

## ARISTOCRATIC OCCUPATIONS AND PASTIMES

Although works like *The Tale of Genji* may convey a different impression, it is probably safe to say that the overriding concern of most male Heian aristocrats was the maintenance and enhancement of status. In economic terms, that aim meant securing a generous patron, seeking lucrative provincial governorships, and/or husbanding and increasing private sources of income, such as *shōen* (rural estates), in order that the individual might house and clothe himself and his many dependents in the discreetly luxurious manner already described. Politically, it meant using talents and connections in an unceasing effort to rise in the bureaucracy, and, in particular, to achieve multiple offices of high ceremonial visibility. Socially, it meant actively pursuing advantageous alliances with other families and exhibiting such esteemed personal qualities as beauty, skill in poetry, music, and calligraphy, and the ability to rise to an occasion with a witticism or a comment showing sensitivity to the evanescence of worldly things.

Members of minor court families, barred by birth from high position, clung to modest official niches by developing expertise in, and hereditary claims to, such specialities as precedents, ceremonies, law, mathematics, the preparation and processing of documents, and the rudiments of astronomy and medicine, and by assuming responsibility for routine governmental operations. It was they who kept the bureaucracy running – and, as will be seen later, it was from their ranks that many quasi-professional poets emerged to achieve a degree of recognition that would otherwise have been unthinkable. In the status-bound world of the Heian court, outstanding literary ability was virtually the only avenue to relative prominence for men whose ambitions were frustrated by the accident of birth, or by the superior manipulative skills of their peers, but it was not a substitute for rank and office, as can be seen by the regularity with which low-ranking poets lamented their inability to climb the official ladder. As a class, men from minor families lacked prestige. It was their superiors who set the tone of Heian culture.

For the highborn noble, whose success in life depended on circumstances only tangentially connected to his competence and diligence in office, the pursuit of status assumed forms not always readily distinguishable from the pursuit of pleasure, with the result that he is sometimes portrayed as a carefree dilettante, enjoying himself with whatever came to hand in the daytime, and flitting from flower

to flower at night. Such descriptions overlook the demands and restrictions imposed on the individual by his censorious, gossipy peers, who expected him above all to function as a smooth cog in the social machinery, and who had a correspondingly low tolerance for unorthodoxy. The line between public and private behavior was ambiguous – or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that very little of a man's behavior was private in the sense of being outside the purview of rules, whether explicit or unwritten. It was, of course, of the utmost importance that he contribute by his attire, demeanor, and knowledge of protocol to the successful execution of the annual ceremonies (*nenjū gyōji*) around which court life revolved – those great Chinese-inspired civil pageants, themselves a supreme affirmation of status, which symbolized the values and preoccupations of the pacific Heian court as surely as tournaments of arms represented those of its medieval Western counterparts. But the scrutiny of society was equally intense, and the demand for conformity equally insistent, on lesser occasions, including those that might impress an observer as having been designed purely for amusement.

### *Excursions*

Participation in the quasi-official pleasure excursions of imperial personages and Fujiwara leaders was both an honor and an obligation, both an occasion for enjoyment and an opportunity for a man to distinguish himself by his appearance, horsemanship, knowledge of precedent, wit, or literary proficiency. Such events were usually linked to the seasons, focusing in the spring on blossom-viewing at suburban sites like Kitano and the Urin'in cloister, or in autumn on enjoyment of the foliage at Arashiyama or some other favorite spot. The Ōi River, at the base of Arashiyama in what is now Ukyō-ku, Kyoto, was the scene of many elegant entertainments, including an autumn river excursion arranged by Michinaga, at which the talented Kintō (966–1041) received the signal honor of being invited to choose from among the three boats – “one for guests who were skilled in the composition of Chinese verse, another for expert musicians, and a third for outstanding *waka* [Japanese verse] poets.”<sup>11</sup>

The usual winter objective was falconry, the only form of hunting sanctioned by the court, which was apparently prompted by the sport's popularity to disregard the Buddhist prohibition against the

11 Matsumura, *Ōkagami*, p. 94; translation from McCullough, *Ōkagami*, p. 113.

taking of life. Falconry was a favorite pastime of at least eleven emperors, from Kammu in the ninth century to Shirakawa in the twelfth; and there are many records of festive outings at which royal spectators and their courtiers watched the activities of falconers and dog handlers, who gradually came to be members of specialist families, versed in secret traditions and masters of elaborately ritualized techniques. Whatever the occasion, the excursions of leading court figures usually began with a procession through the city streets and ended with food, wine, music, poetry, and gifts from the host. Smaller, more private outings for similar purposes were somewhat less formal but followed the same general pattern.

### *Horsemanship*

Most of the retinue traveled on horseback during such pleasure jaunts, which sometimes extended over several days but more typically were arranged so as to avoid spending the night away from the capital. The ability to ride was also necessary if a man was to play his assigned role in great state events like the Imperial Purification, held on the Kamo River beach at the beginning of a new reign, or the Kamo Festival, which was preceded by the most magnificent procession of the year. In earlier periods, riding had been closely associated with military prowess, a tradition that persisted in the warrior class throughout the Heian centuries. Numerous members of the upper aristocracy are also praised for their horsemanship in contemporary records – for example, Minamoto no Makoto (810–69), who met his death in a racing accident, and such prominent Fujiwara nobles as Uchimaro (756–812), Michinaga, Tadazane (1078–1162), and Tadamichi (1097–1164). But the connection with warlike activities is seldom, if ever, made in such cases. Rather, there is increasing emphasis on the individual's contribution to a total visual effect, a task requiring not only skillful horsemanship but also careful attention to the horse's appearance, to the rider's costume, and to the burgeoning rules that prescribed the manner in which the bridle was to be held, the angle at which the whip was to be applied, and the like.<sup>12</sup>

Racing, which had claimed Makoto's life in the ninth century,

<sup>12</sup> See Matsumura, *Ōkagami*, p. 221 (McCullough, *Ōkagami*, p. 196); Yamada Yoshio, Yamada Tadao, Yamada Hideo, and Yamada Toshio, eds., *Konjaku monogatari shū*, vols. 22–26 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (1959–63), vol. 4, pp. 271–72; Bernard Frank, *Histoires qui sont maintenant du passé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), pp. 156–57.

continued in favor, partly because it was associated with gambling, but, like hawking, it became primarily a spectator sport for the upper classes. The main races of the year were official functions, held on the fifth and sixth of the fifth month. Two teams of men from the guards divisions competed on mounts provided by princes and other notables, the winners presented a musical program, and in the evening there was feasting, with music and imperial gifts. A similar pattern was followed on private occasions, as when an emperor or retired emperor visited the home of a minister of state.<sup>13</sup>

### *Archery*

Archery, another sport with strong roots in the martial past, retained its popularity throughout the Heian period. Participation in the mounted variety was left primarily to warriors and members of the lower nobility, although emperors and regents demonstrated their interest by rewarding proficiency. Foot archery, which claimed the prestige of Chinese endorsement, was considered an appropriate exercise for a gentleman. (It was one of only two forms of recreation sanctioned for university students, the other being playing the *koto*.) Numerous ninth-century princes and other personages were renowned for their marksmanship, and the sport was further recognized by the inclusion of an official contest, the Archery Ceremony (*jarai*), in the court calendar. Men of every rank were expected to make themselves available for the two competing Archery Ceremony teams, which performed on the seventeenth of the first month. As time went on, however, senior nobles showed themselves reluctant to participate, and a subsidiary contest on the eighteenth, the Bowman's Wager (*noriyumi*), established itself as the focal point of attention, apparently because the higher nobles were able to watch guardsman teams compete without being obliged to demonstrate their own skill. There were also less formal matches, both at court and in private circles, between teams of wellborn young men. On the lighter side, such events furnished an excuse for drinking and betting, but they were also serious matters for the families involved, because they offered a youth an opportunity to attract favorable notice by his dress, mastery of techniques (and of a growing number of complicated rules), and performance in the later musical entertainment.

<sup>13</sup> See "An Imperial Visit to the Horse Races," McCullough and McCullough, *Flowering Fortunes*, pp. 631-39.

*Wrestling*

Another type of physical prowess was celebrated in the seventh-month wrestling (*sumai*), a lavish summer spectacle featuring competition between two teams of champions, recruited from the provinces and trained by members of the imperial bodyguards. After the ninth century, wrestling was almost entirely a spectator sport, but the official matches were one of the highlights of the year, and it was probably economic difficulties, rather than flagging interest, that led to their disappearance from the court calendar in 1174.<sup>14</sup>

*Kemari*

The tendency to shun participation in strenuous sports may have stemmed in part from the inadequacy of the upper-class diet, but the principal explanation is doubtless to be sought in Chinese-inspired notions of decorum, and in the increasing disposition to treat sport as tableau. The strong emphasis on social harmony seems to have played a role in the preference for team competition. It is significant that the element of competition was almost completely lacking in *kemari* (kickball), the one notably active sport in which male aristocrats consistently indulged. *Kemari* was a game played with a small deerskin ball on a hard-surfaced square court, approximately seven meters long on each side. Eight men, of whom two were stationed under each of four trees at the court's corners, attempted to keep the ball in the air for as many counts as possible, using only their feet. Counting, which began after the fiftieth kick, continued in theory to 1,000, the perfect score, but the usual score seems to have been below 300. Every noble family had its *kemari* court, and the game's enthusiasts included such prominent figures as Emperor Go-Toba (1180–1239), the poet Saigyō (1118–90), and Saigyō's teacher, Fujiwara no Narimichi (1097–1159), the greatest of all *kemari* masters, who held the high court rank of Major Counselor. Even this innocuous pastime, however, was censured by Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon, those supremely articulate spokeswomen for naturalized Chinese values (see section entitled "Literature: Narrative Prose"), who found it indecorous and inelegant for gentlemen to rush around in pursuit of a ball. Given the strength of the attitude

<sup>14</sup> For a description of the *sumai* festivities, see McCullough and McCullough, *Flowering Fortunes*, pp. 391–92.

the two represented, it is not surprising that upper-class amusements tended to be sedentary, and that we hear nothing of such highly competitive activities as swordsmanship.

### *Feminine occupations*

Most aristocratic women had little contact with, or knowledge of, the official activities of men, or of such masculine recreations as hawking, archery, and wrestling. They led quiet, very private lives at home, practicing calligraphy, studying the poetic anthologies, improving their musicianship, reading or listening to stories, assembling costumes, caring for children, and keeping up a poetic correspondence with men and others in the outside world. The monotony of their existence was broken by the companionship (often chiefly nocturnal) of husbands or lovers, by domestic ceremonies and religious activities, and by occasional pilgrimages and sightseeing excursions, made behind the curtains of ox-drawn carriages – vehicles used by both men and women, which accurately reflected the wealth and social status of their owners in their size, construction, fittings, and ornamentation.

Members of both sexes played *go*, character guessing, backgammon (*sugoroku*), and other parlor games, among which backgammon seems to have been a particular masculine favorite. “Whenever Michinaga and Korechika settled down to gamble [at backgammon],” *Ōkagami* says, describing what may have been a fairly typical case, “they bared their torsos, bundled up their robes around their waists, and kept at it until midnight or beyond. . . . Some remarkable and very tasteful stakes changed hands.”<sup>15</sup>

### *Monoawase*

Much more to the liking of fastidious feminine writers – and of women in general, we may suppose – were “matchings of things” (*monoawase*), of which Sei Shōnagon wrote in “Things That Bring Happiness,” “How could anyone help feeling happy after winning one of those contests in which various things are compared?”<sup>16</sup>

The *monoawase*, ranked by a modern authority as one of the three

<sup>15</sup> Matsumura, *Ōkagami*, p. 184; translation from McCullough, *Ōkagami*, p. 173.

<sup>16</sup> Ikeda Kikan, Kishigami Shinji, and Akiyama Ken, eds., *Makura no sōshi, Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, vol. 19 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* (1958), p. 281.

favorite Heian pastimes (the others being falconry and *kemari*),<sup>17</sup> was in many respects the amusement most characteristic of the period and the society. With the exception of the ancient sport of cock-fighting, which might be called a special case, such contests were group enterprises, in which the victory earned by one of the two sides – identified as the Left (the socially superior) and the Right – was scarcely more important than the preparation of costumes and accessories, the scene when the entries were presented, the attendant music, poetry, drinking, and other festivities, and the general opportunity to display taste, ingenuity, and wealth in an atmosphere of well-bred harmony. Sometimes these elegant battles were fought with man-made weapons, such as fans, incense balls, small boxes, musical instruments, pictures, poems, and romances. On other occasions, the combatants turned to nature, comparing the plaintive cries of insects displayed in dainty bamboo cages; matching the plumage or songs of ducks, quail, warblers, or doves; arranging sprays of spring blossoms along the borders of a garden stream or pond; or presenting autumn plants, such as chrysanthemums or colored leaves, on “sandbar-beach tables” (*suhama*), so called because of their gracefully curving tops, and because the entries were often incorporated in a seacoast setting.

The account below conveys some of the flavor of such occasions: the attention to symbolism and visual effect, the prominence assigned to music and poetry, and the preoccupation with status, shown in the care with which ranks and titles were recorded and seating arrangements noted. It describes a sweet-flag root contest held in the middle of the eleventh century – that is, during the heyday of Fujiwara opulence and splendor, which coincided with the regency of Michinaga’s son Yorimichi (992–1074; regent 1017–67). Yorimichi was the moving spirit behind a succession of extravagant contests, many of them nominally sponsored by one or another of the regent’s female relatives or, as here, by the emperor. The leaves and roots of the sweet flag, or calamus, were considered to possess medicinal properties. They figured in a number of customs associated with the Sweet-Flag Festival, held on the fifth of the fifth month as a protection against summer diseases; and it was therefore appropriate to associate them, as the Left did, with pines, cranes, and tortoises, all symbols of longevity. Of the two empresses mentioned, Kanshi was Yorimichi’s daughter and Shōshi the daughter of his

<sup>17</sup> Ishimura, *Yūsoku kojitsu kenkyū*, vol. 2, p. 487.

nephew, the late emperor Go-Ichijō. We learn from another source that Kanshi's ladies-in-waiting were "brilliantly attired in sweet-flag, China-tree, wild pink, and azalea combinations, with bordered sleeves and gold and silver flower and bird designs," and that Shōshi's wore identical glossed silk sweet-flag robes, wild pink bombycine cloaks, mugwort Chinese jackets, and China-tea trains.<sup>18</sup>

There was a sweet-flag root contest in the imperial palace on the fifth of the fifth month in the sixth year of Eishō [1051]. His Majesty had summoned one or two proficient senior nobles and a number of other courtiers for an archery contest on the last day of the third month, and there had also been cockfights, but no clearcut victory had been won, and so it had been determined that the decision should rest on the outcome of a sweet-flag contest.

The preparations in the apartments and grounds were the same as for the poetry contest in the tenth month of the fourth year of Eishō [1049]. Both empresses were present. Among those who attended were the Palace Minister Yorimune, the Minister of Popular Affairs Nagaie, the Inspector Major Counselor Nobuie, the Ononomiya Middle Counselor Kaneyori, the Commander of the Left Gate Guards Takakuni, the Chamberlain Middle Counselor Nobunaga, the Nijō Middle Counselor Toshiie, the Master of the Empress's Household Tsunesuke, the Consultant Middle Captain of the Left Yoshinaga, the Middle Captain of Third Rank Toshifusa, and the Lesser Captain of Third Rank Tadaie. The members of the Left and Right teams arrived in the evening.

First, oil was provided. Then it was time to produce the *suhama* prepared by the Left and the Right. The *suhama* of the Left, which was four feet high, was carried in and deposited east of the door leading to the east bay of the south eavechamber. It depicted a seaside scene, with silver pine trees, silver cranes and tortoises, and a silver stream flowing among aloeswood rocks. There was a scroll on a stand in front. On the scroll paper, which was decorated with delicately edged designs, there were five colored squares, each containing a poem. The green wrapper was decorated with silver, the roller was of amber, and the cord was of silver. There was a green gossamer cloth with a wave design to go under the *suhama*. Five long roots, twisted into circles, were arranged on the pine trees and beside the shore. . . . Five medicinal balls with long multicolored streamers were arranged in circles on the beach.

The members of the side seated themselves on the east veranda. Next, the scorekeeper's *suhama* was presented by chamberlains, who carried it in and put it down east of the principal *suhama*. It contained rocks and tiny pine trees, and there were artificial sweet flags to be used as tallies.

Next, other chamberlains carried in the *suhama* of the Right, which held a drumstand on a pedestal about two feet square, surmounted by a drum. In front of the drum there were dolls, representing children performing the

<sup>18</sup> Matsumura and Yamanaka, *Eiga*, vol. 2, p. 449. For the Sweet-Flag Festival, see McCullough and McCullough, *Flowering Fortunes*, p. 412.

butterfly dance; and on each root a poem had been inscribed. Everything was made of silver. The long streamers of the gold and silver medicinal balls were arranged in circles near the shore.

The members of the side seated themselves on the west veranda. Next, the scorekeeper's *suhama* was presented. A single Chamberlain carried it in and put it down west of the principal *suhama*. It held an imitation of one of the bamboo clumps outside the imperial residence, and its tallies were bamboo stalks.

Next, in compliance with an imperial command, the senior nobles divided up into Left and Right sides. The senior nobles of the Left withdrew from their places, crossed to the east by way of the veranda in front of the emperor, and seated themselves. They were the Palace Minister, Lord Morokata, Lord Kaneyori, Lord Nobunaga, Lord Tsunesuke, and Lord Toshifusa. The captains of the Left and Right, Head Chamberlain Controller Tsuneie and Head Chamberlain Middle Captain Suketsuna, came forward and took their places below their *suhama*. Meanwhile, two child scorekeepers took their places, one for each side. They were sons of Lord Takakuni who were in service at the Courtiers' Hall.

Tsuneie summoned Yoshimoto and Suketsuna summoned Motoie. . . . Tsuneie picked up a long root and handed it to Yoshimoto, who stretched it out under the south eaves. The Right followed the same procedure, and then the lengths were compared. The Left's root was eleven feet long and the Right's twelve; hence the Right won. A second and a third round followed. In each, both roots measured ten feet, but the Right's was slightly longer, so the Right was adjudged the winner. It was decided that the contest would end with the third round.

Next, the five poems [of the Left and the five of the Right] were read. The reciters and their assistants were Nagakata and Tsuneie for the Left, and Takatoshi and Suketsuna for the Right. The Palace Minister was the judge. The topics were "Sweet Flags," "The Cuckoo," "Rice Seedlings," "Love," and "Felicitations." Everyone returned to his original seat after the readings.

Next, his Majesty gave the command for music. The Japanese *koto* was played by the Minister of Popular Affairs, the thirteen-stringed *koto* by the Middle Counselor of Second Rank, the lute by Tsunenobu, the mouth organ by Sadanaga, the flute by [missing], and the oboe by Takatoshi. The singer was Sukenaka. After an oboe solo, the Palace Minister . . . presented a flute to the emperor. His Majesty took it and told the Minister to use the clappers. The Minister assented and returned to his seat. Then the song "Ah! How August!" was sung. At the end of the song in the *ritsu* scale, His Majesty presented gift robes to the senior nobles, who then withdrew. I believe I have heard that there were no imperial gifts for the other courtiers on that occasion.<sup>19</sup>

Murasaki Shikibu, in *The Tale of Genji*, devotes a chapter to a contest in which two teams of ladies, representing rival imperial con-

19 Nagazumi Yasuaki and Shimada Isao, eds., *Kokon chomonjū*, vol. 84 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (1966), pp. 498-500.

sorts, offered paintings for judgment in the emperor's presence. The preliminary maneuverings of the consorts' supporters as they sought to outwit the competition, and the anxious attention devoted to costumes, boxes, mountings, and cords, remind us that the winner of such a contest was considered to have gained a significant advantage in the incessant jockeying for favor that went on among powerful families with daughters in the palace harem. It was not only Prince Genji's enthusiasm for art, but also his desire to protect the interests of his protégée, Akikonomu, that impelled him to the exertions Murasaki describes.<sup>20</sup> Even when the stakes were lower, any *monoawase* – and particularly any public one – had its serious side, because it exposed the taste and sensitivity of the participants to exacting scrutiny. Like the other major pastimes we have reviewed, this one was seldom taken lightly.

## SECULAR PAINTING

Toward the end of Murasaki Shikibu's "Picture Competition" chapter, Prince Hotaru remarks to his brother, Prince Genji, "Our father used to say, 'It goes without saying that Genji has mastered the art of poetic composition. As regards the other major accomplishments, he is best at playing the seven-stringed *koto*; then come the flute, lute, and thirteen-stringed *koto*.' Everyone else thought the same, so I assumed painting was merely something you did for amusement."<sup>21</sup>

That rather ambiguous comment might imply that painting was regarded as an important aristocratic accomplishment – a proposition for which there would appear to be support in *The Tale of Genji* itself, where members of the imperial family are depicted as zealous wielders of the brush; and also in other works, such as *Ōkagami* and *Eiga monogatari*, which describe the proficiency of leading court personages. We will probably be closer to the truth, however, if we assume that painting was acknowledged to be a skill requiring native ability (a point Prince Hotaru makes elsewhere in the same *Genji* passage), and that members of society were under no compulsion to try to master it. It seems to have been viewed in somewhat the same light as cooking, another hobby in which eminent gentlemen often dabbled. Like the applied arts, it was essentially the province of professionals – men

20 See H. Richard Okada, *Figures of Resistance: Language, Poetry, and Narrating in 'The Tale of Genji' and Other Mid-Heian Texts* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 232–38, for a discussion of the interplay between politics and aesthetics on this occasion.

21 Yamagishi, *Genji*, vol. 2, p. 186.

of low social status who worked in the court Painting Office, or in private or temple ateliers. Although there was some overlapping, secular art was produced primarily by court and other lay painters; Buddhist art, by painter-monks associated with the big temples.

Only a few Heian painters' names have survived. Their Nara-period predecessors had been anonymous artisans, and the status of the profession remained much the same, even after the ninth-century rise of secular painting had brought new opportunities for the display of individual talent. Those of whom we hear remain shadowy figures, like Kudara no Kawanari (782–853), the first artist to enter the historical record, who was celebrated for his realism, and Kose no Kanaoka (fl. ca. 980), an expert painter of horses and the founder of the long-lived Kose school. Mentions of Kawanari, Kanaoka, and others recur from time to time in Heian texts, but we get little sense of their accomplishments, because their work, unlike that of the professional poets, no longer survives. Of the handful of extant Heian secular paintings, none can be attributed with confidence to a known artist.

We must likewise rely almost exclusively on literary sources for the history of Heian secular art. A great many paintings are known to have been executed on screens and panels (which were needed in large numbers after the adoption of *shindenzukuri* architecture), and also in small picture books and scrolls, designed primarily for feminine enjoyment. During the early ninth century, when Chinese influence was all-pervasive, styles and subjects were usually Chinese, but Japanese themes became increasingly popular by the tenth century, and a distinction was then made between *karae* (pictures with Chinese subjects) and *yamatoe* (pictures with Japanese subjects). As the Heian period advanced, *karae* continued to be produced. The only extant Heian landscape screen, for example, a work dating from around 1050, is a *karae* preserved at the Tōji Temple, depicting a young court noble visiting an elderly recluse who is probably to be identified with the Chinese poet Po Chū-i (772–846).<sup>22</sup> But the *yamatoe* became the predominant form, evolving from the *karae* – through a process that cannot be traced with certainty – into the mature Japanese style we find in the oldest remaining examples, most of which date from the twelfth century.

<sup>22</sup> Illustrated in Saburo Ienaga, *Painting in the Yamato Style* (New York and Tokyo: John Weatherhill and Heibonsha, 1973), plate 26; also in Akiyama Terukazu, *Emakimono*, vol. 8 of *Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu* (1968), p. 164.

*Rise of Yamatoe*

In the second half of the ninth century, the Japanese were actively naturalizing or discarding many of the imported elements in their everyday life, in areas ranging from food and dress to music, art, and literature. The pivotal event of those decades was the emergence of a workable native syllabary (*kana*). By freeing the Japanese language from total dependence on an alien logographic writing system, *kana* paved the way for the remarkable social rise of Japanese poetry – that is, of the thirty-one-syllable *waka*, which can be said to have constituted the dominant element in aristocratic culture from the tenth century on. Paradoxically, this seeming move away from China proved to be a major step toward a truly Chinese-style society, because it made poetic expression an integral part of upper-class existence, instead of a self-conscious exercise in a foreign tongue. The evolution of *kana* also resulted in the development of narrative prose fiction, which, if it lacked Confucian sanction, nevertheless contributed to the literary atmosphere at court. As we shall see, it also influenced the direction taken by Japanese calligraphy. And it profoundly affected the content and form of the *yamatoe*.

Screen and panel pictures, the earliest form assumed by the *yamatoe*, were not regarded as independent works of art, but, rather, as companions to poems and as vehicles for the evocation of bittersweet emotion. The overwhelming majority were landscape paintings with added genre elements. They focused on the passing of time, as illustrated by the natural phenomena and human activities conventionally associated with the four seasons. Figures gathering young greens indicated spring, as did hazy hills dotted with flowering trees; a cuckoo pointed unmistakably to summer; deer or colored leaves to autumn; snow or falconry to winter. Colored-paper squares, positioned to enhance the total design, contained graceful poems (or, less frequently, prose), inscribed in flowing script, which endowed the pictures with specific connotations.

Although the pictures have long since vanished, many of the poems remain, helping us to visualize the content of the paintings and to understand the manner in which man and nature were linked. The five *waka* below, which may be considered typical, were all composed in 875 for a screen behind the guest of honor at a longevity celebration.

kasugano ni wakana tsumitsutsu yorozuyo o iwau kokoro wa kami zo shiruran	The gods must know well The feelings with which I pray, "Ten thousand years" As I pluck the tender shoots On the plain of Kasuga.
yama takami kumoi ni miyuru sakurabana kokoro no yukite oranu hi zo naki	So high the mountains They seem to float in the sky – Those cherry blossoms My spirit visits daily, Longing to break off a bough.
mezurashiki koe naranaku ni hototogisu kokora no toshi o akazu mo aru ka na	Yours is not, cuckoo, A song we hear but rarely – Why, then, should it be That listening through the years, We never weary of you?
chidori naku sao no kawagiri tachinurashi yama no ko no ha mo iro masariyuku	Mists must be hovering Above the Sao River Where plovers call out, For now the mountain foliage Takes on ever deeper hues.
shirayuki no furishiku toki wa miyoshino no yamashitakaze ni hana zo chirikeru	When white flakes of snow Flutter thick and fast toward earth, Flowers indeed scatter Before the gale sweeping down From fair Yoshino's mountains. <sup>23</sup>

In order to form a notion of the actual appearance of these four-seasons screens and panels, we must examine the few scraps of evidence remaining from the Heian period itself, as well as comparable examples of the later *yamatōe* style. Naturalized landscape backgrounds dating from the mid-eleventh century are to be seen in the Tōji *karae* screen and in religious door paintings at the Byōdōin in Uji; and there are numerous small-scale landscapes, including representations of screens and panels, in twelfth-century scrolls. The pictorial designs on lacquer, ceramic, and metal objects also offer useful hints. It seems safe to conclude, after such a review, that most Heian *yamatōe* landscapes modified Chinese techniques in order to achieve soft, delicate, romantic effects, and that the total impression was one of elegant refinement.

<sup>23</sup> Saeki Umetomo, ed., *Kokin waka shū*, vol. 8 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* (1959), nos. 357–59, 361–62. Here and below, *Kokinshū* translations, sometimes slightly altered, are from Helen Craig McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū: With 'Tosa Nikki' and 'Shinsen Waka'* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985). Poem numbers in Saeki are identical with those in *Shimpen kokka taikan*.

*Emakimono*

The appearance of the *yamatoe* coincided with the development of such vernacular narrative prose forms as the romance, the diary, and the poem tale (see section entitled "Literature: Narrative Prose"). It was not long before romances and similar works began to inspire paintings, which sometimes took the form of screen decorations but most often appeared as booklets (*sōshi*) or horizontal, hand scrolls (*emaki*[*mono*]) – small treasures for highborn ladies, who gazed at them while attendants read from related texts or told stories of their own invention. The horizontal scrolls were made of sheets of paper pasted together and attached to a mounting at one end and a roller at the other. Quite apart from the aesthetic value of their paintings, they were objects of art in their own right, with braided silk cords, richly colored mountings, rollers made of jade, crystal, or precious wood, and textual passages inscribed in exquisite calligraphy on paper flecked with silver and gold. That they were favored over the plainer *sōshi* is suggested by the frequency of their mention in works like *The Tale of Genji*, and by the fact that all the principal surviving Heian *yamatoe* are in *emakimono* form.

Two main types of Heian secular narrative *emakimono* exist today, known respectively as *onnae* (feminine pictures) and *otokoe* (masculine pictures). Both probably derive from Chinese antecedents, through a process that cannot be reconstructed, and both are closely associated with native literary genres – *onnae* with romances, *kana* diaries, and poem tales; *otokoe* with an anecdotal, supposedly factual, ultimately oral genre of very short stories called *setsurwa*. The oldest extant set of *onnae* scrolls, the *Genji monogatari emaki* (*The Tale of Genji Picture Scrolls*), is a masterpiece that obviously represents the culmination of a long line of development. There is also ample literary evidence to show that *onnae* were probably being produced by around the middle of the tenth century, and that they were extremely numerous and popular from at least the eleventh century on. No comparable information exists for *otokoe*, but it does not necessarily follow that the *otokoe* was a much later phenomenon, as has sometimes been maintained.<sup>24</sup> Rather, in view of the high artistic

<sup>24</sup> Tokyo National Museum, *Painting 6th–14th Centuries*, vol. 1 of *Pageant of Japanese Art* (Tokyo: Toto Shuppan, 1957), p. 37; Seidensticker, *Genji*, pp. 307–17; Hideo Okudaira, *Narrative Picture Scrolls* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill and Shibundō, 1973), p. 29; Dietrich Seckel, *Emakimono: The Art of the Japanese Painted Hand-Scroll* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1959), p. 25.

level of the oldest known examples, it seems best to postulate an ancestry of considerable antiquity. We may conjecture that the lack of references to *otokoe* in the writings of court women, our best sources in such matters, is due not to their absence from the society but to a feminine preference for pictures illustrating literature of a different kind.

Very soon after the appearance of *The Tale of Genji* in the early eleventh century, that great work of fiction was canonized as the supreme embodiment of the Heian spirit, and as a magisterial exposition, in particular, of the central aesthetic concept known as *mono no aware*, which may be roughly defined as deep but controlled emotional sensitivity, especially to beauty and to the tyranny of time. The book was read, re-read, quoted, imitated, explicated, and illustrated by generations of admirers; and it is surely no coincidence that it furnished the subject matter for what is not only the earliest surviving set of *onnae* scrolls but also, in the view of some scholars, the finest achievement in the history of Japanese painting. As is true of most *emakimono*, the four *Genji monogatari emaki* scrolls contain both pictures and textual passages. Traditionally ascribed to the court painter Fujiwara no Takayoshi (fl. ca. 1147), they are now recognized to have been produced by different painting ateliers and different calligraphers, probably around the 1120s or 1130s. In its present incomplete state, the set includes paintings of nineteen separate scenes, almost all of which are laid in *shindenzukuri* apartments and adjoining verandas. The strong, dramatic parallel lines of railings, partitions, and lintels contrast magnificently with the richly colored robes, screens, curtains, and blinds; and the stylized human figures, with slit eyes and hooks for noses, are represented in static, pensive poses, perfectly attuned to the majestic pace and melancholy tone of Murasaki's work, and to the planes and masses of the total composition. As in the society of which it is a microcosm, there is small place in this romantic, dreamlike world for ill-bred assertions of individuality or violent outpourings of emotion. Prince Genji's face is impassive when he holds his wife's infant son by another man, and only the tilt of his head hints at his feelings.<sup>25</sup>

Two outstanding examples of the *otokoe* technique survive, both dating from around the middle of the twelfth century. The three scrolls of the first, the *Shigisan engi emaki* (Shigisan Legend Picture

25 Akiyama, *Emakimono*, plate 2; also Ivan Morris, *The Tale of Genji Scroll* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1971), facing p. 54.

Scrolls), depict miraculous events associated with the monk Myōren (fl. tenth century); the subject of the second, the *Ban daiagon emaki* (Ban Major Counselor Picture Scrolls, 3 scrolls), is the Ōtemmon palace gate fire of 866, said to have been set by the court noble Tomo (or Ban) no Yoshio (809–68) in an attempt to discredit a political rival. The *Shigisan engi emaki* stories unfold in a swift, cinematic style, characterized by robust realism and freely flowing brushwork. Colors appear only in thin washes, and the human figures are almost all members of the lower classes, who reveal their feelings of alarm, amazement, or joy through exaggerated facial expressions and hand and foot movements. Most of the action takes place outdoors. The *Ban daiagon emaki* makes more conspicuous use of color and devotes more attention to the upper classes, but its vigorous realism, boisterous crowds of uninhibited commoners, and arson and fist-cuffs remove it, too, very far from the feminine milieu of the *Genji monogatari emaki*.<sup>26</sup>

Of other *emakimono* remaining from the late Heian period, the most important are the first two scrolls of the *Chōjū jimbutsu giga* (Bird, Animal, and Human Caricatures), a work consisting of four scrolls in all. The two Heian scrolls (mid-twelfth century?), which may be from a single hand, contain drawings of monkeys, rabbits, and frogs mimicking humans (scroll 1) and sketches of horses, oxen, roosters, lions, dragons, and other real and imaginary creatures (scroll 2); the other two (early thirteenth century) repeat the subject-matter of scroll 1, with additional scenes of monks and laymen gambling (scroll 3), and depict monks and laymen engaged in frequently enigmatic activities (scroll 4). The symbolic intent, if any, is not understood. All four are executed almost exclusively in ink, using a technique derived from Buddhist copybooks; and the first and second are particularly noteworthy for their skillful composition, lively realism, and fluent, powerful brushwork.<sup>27</sup>

#### CALLIGRAPHY AND PAPER

The *Chōjū jimbutsu giga* scrolls, unusual in so many other respects, are also among the few Heian *emakimono* without calligraphic sections. All the other major narrative scroll sets contain brief textual passages, which were probably intended not so much to inform the

<sup>26</sup> For illustrations, see Akiyama, *Emakimono*, plates 22–30 (*Shigisan engi emaki*) and plates 31–35 (*Ban daiagon emaki*).

<sup>27</sup> Illustrated in Akiyama, *Emakimono*, plates 36–40.

viewer, who could have been expected to know the stories, as to enhance the visual effect and reinforce the connection between painting and the prestigious arts of literature and calligraphy.

Although Chinese writing styles had been competently copied earlier, Japanese study of calligraphy as an art began with the great religious leader Kūkai (or Kōbō Daishi, 774–835), who absorbed the major T'ang styles during his fourteen months in China. The square (*kaisho*), running (*gyōsho*), grass (*sōsho*), and other styles sponsored or introduced by Kūkai after his return were essentially those perfected by the legendary Wang Hsi-chih (321?–71?) and his son Wang Hsien-chih (344–88). They provided the foundation for what was later known as the Chinese style (*karayō*); and Kūkai and two of his contemporaries, Emperor Saga (786–842) and Tachibana no Hayanari (d. 842) – the so-called Three Brushes (*sampitsu*) – were recognized as the style's best early practitioners.

Meanwhile, the Japanese were continuing the experimentation that was to lead ultimately to the modern *hiragana* syllabary. Their first step had been to adopt a bewildering variety of Chinese characters for the phonetic rendering of proper nouns, poems, and the like. Such characters, called *man'yōgana* because of their prominence in the eighth-century poetic anthology *Man'yōshū* (*Collection of Ten Thousand Generations*), continued to be used by early Heian writers, who often set them down in the grass style, producing a form called *sōgana*. By around the second half of the ninth century, a relatively small number of *sōgana* were being further streamlined, a process that led to the creation, by the early eleventh century if not before, of a syllabary (*kana*) similar to the modern one except for the survival of numerous alternative forms for most sounds. It was primarily in that syllabary, known also as the woman's hand (*onnade*), that poetry, romances, and women's diaries were written. (*Katakana*, the other modern syllabary, which dates from the same general period, developed as a utilitarian system of notation outside the mainstream of Heian culture.)

There is evidence that *kana* were used to some extent by men during the period of gestation, but most scholars assume that the lead was taken by women, for whom the study of Chinese characters was considered unsuitable, and who consequently needed a script for the letters and poems that bulked so large in their daily lives. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that the suppleness and elegance of the script thus developed were qualities that appealed only to feminine taste. The first great calligrapher of the tenth century, Ono no

Michikaze (or Tōfū, 894–966), wrote Chinese characters in a graceful, simple manner that was already significantly different from the dignity and vigor of the orthodox style followed by the Three Brushes. The naturalization process was carried further by Fujiwara no Sukemasa (944–98), who was born about fifty years after Michikaze; and it reached maturity a generation later with Fujiwara no Yukinari (972–1027). Although Yukinari is bracketed with his two predecessors as one of the Three Calligraphers (*sanseki*) in the Japanese style (*wayō*), he is by far the most notable figure of the three, because it was his gentle, smooth brushwork that became the classic model, transmitted for generations by the immensely influential Sesonji school.

Yukinari's name is also associated with the classic *kana* style, which achieves an effect of great fluidity and elegance by linking individual *kana* in a long series of graceful loops and curves. The best examples of *kana* calligraphy in its golden age are the *Kōyagire* (Kōya fragments, ca. 1100?), a group of scrolls and fragments containing portions of the first imperial poetic anthology, *Kokinshū* (*Collection of Early and Modern Times*).<sup>28</sup> Two later works, the *Genji monogatari emaki* and *Sanjūrokunin shū* (*Collection of Thirty-Six Poets*, ca. 1110–20?), are celebrated for the superbly decorative manner in which they combine the arts of calligraphy, literature, painting, and paper making.

*Sanjūrokunin shū*, in particular, utilizes many different kinds of fine paper – heavy, white domestic *michinoku*; Chinese *rōsen*, decorated with wax designs; numerous kinds of domestic and imported *karakami* (Chinese paper), the *kana* paper par excellence, decorated with mica paste designs and gold and silver dust – juxtaposing different colors and textures with great verve and originality. One white sheet, for example, is decorated with an overall silver wave pattern and a picture showing an island, a boat, and wild geese in flight. An irregular brown band of differently textured paper has been added in the approximate center, with its own design of gold dust and plume grass, and there is a dark brown accent at the bottom of the page, studded with bits of gold leaf.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly opulent paper was used for religious purposes, as in the case of the well-known *Heike nōkyō* (*Taira Family Dedicatory Sutra*).

<sup>28</sup> Illustrated in Ozawa Masao, ed., *Kokin waka shū*, vol. 7 of *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1971), p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> For illustrations of *Genji monogatari emaki* and *Sanjūrokunin shū* paper and calligraphy, see Ienaga, *Painting*, plates 95–97; also Morris, *Genji Scroll*, passim.

The thirty-three scrolls in this set of the *Lotus Sutra*, presented to Itsukushima Shrine in 1164 by the powerful Taira family, are inscribed on paper lavishly decorated with gold and silver, dainty floral patterns, and under-paintings; and the *karae* and *yamatoe* illustrations, gold and silver fittings, mother-of-pearl inlays, and crystal rollers make the viewer feel that “their splendor and sumptuousness [suggest] collections of elegant verses rather than sutras,” as *Eiga monogatari* comments of a similar set.<sup>30</sup>

It is not surprising that Heian aristocrats should have copied sutras in much the same spirit as poems, with equal attention to calligraphy, paper, and general artistic effect. To a considerable extent, religion itself was regarded as an aesthetic experience – a source of material and spiritual benefits, to be sure, but also an opportunity to delight the senses with the gorgeous ecclesiastical vestments, the solemn massed chants, the clouds of fragrant incense, and the pageantry that were associated with esoteric rituals, in particular. Sei Shōnagon expressed what must have been a common opinion when she said, “A preacher ought to be handsome. Otherwise, his ugliness leads us into sin by encouraging us to let our attention wander.”<sup>31</sup> And since members of court society were the principal patrons of the great temples, their tastes inevitably affected the development of Buddhist painting and sculpture.

#### BUDDHIST ART

As with secular screen paintings and *emakimono*, we know from literary sources that Buddhist art was produced in huge quantities during the Heian period. The two esoteric sects, Shingon and Tendai, which dominated the early religious scene, required at least one new icon for each of the innumerable special rituals their monks performed day in and day out for aristocratic patrons; and groups of as many as a thousand paintings or statues were commissioned repeatedly by wealthy believers, especially in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Most of those works are gone, but a substantial number remains – fifty or sixty statues from the ninth century alone. Often pre-

30 Matsumura and Yamanaka, *Eiga*, vol. 2, pp. 43–44; McCullough and McCullough, *Flowering Fortunes*, p. 532. For *Heike nōkyō* illustrations, see Ienaga, *Painting*, plate 98; also Robert Treat Paine and Alexander Soper, *The Art and Architecture of Japan, Pelican History of Art* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1955), plate 57; and H. Minamoto, *An Illustrated History of Japanese Art* (Kyoto: K. Hoshino, 1935), plate 79.

31 Paraphrased from Ikeda, *Makura no sōshi*, pp. 73–74.

served in isolated temples, where they were relatively safe from spreading fires, warfare, and other dangers, such statues and paintings enable us to trace broad stylistic developments with comparative assurance. Art historians have usually treated them in terms of two periods, Jōgan (or Kōnin, or Kōnin Jōgan, after ninth-century era names) and Fujiwara, with Fujiwara representing the kind of courtly taste we have been discussing. In the view of some scholars, the Fujiwara period begins as early as 894; in that of others, as late as 980. To avoid ambiguity, we shall speak here of centuries, or of early Heian (ninth century), mid-Heian (tenth and eleventh centuries), and late Heian (twelfth century).

### *Sculpture*

For Buddhist art, as for other aspects of Heian culture, Chinese influence predominated at the beginning of the ninth century. Sculpture imitated mid- and late-T'ang models, and through them the art of southern India, continuing a late eighth-century trend away from the realism and classic repose of the Nara masterpieces. The material was almost invariably a single block of wood, frequently embellished with polychrome decoration. The style, copied from imported statues and pattern books, was characterized by somber facial expressions; stout, almost corpulent bodies; formal, stylized poses; powerfully carved drapery swirling in abstract designs; and a suggestion of sensuous languor, imparted by half-closed eyes, full lips, and swelling flesh.

Although it is possible to detect a certain degree of naturalization well before the end of the ninth century, all of the above traits are present not only in the Jingoji Yakushi Nyorai, which probably dates from around 800, but also in works attributed to the mid- and late-ninth century, such as the Kanshinji Nyoirin Kannon and the Hokkeji Eleven-Headed Kannon.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, they are still to be found in statues of the early eleventh century. This continental style persisted, in short, well after the eclipse of Chinese poetry and Chinese fashions in calligraphy and secular art – partly because glowering faces and powerful torsos were suitable attributes for the Mystic Kings and other fierce deities who figured prominently in esoteric

<sup>32</sup> For the Jingoji Yakushi Nyorai, see Minamoto, *Japanese Art*, plate 41, and Kurata Bunsaku, *Mikkyō jūin to Jōgan chōkoku*, vol. 5 of *Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu* (1967), plate 27; for the Kanshinji Nyoirin Kannon, Kurata, *Mikkyō*, plates 63–64; for the Hokkeji Eleven-Headed Kannon, Minamoto, *Japanese Art*, plate 48, and Kurata, *Mikkyō*, plates 72–73.

rituals; partly because of the conservatism nurtured by iconographic pattern-books and by the strictly formulaic approach of the Shingon sect. In the end, however, it failed to withstand the challenge of innovations catering to the aristocratic preference for refinement, mildness, and luxurious decorative effects.

When members of the court circle were in need of immediate divine assistance – for example, to secure a promotion, ensure a safe journey or an uneventful childbirth, resolve a land dispute, or recover from an illness – they turned to the esoteric sects, the native gods, the *yin-yang* prognosticators, and their own special protective buddhas and bodhisattvas. When they contemplated the afterlife (a frequent practice in a society preoccupied with ephemerality), they found solace chiefly in the hope of rebirth in Amida's Pure Land paradise. Worship of Amida, designed to secure forgiveness for sins and assistance for the dead, had existed in Japan for centuries, leaving its artistic mark most notably in the Golden Hall frescoes at the Hōryūji, where Amida's Pure Land, among others, was depicted in a style whose Chinese antecedents can be seen at Tun-huang.

In 985, the Tendai monk Genshin (942–1017) gave new prominence to Amidism with a treatise, *Ōjō yōshū* (*Anthology on Rebirth in Pure Land*), which made the cult an alternative, rather than an adjunct, to other forms of Buddhism; and which contained vivid descriptions of the beauty and compassion of the Buddha and his attendants, and of the pleasures of the Pure Land.<sup>33</sup> As depicted in *Ōjō yōshū*, the Pure Land was a place where the ear was delighted with music, the nose with fragrance, and the eye with drifting blossoms, crystal pools, golden palaces, and exquisite raiment – an idealized counterpart, we might say, of the Heian capital.

Around the beginning of the eleventh century, thanks in large part to Genshin, Amidism began to move religious art and architecture in a new direction. The esoteric and other sects continued to produce works to meet their own needs, but lay believers increasingly commissioned serenely benevolent images of Amida and his bodhisattvas, which they installed in tile-roofed halls decorated with gold, jewels, lacquer, and mother-of-pearl. The most magnificent of many such undertakings was Michinaga's Hōjōji Temple, where the grounds and buildings were consciously designed to suggest the glories of the Pure Land, and where the central icon, a sixteen-foot

<sup>33</sup> For a partial translation, see A. K. Reischauer, "Genshin's Ojo Yoshu: Collected Essays on Birth into Paradise," *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, second series, 7 (1930): 16–97.

statue of Amida, "shining with peerless holy radiance," conformed in every feasible respect to the glittering description of the Buddha in *Ōjō yōshū*.<sup>34</sup> Another was the Byōdōin at Uji, founded by Michinaga's son Yorimichi, where the main image, seated Amida, still survives in the original airy, elegant Phoenix Hall (Hōōdō), a building that combines *shinden-zukuri* architectural features with those of edifices in Tun-huang Pure Land paintings. Executed in 1053 by Jōchō (d. 1057), a sculptor who had won acclaim earlier for his contributions to the Hōjōji, the statue is a noble work, its graceful, well-proportioned body, soft drapery, and tranquil, dignified face combining with a sumptuously decorated golden halo to produce an effect of the utmost beauty and refinement.<sup>35</sup>

As we might expect, the Phoenix Hall Amida did not spring full-blown from Jōchō's inventive genius. Its ancestry can be traced back through at least one hundred years of evolution. Nor can we assume that it was hailed as the outstanding masterpiece of its day, since we hear much more about the vanished splendors of the Hōjōji from contemporaneous writers. Nevertheless, it is a work of unique importance, not only for its intrinsic quality, but also for its effect on the subsequent course of Heian sculpture. Admiration assumed the form of imitation, with the result that the last hundred and fifty years of the Heian period witnessed no new developments, but merely the gradual debasement of Jōchō's style into weak conventionalism. There was mass production of bland images, assembled from many small wooden parts (a technique Jōchō had perfected), and decorated with bright colors, intricate patterns, and cut gold in a manner that occasionally bordered on vulgarity, as in the Jōruriji Kichijōten, with its elaborately simulated textile designs and its multifarious streamers, bangles, and hair ornaments.<sup>36</sup>

### *Painting*

Before the rise of Amidism, there were two main categories of Heian Buddhist painting, both intimately associated with the Shingon and Tendai sects. One was the mandala, a symbolic representation of the

34 Quotation from McCullough and McCullough, *Flowering Fortunes*, p. 567. For the *Ōjō yōshū* description, see Allan A. Andrews, *The Teachings Essential for Rebirth: A Study of Gen-shin's Ōjōyōshū* (Tokyo: Sophia University, 1973), pp. 13-14.

35 Illustrated in Paine and Soper, *Art and Architecture*, plate 37; also in Kudō Yoshiaki and Nishikawa Shinji, *Amidadō to Fujiwara chōkoku*, vol. 6 of *Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu* (1969), plates 1, 4-5.

36 Illustrated in Paine and Soper, *Art and Architecture*, plate 35B.

universe. In the most common type of mandala, scores of miniature divinities were grouped hierarchically in geometric patterns around a central image of Vairocana (Dainichi), of whom they were regarded as manifestations. A variety of decorative effects was achieved by executing the figures in fine gold or silver lines on dark blue paper, or in red outlines complemented by a palette of bright colors; and there were also variations in the types of circles and rectangles employed to make up the total composition. But a basic uniformity, the result both of the tiny sizes of the figures and of detailed iconographic regulations, may be said to limit the aesthetic interest of the mandala.<sup>37</sup>

Awesomely energetic fierce deities are the representative subjects of paintings belonging to the other category, which is characterized by an iconic, expansive, forbidding style paralleling that of contemporary sculpture. With the possible exception of the massive Myōin Red Fudō (which art historians classify merely as “early”), no major ninth-century work in this vein survives, but excellent examples remain from the next century and a half – for example, the Boston Museum’s Daiitoku and the Shōren’in Blue Fudō – showing that the style, protected by strong conservative forces, was able to maintain its integrity until well after the first manifestations of heightened interest in Amida and the Pure Land.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, at temples like the Hōjōji and the Byōdōin, painters were exploring a new subject, the descent of Amida and his heavenly host to escort the dying believer to paradise. Pictures of this kind, called *raigō* (“coming to welcome”), were not unknown in China, but it was in Japan that they became a major element in Pure Land art. Relatively unencumbered by iconographic considerations, painters created compositions reflecting aristocratic taste: richly attired bodhisattva musicians riding on purple clouds, with a golden Amida in the central position and a *yamatōe* landscape at the bottom. The oldest extant *raigō* paintings, a group executed in 1053 on walls and doors at the Byōdōin, are now badly worn and faded, but protected sections, uncovered in the course of twentieth-century repairs, have revealed bright yellows, oranges, reds, blues, purples, and

37 For a short discussion of mandalas, see Akiyama Terukazu, *Japanese Painting* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1977), pp. 37–40; for illustrations, Takada Osamu and Yanagisawa Taka, *Butsuga*, vol. 7 of *Genshoku Nihon no bijutsu* (1969), plates 38–42, 45–53.

38 For the Myōin Red Fudō, see Takada and Yanagisawa, *Butsuga*, plate 59; for the Boston Museum Daiitoku, Takada and Yanagisawa, *Butsuga*, plate 68, and Akiyama, *Japanese Painting*, p. 54; for the Shōren’in Blue Fudō, Takada and Yanagisawa, *Butsuga*, plates 56–57, and Akiyama, *Japanese Painting*, p. 55.

greens, as well as ornamental designs produced by the application of cut gold leaf (*kirikane*), a new technique that was to assume increasing prominence during the remainder of the Heian period. As noted earlier, the pines and hills in the Byōdōin *raigō* are among the oldest extant fragments of *yamatōe* landscape painting.<sup>39</sup>

The greatest Heian *raigō*, known as the Kōyasan triptych, consists of three hanging scrolls, which appear to have originated as a single painting. Brownish clouds, believed to have been lavender, shape the composition into an ellipse, indented at the lower left to admit an autumnal mountain scene. The bodhisattvas, outlined in clean red lines, have skins delicately flushed with pink or tan, and their graceful white streamers repeat the undulating motions of the clouds, as do the bands of red, blue, green, orange, and purple formed by their patterned robes. Extensive and extremely sophisticated use of gold, especially for the central figure and its halo, supports the attribution of this work to the late Heian period.<sup>40</sup>

Mildness, delicacy, grace, and decorativeness, qualities ideally suited to the content of *raigō* paintings, played an increasing role in Buddhist art as a whole during the last hundred and fifty Heian years. One of the finest works of the late mid-period is a hanging scroll at Mount Kōya, dating from 1086, which represents the death of Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha. The background is occupied by hills and water in the *yamatōe* style. In the center, the Buddha lies in tranquil grandeur, many times life-size, framed by graceful śāla trees in full bloom, and surrounded by mourners, who spill over into the foreground. Like the aristocrats in *onnae emakimono*, the divine personages show their grief only through slight gestures, if at all; like the commoners in *otokoe*, the human figures shriek and weep without inhibition. A sorrowing lion writhes in the lower right-hand corner; a calm Queen Māyā, the Buddha's beautiful mother, hovers in the upper right. Painstaking attention has been devoted to color contrasts and harmonies, and to the patterns in the mourners' luxurious robes, which closely resemble mid-Heian descriptions of upper-class attire, but the commanding presence of the Buddha and the grief of the mourners serve as a counterpoise to the decorative elements, and the total effect is one of great vitality and textural richness.<sup>41</sup>

39 Illustrated in Kudō and Nishikawa, *Amidadō*, plate 7.

40 Illustrated in Akiyama, *Japanese Painting*, pp. 46–47; also in Takada and Yanagisawa, *Butsuga*, plates 115, 118.

41 Illustrated in Takada and Yanagisawa, *Butsuga*, plates 1–5; see also the discussion in Akiyama, *Japanese Painting*, p. 49.

In many other cases, the modern viewer feels that dignity, compositional strength, and religious feeling have been sacrificed to surface glitter and fussy detail. Images of the bodhisattva Fugen, a cult figure worshiped particularly by women, appear against a background of falling blossoms, wear elaborate polychrome costumes and innumerable bracelets, necklaces, and pendants, and ride elephants whose saddles are embellished with designs resembling the intricate patterning of Persian miniatures.<sup>42</sup> The once powerful bodies of fierce deities are swallowed up in near-abstract designs, where the focus is on *kirikane*, tiny patterns, and the interplay of planes of reds and browns.<sup>43</sup> The Peacock King, another esoteric divinity, is festooned with dozens of green and gold loops, and the feathers of his mount become layers of contrasting colors, each with its own complex pattern traced in gold.<sup>44</sup>

If we are tempted to accuse some of these paintings of excessive ornamentation, or even of garishness, we may remind ourselves that they were intended to be seen in dusky surroundings, not in brightly lit museums or on the glossy pages of art books. But impressions of insipidity and sentimentality are harder to dismiss. Without wishing to deny the many attractive qualities of late Buddhist painting, we must agree with those who find that here, as in the sculpture of the same period, conservatism and overrefinement have resulted in decadence. It is not to the temples that we can profitably turn for the best in twelfth-century Japanese art.

#### MUSIC

In the four centuries immediately preceding the Heian period, the introduction of many kinds of foreign instrumental music and dance brought revolutionary new aesthetic experiences to the Japanese upper classes, for whom music had previously meant simple vocal performances and dances, with or without flutes, bells, drums, and six-stringed *kotos* by way of accompaniment. The native tradition survived, thanks to an intimate association with tenacious magico-religious beliefs and practices, but it was the importations that bulked largest in the official and private lives of the nobility by the start of the ninth century.

The earliest arrivals had been *sankangaku* (music of the three Ko-

42 See Takada and Yanagisawa, *Butsuga*, plates 14–16.

43 Takada and Yanagisawa, *Butsuga*, plate 29.

44 Takada and Yanagisawa, *Butsuga*, plates 73–74.

reas), mixed Chinese and Korean styles from the Korean states of the Three Kingdoms period (313–668). Then came *gigaku*, introduced in 612, which seems to have consisted mainly of satirical dances, performed with masks suggestive of a Central Asian or Western origin. *Dora-gaku* and *rin'yūgaku*, from short-lived unidentified countries that may have been located in Southeast Asia, appeared in the eighth century, as did *Bokkai-gaku*, the music of the Tungusic state of Po-hai, which occupied parts of eastern Manchuria, the Russian Maritime Province, and northern Korea between 700 and 926. And from around 685 on, there was piecemeal importation of *tōgaku*, the flourishing, cosmopolitan music and dance of T'ang China.

### *Gagaku*

Of three principal types of T'ang music, two found their way to Japan. One was *yen-yüeh* (Japanese, *engaku*), “banquet music,” a formal, dignified amalgam of many elements, including folk songs and dances and the music of Central Asia, India, and other areas, which the Chinese used for court entertainments. The other was *san-yüeh* (Japanese, *sangaku*), “scattered music,” a popular, relaxed form of entertainment, which was accompanied by juggling, acrobatics, stilt-walking, and the like.<sup>45</sup> The third, *ya-yüeh* (Japanese, *gagaku*), “elegant music” used at rituals and ceremonies to ensure the harmonious functioning of the Confucian state, was not imported – it being felt, apparently, that sufficient resources for such purposes existed – but it gave its name to the Gagakuryō (Bureau of Elegant Music), a government office established in 701. Although the original mandate of the Gagakuryō covered all forms of court music, native music was transferred to a new office, the Ōtadokoro (Folk Music Office), around the end of the eighth century; and we shall therefore use the common but ill-defined term *gagaku* to designate only foreign or foreign-style music and dance of the type supervised and performed by the Gagakuryō after the separation.

By the beginning of the ninth century, the Chinese *engaku* (usually called *tōgaku*, “T'ang music”) had become by far the most important of the *gagaku* genres. *Rin'yūgaku*, which was prized as representative of Indian music, occupied second place; the music of the three Koreas and Po-hai followed at a considerable distance; and *gi-*

<sup>45</sup> For details, see James T. Araki, *The Ballad-Drama of Medieval Japan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964), pp. 50–54.

*gaku*, *doragaku*, and *sangaku* were well on the way to their subsequent disappearance from court life. The native music was still flourishing because of its unique acceptability to the Shinto gods.

Around 835 the sinophile court, dissatisfied with the chaotic state of the *gagaku* corpus, set out to make music and dance more "correct." Retired Emperor Saga, an enthusiastic amateur who is said to have been an expert at several Chinese instruments, supplied the initial leadership in what became one of the major musical developments of the Heian period, a process of gradual consolidation and reorganization lasting for more than a century. Non-Chinese pieces were recast in the Chinese mold; fragmentary compositions were fleshed out; large numbers of exotic instruments were discarded; scores were rewritten to eliminate all but two structural types and six main modes; and new works were composed, both by professionals and by prominent members of the court.

As the decades passed, systematization shaded imperceptibly into naturalization. We can seldom be sure when a given change took place, but it is apparent that *gagaku* was much more reflective of Heian aristocratic taste in the late tenth century, at the end of the reorganization process, than it had been in 800. By that time, in addition to the changes just mentioned, the *gagaku* repertoire, including the dance repertoire (*bugaku*), had been divided into two paired categories. The first, *tōgaku* or *sagaku* (Music of the Left), consisted of the old *tōgaku* and *rin'yūgaku* pieces, plus Japanese compositions in the Chinese vein; the second, *komagaku* (Korean music) or *ugaku* (Music of the Right), of drastically revised pieces from Korea and Manchuria. The categories were the provinces of two troupes of professional musicians, who played approximately the same kinds and numbers of instruments – the transverse flute, oboe, mouth organ, lute, thirteen-stringed *koto*, and drums for the Left; Korean flute, oboe, and drums for the Right – and who dressed in sumptuous harmonizing costumes, red for the Left and green for the Right. Dances were performed in pairs, with, for example, a Left bird dance matching a Right butterfly dance, or a Left masked warrior a Right masked warrior.

Another aspect of the reorganization was the establishment of regulations assigning music an integral role in all the main court ceremonies and rituals. The two orchestras and their dancers also figured prominently in the entertainments accompanying wrestling matches, horse races, poetry contests, and other competitions, in which the contesting sides were likewise designated as Left and Right. And, as

noted below, *gagaku* was an essential element in the elaborate Buddhist services sponsored by members of the nobility.

This kind of emphasis, reinforced by the keen personal interest of successive sovereigns, created a musical atmosphere at court and led, early in the ninth century, to the inauguration of the custom of *gyoyū* (or *on-asobi*, "august music"), woodwind and string *gagaku* music played for recreation at the imperial residence by the emperor and other gentlemen of the court. There is much literary evidence to show that the performances of talented amateurs were considered fresher and more elegant than stereotyped renditions of the same compositions by professional musicians, and that musical competence was expected of every member of society. The sons of high nobles, taught by court musicians to dance and play the major *gagaku* instruments, were given ample opportunity to display their skills, both in childhood, when they were the featured performers at longevity celebrations for older members of the family, and on innumerable later formal and informal occasions. Among the lower nobility, musical expertise came to be especially vital for members of the palace guards (*efu*), who found themselves constant participants in *gyoyū* because of their proximity to the imperial person.

Ironically, the popularity of *gyoyū*, a type of performance that permitted at least a degree of spontaneity and originality, seems to have contributed materially to the ultimate fossilization of *gagaku*. In the tenth century, the musical preeminence of the guardsmen was recognized by the creation of a new organ, the Gakuso (or Gakusho, Music Office), staffed with *efu* members, which took over the functions of the Gagakuryō. By the early eleventh century, Gakuso posts were hereditary, and by the twelfth the office was a bastion of conservatism, with each family jealously guarding its secret lore and all alike insisting on the inviolability of tradition and on the status of music as a quasi-mystic Way – an art that sanctioned subtle refinements but strictly prohibited innovations like new compositions. It may be said, in short, that *gagaku*, the principal Heian musical form, followed a course similar to the one we have already traced for Buddhist art: an initial phase of sinic vigor, an intermediate stage of elegant refinement, and a final period of decline.

#### *Shinto and Secular Vocal Music*

At the Heian court, the traditional Japanese preference for vocal music was partially satisfied by the performance of Shinto sacred

songs – notably the long cycle known as *mi-kagura*, a carefully structured combination of poetry, music, and dance, perfected at the start of the eleventh century, which focused on the performance of two choruses, singing to welcome, entertain, and send off a divine visitor.<sup>46</sup>

A number of new secular song forms also appeared. One was the *saibara* (a name of uncertain meaning), which entered aristocratic circles around the beginning of the Heian period and enjoyed its greatest vogue in the early eleventh century. Simple Japanese lyrics – often of folk origin, and characterized by the inclusion of meaningless syllables (*hayashikotoba*) to adjust the rhythm – were set to *gagaku* melodies and sung in a drawn-out style to the accompaniment of *gagaku* instruments.

A second genre, the *rōei* (recitation), also flourished around the beginning of the eleventh century. As the name suggests, it was more recitation than song. *Rōei* lyrics usually consisted of a pair of seven-word lines from a familiar Chinese poem, rendered in a combination of Chinese and Japanese; and the performance style, which resembled round singing (with or without musical accompaniment), made the form particularly appropriate for social occasions. Two well-known collections of lyrics attest to the popularity of the *rōei*: *Wakan rōei shū* (*Collection of Japanese and Chinese Rōei*, ca. 1011?), by Fujiwara no Kintō, and *Shinsen rōei shū* (*Newly Selected Collection of Rōei*, ca. 1107–23?), by Fujiwara no Mototoshi (1056–1142).

The last major secular vocal genre to appear was the *imayō* [*uta*] (modern style [song]), which seems to have originated around the last quarter of the tenth century, and to have been fairly well known by the early eleventh. The melodies were taken from a few favorite *gagaku* compositions, and many of the lyrics were adaptations of simple Japanese Buddhist liturgical pieces (*wasan*). The heyday of the *imayō* was the second half of the twelfth century, when the songs were sung both by courtiers and by female professional entertainers, such as dancers, puppeteers, and courtesans, who sometimes served as music teachers to high-born students. The greatest aristocratic aficionado was Retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa (1127–92; r. 1155–58), who compiled an *imayō* collection, *Ryōjin hishō* (*Secret Selection of Songs*), held *imayō* contests, including one that lasted for fifteen nights, and personally consoled an ailing eighty-three-year-old entertainer by singing *imayō* and reciting the *Lotus Sutra* at her bedside.

<sup>46</sup> For details, see McCullough and McCullough, *Flowering Fortunes*, pp. 410–11.

*Buddhist Music*

The recognition achieved by female *imayō* singers presaged the approach of the medieval era, when Japanese culture and aristocratic culture would no longer be virtually synonymous terms. Among the many factors responsible for the new order, the most conspicuous were the decline of the nobility and the ascension of the military, but an almost equally important part was played by Buddhism, which, throughout the Heian centuries, quietly lent its support to types of popular entertainment that were destined to exert a profound influence on the mainstream of medieval music and literature. For example, temple patronage helped to preserve *sangaku*, one of the ancestors of the *nō* drama, after its banishment from court; and it also sustained the itinerant blind reciters known as *biwa hōshi* (lute monks), who developed the great body of medieval oral literature known to us today as *Heike monogatari* (*The Tale of the Heike*). Since the *biwa hōshi* remained a subterranean plebeian element in Heian culture, they do not fall within the purview of this chapter, but it may be noted that they, like the *imayō* performers, were harbingers of the medieval renaissance of vocal music (and the concomitant eclipse of *gagaku*), and that their chanting style was deeply indebted to Buddhist vocal forms, which, like Buddhist art, constituted one aspect of aristocratic culture.

Heian Buddhist vocal music, known as *shōmyō*, consisted primarily of liturgical music, sacred texts, and eulogies, all of which were sung or chanted by monks – at first in Chinese styles introduced by the patriarchs of the esoteric sects, and later in naturalized styles, perfected especially by the Pure Land monk Genshin. The chanted forms, which influenced the later *Heike* recitations and *nō*, were relatively simple; the songs, like the secular *saibara*, decorated a single syllable with many notes. Both were complemented by instrumental music and dances from the *gagaku* repertoire, performed as an integral part of the services and also afterward as entertainment.

Contemporaneous writers have little to say about the musical aspects of Buddhist rituals before the last quarter of the tenth century, but the rise of Amidism seems to have nurtured a new interest in the relationship between music and salvation. It became common practice to call in small groups of musicians to perform compositions of the kind the believer expected to hear in the Pure Land; and also to send off the dying with woodwinds, strings, and song – partly, perhaps, in the hope of summoning Amida and his attendants, as the

shaman's *koto* had summoned the gods in ancient times.<sup>47</sup> The intimate connection perceived by the middle and late Heian mind between music and the Pure Land is further apparent in the prominence assigned to musicians and their instruments in *raigō* paintings, and in the comments of writers like Murasaki Shikibu, who compares Prince Genji's singing voice (on a purely secular occasion) to the warbling of a kalaviṅka bird in paradise.<sup>48</sup> We have already noticed that the layouts, architectural features, images, and furnishings of temple compounds like Michinaga's Hōjōji were intended as earthly replicas of sights to be seen in the Pure Land; and the same spirit is discernible in the magnificent rituals staged at such religious institutions, in which music played a central role. The point is made quite explicitly in the famous seventeenth chapter of *Eiga monogatari*, an account of the Hōjōji Golden Hall dedication, which bears the title "Music":

Five or six imposing monks, dressed in red and green robes and surplices, began to clear people out of the way with a great show of vigor. Marshals arrived, and then came the Lecturer and Reader riding in litters, with Censors, officers of the Bureau of Buddhism and Aliens, and others from the two ministries walking before them on the left and right, as though for a *Golden Light Sutra* lecture. Heralded by a tremendous burst of fast music from the Music Office [Gakusho] orchestra, a lion danced out leading a cub. The spectacle as all awaited the Emperor seemed part of another world.

Next the monks filed in from the south gallery, forming lines on the left and right; and tears came to the eyes of the speechless spectators at the sight of that great multitude of holy men moving forward in unison, each group headed by a marshal. The monks' costumes varied in accordance with their offices – Clear-tone Singers, Tin-staff Chanters, and the like. Those who wore patchwork surplices had imported them from China especially for the dedication, and the colors shone with all the vivid freshness of ropes of gems, creating an effect of great dignity and splendor. Incense smoldered in silver and gold censers, filling the compound with the scents of sandalwood and aloeswood, and blossoms of many hues scattered from the sky. . . .

Innumerable bodhisattva dances were presented on the platform, and children performed butterfly and bird dances so beautifully that one could only suppose paradise to be little different – a reflection that added to the auspiciousness of the occasion by evoking mental images of the Pure Land. There were peacocks, parrots, mandarin ducks, and kalaviṅka birds, and the harmonies produced by the Music Office were utterly delightful – true voices of the dharma. Those who listened felt as though the singers were

47 Ogi Mitsuo, *Nihon kodai ongaku shiron* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1977), pp. 144–45.

48 Seidensticker, *Genji*, p. 132.

the celestial beings and the holy multitude, lifting their voices in praise of the Buddha's teachings.<sup>49</sup>

(On the construction and dedication of the Hōjōji, see the section "New Imperial and Fujiwara Buildings" in Chapter 2.)

The collapse of court power in the late twelfth century ended aristocratic sponsorship of such lavish religious spectacles. It also radically altered the way of life in which music had figured so prominently. Of all the major Heian musical forms, the Buddhist *shōmyō* alone weathered the passage into the new era, surviving to become the ancestor of almost every new native secular vocal genre. The others, vocal and instrumental alike, receded into obscurity.

#### LITERATURE: POETRY

In poetry, as in other aspects of court life, the first half of the ninth century was a period of direct imitation of Chinese models.<sup>50</sup> The composition of Chinese poems (*kanshi*) was an integral part of many official functions, symbolizing the authors' cultivation and the emperor's status as foremost patron of the arts; and three imperial *kanshi* anthologies, compiled between 814 and 827, attest to the importance attached to such activities. Meanwhile, Japanese poetry disappeared almost completely from public life. If there were gifted *waka* poets in the first Heian decades, their names have not been preserved. We know, however, that the *waka* was undergoing significant changes behind the scenes.

During the seventh and eighth centuries, native poets had produced impressive long compositions (*chōka*) of great lyric intensity and technical complexity, notably the elegies and encomiums of Kakinomoto no Hitomaro (fl. late seventh century), who seems to have served as an official bard. But there was no longer a demand for the services of a Hitomaro by the beginning of the ninth century. Moreover, although the *waka* survived in private – protected by the inertia of custom and, we may conjecture, by the desire of women to demonstrate at least one type of literary competence – it tended to degenerate into little more than a pawn in the half-joking game of romantic intrigue, "nothing but empty verses and empty words . . . the province of the amorous," as the poet Ki no Tsurayuki (873?–945?)

49 Matsumura and Yamanaka, *Eiga*, vol. 2, pp. 71–72; translation from McCullough and McCullough, *Flowering Fortunes*, pp. 556–57.

50 See Helen Craig McCullough, *Brocade by Night: 'Kokin Wakashū' and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1985), chap. 3.

complained.<sup>51</sup> With the development of *kana*, it also became an instrument of casual social intercourse, functioning as the main element in a note of invitation, thanks, or condolence, or as a well-bred response to a moving incident, or as a witty escape from an awkward situation. And because the *chōka* was obviously less well adapted to such uses than the thirty-one-syllable *tanka* (short poem), the *tanka* became the standard *waka* form.

When the *waka* reemerged after its so-called dark age, therefore, serious writers like Tsurayuki confronted difficulties unknown to Hitomaro and his contemporaries. The *tanka* was, in effect, the sole approved form, and the frivolous function of poetry as social grace and pastime was firmly established. As will be shown, there were other formidable handicaps as well. It is easy to perceive ways in which Heian poets fell short of their *Man'yōshū* predecessors; less easy, perhaps, to appreciate the skill, ingenuity, and dedication with which the best of them met the challenge of a new era, or to do full justice to the remarkable edifice they erected on an unprepossessing foundation.

The *waka* began to reappear in public around the middle of the ninth century.<sup>52</sup> Its return was associated with a number of other developments, among them the general revival and refinement of traditional interests and values; the resurgence of the hereditary principle, which diminished the utility of a Chinese education; the perfection of *kana*; and the increasing tendency of the great families to seek power through their feminine representatives in the imperial harem, each of whom was the potential mother of a malleable child sovereign. In particular, the buildings where the consorts lived, known collectively as the rear palace (*kōkyū*), were becoming centers of musical, artistic, and literary activity. It seems to have been from their luxuriously furnished apartments that folding screens decorated with Japanese poems spread to the public parts of the palace (ca. 850–900), and it was their mistresses' interest in elegant competitions, noted earlier, that probably contributed most significantly to the birth of the poetry contest, one of the major cultural phenomena of the Heian period.

There was a sharp spurt in the demand for formal *waka* during the last fifteen years of the ninth century. The Japanese screen poem (*byōbu uta*) entered its century-long heyday, poetry contests were held

<sup>51</sup> Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, p. 97; McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū*, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, chap. 4.

with increasing frequency, and the *waka* began to supplant the *kanshi* at banquets and other official functions. Quasi-professional poets, of whom Tsurayuki became the most highly esteemed, arose from the ranks of the lesser nobility, using their literary prowess to forge ties with the great, and working in many ways to elevate the status of native verse. Early in the tenth century, this activity culminated in the compilation of the first imperial *waka* anthology, *Kokin[waka]shū*, which was edited by Tsurayuki and three other minor-bureaucrat poets and submitted to the throne in or around 905.

Tsurayuki supplied the anthology with a preface that compared the *waka* to a plant “with the human heart as its seed and innumerable words as its leaves,” reviewed the form’s illustrious history, discussed its social and political virtues, and otherwise sought to establish it on an equal footing with Chinese poetry.<sup>53</sup> “Thanks to this collection,” he ended in a burst of rhetoric, “poetry will survive as eternally as water flows at the foot of a mountain; thanks to the assembling of these poems in numbers rivalling the sands of a beach, there will be no complaints of the art’s declining as pools in the Asuka River dwindle into shallows; there will be rejoicing for as long as it takes a pebble to grow into a mighty boulder.”<sup>54</sup> His predictions erred on the side of optimism, but the basic aims of the compilers were more fully realized than they could have dared to hope. The exalted sponsorship of *Kokinshū*, together with its precedent-setting status, made the *waka* the nation’s supreme literary form and established compositional norms that endured well into the nineteenth century. The occasional radical challenge was turned back, and other new developments remained little more than variations on a theme. The *Kokinshū* style became the orthodox style in a society where orthodoxy was almost all.

Some of the 1,111 *Kokinshū* poems, like the anonymous composition below, are simple, straightforward expressions of emotion, similar in construction and tone to the many folk-influenced *tanka* preserved in *Man’yōshū*.

sugaru naku	How long must I wait
aki no hagihara	To see again the traveler
asa tachite	Who leaves this morning,
tabi yuku hito o	Journeying where wild bees hum
itsu to ka matan	In autumn bush-clover fields? <sup>55</sup>

53 Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, p. 93; McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū*, p. 3.

54 Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, p. 103; McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū*, p. 8.

55 Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, no. 366.

The style usually identified with the anthology's name is more complex, however, and much more aristocratic in tone. As modern scholarship has shown, it reveals strong influence from the ninth-century *kanshi*, and from the *kanshi*'s Chinese models.<sup>56</sup> It is natural to suppose that masculine members of the court circle, who were constantly endeavoring to compose *kanshi*, would have begun to use continental conceits and techniques in the *waka* they exchanged with women, and that the women would have responded in kind – particularly because the *kanshi* style in favor was a witty, indirect one, suited to “the fencing about the truth that characterized the romantic intrigues of the day.”<sup>57</sup>

Early-ninth-century *kanshi* were imitations of sixth-century Chinese southern-court poetry – that is, of the style of the latter part of the Six Dynasties period (220–589), which feigned inability to distinguish between such natural phenomena as plum blossoms and snow, made extensive use of figurative language, and delighted in drawing rational conclusions, which were often based on cause-and-effect relationships. The examples below are from two typical poems by Yü Hsin (513–81), “In a Boat, Gazing at the Moon” and “The Mirror.”<sup>58</sup>

The mountains are bright; one wonders if snow might have fallen.  
The shore is white, but not because of sand.

A moon appears in which there is no cinnamon tree;  
A flower opens, but it will not follow spring.

Many compositions of the same kind appear in Japanese *kanshi* collections dating from the early ninth century, and there is evidence to show that the *waka* was developing along similar lines. Just as Yü Hsin pretends to confuse moonlight with snow and sand, so Ono no Takamura (802–53), who, significantly, is best known as a *kanshi* poet, professes himself at a loss to tell plum blossoms from snow:

hana no iro wa	Although your blossoms
yuki ni majirite	Elude our gaze, their color lost
miezu tomo	Amid flakes of snow,
ka o dani nioe	Send forth, at least, your fragrance,
hito no shirubeku	That men may know you are here. <sup>59</sup>

And just as Yü Hsin makes moon and flower metaphors for a beautiful woman, so Ariwara no Narihira (825–80) uses flowers (meaning cherry blossoms) in an indirect accusation of fickleness:

<sup>56</sup> The definitive study is Jin'ichi Konishi, “The Genesis of the *Kokinshū* Style,” trans. Helen C. McCullough, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 38, 1 (June 1978): 61–170.

<sup>57</sup> Konishi, “Genesis,” p. 164. <sup>58</sup> Konishi, “Genesis,” pp. 85, 102.

<sup>59</sup> Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, no. 335.

kyō kozu wa	Had I not come today
asu wa yuki to zo	They would have fallen tomorrow
furinamashi	Like drifting snowflakes.
kiezu wa ari tomo	Though they have not yet melted,
hana to mimashi ya	They are scarcely true flowers. <sup>60</sup>

Six Dynasties techniques are omnipresent in the *Kokinshū* “Spring,” “Summer,” “Autumn,” and “Winter” books, a large sub-collection in which the natural phenomena of the four seasons are closely associated with human emotion – especially with the feeling of sadness evoked by the passing of time. Such seasonal poems, which tended to be formal and public in nature, must have been available to the compilers in comparatively large numbers, and preference was no doubt given to compositions with an up-to-date Chinese tone. But it should be noticed, in order to view the Chinese contribution in perspective, that the influence of the imported style is weaker in “Love,” the second of the two major categories in the anthology. We may surmise that authentic love poems of the kind we have postulated, which were private in nature, were harder to come by than seasonal verses, and, further, that many of them were too personal for inclusion in a public anthology, where individualism and strong expressions of emotion were no more permissible than in an *onnae* painting. Like the examples that follow, most “Love” compositions are elegant, gracefully subdued statements of longing, with the speaker’s feelings closely linked to nature, as in seasonal poems, but with the “reasoning” style less apparent, if it is present at all.

michinoku no	Shall I always love
asaka no numa no	Someone I have scarcely met –
hanakatsumi	A girl as pretty
katsu miru hito ni	As an Asaka marsh iris
koi ya wataran	Blooming in Michinoku? <sup>61</sup>
awanu yo no	If, like these snowflakes,
furu shirayuki to	The nights when we fail to meet
tsumorinaba	Should accumulate,
ware sae tomo ni	I, too, must surely perish
kenubeki mono o	Along with the melting drifts. <sup>62</sup>

Although the source of these two compositions is unknown, their plaintive, passive, somewhat impersonal quality is duplicated in many others that can be shown to have originated as screen poems – verses in which the sentiments belong not to the authors but to fig-

60 Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, no. 63. 61 Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, no. 677.

62 Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, no. 621.

ures in the paintings, and where the intent is not to intrigue the reader with clever reasoning but to hint at a romantic situation. A screen poem serves, in effect, as a clarification of the picture it accompanies, a reversal of the process by which an *emakimono* amplifies a tale (*monogatari*). *Kokinshū* poems of the *byōbu uta* type, closely associated with women and their interests, are among the least public in the anthology. Nevertheless, they are clearly formal in nature, adhering to the conventions of a genre that discouraged originality and circumscribed artistic freedom by predetermining topics, themes, and imagery, and by requiring a tone of quiet harmony and moderation, in keeping with the idealized beauty of the pictures and the tastes of the screens' owners.

There is also a strong resemblance between *Kokinshū* poems and compositions preserved in the more than 470 surviving Heian contest records. From its inception around 885 until the late eleventh century, the poetry contest (*uta awase*) was not a literary event but a social function, comparable in structure and emphasis to the *monoa-wase* described earlier, in which the aim was to spend a pleasant evening in an atmosphere of opulence, taste, and friendly rivalry. The judge's comments were bland, inoffensive, and as objective as possible. The first poem of the Left, the side of superior status, was invariably the winner. Neither side ever lost by an embarrassing margin, and the contest never ended in a tie, which would have made it impossible for winners and losers to present appropriate musical entertainments. A poem mentioning the gods was assured of a win, as was one into which the poet had managed to introduce an auspicious sentiment. Unconventional or inadequate treatment of the assigned topic constituted grounds for defeat, as did illogicalities, flights of fancy, unorthodox imagery, and indecorous, inelegant, or inauspicious language. Personalism was so assiduously avoided that even phrases like *waga yado*, "my dwelling," came to be proscribed. From around 960 on, if not before, acceptable precedents were required for departures from customary practice – for example, the use of archaic or unfamiliar diction, or the failure to include a word like "water" or "bank" in the same context with *fujinami*, "wisteria wave," a term for cascading clusters of wisteria blossoms.

It is natural that the conception of poetry as game should have made its influence felt with particular strength in the area of contest rules. What may seem less understandable is that Tsurayuki, the first Heian writer to advocate the reinstatement of the *waka* as serious literature, should have given tacit approval to essentially the same

criteria. There is no discernible difference in tone, subject matter, or form between the ninety-five known contest poems in *Kokinshū*, which are representative of their genre, and the remaining 1,016. The contest judges, it appears, were merely expressing a consensus about the nature of the public poem. Just as a screen poem was required to harmonize in topic and sentiment with the delicate beauty of a *yamatōe* painting, so a contest poem struck the right note at a well-bred gathering only if it was graceful, conventional, and readily comprehensible.

If a high price was paid for the public rehabilitation of the *waka*, the many admirable poems in *Kokinshū* and later anthologies show how much of value was obtained in return.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, literary considerations were never ignored altogether, even by the social contest judges, who commented regularly on diction, conception, freshness, and similar matters, often with considerable acumen. Particular weight was attached to auditory effect, because contest poems were apprehended through the recitations of the competing spokesmen. Compositions were criticized for sounding awkward, crabbed, unpolished, and “unintelligible” (*iishirenu*, used of archaisms, colloquialisms, and complicated word plays, all of which were also said to “grate on the ears”); they were praised for elegant cadences, refined, flowing effects, and clear, serene, rhythmic beauty. That the same considerations were present in the minds of Tsurayuki and his colleagues is apparent from the melodic flow and intricate sound patterns of *Kokinshū* compositions like the two below – attributes that unfortunately disappear in translation.

yo no naka ni	If ours were a world
taete sakura no	Where blossoming cherry trees
nakariseba	Were not to be found,
haru no kokoro wa	What tranquillity would bless
nodokekaramashi	The human heart in springtime! <sup>64</sup>
hisakata no	On this springtime day
hikari nodokeki	When the celestial orb
haru no hi ni	Diffuses mild light,
shizugokoro naku	Why should the cherry blossoms
hana no chiruramu	Scatter with unquiet hearts? <sup>65</sup>

There are *Kokinshū* poems richer in imagery, more original in conception and treatment, more complex, and more moving than

63 The best study in English on this subject is Robert H. Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1961).

64 Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, no. 53. 65 Saeki, *Kokin waka shū*, no. 84.

these two by Ariwara no Narihira and Ki no Tomonori (fl. ca. 890), but none falls on the ear more pleasingly, and none is more representative of the main elements in the style – the intellectualizing, the formal, public authorial stance, the association of man with nature, the expression of elegant conventional sentiments about a topic with strong overtones of romantic beauty, the sensitivity to the passing of time, and the attention to sound.

In all, seven imperial anthologies were compiled in the Heian period: *Kokinshū* (ca. 905), *Gosenshū* (*Later Selection*, ca. 951), *Shūishū* (*Collection of Gleanings*, ca. 1006), *Goshūishū* (*Later Collection of Gleanings*, 1087), *Kin'yōshū* (*Collection of Golden Leaves*, ca. 1126), *Shikashū* (*Collection of Verbal Flowers*, ca. 1151), and *Senzaishū* (*Collection of a Thousand Years*, ca. 1188).

The second and third, *Gosenshū* and *Shūishū*, which closely resemble *Kokinshū* in style, were both commissioned during the high noon of aristocratic culture. The other four, which incorporate some noteworthy innovations, coincided in time with the long twilight of the court, the hundred-year period during which the emperors and their Fujiwara regents struggled with ever diminishing success to maintain the traditional way of life. The principal poetic development of the century was the emergence of a number of gifted writers who regarded composition as a high calling, and who developed independent ideas about the manner in which the potentialities of the *tanka* form could best be realized.

The fourth anthology, *Goshūishū*, departed from tradition by introducing a new style of descriptive lyricism, typically focusing on bleak autumn and winter landscapes, as in this poem:

mishi yori mo	Still more desolate
are zo shinikeru	Than when I saw it of old:
isonokami	Isonokami
aki wa shigure no	Where the rains of late autumn
furimasaritsutsu	Shower and shower again. <sup>66</sup>

*Kin'yōshū* and *Shikashū* included many poems of the same general type, among them outstanding examples of what was coming to be known as the lofty style, a compositional mode in which the objective was to convey an impression of power and dignity, usually through the presentation of a panoramic scene in which no human presence except that of the poet-observer intruded. The *Kin'yōshū*

<sup>66</sup> *Shimpen kokka taikan*, ed. Shimpen kokka taikan henshū iinkai, 10 sections, each composed of text and index volumes (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1983–92). *Goshūishū*, no. 367.

compiler, Minamoto no Shunrai (or Toshiyori, 1057?–1129), and his father, Tsunenobu (1016–97), were outstanding practitioners of the lofty style, as may be seen from the two poems below, the first by Tsunenobu and the second by Shunrai.<sup>67</sup>

yū sareba	As night settles down
kadota no inaba	There comes a rustling of leaves
otozurete	In home paddy fields
ashi no maroya ni	And the whistling autumn wind
akikaze zo fuku	Visits huts with reed-thatched roofs.
uzura naku	In the autumn dusk
mano-no-irie no	Waves of plume grass come rippling
hamakaze ni	Blown by the shore wind
obana namiyoru	At Mano-no-irie
aki no yūgure	Inlet of quail's plaintive cries.

Tsunenobu and Shunrai were also prominent disputants in hot arguments about poetic practice – controversies pursued with especial vigor at the literary poetry contests by which the old social competitions had been replaced around 1085. Tsunenobu tried to broaden the scope of the *waka*, principally by introducing themes from rural life; Shunrai advocated a closer connection between poetry and everyday experience, as well as enlargement of the tiny *Kokinshū* word hoard (about 2,000 items) through acceptance of colloquialisms and *Man'yōshū* vocabulary. *Kin'yōshū* and *Shikashū* contain numerous poems reflecting their views and those of like thinkers, but the imperial patrons of the two anthologies apparently balked at admitting what is perhaps the most famous “progressive” poem of its type, a “Love” *tanka* in which Shunrai uses two conspicuously crude images – dog and crow, symbolic in popular lore of fidelity and infidelity, respectively. The poem has been preserved in Shunrai's private collection.

iisomeshi	Do your feelings now
kotoba to nochi no	Match the speeches you uttered
kokoro to wa	When our love began?
sore ka aranu ka	Or might they be different?
inu ka karasu ka	Are you a dog or a crow? <sup>68</sup>

Fujiwara no Shunzei (or Toshinari, 1114–1204), the *Senzaishū* compiler, was an outstanding poet and contest judge who wielded tremendous authority during the last decades of his long life. He refused to countenance liberal views like Shunrai's, insisting that the

67 *Shimpen kokka taikan, Kin'yōshū*, no. 173 and no. 239.

68 *Shimpen kokka taikan, Samboku kikashū*, no. 1071.

abundant overtones and delicate nuances of the traditional vocabulary constituted an indispensable resource for poets seeking to make significant statements in thirty-one syllables. At the same time, he rejected the preciousness, mannerisms, and shallow cleverness that marred the *Kokinshū* legacy, espousing instead the strongest qualities of the evolving descriptive style. In the best *Senzaishū* poems, a melancholy, lonely, austere tone is combined with the use of compression and association to achieve rich complexity and pregnant ambiguity. One of Shunzei's own compositions from the anthology can be said to exemplify what might be called the *Senzaishū* compromise – the blending of “old words and new feeling,” as Shunzei put it, which constituted the last great poetic achievement of the Heian period.

yū sareba	As evening falls,
nobe no akikaze	From along the moors the autumn wind
mi ni shimite	Blows chill into the heart,
uzura naku nari	And the quails raise their plaintive cry
fukakusa no sato	In the deep grass of secluded Fukakusa. <sup>69</sup>

Here Shunzei uses familiar diction to express “awareness of mutability” (*mujōkan*), the most familiar of all Japanese poetic sentiments. But the brooding, nostalgic tone of his poem (heightened by the reference to Fukakusa, a place apart from the capital and its life, and known moreover as a burial ground) differs strikingly from the romanticism and facile grace of the two poems by Narihira and Tomonori on the same theme.

Without pretending to explain a complicated literary development in a sentence, we may venture the statement that objective circumstances were far more hospitable to lighthearted poses at the beginning of the tenth century, when not a cloud obscured the brilliance of the court's prosperity, than at the gloomy end of the twelfth. In the same connection, it should be noted that the decline of the court had destroyed the cultural influence of the salons maintained by imperial consorts and princesses during the Fujiwara hegemony – in other words, from around 850 until the last quarter of the eleventh century. The tastes of women like Michinaga's daughters Shōshi, Kenshi, and Ishi, who married three successive sovereigns between 999 and 1018, had helped to shape almost every aspect of the culture we have been reviewing, and thus to nurture an environment to which composition

69 *Shimpen kokka taikan, Senzaishū*, no. 259; translation from Brower and Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, p. 17.

in the light, witty, social *Kokinshū* style was peculiarly appropriate. It is unlikely to have been an accident that *Goshūishū*, the first imperial anthology to depart from that style, appeared at just the moment when the salons were fading from the scene.

## LITERATURE: NARRATIVE PROSE

The salons made an equally significant contribution to the history of narrative prose, the only other noteworthy Heian belletristic form. One genre, the *setsuwa*, mentioned earlier, remained outside their purview, but all the others were affected in varying degrees: the poem tale, the literary diary, the miscellany, the romance, and the historical tale.

As with secular art, relatively little survives of what must have been a corpus of impressive dimensions. (Some eighty titles of romances have been preserved from the ninth and tenth centuries alone.) The poem tale (*uta monogatari*), a brief, elegant anecdote about aristocratic life, centering on one or more poems, is represented by three short anonymous tenth-century collections, the best of which is the oldest, *Ise monogatari* (*Tales of Ise*) – a classic expression of Heian aesthetic ideals, a poetic handbook, and a compendium of types of courtly love, written in simple, chaste language.<sup>70</sup> All three appear to have been compiled by men.

The author of the oldest extant literary diary, *Tosa nikki* (*Tosa Journal*, 935), was also a man, the poet Ki no Tsurayuki. Perhaps because the usual masculine diary of the day was a nonliterary Chinese record of matters useful for bureaucratic and family reference, Tsurayuki assumed the persona of a woman in setting down his account, which is a brief history of a fifty-five-day journey from Shikoku to the capital, dominated by sixty poems.<sup>71</sup> Of several surviving later Heian works in this rather misleadingly named genre, by far the best is *Kagerō nikki* (*Gossamer Journal*, ca. 982?), by “Michitsuna’s mother,” a secondary consort of the regent Kaneie (929–90), which describes, with powerful realism and tight thematic unity, the misery and resentment of a neglected wife.<sup>72</sup> *Izumi Shikibu nikki*

70 For a translation of *Ise monogatari*, see Helen Craig McCullough, *Tales of Ise: Lyrical Episodes from Tenth-Century Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1968).

71 *Tosa nikki* is translated in McCullough, *Kokin Wakashū*, pp. 263–91.

72 Translated in Edward Seidensticker, *The Gossamer Years: The Diary of a Noblewoman of Heian Japan* (Rutland, Vt., and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1964). See also the partial translation in Helen Craig McCullough, ed., *Classical Japanese Prose: An Anthology* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 102–55.

(*Diary of Izumi Shikibu*, ca. 1004?), ascribed to the poet Izumi Shikibu (b. 976?), is a lyrical, vaguely melancholy, poem-studded account of the protagonist's love affair with an imperial prince.<sup>73</sup> *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* (*Diary of Murasaki Shikibu*, ca. 1010), a short memoir by the author of *The Tale of Genji*, focuses on the activities surrounding the birth of an heir to the throne.<sup>74</sup> *Sarashina nikki* (*Sarashina Diary*, ca. 1060?), by "Sugawara no Takasue's daughter," portrays the uneventful life of a romantic, religious woman.<sup>75</sup>

As a group, works in these two genres – and also *Eiga monogatari*, the first historical tale, and Sei Shōnagon's *Makura no sōshi* (*Pillow Book*, ca. 993–1001?), the sole miscellany, discussed below – contained material of obvious interest to women: poetry, gossipy stories about well-known people, courtly anecdotes, talk of dress and babies and domestic problems, and, above all, accounts of relations between the sexes. Romances (*[tsukuri-]monogatari*) offered most of the same features, and, in addition, were often considerably longer. Whereas the typical *Ise monogatari* story occupies less than a page in a modern Japanese printing, even the shortest extant Heian romance, *Take-tori monogatari* (*The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*, ca. 900?), uses thirty-nine, and three volumes are required to accommodate the longest, *Utsuho monogatari* (*The Tale of the Hollow Tree*, ca. 970–1000?). For women with time on their hands, such works must have been especially attractive. Sei Shōnagon brackets romances with *go* and backgammon as among the three best cures for boredom, and Takasue's daughter tells us how eagerly they were sought – and how hard they were for the ordinary woman to come by, even though hundreds appear to have been committed to writing.<sup>76</sup>

The scarcity of paper, a luxury item reserved for the wealthy, was chiefly responsible for the difficulties encountered by would-be readers, and by putative authors as well. Sei Shōnagon, a member of

73 Translated in Edwin A. Cranston, *The Izumi Shikibu Diary: A Romance of the Heian Court* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969).

74 Translated in Richard Bowring, *Murasaki Shikibu: Her Diary and Poetic Memoirs* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982); see also Edward Seidensticker, "Murasaki Shikibu and Her Diary and Her Other Writings," *Literature East and West* 18, 1 (March 1974): 1–7.

75 Translated in Ivan Morris, *As I Crossed a Bridge of Dreams: Recollections of a Woman in Eleventh-Century Japan* (New York: Dial Press, 1971).

76 For Sei Shōnagon's comment, see Ikeda, *Makura no sōshi*, p. 195; and Ivan Morris, trans., *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), vol. 1, p. 145. For Takasue's daughter, see Suzuki Tomotarō, Kawaguchi Hisao, Endō Yoshimoto, and Nishishita Kyōichi, eds., *Tosa nikki, Kagerō nikki, Izumi Shikibu nikki, Sarashina nikki*, vol. 20 of *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* (1957), pp. 490–93, and Morris, *Bridge of Dreams*, pp. 53–55.

the middling aristocracy like most of her fellow writers, explains that she wrote *Makura no sōshi* because her mistress happened to make her a present of a large quantity of paper; otherwise, presumably, she could not have afforded to do so.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, the average noble lady must have had to while away innumerable hours with her attendants' gossip, anecdotes, and oral tales for every one spent with a written *monogatari*. But imperial consorts and princesses were able to make use of their social and economic advantages to collect, reproduce, and order literary works with relative freedom. Manuscript copying was one of their attendants' tasks, and women with literary gifts were regularly brought into their entourages, both to add luster to the social life centering on their salons, as Sei Shōnagon did for Empress Teishi, and to increase their store of romances.

So few romances remain today that it is easy to underestimate the scope of such activities. The major poetry of the period has survived, thanks to its brevity, public nature, and imperial sponsorship, but most of the romances, like the paintings that illustrated them, vanished with the old life. Examination of the ones still available suggests that standards were not exacting, and might lead to the conclusion that the salons were of dubious literary significance. Of the three known early works in the genre, the first, *Taketori monogatari*, is a charming fairy tale about a moon maiden and her earthly suitors; the second, *Utsuho monogatari*, is a rambling story of upper-class life, unified to some extent by recurrent illustrations of the miraculous power of music; and the third, *Ochikubo monogatari* (*Tale of the Sunken Room*, ca. 985?), presents a Japanese version of the worldwide Cinderella theme, told with realistic detail and occasional earthy humor.<sup>78</sup> A handful of others, all from the late period, vary in length and quality, the longer ones tending to indulge in improbabilities while attempting unsuccessfully to imitate *The Tale of Genji*.<sup>79</sup>

77 Ikeda, *Makura no sōshi*, p. 331; Morris, *Pillow Book*, vol. 1, p. 267. Morris's book contains a full translation of Sei Shōnagon's miscellany; McCullough, *Classical Japanese Prose*, translates extended excerpts (pp. 158-99).

78 *Taketori monogatari* has been translated by Donald Keene in J. Thomas Rimer, *Modern Japanese Fiction and Its Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 275-301; *Ochikubo monogatari*, translated by Wilfred Whitehouse and Eizo Yanagisawa in *Ochikubo Monogatari or The Tale of the Lady Ochikubo: A Tenth Century Japanese Novel* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, rev. ed. 1965). For partial translations of *Utsuho monogatari*, see Edwin A. Cranston, "Atemiya: A Translation from the *Utsuho Monogatari*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 24, 3 (1969): 289-314; Wayne P. Lammers, "The Succession (*Kuniyuzuri*): A Translation from *Utsuho Monogatari*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 37, 2 (1982): 139-78; and Ziro Uraki, *The Tale of the Cavern* (Tokyo: Shinozaki Shorin, 1984).

79 For translations of post-*Genji* romances, see Robert L. Backus, *The Riverside Counselor's Stories: Vernacular Fiction of Late Heian Japan* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press,

More important than the general level of quality that may have prevailed, however, are certain other considerations. There were, in effect, two kinds of literature at the Heian court: poetry, which was the recognized public genre, suitable for both masculine and feminine attention; and narrative prose, which was largely relegated to the rear palace (unless, like *Ise monogatari*, the work functioned as a poetic manual). The imperial ladies thus presided over the only catholic literary centers of the day, embracing both poetry and prose in their interests, and encouraging literary activity both indirectly, by setting a prestigious example, and directly, by patronizing individual writers. The antecedents of the literary diary, for example – the genre exploited so brilliantly by Michitsuna's mother – can be traced to the tenth-century salon of Empress Onshi (885–954). Michitsuna's mother herself never served at court, but every other known major diary author except Tsurayuki was a lady-in-waiting to a consort or princess at some time in her life. It may well be, indeed, that we would not possess either *Kagenō nikki* or any of the others if it had not been for the custodial function assumed by the salons.

Feminine sponsorship at court also helped *Ise monogatari* to win recognition as a classic, and feminine interest in the romance paved the way for the single most impressive accomplishment of Heian civilization, Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*, early eleventh century). In that magnificent work, which must rank high on any list of the world's great psychological novels, Murasaki echoes the concerns and adopts some of the techniques of the *waka* poet, developing two major themes – the tyranny of time and the inescapable sorrow of romantic love – within the context of man's relationship to nature. But whereas the poet seeks to distill *mono no aware* into the briefest of lyric expressions, Murasaki uses both poetry and prose to explore the concept in evocative, leisurely detail, weaving a fabric of infinite richness and complexity. Whereas the anthology poet avoids indecorous personalism, Murasaki fills her stage with more than five hundred characters, each a recognizable individual, and makes her long story develop logically from their thoughts and feelings, and from the interplay of their personalities.

1985); Carol Hochstedler, *The Tale of Nezame: Part Three of Yowa no Nezame Monogatari* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University East Asia Papers 22, 1979); Thomas H. Rohlich, *A Tale of Eleventh-Century Japan: Hamamatsu Chūnagon Monogatari* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983); Rosette E. Willig, *The Changelings: A Classical Japanese Court Tale* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1983); and Wayne P. Lammers, *The Tale of Matsura: Fujiwara Teika's Experiment in Fiction* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1992).

She is both the quintessential representative of a unique society and a writer who speaks to universal human concerns with a timeless voice. Japan has not seen another such genius.<sup>80</sup>

Murasaki appears to have written the oldest parts of *The Tale of Genji* away from court around the beginning of the eleventh century (possibly for a private patron), to have been taken into Empress Shōshi's service after word of the work spread, and to have completed it during the next decade or so. Her celebrated older contemporary, Sei Shōnagon, who became a lady-in-waiting to Shōshi's rival, Empress Teishi (976?–1001), around 993, probably finished *Makura no sōshi* shortly after Teishi's death in 1001. *Makura no sōshi*, classified by Japanese scholars as a miscellany (*zuihitsu*), is a jumble of reminiscences about the author's days at court, random observations on people, nature, and life in general, and innumerable lists of things – waterfalls, mountains, bridges, musical instruments, games, “Adorable Things,” “Things That Make One Impatient,” “Things That Give a Vulgar Impression” – all set down in a sparkling, witty style with fastidious sensitivity and small tolerance for human shortcomings. Under “Things That Are Unpleasant to See,” she lists “a lean, hirsute man taking a nap in the daytime. Does it occur to him what a spectacle he is making of himself? Ugly men should sleep only at night, for they cannot be seen in the dark and, besides, most people are in bed themselves. But they should get up at the crack of dawn, so that no one has to see them lying down.”<sup>81</sup>

Sei Shōnagon has a trenchant wit and a marvelously observant eye. If her gaze is less serious and penetrating than Murasaki Shikibu's, she does us the service of calling attention to the gay, high-spirited, somewhat feckless side of court life, which Murasaki's preoccupation with weightier matters tends to obscure. We must read both if we are to capture the flavor of aristocratic society, just as we must

80 Seidensticker, *Genji*, contains a complete translation of Murasaki's work. There is also a virtually complete translation in Arthur Waley, *The Tale of Genji: A Novel in Six Parts*, 2 vols. (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1935). Helen Craig McCullough, *Genji and Heike* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 25–242, translates many of the chapters dealing with Prince Genji. For studies and bibliographies, see Haruo Shirane, *The Bridge of Dreams: A Poetics of 'The Tale of Genji'* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1987); Norma Field, *The Splendor of Longing in The Tale of Genji* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987); Richard Bowring, *Murasaki Shikibu: The Tale of Genji* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Okada, *Figures of Resistance*; and Andrew Pekarik, ed., *Ukifune: Love in The Tale of Genji* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). See also the discussions in Donald Keene, *Seeds in the Heart* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), pp. 477–513; and Jin'ichi Konishi, *A History of Japanese Literature*, vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 317–46.

81 Ikeda, *Makura no sōshi*, pp. 168–69; translation from Morris, *Pillow Book*, vol. 1, p. 266.

take both Six Dynasties obliquity and screen-poem romanticism into account when we seek to understand the *Kokinshū* style.

However favorable the circumstances, a tiny court circle, isolated from outside influences, is unlikely to produce a steady stream of important writers. Only one other woman need be noticed here: the anonymous author – probably Akazome Emon (b. ca. 960?), a poet in the service of Michinaga's wife – who created the historical tale (*rekishi monogatari*) genre by writing *Eiga monogatari* (*A Tale of Flowering Fortunes*, started ca. 1030?).<sup>82</sup> Akazome, as we may identify her for convenience, was her country's first vernacular historian, and the first Japanese to treat historical materials in the *monogatari* style. Her book is a naively enthusiastic celebration of Michinaga, his family, and his times. As literature, it falls far short of *The Tale of Genji*, its apparent model, but its detailed descriptions of everyday aristocratic life make it an invaluable source for the social historian. We are also indebted to Akazome for inspiring another writer to produce *Ōkagami* (*The Great Mirror*, ca. 1086–1125?), the second and most important work in the genre she invented.<sup>83</sup>

We return to the world of masculine letters with *Ōkagami*, a book written by a man for what must have been primarily a male readership, judging from its contents. The anonymous author had had a number of male predecessors in the general area of narrative prose. Strangely, all three of the surviving tenth-century romances and at least one from the eleventh century appear to have been written by men; and Tsurayuki was not quite the only male diarist. Men also monopolized the tenth-century poem tale genre, probably because it was, in effect, a special type of *setsuwa* collection.

The compilation of anecdotes and short factual tales, which enjoyed the prestige of Chinese example, seems to have been a fairly common occupation for educated men throughout the Heian period.<sup>84</sup> Many collections were put together for utilitarian purposes. Of the ones that survive, the bulk are Buddhist, assembled by monks to enliven sermons; and most of the others are twelfth-century compendiums of scraps of information about musical instruments, poetry, official ceremonies, and the like – further evidence of the late Heian desire to embalm the golden past. Nostalgia probably also played a part in the compilation of the greatest monument of *setsuwa* literature, *Konjaku monogatari[shū]* (*[A Collection of] Tales of Times*

<sup>82</sup> Major portion translated in McCullough and McCullough, *Flowering Fortunes*.

<sup>83</sup> Translated in McCullough, *Ōkagami*. <sup>84</sup> See McCullough, *Ōkagami*, pp. 1–14.

*Now Past*, ca. 1120?), an anonymous collection of more than a thousand tales, dealing with a great variety of Buddhist and secular subjects, and with many social classes.<sup>85</sup> Certainly, the conservatorial spirit was in the air. But the inelegant concerns of *Konjaku monogatari* are a far cry from the world of *Genji*, the Shining Prince, and it may be best to think of the collection as primarily a preachers' manual – and as a forerunner, like the *imayō* and the *biwa hōshi*, of the medieval rise of new elements in the Japanese cultural mix.

*Ōkagami*, like *Ise monogatari*, can be considered a special kind of *setsuwa* collection. The author, looking back on Michinaga's spectacular career, finds himself dissatisfied with Akazome's treatment of it, and determines, as he tells us at the outset, not only to describe but also to explain.<sup>86</sup> He retells Akazome's story, forsaking the chronological approach for the anecdotal, and selecting his materials to support the argument that Michinaga's success arose from a combination of luck, family connections, and favorable personal qualities. To readers of *The Tale of Genji* and *Makura no sōshi*, it comes as no surprise that Michinaga is praised for physical beauty, taste in dress, and poetic ability, and that he is depicted as sponsoring literary entertainments like the Ōi River excursion described earlier in this chapter. But nothing in the works of feminine authors prepares us for the discovery that equal space is devoted to his prowess as an archer and a horseman. Even more unexpected is the extensive documentation, in story after story, of his courage, coolness, prudence, and resourcefulness in public life – characteristics, noted approvingly in comments on other men as well, of which we hear virtually nothing from women writers (whose concerns, as has been seen, are basically private), but which are also singled out for praise in *Konjaku monogatari* and other collections of anecdotes.<sup>87</sup>

*Ōkagami* provides an important corrective to the notion that the Heian court produced remarkable aesthetes but bestowed little esteem on practical men of affairs. The truth is surely that the virtues

85 For partial translations, see Robert Hopkins Brower, "The *Konjaku monogatarisyū*: An Historical and Critical Introduction, with Annotated Translations of Seventy-Eight Tales," Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1952; Frank, *Histoires*; Marian Ury, *Tales of Times Now Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979); William Ritchie Wilson, "The Way of the Bow and Arrow: The Japanese Warrior in *Konjaku Monogatari*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 28, 2 (Summer 1973): 177–233.

86 McCullough, *Ōkagami*, p. 68.

87 McCullough, *Ōkagami*, pp. 48–53; Ury, *Tales*, p. 17; Hiroko Kobayashi, *The Human Comedy of Heian Japan: A Study of the Secular Stories in the Twelfth-Century Collection of Tales, Konjaku Monogatarishū* (Tokyo: Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, 1979), pp. 159–60.

of both were recognized. Living as they did in a stable society almost devoid of foreign or internal threats, Heian aristocrats were under no compulsion to practice the martial arts as their ancestors had done, but they did not wholly reject the heritage of the turbulent era before the advent of Chinese culture. Rather, they performed the exceptional feat of reconciling the most useful virtues of their barbaric forebears with a revolutionary new conception of civilized behavior; and the synthesis proved enduring enough to gratify the most conservative of Heian hearts. Although the establishment of the Kamakura shogunate brought ancient attitudes into renewed prominence, the Japanese never turned their backs on the ideals represented by the lacquerer of the Kōyasan marsh-iris chest, the *Genji monogatari emaki* painters, the calligrapher Yukinari, the sculptor Jōchō, the poet Shunzei, and the novelist Murasaki Shikibu. Remote as Heian society may seem to us today, many of its essential characteristics survive in modern Japan. Practical ability continues to be highly valued. Great importance is still attached to status within a hierarchy, to group solidarity, to decision by consensus, and to peer approval. There is less individual freedom than in Western countries of comparable international stature. And there remains a persistent feeling that a true Japanese, whatever his walk in life, ought to be able to compose a verse, judge a specimen of calligraphy or an artistic performance, and savor beauty with a proper appreciation of its ephemerality.