

MEDICATING THE GODS:  
KOKUGAKU, NATURE, AND THE BODY  
IN MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY JAPAN

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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August 2018

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MEDICATING THE GODS:  
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Cornell University 2018

This dissertation examines the relation between scholars of *kokugaku* (often translated as “nativism”) and the rise of empirical rationalism as a paradigm for knowledge in Mid-Eighteenth Edo Japan. In particular, I trace the shifts in the ways language, the human body, and nature came to be intertwined in a complex network of relations that redefined the way knowledge came to be produced. By emphasizing the crucial relation between *kokugaku* and empirico-practical fields, such as the medical-pharmacological rise of *honzōgaku* (ch. bencaoxue) in the 1700s, I seek to show how anatomy and nature came to be central in the ways *kokugaku* scholars imagined the role of people in the world. Mindful of the immense changes occurring in Eighteenth Century Edo intellectual landscape, I argue that it is impossible to account for the rise of *kokugaku* without taking into consideration the shifts in social perception of the role of nature. Instead of anchoring *kokugaku* within the teleological paradigm of incipient nationalism – a relation foregrounded since the Meiji period, and later championed by philosophers in the decades of Japanese empire – my dissertation shows how the excess of nature, as a repository of conceptual and practical knowledge about the world, often guided these scholars’ philological archaeology of the “pristine” relation between language and the body.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

I-Zhuen Lee (Clarence) completed his Bachelor of Arts Degree with Honors in Japanese Studies at the National University of Singapore in 2009 before entering the Doctoral program at the Department of Asian Studies at Cornell University where he specialized in Early Modern Japanese Literature, Philosophy and Thought. Upon receiving the Japan Foundation Fellowship for Japanese Studies in 2014, he was a visiting researcher at the Department of Japanese Literature at Sophia University, Tokyo, from 2014-2015. He is presently an Assistant Professor of Japanese at the University of Colorado-Boulder.

To my parents, Lee Hoe Hin and Teo Bee Chin,  
whose support and encouragement made this dissertation possible.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This Ph.D. dissertation is the outcome of a long arduous journey filled with negotiation, self-doubt, and growth. It could not have been possible without the support and encouragement from my advisor and committee chair, Brett de Bary, who had been there at every major decision and juncture throughout my stay in Cornell. I could always count on her for much needed advice and concern even when she was burdened with other duties. Without her assuring presence, I would not have completed this dissertation. My committee co-chair, Naoki Sakai, had constantly provided me with timely intellectual stimulation. He had always been open to me trying out my poorly conceived ideas and theories while leading me towards greater thinking. I could always count on his knowing smile and his patience as he pushed me beyond the boundaries of my own work to consider other possible perspectives and areas.

I have also been in debt intellectually to Jonathan Monroe and Hirano Katsuya of UCLA who had been guiding forces during the formative years of my research and had made me think of *kokugaku* in ways I have previously never considered. Andrea Bachner has been generous with both her time and counsel despite joining my Ph.D. committee at a later stage. I could always depend on her prompt and apt responses even as her own schedule turned into living nightmares. And last but not least, I would like to express gratitude to the late Kigoshi Osamu of Sophia University. Kigoshi-sensei took me under his wing during my year in Tokyo as a Japan Foundation fellow. His magnanimity made me feel that I had always been his disciple despite our little time together. It is needless to say that I continue to benefit from his teachings and the intellectual network he had provided me. Sensei, I will miss your little chuckles and your smiles. *Iro iro Arigatō Gozaimashita.*

I would also like to express appreciation to my colleagues over in Asia. Fellow Kigoshi-disciples, Marui Takafumi, Amino Kanae, and Katsumata Motoi-sensei had greatly assisted in the research for this project. Members of Ueda Akinari Research Group in Tokyo, especially Inoue Yasushi, Konoe Noriko, Takamatsu Ryōta, had always treated me as part of their community while allowing me keep up with their cutting-edge research. Yamamoto Yoshitaka of Osaka University was essential in my navigation of the research (and restaurant) landscapes in Tokyo. Stateside, the Cornell Classical Chinese Colloquium provided me with an avenue to escape into the joys of close-reading in fields beyond my own. The Japanese teachers, especially Naomi Larson, had also made me think more about my own pedagogical methods while being generous in their guidance and comments. Kim Scott, the graduate field assistant of Asian Studies, made administrative procedures a bliss, and I thank her for her constant vigilance making sure I do not end up on the wrong side of the university administration.

Of course, any academic project would not be manageable without the emotional support from mentors and friends. I am especially appreciative to TJ Hinrichs for all cordial yet insightful moments. Her generosity and approachability will remain ideals which I will aim for as I embark on my own career as a faculty. Dan McKee and Mai Cota had been towers of strength; they were always there to listen to my problems especially when I had no one to turn to. I am also grateful to Ding Xiang Warner who

had always shared my moments of joy and sadness, especially as I struggled to finish this dissertation. Lim Beng Choo and Scot Hislop had always pointed me in the right directions since my undergraduate days at the National University of Singapore. They were the first to encourage me to pursue an academic career and remain two of my greatest supporters. Junliang Huang has always been on my side of the fence while steering me in more productive directions. She has been the elder sister I have never had. Lee Yanling had given me indispensable advice for the revision of some of the material in this dissertation. She had also been a source of comfort and support especially in the later portions of the writing process. It goes without saying that it is thanks to the friendships of Zhang Ning, Masaki Kinjo, Eriko Akamatsu, Cristina Hung, Chan Cheow-Thia, Tyran Grillo, Jeff Dubois, Boxu Tan, Shumay Lin, Keiji Kunigami, Jack Chia, Sean Tang, Qiuwei Liu, Xiang Jing Chen, Eddie Tay, Ku Ka Leung, Yao Hui Jun, Bernard Shee Carolyn Pang, Yuen Shumin, Seng Guoquan, Jerrine Tan, Clarinda Kuan, and Alan Yeo, that I could remain (relatively) sane in the depressive environment graduate students are often exposed to.

This project is dedicated to my parents, Lee Hoe Hin and Teo Bee Chin; it could not have been possible without their ceaseless encouragement and love. Despite being half-way around the world, they have always been present, with unconditional support, at every juncture of my journey through my graduate work. My older brother, Samuel, although immensely pragmatic and practical in every way, had always provided me with the much needed reaffirmation of my dream as a scholar and academic. I would also like to thank my sister, Nianrong, for all the light chats, and laughter she has provided me as I navigate the solemnness of my research topic. My nephews, Emmanuel and Ean, had constantly reminded their *ah-chek* of the sacrifices he has had to make missing their growing up. Despite my being away, they continue to remind me how much love is waiting for me back in Singapore. My bi-annual meals with my god-daughter Eva and her parents, Priscilla and Vincent, had given me occasions to reset and appreciate the important people around me. My American family, Carlo Caci and Lynn Miko, always had my best interest in mind while at the same time showering me with familial love. I thank them for all the Sunday Bellinis and for their annual efforts to fatten me up before the long dreary Ithaca winters.

Lastly, I would like to thank Sookyeong Hong, who has been there through the good and bad times, and for picking me up when I am down in spite of it all.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	x
INTRODUCTION	1
DIAGNOSING THE WORLD IN KOKUGAKU DISCOURSE	
CHAPTER ONE	20
KOKUGAKU AND THE BODY IN THE WORLD	
CHAPTER TWO	89
THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION: MIMESIS AND POESIS IN KOKUGAKU FUMI	
CHAPTER THREE	181
MEDICATING ANTIQUITY: UEDA AKINARI AND THE INVESTIGATION OF HERBS	
CONCLUSION:	228
KOKUGAKU IN A SHIFTING WORLD: SUPERNATURAL WRITING, MEDICINE AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SENSIBLE.	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	246

## LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 1: Prefaces of *Kishitsu Benran* and *Kaiyō Kojidan*
- Figure 2: *Kishitsu Benran* and *Kaiyō Kojidan*, same contents, different titles
- Figure 3: *Kyojitsu Zatsudan-shū*; the incident of a *tanuki* in Suwato, Awaji

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- UAZ Ueda, Akinari. *Ueda Akinari Zenshū* Volumes 1-12.  
Tokyo: Chūō Koronsha, 1990.
- KMZ Kamo, Mabuchi. *Kamo no Mabuchi Zenshū*. Tokyo: Zoku  
Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1977.
- TAZ Nakae, Tōju. *Tōju Sensei Zenshū* Volumes 1-5. Tokyo:  
Kōbundō, 1976.

INTRODUCTION  
DIAGNOSING THE WORLD IN KOKUGAKU DISCOURSE

*The Problematic*

In 1764, the *kokugaku* scholar Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769) wrote an important treatise on the centrality of native Japanese poetry in understanding the world in his time. Aptly entitled *Kaikō* or “Thoughts on the Meaning of Poetry,” Mabuchi expounded the purpose of studying poetry of antiquity, as well as its ultimate purpose: to link individuals to their environment. He wrote:

“In all forms of poetry, it is the poetry of antiquity (*inishie no uta*) – those composed by the hearts and words (*kokoro-kotoba*) of people a thousand years ago – which remain unchanged. Like the flowers and maple leaves [around us], they are the *same things* (*onajiki-mono*) now as in the past. If, with the passing of years and months, you allow your heart to be influenced by the highly praised courtly styles of [the] Nara and Fujiwara [periods], forgetting the crude and odd styles [of later eras], you will be able to compose poetry whose [sense] is thoroughly embedded in your heart and *guts* (*kokorokimo*). It is for this reason that one should pick up and consider the immensely intense (*taketakeshiki*) hearts of antiquity [shown in their poetry] – poetry that is created with the *rectified hearts* of the people then, without a tad of dirt nor dust.” (My emphasis and translation.)

This passage by Mabuchi, who is recognized as a central figure in the historical movement historians have come to call “*kokugaku*” (alternately translated as “nativism” or “National Learning,” as I shall explain) in the Edo period, displays a characteristic call for a return to the pristine lifeworld of Japanese antiquity. As this passage iterates, to achieve a rectified heart, people should conceive and grasp the “intense” hearts of antiquity through the recitation and inculcation of the truth presented within the poetic styles of the early Japanese courts. The bodily dimension of his argument is undeniable:

it is through the “ingestion” of poetry of antiquity – by having it “thoroughly embedded in one’s *guts*” – can one achieve a certain rectification of his/her heart. Yet the “efficacy” of this method of “rectification” is premised on the notion that the hearts of people are, at the core, no different from the hearts of their counterparts of antiquity, and that, in the same way as nature, hearts, and people’s bodies have remained unchanged over centuries. Hence, the possibility of a “transplantation” of the “hearts” of poetry gives the learning, grasping, and replicating of poetry of antiquity its justification. In this dissertation, I will argue that Mabuchi’s treatise, in its call for the return to a pristine past, was not merely based on the importance of “native” poetry. It also assumed the existence of a natural world, that is, at its “heart,” never changing: the hearts and words of antiquity, “like flowers and maple leaves,” have remained unchanged.

Despite fact that Mabuchi’s passage, for the most part, addressed the importance of old poetry, I would like to call attention to an interesting economy of language in it which presupposes a precise knowledge of a world required of his readers. Furthermore, I will propose that Mabuchi’s attempt to call for a return to a certain antiquity glimpsed through the study and practice of ancient poetry assumes a view of the world that was closed linked to other spheres of social knowledge, in particular, the forms of knowledge informed by a kind of “empirical rationalism.” Scholars heretofore have tended to treat these two discourses of *kokugaku* and empirical rationalism – one philological oriented, the other devoted to new modes of exploring the “natural” world – separately. At one glance, then, this passage raises the following question: what is the relation between the emergence of what we now call “*kokugaku*” and the discourses on the body and the

world in eighteenth century Japan? Clear in the passage above is a link held by Mabuchi between a particular representation of the natural world around him – the imagery of flowers and maple leaves – and the possible recovery of the upright rectified heart and minds of the past. The phenomenal perception of the natural world around the seeing individual provides both justification and hence impetus for the study and recitation of ancient poetry. In spite of that, the temporal bind remains: Mabuchi’s rhetoric needed to reconcile and account for this “return” to a specific “cultural” past only found in texts, while at the same time the world around should be observed “in the present” *through the lenses provided by these very same texts*. To put it differently, the passage above poses a basic yet crucial problematic: why, in the writings of Mabuchi and other *kokugaku* scholars, was the discovery of an ancient past glimpsed in words also the discovery of the truth of the world here and now?

It is my hope that passages, like the one above, make clear that Mabuchi’s *kokugaku* was not merely a discovery of a pristine originary cultural “self,” but a specific positioning of that very self within a lifeworld of the past that could be glimpsed textually, a lifeworld that was, by definition, naturally supported by discourses on the *present* surrounding material world of nature. To investigate *kokugaku* and how it intersected with other discourses of empirical knowledge in 18<sup>th</sup> century Japan is therefore an attempt to see how *kokugaku* had brought together both discourses – the positing of an originary “natural” state of the world, and the re-discovery of empirical rational truth in the material world that could be perceived at their moment in history.



At its foundation then, my dissertation is an attempt to read against the traditional framing of *kokugaku* as a kind of discovery of prenascent “Japanese” identity. In positioning *kokugaku* as a teleological precursor to modern Japanese nationalism, many scholars have traditionally – and up through the present – relegated that movement to the category of an ideal realm of Hegelian discovery of the self vis-à-vis others. Often, this is done by tracing the history of the collapse of the Zhu Xi Neo-Confucian “hegemonic” paradigm to its cause in the rise of what were called the *kogaku* (“ancient learning”) schools of Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) and Itō Jinsai (1626-1705). These modern scholars explain the emergence of *kokugaku* as a continuous (or discontinuous) unfolding that eventually led to a form of “Japanese” community. The common intellectual impetus for these scholars in their study of *kokugaku* is therefore anchored in seeking a number of parallels one can draw between the general distaste for foreign philosophical incursions displayed in the texts written by the “four great men of *kokugaku*” (*kokugaku no shi daijin*), and the “irrational” manifestations of the same antagonism to the foreign we find in (1) the pre-1945 ideological state apparatus of Japanese State Shinto in the decades of “ultranationalism”; and (2) the discourses of Japanese uniqueness (*nihonjinron*) that arose in the post-war. I argue that such perspectives that attempt to figure *kokugaku* as the emergence of a proto-modern “imagined” community of either nationalism or culturalism foreclose the fact that *kokugaku*, like other discourses in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were also in conversation with “rational” fields such as medicine and botany.

As I have mentioned, these teleological narratives charting *kokugaku* to the rise of modern nationalism have emphasized the discursive centrality of works written by

the “four great men of *kokugaku*”. The “great men” are, namely, Kada no Azumaro (1669-1736), Mabuchi (the author of the passage above), Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801) and Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843). Conceptually similar to Hegel’s “great men in History” whose “own particular aims involve those large issues which are the will of the World spirit”<sup>1</sup> (or in this case, “*Japanese*” spirit), these four individuals were positioned as important “heroes” in the “cultural” history of Japan – they were individuals who “moved history along.” Thus, as if to reaffirm the ideology of nationalism, eighteenth century *kokugaku* writings and what the works of these four men propound are often seen as historical evidence that “Japan” had existed since antiquity. This narrative of “four great men” has a precise history in scholarship that paralleled the rise of Japan as a modern nation-state in the 1870s. As Tomiko Yoda and Susan Burns have pointed out, this paradigmatic characterization of *kokugaku* can be traced to the studies done at academic institutions during Japan’s imperial age.<sup>2</sup> As if bound to the modern question of Japanese identity – that is, what it means to be Japanese – their writings were deployed and redeployed throughout Japan’s modernization period to support the formation and consolidation of various forms of nationalist identity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. by J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), pp. 30-31.

<sup>2</sup> Tomiko Yoda, *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Constructions of Japanese Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 46; Susan Burns, *Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the Imagining of Community in Early Modern Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 4-10.

<sup>3</sup> Harry Harootunian, for instance, has also shown that in the early decades of Japan’s modernity, “ethnologists, agrarian reformers, communitarian theorists, and even aestheticians,” would mirror the cultural logic of *kokugaku* scholars – in particular Hirata Atsutane – whenever it was perceived that there was a crisis in social identity. In his argument, this nativism often led to the championing of the folk and their practices in national narrative. See his *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 304-305.

Despite drawing constant criticism within academic circles, much of the scholarship on *kokugaku* in English have nonetheless maintained the centrality of this lineage.

This is clear with the terms used to translate *kokugaku*: “nativism.” As with the word as it is used in English – or more specifically American English – “nativism” is generally taken to mean broadly the championing of native culture and history in opposition to foreign influence. Peter Nosco’s classic study *Remembering Paradise* is perhaps the best example of such an approach. Nosco deploys the concept of “nostalgia” to explain the movement in *kokugaku* thought towards championing a pristine antiquity. By comparing *kokugaku* to the rise of what he calls “contemporary religion” (i.e. Abrahamic faiths mirroring Protestantism), Nosco traces the arguments of the “Four Great Men of *kokugaku*” and their eventual association of the essence of Japaneseness with the divine native gods (*kami*). Complicit with modernization theory, Nosco thus sketches a homogeneous unfolding linear timeline to substantiate the recurring theme of nostalgia in Japanese history prior to the emergence of *kokugaku* to its deployment in state Shinto. For Nosco, the terminological slippage between *kokugaku*, nativism, and national learning<sup>4</sup> is clear, and he is more interested in identifying the various moments of nostalgia as nativist sentiments by positing that they are qualitatively similar throughout all of the history of *kokugaku* (or even Japan), since it is an “Asian approach” which has “traditionally located the idealized condition in the past.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> A literal translation of the Sinitic characters for *kokugaku*: “country” and “learning.” But it is also the privileged translation prior to Harootunian’s intervention in 1988. See John R. Bentley, *An Anthology of Kokugaku Scholars: 1690-1868* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 2017), pp. 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Nosco, *Remembering Paradise: Nativism and Nostalgia in Eighteenth-Century Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 4. The orientalist characterization of Nosco’s approach to *kokugaku* is clear. As if mirroring the criticisms leveled on Confucianism as harking back to a pristine moment that is no longer applicable to the modern world, Nosco simply posits *kokugaku* as doing the same. This is how he is able to claim that *kokugaku* is a kind of “Asian approach” to social problems.

Similarly, Susan Burns' *Before the Nation*, as its title implied, traces the discursive conditions for the formation of community that was "separate from and more authentic than the social that was the product of Tokugawa politics." Deploying Prasenjit Duara's use of "culturalism," she traces how a "self-consciously modern nationalism was constructed by [*kokugaku* scholars through] deploying existing culturalist notions of community,"<sup>6</sup> notions of community which, as she claims, were different from the sociality offered by Tokugawa politics. By analyzing how several "minor" *kokugaku* scholars (i.e. not the "big four" listed above) differed from Motoori Norinaga (arguably the most famous of the four), she presents her argument as an attempt to avoid the "teleological assumption that premodern conceptions of identity 'develop[ed] into' modern national identities," by showing the heterogeneity present in the discursive field of *kokugaku*. Despite Burns' attempt to show the multiaccultural nature of the *kokugaku* discourse from the 1750s to 1850s, the overarching framework she utilizes is still constrained by the presumed centrality of one of the four figures. Her attempt to display the multivocal nature of *kokugaku* is therefore unfortunately conflated with an *a priori* assumption of the creation of a culturalist community in *kokugaku* discourse that was a forerunner to the notion of a modern Japanese national identity.

More recently, Mark McNally's *Proving the Way* attempted to historicize this presumed centrality of the four men by showing how this lineage was initially conceived by the last of the four, Hirata Atsutane. Through demonstrating the numerous ways in which Atsutane attempted to reinvent *kokugaku*, McNally shows how there was a

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<sup>6</sup> Susan Burns, *Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the imaginings of community in Early Modern Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 224-225.

general shift away from the classicism and textualism of early *kokugaku* scholars towards what he calls “religious knowledge” in later scholars such as Atsutane. According to McNally, the lineage of the four big men was a deliberate construction by Atsutane in order to justify the latter’s departures from earlier forms of *kokugaku*. What is valuable about McNally’s attempt to reevaluate the position of Atsutane (and his construction of *kokugaku* genealogy) is the acknowledgement of various schools and schisms within the *kokugaku* discourse itself. Like Burns, in charting how there were numerous disputes between Atsutane’s school and more “mainstream” schools in the lineage of Mabuchi and Norinaga (which were also engaged in various intellectual feuds with each other), he shows how the narrative of the four was equated, by Atsutane, normatively to the concept of *kokugaku*. Yet, in spite of his attempt to capture the conflicts within a seemingly homogeneous discourse called *kokugaku*, McNally continues to make use of “nativism” as an adequate translation for the boundaries of his discourse while retaining “*kokugaku*” as a word to designate a specific discursive boundary held by Atsutane in his attempt to legitimize his school.<sup>7</sup> In his later book *Like No Other: Exceptionalism and Nativism in Early Modern Japan* (2016), McNally however redefines *kokugaku* as “exceptionalism”. By calling out the misinterpretation of *kokugaku* as nativism, he argues that exceptionalism is a more appropriate term because it will allow one to view “institutions” that bear “affinity” to *kokugaku* to be understood as “branches on a trunk called Japanese exceptionalism [while denying any]

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<sup>7</sup> Mark McNally, *Proving the Way: Conflict and Practice in the History of Japanese Nativism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 10-11.

one institution [from] bear[ing] the exclusive mark of exceptionalism.”<sup>8</sup> It is unfortunate then that McNally’s emphasis in his later book on lineage and affinity across history, from *kokugaku* to *mitogaku*, ultranationalism in the inter-war period to *nihonjinron* in the 1970s, echoes Nosco’s ahistorical approach to *kokugaku* as nostalgia. In short, he understands these movements as mere points on a single continuous line of history of Japanese exceptionalism towards the present.

While my summaries do not do justice to the sophisticated readings offered by Burns and McNally, I believe that the highlighting of a unified discourse of *kokugaku* as a kind of culturalism, nativism, or exceptionalism reveals a precarious issue in the general approach taken to the movement. This issue can be characterized as thus: by holding on, as these scholars do, to the centrality of community formation, and the works of the Four Great Men in that discursive formation, one precludes the possibility of seeing *kokugaku* as influenced by other discourses contemporaneous to them in eighteenth century Edo society then. To adopt this approach – of viewing *kokugaku* as “the birth of community” – is to ignore the material and perceptual changes in society that occurred alongside the rise and consolidation of *kokugaku*. In addition, this view of *kokugaku*, as a creation of culturalist community – a vision of community that is diametrically different from the purported “Neo-Confucian” vision of a realm with China as the center – is exactly the view which allows for the assertion of a teleological link between *kokugaku* and modern Japanese identity. That is to say, by holding on to this genealogy (and lineage of “Four Great Men”), whether implicitly or explicitly,

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<sup>8</sup> Mark McNally, *Like no Other: Exceptionalism and Nativism in Early Modern Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016), pp. 5-6.

scholars of *kokugaku* have continued to perpetuate and re-present the notion of *kokugaku* as an attempt at the imagination of a community. *Kokugaku* as a discursive field thus becomes self-sufficient as an historical object of intellectual inquiry.

This self-sufficient quality with which *kokugaku* has become invested is symptomatically evident in the use of “nativism” (or more recently, McNally’s “exceptionalism”) as the oft-preferred English translation for *kokugaku* since H.D. Harootunian’s monograph *Things Seen and Unseen*. As John Breen had pointed out in his recent review, the equation of *kokugaku* with nativism in the English language is an instance of mistranslation. According to him, the word “nativism” does not fully account for the myriad of intellectual tendencies in the *kokugaku* movement itself. At the same time, to define nativism solely as *kokugaku* is, according to Breen, also to deny the possibilities of using nativism as an analytical lens for historical inquiry. In his aptly titled review “Nativism Restored,” Breen therefore calls for the recovery of the concept of nativism. Quoting Ralph Linton’s “classical definition,” Breen agrees with Linton that nativism should be defined as “any attempt on the part of a society’s members to revive or perpetuate aspects of its indigenous culture.” Liberating the concept of nativism from its link to *kokugaku*, he argued, will “empower us to propose a more complex history of nativism in Japan, one that ranges well beyond the confines of *kokugaku*.” As he goes on to elaborate, “writings [such as Linton’s] invites us to see a nativism continuum throughout much of Japanese history, a continuum that was multiphased.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John Breen, “Nativism Restored,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 55 (3) (2000): 430.

However, it must be noted that, while clearly disinterested in the analysis of *kokugaku* per se, Breen's call for viewing *kokugaku* as merely *one* form of the nativist championing of indigenous 'culture' clearly parallels Nosco's identification of the movement as one instance of nostalgia and McNally's as an instance of exceptionalism. As though taking a step back to the historically continuous (and teleological) framework which Nosco utilized, Breen's attempt to identify nativism in movements "throughout Japanese history," despite acknowledging its "multiphasic" nature, risks assuming all movements identified as nativist are inherently and qualitatively similar. In addition, his intention of identifying nativist tendencies throughout Japanese history so that they may be placed in a comparative framework with other national traditions, does affirm the issue of nativism (and *kokugaku*) as inherently related to the national identity of Japan, a rebound back to the general approach to *kokugaku* which I have highlighted above.

Nonetheless, Breen's proposal to separate nativism and *kokugaku* needs to be taken seriously in my opinion. While not sharing his enthusiasm in identifying "nativist" tenets in movements throughout Japanese history – as if it is possible to do so without imposing one's preconceived and overarching definition of nativism onto individual movements without denying their specificity – I do agree about steering any analysis of *kokugaku* away from concept of nativism (and of course exceptionalism). To identify *kokugaku* as nativism and/or exceptionalism is to acknowledge implicitly only the identifiable sides of the movement which resemble a preconceived notion of what these concepts of nativism/exceptionalism should be. It is an instance of exclusion and reification. Therefore, instead of translating (defining outright) what *kokugaku* is – as with the attempts at translation of the term '*kokugaku*' either as nativism,

exceptionalism or simply “national learning” – I propose to leave *kokugaku* untranslated. Doing so would allow us to hold a critical distance to the many different discourses presented to us without grouping them under “nativist” tendencies. Here I take Harootunian’s advice in *Things Seen and Unseen* that *kokugaku* texts were riddled by contradiction and should be taken as open to interpretation. Agreeing with Harootunian then, I too argue that we should always assume a temporal distance between the content which *kokugaku* texts present to us, and our own assumptions, by allowing these texts to dialogically speak to us without us imposing our own political unconscious on them.<sup>10</sup> I see the identification of *kokugaku* with community as exactly such a reductionist move for it presupposes that our notions of community, exceptionalism and nativism apply directly to the *kokugaku* texts that are presented to us. To continue to pursue *kokugaku* as a form of premodern figuring of modern community is to flatten the historical specificities of the movement in favor of a continuous frame of historical narrative. At the same time, I admit that my understanding of *kokugaku* is but one attempt to figure the discourse. It is for this reason that I have chosen to keep *kokugaku* uncapitalized in contrast to the common academic practice.

### ***Kokugaku and the World***

In an earlier article entitled “The Consciousness of Archaic Form in the New Realism of *Kokugaku*,” Harootunian argued that *kokugaku* as a movement emerged to

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<sup>10</sup> Harry Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 11-16.

deal with the disjuncture between words and reality. According to him, with the exposure of the ahistorical and non-universal language of Zhu Xi Confucianism, *kokugaku* scholars responded to their sense of a gap in the language with which the world could be described and talked about. This gap that emerged, between what could be said and what is in their world, led *kokugaku* scholars to philologically excavate a possible relation between words and reality that was void of Confucian influence. Using Hayden White's topology of forms,<sup>11</sup> Harootunian argued that *kokugaku* scholars abandoned the form of similitude that undergirded Zhu Xi metaphysics. This form postulated that everything in the world – whether phenomena or noumena – are manifestations of the principle of *li*. Harootunian argued that in order to deal with the non-applicability of *li* in understanding the world, *kokugaku* scholars used a metonymic method of philological excavation. A major portion of Harootunian's argument is that *kokugaku* emerged as a movement to address the need to describe the world around them with adequate language.

Following Harootunian in his earlier article then, I too postulate that *kokugaku* emerged as an attempt to address the world. In this dissertation therefore, I propose that there is a need to understand *kokugaku* as a process and movement that emerged alongside the shifts in knowledge formation that occurred in the eighteenth century in which the “world” – taken in the broadest sense of the word – *gradually became to be*

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<sup>11</sup> Hayden White delineated four master tropes that can be used to characterize the “relationships between consciousnesses and a world of experience calling for a provision of its meaning.” In other words, by understanding how tropes are used in one's work, we can understand the relationship between the writer's subconsciousness and the world of experience around him/her -- we can understand how a writer made meaning, and which elements s/he used to create a network of meanings of which his/her text is situated. See Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 72-73.

*perceived as alien*. In other words, I argue that *kokugaku* as a discourse emerged to address these shifts in perception towards the world. These shifts cannot be understood from within the discourse of *kokugaku* itself; rather, we have to situate *kokugaku* as a movement that was in dialogue with other forms of knowledge in the Edo period, thereby acknowledging the fact that *kokugaku* scholars themselves were in contact and interaction with scholars of various fields about the question of the world.

In this dissertation, I focus particularly on linking the discourses of medicine and pharmacology to the so-called philological discourses of *kokugaku*. Here I am informed by Nakamura Hiroyasu's methodology in his analysis of *kokugaku* scholars' attempt to posit a world that is beyond human understanding. Using one specific scholar, Ueda Akinari (who will also be an important central figure in my dissertation), Nakamura argued that there is a need analyze *kokugaku* scholarship in relation to the introduction of "western" perspectives of the global world in Edo Japan. By showing how *kokugaku* developed in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century alongside the introduction of "western" (Dutch) medicine, anatomy, and map making, amongst many others, he argued that this "unknowability" that *kokugaku* scholars often attribute to the world was simply their move towards a modern understanding of science as constantly hypothesizing and discovering the laws of nature.<sup>12</sup> However, unlike Nakamura who overdetermines the influence of Dutch medicine, I argue that we should anchor *kokugaku* scholars' arguments in their interaction with fields of what Minamoto Ryoen has called "empirical rationalism" (*keiken-teki gōri-shugi*) instead. Minamoto has argued that, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there was a gradual shift towards a kind of "scientific"

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<sup>12</sup> Nakamura Hiroyasu, *Ueda Akinari no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Perikan, 1999), p. 418.

mode of knowledge production anchored in “empiricism,” but that this “empiricism” was still guided by the rationalism of Zhu Xi metaphysics of the world. Unlike the usual opposition drawn between empiricism as experienced based knowledge production, and rationalism as logical based knowledge formation, Minamoto points out that any empirical mode of knowledge acquisition in the Edo period was often filtered through the lenses of Zhu Xi Confucianism. That is, despite so-called advancements in “scientific” fields such as medicine and pharmacological fields (more specifically the fields known as *Honzōgaku*, or *Bencaoxue*), these advancements were still within the prevailing intellectual Confucian paradigm of knowledge production.<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to Nakamura then, I attempt to situate my analysis of *kokugaku* alongside analyses of Sinitic medicine and pharmacology as “empirical rational” modes of knowledge. In such a way, I seek to rethink *kokugaku* away from the paradigm of community above and focus on it as a socio-historical movement that was in conversation with other modes of thought.

### ***Chapter Outlines***

Returning to the passage with which I started this introduction, let me reiterate that a rhetoric of the human body played an important role in Mabuchi’s championing of poetry. For Mabuchi, poetry was important, I argue, because it is an embodied enunciation. Following Naoki Sakai’s lead in *Voices of the Past* then, a major

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<sup>13</sup> This is also pointed out by scholars such as Carla Nappi in her study of Li Shizhen’s *Bencao Gangmu*. See *The Monkey and the Inkpot: Natural History and its Transformation in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 8-9. See also Federico Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), pp. 12-15.

underpinning in my dissertation is on the analysis of the discourse of the body in *kokugaku* writings. Beginning my dissertation with a passage from Mabuchi is therefore not incidental. Mabuchi can be said to be a point of reference for many *kokugaku* scholars and despite the emphasis on the Four Great Men in past scholarly work, Mabuchi is, in my view, the first to fully conceptualize a position of *kokugaku*. I argue that in order to understand *kokugaku*'s emphasis on the body and the body's relation to the world, we need to contextualize their theories in writings by both their contemporaries and earlier Confucian scholars. I argue that, as a reaction towards Zhu Xi metaphysics and, to a certain extent, Wang Yang Ming's framework of placing the human subject at the center of the cosmos, *kokugaku* scholars after Mabuchi often expound a theory of the speaking human subject within a world that needed to be investigated. In other words, unlike Neo-Confucian rhetoric that emphasizes the centrality of humanity in metaphysically determining the definition of the world, it is instead the world, in all its excess and mysteries that are impossible to grasp completely, that provides the anchor for *kokugaku* scholars' definition of human bodies.

It is for this reason that even though *kokugaku* scholars often proposed a philological inquiry into the past, that philological excavation was usually predicated on calling attention to the speaking body as an object and subject in the world. By focusing often on words as mediating the inner and outer of the subject – as we can see in Mabuchi's championing of poetry – *kokugaku* scholars therefore attempted to return the human bodily subject into the world to be investigated.

*Chapter One: Kokugaku and the Body in the World*

In Chapter One of my dissertation, entitled “Kokugaku and the Body in the World,” I seek to understand the exact discursive structures that formed the basis for *kokugaku* scholars’ theories of the body. I re-read several foundational figures in the history of Confucian studies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century emphasizing the works of Nakae Tōju and Kaibara Ekiken. I argue that inherent in these scholars’ works were ideas that continue to permeate eighteenth century *kokugaku* discourse despite *kokugaku* scholars’ general disagreement with them. In particular, Kaibara Ekiken’s formulation of a body that is at once philosophical, social and medical will prove to be important in how we understand *kokugaku* scholars’ and their emphases on enunciation. Therefore, by analyzing the interrelation between the body as a locus of action, and the body as a thing in the world, I look at how Kamo no Mabuchi sought to reposition the human body as both a natural “thing,” and as a “thing” within a natural setting.

Chapter Two, “Politics of Representation – Mimesis and Poesis in Fumi’s Being-in-the-World,” builds on my analysis of the body by focusing on the concept of an embodied script in *kokugaku*. In the last three decades of the eighteenth century, *kokugaku* scholars such as Ueda Akinari, Ban Kōkei and Takebe Ayatari had been experimenting with creating a new style of writing. Modern scholars have often viewed this practice as the writing of what they called *wabun* (lit. “Japanese writing”) and relegated it to an attempt to imitate old forms of writing (*gikobun*). My chapter attempts to write against this understanding of *wabun*. I argue that *wabun* was an attempt to create a written medium that was an adequate substitute for *kanbun* or Sinitic script, one that could be used to represent the world in everyday writing. Up till the early years of the

Meiji era (1868-1912), forms of *kanbun* had been used not only in official discourse, but also in everyday situations such as diaries and letters. In this sense, the attempt to create a “new” type of writing was aimed at creating a script that could parallel *kanbun*, while at the same time being able to address every single aspect of their present world. Informed by the Heideggerian concept of *Dasein* as Being-in-the-World, I show how it is the notion of a pristine relation between the world and the body *produced in script* that was at stake in *kokugaku* discourse on *wabun*. By showing how Mabuchi, Akinari, Ayatari, and Kōkei negotiated their practice of *wabun* and how they viewed their invented script as a kind of medium that figures a pristine being-in-the-world, I argue that they sought to influence what Jacques Rancière calls “the distribution of the sensible” in Edo society.

Chapter Three, “Medicating Antiquity – Ueda Akinari and The Investigation of Herbs” then introduces the question of the relation between *kokugaku* and the fields of empirical rational knowledge. Often in focusing on the textual writings of *kokugaku* scholars and their predecessors, modern scholars have forgotten that these writings were produced by individuals who were part of extensive networks of knowledge. As I will show, the Kamigata region (covering roughly modern day Osaka and Kyoto) of the eighteenth century was a hot bed for the exchange of letters and ideas. Therefore, *kokugaku* scholars based in that region often traversed various scholarly fields, ranging from the literary to the medicinal, philosophy to poetic. Many of them were not only in conversation with thinkers of other fields but were also practitioners in more than one field. In this chapter then, I will focus on the relation between *kokugaku* and the discourse of *honzōgaku*, a branch of medicine that studies the use of herbs for medicinal

purposes. In particular, I will mainly use one representative figure, Ueda Akinari, and show how *honzōgaku* enabled him to negotiate a certain aporia at the center of his *kokugaku* practice before a short discussion on how he presented a different ontological worldview than Mabuchi.

My conclusion “Kokugaku in a shifting world – Supernatural Writing, Medicine, and the Distribution of the Sensible,” will then return to Rancière’s question of the distribution of the sensible. I argue that there was a noticeable shift in the ways people perceived their world in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Using a medical text that was later published as a collection of supernatural tales, I show that there was a general shift in the ways the phenomena in the world were understood. In other words, there was a redistribution of sensibility that dictated what counted as rational and irrational, and what was seen as natural and supernatural. By showing the primacy of the format of case studies in knowledge production, I show how supernatural occurrences that happen across provinces – as well as literary collection of tales from particular provinces – were completely in line with the growing urge to document the world amongst Edo literati. By placing 18<sup>th</sup> century *kokugaku* within these broad shifts in sensibilities, I analyze snippets of Norinaga’s *Tamakatsuma* in order to foreground how *kokugaku*’s emphasis on language was very much tied to a world that needed to be investigated through the form of a narrative.

CHAPTER 1  
KOKUGAKU AND THE BODY IN THE WORLD

*Reading Against Kokugaku as Community*

Modern scholars studying eighteenth century *kokugaku* have often deployed a basic narrative that is centered on *kokugaku* scholars' emphases on the discovery of a "native" language. As I mentioned earlier in my introduction, this emphasis on language is linked inevitably to the insistence on the characterization of *kokugaku* as an incipient discovery of community based on linguistic (and sometimes national) boundaries. Specifically, these modern scholars often look to *kokugaku*'s emphasis on the philological exegesis of the "Japanese" language, and tie their philological methodologies displayed in *kokugaku* texts to a general attempt to excavate the lifeworld of a native "Japanese" antiquity. This posited narrative of continuity therefore asserts that *kokugaku* can be identified as the starting point of a form of "Japanese" consciousness, one that defines itself in contradistinction to other "nationalities". One aim in this chapter is therefore to direct attention away from this linear narrative of *kokugaku* that anchors it as a "precursor" to modern forms of Japanese nationalism. When placed in a long *durée* of the history of "Japanese thought", one may indeed posit *kokugaku* as belonging to the same genealogy of a kind of "native" consciousness. As I mentioned in my introduction, this narrative ignores the multifaceted nature *kokugaku* and its relation to other forms of knowledge. In spite of the general acknowledgement of the problematic nature of this rendering of *kokugaku*, the general history of *kokugaku*

scholarship nonetheless continues to hold the centrality of this very narrative. McNally and Burns have tried to show the multiaccultural nature of *kokugaku* by focusing on the conflicts between various historical figures identified as *kokugaku* scholars during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In this chapter, rather than simply looking at the “boundaries” of this narrative, I will attempt a deconstructive reading of *kokugaku* from the center. In other words, I argue that it is necessary to re-read *kokugaku* discourse through its attempt to rethink the body as belonging to the world. In this chapter therefore, I will utilize the writings of *kokugaku* scholars such as Kamo no Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga – scholars who have been positioned at the center of the narrative of the rise of “Japanese consciousness” I have sketched above.

While I will examine more closely Mabuchi’s and Norinaga’s writings later in this chapter (and also in Chapter 2 where I elucidate the problem of *wabun*), it is perhaps useful to give the rough genealogy of ideas that often undergirds the usual approach to the writings of both figures. Both figures are posited at the teleological end of a three stage “development” in which they react to the dominance of “Sinitic” knowledge. Specifically, Mabuchi and Norinaga’s criticism of Zhu Xi’s metaphysics are highlighted to show how they were reacting against anything Sinitic. By utilizing the philosophies of what scholars have called the *kogaku* school (lit. ancient learning school) – in particular those of Itō Jinsai (1627-1705) and Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728) who argued for a return to the pristine teachings of early Confucian sages *prior* to Zhu Xi (*kogaku* is often characterized as calling for a return to the time in which Confucius emphasized the importance of rituals) – Mabuchi and Norinaga similarly beseeched their contemporaries to return to a pristine moment *prior* to Sinitic influence, a return to *the*

“originary” and “native” state of *things* devoid of Sinitic influence. In short, the three stage developmental model that is often adopted is that of (1) the dominance of Zhu Xi metaphysics amongst literati/intellectuals, (2) the repudiation of Zhu Xi metaphysics by scholars of *kogaku*, and (3) kokugaku’s adoption of *kogaku* tenets while championing a kind of “native” ethos. This positing of a pristine past is exactly what is then read as the discovery of a “Japanese” consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

What is crucial to note is the clear conceptual slippage between returning to the pre-Confucian past, with the return to pre-sinitic influence, and hence the discovery of Japanese consciousness. As we shall see later, Mabuchi and Norinaga (as with most of his *kokugaku* students and contemporaries in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) were heavily invested in the naturalistic philosophies of Lao Zi and Chuang Zi, often double-voicing or even echoing passages from Lao-Chuang sources, without reproval, to support their claims. Nevertheless, the narrative of continuity above, which posits Mabuchi and Norinaga’s thought – and *kokugaku* as a whole – as that of the discovery of “Japanese” consciousness, community and ethos, disregards such the complex (and seemingly contradictory) relationship *kokugaku* scholars had with other schools of thought in favor of a portrayal of pre-nascent discovery of modern Japanese consciousness.

As is widely known, Maruyama Masao was instrumental in bringing this narrative to the center of the modern discourse on *kokugaku*. In arguably one of his most famous works *Nihon Seiji Shisō-shi Kenkyū* (first published in 1952; translated into English as *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*), he argued that there

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<sup>1</sup> There is a curious contradiction at the center of Mabuchi and Norinaga’s thought. That is, namely, they continue to toil within the framework of Neo-Confucian empirical rationalism despite their outright repudiation of it.

were structural similarities between *kokugaku* and *kogaku* in both their emphases on, and praxes of, returning to posited pristine pasts. While I do not wish to reiterate much of the criticisms mounted against Maruyama's work (such its use of modernization theory as well as its flawed assumption of the hegemony of Zhu Xi Confucianism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, amongst many other issues), I will use Maruyama as a way to read against the characterization of *kokugaku* above. Maruyama's approach, which assumptions are still adopted by many "introductions" to *kokugaku* today, will be read as a symptom of the state of contemporary *kokugaku* scholarship as a whole.

While a major portion of Maruyama's work is an in-depth and meticulous reading of Zhu Xi's reformulation of Confucian philosophy within the context of Edo society and Sorai's eventual rejection of it, central to the overall arc of the book is the relation between "community" and "nature". Here, "community" and "nature" should not be understood simply. "Community" for Maruyama is referring to the type of social relations found within the philosophies of the scholars he analyze. "Nature" on the other hand is not that which is "out there". Rather, it is the specific social relations presented in Zhu Xi's emphasis of *li*, or principle in which the relations between heaven and society are mirrored and one. What Harootunian has called the logic of "similitude".<sup>2</sup> For Maruyama then, the historical rise of *kogaku* and *kokugaku*, as a reaction to and abandonment of Zhu Xi metaphysics, is synonymous with the shift away from "nature" towards "modern" community and rationality. In Maruyama's writings, what he calls

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<sup>2</sup> H.D. Harootunian, "The Conscious of Archaic Form in the New Realism of Kokugaku," in *Japanese Thought in Tokugawa Period 1600-1868: Methods and Metaphor*, ed. Tetsuo Najita and Irwin Scheiner (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), p. 77. See also H.D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, p. 58.

modern rationality is defined in terms of the specific kind of community it produces and how it reveals the “objective spirit” of that particular historical moment.<sup>3</sup> Needless to say, the use of the concept of “objective spirit” of a particular historical moment is an obvious reference to Hegel’s historical spirit as “the theater of world history, where it has its most concrete reality” as “it is Spirit, and the process of its development, that is the substance of History.”<sup>4</sup> The explicit drawing of the relation between the Hegelian spirit of *kokugaku* and the rise of community allows Maruyama to then characterize *kokugaku* as a historically “significant” movement that led to the rise of a modern form of national community, albeit in a perverse form as we shall see in a moment. For Maruyama, the rise of modern rationality – and modern forms of social relations and community – in Edo society is seen in the decline of *gemeinschaft* society and the subsequent rise of *gesellschaft* forms of social relations, which constitute a new form of objective spirit. As it is well-known, this is taken from Ferdinand Tönnies’s framework of social theory in his influential work *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), which has been translated as “Community and Society”. In his discussion of Hans Freyer’s intervention into Tönnies’s framework, in order to address what Freyer considered to be lack of clarity of “the historical scope of Gemeinschaft predominance,” Maruyama recognizes that nonetheless “Tönnies’s schema still retains fresh significance and value.” This is especially so, he argues, if Tokugawa social relations are examined based “not on the individual or subjective consciousness but the social consciousness, the so-called

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<sup>3</sup> Maruyama Masao, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, trans. Mikiso Hane (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1974), p. 225.

<sup>4</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), p. 19.

objective spirit, that permeates the social structure [of Tokugawa Japan].”<sup>5</sup> As we can see here, even while Maruyama was critical of assuming congruence between the actual socio-historical reality of Edo society and *gemeinschaft* as ideal types (not to mention the implausible nature of his own assumptions about the historical situatedness of *gemeinschaft* society), he nonetheless chose to retain the two concepts as teleological poles, asserting that Tokugawa society represented an interim zone between them. On one level, Maruyama’s work, written in tandem with his gradual acknowledgement of the difficulties faced in Japanese empire, and also as a critique of the sense of ultra-nationalism centering around the cult of the imperial family, is ultimately an attempt to explain why “modern rationality” did not develop in Japan. Clearly influenced by the Marxist position of *kōza-ha* (or the “Lecture School”), Maruyama saw in ultra-nationalism in Japan the necessary evidence for an incomplete modernization of Japanese society, one in which social relations are still dictated by the gods’ (and emperor’s) will as a manifestation of creative subjectivity. Thus, in many senses, *Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* can be read as an attempt on Maruyama’s part to explain why *gemeinschaft* social relations (i.e. feudal relations) persisted into the early decades of the Showa Emperor’s reign.

Since what was at stake in Maruyama’s argument was providing a sufficient explanation of the incomplete modernization of the subjective will of the Japanese people, it was necessary for him to analyze the way in which a “modern” human subjectivity is denied to the masses. Here, Maruyama again attempts to understand this incomplete modernization within the framework laid out by Tönne. In particular, he

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<sup>5</sup> Maruyama, p. 225.

deploys Tönne's discussion of the difference between "natural will" (*Wesenwille*) and "rational will" (*Kürwille*), which I shall cite in its entirety:

Natural will is the psychological equivalent of the human body, or the principle of the unity of life supposing that life is conceived under that form of reality to which thinking itself belongs...Rational will is the product of thinking itself and consequently possesses reality only with reference to its author, the thinking individual.

Natural will derives from and can be explained only in terms of the past, just as the future in turn evolves from the past. Rational will can be understood only from the future developments with which it is concerned. Natural will contains the future in embryo or emergent form [*Keim*]; rational will contains it as an image [*Bild*].<sup>6</sup>

The distinction between Natural will and Rational will is in its temporal dimension vis-à-vis social reality. As he elucidates it, when Natural will is dominating social relations, people are constantly attempting to reconceive (to follow his metaphor of an embryo) of a normative and *generic* form of social relations. The example par excellence of Natural will for Maruyama is precisely Zhu Xi confucianism's emphasis on how heavens and earth, and social relations are mirrored. The "naturalness" of life therefore is a posited unity that *should* mirror the originary nature of things, a basic tenet in Zhu Xi's championing of *li* as the ultimate principle behind all things and relations. When Rational will is more dominant (than Natural will), people are more concerned with the *future* which is posited as an *image*. In other words, people with Rational will, regardless of "ideal" social relation posited, are capable of thinking for themselves, with themselves. They are no longer bounded by the logic of being in "nature" or as a part of the "heavens or earth". As we shall see later, this self-image of Rational will is what Maruyama claims is incompletely developed in *kokugaku*. As with this polarization of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 226.

social will then, social forms are also polarized for Maruyama. A *gesellschaft* society is dictated by domination of rational will while a *gemeinschaft* society is ruled by the domination of natural will as a determining factor of not only legitimacy but also subjectivity. This is the reason why temporally, *gemeinschaft* social relations are determined by their links to the past, with the future always in some form of relation to the past as a determinant. Conversely, *gesellschaft* social relations, being dominated by Rational will constantly look forward to the future through the conceptual image (*Bild*) of the future as a teleological purpose. In other words, the shift from *gemeinschaft* society to *gesellschaft* society in Japan *should have been* accompanied by a corresponding shift from natural will to rational will. Only with the rise of rational will can there be a recognition of the modern man as a creative animal, or what Naoki Sakai calls, the birth of *techné* as the determining force of human (national) subjectivity.<sup>7</sup> It is within this conceptual framework that Maruyama criticizes *kokugaku* as a partial reversion to “natural will.”

To reiterate, for Maruyama, the Zhu Xi rendition of social relations – Maruyama takes Zhu Xi Confucianism as a hegemonic ideology that not only dictated political but social relations – was a form of *gemeinschaft* society. The critique of Zhu Xi metaphysics by the Sorai school was thus an important historical moment in the development of spirit of Japanese society for Maruyama, a moment where rational will and *gesellschaft* society began shadowing the previous dominant *gemeinschaft* social forms:

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<sup>7</sup> Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On “Japan” and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997), pp. 24-25.

“[I]t can be inferred that the shift from the Zhu Xi mode of thought, which considered political and social systems to exist naturally in heaven and earth, to the Sorai school’s logic, which held that [these same systems] are invented by men as agents, corresponds roughly to the changes in the “medieval social consciousnesses [from natural will to rational will].”<sup>8</sup>

What is crucial then according to Maruyama in the Sorai school’s emphasis on rituals, is the philosophical separation of the Confucian Way from the order of the heavens. By arguing for this separation, Maruyama therefore anchor Sorai’s “correct” way within the praxis of everyday rituals. It is in Sorai’s reorientation of the primacy of the Zhou dynasty rituals (as laid out by Confucius in *The Analects*) that Maruyama finds the needed human subjectivity for the development of a *gesellschaftian* modern will. This is the reason why he sees all “early Tokugawa thought [as] based on the concept of natural order, [and hence] correspond[ing] both in its subjective intentions and in its objective content to a *Gemeinschaft* logic of social relations.”<sup>9</sup> In sum, it is within the arguments of Sorai that Maruyama views the nascent development of a modern subjectivity based on rational will.

It is important to note outright that for Maruyama, *kokugaku* does inherit this logic of *Gesellschaft* social relations from the Sorai school. As I have mentioned, this was an incomplete inheritance. Maruyama justifies his characterization of the “flawed” development of *kokugaku* by analyzing the writings of Norinaga. For him, Norinaga “perfected” *kokugaku*, and that Norinaga’s thought is representative of *kokugaku* as a whole. There are obvious problems with such his perspective, both empirically and conceptually as I have pointed out in my introduction. Particularly significant in our

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<sup>8</sup> Maruyama, pp. 227-228. Words in brackets, my own.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 228

discussion is the fact that despite the importance of Norinaga in the modern characterization of *kokugaku* (such as Maruyama's), such a positing of Norinaga as representative of *kokugaku* in general often ignores the layers of multiaccentuality within the discursive field of *kokugaku* itself, a view also shared by Susan Burns. Nonetheless, the central position accorded to Norinaga by Maruyama is necessary to complete his argument that the centrality of the cult of the imperial family in 1940s Japan is a sign of an incomplete development of *gesellschaft* subjectivity and therefore rational will.

This is specifically discussed by Maruyama in the chapter "Logic of Invention" of *Studies in Tokugawa Intellectual History*. In that chapter, Maruyama shows the incomplete inheritance of the logic of *Gesellschaft* subjectivity in *kokugaku*. Once again, Maruyama assumes that Norinaga's writings are synonymous with the whole movement of *kokugaku*. According to Maruyama, Norinaga, in response to the "human-ness" of Sorai's emphasis on human constructed rituals, attempted to maintain the primacy of inner naturalness over human intervention while necessarily avoiding the creation of "any ideal absolutization of nature itself." In other words, despite Norinaga's general agreement with Sorai on the need to return to a pristine order of things, Maruyama claims that Norinaga avoids anchoring any sense of pristineness within the human (and hence "artificial") realm of social practices, instead electing to anchor any of such creativity in the subjectivity of the gods. Maruyama thus claims that Norinaga therefore posits the native gods as "super human[s]" that manifest "absolute personalities behind the inner nature [of humans] as [nature's] foundation." In other words, unlike the logic of "human" rational will in Maruyama's reading of Sorai, in which any invention is

attributed to the sage kings (who are seen as humans), he claims that Norinaga introduces a “natural [state of society] as the invention of the gods.”<sup>10</sup> For Maruyama then, the *kokugaku* movement, which he assumes is typologically equivalent to Norinaga’s thought, “began as the championing of nature against man-made standards (as propounded by the Sorai school), but in order to prevent nature itself from becoming a normative standard of sorts (i.e. returning to the metaphysics of Zhu Xi Confucianism), [*kokugaku*/Norinaga had to] make nature dependent on the invention of the gods.”<sup>11</sup> If our reading of Maruyama is accurate, *kokugaku*/Norinaga, despite inheriting the notion of *gesellschaftian* subjectivity from the Sorai school, created a logic of autonomous invention separate from human subjectivity by grounding this logic in the immanency of the gods. That is to say, the naturalness within a native “Japanese” subject for *kokugaku*/Norinaga grounded in the immanence of the world with gods (and not humans) as the subject of historical change. In other words, unlike Sorai’s notion of sage kings as the ultimate subjects of rational will, social relations for *kokugaku* scholars were invented by the gods and grounded in a form of rational will of the gods as an inventive force as a form of natural will.

There is a curious ambivalence within Maruyama’s characterization of *kokugaku*’s partial reversion to the logic of natural will. Previously, natural will as exemplified by Zhu Xi metaphysics, was, according to Maruyama, that the manifestation of *li* as a unifying principle of both the dominant social relation as well as the “natural” state of the world. However, as he explains how *kokugaku* scholars

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

(Norinaga) grounded rational will in the agency of the gods as inventive force, the nature yet is that which is embodied by *both* the gods *in nature* (i.e. the outside world) as a form of *natural will*. Nature as a word designating the outside world is compounded with a will that is between rational will and natural will. What is implied in Maruyama's approach to *kokugaku* is then the notion that the discovery of the lifeworld of antiquity through philological analysis is also the discovery of a certain natural will immanent in the present that is, at the same time, close to yet unlike Zhu Xi's principle of *li*. In the context of his writing then, for Maruyama, the structural similarities between discourses on ultranationalist Japanese identity and that of *kokugaku*'s (Norinaga's) attempt to recover the pristine lifeworld of antiquity is commensurate. This is the reason why despite being translated as *Studies in the Intellectual History of "Tokugawa Japan,"* the original title of his book, *Nihon Seiji Shisō Kenkyū* or *Studies in Japanese Political Thought*, was likely a more accurate description. Through his assertion that *kokugaku*, in contrast to Zhu Xi's cosmology and Sorai's thought, had discovered of a certain subjective interiority that is free of normative demands of society which in turn allowed for the rise of *natural emotions* within the subject,<sup>12</sup> Maruyama therefore asserts that the *sentiments* of modern Japanese nationalism – its emphasis on “community” instead of “society,” and its link to the cult of Emperor worship – are commensurate to those *kokugaku* scholars discovered in the lifeworld of antiquity.

In contemporary scholarship, this commensurability between *kokugaku* and ultranationalism continues to be foregrounded. Often, Maruyama's framework

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony: Poetry, Empathy, and Community in Mid-Tokugawa Confucianism and Nativism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), p. 15.

continues to underscore studies of *kokugaku*. As an object of study, *kokugaku* continues to be “relevant” arguably because this very parallel is drawn between the two historically distinct events. Yet, as I have continually shown, if we were to read *kokugaku* through Maruyama’s lens, the practice of philology by *kokugaku* scholars would be narrowed down to the recovery of social and communal relations revealed in a language. What is then privileged by Maruyama (and others who continue to toil in his line of argument) in the discourses of *kokugaku* scholars is the “discovery” on “our” part (as someone situated in the present analyzing the writings of *kokugaku* scholars) of a form of philological and linguistically “pure” community. This community is one that presumably “possesses” a language that presupposes a perfect world in which the links between language and the material realm (which includes not only things, but also social relations) are *never* severed, in which the signifier, the signified are the same, and how they then correspond to the referent. In other words, scholars who continue to toil within Maruyama’s line of inquiry, whilst possibly critical towards such an ideal construction (or fabrication) of an ideal linguistic community, requires its very conception as an underlying assumption in their framework. But as I have constantly pointed out, at the center of their narrowing of *kokugaku* discourse is the often posited centrality of figures such as Kamo no Mabuchi and his student Motoori Norinaga whose writings support the myth of a national origin. What occurs then with Maruyama, despite the richness of his study, is a certain reification of *kokugaku* discourse as a whole. In this chapter therefore, I will attempt to read against the grain by proposing the body as an analytical entry into *kokugaku*. By shifting the emphasis away from community to that of the body, I propose a recontextualization of *kokugaku* within a different narrative that is

positioned in the interstitial space between medical and philosophical discourses of the body in Edo Japan. In short, I am attempting to resituate the rise of *kokugaku* within its own historical context instead of assuming it as part of a long *durée* of “Japanese” identity.

### ***The Body in Kamo no Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga***

As I mentioned earlier, the writings of Kamo no Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga are often placed in the center of this discourse on *kokugaku* as a discovery of a “Japanese” community. In this section, I will attempt to conceptualize the body within both figures’ works by first giving a summary of their basic ideas before rethinking how, instead of language proper, the human body as a locus within the world was a more important aspect in their excavation of the past. Here, by focusing on the analytic of the body, I hope to achieve two aims. Firstly, unlike the simplistic picture drawn by Maruyama that *kokugaku* arose out of the revolutionary interventions of the *kogaku* movement, I seek to show how *kokugaku* continued to toil in the empirical rational framework of the Wang Yang Ming school of Neo-Confucianism. Secondly, I argue that the body in *kokugaku*, while clearly a speaking body, is also a body that is imbued with anxiety, a body whose very being-in-the-world constantly seeks its *natural* place within its surroundings.

This link between one’s “natural” body and one’s natural world is clear from Mabuchi’s writing. As it is widely known, Mabuchi’s rhetoric in most of his treatises is based on the superiority of the naturalness of native systems. In *Kokuikō*, he criticizes the “unnatural” (man-made) systems of Sinitic languages by claiming that their

emphasis on the pictorial graphs confounded meaning, making language superficial and unnecessarily complicated. This observation allowed him then to claim that the simplicity of the *kana* system reflects the natural way of the world.<sup>13</sup> According to him, the fifty characters of the *kana* system were therefore sufficient in expressing every single emotion, and for describing every single aspect of the world. It is for this reason that he denounces *the* sinitic script (Mabuchi assumes that there is only one script) as the cause of the deterioration of the world, since it supposedly introduces an unnecessary number of characters into language, thereby confounding the original relationship between the world and the language describing it. One method Mabuchi proposes of recovering this original link that allowed for language to effectively re-present the world is that of poetry (*uta*), or more accurately, *waka*. By positing the primacy of poetry, Mabuchi argues that poetry – which includes both the composing and recitation of it – once practiced, allows people to comprehend their true hearts, making it possible to govern the realm harmoniously and naturally.

In the same way as Mabuchi champions *kana* as a language adequate to discovering the essence of his native land, Norinaga too focused on recovering a “native,” *natural* history through the study of old texts using *kana* as method. To this day, Norinaga’s works hold a dominant position within studies on 18th century *kokugaku*, as hinted at by my reading of Maruyama. Norinaga’s magnum opus, the *Kojiki-den*, consists of 44 volumes and has often been used even now in linguistic analysis of old Japanese. In that work, written in 1764, Norinaga asserted that the *Kojiki*, when read/recited in the correct manner, would reveal to its reader/reciter the singular

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<sup>13</sup> Kamo no Mabuchi, *Kokuikō*, in *Nihon Shisō Taikēi* vol. 39 (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1972), pp. 134-135.

nature of the world of antiquity. As if mirroring Mabuchi's assertion, he claims that "[l]anguage is something which has its own style in each age and corresponds to the human actions and feelings of the time."<sup>14</sup> It is with this observation that Norinaga attempted to rediscover the language of antiquity in order to give the reader of the *Kojiki-den* a glimpse of the actions and feelings of that pristine past in which body and world was not in a state of disarray.

Norinaga's *Kojiki-den* no doubt shifted the *Kojiki* to the center of *kokugaku* inquiry, at least for his students. However, when Norinaga wrote the *Kojiki-den*, it was the *Nihon Shoki* (another imperial chronicle; compiled in 720 AD) – and not the *Kojiki* – which was widely acknowledged in society as the official version of the imperial family's history. In addition to being documented in the *Shoku Nihongi* (the continuation of the *Nihon Shoki*; compiled 797 AD) as a text presented to the imperial court in 720, the first two chapters of the *Nihon Shoki* covering the age of the gods were also the foremost of the imperial histories to be printed using movable type in 1599, and were widely used as a text for those wishing to learn about the age of the gods. In contrast, the *Kojiki* was the less recognized narrative, and was deemed as an "alternate" or "lesser" history due to much of its content being inconsistent with the *Nihon Shoki*. Most modern scholars too agree that in the 18th century, the specific form of the *Nihon Shoki*, written in sinic script with a particular format that mirrors the histories of China, too gave an air of authority to the history narrated there.<sup>15</sup> Norinaga was clearly

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<sup>14</sup> Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki-den Book 1*, trans. Ann Wehmeyer (Ithaca: East Asia Series, 1997), p. 145.

<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed summary on the status of the imperial chronicles, see William M. Bodiford, "Myth and Counter-myth in Early Modern Japan," in *Writing Down the Myths*, ed. Joseph Nagy, *Cursor* 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), pp. 277-288.

cognizant of this. Yet, in spite of this high status attributed to the *Nihon Shoki* in the eighteenth century, Norinaga flipped the hierarchy between the two texts. He claimed that due to the way the *Nihon Shoki* was written (in Sinitic script), it was in fact a distortion of the events it sought to depict. By specifically pointing out that it was written in a foreign language of “Chinese,” Norinaga followed Mabuchi’s argument that the *Nihon Shoki* thus presents an improper use of a foreign language to describe the specificities of the native world:

“The reason why there are so many instances in the *Nihon Shoki* where the language does not correspond either to the conditions of antiquity or to the human actions and feelings of antiquity is because there is too much ornamentation of classical Chinese.”<sup>16</sup>

It is clear that Norinaga not only faults the sinitic script as a language filled with unnecessary embellishment that distorts meaning in itself, but by anchoring the sophisticated nature of the sinitic script within such a discourse of language that can be traced back to the philosophies of Lao Zi (in particular Lao Zi’s critique of concepts), he claims that as a vehicle of transmission, the Chinese language is not *natural* in the context of recording to real events in his country. Here, the argument about the sophisticated nature and the authority attributed to the crafted quality of *Nihon Shoki* – characteristics that had previously been highlighted as determinants of its value and accuracy – is turned on its head. In order to show that the *Kojiki* was a more accurate *record* of the events of antiquity, Norinaga attempts to voice it through a peculiar way of reading.

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<sup>16</sup> Motoori, *Kojiki-den*, pp. 42-43.

As William Bodiford had pointed out, Norinaga *reads* the *Kojiki* almost literally. Ignoring the tradition of *kundoku*, a systematic method of the attaching of syntactical reading markers, Norinaga argued that the sinitic glyphs in the *Kojiki* were in fact used to record *sounds*. As Bodiford puts it, Norinaga “carefully catalogs the semantic structures found within the *Kojiki*, identifying how it uses Chinese glyphs to represent (a) pure Japanese in phonetic transcription, (b) the style of ancient Japanese, (c) a hybrid style of ancient Japanese with Chinese influence, and (d) pure Chinese.”<sup>17</sup> By asserting that it is still possible to *voice* even those passages written in “pure Chinese,” Norinaga effectively creates his own readings of many of the glyphs. Hino Tatsuo has called this move by Norinaga – and most *kokugaku* scholars who also create purported “old” readings of glyphs that were previously unrecorded – *asobi* (or “play”). According to Hino, by positing that it is possible to voice the texts, *kokugaku* scholars like Norinaga ultimately *constructs the truth in the text*. That is, *kokugaku* scholars in attempting to read the text in question, often create a *version* of the text that they then posit as true.<sup>18</sup> Bodiford too shows that, at least in the case of the *Kojiki-den*, Norinaga’s glossing of sinitic glyphs with readings “lacks any linguistic basis whatsoever.”<sup>19</sup> According to him, what is important in Norinaga’s holding on to this “illusion” of transforming “Chinese texts” into “Japanese prose,” thereby positing of a “true” text that can be recovered through glossing of readings above sinitic glyphs, is not the supposed change in the meaning of the text in question. Rather, by so doing, Norinaga “profoundly shifted its

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<sup>17</sup> Bodiford, p. 291.

<sup>18</sup> Hino Tatsuo, *Edo-jin to Utopia* (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1977), pp. 191-192.

<sup>19</sup> Bodiford, p. 293.

cultural context”<sup>20</sup> by placing the text now solely within a discursive space that is culturally “Japanese”. Ironically, “the presence of Chinese glyphs merely confirms [for Norinaga] the historical authenticity of the ancient Japanese speech. They are not to be read as themselves.”<sup>21</sup>

In this sense, by attempting to recover a voiced language – a form of phonocentrism – Norinaga’s criticism of the inappropriateness of the sinitic script mirrors what Edouard Glissant has called a “forced poetics.” Although writing in a context completely separated from *kokugaku* discourse – that is, the wave of anti-colonialism globally in the 1970s, and in the context of Martinique in particular – Glissant’s conceptual underpinnings may prove useful in understanding the layers of argumentation involved in Norinaga’s critique of the sinitic script. My aim of deploying Glissant’s concept of “forced poetics” is to uncover the severe bodily anxiety found within Norinaga’s own championing of the *kana* script as *natural* script.

From the outset, what Edouard Glissant calls “forced poetics” is juxtaposed against and derived from his definition of “natural poetics.” Glissant states that “natural poetics” is a poetics “that are a direct result of activity within the social body... [Where] there is no incompatibility [...] between desire and expression.” Against “natural poetics” then, what he calls “forced poetics” occurs when there is a situation or state “where a need for expression confronts an inability to achieve expression.”<sup>22</sup> This need is accordingly “fixed in an opposition between the content to be expressed and the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 303.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 304.

<sup>22</sup> Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. Michael Dash (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989), pp. 121-122.

language suggested or imposed.” According to Glissant then, to toil in the mode of a “forced poetics” – in the case of Norinaga’s argument, the transmission of crucial ideas of antiquity through the sinitic script – is to “cut across one language in order to attain a form of expression that is perhaps not part of the internal logic of this language.” In other words, a “forced poetics is created from the awareness of the opposition between a language that one uses and a form of expression that one needs.”

For Glissant, the main example of a forced poetics is the state of Creole language in Martinique, in which the language of the colonized is forced into the discursive sphere of the language of their French colonizers.<sup>23</sup> Due to the state in which Creole is a “medium of communication between slave and master” and as a result of this utilitarian dimension, Creole as a “spoken [medium] imposes on the slave its particular syntax,” slowly “vulgariz[ing] it in the transition”. Therefore, due to this use of Creole as the medium of this specific power relation, a primarily spoken language which was previously grounded in orality is then forced to conform to the configuration of a written language on par with the relatively (and perceived) fixed forms of French at the time. Glissant claims that this hybridized nature of Creole, as a forced poetical expression, was traumatic for its speaker since “self-expression [did] not emerge spontaneously” and that this form of “self-expression” that arose out of forced poetics will always be marked by “a kind of impotence [and] a sense of futility.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Glissant claims that it is possible to “locate a forced poetics that is both an awareness of the restrictive presence of French as a linguistic background and the deliberate attempt to reject French, that is a conceptual system from which expression can be derived.” See Glissant, p. 126.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 121.

Perhaps, most crucial in Glissant's formulation of forced poetics, is the concept's non-bodily dimension. Anchored in the parallel drawn between (a) natural poetics' correspondence with the oral, and (b) forced poetics and its written form, Glissant argued that a forced poetics, in its negotiation, moves the oral towards the written, thereby disciplines the social and individual body. As he observes simply, "the written (i.e. the attempt to imitate French written forms) requires nonmovement: the body does not move with the flow of what is said. The body must remain still; therefore the hand wielding the pen does not reflect the movement of the body, but is linked to (an appendage of) the page."<sup>25</sup> Interestingly, his understanding of the link between a social and individual body implies that there is not only the loss of a *natural* poetics within the individual body, but also a loss within the language of creole itself.

It is not difficult to see the parallels between Norinaga's championing of *kana* as a *enunciated* language and Glissant's lamenting of the lost of natural poetics. Reading Norinaga's exposition in the *Kojiki* in relation to Glissant's framework, we can see that in the same way Glissant argues that the French language encroaches on the natural poetics of what has now come to be known as creole in Martinique, Norinaga criticizes the non-bodily function of the sinic script in the *Nihon Shoki* as one that is *unnatural* for the recording of purportedly true events. Thus, not only is sinic script not appropriate in describing the lifeworld of antiquity – and in recovering a pristine past – it is also not appropriate for the here and now, a point which I will return to when I discuss the composing of *wabun* (lit. "Japanese" writing) in Chapter Two of this dissertation. Reading Norinaga through Glissant's concepts moreover, allows us to

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

uncover the centrality of the enunciating body within language in Norinaga's excavation of the past. Not only is language for Norinaga a matter of *meaning*, it is also a bodily praxis.

This is exactly what Naoki Sakai, in *Voices of the Past*, claims to be the phonocentrism at the heart of *kokugaku*. Sakai argues that Norinaga's championing of the immediacy of spoken language – enunciation – led to the discovery of the primacy of the speaking body. In order to show this, Sakai compares Norinaga's writings with those of Ogyū Sorai (1666-1728), an important proponent of the *kogaku* (ancient learning) movement which argued against the idealism found within Zhu Xi metaphysics. Sorai's form of *kogaku* emphasizes the return to the rituals, music and practices of the time of the ancient sage kings. Imitating Confucius' attempt to revive the ancient court rituals of the Zhou dynasty, Sorai argued that it is only through the practice of these ancient rituals can one bodily *internalize* the correct sagely way. Sakai, through analyzing Sorai's *Bendō*, argues that Sorai saw the body as “the locus of anchorage in this world according to which here and now are primordially given, although the body is not what is present to consciousness but that to which something is present.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, it is through this “physical body” as a *topos* — the presencing of a distant past through *acting it out* — that knowledge is to be revealed. Accordingly then, this “interiority” of Sorai's conception of the body has two dimensions. Firstly, the body is conceptualized as the central space of Sorai's call for the praxis of rituals. That is to say, it is only through the body as a sort of screen that people are able to excavate some truth of the world – the body is that which displays the

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<sup>26</sup> Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 247-248.

philosophical truth of the world of things because it is also a *thing in the world*. Secondly, and subsequently, the body itself becomes the interiority that is “produced” when one achieves this very unity of self and the world around through elucidating the pristine lifeworld of antiquity. As Sakai explains, “[i]t is no contradiction to say that [for Sorai] the interior is in one’s body and the body is in the interior, provided that one has already achieved virtue.”<sup>27</sup> According to Sakai then, the body in Sorai’s framework is not simply the organic unity in physiology – it is clearly not anatomical – since it takes on signification when placed in particular performative situations guided by the ideology of *kogaku* praxis. Unlike the notion of a body as a passive *thing* within the world, the *kogaku* body, according to Sakai, is itself a producer of signification, since it assumes particular ethical and social meaning within “situations [that are] institutionally and culturally articulated.”<sup>28</sup>

Through drawing these observations on the *kogaku* body as a locus of signification, Sakai hints that *kogaku* scholars’ emphases on the vocal qualities of textual reading is suggestive of a similar schemata. According to Sakai, Norinaga’s “reading” in the *Kojiki-den* is itself an attempt to “univocalize” the text by limiting reading to one “authentic” reading of the text. This “singularity of the voice” had to be secured, because it provided Norinaga with the possibility of reading as a “strategic move by which to return to the original time [...] at the founding of Japan.” According to Sakai, for Norinaga, this “original time” was a period before sinic glyphs were used as ideographs to render meanings. However, with the use of ideographs to render

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 249.

meaning, original meaning was made uncertain by shifting the way of reading from sounds to pictographs. As Sakai explains, “the entire project of [Norinaga’s] *Kojiki-den* can be summarized as an attempt to reclaim the text from the realm of seeing and restore it to the realm of speaking/hearing.”<sup>29</sup> This emphasis on speaking and hearing shifts the focus of reading to the notion of the voice. In the same way Derrida wrote his famous critique on the championing of voice in Husserl, Sakai argues that Norinaga attempted to deny the “transcendent meaning” in ideographs through avoiding any recognition of the inherent multivocality of the ideographs themselves. It is only through placing a certain silence on the ideographs — a parallel move observable with some Japanese scholars in the early 20th century as we will see in Chapter Two — could Norinaga deny this “transcendent meaning” and avoid issues of reading proper. Accordingly, this avoidance of reading, which could render ideographs with an uncertainty of pronunciation, enabled Norinaga to impose his own readings onto the text. As Sakai elaborates, these readings often had to do with the possibility to “voice” the ideographs in a particularly “native” way of reading. Norinaga, it seems, went the full extent in avoiding not only sinic pronunciations (*onyomi*) of the text as well as the use of *kundoku*, the usual reading rearranging syntactically sentences in order to decipher and parse the text into “Japanese”.

If as Sakai has pointed out, reading for Norinaga was akin to pronouncing or, more accurately, enunciating it, the vocal element of “reading” is therefore championed over the “interpretive” dimension, an observation also shared by Bodiford. However, we should recognize that while both scholars agreed that Norinaga’s act of reading was

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 262.

an act of interpretation, Sakai went a step further than Bodiford by bringing the centrality of the “voice” in Norinaga’s act of reading fore. Instead of the mediated nature of interpretation — through *kundoku* and deciphering of the ideographs – the immediacy imbued in “voicing” out the text is, according to Sakai, what was emphasized in the *Kojiki-den*. As such, Norinaga’s imposition of his own readings in the text hence had to be an endeavor that conformed to the voice *as part of his body*. In this sense, Sorai’s conception of the body, as the *topos* of knowledge production that reflects the world, is then translated onto the primacy of the voice as *the* im-mediate border between the body and the world around. Sakai’s analyses therefore enables us to realize that for Norinaga, through his discovery of the immediacy of the vocal nature of the *Kojiki*, the voicing body is precisely the most crucial component since it bridges the listening self, the interiority of the body, the exteriority of things, and ultimately, the intersocial nature of language as already present within oneself, a “dissolution of the distance between subject and object.”<sup>30</sup> This voicing body is thus this very (im)mediating thing that possesses, both actively and naturally, the duality of being both subject and object. Unlike Sorai’s interiorization of the Way through disciplining one’s body by the practicing and repetition of rituals of the sage kings, Norinaga discovers in his body (and everyone else with a “true” body), the original immediacy of the pristine past. In other words, unlike Glissant who does not think that it is possible to return to an originary point in which creole continues to develop *naturally*, for Norinaga, this was clearly possible and *must be achieved bodily*. Nevertheless, Glissant’s anxiety of the unnaturalness of being in a “forced poetics” is clearly also present in Norinaga, and it is

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

only through this sense of a kind of linguistic and bodily crisis can we understand Norinaga's attempt to return to a posited pristine past. Furthermore, the recognition of this bodily anxiety allows us to re-orientate the study of *kokugaku* from the questions of community, to the question of the body as one within the world. Following Sakai's insistence on the body as thoroughly philosophical and theoretical, I will also argue in the next section that the body in *kokugaku* discourse – more specifically that of Norinaga and Mabuchi – was also at the same time physiological. Specifically, I will place the *kokugaku* body within the discursive philosophical boundaries centering on the phrase: *hito wa banbutsu no rei* or “people are the spirit of all things.” Following Sakai then, I postulate that *kokugaku* itself was an attempted to reconfigure the role of bodies within society by redefining the role of the body as one belonging in the world. As a movement that criticized Song Confucianism, *kokugaku* itself was still toiling within the critical discursive boundaries set by its intellectual opponents. In order to show this, this chapter will discuss the works of Nakae ūu and Kaibara Ekiken, two figures who had been understood as toiling not only within discourse of Song Confucianism, but also within the lineage of what scholars have come to call *jitsugaku* (or practical learning). Through reading *kokugaku* as following this “practical” side of Song Confucian discourse, I hope to show how *kokugaku* was very much part of a larger debate of the body in eighteenth century Tokugawa society.

### ***The Problem of the Body in Eighteenth Century Edo Japan***

To show the importance of the body in *kokugaku*, there is a need to think how the body was positioned within the discourses of scholars in the late 17th century and

early 18th century of the Edo period. In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, and early 18<sup>th</sup> century, it can be said that the view of the body was centered on the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* 人は万物の霊, or “people are the spirit of all things.” Often deployed by Neo-Confucian scholars to support their logical renderings of the world around them, as well as the importance of people within these schematic constellations, *hito wa banbutsu no rei* provided the grounds for the focusing on human actions within a world that was increasingly defined through empirical lenses. Using this concept as a lens, this chapter explores the various shifts in perception in the early 18th century that gave rise to a particular discursive structure centering on the human body as an affective locus that links together, in a metonymic manner,<sup>31</sup> the various aspects of the perceived empirical world of 18th century Edo society. Often, early *kokugaku* scholars attempted to justify their exegesis of the past by emphasizing this very affective embodiment of the world that can be glimpsed through their philological archeology. My contention is that this was only possible due to various shifts in the ways in which the bodies of people were placed in relation with their surroundings. This chapter thus explores ways in which

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<sup>31</sup> The word “metonymy” is used here according to Hayden White’s analysis of tropological approaches to historical interpretation. Following Kenneth Burke, he argues that there are four “master tropes” -- metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony. Each of these tropes “deal with relationships that are experienced as inhering within or among phenomena, but which are in reality relationships existing between consciousness and a world of experience calling for a provision of its meaning.” In other words, by understanding how tropes are used in one’s work, we can understand the relationship between the writer’s consciousness and the world of experience around him/her -- we can understand what and how a writer made meaning, and which elements he used to create a network of meanings of which his text is situated. (In other words, identifying the linguistic (tropological) moves a historian makes in order to confer historical meaning onto certain phenomena (events).) White defines “metonymy” as the conceptual move that reduces the whole to the part while presupposing that it is possible to distinguish between part and whole. By such “reduction” the priority of interpretation is then ascribed to the parts as the producer of meaning that reveals the putative whole to consciousnesses. In other words, this presupposes that with the investigation of parts, one is able to reveal the totality of relations which make up the whole. See Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 72-73.

several simultaneous shifts in the fields of medical, philosophical and social knowledge provided the necessary impetus to understand the emergence of *kokugaku* scholars' emphasis on the primacy of their native world. In so doing, my purpose is also to contextualize the various close readings in subsequent chapters.

Let me return to Mabuchi's *Kokuikō*. Earlier I gave a brief summary of Mabuchi's rhetoric in the treatise, that Mabuchi championed *kana* as the natural script for any basis of a natural language. In order to show this, Mabuchi had discussed extensively comparable instances and examples from countries other than the "China" and "Japan" to show how phonic scripts, and not ideographs, were sufficient for these countries' languages. What is interesting in our context is a curious passage found in the midst of this extended discussion on the nature of linguistic sound in different countries. In this passage, Mabuchi raises tangentially an objection against defining humans as separate from animals as a habit of "Chinese thinkers":

"In China, there are sayings such as '(people are) the spirit of all things' (*banbutsu no rei*) which exalt people (over everything else). I think, rather, people are the most evil of all things. The reason, if one were to ask, is that in the midst of the unchanging Heavens and Earth (*tenchi*), the Sun and the Moon, and the natures of birds, beasts, fishes, plants and trees, are unchanged, just as they were since antiquity. Humans [however] are not quite like them at all (i.e. the nature of human has changed)."<sup>32</sup>

In line with the general argumentative style used throughout *Kokuikō*, Mabuchi displayed his disdain for the artificiality of these implied "changes" exhibited in human society as opposed to unchanging naturalness of "nature". These "human changes," in his view, were the result of humans acting according to what they deem as intelligent or

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<sup>32</sup> Mabuchi, *Kokuikō*, pp. 12-13.

cunning (chi; 智). It is well known that this criticism of intelligence in Mabuchi was taken from Lao Zi's criticism of intelligent Confucian scholars as mere deceivers who cunningly twisted the Way (dao) in order to substantiate their arguments, a point which I will return to in Chapter Three when I discuss Ueda Akinari's *Odaegoto*. As if echoing Lao Zi then, Mabuchi was also drawing his reader's attention to what he considered fallacious Confucian rhetoric which privileged complexity over simplicity.

Central to this critique above is therefore Mabuchi's denial of the separation of humans from animals in what he refers to as "Sinitic thought" epitomized by the phrase "people are the spirit of all things" (*hito wa banbutsu no rei*). The fact that this passage, which denies of the singularity of human existence in favor of their natural place as mere animals in the world around them, was inserted into an extended discussion on the nature of linguistic sound, begs the question of the relation between this "clash" between two different intellectual positioning of people vis-a-vis the world and the nature of Mabuchi's philological archeology of the lifeworld of antiquity. As I will show in Chapter Two when I discuss Mabuchi's treatise *Bun'ikō*, this very question of positionality of humans in the world is crucial in understanding Mabuchi's own attempt at the transplantation of the past onto his present. At this juncture, however, in order to understand the full extent of the critiques launched by Mabuchi and other *kokugaku* scholars such as Ueda Akinari and Motoori Norinaga, we need to unpack this phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* as well as its context in 17th century Edo society. Only in so doing, can we fully ground any viable analysis of the ways in which *kokugaku* scholars counter-positioned their feeling body within their view of a natural world.

Nishida Kōzō has argued that, as an ideal, *hito wa banbutsu no rei* had permeated all levels of society by the early 18th century. By showing how this phrase appears in the writings of various writers, from *shingaku* (lit. mind learning) scholars such as Kumazawa Banzan (1619-1691) to those of the famed poet Matsuo Basho (1644-1694), he states that it was a major metaphysical and didactic structure for the production of both intellectual treatises as well as popular literature.<sup>33</sup> An important aspect of Nishida's critique is the pointing out of how these scholars, in their positing humans as the essence of all things, imbue in the figure of humans a teleological end of nature in themselves. Nishida draws our attention to the parallel critique observed by Kant in his essay "Conjectural Beginning of Human History":

"The fourth and final stage, by means of which reason completely raised the human being above its society with animals, was that he understood (however vaguely), that he was actually the end of nature, and that nothing that lived on earth could compete with him in this regard. The first time that he said to the sheep, "the coat that you wear was given to you by nature not for you, but for me," and stripped it of this coat and put it on himself (v. 21), he became aware of a privilege that he, by virtue of his nature, had over all animals. He now no longer viewed them as his fellows in creation, but rather as means at his will's disposal and as tools for attaining any chosen ends. This view of things also implies (however vaguely) the thought of its contrary: that he may not say such a thing to another human being but should rather regard the latter as an equal recipient of the gifts of nature."<sup>34</sup>

Using Kant's observation as a stepping stone then, Nishida postulates that *hito wa banbutsu no rei* posits the human as an end of nature itself. What is particularly insightful in Nishida's reading is how, as a didactic philosophy, the phrase posits a kind of circular teleology where people are at once the spirit of all things in spite of the fact

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<sup>33</sup> Nishida Kōzō, *Hito wa Banbutsu no Rei* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 2007), p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Immanuel Kant, "Conjectural Beginning of Human History," trans. Allen W. Wood, in *Anthropology, History, and Education*, ed. Günter Zöllner and Robert B. Loudon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 28.

that they must also work to achieve it, a kind of circular narrative of development. While I agree with Nishida's assertion that in the 17th century Edo period, humans became a kind of teleological beginning and end, a situation encapsulated in the popularity of the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei*,<sup>35</sup> the overarching nature of Nishida's argument begs the question of the relation between *kokugaku* and earlier thinkers on the role of humans, a question which Nishida failed to answer. In particular, in his treatment of Mabuchi and Norinaga — as representative figures in *kokugaku* — Nishida failed to account for the fact that despite Mabuchi's argument that people are the same as animals, they are still central within his worldview of ancient society.<sup>36</sup> In other words, despite his acute observation of the figurative nature of *hito wa banbutsu no rei*, Nishida returns to the simplistic analysis of humans as distinct to animals in his differentiation of both Neo-Confucian scholars and *kokugaku* scholars in the 18th century. While clearly indebted to Nishida's approach, I propose we rethink the way in which the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* was deployed in the 17th century leading up to *kokugaku* scholars' refutation to it. Specifically, I suggest that the notion of the "body" and its relation to the material world is at the core of the disagreement launched by *kokugaku* scholars such as Mabuchi and Norinaga against prior Neo-Confucian attempts to center the human as a mirror of the world yet completely divorced from it.

Arguing that the body as a concept and material form is always produced in discourse, this chapter will now attempt to trace the discursive shifts in the ways in

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<sup>35</sup> Not only do we see this phrase in "philosophical" texts, but also medical and literary ones. Even in popular literature consumed by the masses – such as those by Chikamatsu Monzaemon – this phrase appears constantly as both an object of ridicule as well as a starting point for didactic prose.

<sup>36</sup> Nishida, pp. 35-37

which the body is seen in several scholars. Starting with Nakae Tōju, I will attempt to elucidate the intellectual boundaries of the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* as referring not so much to the centrality of humans, but a clarification of the role in which the body plays within the Way in Confucianism. This will allow us to approach Kaibara Ekiken's notion of *yōjō*, or "the preservation of one's health" through his famous medical treatise *Yōjōkun* (or "A Discourse on Maintaining one's health"; 1713) to explicate how Ekiken's concept of the body is not only one that mirrors the world (as with *hito wa banbutsu no rei*, which Ekiken subscribes to), but also a body *within* the world. Ekiken's attempt to bring together the logic of circularity found in *hito wa banbutsu no rei* with that of medical justifications of the body as that which shares a similar constituent to the world, is an important historical moment leading up to *kokugaku*'s own definition of the *natural* body in a *natural* world. Through my analysis of Tōju's and Ekiken's understandings of the body, we will be able to observe a crucial shift from earlier understandings of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* to those understandings of the body held by *kokugaku* scholars in the 18th century.

### ***Nakae Tōju and the Fulfillment of One's Philosophical Body***

It should be stated at the outset that originally the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* did not come to possess such an all unifying metaphysical outlook. The earliest instance of its usage survives to us through one of the five pre-Qin Dynasty Confucian classics, the Book of Documents, with the phrase appearing as one half of a famous couplet: "The Heavens and Earth (*tiandi*) are the parents of all things; people are the

spirit of all things.”<sup>37</sup> This couplet marks the beginning of a declaration by the rulers of Zhou dynasty (1046 BCE - 256 BCE) whom, after overthrowing the Shang Dynasty, issued a number of similar proclamations explaining to the defeated Shang people why they should submit to their conquerors.<sup>38</sup> As a form of justification, the character for “person” (jp. *hito*, ch. *ren*), despite referring vaguely in this case to the abstract concept of being “human,” is not the main focus of the couplet. On the contrary, the phrase merely reiterates that humans – whether sovereign or not – should understand that they are but mere vessels for the will of the heavens, the actual parents of all things. As one reads the rest of the proclamation, it becomes clear that the document wishes to emphasize the inadequacy of the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, King Shou. As a mere line within this document then, it is clear that, rather than a definition of the role of humans per se in the universe, the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* refers more to the position which people are supposed to assume in order to fulfill the mandate of heaven (jp. *tenmei*, ch. *tianming*). To put it differently, instead of the metaphysical connotations attached to the phrase – the assertion that people are the spirit of all things – this original usage calls our attention to the fact that people are merely the most equipped to fulfill the will of the heavens.

In the late 17th century Edo period, however, this phrase was made into a central guiding philosophy for several major figures of Neo-Confucian school associated historically with *Yōmei-gaku* (Wang Yang Ming philosophy), as Nishida Kōzō had pointed out. The most prominent proposer of this philosophy is Nakae Tōju (1608-1648)

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<sup>37</sup> Original in Sinitic script: 惟天地萬物父母，惟人萬物之靈。

<sup>38</sup> WM Theodore De Bary, Irene Bloom and Chan Wing-tsit, eds. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 27.

who is often hailed as the “founder” of the Wang Yang Ming School in Japan. In particular, he flips the hierarchal relation between the heavens and humans seen above in the Book of Documents on its head. Unlike the proclamation above which asserts that humans were merely in a better position to fulfill the will of the heavens by being subservient, he proclaims in a miscellany collected by his students the following:

“The heavens and earths are the womb which gives birth to the divine process (*shinka*), they are the parents of all things. People [then] are the essence (*honshitsu*) of this divine process, the virtue (*toku*) of the heavens and earth, and [thus] the spirit of all things. Subsequently, all things (*banbutsu*) are the sprouts of this divine process, and thus, exist for the purpose of maintaining humans (*hito no iyō*).”<sup>39</sup>

It is evident that unlike the book of documents, Tōju’s explication of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* emphasizes the centrality of humans within his worldview. Humans are said to be the essence of the divine process of the heavens, and as such, all things were created for the purpose of sustaining human. In another entry, he explains further,

“The Great Void (*taikyo*),<sup>40</sup> the heavens and earth, and people and things, are simply [categories] put in place to distinguish them [from each other]. To use the metaphor of the [various parts] in a plant, the Great void represents the roots, heavens and earth represent the stem. People are none other than the fruit and flowers, with all other things (*banbutsu*) the leaves. It is because of this, [if] people were to lose their virtue (ch. *ren*; jp. *jin*) and descend into the category of beasts, the flowers will not bloom to fruits [and the plant will cease to exist]. If people truly do not [maintain] their virtue and the leaves will wither in the same way.”<sup>41</sup>

The metaphorical association of “people” with fruits and plants makes salient the centrality of “humans”. Not only are people named as the goal of all other “components,” the reversal of the botanical relations between each “part,” in which the

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<sup>39</sup> Nakae Tōju, *TSZ Vol. 1* (Tokyo: Kōbundō, 1976), p. 246

<sup>40</sup> 太虚. The originary “space” in which the essence of all things, Qi, emanates from.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

“withering” of flowers are said to affect the whole plant, too alludes to the very idea that people are both the purpose as well as the key constituent for the continuity of the “plant”. We need to also take note the importance of the “surface” in this understanding of the plant/human. It appears that the withering of the plant determines the whole being of the plant, a curious importance attached to the surface of the plant – its appearance determines its state – instead of our “modern” understanding of the symptomatic symbolism associated with withering.

The language Tōju employs — specifically, his linking of humans with the “divine processes” — is distinctive when compared to his Neo-Confucian counterparts who adhere to the Zhu Xi school of Neo-Confucianism. As is widely known, Zhu Xi repudiated gods and demons as least important in the understanding of the workings of the world. Thus, in this sense, Tōju was quite unlike the supposedly “orthodox” version of Song Confucianism during his time. Yamashita Ryuji has pointed out that despite being initially schooled in the basics of Zhu Xi Confucianism, Tōju gradually grew to be critical of its metaphysical and formalist approach to the world. According to Yamashita, it is because of this gradual discontent with Zhu Xi Confucianism, Tōju placed greater emphasis on the Five Classics instead of the Four Books (Confucius, Mencius, Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean) championed by Zhu Xi. The reason for this, Yamashita argues, is due to Tōju’s “recognition of the existence of the gods and the deepening of his interest in the mystical and the non-rational.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Yamashita Ryuji, “Nakae Tōju’s Religious Thought,” trans. David A. Dilworth, in *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 309-311 and p. 324. Yamashita’s work attempts to draw parallels between Tōju’s writings and other “religious thought” in order to show Tōju’s supposed recognition of a singular creative force.

Accordingly, the assumption that “people are the spirit of all things” is due to this recognition of the mystical and singular “nature” that humans too share with the cosmos. This assumption of singular nature that humans share with the gods can be glimpsed through one of his most famous treatises, *Okina Mondō* or “Questions directed at the Wise Old Man”.

In this work, written in the quintessential format of a master answering his student’s questions, Nakae Tōju again claims early in the text that people are the spirit of all things (*hito wa banbutsu no rei*). This observation, according to him, can be derived from the “fact” that “[i]n humans, there is a basic spiritual treasure (*reihō*) that is unsurpassed (*musō*) in this world (*tenka*).” This “treasure,” he goes on to explain, is the “basic potential of attaining virtue (*shi’itoku yōdō*).” This general treasure is innate in all humans, “in line with the heavens above, and the four seas (beneath the heavens).”<sup>43</sup> It is the *natural essence* in humans that enables them to harmonize Confucian principles. As Tōju further elaborates, if one nurtures this potential, and “practices it in [...] one’s body, the body will be harmonious (*osamari*); if one were to use it to upkeep the heart, the heart will be clarified.” The reason people are the spirit of all things according to Tōju is therefore precisely this “naturally occurring” – almost innate – nature that allows humans to be already and potentially in line with the heavens and the world around them.

This seemingly circular definition of *reihō* (spiritual treasure) as naturally present in the body is further complicated by the possibility of losing it. As Tōju explains, humans need to maintain and protect the existence of this treasure within them:

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<sup>43</sup> Nakae Tōju, *TSZ* Vol. 3, p. 61.

“If we were to protect our [*reihō*] well, rulers would be able to continue to reap the benefits of the four seas; subjects would continue to receive good fortune from the country; aristocrats will continue to prosper, warriors will receive fame; and commoners will be able to accumulate (wealth) as well. There will be nothing more joyous than this [state of affairs]! [...] If one were to discard such a treasure, it would mean abandoning the path of humanity (*ningen no michi*), and not merely just this abandonment of humanity, but also that of the path of the heavens and earth. Furthermore, it is also not to act in accordance with the spiritual processes of the Great Void (*taikyo*). The Great void, the three absolutes (*sansai*; heaven, earth, people), the universe (*uchū*), the gods and demons (*kishin*), the creative [force], life and death — *all these things are dependent upon this treasure within humans*. It is therefore the job of the Confucian to investigate and clarify (*motome-manabu*) this treasure.”<sup>44</sup>

As indicated by Yamashita, Tōju links the originary Great Void, the gods and demon, creative forces, and most importantly humans, in order to foreground the imperative and foundational nature of the “spiritual treasure” within humans. However, rather than characterizing this simply as a form of “religious thought” as Yamashita did, I propose that these links drawn by Tōju between different theological levels of the cosmos were merely to foreground the importance of the human body since, as is evident in the passages above, central to Tōju’s theory of the world is the human body as an entity that innately possesses the potential of achieving the virtue that harmonizes the universe.

As is widely known, towards the end of his life, Tōju had very much confirmed the alignment of his philosophy with Wang Yang Ming and the latter’s proposal that learning itself encompassed two aspects: words and, more importantly, action.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the exegetical aspect of learning central in the Zhu Xi Neo-Confucianism which is often

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<sup>44</sup> *TSZ* Vol.3, p. 62. Emphasis my own.

<sup>45</sup> As I mentioned earlier, Tōju is often hailed as the founder of the Yangming school in Japan, although this is up for debate. Here I follow Jean-Francois Soum’s interpretation that Tōju himself likely used Wang Yangming’s writings as a point of affirmation. See Herman Ooms, “Review of *Nakae Tōju et Kumazawa Banzan by Jean-Francois Soum*,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 28 (1) (2002): 190. According to Herman Oom’s summary of Soum’s work, “Tōju’s ‘conversion’ to Yangming philosophy toward the end of his life would better be called a “confirmation” of ideas he had come to call his own.”

adopted by most Neo-Confucian scholars in the early Edo Period, Wang Yang Ming sought to promote a certain embodiment of learning through the dimension of praxis. In other words, rather than explicating the meaning of a concept such as “filial piety” through the textual study of its meaning in the Four Books, Wang Yang Ming urged individuals to act upon the concept themselves, thus propounding the tenet of clarifying the concept through its material manifestation in their world. As scholars such as Barry D. Steben had pointed out, this emphasis on the role of learning through acting by Wang Yang Ming gave Tōju the much needed confirmation that the human body is the central constituent in the world.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, Tōju’s body as a medium of praxis is clearly not merely the physical visible anatomical body but a discursive one. As Tōju explains in *Okina Mondō*, the body is “that which is borne out of the depths of one’s heart/mind (*kokoro*)” (77). Despite being in line with the Zhu Xi scholars of his time (such as Hayashi Razan) who emphasize the heart<sup>47</sup> as the primary medium in understanding Confucian concepts, Tōju’s theory includes the body as an equal if not more important determinant of one’s search for virtue. This dualism is clear when he asserts that “an enlightened eye does not distinguish between interior and exterior (of one’s body), the invisible-visible (*yūmei*) and the existent-inexistent (*u-mu*).” By emphasizing the spiritual treasure found in all humans within a cosmological framework — that which links together all the several crucial concepts in his Confucian theology — Tōju

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<sup>46</sup> Barry D Steben, “Nakae Tōju and the Birth of Wang Yang-Ming learning in Japan,” *Monumenta Serica* 46 (1998): pp. 239-240.

<sup>47</sup> That is *kokoro*, which does not simply translate to the contemporary sense of heart as the nexus of emotions. In the Edo period, *kokoro* came to mean the mind as well, as in the “thinking” component of the individual. The question of whether *kokoro* is part of a functional organ (for instance, the “brain” in our contemporary context), is beside the point. One may say that *kokoro* is a posited core of thought processes within an individual.

therefore postulates that the body becomes the natural receptacle which binds together in its treasure the correct path presented in all humans. In this sense, *hito wa banbutsu no rei* is not merely a creation of an ontological viewpoint in which to substantiate and reiterate the Confucian emphasis on social relations (such as filial piety).<sup>48</sup> On the contrary, it is the centering of the physical object of the human body as the analytical center of the phenomenal world in both metaphorical and literal senses as I have highlighted above. Not only are people’s hearts – their “minds” – important, their bodies are just as crucial as well.

It is therefore no coincidence that the imaginary interlocutor-student of the Master’s teachings in *Okina Mondō* has the pseudonym the “fulfillment of one’s body” (*Tai-Jū*), made up of the characters for body (*karada/tai*) and ‘filling-up’ or ‘sufficient’ (*jū*). In other words, a proper student (according to him) is one that seeks to possess a “sufficient body.” It is also noteworthy that the character *tai* in the pseudonym is not the usual character used today for the body (体) but instead, an archaic one with an explicitly bodily radical (躰), which, again, foregrounds the bodily aspect of one’s being. At the same time, this *tai* (with the bodily radical) is not the only character used to refer to the concept of the body. Tōju also deploys the character *mi* 身 which is used to refer to the vague sense of body and its corresponding social stratum (as in the modern word for status, *mibun* (身分)). By differentiating between *mi* and the archaic character of *tai* (with an explicitly bodily radical), it appears that Tōju was seemingly hinting at

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<sup>48</sup> Tōju anchors filial piety as the foundational manifestation of this treasure. According to him, this treasure did not originally have a name despite being naturally found in the heavens, earth, and humans. Sages of old then gave it the name of *Xiao* (*kyō*; filial piety) in order to teach people and allow them to attain virtue.

the relation between the Confucian subject and the physical, visible and “medical” body, a relation that is, as I will show shortly, central in his theory.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout *Okina Mondō*, *tai* with the explicit bodily radical is used as though it is in contradistinction to *mi*. This is obvious in various sections referring specifically to the physical body in which *tai* is used with greater frequency. In other passages, this explicit use of *tai* is further complicated by the sometimes interchangeable usage by Tōju of it with *mi* 身, which, as I have mentioned, often encompasses a range of meanings from the physical body, to the metaphysical ontological positionality of the human subject in question. Instead of assuming both concepts are interchangeable, I contend that the ways in which they are deployed provides an entry into understanding Tōju’s attempt to conceptualize the human body. Thus, by dissecting *Okina Mondō* through this analysis of the difference between *mi* and *tai*, I will show how, in Tōju, we see the centering of a specific bodily conception of “human” that forms the basis for eighteenth century *kokugaku* scholars’ theories of nature, poetry and the human subject.

To reiterate, on a general level, Tōju uses the character *mi* 身 to refer to the body in the broadest philosophical sense. In other words, as a concept, it encompasses connotations that are at once sociological and ontological. Lurking at the background of this general usage is of course, the civilizing impulse in his treatise. *Okina Mondō*, even in Tōju’s interpretation of Song Confucianism, which can be said to be far from orthodox,<sup>50</sup> is a treatise that seeks to educate and civilize people in order to enable them

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<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, a large portion of Tōju’s writings were commentaries on Sinitic medical texts.

<sup>50</sup> Tōju was initially employed as a retainer-scholar but later quit his position to return to his hometown. There are various speculations as to the reason for this. Some historians feel it was likely because of the heterodox nature of his teachings.

to participate in the ideal social worldview of Confucian prescribed relationships.<sup>51</sup> As with his contemporaries, Tōju anchors the epitome of human relationships in the display of filial piety. In other words, the “spirit treasure” evident in all humans in its ideal embodied form is the exact relationship a filial child has with his parents. Accordingly, this treasure is formless: “[When the treasure is] in the heavens, it becomes the way of the heavens; in the earth, it becomes the way of the earth; in humans, it thus also becomes the way of humans. Originally this treasure has no name. However, in order to educate the populace [of this Way], the sages of old gave it the name ‘filial piety.’”<sup>52</sup> Thus despite the fact that Tōju’s rhetoric does not specifically highlight the direct link between one’s “treasure” and *tai* (with the bodily radical), the “treasure,” when manifested in the conceptual relational body — *mi* — is most clearly evident in the embodiment of the ideal relation of filial piety through one’s physical body, *tai*.

The prime example which Tōju discusses too reveals this similar emphasis on the concept of the body. Unlike the traditional allegory of a story about singular acts of filial piety towards a person’s parents seen in other treatises, Tōju discusses in *Okina Mondō* the “everyday situation” of a pregnant woman displaying filial piety. He argues that a pregnant mother should practice what he calls “*taikyō* 胎教,” which he explains as “providing didactically for the child while he/she is in the mother’s womb.”<sup>53</sup> Although Tōju never defines explicitly this act of “providing didactically,” it is still possible for us to trace its conceptual boundaries. According to Tōju, *taikyō* begins at

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<sup>51</sup> In the preface to *Okina Mondō*, Tōju states that the text is meant for the everyday usage as a guide to the Way.

<sup>52</sup> *TSZ* Vol. 3, p. 64.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87.

the experience of pregnancy itself. It consists of recognizing and remembering the experience of one's body (*tai*) during pregnancy, in particular, the general weakness felt by the mother during this period of pregnancy in “which her body becomes [fragile as though it possesses] the “ten illnesses and nine deaths”.<sup>54</sup> In other words, it is this momentary brush with death that should be remembered bodily. Although Tōju does not express it explicitly in this section, in a later section on the reason for the many different social standings of people, Tōju postulates that this moment of *taikyō* is important because despite the fact that “everyone's state of affairs — whether they are wealthy or in poverty, noble or wretched, one's life span — is pre-determined by disposition (*bunsū*),<sup>55</sup> this very disposition is in-turn determined by the ten months in [their mother's] womb.”<sup>56</sup> Even though he is quick to qualify this statement by adding that there are many other factors that determine one's disposition (such as one's relationship to *Yin-Yang*, family member's dispositions, and so forth), Tōju nonetheless stands by his assertion that the ten months<sup>57</sup> of *taikyō* is the most critical in the formation of what he calls one's “real” (*jitsu*) disposition (as opposed to the events that happen over one's life which he calls “false” or “empty (*kyō*) disposition).<sup>58</sup> In short, this “real

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. For the father of the child, Tōju emphasizes remembering the hardship of providing for the child and his mother.

<sup>55</sup> 分数. This literally means “status” or “caste”, because it implies the notion of being separated from others depending on one's state of affairs. I have chosen to translate it as disposition because this appears to refer not so much to the actual state of affairs but the innate characteristics a person possesses. It should also be noted that the ideological notion that samurai often claim their superiority is often based on this innate disposition. Perhaps Tōju was attempting to show the overlapping of these two aspects in one concept.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>57</sup> Ten lunar months that is, which would roughly correspond to our modern acceptance that nine Gregorian months is the average length of a pregnancy.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 154. Accordingly, this interaction between real and false is the reason there are moments in which good people meet misfortune, and other moments when bad people are able to garner favorable situations.

disposition” is formed through the process of *taikyō*, in which the nourishment of one’s pregnant body (*tai*) is the direct nourishment of one’s offspring. It is in this everyday sense of remembrance, a re-living of the “sharing” (in terms of dividing) one’s life through the “division” of one’s own body with the infant, that serves as the ultimate everyday example of one’s alignment with the Way. As Tōju explains:

“Our bodies, since they were [also] received from our parents, are in other words equal to our parent’s bodies. Even if we were to split this body given by our parents into our children’s bodies, each child’s body is, still fundamentally part of our parent’s bodies.”<sup>59</sup>

To put it differently, Tōju’s understanding of the socio-ontological body *mi*, is best exemplified by this “sharing” of bodies (*tai*). In this very instance, *mi* works on at least two discursive levels. It refers firstly to the appropriate socio-ontological and ethical body that is in line with the Way. Through the education of one’s children — which begins at conception — one is able to display his/her gratitude to one’s parents in a filial manner. This is the perhaps the reason why Tōju reminds his “student” Taijū that, “[t]o neglect the right teachings for our children and cause them to go down inappropriate paths is to toss our parent’s body (*tai*) down the wrongful path (*akudō* 悪道).”<sup>60</sup> Secondly, through the actual encephalation of one’s child, the physical body (*tai*) becomes a point of mediation between one’s fore-bearers and one’s descendants. Here, the act of returning gratitude to one’s parents is, according to Tōju, an act that should be affirmed through one’s bodily experience, and in the process of *taikyō*, the bodily deed of guiding one’s children from conception is the affirmative epitome of such a filial and bodily

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

endeavor. In other words, in the practice of *taikyō*, the socio-ontological body *mi* mirrors that of *tai*, the physical anatomical body. This ideal state of bodily experience, or in Tōju's own words, *tainin* (躰認; lit. bodily confirmation), is exactly the centrality of the Way.<sup>61</sup>

By defining the way in which filial piety proceeds as ultimately a bodily affair, Tōju therefore provides us the basis in understanding why he is able to substantiate that people are the spirit of all things (*hito wa banbutsu no rei*). According to him, “the hearts (*kokoro*) and body (*mi*) are the material embodiment (*jittai* 実躰) of filial piety and the eternal truth (i.e. people are the spirit of all things) is [achieved] through practicing the Way through one's moving of his/her body (*mi wo tate michi wo okonafu wo motte*).” In this case, when a person is in line with the Way, *tai* and *mi* are aligned vis-a-vis each other — they are one and the same. His proclamation is succinct: “There is no filial piety without the body (*mi*), and no body (*mi*) without filial piety.” And therefore, “to move one's body (*mi wo tatsu*), and practice filial piety, is the main method of the Way.”<sup>62</sup> This “moving of one's body” is defined as any motion related to the physical body (*tai*), which includes “seeing, listening, speaking, or [simply] moving.” That is, “to lift one's hand, and to move one's legs, is also part of the logic (*dōri*) of filial

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 79. As though extending this idea infinitely, the Way is later characterized by Tōju in consanguineous terms. When asked about the everyday applicability of his theory, he answered, “even though there are differences in disposition granted by the heavens 稟賦, [...] originally [everyone] belonged to the same womb and hence are consanguineous (骨肉同胞). [...] Thus, there should not be any hatred between each other.” (Ibid., p. 90) When asked about the everyday applicability of his theory, he answered, “even though there are differences in disposition granted by the heavens 稟賦, [...] originally [everyone] belonged to the same womb and hence are consanguineous (骨肉同胞). [...] Thus, there should not be any hatred between each other.” (Ibid.)

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., pp. 66-67.

piety.”<sup>63</sup> As he claims elsewhere, the importance of “moving one’s body derives from [the fact] that originally, our bodies were given by our parents, and to define our bodies as that of our parents and our parents’ as ours — even if one were to understand that bodies are merely transcendent [entities] (*karisome ni mo*) — we will [still] come to the conclusion that there is no one body that acts without righteousness and apart from the Way.”<sup>64</sup> Herein lies the logic behind Tōju’s assertion that people are the spirit of all things. Since our bodies and our parent’s bodies are defined as ontologically and ethically inseparable, and since this relation is the exact embodiment of filial piety – the name for the nameless “Great Void”, Tōju concludes that “our bodies are by consequence originally the incarnations of the godly processes of the Great Void (*taikyo shinmei no bunshin henge* 太虚神明の分身変化).” Therefore, “in order to clarify the essence of these processes,[...] we need to move our bodies. [...] This is what [one] mean[s] by the Way.”<sup>65</sup>

On that account, our bodies — the equivalence of *mi* and *tai* — due to the fact that they are the consummation of all the godly processes of the world, are not strictly “ours” in the sense of being one’s possession. That is to say, it is because of the necessary alignment between *mi* and *tai*, one’s body is linked to the broader Way of the cosmos. This is perhaps the reason Tōju is critical of what he calls the “private self” (*watakushi*) or the thinking that one’s body belongs only to oneself (*wagamono*). More importantly, we see in Tōju the centering of the physical human body *tai* – due to its alignment with the socio-ontologically “right” body *mi* – within his creation of a

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

particular view of the natural world. It is also possible to note that despite his usage of both *mi* and *tai*, as well as his postulation that the ideal state of affairs occurs when *mi* and *tai* are aligned with each other, Tōju's framework privileges *tai* (physical body) as the central *topos* in which *mi* (i.e. social position) is able to fulfill itself. In many senses then, Tōju's emphasis on one's physical body as one that possesses a kind of generality allows for later scholars such as Kaibara Ekiken to consider the physical body as embodying the concept of *hito wa banbutsu no rei*.

### ***Kaibara Ekiken and the Alignment of Medical Body with Philosophical Body***

Following Nakae Tōju, Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714) too echoes the tenet of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* (people are the spirit of all things). Born into a family of low ranking retainers, Ekiken was sent to Kyoto by the provincial authorities (*han*), and subsequently employed as an advisor to the provincial lord or daimyo of Fukuoka domain of the Chikuzen province (modern day Fukuoka prefecture). Perhaps due to his secure source of income as a relatively high ranking Confucian scholar-official, he was very productive towards the later years of his long life. In addition, as can be seen from his writings, Ekiken's works were not simply interested in clarifying the Confucian Way, and it is known that from a young age, he was exposed to thought from various fields of knowledge. Introduced to the main precepts of Zhu Xi Confucianism by his older brother Sonzai and made to read the medical texts of his father's time well before he

was an adult (by their standards), these formative years proved to be crucial to expanding the scope of his thinking later in his life.<sup>66</sup>

A cursory look at the works that had written over the course of his life shows not only this breadth but also the depth of his thinking. Texts he had written ranged from medical treatises to philological dictionaries, didactic texts for women to philosophical pieces elucidating the Confucian Way. Despite this wide range of topics, we see that for Ekiken, the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* is central to his overall thought. For instance, we see the centrality of this phrase in his philological dictionary *Nihon Shakumyō* (1699), a work in which he discusses the etymology of “native” words and their pronunciations. The text is arranged in an encyclopedic form similar to those of the pharmacological field of *honzōgaku* (ch. *bencaoxue*) with entries organized according to different aspects of the world, ranging from “heavenly phenomena” to “human affairs” and “beasts and birds.” In the entry on “people” (*hito*), he states “people are the spirit of all things (*hito wa banbutsu no rei*) without equal, and because their existence is singular under the heavens, the meaning of people (*hito*) derives from the sound for singular (*hitotsu*).” Here, the philosophy behind the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* guides his explanation on why the graph is pronounced in the particular way. Instead of attempting a philological examination of the graph to discover how it could have been pronounced in the past, Ekiken allows the conceptual boundaries of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* to drive his definition. As if in agreement with Tōju, the singular position of

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<sup>66</sup> Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Moral and Spiritual Cultivation in Japanese Neo-Confucianism: The life and Thought of Kaibara Ekken* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 33.

people in the concept of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* is reproduced in his definition. This is clear when he goes on to add,

“[People are] also [pronounced as *hito*] because there is nothing in the heavens more noble (*tōtoki*) and nothing in the realm more precious than people; [people] are ‘friends of the sun’ (*hi no tomo*; 日の友). This is why the graph [for people], with the *mo* omitted, is pronounced *hito*.”

This additional definition, instead of following the logic of phonetical parallelism in “people as singular,” is nonetheless predicated on the notion of people as the spirit of all things and equivalent to the sole singular existence between the skies and the land – the sun. In the next entry on “subjects” (*tami*),<sup>67</sup> Ekiken utilizes the same conceptual move. As if as an extension to his definition of *hito*, he states,

“[The word] ‘subjects’ (*tami*) means “to be ‘precious’” (*tōtomi*). What this means is [simply], “subjects” are the spirit of all things (*tami wa banbutsu no rei nari*). Of the myriad of things [in this world], people (*hito*) should be the most respected (*tōtomu/tafutomu*). They should not be despised. The sound of “subjects” (*tami*) is formed through omitting the two syllabi in the middle [of *tafutomi* (the noun form of the verb “to respect” (*tafutomu*))]. The character *tami* was sometimes read (*yomishi*) as *ohon-takara* (lit. August treasure)<sup>68</sup> and this too represents this meaning. [In other words,] *tami* and *hito* are the same things, [and] to the heavens, they are the [simply] people (*hito*). There is also the explanation that *tami* is derived from the phrase ‘the seed of the fields’ (*ta no mi*). But this explanation does not conform to [the evidence] laid out above. If this meaning was used as personal language (*jigo*) in antiquity, it was probably a reckless usage and hence must be a mistake.”<sup>69</sup>

For Ekiken, “subjects” (*tami*) and “people” (*hito*) are the same, as they are both derived from the same root – “precious”. As if there is no distinction between the two characters,

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<sup>67</sup> While the graph *tami* is also often translated as “people,” I have chosen to translate it as “subject”. This is because, at least in its usual textual meaning, it is often used to designate those who do not have direct possession of political power. Thus, as a character, *tami* is always juxtaposed with those in power such as ministers, emperor, and refers to people who are “subjects” of the governing authorities. In the context of Edo society, this would refer to those that are not warriors or aristocrats. However, Ekiken equates *tami* with *hito* as we shall see shortly.

<sup>68</sup> Interestingly Ekiken takes this meaning from the Heian text *Wamyō ruijūshō* (A.D 938; usually abbreviated as *Wamyōshō*), which writes *ohon-takara* in its *manyōgana* form.

<sup>69</sup> Kaibara Ekiken, *Ekiken Zenshū* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Nihon Tosho Sentaa, 1979), p. 29.

Ekiken reemphasizes that people are the spirit of all things since even as “subjects,” they are the “august treasures” that “should not be despised.” In order to reassert this, Ekiken denies the alternative explanation of “subjects” as “the seeds of the fields” even though *tami* appears to conform more to that in the time that Ekiken wrote *Nihon Shakumyō*. Even though he claimed it is because this explanation does not conform to the evidence put forth, it is clear that this rejection was based more on its non-conformity with *hito wa banbutsu no rei* than with it as a “mistake” in usage.

Ekiken’s linking of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* to the etymology of the word for “person” or “people” proved to be foundational in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Arai Hakuseki, in his “dictionary” *Tōga* (1717) for instance, claims that in antiquity, *hito* is means the place that the spirit (*rei*) stops (止; *to*) and agrees that due to this, etymology, corresponds to the idea that *hito wa banbutsu no rei*.<sup>70</sup> Hattori Taihō’s (1770 – 1846) *Myōgentsū* (1835) too follows a similar line of reasoning when he stated that *hito* probably came from the combination of spirit (靈; *hi*) and “place” (処; *tokoro*), thus meaning the place in which *spirit* is housed. He also cites *hito wa banbutsu no rei* as evidence.<sup>71</sup> This definition of people as “treasures” and “precious” continued to be used even as late as the early years of the Meiji period. In other words, not only did this formulation influence *kokugaku* scholars such as Norinaga as we shall see shortly, it also laid the foundations of how later scholars continued to define *hito*.

What is perhaps more important in our context is how this persistence of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* as the defining instance of “people/person” undergirds *kokugaku*

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<sup>70</sup> Arai Hakuseki, *Tōga* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Hanshichi, 1903), p. 129.

<sup>71</sup> Hattori Taihō, *Myōgentsū* Vol. 1 (*jō*) (Edo: Waizumiya Kichibei, 1835), p. 19(ウ).

scholars' attempts to define the "native" body. As we have seen earlier, Mabuchi had vehemently criticized this view as completely *unnatural* – and that people are "not quite like" the "unchanging heavens and earth" and their animal inhabitants. Unsurprisingly this thought is also echoed in his treatise on poetry *Kaikō*: "Since the heavens and earth has not changed, the birds and beasts, plants and trees too have not changed. Why then should people be seen as different in the past and present?" What Mabuchi was calling our attention to is that in defining people as the spirit of all things, "people" are alienated from their immediate surroundings and reified into a concept, thereby blinding them from the truth that they are in fact very much the same as the world around them – unchanged, *natural* beings. The insistence of defining *hito* as a kind of teleological end (in the Kantian sense) of "history" and therefore placing its referent "people" as developing independently from the world is exactly what Mabuchi is problematizing. It is noteworthy at this point to highlight how the critique of Zhu Xi Confucianism is facilitated by the philosophies of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi (what scholars nowadays call "Daoism"). Specifically, Lao-Zhuang philosophy allowed Mabuchi to tie together the notion of "natural-ness" with a pre-ontological and conceptual definition of people within the world that is quite different from the definitions held by Ekiken and Tōju. As this will be discussed in depth when I touch upon Ueda Akinari in Chapter Three, it will suffice to say at this juncture that Mabuchi's formulation of the "natural" person is also accepted by most *kokugaku* scholars in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Norinaga for instance in the section of *Naobi no Mitama* (The Spirit of Rectification) states that "People came to life through the august spirit of the Musubi-no-kami, and thus they naturally know and

perform well those acts which they should be expected to perform.” He then went on to explain in detail what he meant by this:

“All living things in this world, even lowly birds and insects instinctively know well and perform those acts which they must each perform, and this comes about through the august spirit of the Musubi-no-kami. *Human beings are born into this world as especially gifted beings, and in correspondence with these gifts, know what they are supposed to know, and do what they are supposed to do...* If one claims that people cannot know or do anything without being taught, then this means that they are inferior to birds and insects. Acts of humanity [such as] righteousness ... should be innate to human beings...”<sup>72</sup>

It is clear that Norinaga extends Mabuchi’s argument using almost similar language. While he accepts Mabuchi’s assertion of the original naturalness of humans within the natural world around them, he retains the special position according to people as also seen in *hito wa banbutsu no rei*. This can be further observed by his reading of the meaning of the name of the god Musubi-no-kami. Instead of the regular characters of *musubi* 産巢日, which were characters representing phonic sounds, Norinaga interprets these sounds to mean “generative spirit” (*musubi*; 産靈): “the divine force that gave rise to all things.”<sup>73</sup> When placed in the context above, of the centrality of the phrase *hito wa banbutsu no rei* within Edo society then, we see that Norinaga’s rendering of people “gifted” with the “generative spirit” of Musubi-no-kami appears to be part of that discourse. As with Tōju and Ekiken, Norinaga upholds that people (*hito*) have inborn in themselves an innate ability that makes them superior vis-à-vis other entities in the world – they “know what they are supposed to know, and do what they are supposed to do.” At the same time, instead of following Ekiken’s and Tōju’s call for the need of

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<sup>72</sup> Translation taken from Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki-den Book 1*, trans. Ann Wehmeyer (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 1997), p. 232. (Emphasis/Italics are mine).

<sup>73</sup> Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki-den*, in *Motoori Norinaga Zenshū* Vol. 9 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shōbō, 1975), p. 129. Translation is taken from Ann Wehmeyer’s, in *Kojiki-den Book 1*, p. 245.

constant praxis in order to recover this innate spirit of all things (*rei*), Norinaga follows Mabuchi in imbuing people's *bodies* with the *possibility of achieving this natural* ability that is already *a priori* to their becoming of social beings. The temporal difference is crucial. Tōju and Ekiken posited that people are by definition intrinsically “good” and this “goodness” enables them to toil in bodily praxis of filial piety in order to move towards the goal of achieving sagehood, a line of reasoning that follows the Wang Yangming school of Neo-Confucianism. In contradistinction, Norinaga posits an instinctive human being that is innately and rhythmically coeval with the world, *thus making him/her as a superior being*. The philosophical and practice work necessary then is not bodily praxis as with Tōju's and Ekiken's philosophies; instead, it is to “peer” within oneself and recover the natural “body” buried under layers of Sinitic influence.

This attempt to recover a natural body in sync with the world is what modern scholars have pointed out as the discovery of a subjective “interiority,” an ontological rendering that is defined vis-à-vis the outside world. Given that I have shown how “nature” – notion of being-in-the-world – plays an important role vis-à-vis Mabuchi and Norinaga's determination of *hito*, I argue that this distinction between “interiority” and “exteriority,” and by extension between “private” and “public,” is questionable at least to the extent in which the question of the body is involved. Here, I return to a reading of Ekiken's famous treatise, *Yōjōkun* (“Precepts for the preservation of one's health, 1712), a work which he wrote towards the end of his life. *Yōjōkun* is part of a series of *kunmono* (lit. books for teaching), written primarily for the intention to educate the masses. Because of this purpose, *kunmono* were written mainly in “Japanese” (*kana*) script instead of the more conventional Sinitic script (*kanbun*) that was often the choice

for medical treatises. Through these *kunmono*, it is clear that towards the later decades of his life, Ekiken was more concerned with the plight of the common people around him,<sup>74</sup> unlike most Confucian official-scholars during his time who were more interested in the questions of governance.<sup>75</sup> The purpose of *Yōjōkun* was no different. Ekiken's purpose in writing the text was to educate people of the importance of *yōjō* or the maintenance of health. Ekiken claimed that “people still do not understand the techniques of *yōjō*; [they do not understand that] the reason they die or commit errors (related to their health) is because of this ignorance of *yōjō*.”<sup>76</sup> Yet, it is clear that for Ekiken, the question of self-care on the part of people is predicated on the ethical relations – governance – people should upkeep. In this regard, Ekiken's echoing of people's bodies are gifts from their parents in the beginning of *Yōjōkun* is important in this overall formulation. In addition to the relation between human actions – such as filial piety – and principle (*li*), Ekiken added the dimension of the body as a main place in which this relation plays out. The body – as a microcosm of the true world – thus becomes a necessary component in upholding Confucian ethical relations. More specifically, the body and the life (*sei*) in one's body has to be maintained because of the necessity of upholding the most important ethical relation of filial piety.

Logically then, the *act* of maintaining one's life (*yōjō*) becomes a central aspect of Ekiken's espousal of the Confucian Way. According to Okada Takehiko, despite

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<sup>74</sup> Ekiken wrote extensive public proclamations (like *Onna-daigaku* which was meant to “educate” women of the “greatness” of self-discipline) and promoted local schools and community compacts. Given that he also wrote for the benefit of the commoners, Mary Tucker compares his motivations with Zhu Xi's own attempts to “foster public education.” See Mary Tucker, p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> Okada Takehiko, “Practical learning in the Chu His School: Yamazaki Ansai and Kaibara Ekken,” in *Principal and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning*, ed. Wm Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 277, 282.

<sup>76</sup> Kaibara Ekiken, *Yōjōkun* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2015), p. 292.

Ekiken's general agreement with Zhu Xi's championing of principle (*li*) as the main concept of analysis, Ekiken's emphasis on the concrete manifestation of principle into actions thus exalt *qi* (or material force) – the material and concrete embodiment of *li* in the world – as an equally important concept. The centrality of *qi* in Ekiken's later treatises, and his overall interest in documenting the world, has led scholars such as Mary Tucker to characterize his philosophy as a “monism of Qi,” a concern that arose due to his “interest in articulating the dynamic relationship between the cosmological and human orders [in the world].”<sup>77</sup> However, as Federico Marcon has pointed out, Ekiken had not foregone the Zhu Xi view that principle (*li*) is still underlying all concrete reality, and despite the Ekiken's call for action – maintaining one's body in this case – as the main praxis of Confucian learning, *li* continues to be the concept that requires elucidation and clarification. As he claims, this is closer to what Hegel calls “concrete universality” than a monism of *qi*, because, “[f]or Ekiken, scholars have no choice but to infer the logic of *ri* (*li*) from concrete situations, or particular instances, in the way each thing relates to everything else. It is not that human beings have no direct understanding of *ri* (*li*) in its abstractness, but *ri* (*li*) itself can exist only in action, conjoined with the material energy of *ki* (*qi*).”<sup>78</sup>

Marcon's reading illuminates a crucial dimension within Ekiken's thought, and that is, the relation between abstract principle and material force is not merely that of a

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<sup>77</sup> Mary Tucker, p. 65. Tucker also argues that Ekiken was part of a broader tradition of Neo-Confucian thinking that attempted to overcome the dualism of ideas and things through the “monism of Qi”. According to her Ekiken sought to “overcome the dualism [while] at the same time ... affirm[ing] the reality of physical things.” (pp. 11-12.) See also her introduction to her translation of Ekiken's *Taigiroku* in Kaibara Ekken, *The Philosophy of Qi: The record of great doubts*, trans. Mary Evelyn Tucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 26.

<sup>78</sup> Federico Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015), p. 100.

mirror image. For him, principle cannot be known in its totality. That is to say, principle is itself always present yet eludes one's grasping of it due to the implausibility of figuring its concrete existence. It is important to note in passing the proximity of Ekiken's thought to those held by important figures of the *kogaku* or "ancient learning" movement, particularly that of Itō Jinsai (1627-1705). As Naoki Sakai had pointed out in his reading of Jinsai, unlike the primacy of *li* that Zhu Xi metaphysics privileges, Jinsai argued for the implausibility of feelings (one manifestation of *qi*) to be controlled. In other words, despite the notion that everything arises out of *li* and *qi* is merely the concrete "expression" of this abstract principle, Sakai claims that for Jinsai, there is no guarantee that *qi* will conform to *li*.<sup>79</sup> Although we do know that Ekiken had in fact met Jinsai, and that he harbored great doubt towards the latter's philosophy, the similarity of his view of *qi* to Jinsai's cannot be overlooked.<sup>80</sup> As with Jinsai, this privileging of *qi* on Ekiken's part subverts the Zhu Xi axiom (according to Ekiken's contemporaries) of abstract principle determining concrete material force. In the context of Ekiken's *kunmono*, we can then postulate that, for him, the investigation of *qi* is not only an extension of the analysis of *li*, but it is only through that very investigation of *qi* can

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<sup>79</sup> Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 64-66.

<sup>80</sup> According to Okada Takehiko, Ekiken had made frequent trips to Kyoto (the location of Jinsai's school) and mingled with many of the famous scholars of the time. Using Ekiken's diary, Okada shows how in 1668, Ekiken had a discussion with Jinsai in which he disagreed with the latter's view. Despite there being "no evidence that the two had any direct contact" thereafter, Ekiken continued to be physically meet scholars who were close to the Itō family. Okada also pointed out that in *Taigiroku*, Ekiken appears to have held similar views to Jinsai and postulated that "it may have been that Ekiken simply took them directly from Jinsai even though [...] he remained severely critical of Jinsai's position to the end" despite his interpretations "growing more and more similar to the *Kogaku* school." (See Okada, "Yamazaki Ansai and Kaibara Ekiken," pp. 265-266). Mary Tucker also held similar views. She noted that it may well be possible that the reason why Ekiken did not publish *Taigiroku* during his life time was because "at a minimum it appears to reflect his concern that he would be identified with the Ancient Learning (*kogaku*) scholars, especially Itō Jinsai, who had adopted a position regarding *qi* close to his own. (See Mary Tucker, "Introduction," in *Taigiroku*, pp. 31-32). It should also be noted that Ogyū Sorai (166-1728) had also pointed out the proximity of Ekiken's thought to his. (See Okada, p. 263).

there be any refining of individual proximity to *li*. It is this refining of people by *themselves* – a praxis – through the understanding of and moving one’s body within their concrete situatedness (which is dependent on the *kunmono* in question) that places them within the Neo-Confucian path (way).

In *Yōjōkun*, this situatedness is explained in terms of the historical moment as well as one’s role within society. As expected, one’s role within society is largely based on the official social stratum of samurai-peasants-artisans-merchants, which is prescribed at birth. For instance, the samurai are supposed to practice *yōjō* via “moving their bodies” through “reading, learning, and the practicing of one’s martial skills such as horseback riding.” Peasants are supposed to “toil in the fields” and women in general are supposed to work hard in the domestic sphere. Yet, this is dependent on the exact historical moment. Ekiken argues that *yōjō* should be a practice for periods of “normalcy” (*tsune*). He explains that there are historical periods such as the period they are living in when everything appears “normal” (i.e. peaceful), and there are times in which “special conditions” (*hen*; lit. change) prevail. By emphasizing the possibility of periods of “special conditions”, Ekiken attempted to explain the need for (1) warrior rule in an era of “normalcy” as well as (2) the need to maintain their “skills” despite the lack of immediate need. As a scholar-official in service of his *han*, Ekiken clearly needed to include the strata of samurai-officials within his assertion of *yōjō* as an important everyday precept.

It is in this context that the notion of one’s “body” emerges in *Yōjōkun*. In order to draw similarities across different regimes of lifestyle which is based on one’s class, Ekiken had to conceptualize a “body” that writes across various particularities. In this

sense, even though there had been a preexisting discourse of *yōjō*, especially in the context of Daoist precepts, it is with Ekiken that we see a systematic study that attempts to place at the center of Edo period Confucian discourses on governance the question of self-care through one's body as a particular and general entity in the world. Unlike Tōju, Ekiken's body encompasses not merely the philosophical and the social, but also the anatomical, as we shall see in a moment. As I will argue later, this combination of social, philosophical and anatomical bodies into one concept will provide a basis for *kokugaku* scholars' own formulations, for it directs the Confucian proper body away from the abstract body towards it being in-line with nature.

For Ekiken, this formulation begins with the philosophical body which is at the same time, a social body. This can be glimpsed from a concept used early in the text, that of *tenchi fubo* (天地父母). As a complex noun, *tenchi fubo*, which combines the concepts of heaven-earth with that of parents, figures the natural Way of the world in the form of parent-child relations – that is the mirroring of the harmony of the world with that of filial piety – an idea that can be traced back to the *Analects*. This doubling of “parents” and “heaven-earth” is also seen in another one of his works, *Yamato Zokkun* (“Miscellaneous teachings for our Country”; 1708) – “The heavens and earth (*tenchi*) are the parents (*fubo*) of all things... what this means is that they are the bases (*konpon*) that gives birth to all things, and hence a “great parent” (*dai-fubo*)” – revealing how it usually formed a basic starting point for most of Ekiken's attempts to educate the masses. In the context of *Yōjokun*, as I have mentioned earlier, Ekiken argued that because of that “truth,” people's bodies derive from one's parents' bodies as well as from the world (*tenchi*). Due to this “blessing” that filters down through both one's parents as well as

one's natural disposition given by the natural world (*tenchi*), the maintenance of our bodies thus become an act of filial piety. At this point in the text, Ekiken's thought mirrors that of Tōju's. However, unlike Tōju who posited the equivalence of one's social body can be achieved through the movement of one's physical body, Ekiken however proposes the opposite: "since our bodies are to be maintained" as an act of filial piety, "our bodies are not merely our own." Thus, he imbues our physical bodies with a kind of sociality in themselves. He explains this *a priori* as such: "[our body is not merely ours] "because it is a gift (*mitama-mono*) from the natural world (*tenchi*), and a residuum (*nokoseru mi*) of our parent's bodies, [and since this is so] we should care for it by not allowing harm to come to it. By maintaining our body through *yōjō*, this will allow ourselves to fulfill our natural lifespan (*tennen*)."<sup>81</sup> In the same line of reasoning, Ekiken then concludes that to shorten one's prescribed lifespan is itself an unfilial act "as a person" (*hito to narite*). In short, one's way of "living in the world is [therefore] to *singularly* exhaust one's filial piety towards his/her parents and acting in line with the way of human ethics (*jinrin*) following the rightful principle of achieving one's prescribed longevity. In one sense then, the act of caring for one's body is connected to the greater cosmos of *tenchi* through its *meaning* as filial piety presented towards one's parents' bodies within our own. It may be argued then that the practice of *yōjō* can be defined as the maintaining of the natural world *within* our bodies in so much as our bodies are defined as a microcosm of the heavens-earth-parents.

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<sup>81</sup> Ekiken, *Yōjōkun*, p. 258. Ekiken uses *tennen* to refer to the prescribed lifespan at birth. The proper caring of one's life will allow this lifespan to fulfill its expected length. Conversely, the neglecting the regime of *yōjō* in one's life will conversely lead to the reduction of this natural prescribed lifespan.

On the one hand, this mirroring of the heavens and earth with the concept of biological parents, and hence one's body, is what allows Ekiken to shift the concept of *yōjō* to the center of Confucian praxis. On the other, this centering of *yōjō* is but a mere frame in which Ekiken puts forth a theory of the anatomical body within the discourse of what is proper to the Way – *Yōjōkun* was also as much a medical text as it is a philosophical and moral *kunmono*. Littered throughout the text are references to medical theories as well as medical concepts. In addition, the bulk of the text is focused on methods of healing and treatment – ranging from eating, exercises, to choosing a doctor and caring for the elderly (*yōrō*). It is thus necessary to position Ekiken within not only intellectual history, but also the discourse of medical thought in the period of his time. Instead of focusing on the composition of *Yōjōkun* within the context of Ekiken's ailing wife (as most scholars seem to do)<sup>82</sup> – the text was written in the years Ekiken was caring for his bed-ridden wife who eventually passed away, and indeed it is possible to read the text in that manner especially when one considers the overarching sense of melancholy and regret one feels in the language – I argue that Ekiken was also attempting to question major schools of medical thought that were at its peak in society at that time, while educating the masses of their medical options. This two-tier goal is seen in a large section of Section Six of *Yōjōkun*. In that section, Ekiken presents, as advice, to his reader the definition of a good physician as well as a good medical text.

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<sup>82</sup> Mary Tucker describes their union as “a happy marriage of rare intellectual compatibility” (*Moral and Spiritual Cultivation*, p. 38). Itō Tomonobu in the preface to the Kōdansha *bunkō* version of the text points to the fact that the text was published in the same year Ekiken's wife passed away. He argues that Ekiken was likely in search of a remedy for his ailing wife as he wrote this text, and that was one of his main motivations for constantly reminding the reader of the importance of maintaining one's proper lifespan (*tennen*). See Itō Tomonobu, “‘Yōjōkun’ wo yomu hito no tameni,” in Kaibara Ekiken, *Yōjōkun* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2015), p. 23.

While this section does not give us an adequate sense of Ekiken’s own personal view – which will be discussed later – it does provide us with the position of Ekiken vis-à-vis the medical field at the time.

Let us first focus on the medical advice given by Ekiken to the masses on the types of doctors before seeing how he classifies medical texts. According to Ekiken, choosing the right doctor to treat illnesses because of the importance of your parents body in yours: “choosing a mediocre doctor (庸医; *yōi*) is comparable to being non-filial and non-affectionate [towards your parents].”<sup>83</sup> As such, he classifies doctors into several different classifications. Firstly there are “good doctors” (良医; *ryōi*) who are not only well educated in medical texts, but have a thorough grounding in Confucian education. For Ekiken, those who do not have the ability to “read” Confucian classics would by default not have the ability to toil through medical texts. In addition, without understanding the “classic meanings and sensibilities” (*keiden no giri*), one would not be able to understand the correct meanings of the medical texts.<sup>84</sup> These doctors who do not possess the necessary training, he call either “doctors with good fortune” (福医; *fukui*) – those who become famous due to circumstances instead of knowledge – or “vulgar doctors” (俗医; *zokui*) who do not “enjoy learning.” Another distinction he draws is between “gentlemen” (*junzi*) doctors and petty (*xiaoren*) doctors. The formers are those who toil in the medical profession with “skillful compassion” (*jinjutsu*) while the latters are those who practice for their own benefits. It is clear that these two scales overlap with each other, and while Ekiken did not completely deny that in some cases

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<sup>83</sup> Kaibara, *Yōjōkun*, p. 372.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.

“vulgar doctors” can provide simple remedies,<sup>85</sup> we can see that basic Confucian training – and hence the internalization of its morals – is, for Ekiken, a necessary characteristic of his ideal medical figure.

Upon establishing the importance of learning, Ekiken then gives a hierarchal list of books to learn. Beginning with two foundational texts: the *Huangdi Neijing* and the *Shennong Bencaojing*, he interestingly attaches more importance to older texts in particular those texts written by Zhang Zhongjing (150-219; the author of *Shang Han Lun*) and Sun Simiao (542? – 682?) while relegating those written in the Yuan and Ming periods further down the hierarchy.<sup>86</sup> In this sense, his overall view is in line with those of the *kohō-ha* (ancient methods school) who espoused a return to medical texts before the Song dynasty in addition to the “empiricism” and “experimental” nature of the ideas within these texts.<sup>87</sup> This is also hinted in his commentary found in another section in which he criticized the Yuan physician Zhu Danxi (1281-1358; also known as Zhu Zhenheng):

“Danxi is indeed a famous doctor in line with standards of antiquity, and he has contributed to the way of medicine. It may perhaps be said that his theory of supplementing *yin* could have been appropriate for the trends during his time. But he is not a sage doctor. Other than this baseless theory (of supplementing

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<sup>85</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 385-386, where he talks about what kinds of illnesses can be diagnosed and treated even by the most misinformed doctors.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 381-383. Although a simplification, it is clear that for Ekiken, medical texts/treatises/commentaries written post-Song period are taken to be second rate. Particularly, he is very impressed by Sun Simiao’s *Qian Jin Fang*. A more extensive reading of the relation between these texts and his treatise needs to be done. In another section, he argues that there are many errors in the later Ming texts because “these texts simply rely on [commentaries] handed down over the generations without looking at the bigger picture – recent physicians in the end of the Ming era mostly had this problem” (p. 302).

<sup>87</sup> It may also be possible that during his constant trips to Kyoto, Ekiken could have interacted with physicians associated with Jinsai’s school, many of whom became the main proponents of the *Kohō-ha* school.

*yin*), there are many other places where his ideas are also bordering [absurdity]. It is difficult to simply trust his ideas since there is no foundation for them.”<sup>88</sup>

Danxi’s theory of supplementing *yin* can be summarized as follows. He argued that the origin of illnesses is due to the imbalance in the “gate of life” (*mingmen*; roughly equivalent to the right kidney) caused by the lack of *yin* and an excess of *yang*. Therefore, in order to curb this eruption of *yang* in the kidney, there is a need to supplement *yin*. This is done through the (a) the taking of concoctions that are *yin* in nature; or (b) self-restraint from the loss of *yin* through indulgent (such as sexual) activities.<sup>89</sup> A forthright critique of Zhu Danxi is telling of Ekiken’s own position within the medical field.

In 17<sup>th</sup> century Edo society, Zhu Danxi’s ideas was part of mainstream medical training due to the adoption and propagation of his theories by Manase Dōsan (1507-1594), who is currently hailed as the forefather of early modern Sinitic medicine in Japan. It is well known that Dōsan was well versed in medical writings of the Ming dynasty. When he was living in Kyoto, his fame reached a peak some time in 1574, when his work was presented to Emperor Ōgimachi. Dōsan also had a large following with about 800 students. Amongst his writings, Zhu Danxi’s and Lee Dongyuan’s (1180-1251) writings feature greatly, and it is clear that, despite his broad knowledge of different methods of treatment, Danxi and Dongyuan’s works had the greatest

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 301-302. It is important to note that when Ekiken published this text, the idea that Danxi’s medical theory is possibly flawed was likely familiar with the general masses. This is because Ihara Saikaku, the famous *ukiyo* writer, had inserted a criticism of Danxi very much similar to Ekiken’s in his *Budō Denraiki* (1687). See Fukuda Yasunori, *Igakushō no naka no ‘bungaku’: Edo no Igaku to Bungaku ga Tsukuriageta Sekai* (Tokyo: Kasama Shōin, 2016), pp. 89-104.

<sup>89</sup> Sakai Shizu, *Nihon no Iryōshi* (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki Kabushiki Gaisha, 1982), pp. 158-159. See also Fukuda, p. 89, and Paul Unschuld, *Medicine in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 198-199.

influence on him.<sup>90</sup> In the history of Japanese medicine, Dōsan’s medical lineage came to be identified as Lee-Zhu Medicine (taken from the family names of the two Chinese physicians).

This background is important, because Dōsan’s descendants and disciples became a major school of medical thought in the 17<sup>th</sup> century: the *Gosei-ha* (Later-period school). With Danxi’s theories laid out in his treatises *Ge Zhi Yu Lun* (Jp. *Kakuchi Yoron*; 1347) and *Danxi Xinfa* (Jp. *Tankei Shinpō*; 1347) forming the backbone of the Manase *Gosei* school, Dōsan’s nephew Manase Gensaku’s succeeded him as the head of his practice. Perhaps because of Gensaku’s employment with the major leaders during his lifetime – figures such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi (the preceding figure in absolute power prior to the establishment of Tokugawa rule) and Tokugawa Hidetada (the second shogun of the Tokugawa era) – Gensaku was able to train a whole generation of physicians who went on to dominate the field. These scholars came to be known as those belonging to the *Gosei-ha* because they often expounded historically “late” medical theories, in particular those belonging to the Yuan and Ming era. In contrast, and as I have mentioned earlier, Ekiken’s ideas seem to be aligned with the *Kohō-ha* school of medicine, especially the school’s emphasis on empirical verification of effectiveness of treatments. According to Aoki Toshiyuki, the *Kohō-ha* movement likely began around the end of the Genroku period (1688-1704) – which coincided with the period in which *Yōjōkun* was published – as a reaction against Manase-style medical thought and their lack of any empirical substantiation.<sup>91</sup> Sakai Shizu also noted that the

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<sup>90</sup> Sakai Shizu, pp. 174-175.

<sup>91</sup> Aoki Toshiyuki, *Edo Jidai no Igaku* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2012), p. 33.

*Kohō-ha* movement arose in the same period as the *kogaku* (ancient learning) school of Itō Jinsai launched their criticism of Zhu Xi metaphysics in which the Manase school was in agreement with.<sup>92</sup> In this sense, the label *Gosei-ha* is a derogatory label placed on the Manase school by proponents of the *Kohō-ha* based on the assumption that they were derivative of older, and hence, more correct theories (since cultural capital was based on the proximity to the antiquity). Although it is possible that Ekiken's mirroring of Jinsai's thought, in addition to his questioning of Zhu Xi metaphysics, could have led to him to reject Danxi's theory as unfounded, it is more likely that Ekiken was critical of the supplementing of *yin* to cure diseases because Danxi's view was going against Ekiken's own views as we shall see in a moment.<sup>93</sup> At this juncture, it will suffice to say that *Yōjō-kun* was published in a medical climate in which there were debates on the correct medical treatment and theories were ongoing in Edo society.

What then was Ekiken's disagreement against Danxi's theory? How is it linked to his theory of the appropriate way of maintaining the health of the body? How then is this theory related to *kogaku* formulations of the body within nature? In this last section, I will attempt to answer these questions. Let us return to the passage in which Ekiken deconstructs Danxi's theory of supplementing *yin* as a cure. Prior to his criticism of Danxi, Ekiken claims that

“The proportion of *yin* and *yang* in the order of the heavens and earth is [basically] yang is foremost, and yin is second place. When there is a large amount of water [elements] there will be little fire [elements]. Water is takes a

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<sup>92</sup> Sakai Shizu, p. 194.

<sup>93</sup> In fact, Ekiken's position vis-à-vis the schools of *Gosei* and *Kohō-ha* is uncertain. We do know that one of his students Kazuki Gyūzan (1656-1740) had been a major figure in the *Gosei-ha*. Accordingly Gyūzan's *Shōni hitsuyō sodate-gusa* (1703) was written in easy-to-read language for the purposes of educating the masses. Sakai Shizu claims that Ekiken could have been influenced by his student in this regard as he composed *Yōjōkun*. (See Sakai Shizu, pp. 202-203).

long time to evaporate, and fire is easy to extinguish. [In the same line of reasoning,] people belong to yang, being less in number, and birds, beast, insects, and fish belong to yin because they are numerous. From this fact, it is self-evident that yang is always scarce while yin is always close to boundless. This is the law of nature (*shizen no kotowari nari*). Due to its scarcity, yang should be cherished, and yin should be despised. Just as gentlemen (*junzi*) are little in number, and petty people (*xiaoren*) are numerous, the way of changes (ch. *yidao*, jp. *ekidō*) privileges Yang and likens Yin to evil... Since water belongs to yin [...], even if one loses a lot of blood, he/she would not die. However, if one loses a large amount of *qi*, he/she will die suddenly... To over-replenish loss blood – such as in cases of vomiting blood, the suffering a sword injury, or postpartum – will cause a reduction in yang-qi, and cause one to die. If one were to replenish *qi* [during cases of emergencies], the life will be saved and blood will naturally also replenish itself.”<sup>94</sup>

Even though Ekiken also subscribes to the tenet of balancing yin and yang, it is clear that Ekiken’s disagreement with Danxi’s theory of supplementing *yin* is due to this assumption that too much *yin* is disastrous. Ekiken bases this observation on purportedly empirical observation: “I have never seen a medical case in which Danxi’s theory is appropriate.”<sup>95</sup> In addition to subscribing to the classical notion that *yang* is a positive immaterial force vis-à-vis the material *yin* (such as fluids) – one that dates back to the earliest commentaries on the *Book of Changes* – he also argues that the balancing of the two forces is important in so much so as it does not harm *qi*. This is surprising because of two reasons. Firstly, in most sinic medical texts after the Song dynasty, the couplet yin-yang and their relation to *qi* has always been taxonomic. In other words, yin and yang are just *types* of *qi*, and an adequately balanced *qi* would always have substantial amounts of both. Ekiken, by claiming that *yang* is *naturally* scarce, and *yin* is *naturally* numerous, not only directs diagnosis away from “supplementing” either – since it is

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<sup>94</sup> Kaibara, *Yōjōkun*, pp. 300-301.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 301.

difficult to supplement *yang* – to the analysis of *qi* as that which should be maintained. Secondly, and in so doing, he separates the analysis of *yin* and *yang* with that of *qi*, thereby establishing *qi* as a medical category that should be focused upon. This is the reason why he claims as long as “one replenish *qi*, the life will be saved...” This is also the reason why he claims that “the human body has its source in *qi* [with *qi*] as the master of life.”<sup>96</sup>

It is through directing the analysis away from the relation between *yin* and *yang* to *qi* proper that Ekiken also introduces the concept of *yuanqi* (jp. *genki*) or *originary qi* to denote this appropriate *qi* in each person. Due to the concept of *tennen*, Ekiken had to assert that everyone thus has their own an originary *qi*. At the same time, he distinguishes this *yuanqi* with *qi* in general. This is clear when he states, “the hundred illnesses are all caused by *qi*, or to be more specific, the stagnancy of *qi*.” Through the regulation (*totonofu*) of *qi* then, this is what is called the Way of *yōjō*.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, it is the willful (*hoshiimama*) actions of people that leaves them open to the incursion of illnesses due to improper *qi* regulation.<sup>98</sup> For Ekiken, this regulation of *qi* is achieved in two aspects – physically and mentally – they are two sides of the same coin.<sup>99</sup> That is, in addition to choosing a correct doctor and consuming healthily,<sup>100</sup> to regulate *qi* physically is to move of one’s body which is determined by one’s place in society as we have seen earlier. On the other hand, to regulate *qi* mentally is to practice abstinence as

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 294.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 278. Ekiken claims that *qi* is meant to circulate the body, it is not something that should be concentrated within one area of the body. Once *qi* gets “stuck” within one spot, this will lead to illnesses.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>100</sup> The whole of Chapter 3 lists the kinds of food that one can take to regulate *qi*.

well as activities that will cause negative emotions.<sup>101</sup> In short, it is the maintenance of *the constant flow* of *yuan qi* that is crucial to maintaining one's *natural* health and lifespan (*tennen*).

To the extent that *qi* flows within the body, there is also a possibility of losing *qi* as is highlighted in his example of losing blood. In this sense, the body is seen not as a bounded *thing* but instead, one whose boundaries are permeable vis-à-vis the surrounding world. This is clear when we notice that, for Ekiken, *qi* still possesses the cosmological sense of “material force”:

“The *qi* in one's [body] is the same as that of the heavens and earth; *qi* interpenetrates the inside and outside [of the human body]. People in *nature's qi* (*tenchi no ki no naka ni*) is just like fish in water – the water in a fishes' [body] mixes interchangeably with the water outside [its body]. [In such a] similar fashion, the *qi* in one's body is that of *nature*.”<sup>102</sup>

It is not impossible to see that not only is the body placed within a world, that which connects the human body and the world is the sameness of *qi*. That is the *qi* as material force which manifests principle (*li*) is interchangeable with the *yuanqi* within people's bodies.<sup>103</sup> However, it is at this level that we see a strange departure from the theory of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* that Tōju adopted. By focusing on the sameness of *qi* between one's body and the world, Ekiken's framework allows for the reading of the two as *distinct* entities connected by the flow of nature in the form of *qi*. That is to say, to claim that two entities have a similar *essence of qi* does not necessarily posit that the two are *essentially* mirror-images of each other. This ambiguity in Ekiken's framework thus allows for one to read his text as both in support of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* as well as

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 267-268. There is also a sense of “disciplining” one's body and developing good habits that constantly regulate *qi*. See for example, pp. 266, 270, 280. In addition, Ekiken also encouraged breathing exercises since “breathing allows one to regulate *qi* to various important parts of the body” (p. 295).

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 299.

<sup>103</sup> See also Mihoko Katafuchi, “Ki and body: Yin-Yang and the Five Elements Theory on Personal Health Care in Early Modern Edo era,” *Wakayama University Department of Education Bulletin* 60 (3) (2010): 47-49.

the people within the world. It is perhaps then no coincidence that this is reflected in Ekiken's own position between both *kogaku* and *shushigaku*, and *kohō-ha* and *Gosei-ha*. More importantly, it is this ambiguity that allows, the anatomical body, the philosophical body, and the social body to be equivalent to each other, since the human body is conceived as a mirror image of the world, a situated body within social structure, as well as a body in a world of nature.

### ***Ekiken and Kokugaku***

What emerges in Ekiken's *Yōjōkun* is an interesting set of ideas that seem to mirror Norinaga's. At least, at a surface level, Ekiken's philosophy and that of Norinaga's are similar: not only are people special – placed above all other species – they are also placed within a world that are *essentially* part of their bodies. The naturalness we see in Mabuchi's assertion of the native language-body – an aspect that was also inherited by Norinaga – is also shared by Ekiken. In this final section, I attempt to re-read an oft-overlooked layer in *Yōjōkun* to elucidate how, in many regards, Ekiken laid the ground work for *kokugaku* scholars to conceptualize a body in the world. This aspect is encapsulated by the concept of “enjoyment”. In verse 38 of Chapter 2, Ekiken delineates the term as follows:

“The sages often talk about “enjoyment” (*tanoshimi*). Even though it is difficult for our dullish minds to comprehend their sagely hearts (i.e. the meaning of the concept), what they call “enjoyment” is related to the *natural physiology* (*tenchi no seiri*) that people are born with. One should not *not* experience that by turning one's back towards the law of nature (*tenchi no dōri*). To always follow the Way and suppress one's desires then is to not lose this “enjoyment”. To not lose one's “enjoyment” is the basis of *yōjō*.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Kaibara, *Yōjōkun*, pp. 292-293.

Ekiken's definition of "enjoyment" is clearly distinctive. On the one hand, it is part of one's natural bodies and that it is a law of nature to "enjoy". On the other hand, it is also possible to lose this ability to experience "enjoyment". "Enjoyment" is thus not merely being "happy," it is also not something actively sought such as "joyous living". In the case of the Genroku period, it is not the enjoyment of sensual pleasures as well. In other words, *tanoshimi* is not an experience but a state. A person cannot *feel* enjoyment without *being in* enjoyment. It is almost as though being in enjoyment is the natural state of a human body, one that Ekiken wants to allow the readers of *Yōjōkun* to return to.

If then, this is the state to return to – one that is naturally and *bodily/physiologically* in a state of "enjoyment," how can the practice of *yōjō* aid in this?

For Ekiken, this is following the path of *junzi* of antiquity in moving their bodies:

"People of antiquity regulate their blood-flow and pulse via the recitation of poetry and the bodily movement of dances. To recite is to sing (*utafu*). To dance is to swing one's hand and stamp one's feet (i.e. to dance). These all harmonize the heart/mind (*kokoro*), move the body, and regulate *qi*, ultimately maintaining the body. This is the path of *yōjō*."<sup>105</sup>

The bodily form of poetry and dances is thus that which allows a person to achieve his prescribed longevity. What is important is how this observation on the part of Ekiken is based on his idea of the body as possessing the three dimensions of philosophical, social, and *natural*. By positing a body that achieves original "enjoyment" – i.e. being *one with one's nature* – through the recitation of poetry and dances – a position very close to *kokugaku* scholars later, we see in Ekiken the basis for *kokugaku* scholars' own conceptions of the body in the world.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 297.

CHAPTER 2  
THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION: MIMESIS AND POESIS IN  
KOKUGAKU FUMI

*The Question of the Body and Writing*

As we have seen in previous chapters, the question of the body is central in understanding not only language, but how *kokugaku* scholars approached texts. In the previous chapter, I have focused on the ways in which the question of the body is central to any investigation of *kokugaku*, and how there was a discursive shift between the Neo-Confucian body as a teleological and circular mirroring of the world, and that of *kokugaku* scholars' adoption of a conceptual "physiological" body based on praxis. In Chapter Three, I will show how the discursive shifts in the fields of botany and medicine provided the structural tools that enabled *kokugaku* scholars, such as Akinari and Mabuchi, to highlight the efficacy of an ontological definition of the world through the "simple" process of categorizing and observing the world. This chapter therefore acts as a bridge between the first and the third chapter, by answering the question of how language and the body is linked. It focuses solely on the discourses of language in a select group of writings by *kokugaku* scholars. If the body is central to the philological investigations of *kokugaku* scholars, we then need to question of the body and the investigation of a lifeworld of the past are linked through the medium of language. Why is it that the clarification of language and reading/recitation (which are not quite distinct from each other) enables one to recover one's pristine conceptual body? Consequently,

as a prelude to the following chapter, we can also pose the following questions. That is, if medicine and botany were central to *kokugaku* scholars and their understanding of the lifeworld of both antiquity and their present, how did this “botanical/medical” perspective also inform the approaches to language as one of, if not *the*, central component(s) in *kokugaku* scholars’ endeavors in reframing the world? For what purpose did scholars such as Mabuchi link language to a “return” to “antiquity”? How did language enable them to link their contemporary world to that of antiquity? How might it be possible to understand their emphasis on language as a politics of a “now” instead of offering the usual interpretations of “nostalgia” or “exception” that places *kokugaku* within the context of “nativism”?

This chapter is therefore framed by the above questions, but also intends to extend the field of inquiry beyond the “canonical” *kokugaku* scholars. The aim here is to elucidate how a certain rhythmic understanding of language should be taken into account in order for us to better comprehend the implications of *kokugaku* scholars’ explications of language. A second aim is also to understand how “lesser” *kokugaku* scholars tried to “practice” *kokugaku* through their writings. By re-reading canonical *kokugaku* texts – such as Mabuchi’s *Koku’ikō* – I show that central to *kokugaku* scholars’ politics was a certain fixation on the creation of certain “styles” (*bunshō*) of language that, although they were proposed as “new,” were also seen as related to the pristine ideal language of the lifeworld of the past. The word “style” here is used in the broadest sense possible, because even though *kokugaku* scholars did intend to create styles, they never defined one particular style as the most important nor did they designate their styles in a conceptual way. However, I will emphasize that the question

of “styles of language” can be misleading here, since it re-presents a conventional position held by scholars even now. This position generally postulates that the efforts by *kokugaku* scholars to “learn” or “study” the “styles of antiquity” was mostly for the purposes of “imitating” these styles in their own writing. The “new styles” of language that *kokugaku* scholars produced are therefore surprisingly labelled by these same modern scholars as *gikobun* (擬古文; lit. “imitative of the past” style). By comparing literary styles of *kokugaku* scholars and classical, modern scholars holding this position often highlight the “imitative” tendencies in *kokugaku* writing. However, this chapter is not interested in replicating such a “comparative” and teleological approach to account for the genealogical production of literary styles by *kokugaku* scholars. I believe that by emphasizing their writing as a stylistic repetition, scholars holding this position have eschewed a different approach, that which would emphasize the importance of language in *kokugaku* scholars’ attempts at reorienting the relationship between language and the world. In addition, such scholars often reiterate a position that was popular during the decades of Japanese imperialism: the idea that *kokugaku* scholars *successfully recovered* a kind of “modern” language that combined both sound and script, and through *kokugaku* scholars’ practices in *that* “mode” of writing, they have effectively allowed the Japanese national language to arise from the distant past.

Thus, rather than focusing on “styles,” this chapter will begin with an analysis of what scholars now call *wabun*, a term that literally means “Japanese writing.” My contention is that modern scholars, by emphasizing *wabun* as style in reaction to Sinitic writing such as *kanbun* (lit. “Chinese script”), have ignored the ontological and bodily politics that is central to *kokugaku*’s championing of a “native language.” As this chapter

will argue, the concept of *wabun* accentuates erroneous assumptions that would impede our understanding of *kokugaku* scholars' production of writing.

Therefore, this chapter will first attempt to deconstruct *wabun* as a concept. By analyzing the ways in which major modern scholars since the Meiji period have highlighted *kokugaku* scholars' writing as a form of "wa-bun" (lit. "Japanese" (*wa* being a name for old Japan) script), I assert that *kokugaku* scholars' fixation on writing cannot be understood from this dialectical definition of it as a form of "Japanese." Instead of *wabun* as the analytical concept that guides my analysis of *kokugaku* scholars' emphasis on writing and language, I propose using the word *fumi*, the concept and word that was used by *kokugaku* scholars themselves and in many ways was more important than the term *wabun* (which was mostly a modern construct) on the basic level of their politics. By focusing on *fumi* instead of *wabun* then, I will argue that *kokugaku* scholars' emphasis on writing, language, and, more importantly, their fixation on the production and discovery of particular styles took place in a situation where there was no one dominant style. Since their efforts were mostly a praxis on the level of trial and error, I interpret them as ultimately attempts at rediscovering an ontological relationship between the world and the self. Language for *kokugaku* scholars thus provided not so much a *method* for understanding old texts but rather, a rhythmic embodiment of the natural and thus correct way of living.

### ***The Problem of Wabun***

According to what is now the established narrative of the rise of *wabun*, by the mid-1700s, the main decades in which we see a proliferation of *kokugaku* writing on

writing, the literary language in Edo society had supposedly been systematically categorized by the aesthetic dichotomy of *ga* (“refined”) and *zoku* (“vulgar/popular”). According to Haruo Shirane, Edo period literary circles began categorizing texts into the stylistic categories of *gabuntai* (lit. refined style) and *zokubuntai* (vulgar style) as an extension of this *ga-zoku* dichotomy. *Gabuntai* is usually associated with the long standing literary genres associated with Heian period courtly culture, whereas *Zokubuntai* is identified in more popular “recent” forms for the lowly classes such as *kibyōshi* (satirical and didactical picture books) and *akahon* (books aimed at children as their consumers).<sup>1</sup> Due to the prevalence of such an aesthetic opposition in the Edo period, modern scholars have often pointed to the certain overlap between (1) the texts identified as *gabun*, as a form associated with “classical” literature, and (2) the source texts of *kokugaku* exegeses.

The overlap between these two categories has hitherto framed the way in which contemporary scholars analyzed the attempts by *kokugaku* scholars such as Ueda Akinari, Ban Kōkei (1733-1806), and Murata Harumi (1746-1812) at formulating styles of writing. In my reading of contemporary scholars, I find that, the concept *wabun* has been repeatedly used to describe these *kokugaku* writings. As the name indicates, *wabun* is used by these scholars to refer to any form (*buntai*) or style (*bunshō*) of language that can be seen as “Japanese” (suggested by the modifier *wa*) as distinguished from Sinitic textual forms (such as *kanbun*). On the basis of this loose definition then, *wabun* can be identified as a form of language that can, at its most basic level, be genealogically traced

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<sup>1</sup> Haruo Shirane, ed., *Early Modern Japanese Literature: an Anthology, 1600-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), pp. 16-17. Often, introductory courses to Edo period literature also begin with this set of aesthetical opposites as ways of characterizing prose in popular works.

all the way back to the long standing literary genres usually associated with *gabun*. Because they have insistently identified *kokugaku* attempts at formulating a style of language as *wabun*, contemporary scholars have understood *wabun* as attempts in writing in the above-mentioned *gabuntai* style that emulates both the forms and styles of Heian courtly classics such as *The Tale of Genji* and *The Pillow Book*. These texts, of course, were often written in *kana* as opposed to forms of *kanbun* (Sinitic script or classical Chinese). While *wabun* is technically distinct from *gabun*, as something produced at a later time, this ambiguity in modern scholars' definition of *wabun* emphasizes an imagined lineage that is grounded in some perceived continuity of tradition. As a conceptual category, it possesses a certain ambiguity in scope, since it can be used to describe activities, ranging from the creation of a particular stylized form (such as one that emulates *The Tale of Genji*) to any style of pre-Meiji "Japanese".

Also, inherent in this particular use of the concept by contemporary scholars to describe *kokugaku* endeavors of writing is a specific dialectical opposition: since *wabun* is associated with the tradition of courtly literature often written in *kana*, it becomes by definition any forms and styles which can be distinguished from – and therefore are not – "Chinese". What is problematic about such a definition is the fact that it presupposes *a priori* what Naoki Sakai has called the "schema of cofiguration," in which both *wabun* and Sinitic writing are co-figured as discrete linguistic entities with no overlapping domains.<sup>2</sup> Thus if we were to accept *wabun* as an adequate analytic in understanding

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<sup>2</sup> The "schema of co-figuration" refers to how different styles of writings are assumed to be belonging to discrete national languages. In other words, any new style of writing immediately characterized as the mixing of already known languages whose boundaries have already been defined. The "figure" of Japanese is always built with other linguistic "figures" presumed – thus the idea of a "co-figured"

*kokugaku* writing, we will not only be assuming a certain teleological inevitability of a particular image of “Japan” (as a nation) that already existed prior to the consolidation of Japan as a nation-state – an approach to *kokugaku* that I have been attempting to deconstruct in this dissertation – we will also be denying the any productive endeavors on the part of *kokugaku* scholars to negotiate a form of language that is adequate to their bodily politics. As I will go on to show, if we were to accept this definition of *kokugaku* scholars’ *wabun* as simply some form/style of “Japanese”, we will be reiterating the same ideological framework that guided a particular reading of *kokugaku* scholars’ works in the institutionalization of *kokubungaku* (lit. National Literature) of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This reading is often characterized by the acceptance without criticism of the ideas expressed in Motoori Norinaga’s *Kojiki-den*.

### ***Kokubungaku (National Literature), Kokugo (National Language), and Wabun***

Hashimoto Shinkichi (1882-1945) who was the linguistics professor at Tokyo University from 1927 till his death was likely the first modern scholar to conceptualize *wabun* as a form of “Japanese” writing. In the second volume of *Kokugo Gairon* (An Outline on National Language; 1943), Hashimoto hypothesized that *wabun* emerged from the practice of composing *waka* poetry. According to him, *waka* poems existed in an age prior to writing.<sup>3</sup> Writing on the Japanese archipelago, as he explains, began with the “learning” of *kanbun* by the elite aristocrats in the Nara Period. Despite this acknowledgement that *waka* as a practice was probably catalyzed by the “importation”

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language. See Naoki Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity: On “Japan and Cultural Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Hashimoto Shinkichi, *Kokugo Gairon* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1943), p. 65

of Chinese poetry, however, Hashimoto claimed that, “up to the time of Fujiwara [Teika], [*waka*] poetry were more or less similar to spoken language even though [*waka*] probably incorporated many words that were not present in spoken language then.”<sup>4</sup> That is to say, in Hashimoto’s view, works such as the poetry anthology *Manyōshū* simply used Chinese characters to represent the phonic *readings* that were already pre-existing, echoing the arguments of Norinaga. Hashimoto went on to explain that in the Heian period, there was a systemization of poetic language which led to the separation of *ga* and *zoku* – the same binary still used by Haruo Shirane – and, more importantly, the separation of written from spoken language. This led him to claim that “even though phonic changes are inherent in spoken language over time, these changes were not reflected in *waka*.”<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that *kokugaku* scholars continued to write in both *kana* and *kanbun*, Hashimoto nonetheless argued that with the rise of *gabun* in Edo period *kokugaku*, by adopting the convention of *waka*, *kokugaku* scholars effectively created *wabun* by attempting to emulate the styles of Heian period writing. Notably, the adoption of these styles involved the use of *kanabun*. Of great interest to us is Hashimoto’s assertion in this 1943 text that, “this kind of *kanabun* [written by *kokugaku* scholars], while it is usually called *gikobun* (imitative writing) now, was in fact referred to as *gabun* by *kokugaku* scholars and more often by the name *wabun* by scholars after the Meiji period.”<sup>6</sup>

It is crucial to recognize that, in spite of the seeming periodization of *wabun* that Hashimoto traces from *waka* prior to the adoption of Sinitic script, to the *wabun* of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 66

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

*kokugaku* scholars of the Edo period, it is his assumption of an unchanging spoken language which undergirds his remarks about *wabun*. That is to say, by presuming the primacy of an original oral language that existed before the “adoption” of Sinitic characters as a writing system, he clearly builds a continuity from antiquity to the modern period by linking the spoken “old language” to *waka*, and subsequently, to *kokugaku*’s adoption of the systemization of that old language as a form of writing. By ignoring the possibility that Sinitic characters (i.e. *kanji*) could have influenced the ways in which spoken language was used, what is also implicit in Hashimoto’s framework, however, is the alternate continuity of *kanbun* as a silent and dead language. This is the reason why he claims, “such a type of writing (*wabun*), even in its revival in the second decade of Meiji, may be characterized in its most basic form as a writing [1] composed with purely original spoken language while avoiding the usage of *kango* (lit. chinese language); and [2] as mainly written in *hiragana* without using much of *kanji*.”<sup>7</sup> By thus separating *wabun* from any influence of *kango*, Hashimoto attempted to “purify” the roots of *wabun*. This will perhaps explain why he insisted on calling its “revivals” (both in the mid-Edo period and Meiji period) rivivals of *wabun* despite his acknowledgement that the same writings were described as *gikōbun* (lit. imitation writing) by his contemporaries earlier.

Despite his acknowledgement of the influences *kango* and *kanbun* have on *wabun* and *kana* writing in general, by defining *wabun* as linked to the pure original spoken language, Hashimoto set the parameters for an implicit marriage of the external form of writing to compositional styles. This parameter is clearly defined when he

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

claims that *wabun*, at its basic level, is always associated with *kana* composition. By linking *wabun* to texts that are written in *kana* and poetic anthologies, Hashimoto avoids the need to address texts of central importance to *kokugaku* scholars that do not fall neatly into his idea of *wabun* – in particular, the eighth century compilation, the *Kojiki* which Hashimoto sees as written in a form of *hentai kanbun* (lit. abnormal Sinitic writing).

Nonetheless, in my view, by setting the parameters and boundaries for what defined as *wabun* as being that which was written in *kana*, Hashimoto was attempting to identify not so much distinctive forms or styles, but what I might call a particular *tendency* towards what he conceived of as a pure language that was a perfect combination of form and style.<sup>8</sup> When seen in the light of the role attributed to language in the imperial policies of colonization that were the backdrop for Hashimoto's writing (such as teaching Japanese language to the colonial subjects of Taiwan, Korea and Southeast Asia), this attempt of Hashimoto's to anchor the Japaneseness of *wabun* in the form of *kana* writing is very much in line with the writings of other scholars – such as Muraoka Tsunetsugu – working on *kokugaku* texts at this time.

What is more important at least in our context is the fact that Hashimoto's distinction between the *form* of writing (as *kanabun*) and the *style* of writing (as *gikōbun* or *gabun*) continues to be reiterated in the work of scholars even today. For example, in a recent attempt (2014) at renovating Hashimoto's framework, Mōri Masamori for instance very much followed the observations and assumptions laid out by Hashimoto

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<sup>8</sup> The significance of Hashimoto's framework should not be ignored. His framework continues to underlie the teaching of *bungo* (classical Japanese) today in middle schools in Japan.

in *Kokugo Gairon*. Mōri's point of departure, however, involves a disagreement with Hashimoto's classification of the *Kojiki* (the central text in Norinaga's work the *Kojiki-den*) within the category of *hentai kanbun*. In "The Research History of 'Hentai Kanbun' and 'Yamato written forms'," Mōri argues that there is a need to distinguish between texts such as the *Kojiki* and those written in *kanbun* such as the *Nihon Shoki*. By calling into question Hashimoto's marriage of form (体; external appearance) and style (式), Mōri claims that despite the external appearance created by their deployment of Chinese characters, texts such as the *Kojiki* were *not* written in what he calls "kanbun style" despite their "kanbun form" because, according to him, we can see that in their use of Chinese characters there was a "conscious attempt to Japanize (*wabun-ka*) them." Mōri therefore concludes that the *Kojiki* is not a kind of *kanbun*, but should rather be seen as what he calls a "stylistic mode" (*bunshō-yōshiki*; 文章様式) of it.<sup>9</sup> This is the reason why he focuses on the idea of *wabun-ka* or "Japanizing".

Mōri's emphasis on the "Japanese" elements within the written script of the *Kojiki* allowed him to claim that despite having the façade of it being written in *kanbun*, the form (体) of the *Kojiki* only uses *kanbun* as a "style" (式) of writing in *wabun* (or what he calls *yamato-bun*).<sup>10</sup> By ignoring the stylistic ambiguities that a text such as the *Kojiki* poses to a reader today, a characteristic which made Hashimoto relegate the work to the quasi-category of *hentai-kanbun*, Mōri eagerly draws a distinction between style

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<sup>9</sup> Mōri Masamori, "'Hentai Kanbun' no Kenkyūshi to 'Yamato Buntai'," in *Nihongo no Kenkyū* Vol. 10 (1) (2014): 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7. For Mōri, *wabun* should not be the correct terminology for such a "Japanization". He claims that there is no textual basis for reducing *yamato* 大和 to *wa* 和. It is for this reason that *wabun* should be renamed with the characters *yamato-bun* 倭文. In terms of its definition, Mōri appears to accept that the two are the same.

and form that is based on the same assumption he shares with Hashimoto – that *wabun* and *kanbun* are linguistically discrete, with little or no middle grounds between the two. Thus, despite his attempt to question Hashimoto’s framework, much of Mōri’s interpretations are based on a premise similar to the one held by Hashimoto, that privileges the possibility of a verbal pronunciation of the characters in question. By giving examples from the *Kojiki* on how certain characters were possibly pronounced, Mōri attempts to offer “evidence” substantiate his thesis that if such writing can be pronounced in a “Japanese” fashion, the text in question should therefore no longer be treated as it is written in *kanbun*, but as a form of *wabun*. It is clear that Mōri simply complicates Hashimoto’s original framework but still holds the same structural assumption – that is that any *wabun*, for it to be defined as such, should always be readily pronounceable *as* Japanese. And on the basis of this definition, a work such as the *Kojiki* – since it can be pronounced in Japanese, and therefore *was* written as *wabun* – such works *should*, for that reason, *not* be labelled as *kango/kanbun* since it *tends* towards a pure-spoken-phonetic original language.

As we have seen in Chapter One, such attempts by Hashimoto and Mōri to conceptualize *wabun* as dialectically opposed to any form of “Chinese” writing can itself be traced to *kokugaku*, more specifically, to the treatises of Motoori Norinaga.<sup>11</sup> In “On the Method of Reading,” Norinaga emphasizes exactly this need to *read* texts such as *Kojiki* in their “Japanese readings”. As it is widely known, in the preface of the *Kojiki*, the compiler states that the aim of the text is to correct the historical inaccuracies

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<sup>11</sup> I am indebted to Kazama Seishi’s wonderful elucidation of the historicity of *wabun* in his introduction of *Kinsei Wabun no Sekai: Kōkei, Ayatari, Akinari* (Tokyo: Shinwasha, 1998).

in oral transmissions that had been previously transmitted down over the generations. Although it is currently recognized that the *Kojiki*, alongside the other Japanese imperial genealogies, were likely political endeavors to legitimize the ruling family through anchoring their ancestry in the mythical creation of the world, Norinaga viewed the *Kojiki* as a text that contained linguistically and historically accurate depictions of the past. In addition to accepting the texts as accurate recordings and hence philologically pure, Norinaga speculated that the *Kojiki* was not merely a historical text, but also one that corrected the linguistic errors of the transmission itself. As he states,

In close scrutiny of this imperial command [of compiling the *Kojiki*], it is apparent that the Emperor [Tenmu] was well aware that as it was the custom in antiquity to record and transmit everything in classical Chinese, each time this was done the language of the original would gradually come to differ due to the influence of the Chinese language, and he was saddened at the thought that at some point the language of antiquity might simply fade away. The Emperor must have thought that it was absolutely necessary to remedy the texts at this time... [Nonetheless,] it is difficult to commit to paper that which has been expressed only in the spoken word... The whole endeavor becomes all the more difficult when the goal is not to *deviate from the language of antiquity, yet the convention of the times was to write in classical Chinese*. It was his august intent to *first of all (mazu)* have the text carefully recited orally, and then to have those exact words recorded faithfully.<sup>12</sup>

As is evident in the extended quote, Norinaga reads the text of *Kojiki* as an endeavor to arrest the disparity between textual traditions and oral traditions of transmission. In assuming that Sinitic scripts were inadequate media for the transmission of *the* “language of antiquity,” Norinaga sought to read the *Kojiki as Japanese* because, according to him, *that was exactly why the text was written*. In addition, through assuming such an ideal linguistic utopia of antiquity, Norinaga inevitably created a new

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<sup>12</sup> Norinaga, *Kojiki-den*, trans. Ann Wehmeyer (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 1997), p. 142. Emphases in italics are mine.

method of reading that extended beyond imagery towards the realm of senses.<sup>13</sup> That is to say, the reality that Norinaga claims the *Kojiki* elucidates not only reflects the imagery of words, but also the senses in which reading takes place. As he explains, readers should “assign a reading based on the *sensibilities of antiquity*,”<sup>14</sup> and even for passages in *Kojiki* that are “written completely in classical Chinese... one should read such passages by not relying upon the characters too heavily, but rather obtain an understanding of the meaning, and *assign* a reading in the language of antiquity which is appropriate.”<sup>15</sup> Evidently, the project of philological rendering of the pronunciation of characters in a Japanese style went hand-in-hand with a creation of a method of reading that was based on the reader’s understanding, a method that he calls elsewhere “intuitive”.

At this point, it is not impossible to see the historical parallels between Norinaga and modern linguists such as Hashimoto and Mōri. Not only do Hashimoto and Mōri echo Norinaga’s own “creative” reading methods. But also by claiming, like him, that texts that can “*now*” be read (deciphered and interpreted) in *kana* were probably not written as *kanbun* (Sinitic script) *at that time* (because these writings were *probably* attempts towards some form of Japanese or Japanization of language in their view), they replicate the same schema adopted by Norinaga. More importantly, if we were to follow their observations and read in the same way other *kokugaku* scholars’ attempts to write *wabun* – that is, as efforts to replicate the language of antiquity as a language that is *not*

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<sup>13</sup> See William M. Bodiford, “Myth and Counter-myth in Early Modern Japan,” in *Writing Down the Myths*, ed. Joseph Nagy, *Cursor* 17 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Norinaga, *Kojiki-den*, p. 151.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

“Chinese” – we risk flattening the discourse of *kokugaku* praxis of writing as a whole. More seriously, if we do so, we reify any production of language in the *kana* script (through our event of reading it) as a reproduction of a pre-existent national “Japanese” language. What is then constantly reemphasized in both Hashimoto and Mori’s schemas is the same ideological notion of an ageless imagined linguistic community that Norinaga appears to have assumed in his idealization of the pristine past. To continue to define *wabun* as simply what is *not kanbun* is thus only to repeat this assertion that there is a Japanese language that has existed unchanged since the time of the *Kojiki*.

### ***Defining Wabun: Problems of Terminology and Conceptual Boundaries***

It is prudent then that we begin with a problematization of the term *wabun*. As a concept, as I have highlighted above, *wabun* is a term that rose to importance in tandem with the rise of the Meiji state and that state’s attempt to standardize the myriad of languages that actually existed at that time. Often, the term *wabun* is used to signify, in a teleological fashion, any “pre-modern” “Japanese” forms of writing. The character in question, *wa* 和, as I have pointed out in my analysis of Hashimoto and Mouri, is used to refer to the idea of Japan.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps because of this very relation, *wabun*, as if in line with any signification of a nation, is rarely defined, and is deemed to be self-explanatory.<sup>17</sup> Its meaning spans from any nascent form of *nihongo* (“Japanese”

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<sup>16</sup> Scholars continue to debate on the etymology of 和. The question of whether 和 is ultimately related to the old name of “Japan” 大和 is still unresolved. Nonetheless, 和, by its association with Japan, continues to bring about various cultural significations that defer back to 大和.

<sup>17</sup> Looking at various monographs written in Japanese about *wabun*, the concept is often left undefined. See for instance, Takeuchi Michiko’s *Heian Jidai Wabun no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Meiji Shoin, 1986).

language) to any written forms overdetermined by the possibility of pronunciation via the *kana* syllabary. The question then is, how did Edo *kokugaku* scholars themselves understand *wabun*? In a chapter on *wabun* in the recently published *Research Dictionary on Ueda Akinari*, Iikura Yōichi explains that *wabun* was not the seemingly obvious concept used by modern scholars such as Hashimoto and Mōri. Analyzing the writings of several *kokugaku* scholars, Iikura shows that not only do these scholars not link *wabun* to some form of collective polity, but they also do not address directly its meaning or definition at all. Given this glaring lack of any definition during the time when *kokugaku* scholars were active, Iikura argues that we can only define the concept by “grasping what it was often placed in opposition to.” In an in-depth yet concise discussion, Iikura demonstrates how *kokugaku* scholars often attempted to define *wabun* through three sets of oppositions. What is important here is to note the series of slippages that Iikura presents to us, and how Iikura’s explication of *wabun* is still laden with the problems that we have seen in those of Hashimoto and Mōri.

The first opposition Iikura raises is the tendency on the part of *kokugaku* scholars to understand *wabun* as *gikobun* and hence a kind of *gabun* or “elegant language.” As I have mentioned, in the literary climate of Edo society, *gabun* was generally defined in opposition to *zokubun* or “vulgar language”. In this sense, *wabun* in so far as it was equated with *gabun* referred to the stylistic poetics of the imperial court, a poetics which content therefore changed from time to time.

The second opposition Iikura points to echoes the definition raised by Hashimoto in deriving *wabun* from *waka*. In other words, it is an opposition between *wabun* as prose and *waka* as poetry. Iikura acknowledges that this distinction is arbitrary,

since *waka*, simply by virtue of the fact that it was *not* written in Sinitic script, could, of course, be considered a kind of *wabun*. For Iikura, it was the distinction between the written nature of *wabun* and the recited nature of *waka* (much like the conventional distinction in the English language between prose and poetry) that lay at the crux of this opposition. Yet, as I will demonstrate later in this chapter, *wabun* was never defined outside the confines of *waka* and to a certain extent, *wabun*, if we continue to insist on its distinction, had a derridean *supplementary* nature vis-a-vis *waka*. Nonetheless, Iikura argues that the birth of *wabun* as a topic of analysis amongst *kokugaku* scholars could be traced to this very break from *waka* whereby *wabun* established itself as an independent form with an independent purpose in their writings.

The third, and in my view, most important opposition that Iikura constructs is when he equates *wabun* with something *kokugaku* scholars called *kunitsufumi*, a term meaning “lit. script of the country,” and used in opposition to *karafumi* (lit. “script from China”). What is important to note here is that, while this dichotomy mirrors the dichotomy I have highlighted above – that between *wabun* and *kanbun* – Iikura himself never asserts that this opposition was between that of “Japanese” script and “Chinese script. In addition, he argues that while the former term, *kunitsufumi* was itself a term imbued with many meanings, it was this term which was used by *kokugaku* scholars as a conscious attempt to counter the tendency throughout Edo period society to *write*, record, or compose in syntactical forms of what is now known as *kanbun* (which Iikura equates with the term *karafumi*).

In considering this third opposition, I would like to suggest that, Iikura highlights an important dimension of *wabun* that is ignored in Hashimoto’s and Mōri’s

writing. That is, instead of defining *wabun* as a protonational “Japanese” language that is essentially timeless and in constant dialectical opposition to other modern languages (of which “Chinese” language is but one), Ikura, through his third opposition, suggests that what was at stake for *kokugaku* scholars was the perceived inadequacy of the official language of *karafumi* to describe the world around them. Looked at from this perspective, we may imagine, it was easy for them to think this inadequacy could only be corrected by supplanting *karafumi* or *kanbun* with a proper script that was capable of *natural* commensurability: *kunitsufumi*.

It is this third characteristic of *kunitsufumi* as *writing reality* that I think is the most politically important in understanding *kokugaku* scholars’ attempt to create “*wabun*”. Nonetheless, and because of this attempt at substitution, we find that in varied uses, the conceptual boundaries of *kunitsufumi* (*as wabun*) often mirrors those of *karafumi*.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, I would argue that *kunitsufumi* was an alternative writing form created by *kokugaku* scholars in reaction against the widespread tendency in Edo to associate *textuality* with *karafumi* – something that continued into the early years of the Meiji period with official documents often written in forms of *kanbun* (such as the semi-sinitic script called *sōrōbun*). In short, we could say that the *kunitsufumi* designated an appropriate form to be used in everyday affairs of both public and private.

At this juncture, we then need to return to the opposition between *wabun* and *waka*. When *wabun* is seen as *kunitsufumi*, the question then is, how could *wabun* serve a purpose that *waka* could not? What was it about *wabun* as “native prose” that enabled

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<sup>18</sup> Ikura Yōichi, “Akinari no Wabun,” in *Ueda Akinari Kenkyū Jiten* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 2016), p. 182.

it to substitute *karatsufumi* or “Chinese” script? To answer this question, Iikura quotes from Mabuchi’s famous explication of *uta* (poetry) as distinct from *fumi* (文), a character referring to letters, writing and/or texts. I find it extremely significant that Iikura turns to this passage:

“It is very much the case when people of antiquity (*kamitsu-yo no hito*) had thoughts that they were unable to conceal (*shinubanu omohi*), they would sing in words (i.e they would compose poetry). This is what is called *uta* (poetry/songs). Conversely, when they saw things with their eyes, or heard [sounds] with their ears, and were unable to keep [the feelings they experienced because of these] to themselves, they *strung* (*tsuraneru*) words together. These were called *tatae-goto* (lit. words of praise).<sup>19</sup> This *tatae-goto* is what came to be called *fumi* in later eras. Thus, *uta* derives from the inside (of the person), and *tatae-goto* derives from the outside.”

Accordingly, and despite Mabuchi’s use of the word *fumi* rather than *wabun*, Iikura explains that the distinction Mabuchi makes between inside and outside, subjective feelings and objective observation, is what separates “*wabun*” from *waka* for Mabuchi. Through this observation, and in light of the three oppositions he highlighted, Iikura then attempts a definition of *wabun*:

“If we were to sum it up, *wabun* were texts that were written on the basis of an external motivation, focusing on reason (*kotowari*) rather than feelings (*jō*). It uses a wider range of vocabulary as compared to poetry while still maintaining its usage of words within the boundaries of *ga*. Nonetheless, in writing/using *wabun*, it is generally fine to veer towards *zoku* language unlike the fixed poetic vocabulary of *uta*.”<sup>20</sup>

He continues, “despite *wabun* being close to the *gabun* form, when *kokugaku* scholars placed it in opposition with *waka*, its basic purpose as *text* (*fumi no kihon-teki kinō*) was

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<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, *tataegoto* parallels the etymology of the English word “text”. The old North French word *tixte* (12C) refers to “text, book” but more specifically the Gospel. Similarly, the Medieval Latin word *textus* refers not only to “treatises” and texts in general, but also to “Scriptures”. Like its old usage grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Mabuchi too derives the meaning of *fumi* from the *Norito* – a compilation of religious rituals performed in praise (or appease) of the gods during the 8-9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>20</sup> Iikura, p. 183.

emphasized.” It is for this reason according to Iikura, that *wabun* was seen as closer to *zoku* forms of language, a tenet also based on the observation that *kokugaku* scholars such as Norinaga did attempt to differentiate between prosaic language and poetic language.<sup>21</sup>

Let me call attention, at this point, to how in attempting to reconcile three vastly different definitions that are placed on the same level of importance, Iikura had to resolve to the constant slippage in his writings between “*wabun*” and various other terms he uses to define the practice of *kokugaku* writing. *Wabun* is equated to *kunitsu-fumi* on the one hand, and to *gabun* and prose, on the other. At the same time, Iikura is always compelled to define *wabun* by what it is not. He appears, in other words, to be attempting to reach an invisible center by defining its boundaries.

Despite such terminological slippage, I would suggest that Iikura’s efforts do provide us with an entry point into the problem of *wabun* as an analytical concept. The strength of his approach lies in the identification of three oppositions as boundaries which limit the definition of *wabun*. By defining *wabun* in this way, his analysis allows us to view the production of *wabun* as a constant negotiation between three levels of negative identification. Iikura provides a glimpse, not of what *wabun was* for *kokugaku* scholars, but rather, what it *should (not) have been*. Iikura’s approach thus allows us to see the construction of *wabun* as a constant work in process amongst *kokugaku* scholars. At the same time, we should be conscious that attempts such as Iikura’s to negatively define *wabun* risk reifying the concept itself. Iikura’s constant attempts to equate

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<sup>21</sup> Iikura quotes from Norinaga’s *Tama-Arare*, particularly the differentiation between vocabulary of the prose and that of poetry. See *Ibid.*

various terminologies with *wabun* reveals the concept of *wabun* to have been an *a priori* assumption in his explication. It could thus be argued that, despite his attempt to analyze the various ways in which *wabun* had been defined, *wabun* itself is figured in his analysis dialectically as a conceptual object in the very process of definition. As though in defense of the ideology of national ethos hinted at in the analyses by Mōri and Hashimoto, Iikura's own definition simply repositions any attempt by *kokugaku* scholars to define a language as a prescient attempt at creating a *wabun*, or a "Japanese" (*native*) language. And although Iikura seeks the basis for his definition in the writings of Mabuchi, Norinaga, and other *kokugaku* scholars, and his recognition that *wabun* was always produced in reaction to some social external force, Iikura's approach precludes the specificity of *kokugaku* praxis since the attempts by *kokugaku* scholars to produce a form/style of writing is immediately reduced to the production of and in line with *wabun*. Regrettably, despite his attempt at a holistic definition of *wabun*, the politics of *kokugaku* writing is thus reduced and domesticated into the aesthetics of a particular style of writing enclosed within the confines of a national language (the language of "Japan) which is then called *wabun*.

There is hence a need to reposition the lens of the inquiry we have undertaken. It may be constructive to first direct any analysis of *kokugaku* scholars' attempts to create a form/style of writing away from any discussions of it being a form of *wabun*. In order to avoid characterizing writing produced by *kokugaku* scholars simply as a recreation (or imitation) of "national language" as Hashimoto and Mōri did, we need to rethink how to grapple with the question of the purpose of *producing writing*. In other words, instead of merely seeing the writings of *kokugaku* scholars as *wabun* and *gikobun*

or a form of imitation of earlier “classical” writings, I would argue for considering *kokugaku* scholars’ practices of writing in the framework laid out in the previous chapter. That is, I argue it is necessary to place the practice of *wabun* within the attempt to address and account for the body within the world around.

A good point of departure then is to position *kokugaku* writings away from the dialectical determination that the new forms and styles simply sought *not* to be Sinitic script. Helpful in this respect is the viewpoint of Kazama Seishi, who has argued that one should understand *kokugaku* scholars’ writings within a greater field of multi- and trans-linguistic environment that they had participated in. As though in response to Hashimoto and Mōri, Kazama points to the need to consider *kokugaku* scholars’ writings apart from what the approach he defines as “seeing *wabun* through the lens of a modern writing style” (*kindai-teki bunshō hyōgen*).<sup>22</sup> According to Kazama, this approach is characterized by the assumption that as long as all text belongs to a particular language, anyone who is *fluent* in the language *should* be able to easily write and read the text. That is to say, an English speaker will be able to comprehend *any* text as long as it is written in *the* English language. According to this logic, when an English speaker is faced with certain writings (for instance, the “English” language used in mathematical journals), rather than conceiving of such a language as a completely different language, the s/he would naturally assume that it was difficult to comprehend because the *level of English* was *beyond* the reader. In this case, what would be encountered as a real difference is quickly translated into a problem of difficulty within the English language itself. As Naoki Sakai has also pointed out, this flattening of the

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<sup>22</sup> Kazama, p. 10.

heterogeneity *within* “a” language effectively redefines any miscommunication as that of misunderstanding or non-understanding since all members that speak a language are bounded by the logic of what Sakai calls the “homolingual address.”<sup>23</sup> Sakai goes on to argue that what is in fact present in the practice of language – in enunciation, addressing, utterance, writing – is the logic of heterolingual address that “does not abide by the normalcy of reciprocal and transparent communication, but instead assumes that every utterance can fail to communicate because heterogeneity is inherent in any medium.”<sup>24</sup>

Hence, if we are to rethink the *kokugaku* writing as a praxis within this schema of heterolingual address, and if there was in fact a multiplicity of styles and forms within *kokugaku* scholars’ *wabun*, then we must come to the conclusion that it would be in fact inadequate to describe their efforts as attempts at creating a form squarely within the confines of a “Japanese” language. Sakai’s highlighting of the problematic assumptions involved in the homolingual address, coupled with Kazama’s pointing out that *kokugaku* writings should be understood apart from such a “modern” schema, suggest that when *kokugaku* scholars attempted to create styles and forms, they were doing so in milieu where a multitude of “styles” and “forms” were a norm. In addition, if, rather than thinking of the practice of writing as an enclosed endeavor that merely attempted to imitate classical styles, we thought of it as a form of heterolingual address, we would be able to perceive that the “boundaries” between various “styles,” “forms” and “languages” were in practice permeable. That is to say, it was a norm for *kokugaku*

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<sup>23</sup> Sakai, *Translation and Subjectivity*, p. 6. Sakai points out that “What is kept out of this regime of homolingual address is the mingling and cohabitation of plural language heritage in the audience, and subsequent to this address, speech addressed by or to a foreign language speaker is put aside as secondary to the authentic form of delivery or as an exceptional case outside normalcy.”

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

scholars to attempt to address this centrifugal force – to use Bakhtin’s words – in their conception of *what is writing*. Kazama and Sakai therefore draw our attention to the implicit *boundaries* within which contemporary scholars tend to understand the relation between language and textual production. By pointing out that a multilingual environment might very well have been natural at that point in time, both scholars give us a starting point to challenge a major assumption often held by modern scholars studying *kokugaku*: that *kokugaku* entailed the discovery of a “Japanese language” through the Hegelian (or even Freudian) mirror of Chinese classics.<sup>25</sup>

Following Kazama then, I attempt to leave behind the usual narrative about *kokugaku* writings as attempts to create *gikobun* (lit. texts that imitate ancient forms/styles) by showing how their “*wabun*” were very much grounded in an attempt to conceptualize an everyday creativity based in the material and phenomenological realm. I argue that *wabun* at its most basic level was the creation of a *thing* – a kind of *poesis*. Instead of focusing on the writings as stylistic compositions, which attempt to reproduce the aesthetics of *ga* (elegance), I argue that we should direct the discussion away from stylistic forms to the politics of *kokugaku* scholars themselves – a politic I see as revolving around the recovery of the lifeworld of antiquity and the repetition of

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<sup>25</sup> As I have shown in my introduction, such a separation between that of “Japanese” and “Chinese” often deployed in the studies of *kokugaku* itself can be said to be part of the process in which *kokugaku* scholars toiled in. By assuming that the two spheres are cofiguratively separatable, scholars such as Nosco have been simply reiterating the discursive framework that was constructed by their object of study. While I admit that it may not be completely possible to distant oneself from this “schema of configuration” (in Naoki Sakai’s words), I think it may be helpful to lay the ground work by emphasizing *kokugaku* not merely as a reaction, but also as that of a process. That is, one needs to recognize how they attempted to pursue the separation of “Chinese” and “Japanese”. It is precisely this emphasis on ‘*wabun*’ vis-à-vis *kanbun* that hinders any productive research on the view of realizing the multilingual stylistic environment in which *kokugaku* scholars toiled in. Kazama claims that *kinsei wabun* (the creation of *wabun* by *kokugaku* scholars) was what inhibited any research on style. (See Kazama, p. 20) Although I agree somewhat with Kazama’s assertion, the leap from a creation of language to that of style is itself questionable.

that lifeworld in their present. In other words, we should emphasize the socio-historical nature of *kokugaku* scholars' creation of a form of language (now called “*wabun*”) that was sufficient for everyday writing and usage. Going further, we need to ask the following questions: what is the role of “*wabun*” within the larger aim of recovering the past? How is “*wabun*,” as a kind of writing *kokugaku* scholars themselves described as related to *mono* (thing) and the “investigation of things,” central to *kokugaku*'s philological framework? How is writing related temporally to the past, and how did *kokugaku* scholars attempt to explain the “still born” nature of the “Japanese: language when they discovered it as already “dead” in their present? In short, I argue that at the center of the practice of writing “*wabun*” is this very urgent need to address the “present” state of things, in which language used was seen as inadequate to describe and represent reality – both in antiquity, and in the present.

In order to address this aspect of writing, I propose to systematically replace the term *wabun* with the preferred terminological choice of *kokugaku* scholars themselves: what they call “*fumi*”. What I have discovered in tracing these arguments in mid- to late eighteenth century *kokugaku* texts is that the term *wabun*, used without question by so many contemporary scholars, in fact was never deployed, in any conceptual manner, in *kokugaku* discourse of the time. By narrowing our focus to *fumi* and the role it plays in the thought of *kokugaku* scholars, we can steer away from any overdetermination of the production of certain writing forms as a creation of proto-Japanese *wabun*. Here, we can re-read Iikura's (Mabuchi's) definition of *fumi*, as a written medium directed towards some external catalyst. What can be elucidated from such uses of the word *fumi* without any modifiers such as *wa* is the conceptual boundaries of *kokugaku* scholars' thought

and their politics. On one level, *kokugaku* scholars such as Mabuchi were not writing in a vacuum; they had to address their ideas towards a larger general audience through an extended network of letters, the preferred mode of intellectual exchange across regions. Far from relying on an assumed consensus around the meaning of a word like *wabun*, they needed to contextualize their thinking in terms of words like *fumi* and what they meant to fellow thinkers in Edo society.

In its general usage in the Edo period, *fumi* is often used to refer to various *things*, ranging from text, prose, letters, (official) documents, records, laws, and so forth.<sup>26</sup> As if to add to the ambiguity of definition, *fumi* in its everyday usage was also used to refer to “official” (orthodox) learning in general, especially the learning of Confucian classics, as well as Chinese poetry and literature.<sup>27</sup> Yet, from this preliminary list of *fumi*’s meanings and usages, we can already see that, as a lowest common denominator of meaning, in the Edo period, *fumi* was always assumed to be writing done in some form of *kanbun* style (including *sōrōbun*), the official style of written documents as I have mentioned. In this sense, the use of the term “*fumi*” by *kokugaku* scholars such as Mabuchi was not incidental; the boundaries of their analysis reveal an attempt at renovating the discursive boundaries of *fumi* to include *alternative* (and more “appropriate”) non-*kanbun* writing styles. Thus, *fumi*, in the sense that Mabuchi uses it,

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<sup>26</sup> In Edo period literature, *fumi* was also used as a marked slang for love letters.

<sup>27</sup> Historically, this has been the standard usage of *bun* with shares the same ideograph as *fumi*, with many examples from different historical periods. In the *Analects* 7/25, for instance, it is said that “Confucius taught four subjects: culture/learning 文, moral conduct 行, loyalty 忠, and trustworthiness 信.” Judging from its uses in *The Tale of Genji*, this definition was widespread since the Heian period. Ogyū Sorai in *Benmei* (1740) too described *bun* (*fumi*) as the foundation of the Confucian way. He uses it as “culture” (as juxtaposed with barbarism). See John A. Tucker, *Ogyū Sorai’s Philosophical Masterworks* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), pp. 322-323.

is always an adequate and *alternative* medium for the purpose of everyday writing. That is to say, as a medium, *fumi* could, by definition, convey the information within these everyday mediums with equal as or, more often than not, *more accuracy* than, *kanbun*. In this sense, *fumi* does not strictly have to be bounded to the notion of *identity* foregrounded in the modern definitions of *wabun* as a kind of “Japanese language”. As we shall see in the *kokugaku* scholars analyzed in this chapter, this need to discover a form that rivals the use of *kanbun* seems to be the central driving force of much of their analysis of what *fumi* is and *can be*. Their project was, as a whole, an attempt to define a textual form that is an adequate medium to address the needs of dealing with reality.

### ***The Problem of the Lifeworld in Fumi***

To think about *fumi* as a kind of attempt to find a language that is adequate in describing the world is effectively to broach the topic of representation. That is, I suggest that insofar as *kokugaku* scholars attempted to create a language to effectively describe the world through writing, the link between writing and the real world moved away from seeing writing merely as a form of “recording” to a form of representation. In other words, by attempting to write *fumi*, *kokugaku* scholars did not simply toil in the creation of a “language” – it is not about playing in the realm of language (as Hino Tatsuo and Susan Burns have mentioned with the concept of *asobi*) – it is about making present the materiality of the world in another material form – script. By defining script as a form of re-presenting of the world around them, *kokugaku* scholars effectively had to thus hover between two poles – the practice of writing as *mimesis* and that of *poesis*. The notion of *mimesis* I use here is not that of imitating classical texts (*gikobun*), but

rather, that of searching for a linguistic form and style that *directly imitates the world in their writings*. In their attempt to find a language that could replace Sinitic script, or *kanbun* – effectively the de facto “official” language of their time – on an everyday basis, their reconstruction of a language hints at their attempt to develop in *fumi* a chronotope that specifically mirrored their perceived chronotope of the world. Here, the word “chronotope” is borrowed from Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept referring to the particular combination of space-time within a text or narrative, “the place where knots of the narrative are tied and untied.”<sup>28</sup> In other words, the chronotopic dimensions in a form of writing such as *fumi* are not the literal time and place coordinates in which a piece of writing is presented in but rather, the *ground* that allows for the reader to perceive the narrative frame of the present itself. As Peter Hitchcock explains, the chronotope is “that *figural* semantic process allowing narration to proceed to form.”<sup>29</sup> That is not to say that the writing of *fumi* as a kind of chronotopic operation produces a specific form. On the contrary, what I am suggesting in reading *kokugaku* scholars’ producing of *fumi* as a kind of chronotopic writing is that the writing is figurative in dimension, and appears close to a generic set of forms that possess *similar* chronotopes but is at the same time unfinalized as a whole. Seen in such a manner, the practices of *fumi*, as an attempt to supplant the practice of *kanbun*, is also an attempt to toil in what Jacques Rancière defined as politics: a “(re)distribution of the sensible” – it is a

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<sup>28</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 250.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Hitchcock, *The Long Space: Transnationalism and Postcolonial Form* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 4.

“demonstration of a gap in the sensible itself.”<sup>30</sup> That is to say, *kokugaku* scholars’ writing of *fumi*, in so far as it is an attempt to describe adequately the surrounding world, was aimed at the disrupting of preexisting sensibilities that were *felt* through the use of *kanbun* while “figuring” an “appropriate” form of writing that *mirrors* (i.e. imitates) the perceived chronotope of the world. *Fumi*, as a form of writing, was therefore an *adjustment* of *poesis*, *mimesis* and more importantly that of everyday sensibilities (i.e. *aesthesis*).<sup>31</sup>

If we were to acknowledge that *fumi* is an attempt to create a form that is chronotopically adequate not only to re-presenting everyday reality but also the pristine lifeworld of antiquity, then we would also need to think of how as a form, *fumi* was seen by *kokugaku* scholars not merely as a re-presentation of the world but also an ontological excavation of the past. This becomes clear when we look at the layers of translation that are generally involved in the practice of *fumi*. Earlier, we have seen that Iikura defined *wabun* as being closer to *zokubun* due to its proximity to the everyday and in spite of its attempts to retain a sense of partial elegance. It is not impossible to see in this sense that

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<sup>30</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On politics and aesthetics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 38.

<sup>31</sup> I derive this observation from Jacques Rancière’s reading of the (un)representability of art. As with his definition of politics, Rancière argues against aesthetics as unrepresentable (e.g. Kantian sublime) by pointing out that it is a matter of the shift in aesthetic sensibilities that often undergird any conceptual shift in art. (See his *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), p. 115.) Elsewhere, Rancière expands on this methodology by again defining “aisthesis” (the logic of sensation) as something not internal to the art piece or its form but rather as “regimes of the identification of art.” (See his *Aisthesis* (London: Verso, 2013), p. xi.) Using Rancière’s methodology here allows us to move away from *wabun* as a kind of style and/or form and allows us to explore how *kokugaku* scholars attempted to redefine the interpretive sensible network that gives the world meaning.

Iikura's definition comes close to defining *fumi* as a kind of vernacular form – a language that bridges official linguistic forms with that of everyday speech.<sup>32</sup>

Yet this does not take into account the practice of composing *fumi* itself. Kazama highlights that *fumi* (although he calls it *wabun*) had to go through at least two translational processes. He claims that *kokugaku* scholars often translated texts of antiquity into a form closer to everyday discourse before ornamenting the writing with more elegant styles.<sup>33</sup> This idea can also be seen in Ueda Akinari's *Kamiyo Monogatari* (1809), which is a “translation” of the “Age of the Gods” section of the *Nihon Shoki*. Rather than writing in simple everyday speech, Akinari's translation is highly stylized while retaining observable forms of early modern syntax.<sup>34</sup> We see also a certain simplification of content to allow for better continuity between various scenes in the narrative, suggesting how he had to deal with the difficulties of consolidating different versions of the imperial mythology. The translational nature of Akinari's text is salient. Akinari lifts passages directly from the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki*, and the *Kujiki* without quotations. Specifically, he omits portions that seemed contradictory, thereby flattening the ancient texts – which had their own commentary and annotation traditions – into a simplified form.<sup>35</sup> Yet, at the same time, Akinari also includes commentary from the

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<sup>32</sup> Perhaps Iikura was influenced by the concept of *baihua* in Chinese literary history, that is a kind of vernacular form is closest to what one may think of as modern Chinese (of the New Culture Movement), one that is a kind of “elegant everyday language”.

<sup>33</sup> Kazama, p. 74.

<sup>34</sup> See *UAZ* Vol. 1, pp. 143-187.

<sup>35</sup> This is clear where he omits scenes that did not conform to the *general* narrative of the *Nihon Shoki*. The *Nihon Shoki* itself a polyphonic text in which annotations and commentaries were inserted into the text alongside the marking of different oral versions of the same tales. Akinari however ignores this polyphonic dimension. For instance, he glosses over Susano's birth and development and jumps direct to his challenging of Amaterasu's rule in the land of Takamanohara (*Ibid.*, pp. 148-151).

original texts mixed with commentary of his own.<sup>36</sup> Even more important is the polyphonic nature of his translation. By lifting passages directly from the imperial histories while at the same time diffusing the sense of disjuncture a person reading his text during Akinari's own time might have experienced, Akinari was clearly sufficiently contented with his attempt at *fumi* enough to hope that the text would be presented for imperial viewing (*tenran wo tatematsuru nari*).<sup>37</sup> This kind of attempt at "translation" undertaken by Akinari reveals another dimension of *fumi* that needs to be addressed. Not only is it a translation of old language into something "contemporary," but it is also to replication (which is different from an imitation), a certain combination of form and content made comprehensible to people during his time. *Kamiyo Monogatari* may be seen as a re-presentation, in the present, of the lifeworld of the past through *fumi* as a medium.

In order to discuss *fumi* as writing in a particular mode aimed at the recovery of the lifeworld of the past *for* the purpose of the present, I also deploy Heidegger's conception of *Dasein* in *Being and Time*. As Allan Megill has pointed out, Heidegger's attempt to recover the Being of beings, or the originary mode of existential being, was nostalgic in nature. As he explains, "Heidegger's predilection for "going back" is present in both the ontological aspect of *Being and Time*, where he is concerned with

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<sup>36</sup> For instance, he shows how there were different versions of oral transmission that narrated the funeral of the god Ame-waka-hiko. However, Akinari adds a line of his own to one of these versions: "In one [version,] the river geese were made to carry both the *kisari* (head-hanging bearers) and the *hahaki* (broom bearers), while the kingfisher was made to carry the body, the sparrows served as pounding women .... [In my (Akinari's) opinion] even if there are books that transmitted such a ceremony, it is not something that can be understood by our human mind" (Ibid., p. 155). See also his insertion of the commentary on Amewakahiko's death by arrow as the reason why people are now cautious of the weapon (p. 154).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 187. Iikura Yōichi has also pointed out that this hope for *tenran* was to match his intellectual rival Norinaga's feat in his writing of the Norinaga's *Kojiki-den* which had *really* been presented for imperial viewing. See Iikura Yōichi, *Akinari-Kō* (Tokyo: Kanrin Shobō, 2005), pp. 79-80, 89-91.

uncovering the “meaning of being”, and its existential aspect, where he is concerned with analyzing *Dasein*’s Being-in-the-world.”<sup>38</sup> Reading *Being and Time* as written in a historical period of urgency – Germany’s defeat in World War I and the sense of crisis in its aftermath<sup>39</sup> – Megill argues that Heidegger’s *Being and Time* was a critique of people’s over-reliance on the scientific knowledge, resulting in them losing their “way back to the question of Being.”<sup>40</sup> Here, Heidegger’s framework will be used as a lens to view *fumi*. Like *kokugaku* scholars, Heidegger was interested in uncovering what makes it possible to “be-in-the-world,” a philosophical and ontological dimension that exists as the essence of all beings.<sup>41</sup> In many regards, Heidegger’s formulation of one’s “place” in the world mirrors the ontological positioning of the *kokugaku* body and its relation to language in the natural world. The notion of language as a tool and technology in Heidegger’s *Dasein* therefore provides an analytical entry into the question of both the lifeworld of the past postulated by *kokugaku* scholars, and the lifeworld of the present, as well as both these lifeworlds’ relations to *fumi*.

For Heidegger, this “being in the world” centered on the elucidation of the concept *Dasein* which is often translated as Being (with the capital ‘B’). In *Being and Time*, *Dasein* is undoubtedly the human being, although not the human being as it *is* as a kind of object/subject/psyche/animal/thing/ego/cognito in the world. In other words, unlike the notion of humanism, or the idea of human cognition as separate from the

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<sup>38</sup> Allan Megill, *Prophets of Extremity: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 120.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.121.

<sup>41</sup> As it is widely known, the role of language – and etymology – plays a major role in the way Heidegger justifies his elucidation of Being. At times, he uses the “logical” and grammatological aspects of the German (English) language to show how *Dasein* can be glimpsed in human being’s own enunciations with regards to the human being’s role/place in the world.

world and the only measure of objective truth of “reality” – a position held by Descartes in his *Meditations on First Philosophy* which Heidegger posits as the beginning of the “wrong” route of scientific knowledge – Heidegger is more interested in uncovering that which allows *Dasein* “to be”. That is to say, by raising the question “what is being,” Heidegger is attempting to point out that even if one does not ask this question, there is an *inherent* (almost instinctual) understanding of *being* in everyone. Otherwise, Heidegger claims, it would be impossible to engage with other *beings* or even to engage with oneself. This is why he says that “Being” is a self-evident concept. “Being” *exists* in all knowing and predicating, in every relation to beings [Seienden], and in every relation to oneself, and the expression is understandable “without further ado.”” It is not a question of what it *means to be* as much as it is a question of uncovering the “Being” which lies “*a priori* in every relation and being toward beings as beings”<sup>42</sup> – Being is therefore “that which determines beings as beings [...] while “is” itself not a being.”<sup>43</sup> For Heidegger then, to raise the question of *Dasein* is to raise the question of one’s ontological relation to the world – how is it possible to “be” being.

At the same time, to elucidate *Dasein* is to also to understand how we (as human beings capable of reflecting on and elucidating *Dasein*) are always thrown into the world as just “being-[t]here” (Heidegger sometimes hyphenates *Da-sein*; “being [t]here”). Heidegger calls this “being-in-the-world”. In Heidegger’s view, *Dasein* and the world are not oppositional but complementary. *Dasein* dwells in a world that is at the same time ordered through *Dasein*’s being. This “facticity” – the factuality of the way in

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<sup>42</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State of University of New York Press, 2010), p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5. In other words, it is not the tracing back in their origins to another being in a narrative mode.

which every *Dasein* actually is – implies that ““an innerworldly being” has being-in-the-world in such a way that it can understand itself as bound up in its “destiny” with the being of those beings which it encounters within its own world.”<sup>44</sup> In other words, while every human being, in so much as they possess *Dasein*, is also spatially “in” the world, the world is also at the same time tied together with their being and rendered through their beings precisely because they are being through *Dasein*. This is why Heidegger sometimes uses the word “dwelling” for this relationship. It is not simply referring to that relation in which human beings inhabit their environment. On the contrary, insofar as they possess *Dasein*, human beings can innately discover other beings they encounter in their environment, can know about them, *make sense of them*, and *grasp* (in both senses of understanding as well as *use*) them. This environment – the world – is however not defined as what we now call “nature” or in terms of an external reality,<sup>45</sup> but is instead thoroughly entwined with the being of *Dasein* or more specifically, the “worldliness” of the world of *Dasein* – a “structural totality of particular “worlds” [that] contains in itself the *a priori* of worldliness in general.”<sup>46</sup>

The correspondence of the *kokugaku* body to Heidegger’s conceptualization of the role of human beings to the world via *Dasein* is striking, perhaps because of crisis in the world that one may sense in both Heidegger’s writings, and those of *kokugaku* scholars. In many regards, although he does not say it explicitly, Heidegger’s *Dasein* is an embodied being both *in* the world and *the being of the world*. As if Heidegger is

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<sup>44</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 56.

<sup>45</sup> Heidegger calls these kinds of definition “ontic” in contradistinction to what he claims to be the ontological world in which *Dasein* dwells.

<sup>46</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 65.

echoing the writings of *kokugaku* scholars, the body in *kokugaku* is, as I have shown, both in the world as a thing (*mono*), while at the same time that which is placed above the rest of things as the most important and precious constituent of the world. As with *Dasein*, the *kokugaku* body/human is thoroughly intertwined with the world as both a medical/anatomical ontic (existential) being, and an ontological being that enables people to understand the pristine originary world. In addition, as we have seen with Mabuchi and Norinaga (and later, in Chapter Three, Akinari), the body's relation to the world is *natural*. By natural, *kokugaku* scholars posit the body as not merely a natural ontic thing in the world – as in the anatomical or medical body – but also one that is thoroughly ontological *and* social. These two dimensions of the ontological and the social as “natural” appears to also undergird Heidegger's uncovering of *Dasein*. On the one hand, Heidegger claims that “being-in-the-world” is in most part at the same time “being-with-others” (*Mitsein*): “The world of *Dasein* is a *with-world* [*Mitwelt*]. Being-in is *being-with* [*Mitsein*] others.”<sup>47</sup> On the other, *Dasein*, in its dwelling in the world, completely effaces the traditional subject-object binary in Cartesian metaphysics<sup>48</sup> with the world and *Dasein* in mutual-rendering. It is clear that the position of the body – and the human being – in both Heidegger and *kokugaku* seem to be analogous. Heidegger's elucidation of *Dasein*'s dwelling in the world then will, I contend, provide us with the conceptual tools to understand how in *kokugaku*, the ideas of the body and language are tied together into a “natural” worldview. According to Heidegger, one relation between *Dasein* and its worldliness (and hence the world) is through the notion of “handiness,”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 116.

<sup>48</sup> Heidegger calls this position “classical ontology”.

<sup>49</sup> At times Heidegger uses the word practicality to designate this “at hand-ness” of tools.

in which *Dasein* innately understands the way in which ontic things in the world are to be used. For Heidegger, *Dasein* toils on an everyday level in the same way a craftsman practices his craft.<sup>50</sup> This “handiness” does not designate the “immediate” (taken in the most literal sense of the word) world around *Dasein*. While at times he uses the notion of “at hand” to describe how *Dasein* encounters the surrounding world, the immediacy of the craftsman’s tools refers to how how *naturally* and *immediately* (as juxtaposed with *mediatedly*) the craftsman knows *how to interact with the world with hands*. For instance, a human being that has *Dasein* can readily and knowingly use any flat surface as a *table* without readily conceptualizing the table or its use as such. In many regards, the “handiness” here refers to the logic in which the body appears to *already know* how to interact with its surrounding world, as though the logic of the world itself is already *immanent* to the body.<sup>51</sup> To uncover *Dasein* is thus, to uncover how it is both *a priori* and *naturally* able to interact *in and with* the world.

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<sup>50</sup> Heidegger distinguishes between a *Dasein* on the level of everyday activities and a more reflective and philosophical mode of it. In most times, *Dasein* works in the former, both consciously and unconsciously. (Heidegger does not use the word consciousness because it posits an interiority that is at the same time distinct and self-sufficient vis-à-vis an external world.) Obviously, he equates his inquiry into the ontological aspect of *Dasein* as belonging to the latter mode of *Dasein*.

<sup>51</sup> This is perhaps the reason why in Heidegger’s later writings, the question of technology and *techné* will dominate his thinking of Being. In a late lecture on *Time and Being*, Heidegger for instance claims that “Ever since the beginning of Western thinking with the Greeks, all saying of “being” and “is” is held in remembrance of the determination of Being [*Dasein*] as presencing which is binding for thinking. This also holds true of the thinking that directs the most modern technology and industry... Now that modern technology has arranged its expansion and rule over the whole earth, it is not just the sputniks and their by-products that are circling around our planet; *it is rather Being as presencing in the sense of calculable material that claims all the inhabitants of the earth in a uniform manner without the inhabitants of the non-European continents explicitly knowing this or even being able or wanting to know of the origin of this determination of Being.*” (Emphasis are mine.) It is needless to say that modern technology for Heidegger is thoroughly European, and that the spreading of not only technology but also European “definitions” of language across the world in light of (colonial) modernization, people are now effectively toiling bodily in the same worldliness as “European” *Dasein*. In this sense, “modern” technology is but an extension of this handiness of *Dasein*. See Martin Heidegger, *On Time and Being*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 7.

Evidently, the “tool” par excellence for such an uncovering of Dasein is language. Heidegger’s attempt to recover the worldliness of Dasein is steeped in the analysis of the logics within language – from the “is” of Being to the uncovering of Being through etymological explanations. This is why he claims,

“Signs are not things which stand in an indicating relationship to another thing; rather *they are useful things which explicitly bring a totality of useful things to circumspection so that the worldly character of what is at hand makes itself known at the same time.*”<sup>52</sup>

This is why the worldly character of *Dasein* is so important to Heidegger. By positing that there is a single way of ontologically rendering the world that can be glimpsed through the uncovering of a certain being-in-the-world through *Dasein*, Heidegger attempts to champion an ideal type of being that becomes the subject and object of philosophy. This ideal type of being is similar to the implicit subject of “people” and their bodies in *kokugaku* thought. As we have seen in Norinaga’s *Kojiki-den*, uncovering the ideal lifeworld in which words, people, and their direct and immediate relation to the world was central to *kokugaku* scholars’ philological excavation. This is the reason why almost all *kokugaku* scholars assert the primacy of the native “Way” that does not require the normalizing structures of Confucian concepts. The traditional mode of understanding *fumi* as *gikōbun* (imitative style) and as “prose” and not *waka*, is thus inadequate, for it does not take into account the very figurative nature of *kokugaku* scholars’ view of language. By positing *fumi* as a kind of simple imitation, scholars such as Haruo Shirane has evaded the central question in their praxis: that of the lifeworld of antiquity. Hino Tatsuo’s understanding of *kokugaku* writing as a kind of “play” can

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<sup>52</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, p. 78. (Emphasis from the original translated text).

thus be understood in the same way. It is a “worlding” of the past through the “play” of words, in which the pristine lifeworld of the past is re-figured as a real constituent of one’s very being in the present world.

However, I do not however wish to deny that there are imitative tendencies in *kokugaku* scholars’ writing on *fumi*. On one level, the proximity between *kokugaku*’s attempt to recover the lifeworld through *fumi* and Heidegger’s theory of *Dasein* does show how *kokugaku* scholars could have positioned *fumi* as an adequate tool to recover the relation of how every single ontic being in the world is bounded through the ontological embodied being-in-the-world. On another level, *kokugaku* scholars’ own attempts to compose *fumi* via the imitation of classical (i.e. Heian court) prose reveals the productive qualities of *mimesis* in its relation with *aesthesis*. As Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe pointed out in *Typographies*, there is a deep anxiety towards *mimesis* within Heidegger’s elucidation of *Dasein*. According to Lacoue-Labarthe, Being in Heidegger is considered as a fixed quality of typos (type print, model, etc.) in which beings originate as traces of resemblance; in short, *Dasein* is always deemed as *the original* Being-in-the-world that *knows* the world as its dwelling. Thus, by conceptualizing a certain onto-typology – *Dasein* as the ideal type – in Heidegger, Lacoue-labarthe shows how Heidegger is still trapped immanently in the Platonic model where *mimesis* in beings corrupts the truth of Being despite Heidegger’s own attempt to return *before* Plato.<sup>53</sup> What Lacoue-Labarthe’s deconstruction of Heidegger’s Being shows is that at

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<sup>53</sup> In analyzing Heidegger’s reading of Nietzsche, Lacoue-Labarthe shows how there is a fixation on the concept of *gestalt* and *poesis* and a blatant ignoring of the dimension of *Darstellung* (formulation/representation) in Heidegger’s concept of Being. See Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Typographies: Mimesis, Philosophy, Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 72-73.

the center of the latter's attempt to recover the relationship between Being and the world, is the centrality of *mimesis* in Heidegger's attempt to describe *poesis*.

While Lacoue Labarthe's observations were directed at the elucidation of Heideggerian subjective technology, it is possible to apply his ideas to the discussion of *fumi*. Given that the two aims of *kokugaku* scholars – the recovery of the relation between one's body and the lifeworld of pristine antiquity, and that of a conceiving a form of writing that is adequate in transplanting *kanbun* and describing the world – are both encompassed by the practice of *fumi*, we return to the earlier observation that *mimesis* and *poesis* were inseparable in their attempts to conceptualize *fumi*, and that in its praxis, *mimesis is poesis*. In addition, given that the emphasis on the *natural* – in the sense of world's nature – on the part of *kokugaku* scholars – a point which I have raised in the earlier chapters of the body, and which I will also discuss in Chapter Three – *mimesis* is always postulated as an imitation of *phusis* – the nature of things. This is not to say that *fumi* is an imitation of nature. On the contrary, in the practice of writing *fumi*, *kokugaku* scholars' attempted an excavation of the relation to *phusis* that is at once timeless but cannot be perceived in their present time. *Fumi* is ultimately an attempt to redistribute the sensible realm of the world – *it is an attempt to write and figure a pristine world that was both nature and natural*.

### ***Kamo no Mabuchi (1697-1769): Fumi and the External World***

I would propose that the discourse on *fumi* was therefore the arena in which *kokugaku* scholars attempted to reassess the problems of Sinitic writing and propose an alternative that was adequate to the everyday needs of writing. In order to understand the ways in which *fumi* was deployed as such an alternative by *kokugaku* scholars, we

should start with Mabuchi's understanding of *fumi*. Mabuchi, historically known as one of the "four great men of *kokugaku*" as I have stated in my introduction, set the scope of inquiry for later *kokugaku* scholars I will discuss in this chapter. In their own ways, these individuals were responding to opposition between *uta* and *fumi* that inform Mabuchi's own understanding of the relation between text, the phenomenal world, and a particular "self". Here, "self" is put in quotation in order to distinguish it from the philosophical usage of subjectivity or subject in scholarship at present. Rather, "self" here refers to what Mabuchi calls "native ethos" (*yamato-gokoro*), a phrase that is prevalent in his writing. My contention is that Mabuchi's initial assertion of a discrete split between the role of *uta* and *fumi* determines his ontological reordering of the way in which the world was perceived. The duality of external and internal drawn by Mabuchi is itself an attempt at the definition and imitation of a pristine version of an individual self vis-à-vis the world of antiquity.

The most explicit discussion of *fumi* is found in the treatise *Bun'ikō* (Thoughts on the meaning of *fumi*) which is part of a series of similarly titled treatises known as *Go'iko* (Thoughts on the meaning of five subjects)<sup>54</sup> which have been seen by scholars – both in the late Edo period and contemporary – as representative of Mabuchi's position as a whole. Within these five treatises however, *Bun'ikō* is the relatively understudied and lesser known text. The exact date of its composition is uncertain, although scholars speculate that it was likely written around the years of 1761-1763.<sup>55</sup> There are also two

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<sup>54</sup> The five "*ikō*" 五意考 are 文意考, 歌意考, 国意考, 語意考, 書意考. To a certain extent, these five *ikō* has come to represent Mabuchi's thought in a nutshell, for they cover the main topics that modern scholars have identified as forming the crux of *kokugaku* philological inquiry.

<sup>55</sup> According to three different prefaces written by Mabuchi's students, this text was written when Mabuchi was fifty (1746), sixty (1757), and sixty-six (1763) years old. In the commentary attached to

versions that survive to us. The first was edited and published in 1800 by Mabuchi's student, Arakida Hisaoyu (1747-1804). In the latter's preface, Hisaoyu stated that this work written by his teacher at the age of 50 (the year 1746) was "regrettably never completed, [...] and despite the impossibility of it becoming a work on its own, the [ideas found in the text] that is left to us are refreshing." It is because of that, Hisaoyu appended it to the *Ka'ikō* ("Thoughts on the meaning of Songs/Poetry") to "form a single volume." In contrast, the second version was never published, and appeared to have circulated amongst other students as a written manuscript.

There are marked differences between the two versions of the treatise, but scholars generally agree that the second manuscript represented a later edited version of the first, due to the fact that it included far more details and corrections than Hisaoyu's published version. In order to explain how *kokugaku* scholars responded to Mabuchi's thoughts, I will base my argument on this second circulated version, as it was likely this text that was read and discussed amongst *kokugaku* networks. In addition, the fact that there were at least two distinct versions allow us to draw three observations with regards to Mabuchi's penning of *Bun'ikō*. Firstly, the range of dates given by Mabuchi's students with regards to the exact time in which the text was completed shows that Mabuchi had not only considered *fumi* at the prime of his practice in the 1750s, but he had continued to ponder upon the subject towards the end of his life. Secondly, Hisaoyu's appending of the supposed 1746 published version to *Ka'ikō* (1760) reveals the perceived complementary nature of the text to *Ka'ikō*, a text that was written

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Volume 19 of *KMZ* (Tokyo: Zoku Gunsho Ruijū Kanseikai, 1977), the editors speculate that the text was written between 1761-1763, taking the average of the latter two ages.

supposedly fourteen years (1760) after *Bun'ikō*. Thirdly, and by extension, we can also draw the conclusion that *Bun'ikō* was edited and revisited by Mabuchi as he composed the other treatises that comprise of *Go'ikō*. It is thus impossible to understand the definition of *fumi* in *Bun'ikō* without reference to the other four treatises of *Go'ikō*.<sup>56</sup> In this section, I will only draw on arguments particularly from *Ka'ikō* (Thoughts on the meaning of Poetry/Songs), and *Koku'ikō* (Thoughts on the meaning of our country) in my reading of *Bun'ikō* due to their centrality to the understanding of *fumi*.

As I have highlighted, our analysis of *fumi* has to proceed paratactically with the other *Go'ikō* texts in order to elicit the role played by *fumi* as a medium for Mabuchi's understanding his antiquity. To formulate this differently, to investigate Mabuchi's *fumi* is also an attempt at understanding its role in relation to other important dimensions of language central to his thought, particularly how it is positioned vis-à-vis various conceptual components of his philosophy represented in *Go'ikō*. Yet, the relation between these five texts are not entirely straightforward; they are not five treatises on five different aspects of a single philosophy. Scholars have generally placed *Kokuikō* as the central treatise that summarizes Mabuchi's position, while the other texts are simply different aspects of this very same "way of the gods." In this "central" text of *Kokuikō*, he introduces a derivative set of dichotomous binary of "self" as I have highlighted earlier: *yamato-gokoro* (Japanese heart) and *kara-gokoro* (Chinese heart). In a very similar fashion, this binary prefigures the schematic placement of *wabun* and *kanbun* mentioned in the first section of this chapter – that is, both writing styles as belonging

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<sup>56</sup> At the end of *Bun'ikō*, Mabuchi himself stated that this is part of a series of five lectures. Interestingly, it is also stated that he might return to this text to revise it, but, in his words, "like *Kai(kō)* and *Shoi(kō)*, this text is yet to be completed."

to their *own* respective national ethos. Yet unlike the way in which *wabun* and *kanbun* are placed in a seemingly separate and *equal* level vis-à-vis each other, *yamato-gokoro* and *kara-gokoro* are clearly, in Mabuchi's schematic constellation, a founding hierarchy that allows him to substantiate the importance of *uta*, that is, song or poetry. At the same time, it is also the hierarchy between a "natural" heart and an artificial one. As we will see in a moment, despite its derivative status, scholars have often used Mabuchi's assertions in *Kokuikō* to champion *uta* and ignore *fumi* as a concept worth analyzing.

The period when Mabuchi wrote *Kokuikō*, was historically the peak and gradual decline of Ogyū Sorai's school of thought in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup> It is no surprise then that the format of the text is organized as a series of responses to questions from an imaginary interlocutor. Although Mabuchi does not identify the interlocutor by name, many of the questions come more or less directly from *Bendōsho* (1734), a polemical treatise on the nature of the Way by the Confucian scholar Dazai Shundai, a student of Sorai.<sup>58</sup> Before his "turn" towards *kokugaku*, Mabuchi had studied Chinese classics with Watanabe Mōan (1687-1775), a student of Nakano Kiken who was also Shundai's teacher. It may have been at this point that he encountered various ideas that Shundai could have shared with Mōan.<sup>59</sup> In *Bendōsho*, Shundai asserted that Japan lacked any normative criteria for governing society prior to the coming of Confucian philosophy.

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<sup>57</sup> Kamo no Mabuchi, *KMZ* vol. 9, p. 30.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Fluckiger, "Reflections on the Meaning of Our Country: Kamo no Mabuchi's *Kokuikō*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 63 (2) (2008): 213-214.

<sup>59</sup> Mabuchi was known to have been interacting with a number of scholars intellectually related to the Sorai school of *Ken'engaku* (a name based on Sorai's sobriquet). In addition to Mōan, Mabuchi was also close friends with Hattori Nankaku (1683-1749), another of Sorai's students. Peter Nosco states that the relation between Ogyū Sorai's and Mabuchi's thought was a strong one but based on Mabuchi's "repeated rejection of several of the Sorai School's basic assumptions." (See Nosco, "Introduction: Neo-Confucianism and Tokugawa Discourse," in Peter Nosco, ed. *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture* (Princeton: Princeton: University Press, 1984), pp. 15-16.

Taking Ogyū Sorai's belief – that the Way of the Ancient Kings was the perfect ethical system for both China and Japan – to its logical extreme, Shundai's assertion implied that prior to the adoption of Confucian teachings, Japan was merely in the phase of “pre-history” – a chaotic realm that is not governed properly by the philosophy of the sages. As one would expect, this extreme position was not easily accepted by scholars then. Indeed, this argument provoked a series of rebuttals from scholars of all intellectual and political positions, particularly those advocating Confucian-Shinto syncretic positions. From that perspective, Mabuchi's *Kokuikō* was a part of that larger movement; in fact, he drew upon many existing ideas even from camps that were not aligned with his position.<sup>60</sup>

To reiterate, *Kokuikō* begins with a distinction between the *uta* (poetry) and that of “conceptualizing” (*kotowaru*) using the format of Mabuchi's conversation with an imaginary interlocutor. The format is familiar to readers in the Edo period, and while it appears to be an argument, it is perhaps more similar to the classical format of question and answer between a wise master and an ignorant disciple – one that we have seen in Nakae Tōju's *Okina Mondō*.<sup>61</sup> The hierarchy is clear in every instance, and in the same way that the interlocutors are likened to a wise and broad-minded master teaching an ignorant and myopic disciple, Mabuchi's arguments are guided by notions of holistic value – “enlarged” over “narrow,” “encompassing” over “reduction,” and so forth. This running difference in terms of the holisticity plays out immediately in the very first

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<sup>60</sup> Flueckiger, p. 213.

<sup>61</sup> This question and answer format is evident with lucid markers of hierarchy and ignorance. 問う、曰く。 Interestingly, despite his disagreement with Confucian rhetoric, Mabuchi still continues to toil in its traditional form which dates back to the earliest texts of *The Analects*.

conversation. Against the anonymous interlocutor's assertion that, "poetry is insignificant [and] it is only with the "Sinitic Way" (*karakuni no michi*) – which is quickly equated with the "Confucian way" – can one effectively govern the world," Mabuchi points out this "Chinese way simply conceptualizes (*kotowaru*) everything using [principles] that are man-made, and hence is too insignificant (*chihisaki*) [within the grand scheme of things]." It is this very replacement of the study of the world with the study of a conceptual and totalizing origin and essence that Mabuchi is reacting towards in *Kokuikō*. According to him, the focus on concepts like "principle" constrains the "heart of heaven" and as such, reduces it into a single conceptual dimension.<sup>62</sup> In other words, the use of *li* by "Confucians"<sup>63</sup> as a holistic tool to comprehend the world is severely myopic, "since it was merely the clever intellectual conceptual product of a single mortal person." Here, the dichotomy between man-made concept and the nature allows Mabuchi to claim that "heaven is all embodying" and thus *exceeds* any boundaries laid by the concept of *li*. Scholars have pointed out that this championing of the impossibility of completely comprehending the heavens and earths (*ametsuchi*) through logic, is an idea that Mabuchi took from the naturalist philosophies of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi.<sup>64</sup> By positing the mysterious nature of the world, Mabuchi's

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<sup>62</sup> Mabuchi, *Kokuikō*, in *KMZ* Vol. 19, p. 7.

<sup>63</sup> Mabuchi uses the ideograph 儒 to refer to Confucians as a whole. In the same way as Zhu Xi Confucians do not distinguish themselves from older forms of Confucianism, Mabuchi too does not particularly name out certain Confucian schools as targets. Although, as I have mentioned earlier, *Kokuikō* was written particularly in response to Shundai, Mabuchi no doubt saw his argument as universally applicable to any Confucian. At times too, 儒 and から国の道 (lit. "the Chinese Way") is synonymous, and Mabuchi appears to use both interchangeably.

<sup>64</sup> Kawahira Toshifumi asserts provocatively that *Kokugaku* was "born" out of the "Chinese studies" (*kangaku*), in particular the thought of Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. Citing Hino Tatsuo, he asserts that one of the tenets adopted was the "impossibility to know everything (不可知論). See Kawahira Toshifumi,

employment of the tropes of magnitude betrays its basis in an opposition between the limited capacity of the human intellect, and the impossibility to withhold all knowledge of the world within that “small” space. At the same time, Mabuchi hints that it is important to return to the original “being” of humans in their initial “interaction” with the world.

In many senses, this first dialogic monologue on the limits of human knowledge therefore sets the tone for the rest of the arguments found in *Kokuikō*. The initial distinction between poetry (as method) and conceptualization (theory) is then extended into a series of related hierarchal binaries, namely: (1) the *affective* dimension of poetry that is grounded in *feeling*, against *intuitive* thinking (conceptualizing); (2) by extension, the heart (*kokoro*) as a tool of *feeling the world through poetry*, that is more superior to the attempt to understand the world through the workings of the mind. Thirdly, and more importantly, (3) the deepness of understanding the world through feelings rather than the notion of superficiality of imposing a metaphysical principle such as *li*. Each of these dichotomies are interrelated architectonically – they provide foundations for each other. Poetry is linked to the heart, to feeling, to affect, to depth, and to nature; while, theory/conceptualizing is linked to thinking, to the mind, and reeks of unnatural superficiality. To Mabuchi, the former set was an essence and characteristic shared by all individuals in “native” antiquity in which their hearts (*kokoro/yamato-gokoro*) were straight-forward, transparent and *natural*. This upright, straight-forward, *unadulterated* pure heart of antiquity – the epitome of proper relations between humans and the world

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“Kokugaku wa Kangaku kara Umareta,” in *Edo no Bungakushi to Shisōshi*, ed. Inoue Yasushi and Tanaka Kenji (Tokyo: Perikan, 2011), pp. 142-145.

– is hierarchically exalted over the latter set begotten by the “false, corrupted and superficial” *kara-gokoro* (“Chinese heart”). Mabuchi is quick to associate the former and latter terms in each binary with what he calls, “our imperial country’s way of antiquity” (*waga subera mikuni no inishie no michi*), and the “Chinese country” or “Chinese country’s way” (*karakuni, karakuni no michi*), respectively. What follows in *Kokuikō* is then an elaborate critique of the “Chinese country’s way” (*kara-kuni no michi*).

It is well known that in Mabuchi’s eyes the Chinese influence perceived in his time was a result of a historical corruption of the pristine natural way of antiquity. Repeated in all treatises of the *Go’ikō* are similar passages of how the pristine world of native antiquity was effaced – a natural world in which everything was rendered accordingly and appropriately which was later corrupted by the coming of “unsuitable Chinese” (*koto sahegu kara*; lit. incomprehensible Chinese) philosophy and thought. It is due to this “pestilence” then that the world is plagued with a series of “confusions” (*midare, ran*; 𤝵). Mabuchi names at least two such confusions arising due to the incoming of cultural aspects of the “Chinese country”.

The first instance of confusion arising from the influence of this “Chinese” way is the incidence of dynastic revolution and abdication. Tracing the various political changes and upheavals in Chinese history, Mabuchi asserts that such dynastic revolution and abdications are made the norm. This is evident in the extended quote:

“When Emperor Wen of the Han dynasty was around, [the country] was well governed for a while. Thereafter, people of lowly status emerged (within the

bureaucratic system),<sup>65</sup> killed the ruler and made themselves Emperor. Even in such cases, the subjects in the realm simply lowered their heads in servitude [without protest]. Furthermore, despite branding other countries around them barbaric and lowly, once those barbaric countries rebel and [a barbarian] is then made the emperor of the Chinese country, people again let their foreheads touch the floor in subjugation. [...] In such a way, [the Chinese country] gets messier with each generation. It is evident that [the country is] not governed in a proper manner, despite having the so-called Confucian way. [More importantly,] they have designated this as the principle under the heavens (*amegashita no kotowari*). [...] By propounding the simplicity of this principle, they have severely reduced (*ito chisaku*) [the truth], making people accepting of this [theory].”<sup>66</sup>

It is apparent from this quote that Mabuchi held the belief that individuals should remain in the strata of society they belong to.<sup>67</sup> This belief went hand-in-hand with the targets of criticism: the “tradition” of dynastic revolutions in Chinese history as well as the ideology that supports it, an ideology which according to Mabuchi was thoroughly rooted in Confucianism, particularly the text of *Mencius*.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, it is through this use of Confucian rhetoric and ideology that lowly-born subjects were able to justify their establishment as a ruler. Confusion thus accumulates because through this rhetoric (which is apparently representative of *all* “Chinese” thought) and the ensuing justification of illegitimate political rule, people gradually become uncertain of their supposed *natural* position within the world. Ironically then despite his disagreement with the artificiality of Confucian thought, Mabuchi continues to champion its emphasis

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<sup>65</sup> Emperor Wen was known to have introduced the civil examinations that would, for the first time, allow people born to “lowly classes/statuses” to move up the bureaucratic ladder. Perhaps, Mabuchi was referring to this.

<sup>66</sup> Mabuchi, *Kokuikō*, p. 9.

<sup>67</sup> In an interesting parallel, Ueda Akinari too expounded that people should acknowledge their own position and strata within society. In the Preface of *Yasumigoto* for instance, the term *bundō* 分度 is used to refer to this argument. See Iikura Yoichi’s analysis in *Akinari Kō*, pp. 54-78.

<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, we see a similar derogatory treatment of *Mencius* in Ueda Akinari’s tale of “Shiramine” in his famous *Ugetsu monogatari* (1778). See *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, trans. Anthony Chambers (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 62.

on the importance of social hierarchy in a harmonious realm.<sup>69</sup> Nonetheless, Mabuchi concludes, it is “because of their subscribing to this *superficial* (*uwabe*) [theory] that people have come to be unable to listen to their hearts”<sup>70</sup> – they have become divorced from original being.

This inability to “listen to one’s heart” is compounded with the second confusion that arose out of the introduction of Sinitic writing. In *Kokuikō*, Mabuchi refutes his interlocutor’s assertion that because there were no forms of writing (*moji*) in the country’s past, “Sinitic writing was used as the tool to comprehend the myriad [of things].” Against this argument for the applicability of Sinitic writing to the understanding of the myriad of things – a knowledge that would otherwise be unattainable – Mabuchi points to the resulting confusion on the part of individuals resulting from learning the sheer number of characters (“about thirty eight thousand,” in Mabuchi’s count). “For instance,” as he points out,

“a single flower too, requires the many different (sinitic) characters to describe different processes and botanical components [such as] blooming, scattering [of petals], the stamens (*shibe*; 藥), the stems, the tree, and many tens of other words for others. [...] Because of these numerous characters, it is difficult for people to ascertain all the knowledge without errors at one moment in time. With years, these names too evolve, and [thus] people continue to be perplexed by this cumbersome issue.”

On one level, Mabuchi’s criticism was directed at the numerous characters used in Sinitic writing, something he felt is unnecessary for his country. On another, the problem of numerous characters are further magnified by his example. The fact that he

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<sup>69</sup> This emphasis on social structures and hierarchy was compounded by Mabuchi’s apparent view that the Edo society was conducive for a return to the pristine world of antiquity.

<sup>70</sup> *Kokuikō*, p. 9. He likens the tendency of superficiality to the returning of Urashima Tarō to his old village three hundred years after being invited to the Dragon Palace. That is, Urashima upon discovering how much things have changed have completely alienated from his material reality and being.

used characters related to botany is not by accident; by listing these characters, he points to the complexity of the ways these characters are conceived. Despite the similarity of the characters' "roots" in their radicals (偏/部首), the relations between the "core" (non-radical portion) and the object remain elusive for most since they were seemingly based on foreign "pictures" that were not *visible* to most "local" individuals. Thus, as though in direct response to his interlocutor's championing of the link between possible knowledge of the phenomenal world and Sinitic characters, Mabuchi's choice of example highlighted the actual confusion which could have been occurring at the level of worldly things themselves.

What then was Mabuchi's alternative to the "complexity" of Sinitic writing system? It was one based on the phonic system of *kana*. As I have briefly touched upon in Chapter One, Mabuchi justifies this choice by pointing to the languages of various countries, highlighting, in particular, the languages of "India" (*tenchiku*). In the same way language in India was based on the fifty phonic sounds (according to Mabuchi) that were derived naturally (*onozukara*) from the "fifty voices (*koe*) of the heavens and earth," the language of antiquity in our country was based on the same logic (*kotowari*) to "describe the myriad of things (*banbutsu*) through our fifty sounds." By pointing out how the same processes and botanical components can be easily signified by different combinations of *kana*, he claims that this use of a phonic language is not only "easy to enunciate [but also] does not bring any troubles [to people]." <sup>71</sup> The "simplicity" and

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<sup>71</sup> *KMZ* Vol. 19, p. 13. The holisticity of Mabuchi's justification of a phonic language as not only based on Sanskrit but also that of the "Dutch language's twenty-five sounds as well as *all countries in the four directions*" reveals the amount of information that Mabuchi had access through his role as the tutor for native classics for Tayasu Munetake.

“naturalness” of the phonic nature of language in antiquity is thus the ultimately explanation for the state of things that “despite the use of Sinitic characters for meaning (*kokoro*) alongside [*kana* sounds], the practice of *kundoku* (parsing into “Japanese” syntax) continues to be the main way in which [reading occurs] with no change in which [phonic] meaning is [conveyed].” Despite his equation of “the way of China” with “Confucian philosophy”, lurking in the background of this juxtaposition between the complexity and man-made nature of Sinitic script with the naturalness and “simple” nature of *kana* vocal “script”, is, as I have highlighted earlier, the philosophical criticism of the Confucian tradition by Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi. It is no coincidence that Mabuchi has explicitly cited both philosophers’ works – in particular, Lao Zi’s *Dao De Jing* – in his writing.<sup>72</sup> Inspired by the way both “Daoist” philosophers championed the simple and natural Way (*dao*) of the heavens and earth, Mabuchi’s emphasis on the vocal nature of language and script in antiquity is based on the assumption that the phonic nature of language as *naturally* (*onozukara*) in line with “the texture (*aya*) of the myriad of things in the heavens and earth.” For Mabuchi, ultimately, this link between voice, individual, language, and the texture of the heavens and earth, is “the thing (*mono*) which *naturally* governs and calms the hearts of people,” without “the piling up of principles on top of each other which leads to more confusion” (*hito no midaru ru wo, kotowari no ue nite kotowari ni kakawarazu*). Like Lao Zi then, Mabuchi too assumes that a harmonious

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<sup>72</sup> In *Goikō*, Mabuchi asserts that, “In *karakuni*, only *Lao Zi* can be considered as a book of truth (*makoto no sho*). (Ibid., p. 130.) In *Kokuikō*, he states that “The person called Lao Zi said that one should act in accordance to the heavens and earths, and that is exactly the realization of the Way of the world (天が下の道). From this, we can see that in ancient times there (i.e. *kara*), things too were also upright.”

age is only achieved in accordance to the way of heaven and earth, and not via doctrines such as *li*.

To deal with the confusions highlighted – the confusion of one’s place in society, and the confusion that arose out of language as not in accord with the world – Mabuchi consequently proposed *uta* (poetry) as the tool for both self-governance as well as the governance of the world in *Kokuikō*. By relating the importance of understanding the natural emergence of phonic language as inseparable from the texture of the world, *uta* was thus reaffirmed by him as the Heideggerian tool *par excellence* in achieving the aims of understanding and realizing the harmony and perfection in which the age of antiquity likely embodied. In his words, poetry allowed for “the heavens and the earth to be moved, the aweing of both gods and demons, and moderation of relations between men and women, not to mention also the soothing the fiercest warriors.”<sup>73</sup> It is mainly because of Mabuchi’s own championing of *uta* as an important tool and medium against the narrowness of the “Chinese way” in *Kokuikō*, as well as the general positioning of *Kokuikō* as central to his overall thought by contemporary scholars, the importance of spoken immediacy of Mabuchi’s *uta* is often privileged over *fumi*. As a tool for the philological exegesis of the ancient language, Mabuchi’s poetry is seen by most scholars as his affective and effective method in understanding the world through it being *the* “immediating” instrument *par excellence* between language and the recovery of the past. The immediacy in which poetry seems to have been produced – via the voice and *sound* of the speaker in antiquity – is juxtaposed with the artificiality and mediating nature of

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 23. This formulation, is as we have seen, also echoed by most, if not all, *kokugaku* scholars under Mabuchi’s lineage. It also derives from a literal reading of the *kana* preface of the 10<sup>th</sup> century imperial poetic anthology *Kokinwakashū* which I will elaborate about below.

Chinese script.<sup>74</sup> This particular frame has led scholars to completely ignore the role of *fumi* or “writing” in Mabuchi’s thought. For instance, Peter Nosco, in his analysis of Mabuchi’s participation in the famous *Kokka Hachiron* debates of the 1740s, highlights Mabuchi’s disagreement with Kada Arimaro’s (1706-1751) notion that poetry was inconsequential in the governance of the country,<sup>75</sup> a position not dissimilar from Sorai’s. Nosco goes on to show how poetry for Mabuchi was an important link between individuals and governance in the antiquity, particularly as an outlet for “powerful human emotions which otherwise might be channeled into behavior disruptive to the state.” For Nosco then, Mabuchi’s attempt to understand poetry of antiquity led to what Nosco calls, a “versification” of the “ancient past” in which poetry allowed the age to be automatically governed.<sup>76</sup> Mark McNally on the other hand too asserted that poetic anthologies were deemed by Mabuchi as the most important of all classical texts in the study of the ancient way. As McNally argued, Mabuchi’s emphasis of poetry, particular that of the *Manyōshū*, was an attempt at recovery of an “archaic, *spoken* language.” As he goes on to show, applying Saussure’s exposition of the sign, Mabuchi’s emphasis on the duality of language – the words and their meanings – reflect a reality in which “this archaic spoken language” was “perfectly transparent”. As McNally puts it, “the ancient language [to Mabuchi] represented a unity of signifier and signified. This unique quality gave this language a magical power endowed by the *kami*, which Mabuchi called the

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<sup>74</sup> As Mabuchi claims, “Chinese *script* is the slave; while Japanese *sounds* are the masters.”

<sup>75</sup> This series of debates were in the form of opinions on the role of poetry in society. It is historically named after Kada no Arimaro’s *Kokka Hachiron* (Eight theses on our country’s poetry). For more details, see Nosco’s article in *Critical Readings in the Intellectual History of Early Modern Japan* Vol 2, ed. W.J. Boot (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

<sup>76</sup> Peter Nosco, “Nature, Invention, and National Learning: The Kokka Hachiron Controversy, 1742-46,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 41 (1) (1981), 85-88.

*kotodama* (lit. spirit of words).”<sup>77</sup> In McNally’s argument then, ancient poetry represented for Mabuchi exactly this possibility of reviving a *spoken* language that can replace what he deemed to be the vulgar forms of spoken language in the time that Mabuchi lived. Through his usage of Saussure, McNally’s argument does elucidate an important assumption held by both him and Nosco: if pristine language – a completely perfect Sign system – is at the heart of Mabuchi’s politics, then how are we to understand poetry as a capable medium in such a system? How does the phonocentric qualities of poetry allow us to relate the series of linguistic signifiers of antiquity purportedly in poetry to that of its signifieds in the realm of things? As we shall see shortly, despite this postulation of a perfect spoken language by Mabuchi, the emphasis on the phonocentric nature of *uta* continually discloses the question of textuality in Mabuchi’s *almost equal* emphasis on *fumi*. That is to say, we see in *Bun’ikō* a need to account on the part of Mabuchi of the specter of textuality within his own framework – if each age in antiquity was a reflection of a perfect unity of individual, language and environment in which poetry was produced *verbally*, why was there a need to record – *in writing* – these deeds?

My purpose here is not to show how modern scholars were inaccurate in their understanding of the centrality of poetry in Mabuchi’s thought. Given that Mabuchi’s own conception within *Kokuikō* and *Goikō* – in particular, how *uta* was arguably the main tool within his overall repudiation of what he calls *kara no michi* (lit. the way of China) in those works – does favor such an interpretation, it is no surprise that scholarship had focused solely on poetry as Mabuchi’s analytical lens in recovering the

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<sup>77</sup> Mark McNally, *Proving the Way*, p. 19.

pristine language of the past. In spite of this, I postulate that the question of *fumi*, or more accurately, the lack of any attention towards *fumi*, does hint at a certain foreclosure of the medium of writing in favor an immediacy of speech that is central to both Nosco's and McNally's readings of Mabuchi. As Harootunian reminds us, "[Mabuchi]'s conception of language was linked to a privileging of sound over the formation of words. Speech – the spoken – revealed the *inscription* of sound."<sup>78</sup> In other words, while *speech* or *spoken language* might have had been central to Mabuchi's own philosophy of the perfection of the past, we can only understand this relation between speech and the antiquity through *writing as a form of inscription* – through *fumi* that had been handed down over time. In short, we need to address how Mabuchi attempted to account for this lacuna that is constantly foreclosed in his inquiry of the pristine past.

My argument is that *fumi* works as a form of Derridean supplement in Mabuchi. Despite its allegedly secondary status, it is a required "addition" in the completion of his understanding of the perfect unity of language and antiquity.<sup>79</sup> However, unlike Derrida's assertion of that philosophy constantly forecloses writing in favor of the phonocentrism – particularly that of Husserl's phenomenology – Mabuchi was

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<sup>78</sup> Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*, p. 51-52. In fact, Harootunian too argues that Mabuchi's critique of Chinese learning was based on what he calls "the sovereignty of sound." In his reading of *Kokuikō* and *Go'ikō*, Harootunian shows Mabuchi's reimagination of the antiquity as *naturally* simple, "a time when nobody was perplexed and forgetful and there was perfect comprehension." This was only possible because there was a perfect correspondence between words and the differentiation of sounds. See also pp. 50-57 of *Things Seen and Unseen*.

<sup>79</sup> Derrida understands writing as the supplement par excellence since "it marks the point where the supplement proposes itself as supplement of supplement, sign of sign, taking the place of a speech already significant: it displaces the proper place of the sentence, the unique time of the sentence pronounced *hic et nunc* by an irreplaceable subject, and in return enervates the voice." (See *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 281.) The ambiguity of writing as a method of presencing speech or simply as a derivation of speech is exactly at the core of his understanding of the supplement. In other words, it is "not more a signifier than a signified, a representer than a presence, a writing than a speech." (Ibid., p. 315) Writing as a supplement appears to always encompass a kind of ambivalence in its "being" as it appears to be before either form of modality.

seemingly conscious of *fumi*'s importance. Here it is important to note that *fumi* is not equivalent to writing in Derrida's framework, nor should the immediacy of *uta* be equated with speech (or voice). As the reader may recall from our discussion earlier, the politics of *fumi* by *kokugaku* scholars were less to "supplement" speech; rather, it was to uncover an adequate medium to replace forms of Sinitic writing that were dominant everyday social and political discourse in the late Edo period. *Fumi* was seen as a Heideggerean tool making it possible to both uncover pristine being-in-the-world while allowing for that being to manifest itself in this world. In other words, *fumi* served a purpose that was both mundane and everyday and, in some senses, a "tool" reflected bodily speech. It was thus not simply "writing" as a "supplement" for "speech"; both mediums were equally crucial in their politics. In spite of that, at least within the context of Mabuchi's architectonic framework, *fumi* does play the role of a supplement – one that supports *uta* as the main proponent against *kotowari* (conceptualization). This is because *fumi* in its role as a mimetic poesis of *external* reality does reveal to its writer the original heart (being-in-the-world) in a similar way the *internal* "self" is revealed through *uta* or poetry.

By reading *fumi* as a supplement, Hisaoyu's preface of *Bun'ikō* as complementary to *Kaikō* which I have elaborated on earlier can therefore be read differently as well. In placing the two works together in a bounded printed form, his assertion of the salient relation between both Mabuchi's view of *uta* and *fumi* hints at the fact that the importance *uta* cannot be understood apart from *fumi* as an equally crucial tool. Given that Hisaoyu was a student of Mabuchi, it may also be conjectured that this was indeed the impression Mabuchi's teachings made on him. The first few

lines of *Bun'ikō* too support such a postulation, showing that Mabuchi was also conscious of the importance of *fumi* and its relation to *uta*:

“It is very much the case when people of antiquity (*kamitsu-yo no hito*) had thoughts that they were unable to conceal (*shinubanu omohi*), they would sing in words (i.e they would compose poetry). This is what is called *uta* (poetry/songs). Conversely, when they saw things (*mono*) with their eyes, or heard [sounds] with their ears, and were unable to keep (*damasu majiki*) [the feelings they experienced because of these] to themselves, they *strung* (*tsuraneru*) words together. These were called *tatae-goto* (lit. words of praise).<sup>80</sup> *Tatae-goto* was what came to be called *fumi* in later eras. Thus, *uta* is the truth (*makoto*) which is expressed from the inside (of the person) out, and *tatae-goto* is the forms of things (*aya*) derived from the outside inwards.”<sup>81</sup>

According to this passage, Mabuchi asserted that by definition, *fumi* was defined through its differentiation from *uta*. There are two ways in which this proceeds. Firstly, he claims that *fumi* is differentiated from *uta* by the flow in which both take place as mediums of expression. This is clear when he states that *uta* derives from *that* which is inside of a person, while *fumi* (or *tataegoto*) is derived from those feelings in reaction to the interaction with external stimuli outside of one's body. To describe the process differently, *uta* flows from the inside to the outside, while *fumi* is derived from an outside towards the inside. At the same time, both *fumi* and *uta* were written/composed because of the inability to withhold certain information within the body/mind – thus an overflow of inside towards the outside. In such a manner, the only structural distinction between *uta* and *fumi* is this additional movement in the process of composing *fumi* (outside-inside-outside), the “outside” source of which information is derived from.

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<sup>80</sup> Interestingly, *tataegoto* parallels the etymology of “text”. The old North French word *tixte* (12C) refers to “text, book” but more specifically the Gospel. Similarly, the Medieval Latin word *textus* refers not only to “treatises” and texts in general, but also to “Scriptures”. Like its old usage grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition, Mabuchi too derives the meaning of *fumi* from the *Norito* – a compilation of religious rituals performed in praise (or appease) of the gods during the 8-9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>81</sup> *KMZ* Vol 19, p. 79.

Secondly, there appears to be a qualitative difference in terms of the source of feelings experienced and, by extension, composed. On the one hand, *uta* is a truth (*makoto*) that is projected outwards; on the other, *fumi* is the “ingestion” of the form (*aya*) that caused the inability to withhold feelings related to an external stimulus. By equating *fumi* to *tataegoto*, he no doubt links *fumi* to the imperial rites recorded in the *Norito* and *Engishiki*.<sup>82</sup>

Related to the way in which the individual creator-speaker-writer signified the boundaries in which *uta* and *fumi* could have been distinguished, Mabuchi’s definition of the *derivation* of *fumi* from the outer world imbues it with the capacity to not only describe, but also re-present the world with accuracy and truthfulness. More importantly, in his naming of the *Norito* and “historical books” of *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* as prime examples of *fumi*,<sup>83</sup> the process of internalization of external stimuli naturally aligns itself with the rhythmic and *natural* (*onozukara*) character of *fumi* as a capable medium of both communication and inscription. In other words, it is the combination of *fumi* as individual poesis, and a mimesis of physis. This is the reason why he subsequently consummates the purposes of *fumi* and *uta* as important mediums that link together various aspects of social and ontological reality:

“These people of antiquity (*kare inishie no hito*) with regards to deeds/things (*koto*) thus express these two (mediums) [through] doing deeds that come to their own minds (*waga omohi wo yari*), and comfort the hearts of others (*hito no kokoro wo nagusame*). They were also used to speak of the deeds of gods in the heavens and earths (*ametsuchi no kami waza wo mōshi*) as well as transmit

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<sup>82</sup> *Norito-kō*, in *KMZ* Vol. 19, p. 201

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 205

the servitude<sup>84</sup> (*matsurofu*) of the subjects. With all these conditions met, in all the aspects of the world (*yorotsu no koto*), [everything] was said to be sufficient.”

It is clear in this passage that *uta* is not the only important link between the different parts of social reality as the Mabuchi exalts the two mediums as created a chain of links between one’s minds, the heart of others, the gods, the world, and one’s place within the hierarchy of governance. If, it is as scholars such as Nosco and McNally have pointed out that, *uta* was the main medium for such a pristine and harmonious world in Mabuchi’s worldview, then Mabuchi’s statement of *fumi*, as an equally important way in which the harmony in the world was produced and maintained, sheds new light on the importance of *fumi*, especially in relation to *uta*.

It is important to note at this juncture the fact that Mabuchi’s definition of *fumi* is itself an ingestion of *aya* is not entirely novel in its conception. As it is widely known, Mabuchi’s philosophy shared many structural similarities with Sorai’s, despite his constant refutation of the latter’s ideas. His assertion of *fumi* as the projection of an ingested *aya* was no different. In the section on *bun* (which shares the same character as *fumi*) in *Benmei* (“On Distinguishing Names”; 1740), Sorai explains that,

“*bun* is the reason that the way acquired form and a name. Now, what is in the heavens, the sages called patterns (*bun*). What is in the earth was called rational principle (*li*). The great origin of the way emerged from heaven. Indeed, the early sage kings of antiquity founded the way by modeling it on heaven. For this reason, they provided the way with form as brilliant rites and music. Thus these are referred to as *bun*.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Here servitude is not meant in any oppressive sense. Mabuchi uses it in terms of a certain relationship between ruler and subject that is perfect, in which each individual acts in accordance to the natural social roles that is in-line with their respective aptitude.

<sup>85</sup> I have edited John Tucker’s translation in *Ogyū Sorai’s Philosophical Masterworks* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), p. 322. Particularly, I have replaced his translation of *bun* as “culture,” (as in *wenren/bunjin*) as it does not seem to capture the “idea of texture” in which Sorai appeared to have been alluding to. For the original, see *Nihon Shisō Taikei* Vol. 36 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), p. 172 and *Ogyū Sorai Zenshū* Vol. 1 (Tokyo: Kawade Shobō, 1973), p. 457.

As though echoing Sorai, Mabuchi's emphasis on the importance of the pattern (*aya/bun*) of the world around (instead of the heavens) does reveal the extent to which Sorai's writings had influenced his own. Yet unlike postulation of *fumi* as the creation of *bun* by the early sage kings, Mabuchi argues that it is something that is *naturally* created through *any* individual's interaction with the external world. Thus what is novel in Mabuchi's framework is not the *method* in which it is created but rather, the ways in which the *internal* body of the individual, the *external* environment of the world, and medium of *fumi* are brought into play that reveals this pristine and harmonious state in which everything was *naturally* in its rightful place. At the same time, we can observe that, on one level, his attempt to place *fumi* on the same level as *uta* does reveal the need to account for the supplementary nature of *fumi* within his supposed framework of the country's way in *Kokuikō*. On the other, by reminding us the role in which ritual texts such as the *Norito* and *Engi-shiki* played in recording *and performing* – mimicking – the harmonious *rhythm* of the godly worlds, he insinuates that *fumi* was *the* quintessential medium in revealing these crucial relations between individual, world, and the gods.

Mabuchi's attempt to link various different parts that reveals a particularly perfect lifeworld of antiquity is what H.D. Harootunian in *Things Seen and Unseen* has called the "metonymic strategy" of *kokugaku* scholars. As with the word "metonymy" and its use as an analytical concept for figures of speech in which it refers to the substitution that occurs when the name of the part of a thing is used for the name of the whole, Harootunian argues that the philological inquiry of *kokugaku* scholars proceeded under this assumption that a part such as *fumi* was adequate in revealing the whole. By

foregrounding this particular relation between parts and whole, Harootunian agrees that *kokugaku* was, at its base, a response to the failure of Neo-Confucianism to account for the changing world around them. According to him, this reaction by *kokugaku* scholars hinged on the Zhu Xi concept of an all-encompassing originary concept of *li* (理; which is usually translated in English as “principle”).<sup>86</sup> According to Harootunian then, Neo-Confucian production of knowledge proceeded by the logical order of similitude which dictated that all phenomenon and noumenon are merely manifestations of the same principle of *li*.<sup>87</sup> This is clearly not the case in reality, as we have seen in our discussion Nakae Tōju and Kaibara Ekiken. Nonetheless, Harootunian’s observation that *kokugaku* scholars, by attempting to rethink this process of rendering the world as a merely manifestation of principle, reveals how their philological inquiry and their creation of *fumi* called forth “contiguity as the model of the syntagm”.<sup>88</sup> In focusing not on

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<sup>86</sup> This is also hinted in the use of *kotowaru* by Mabuchi. Although not always the case, *kotowaru* was often used derogatorily by *kokugaku* scholars to refer to the overreliance on conceptualization or by using certain conceptual frameworks to understand phenomena.

<sup>87</sup> According to Zhu Xi, principle was synonymous with the principle of Heaven (*tian li*). It is the origin of every object – conceptual, or material – in the world. As he claims, “[t]he sum of all creation and the universe when taken together is but one principle.” He goes on to state, “[b]efore heaven and earth existed, there was certainly only principle. As there is this principle, therefore there are heaven and earth. If there were no principle, there would also be no heaven and earth, no man, no things, and in fact, no *containing or sustaining [of things by heaven and earth]* to speak of.” In other words, not only is principle an originary force in nature, it also continues to manifest itself in everything phenomenal and noumenal. Conversely, without principle, nothing will exist and the world would simply be a void. Thus, according to Zhu Xi, any study of the world should take at its starting point, the recognition of this centrality of principle within things. By showing how Neo-Confucianism in the Edo period – particularly those derived from Zhu Xi’s philosophy – sought to favor this very principle as the origin of everything,<sup>87</sup> Harootunian hinted that this belonged to a form of similitude. Understood in this manner, Neo-Confucian order of knowledge thus posits that every process, object, idea, philosophy, has at their roots the manifestation of principle. The world and its objects are a part of the originary process of which principle produces as well as a reflection of principle itself.

<sup>88</sup> As Harootunian explains, “[in *kokugaku*], the world of appearances was broken down into dualities, oppositions, or contiguous linkages, such as cause and effect, agent and act, visibility and invisibility. [...] It would now account for the relationships between apparently different things in a general effort to establish the identity of objects and to argue that connections and identities were no longer local manifestations of principle (*li*).” See H.D. Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 29.

*kokugaku*'s criticism on the rhetoric of *li per se*, Harootunian thus shifts the analytical lens of the investigation of *kokugaku* away from the content (as an anti-foreign influence movement) towards the tropological analysis of discursive forms. His attempt to identify the order in which argumentation proceeds architectonically in *kokugaku* scholars led him to designate their procedure as "a metonymic strategy," which allowed the *kokugaku* scholars to move away from the schema of similitude (of principle) towards qualitatively identifying the specificity of each *thing* within an imaginary whole. As Harootunian explains,

"[b]y resorting to what I have called a metonymic strategy, [*kokugaku*] ... was able to create an apprehension of a world in which one thing – the part – was reduced to another or substituted for the whole. In this epistemological scheme, parts of presumed totalities functioned to construct a series of attributes that were adequate to the whole and could reveal the web of relationships that bound entities together."<sup>89</sup>

Thus Harootunian identifies the various formal relations in which *kokugaku* scholars use and incorporate to account for both the worlds of the present and the past. This formal relations, he argues, enabled *kokugaku* scholars to render a view of the world that accounted for relations and change, leading to the discovery of a kind of history quite different from the accounts of cyclical of principle. The world around them, was for once, alive, and not imbued with the sameness of principle. In this way, Harootunian's insight that parts work both as a signifier of itself as well as the imagined whole – allows us to situate the roles of *fumi* and *uta* in Mabuchi's overall framework. By raising the question of the relation between the tropological form of the knowledge

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<sup>89</sup> *Things Seen and Unseen*, pp. 29-30. See also an earlier version of this argument in his earlier essay, "The Consciousness of Archaic Form in the New Realism of *Kokugaku*," in *Japanese Thought in the Tokugawa Period: 1600-1868*, ed. Tetsuo Najita and Irwin Scheiner, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1978), pp. 63-104.

produced by *kokugaku* scholars such as Mabuchi to the content of the knowledge, as well as that very relation to reality, Harootunian provides us with a stepping stone to analyze *fumi*'s role within both his framework and his presumed imaginary whole defined by reality. Following Harootunian's argument then, what is crucial is the recognition that Mabuchi's *fumi* as a medium was not solely important because they linked various aspects of the world in antiquity but also for the reason that it was an adequate tool which revealed the ways in which this very pristine world of the past could have been perceived, even at "this late age" of the Edo period.<sup>90</sup> In the passages I have analyzed from Mabuchi above then, what is revealed, with the insight derived from Harootunian's observations, is the assumption that *fumi*, as a part, was *sufficient* in signifying itself, "records" of rituals and histories, as well as the imagined whole lifeworld – the harmonious and perfect world of antiquity. Nevertheless, as if to foreclose any assertion that *fumi*, not *uta*, should be the utmost subject of *kokugaku* study, Mabuchi goes on to state that, in antiquity, there was no distinction between *fumi* and *uta* despite the general split in the ways in which both are ultimately produced. As he claims in *Bun'ikō*, "in the past, there was probably no distinction between regular language (*tsune ifu kotoba*) and the language of *uta* and *fumi*." It is also no coincidence that this same statement appeared in *Kaikō*.<sup>91</sup> The poetics of *fumi* and the prosaics of

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<sup>90</sup> Mabuchi uses the term *ito sue no yo* いと末の世 (lit. very late age of the world) to refer to his current age in *Ka'ikō*. The "slicing" of historical time into "early-middle-late" (*kamitsu-nakatsu-shimotsu*) is also seen in *Niimanabi* (lit. Steps for New Learning) albeit in another semantical form. What is crucial to note is the fact that unlike the modern conception of time in which every period is taken in reference to the "modern", Mabuchi's historical perception of time took everything in reference to the age of antiquity, particularly, the time of the Manyōshū. In this sense, *ito sue no yo* is reminiscent to the Buddhist temporal designation of the series of presents as *mappō* 末法, a time in which the "Way" (of Buddha) is in a degraded state.

<sup>91</sup> *KMZ* Vol. 19, p. 40.

*uta*, as parts, are hence collapsed into a pristine whole that is imbued with equal capacity towards the creation of a language that is both adequate for everydayness (regular language), the governing of the body of the enunciator/creator and the realm around. Nonetheless, *fumi* remains one of the main tools that anchors the individual's "self" in the world.

In addition, despite this positing of a pristine *singular* language in this ideal past which every enunciation, text, articulation was, a part of and a reflection of this wholeness of language, Mabuchi nonetheless accepts that in his time and age, people have come to distinguish between these three ways of expression (*uta/fumi/everyday language*). According to him, this is a false distinction; they were not differentiated based on types but rather, on the levels of textuality/patterned-ness (*aya*) which were determined by one's interaction with his/her surroundings. As he explains,

"within that [whole language], [we can ascertain] that in the case of *uta*, it is the enunciation (*ii idete*) of our true intentions/thoughts (*waga omoji makoto gokoro*). [However,] when there is nothing to reflect upon, its basis (*sono moto*) would also have a lack of patterns (*aya naru koto mo sukunakariki*). [On the other hand,] since *tataegoto* appears to have occurred through [one's interaction] with the beautiful things of the outside (*soto no uruwashiki mono*), the patterns/texture of language of the age of antiquity were vivid and elegant (*azayakani shite miyabitarikeri*)."

In this passage, it is not impossible to see that, in spite of the over-emphasis on *uta* in his other treatises, the mediums' importance cannot be understood without the supplementary nature revealed in the medium of *fumi* as *the* adequate link of the coexistence of words, individual (enunciator/creator), and the pristine world of antiquity. Yet, despite *fumi* being the medium par excellence which revealed this pristine state of things, the general lifeworld of antiquity envisioned by Mabuchi is nonetheless a "poetic"

one. This was accordingly a world in which every form of utterance, writing, and linguistic production is necessarily in some form of *rhythmic* language. It is important to note that for Mabuchi, this was not a contradiction, since any linguistic utterance or creative writing was part of a whole language that did not distinguish between poetic or everyday forms, elegant (*ga*) or vulgar (*zoku*), spoken or written. This is perhaps also the reason why in *Kaikō*, his treatise on poetry, Mabuchi promotes the need to *recite* (*tonafu*) equally “old prose” (*furuki fumi*) and “old songs” (*furuki uta*) in order to regulate the individual’s body (*mi*) and “constitute (*sadamu*) one’s mind (*kokorogimo*)”.<sup>92</sup> The general distinction between *uta* and *fumi* is thus, for Mabuchi, a “theoretical” one that only became concrete in the later periods. However, Mabuchi’s lifeworld of antiquity did not define the boundaries of various discursive production in such a manner as we have seen. Instead of a world that possessed distinctions in literary generic traditions, old language was merely a wholesome phenomenon that aligned *rhythmically* with the world of things around individuals: “there was no distinction between those who were poets and those who were not.”<sup>93</sup> People during his present time were unable to understand that “truth” because they have lost their *Being* (*motodachi*)<sup>94</sup> – they could not divorce their mind from the influence of incompatible

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>94</sup> The notion of gestalt underpins *motodachi* which literally means the foundational and to erect. This is the reason why I have chosen to translate it as Being. In Chapter Two of the *Analects*, this word 本立 is also used to refer to a “correct way” albeit with a clearly different nuance: 「有子曰。其爲人也孝弟。而好犯上者。鮮矣。不好犯上。而好作亂者。未之有也。君子務本。本立而道生。孝弟也者。其爲仁之本與。」 A rough translation would be, “Master You (Confucius’ disciple) said: It is immensely rare to find a person who is filial to his parents and respectful of his elders, yet enjoys opposing his ruling superior. And there has been no instance of a person who does not offend his superiors yet enjoy raising a rebellion. *The gentlemen (junzi) is one who toils on the foundation. Once the foundation is planted, the Way is then born.* Filiality and respect towards elders, are these not the

foreign influences.<sup>95</sup> This distinction between *fumi* and *uta* is hence, in Mabuchi's view, a false dichotomy. If people were to continually emphasize the two mediums' differences, they would not be able to comprehend the process of recovering their lost Being.

The politics of *fumi* as an alternative to Sinitic forms of writing hence fully emerges from Mabuchi's writing. In *fumi*'s non-distinction with *uta*, Mabuchi's framework signifies that as *the* medium that reveals most saliently the metonymic relation between three different sides of a whole world of antiquity – the self-body, a pristine prosaic language, and the world around. *Fumi* is itself raised to an equal level of importance as *uta* since it is imbued with an equal level of immediacy. In its ability to reveal the pristine link between people, writing, and the realm of everyday things and events, the praxis of studying and creating *fumi* would therefore allow individuals to recover their lost being (*motodachi*) that is aligned directly with the pristine ethos of the country.

### ***Nishiyama Monogatari and Takebe Ayatari's (1719-1774) Fumi***

In the 1760s when Mabuchi completed the five treatises of *Go'ikō*, various versions of *Bun'ikō* were in circulation amongst his students and intellectual contacts. And while scholars have pointed out that *kokugaku* was not a “school” in an institutional sense of the word, there were specific locales in which Mabuchi's disciples (and their

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foundations of benevolence (*ren*)?” Here, instead of something that is innate to the person, *motodachi* 本立 refers instead to the practice of Confucian teachings – teachings which Mabuchi would have argued is artificial.

<sup>95</sup> *KMZ* Vol. 19, p. 42.

disciples) positioned themselves in.<sup>96</sup> Among his many students, there was a select group based in the Kamigata region (modern day Osaka and Kyoto) that were putting his theories on *fumi* into practice. It should be noted at the outset however that this practice of “writing” was not mutually exclusive from the practices of reading and philological investigation of old texts. In spite of the historical importance attributed to philological investigations – indeed, modern scholars have often emphasized this aspect of *kokugaku* (perhaps due to the centrality of Norinaga’s works) – it is important to note that the politics of *fumi* required *kokugaku* scholars to respond to the problem of writing about the external, supposedly unchanging, world around their individual bodies. The praxis of *fumi* laid not only in recovering a glimpse of the metonymic relations of being-in-the-world revealed in old texts (*furuki-fumi*) but also the application of such an understanding to their contemporary world. It was, as I mentioned, a process of mimesis and poesis as well as the relation of praxis to *phusis*. A scholar following Mabuchi’s teachings would then have likely understood his/her *kokugaku* studies not merely as an imitation of the texts of antiquity through philological investigation, but also a creation of styles of *fumi* which adequately displayed the powerful immediacy of language’s link with the one’s being (*motodachi*) and the world around them. Nonetheless, such an endeavor, of creating a style of *fumi* that was sufficient in re-presenting the relations between self and world, was, as one would suspect, a severely subjective project. Given that Mabuchi’s *Bun’ikō* and *Kaikō*, when read as “guides,” were open to a myriad of interpretations, it comes to no surprise that there were many feuds amongst *kokugaku* scholars themselves with regards to the most legitimate way of recovering

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<sup>96</sup> See McNally, *Proving the Way*, pp. 1-13.

metonymically the place of *yamato-gokoro* in the world. In this section, I will focus on one such case to not only elucidate how the politics of *fumi* intersected with the everyday practice of writing but also to show how Mabuchi's reimagining of the relation between self-in-world could have affected the realms of literary production. In such a way, Mabuchi's call to retrieve the singular and natural relation between *yamatogokoro* (purportedly possessed by everyone) and the world around them *at that moment in time* intersected with the literary politics of the time.

To reiterate, by calling for a reexamination of one's Being (motodachi), *fumi*, and the world, it is no surprise that literary writers who had studied Mabuchi's philosophy attempted to put into practice this *kokugaku* investigation through their literary writings. Takebe Ayatari's *Nishiyama Monogatari* ("Tales of the Western Mountains," 1768; henceforth, *Nishiyama*) is one such instance. While Ayatari is now labeled as a *yomihon*<sup>97</sup> author and generally known for influential literary works such as *Honchō Suikoden* ("Native Water Margin," 1773), it is *Nishiyama* that was a clear application of Mabuchi's *fumi*.<sup>98</sup> Published as a literary work for mass consumption,

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<sup>97</sup> A genre that "adapts" Ming vernacular tales into local contexts, often imitating the structure and style of the source tales.

<sup>98</sup> Lawrence E. Marceau's eminent monograph on Ayatari characterizes him as a "*bunjin* bohemian." *Bunjin*, often translated as literati, here refers not to a specific class, as with its continental (chinese) counterparts. Rather, Marceau understands *bunjin* as a kind of non-conforming anti-structure. Placing the rise of *bunjin* within the context of Tokugawa period caste system where one's position is determined by birth, Marceau argues that the incidence of *bunjin* shows "a crucial shift [...] in attitudes during the second Tokugawa century" where *bunjin*, "as nonconformists, aspired to lead productive lives with a minimum of self-compromise, often in an ideological climate all too directed toward keeping people in their respective places." In other words, *bunjin* were a form of non-conforming role individuals adopted not in order to go against the structure of roles – warrior, peasant, merchants, artisans – but rather that which allowed these individuals a certain freedom and seclusion from the "physical "realities they faced in their everyday lives. The various art forms – painting, poetry, literary prose – thus served as an escapism according to Marceau's understanding of *bunjin*. Marceau takes his cue from Nakamura Yukihiro's characterization of *bunjin* as "versatile (in many art forms," "anti-zoku," "psychological eremitic," and "self-righteous." See Lawrence Marceau, *Takebe Ayatari: A Bunjin Bohemian in Early Modern Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center of Japanese Studies, 2004), pp. 8-10.

what is distinct about *Nishiyama* is the use of semi-archaic language with syntax seemingly of Ayatari's time – a form which parallels Akinari's *Kamiyo Monogatari* – to describe and re-tell the famous “Genta Disturbance”. As scholars such as Blake Morgan Young and Lawrence Marceau had pointed out, *Nishiyama* can be described as literary form which mixes *gabun* and *zokubun*. These same scholars, in particular Young, had downplayed *Nishiyama*'s value as nothing more than an attempt to capitalize on the sensational incident while presenting the author's own knowledge of classical words.<sup>99</sup> It is perhaps for this reason that Young's translation – the only translation available in an English language – ignores layers of heterogeneous expressions and hence the very textuality of Ayatari's original language.<sup>100</sup>

Young's argument is not entirely unfounded; Ayatari's text looks makeshift at best, and put together without much emphasis on coherence. For instance, the first half of the text has little to no relation to the second. Between several chapters, the flow and pace too shifted abruptly without much explanation. In addition, certain central tropes – the cursed sword for instance – in the first half of the story were simply forgotten in the second half. Furthermore, when we take into account the nineteenth century *yomihon* author Takizawa Bakin's attack on Ayatari's character and his works – in particular *Nishiyama* – it is clear that the work was not a fantastic piece of literature by both today's standard and Ayatari's time.<sup>101</sup> Nonetheless, rather than conjecturing about

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<sup>99</sup> Blake Morgan Young, “A Tale of Western Hills: Takebe Ayatari's *Nishiyama Monogatari*, *Monumenta Nipponica* 37 (1) (1982): 81.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>101</sup> See Bakin's *Honchō Suikoden wo Yomu Narabi-ni Hihyō* (1833). In that text, Bakin points out that Ayatari was more interested in making a name for himself through the explicit use of poorly conceived scholarship than his interest in intellectual pursuits.

Ayatari's intentions in publishing *Nishiyama*, I argue that it is important to note that his work can be seen as an attempt to create *fumi*.

If read as an attempt to create *fumi*, a reader during the time might have likely noticed that it is not a combination of *gabun* with *zokubun* but rather, an insertion of “archaic” language into relatively contemporary prose to introduce people to the syntactical parallels between languages from both “periods”. Kinryū Keiyū's (1712-1782) preface to the work too points to such a purpose of the text:

“Now, what is the same as it was in the past, is human feelings (*ninjō*). In the past, that which was different with the present is that of language. Why then has language changed? It is likely because there is decline and prosperity and people distinguish between *ga* and *zoku*. How then are students (*manabu mono*) to master the language of antiquity? Alas, it must be difficult. Even those who claim to have grasped [old language] well are probably merely scratching an itch through his/her shoes.”<sup>102</sup>

Keiyū lamentation was clearly not merely highlighting of *Nishiyama* as a work that “mixes” language of *ga* and *zoku*; instead, he underscores the fragmentary nature of language at present. What is implied then is the notion that instead of language being separated into those belonging to *ga* and those of *zoku*, this is but a false dichotomy that prevents one from mastering the language of old. The “wholesomeness” of language is what appears to be at stake here, for without understanding that old language and contemporary language are really one and the same, learning is but a futile practice in the same way someone tries to scratch an itch through shoes. Keiyū then (obviously) goes on to exalt Ayatari for being a master “that is able to apply the past into the present, while adapting the vulgar into elegance”.<sup>103</sup> Keiyū, an itinerant monk belonging to the

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<sup>102</sup> Takebe Ayatari, *Nishiyama Monogatari* in *Shinpen Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* 78, ed. Nakamura Yukihiko (Tokyo: Shogakkan, 1995), p. 197. All translations of *Nishiyama* is mine.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Tendai sect, was a figure who had connections with men of letters all over the country and was held in high esteem by most cultural figures of his day. To have someone of that stature praise your work was likely no small feat, and speaks of Ayatari's position amongst his contemporaries.

In addition, we should not overlook the fact that in Keiyū's view that *Nishiyama* is a good introductory text for those who yearn to master the native-style prose (*kokufū*) and the poetic form of *katauta*. *Katauta*, the poetic form that Keiyū names, was an archaic form that Ayatari began championing and composing sometime around the general years Mabuchi wrote his *Go'ikō*. In a 1763 revelatory work titled *Katauta Michi no hajime* ("Katauta: commencement of the way"), Ayatari had claimed that *katauta* was a new and more authentic form of expression in comparison to other poetic forms in the era. In this work, Ayatari claims to have been visited by the spirit of Mt. Kurohime (lit. "black princess") when he was traveling in the area, and they had spent time discussing Ayatari's poetry. In the middle of their discourse, the maiden praised Ayatari's poetry,

"This is very good [*This is archaic language for 'Was that it?' and 'That's good'*]. In the past people's hearts were deeply sincere, and due to the fact that they plainly spoke their minds, their words were very poignant, and their spirits profound [*people of the past were deeply true, they did not embellish their words, and they never spoke skillfully of things they did not believe. Many songs exist in which they spoke directly*]. People today have many falsehoods, and work their hearts in sinister ways, assuming poses of (verbal) skill. (But) you have well mastered such language and are free from embellishments. In praise of your spirit, I have come."<sup>104</sup>

There are two observations we can draw from this short passage. Firstly, while Ayatari justifies his turn to *katauta* through "divine intervention," he effectively mirrored

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<sup>104</sup> Translation taken from Marceau, *Takebe Ayatari*, p. 118. Emphasis in italics are mine.

Mabuchi's rhetoric that current language is full of embellishments due to its degeneration from the pristine past. Secondly, and more importantly, *Katauta Michi no Hajime* is written in the same format as *Nishiyama*, infusing archaic terminology into contemporary language. In addition, we can see from the above passage that the spirit's enunciations are punctuated with Ayatari's "own" commentaries (the portions within the [brackets]) about the language of the utterance. It is as though Ayatari is commenting on a supposedly otherwise incomprehensible form of language as well as the otherwise "profound" knowledge that the spirit utters. Tanaka Kōichi has called the form in which *Katauta Michi no Hajime* and *Nishiyama* was written in as a kind of "self-composed annotated literature (*jibun-jichū*)" because ultimately both "voices" belong to Ayatari.<sup>105</sup> This double-voice format – between the "main text," and "annotated portion" – remains Ayatari's preferred mode of composition in his later works. Notwithstanding the differences in which authority are asserted in this double-voiced format, what is important was the temporal aspect of this double voice. We see how the spirit of Mt. Kurohime represented a timeless essence that needs to be translated into contemporary language through Ayatari's annotation. Yet the whole event occurred in his present, which casted the spirit's language as applicable to all different periods and only one who understands "old language" may experience this epiphany.

We see a similar mixture of temporalities in *Nishiyama* which was, as I mentioned above, based on a real historical event known as the "Genta Disturbance" which happened in 1768 in the village of Ichijoji northeast of Kyoto. In order to

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<sup>105</sup> Tanaka Kōichi, "Jichū no dainamizumu – "Nishiyama Monogatari" ni okeru shōsetsu tekisuto no seisei," *Nihon Bungaku* 39 (7) (1990): 21-22.

understand *Nishiyama* in particular, and Ayatari's *fumi* in general, we need to a basic understanding of this so-called "Genta Disturbance." As the details of this incident have been intertwined with various popular tales, there are several versions that differ slightly from each other. All the versions however recount the feud between two families that trace their lineages to Watanabe Masa, a retainer to the last of the Ashikaga Shogun, as well as that of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Masa had also previously traced his lineage back to Watanabe no Tsuna (953-1024), one of the "Four Heavenly Kings" of Minamoto no Raikō. It is difficult to ascertain if this lineage played a major role leading up to the incident but it is a fact that both families identifies each other as fellow kinsman due to this lineage. The first family of Watanabe Danji (hereby, Danji) was wealthy, and occupied the hereditary position of village headsman. At the point of the incident, Danji had already handed over his position as headsman to his son Unai. The other family was poverty-stricken and headed by Watanabe Genta, twenty years of age at the time, and the protagonist in all the versions. Scholars have speculated that this difference in financial background between both families, compounded with them being blood related, led to an air of discord between the two Watanabe families.<sup>106</sup> Living with Genta were his mother Tsuya, Genta's younger sister Yae, seventeen at the time, and their younger brother Gunji who was fifteen.<sup>107</sup> The center dispute of the story was related to the apparent marriage arrangement between Unai and Yae. Here, there are generally two versions. The first version, proposed by Young, asserts that the two were star-crossed lovers, and that both were very much in love during the incident. Given that

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<sup>106</sup> Young, p. 78.

<sup>107</sup> Asano Sanpei postulated that Tsuya, being a daughter of a prominent local warrior family could have imparted warrior ethics and teachings to Genta. See footnote 108.

relations between the two families were strained due to economic and social differences, as I have highlighted above, marriage between Unai and Yae became a highly undesirable prospect despite their love for each other. This was especially so from the perspective of Unai's father the ex-headsman Danji, who held both power and wealth in the village. The general story is then archetypal: Genta, who foregoes the usual matchmaking intermediary, apparently made continued visits to the richer Watanabe household with requests to grant the two young lovers' wishes while Danji remained opposed to the arrangement, going to the whole extent of separating the two lovers by sending Unai to stay at the distant home of a relative. According to Young, Unai sent a letter to Yae, "in which he sought her understanding and her agreement to terminate their relationship." Unfortunately, Yae did not receive the letter for reasons that are now unknown. On the 3rd day of the twelfth month of Meiwa 4 (January 22, 1768), Genta escorted his sister to Danji's home and begged Unai's father to relent. Upon rejection, Genta, realizing that he had to carry out his mother's instructions in such a case, unsheathed his sword and struck his sister's head off in front of the horrified Danji.

A second version proposed by Asano Sanpei follows a similar trajectory but differs in the relation between the two families as well as the feelings shared between Unai and Yae. Showing evidence that the two families went through several discussions of a possible interfamily marriage arrangement, Asano asserted that they were in fact moving forward to uniting the two "lovers." In addition, he conjectured that Unai was not at all interested in Yae given that several years after the "Genta Disturbance" Unai married another woman. In Asano's words, "if [Unai] had really loved [Yae], then...he would have taken his life in pursuit of her, or renounce the world and become a bonze

– these actions were more reminiscent of the path of love.”<sup>108</sup> In the same line of thought, it can be inferred that Danji was not as materialistic as portrayed by Young and probably had “benevolent heart that understands the pains of love.”<sup>109</sup> In both versions, Yae appeared to be truly in love with Unai. In addition, historical documents also point to the fact that Unai was not present at Yae’s death: he was either sent away by his intransigent father or he had ran away to avoid the marriage arrangement.

Given the many versions that survive to us, it is clear that this incident caused a huge commotion in the Naniwa area and rumors/gossip were being shared across regions. It is perhaps because of the upheaval caused by the incident that the authorities wanted to swiftly resolve the incident. Thus, regardless of either version, the ending is similar: Genta was apparently arrested and charged with the murder of his sister and the disturbance of peace. However, due to the fact that this was an unprecedented “crime,” the local authorities were unsure how to punish his “deviance.” The case was transferred to higher authorities and Genta was imprisoned awaiting judgment. In the meantime, the general populace valorized his deed; it was seen “as one that epitomized the ideals of steadfastness and sincerity.”<sup>110</sup> According to judicial documents too, Genta was recorded as *rightfully* killing his sister for being immoral and unfilial, a view that was grounded in Confucian rhetoric of maintaining social structures and doing away with unnecessary emotions of love. At the same time, Danji became the villain of the affair – both in official and popular gaze – and was eventually stripped of his headsman

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<sup>108</sup> Asano, “Genta Sōan to Ayatari, Akinari,” in *Akinari*, ed. Nihon Bungaku Kenkyū Shiryō Kangyōkai (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1972), p. 237. My translation.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>110</sup> Young, p. 79

position for “disturbing the peace of society” and exiled. In short, it can be inferred that the general pressure from the populace – that Genta did nothing wrong – as well as the lack of case precedence in this incident, eventually led the higher authorities to pardon him. Genta eventually returned to his hometown as a hero.

When Ayatari published *Nishiyama*, the 1722 publishing statute preventing “irresponsible statements” was already widely enforced in Edo society. This law prevented the publication of any work that included discussions of any ancestral lineage of any family, any mention of the ruling Tokugawa family, and any discussion or reenactment of contemporary event. The usual method authors use to circumvent this censorship was to either obscure the specifics, or by repositioning the whole narrative into an earlier time period. In line with these common practices then, Ayatari’s tale was transposed onto an ambiguous time sometime during the Muromachi period (1336-1573). Readers contemporary to him would of course have had no doubt that his tale is a version of the Genta disturbance since *Nishiyama*’s general plot mirrors these incidents. Yet the obvious difference is the framing of the very reason for Yae’s sacrifice. The reader notices that the question of love, and the melodramatic juxtaposition, of youthful love with familial obligation, is foreshadowed by the focus on warrior ethics. Takada Mamoru postulates that rather than *bushidō* (the warrior code of ethics), the framing mechanism in *Nishiyama* appeared to be closer to an example of the *masurao* (the valiant man), an important trope of Mabuchi’s gendering of the poetics as we shall see in the next section.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Takada Mamoru, “Kaisetsu,” in *Shinpen Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* vol. 78, pp. 597-598. This valorization of his act would be the focus of the next section when I talk about Akinari’s account of him in *Masurao Monogatari* (lit. The tale of a valor man).

The first chapter, “A Small Sum” (*Kogane no Maki*), shows this shift in focus from *bushidō* to *Masurao* most clearly. The reader is first introduced to the two main characters, Hachirō and Shichirō who are fictional representations of Danji and Genta respectively. Like the Watanabe lineage highlighted above, both characters are heads of warrior households that trace their lineages to Ōmori Hikoshichi.<sup>112</sup> Unlike the incident above however, the two protagonists were cousins, and language in the text hints that they belong to the same generation, with the same occupation: fierce warriors that made their living as sword instructors. Interestingly though, the economical and social differences that were so crucial to the “strains” between the two households were replaced by Ayatari with two equally impoverished families who had very good relations with each other. By setting up the background in such a manner, Ayatari introduces anticipation in his readers by having them ponder about the *cause* for the eventual sacrifice of Kae, Shichiro’s sister. It is obvious that Kae (lit. Cypress Tree) was chosen as the name of the female protagonist because of the name’s sounding similar to Yae (the name of Genta’s sister). Kae’s sister’s name not only serves as a reminder of Yae; it was also a satire on so-called Chinese classics (*kara no fumi*). When Kae asked her mother why she was named as such, her mother explained,

“It is said that in the Chinese classics, the pine (*matsu*) and the cypress (*kae*) both remain green in the snow. When you were born, my helpmate [*seko*; the word used in the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* to refer to husband] that old man personally asked, ‘it is written [that pines and cypresses are as such in Chinese classics, should we name this girl Matsu? Or Kae?’. This woman thought (to myself), ‘it is said that pines [last] a thousand years yet they are overcome by snowstorms. I myself have seen many times how they give way in those [harsh conditions].’

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<sup>112</sup> A retainer whose story is narrated in the military epic of *Taiheiki* written sometime in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Hikoshichi, as he is widely called, was from the province of Iyo who fought against the forces of Emperor Go-Daigo at Minatogawa, thereby winning the favor of Ashikaga Takauji, the first Shogun of the Muromachi Bakufu.

[On the other hand,] although I have never heard nor read of such [a thing] as cypresses lasting a thousand years, I have personally witnessed their contumaciousness [*kamakezu; this is from the Manyōshū*] against the snow and frost. Thinking ‘what tough things they can be,’ I decided to name this child as Kae. [...] As this woman says, may you become a nonesuch [*uma-hito; from Manyōshū*] whose heart does not change in the snow (i.e. in face of adversity) ...”<sup>113</sup>

The reader will likely first notice how the disjuncture between classical “theoretical” knowledge and that of reality is foregrounded in this subtle critique of the Chinese classics. Kae’s mother chose names based not on the knowledge derived from the classics but rather from her very own personal experience. Yet this centrality of Kae’s name to the story is foreshadowed by the general arc of the first half, which focus is on Shichiro’s recovering of a blood-stained sword from a certain mountain temple, a sword which had previously belonged in the family till seven generations before. The reader is then told that as the sword initially belonged to Lord Kusunoki Masashige,<sup>114</sup> who was defeated and slain at the battle of the Minato River. Due to the bloody origins of the sword and the fact that it was later kept as a prize by Ōmori Hikoshichi, the family was plagued by supernatural occurrences, as a result of Masashige’s restless spirit. Here the emphasis is on Shichiro’s character as that of a *masurao*, as the reasons for both the recovery of the sword and the impoverishment of the family, as evident in this passage:

Nonetheless [despite ancestor-Shichirō’s effort of seven generations ago], currently the household treasures are depleted and the family is simply pauperized. The reason for this is no doubt the present Shichiro’s [yearning] to continue following (*migaku*, lit. polishing) the path of the warrior, and as a

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<sup>113</sup> Ayatari, *Nishiyama*, pp. 210-211. In my translation, Ayatari’s own annotations are italicized while my own additions are non-italicized.

<sup>114</sup> A warrior who lived during the South-North Courts period. Known to be loyal to Emperor Go-Daigo, he fought for Go-Daigo during the revolt of 1331 and remained loyal to him despite the emperor’s exile in 1332-1333. He eventually committed suicide after the decisive battle of Minatogawa of 1336. This is recounted in the fourteenth century epic *Taiheiki*, which also includes an account of Ōmori Hikoshichi’s major role in Kusunoki’s eventual defeat. According to the narrative, Hikoshichi was haunted by Kusunoki’s spirit after the latter’s death.

valiant man [*masurao*; seen in *Nihongi*, *Kojiki*, *Manyōshū*; means a great big man] of this era, he is often a man that gets panegyricized (*Kojiki*, *Nihongi*) by people...<sup>115</sup>

As the reader will find out several chapters later, it is this “valiantness” or “manliness” (*masurao*) of the outdated warrior ethics of Shichirō – a likely curse also from his obsession with the legendary sword – which causes both the death of his sister as well as the loss of an opportunity at economic advancement. It is this valiantness that frames the second half, although the curse of the sword was completely pushed to the background. The second half therefore unfolds in the same way as a usual *ninjōbon* in which the star-crossed lovers become the centrality of the story. Here, Ayatari’s version general mirrors that of the Genta disturbance.

Instead of focusing on the story, let me return to Ayatari’s use of *wabun*. It is clear that as with his treatise on *katauta*, Ayatari inserts old language into his contemporary prose. Although this is a clear departure from Mabuchi’s *fumi* as a kind of being-in-the-world – it reeks of superficiality at best – Ayatari attempts to show this “combination” is aimed at allowing the pristine antiquarial language to seep into present in order to effectively portray a certain contemporary reality. To put it simply, Ayatari was looking for a language that not only includes the historical continuity of the pristine past to seep into the present, but allows for people to learn and embody the necessary being of language itself. In addition, *Nishiyama* is written in a paratactical juxtaposition of the main narrative and Ayatari’s annotation. At times he tells his reader how he is interpreting the old word, or he simply gives the Sinitic characters to archaic word. Shortly before the publication of *Nishiyama*, Ayatari appeared to adhere to a movement

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<sup>115</sup> Ayatari, *Nishiyama*, p. 203.

to correct character use in society. Lawrence Marceau argued that this was likely due to Ayatari's interaction with many of the main figures in the field of *honzōgaku* (*materia medica*), in particular Hiraga Gennai (1728-1780) "who had been involved in the exhibition of "natural products" from 1758, 1759, 1760, and 1762."<sup>116</sup> *Honzōgaku*, due to its need to catalogue plants and *things*, often had to find a way to standardize names vis-à-vis specimens. Ayatari could have been following their lead given that around the first few years of the 1760s it was clear that he had increasingly been using "orthodox characters" (*seiji*). The characters given in *Nishiyama* appears to then conform to this general trend of empirical rational "scientific" advancements. As a practice in *kokugaku fumi*, *Nishiyama* thus mirrors the general assumptions held by Mabuchi with regards to composing *fumi*.

#### ***Ueda Akinari's (1734-1809) Masurao Monogatari and his criticism of Ayatari***

As I have mentioned earlier, due the open-ended nature of Mabuchi's politics of *fumi*, it comes to no surprise that *Nishiyama* invited much criticism from other *kokugaku* scholars. A clear critical response came from Ueda Akinari, whose *Masurao Monogatari* (Tale of A Valiant Man; 1806) attempted to present a different stylistic approach in depicting the same event which *Nishiyama* was based on. My purpose here is to highlight various points of disagreements between the written "form" of *Nishiyama* and *Masurao Monogatari* in order to capture the boundaries of the politics of *fumi* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century *kokugaku*. It should be noted at the outset that although it is obvious that both Ayatari and Akinari were very much influenced by Mabuchi's poetics of *fumi*,

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<sup>116</sup> Marceau, p. 111.

their reputation amongst *kokugaku* contemporaries were very different. Akinari was perceived as a direct disciple in Mabuchi's lineage, having studied with Katō Umaki, who was Mabuchi's close student.<sup>117</sup> In contrast, Ayatari's authenticity as Mabuchi's student was often questioned. In *Zoku Kinsei Kijin-den* (Odd persons of recent eras continued; 1798), Ban Kōkei<sup>118</sup> (1733-1806) describes Ayatari's introduction to Mabuchi's teachings in the following manner:

[In the midst of his adoption of Haikai,] Ryōtai (Ayatari's poet pseudonym) became exposed to the increasing popularity of Kamo no Mabuchi's emphasis on the old style of the *Manyōshū*. As such, he made his wife a student [of Mabuchi] and he himself, picked up Mabuchi's teaching through his wife's learning (i.e. notes)."<sup>119</sup>

Given that the *Zoku Kinsei Kijin-den* could have been written, as its title and preface suggested,<sup>120</sup> with the aim of sensationalizing the lives of historical figures, we should take this statement on Ayatari with a pinch of salt. In spite of that, Kōkei's statement hints that not only did Ayatari never share Mabuchi's sentiment to uncover the pristine text-individual-world relation, but his *kokugaku* knowledge were mostly from indirect

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<sup>117</sup> In addition, Akinari was also involved in the editing and publication of Mabuchi's studies of *Manyōshū*, a clear sign that he was generally accepted by Mabuchi's other students.

<sup>118</sup> The author of *Zoku Kinsei Kijin-den* was in fact Mikuma Katen (1730-1794), the illustrator and contributor of the first *Kinsei Kijin-den* (1790) by Kōkei. However, before completing the second volume, Katen passed away in 1794. Before his death, it is known that Katen requested that Kōkei complete the work on his behalf. According to Munemasa Isoo, Kōkei's editing and contribution is clear in the eventual published version as whenever Kōkei added any information to the Katen's "original" text, he would state that it is his addition to Mikuma's text, usually using his pseudonym "according to *Kandenshi* 閑田子," or simply with "Kōkei said". (See Munemasa, "Kaisetsu," in Ban Kōkei, *Kinsei Kijin-den*, *Zoku Kinsei Kijin-den*, *Tōyō Bunkō Vol. 202* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1972), p. 510.) While scholars continue to debate as to how much of the final work was really Mikuma's original writing, given its proximity, both in style and rhetoric, to Kōkei's "first" 1790 volume, for the purpose of this dissertation, I will attribute the work to Kōkei as is the usual practice.

<sup>119</sup> Ban Kōkei, *Kinsei Kijin-den*, pp. 441-442.

<sup>120</sup> Preface of *Kinsei Kijin-den* spoke about how individuals were selected and so forth. They were mainly "oddballs" in society though it is clear that Kōkei's language usually displayed immense respect towards most of the individuals described in the work.

sources (i.e. hearsay) and hence questionable. Nonetheless, we do know that in reality, Ayatari did become a student of Mabuchi, given his name appearing in a published list of students beside Hiraga Gennai.<sup>121</sup> According to a letter to Umetani Ichizaemon, Mabuchi wrote happily of his acceptance of Ayatari as a student, “[Ayatari is] adept in Chinese painting and *Haikai*, with many students of both arts under him. Of recent, he has taken interest in the *Manyō[shu]*, and through Katō [Umaki] with his request, has henceforth become a student under our [school].”<sup>122</sup> Mabuchi’s delight detected in this announcement will later take a U-turn as shown in a letter (written in his late years) where he warned his students of an “imposter called Ayatari” who may appear claiming to be his student.<sup>123</sup> We do not know the reason(s) behind this drastic change in Mabuchi’s opinion of Ayatari. Nonetheless, what we can assume from this rough sketch of both Ayatari’s and Akinari’s positions within the Mabuchi school is that both were likely received by their fellow *kokugaku* disciples in very different manners, with Akinari holding a more “orthodox” position. This difference in position between the

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<sup>121</sup> Marceau, p. 112. Marceau argues that when Ayatari shifted his attention towards *kokugaku*, he was “undergoing a radical *metamorphosis*, much like the butterflies he describes so often in his late essays.” Marceau’s usage of words is telling of his view of Ayatari’s turn to *kokugaku* – it is a teleological end of which Ayatari reached. *Kokugaku* appears to be the ultimate end that sublates all previous inclinations: “through [Ayatari’s] interpretation of Japan’s most ancient poetry as embodying greater “emotional integrity” than the contemporary forms with which he had heretofore been involved, [he] finally gained the release he had been seeking in his own creative efforts.” By placing Ayatari’s *kokugaku* within the “context” of his life, Marceau has successfully made Ayatari’s writing an expression of his individual psychological discontent, a “release” of all the apparent contradiction prior to his “turn” to *kokugaku*. Only in such a way could Marceau claim that Ayatari’s *yomihon* were “vehicles in which the poet/author’s keenly honed sensibilities *find outlet*” (See p. 127). While I do not deny the empirical richness of his study, it is clear that Marceau’s study of Ayatari is a form of *sakka-ron*. It is only by such an approach, could *kokugaku* seem like an ultimate teleological end to the life of the *yomihon* author, like how *kokugaku* is the teleological end to the crisis of Neo-Confucian paradigmatic thought.

<sup>122</sup> Quoted in Tamaki Tsukasa, *Aya no hito: Takebe Ayatari* (Tokyo: Shintensha, 1998), p. 239.

<sup>123</sup> See Marceau, p. 258.

two frames my reading of *Masurao Monogatari*.<sup>124</sup> Here I use the concept of *masurao* – a concept that is also central to *Nishiyama* – to see how Akinari disagreed with Ayatari. In my reading of *Nishiyama*, I have followed Takada’s suggestion that Ayatari had defined Genta as a kind of *masurao*. From the title of Akinari’s version, this characterization of Genta was clearly also shared by him. In addition, it is clear that both Ayatari and Akinari had followed Mabuchi’s definition. Nonetheless, we should not simply translate *masurao* as a quality of being valiant as that was not how Mabuchi delineated his concept.

In Mabuchi’s writings, the concept was used not to apply to specific characters of people – as with Confucian notions of “gentlemen” – but instead, to mark certain historical periods as either masculine or feminine. In *Kaikō* (“On poetry”), Mabuchi argues that songs *uta* during the Engi period (901-923) had “a wide range of subject matter and a rich and courtly spirit.” According to him, they were “smooth and refined,” and were “truly poetry appropriate to women.” By delineating poetry of the Engi period as “effeminate” (*memeshiki*), this allowed Mabuchi to claim that prior to that period, “men were brave and manly (*masurao-buri*) and so was the poetry then.”<sup>125</sup> It is well known that Mabuchi often upheld the *Manyōshū* as *the* anthology that reflected the sincere and unornamented nature of the pristine ancient lifeworld and it is no surprise that this gendering of poetic history overlapped with his downplaying of Heian courtly

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<sup>124</sup> The title “*Masurao Monogatari*” was in fact attached to this memoir written by Akinari in a 1929 editing and publication of *Akinari-Ibun* (“Texts left behind by Akinari”). See *UAZ* Vol. 8, p. 520. I will adhere to present scholarly conventions by referring to this text as such, but it should be clear that *masurao* was *not* the main concept that Akinari used to frame his narrative.

<sup>125</sup> Translation borrowed from Peter Flueckiger’s in *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, ed. Haruo Shirane (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 610.

(read, “ornamented”) culture and the later anthologies (e.g. *Kokinshū*).<sup>126</sup> This is because for Mabuchi, the poetry of the Heian period had already been “affected by artificiality and Chinese influences.”<sup>127</sup> It is clear that there is a gender politics at play, with masculinity privileged over femininity. It is however not my purpose to delve too much into a gender reading of his assertion. Rather, I wish to point out that the concept of *masurao* for Mabuchi appears to be a descriptive for all that is sincere and straightforward and void of Chinese influences. Yet in *Nishiyama* we see Ayatari use *masurao* to describe Shichiro’s disposition as a warrior that is anything but sincere, and a cursory reading would suggest that Ayatari could have been attempting a critique on the concept of *masurao* as proposed by his master. Yet the continuing trope of warrior ethics as well as the constant praise for Shichirō’s disposition suggests there was likely some ambivalence involved in Ayatari’s portrayal and treatment of *masurao*. Takada Mamoru has suggested that we should separate the emphasis on *masurao* and its discourse on warrior ethics. According to him, “[for Ayatari], *masurao* referred not to the sincere and manly figure promoted by Mabuchi; rather, it is a title Ayatari defines as ‘a person that excels in things’ (*mono ni masareru hito to iu*).”<sup>128</sup> If read in the manner that Takada suggested, the concept of *masurao* in *Nishiyama* appears more utilitarian and as an extension of Zhu Xi metaphysics of the “investigation of things.” More accurately, it is a clear departure from the politics of *fumi* in the discovery of being-in-the-world.

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<sup>126</sup> Mabuchi had also characterized the imperial poetic anthology *Kokinshū* as *taoyame* (“gracefully feminine”). According to McNally, for Mabuchi, this femininity was mainly attributed to the gradual sway of Chinese cultural institutions in the Heian period, “forsaking their masculine cultural heritage.” (See Mark McNally, *Proving the Way*, p. 19.)

<sup>127</sup> Tomiko Yoda, *Gender and National Literature: Heian Texts in the Constructions of Japanese Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 28.

<sup>128</sup> Ayatari, *Nishiyama*, p. 598.

It is perhaps because of this “misunderstanding” on the part of Ayatari that led to Akinari’s disagreement with *Nishiyama*. In addition to criticizing Ayatari’s superficial characterization (as merely “manly”) of Genta in *Masurao*, Akinari also censured Ayatari’s use of “Chinese” narrative structures and conventions. Reading his preface to *Masurao*, Akinari appeared to have held great esteem for Genta and was overjoyed to have had a chance of meeting with him during a festival at Ichijōji on the west side of Kyoto:

“There was a time not so long ago that this old man’s deed reverberated across society. But now, with forty years passed, it is treated merely as an old tale, and because of that, not many people in this world still remember it. At that time too, when the news of his deed came to me, I thought to myself ‘such a sincere man (*masurao*) still exists in the world!’ And while [I was touched then], having met him in person now, I am thankful for simply being old.”

After describing what a “beautiful and youthful face” Genta had despite being over sixty, Akinari launched a criticism of *Nishiyama*:

“His deed was once taken up by a work called *Nishiyama Monogatari* written by a smart-aleck (*namasakashi hito*), a work which wrongfully [depicts] an otherwise good person (i.e. Genta) and hence is truly a piece of meaningless prose (*itazura fumi narikeri*). By [writing] stories that adapt the form of Chinese vernacular works (*morokoshi no engi shōsetsu*) while mixing it with this country’s narrative prose style (*kono kuni no monogatari fumi*), [Ayatari] had combined wisdom with stupidity. Even if [these works] are left behind in the world, it is needless to say that it is only a matter of time before they disappear, and [this very one] truly did. Here (in this text), even though I will attempt to record the truth of this man’s deed here with this simple brush, since there is no falsehood, I think this record will continue to be transmitted over the ages.”

It is clear that Akinari attempted to fault Ayatari’s attempt in *Nishiyama* to mix Chinese forms with “native” narrative prose styles. For him, the native *fumi* and foreign *shōsetsu* were two distinct forms that should not cross, a view that parallels his own development

as a *kokugaku*/literary scholar.<sup>129</sup> Instead of such “sophistication,” Akinari prosed recording simply and indeed in terms of the general narrative arc, his version of Genta’s tale simply mirrors that of Young’s reconstruction with one clear difference. Instead of the Confucian ideal of maintaining morality and filiality, Genta tells Akinari that he killed his sister to save her from the humiliation of having to kill herself. It is this sincerity and composure that gave Akinari reason to exalt Genta by comparing him to a legendary warrior of the same family name, Watanabe Tsuna, who had successfully fought off a ferocious demon named Ibaraki-dōji.<sup>130</sup>

### ***Wabun no Kai: Ban Kōkei (1733-1806) and Rewriting Fumi***

In the last decades of Akinari’s life, he was part of an intellectual group based in the Kamigata region that sought to implement Mabuchi’s *fumi* into praxis. As a group that was aptly named “Wabun no Kai” (lit. “The Wabun Study Group), these intellectuals often discussed the poetics of *fumi*, and different ways of putting Mabuchi’s ideas into actual material text. What survives to us are then a series of prosaic texts that appear to show their attempt to experiment describing their world through the mimetic

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<sup>129</sup> Scholars have pointed out the marked difference between compositional forms and styles of *Ugetsu Monogatari* (“Tales of Moonlight and Rain”; 1768) and the manuscript he was working just before his death, *Harusame Monogatari* (“Tales of Spring Rain”; 1809). In the earlier work, Akinari adapted famous stories from Ming vernacular anthologies by placing them in “native” histories while interweaving each tale of *kokugaku* rhetoric. The structure and literary form therefore closely resembled those of Ming tales, especially his adaptation of the popular folk tale “Madam White Snake” to “Jasei no In” (A serpent’s lust). In *Harusame monogatari* however, the tales were more fluid, and while not close to traditional forms of *monogatari*, had more simplicity and erudition. The obvious intertextual sources seen in *Ugetsu* are also not prominent in *Harusame* despite clear indications that Akinari had continued editing his tales. Hino Tatsuo points at the lack of any narrative devices in *Harusame* and he found it so simple it was too mundane a read. See Hino Tatsuo, *Norinaga to Akinari: Kinsei Chūki Bungaku no Kenkyū* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1984), pp. 224-225.

<sup>130</sup> *UAZ* Vol. 8, p. 399. The tale of Watanabe Tsuna and Ibaraki-dōji was popular during the Edo period, and versions of it can be found in the Kabuki theater, Noh dances, epic poetries and military narratives (*gunki*). A reader during Akinari’s time would have been familiar with the reference.

and poetic relations revealed in ancient *fumi*. One prominent scholar that seemed to have anchored the whole group together was the *kokugaku* scholar Ban Kōkei (1733-1806) (who also edited the *Kinsei Kijin-den*). In this last section, I will attempt to return the discussion back to the politics of *fumi* through a look at Kōkei's treatise *Utsushi-bumi Warawa no Satoshi* ("The enlightening of children in the writing of *fumi*; 1794; hereby, *Utsushi-bumi*). The preface to the work was written by Akinari himself, and echoes Mabuchi's view that all poems, all prose, and all feelings are natural reactions to being in the world: "Are not all those [*fumi*] measured by our hearts, and our heart invited by the words that are used?" By foregrounding the importance of *fumi* in understanding one's being in the world, Akinari then praises Kōkei's *Utsushi-bumi* as a *satoshi-bumi* – a text that enlightens – for it allows its learner "to *feel the deep way of such truth (mamewaza) of the world.*"<sup>131</sup> As we shall see, Akinari's writing of *fumi* in *Masurao Monogatari* and *Kamiyo Monogatari* mirrors the basic tenets laid down by Kōkei. A reader will also notice that the "*utsushi-bumi*" in the title of the work uses an interesting Sinitic graph-set: *yakubun* (訳文) or "translated text," and an informed reader will immediately make reference to Ogyū Sorai's famous text *Yakubun Sentei* (A preface about Translation; 1715). As a notion of "translation" undergirds the basic ideas of writing *fumi* in *Utsushi-bumi*, in order to understand the way in which Kōkei is suggesting a different definition of translation, we need to understand his implied interlocutor – which in this case was Sorai's attack on *wakun*.

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<sup>131</sup> Ban Kōkei, *Utsushi-bumi Warawa no Satoshi*, in *Ban Kōkei-shū*, ed. Kazama Seishi, *Sōsho Edo Bunkō* Vol. 7 (Tokyo: Kokusho Kangyōkai, 1993), p. 62.

In *Yakubun Sentei*, Sorai argued that the way in which people in Edo society read Sinitic texts known as *kundoku* (lit. parsing with reading markers) or *wakun* (“Japanese” parsing) – a method which parses Sinitic script syntactically into “native” order through a series of rules and mechanisms – was an act of translation. By labeling *wakun* as such, he argued that as a method of reading, it effectively effaces the original sounds and syntactical sequences in which classical texts (like the *Analects* or the *Book of Rites*) should have been read. For him, this “distance” that develops between the original and the translation should be problematized, since it ultimately resulted in the changing of both meaning and structure of the text in question. That is to say, any act of reading should attempt to bridge this “distance”: “when one moves beyond *wakun* annotations, and follows a straight and steady course, the eight islands of Japan will connect directly with the province of Ming (China).” For Sorai then, this “moving beyond” was, as many scholars have pointed out, the “translation” of Sinitic script into native language of the everyday: “If one translates adequately these “Chinese” script into the ordinary speech of our country, that would be reading accurately.” While Sorai argues that this is because “everyday language is unembellished and direct and therefore close to human sentiments,” it is also due to the proximity of everyday language to the material world. As it is widely known, for Sorai, the era of mythical sage kings of China was the ideal lifeworld and method of governance (through rites) to which the Tokugawa regime should attempt to imitate. Thus, to read classical Chinese texts – here, in particular, those prior to *The Analects* – in *wakun* is to ignore the link between language and reality. *Wakun* was a barrier to any proper form of governance and the link between “Japan” and “China.” Naoki Sakai characterizes this conceptual move by

Sorai as the calling for the passive nature of writing and the active nature of reading. He argues that Sorai attempted to overcome the representational distance generated and thereby to "annual the representational function of language." This is in order to ensure the transparent language, through reducing two modes of verbal practice - reading and writing - into one "mode akin to performative practice." The linguistic act is thus, for Sorai, also the non-linguistic act.<sup>132</sup> It is to "perform" the text and re-present it in their everyday. Perhaps it is for this reason that Sorai emphasized the rites of the sage kings as Confucius during the Zhou dynasty.

In Kōkei's early work *Kunifumi no Yoyo no Ato* (The Traces of Native texts in various eras; 1774/1777) in which he traces the historical changes in which *fumi* was written, Kōkei clearly adopts a similar paradigm: "if one were to understand the deed of translating (*yakusuru*) *mana* (Sinitic characters), it is always to that of *kana* – it is the rendering of each character into its specific *kana*. It appears that Kōkei combines the two approaches that were diametrically opposed in Sorai's conception of translation. He calls for both the translation to *kana* – taken as everyday language – as well as the parsing of words into Japanese syntax. The act of "understanding" which was also central to Sorai's conception underpins Kōkei's earlier concepts of "translation" (*yakusu*). Kazama Seishi has pointed out that Kōkei's understanding of "translation" appeared to have shifted in *Utsushi-bumi*. Now, instead of parsing the same characters 訳文 as *yakubun*, Kazama highlights that Kōkei's notion of *utsushi-bumi* or the act of *utsusu* is closer to rewriting.<sup>133</sup> My own reading too yields the same observation, and unlike the

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<sup>132</sup> Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 242.

<sup>133</sup> Kazama, *Kinsei Wabun no Sekai*, pp. 76-78.

communicative framework that was so central in his understanding of the characters *yakubun* 訳文 in *Kokufumi no Yoyo no Ato*, Kōkei appeared to have created a different approach to *fumi* in *Utsushi-bumi* that reflected Mabuchi's understanding of the act of poesis and mimesis in writing *fumi* as uncovering being-in-the-world. This is clear when he says that “the method of *utsusu* (the verb form of *utsushi*) is the same” regardless of the source text, whether it is a rewriting of vulgar language (*tadakoto*) or Sinitic script (*kango*) – it is no longer about writing in the “vernacular” as in Sorai but instead, a conceiving of a new form. In other words, unlike the communicative framework of Sorai and Kōkei's older views, in which a classical text is translated into contemporary language to “transmit” knowledge, this idea of communication now appears to be bracketed in favor of discovering one's place in the world. There is thus an added step *after* understanding, and it is to write in what he calls *masakoto* (“elegant” or “polished” language). In other words, instead of the paradigm of “translation” in which *meaning* was transmitted, the *rewritten form* in which language presents to the writer becomes crucial.

It is therefore clear that *utsusu* is not “translation” in the conventional sense of the word; rather, it is what we would call “rewriting.” The idea of having two separate languages in which to translate to is also alien to Kōkei's concept of *utsusu*. As he claims in the section titled “The Rule of Rewriting *Karafumi* (Sinitic script) to *Kokufumi* (our country's script), the Sinitic script and the “native” script should not be opposed to each other given that,

“The writings (*fumi*) of people of antiquity who accepted the general (writing) laws of the Sinitic style (*karaburi*) [show that] our forebearers [...] did not distinguish [between the two] and both were understood as our country's style

(*kokuburi*). As such we should also pick up [these *karafumi*] and learn from them. I am not asserting that if one does not know the texts of that style (i.e. *karaburi*), one will not be able to write an elegantly styled (*miyabi-buri*) text of this country (*koko no fumi*). Rather one should broadly bring together [texts of] here and there and learn the meanings [as though] they are both one form (*fumi*). [...] If you can understand these two [styles] you can write anything [in *masagoto*].”<sup>134</sup>

By pointing out that both Sinitic texts and those of “his country” belong to the same tradition, he claims that this is exactly the meaning of “rewriting”. It is to “rewrite (*utsusu*) the stance (*ikioi*), the character (*kokorobae*), its form (*sugata*), its meaning (*yō*), and other textual dimensions by allowing all these levels of meaning to speak to us.”<sup>135</sup> It is noteworthy that despite his general agreement with Mabuchi’s concept of *fumi* as revealing one’s being-in-the-world, Kōkei disagrees with his idea that one should not study or even rewrite anything Sinitic.<sup>136</sup> More importantly, instead of meaning dominating the act of translation, Kōkei therefore proposes that the combination of form and content should not be sacrificed in favor of understanding. This is the reason why he proposes that after rewriting an old text into everyday language (*tadakoto*), there is always a need to rewrite it into “elegant” language (*masakoto*), one that transmits the combination of form and content to later generations.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Kōkei, *Utsushi-bumi*, p. 84.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

<sup>136</sup> He points to Mabuchi’s own hypocritical practices claiming that if one looks at Mabuchi’s description of his disciple Tachibana Tsuneki (1704-1763), it possesses the similar stances (*ikioi*) as the Sinitic texts he used to [substantiate his praise]. See *Ibid.*, p. 92. If one compares this critical stance towards Mabuchi with his earlier mention of the latter in *Kokufumi Yoyo no Ato* where he simply cites Mabuchi’s *Manyōkō* as an appropriate way of translating (*yakusu*) and reading (*yomu*; 訓む), it is clear that Kōkei was gradually became critical of Mabuchi’s “sinophobia”. See *Kokufumi Yoyo no Ato*, in *Ban Kōkei-shū*, p. 51.

<sup>137</sup> As an example, Kōkei rewrites a portion of Kaibara Ekiken’s *Kisoji no Ki* (1713) into *masakoto*. It is clear that he takes liberty with his rewriting and what is more important is how he “imagines” Ekiken’s feelings at the moment in time while “leaving out all the unnecessary details to prevent the text from becoming unpleasant.” (*Utsushibumi*, p. 74).

Thus, what we see here is an interesting combination of *mimesis* and *poesis*. On the one hand, Kōkei argues for the imitation of *masakoto* from earlier native texts,<sup>138</sup> on the other, he argues for the creative power of *masakoto* in revealing the distinctive combination of form and content each text has. Kōkei appears to hold that *fumi*, if re-written correctly, would be adequate in the transmission of any source text. It is perhaps this insight that continued to drive the writings of not only Kōkei but also Akinari and those of their network.

### ***Conclusion: Writing Wabun***

In this chapter, I have tried to show how *fumi* as a *kokugaku* practice was central to their understanding of being-in-the-world, or what Mabuchi has called, “the constitution of people’s *motodachi* (gestalt/being)”. Hidden in their “everyday” attempts to conceive a “native” prose, one could feel an urgency for the need of a language adequate to describing, addressing and knowing the world around them. Unlike the constant emphasis on the phonocentric nature of *kokugaku* discourse of *uta* – which was the focus of Chapter One – I have attempted to illuminate how *fumi* was in fact central to how some *kokugaku* scholars understood their being-in the-world. By showing how Mabuchi’s explication of *fumi* vis-à-vis *uta* forms the backbone of the whole *kokugaku* discourse on writing amongst these scholars based in the Kamigata region, I have tried to show the multiplicity within *kokugaku* practice.

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

CHAPTER 3  
MEDICATING ANTIQUITY:  
UEDA AKINARI AND THE INVESTIGATION OF HERBS

*The Chrysanthemum Conundrum*

In 1798, the author of the famous *Tales of Moonlight and Rain* and *kokugaku* scholar, Ueda Akinari (1734-1809) wrote the following passage:

“Chrysanthemum [flowers] are reminiscent of our capital. And while they were brought over from China (*morokoshi*), they have been cultivated into many different species (*chigusa*) since the moment they had brought joy to the Jōwa Emperor (Ninmyō Tennō; reign: A.D. 834-848). In antiquity alas, the chrysanthemum was probably abundant along the sides of mountain paths, and this may perhaps still be the case. Even if one does not see these flowers [while walking], its scent, emitting itself in the dew during autumn [can be detected], and [there are too] the streams flowing down the mountains filled with its fragrance. If one draws [and drinks] this water, it is said that [this water] is a wonderful medicine that enables one to live for a millennium (i.e. a long time).”<sup>1</sup>

This passage is found in a recently discovered scroll handwritten by Akinari himself entitled *Toshi no Nanafu* (lit. *The Seven Moments of the Year*). One of several surviving versions, in it Akinari *narrates* the rituals, history, and natural occurrences that are involved in a seasonal year. As hinted at by the above passage, the seasonal year Akinari invokes here is clearly not understood in the same way as it was by the general populace in Akinari’s day. Rather, we find in Akinari’s text an aestheticized ideal world — a world supposedly unchanged since the time of Emperor Ninmyō — in which “nature” and the

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<sup>1</sup> This version is taken from Kigoshi Osamu’s annotation/transcription in “Shinshutsu Ueda Akinari Jihitsu *Toshi no Nanafu* – Eiin to Honkoku, Ihon tonō Taikō,” *Sophia University Department of National Literatures Bulletin* 31 (March 2014): 78. Kigoshi gives a comparison of his version and others versions (pp. 86-114). For other versions, please see Ueda Akinari, *UAZ* Vol. 11 (Tokyo: Chuō Kōronsha, 1994), pp. 123-129. Translations are mine.

life of the people are bound in an interactive relationship via the consumption of the flower as medicine.

It is crucial to note that in naming Emperor Ninmyō, Akinari likely invited his readers to draw a parallel between what he described — and presented — in his text, and the world in which Ninmyō had supposedly lived, as depicted in the *Shoku Nihon Kōki* (869). As an official history commissioned by the Heian court, the segment of *Shoku Nihon Kōki* on the Jōwa era (in which Ninmyō ruled) reads more as chronology of the important rituals and responsibilities observed by the Emperor. Its form, written in *kanbun* (Sinitic script), and often in a laconic repetitive style, differs strikingly from Akinari's own poetical writing. Perhaps surprisingly, the chrysanthemum, while foregrounded as such an important trope in Akinari's passage above, can only be found in one annual ritual celebrated in Ninmyō's time — the *Chōyō* (重陽, ch. Zhong Yang). Historically held by the imperial court on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, this ritual is now known also as the “Chrysanthemum Festival” (*kiku no sekku*) and usually features the Chrysanthemum wine as an offering to the gods as the court prays for the Emperor's longevity. Given the close metonymic relation between the symbol of chrysanthemum and the imperial household, in both the Edo period and in our present day (the regalia of the imperial family is none other than the chrysanthemum), what Akinari appears to be doing in his text was performing an archaeology of this very discursive relation.

The importance of this relationship between the chrysanthemum and the imperial family is clear from the first sentence in the passage: “Chrysanthemums are reminiscent of our capital.” Yet, if we were to trust the exact dating of the events in *Shoku Nihon Kōki*, this tradition of chrysanthemum wine offerings only began in the second year of the Jōwa

era (est. 835), and prior to that year, the chrysanthemum did not feature in the court's *Chōyō* rituals.<sup>2</sup> We may assume that Akinari was conscious of this, since in the text above he described the flowers as “brought over from China.” What is, however, even more striking, is how, by drawing this parallel between the chrysanthemum's use in court ritual and its appearance in everyday life in autumn in *Toshi no Nanafu*, Akinari placed, on the same level, the harmonizing role of the chrysanthemum wine in the imperial court and its medicinal use in contemporary concoctions in the Edo period.

In this passage then, the chrysanthemum in its guise as botanical entity growing in the natural world is foregrounded in a relation with the imperial lineage. According to Akinari's rhetoric in *Toshi no Nanafu*, the chrysanthemum, despite its “crossing” over from China, has since flourished in Japan, being both “abundant along the sides of the mountain paths,” and a flower that continues to provide benefits to those who stumble upon it. It is interesting that Akinari also wrote elsewhere about the importance of the chrysanthemum in the history of the imperial court. In an unpublished poetic note, Akinari asserted that even though in this “august country, the cherry-blossom (*sakura*) has been deemed *the* plant worthy of praise, its importance [in our country's history is foreshadowed by] the chrysanthemum which is primarily the flower that has a more important symbolic and aesthetic role.”<sup>3</sup> Clearly, in Akinari's view, the chrysanthemum is not merely a medical object but also an aesthetic one. Its centrality in “Japan” is such that its scent will “move people to compose” (*fumi wo tsukurite*), will work “as a playful way of accentuating women's original feelings” (*nyobō-tachi no jōshiki on-susasbi*), and

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<sup>2</sup> *Shoku Nihon Kōki*, in *Kokushi Taikei* Vol. 4 (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 1978), pp. 42-43.

<sup>3</sup> *UAZ* Vol 11, p. 395.

that it can be used in the making of liquor for celebratory events, and in many other ways. It is an “illustrious [plant] that is worth all the effort of those who cultivate it.”<sup>4</sup>

In this sense, the word “capital” (*miyako*) in the initial sentence of *Toshi no Nanafu* functions on at least two levels. On one level, as I have elaborated in the previous paragraph, *miyako* refers to the city of Kyoto as the locale of the imperial family, in-turn symbolized by the crest of the chrysanthemum. On another level, by claiming that the chrysanthemum had proliferated beyond Kyoto into the mountains, the word “capital” also refers to the pristine and rightful *annual* temporality experienced by past emperors since Ninmyō, a temporality that is still present in nature given the continual presence of the chrysanthemum in the mountains. In this sense, the word “year” (*toshi*) in the title of Akinari’s treatise refers to the “pristine” seasonal year, not as it occurred in nature, but as one that had the rites and rituals of the imperial court at its center.

The complexity we find in Akinari’s use of the word “capital” therefore suggests that, because of these overlapping meanings, *Toshi no Nanafu* could perhaps be read as a kind of meditation by Akinari on a particular chronotopic understanding of the world. This chronotopic world is obviously not identical to the geographical and temporal “present” as Akinari lived it. Instead, this “world,” as Akinari imagines it in the text, is an ideal, aesthetic past-future that he envisions. He offers the reader the chrysanthemum, in all its “materiality” as an object occurring in the natural world, as a *topos* through which to envision the congruency of the “pristine past,” the everyday present, and the future. To put it differently, while an obsession with returning to a pristine past is often attributed to *kokugaku* scholars, what Akinari highlights in *Toshi no Nanafu* is instead this precise

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 396.

connection between the pristine past and that of the present in which the phenomena of nature presents themselves to our senses – i.e. the scent, sight, taste of the chrysanthemum. That is to say, I am proposing here that it is around the chrysanthemum *as medicine* that the totality of the ideal lifeworld is brought together in the text. More importantly, is that it is possible in Akinari's view for individuals to participate in this ideal vision by consuming various concoctions made from the plant that result in the internalization of the chrysanthemum into the human's body.

What *Toshi no Nanafu* therefore proposes to the reader is an intricate relationship between nature, history, and the experiencing subject's body within a diachronic schema of the world. As we have seen in Chapter Two on Mabuchi's *fumi*, the question of an experiencing subject within the world was itself not alien to the discourse of *kokugaku* per se. But unlike Mabuchi's (and Norinaga's) emphasis on the speaking/writing subject as the locus of external determination, for Akinari, the question of nature is not simply an abstract concept of the world "out there." It is also not linked solely to the critique of *hito wa banbutsu no rei* in which Mabuchi rejected the centrality of the human within the Zhu Xi and Wang Yang Ming paradigmatic explication of principle.<sup>5</sup> The external world, as we can see in Akinari's text, cannot be solely reduced to a phenomenological dimension — one that is overdetermined by the seeing/feeling subject. How then was *kokugaku* related to the study of this external world of nature? How does an herb such as the chrysanthemum feature in the archeology of the lost "Japanese" past? To put it differently, what I would like to pursue in the following pages is the question of how we explain the

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to my discussion in Chapter One where I analyzed how Mabuchi rejected the positioning of humans in the framework of *hito wa banbutsu no rei*.

trope of the chrysanthemum in *kokugaku* texts like Akinari's, if we are committed to seeing *kokugaku* as a reaction against the speculative and metaphysical emphasis on language of Zhu Xi school of Confucianism (a view that is found in most "introductions" to *kokugaku* as I have pointed out in my introduction), or as merely as a kind of protonationalism? Given the appearance of the chrysanthemum trope in Akinari's writings above, that is, how might we account for a relation between *kokugaku* and the growing field of medical knowledge in the eighteenth century known as *honzōgaku* (*materia medica*) of which the subjects of study were herbs, plants and flowers?

#### ***Akinari, Medicine and the Study of Herbs in Mid-Eighteenth Century Edo Society***

These questions are not incidental. Akinari, like a number of *kokugaku* figures of the late 18th century, was also a physician by profession. However, despite his status as a major figure in Japanese literary history, the lack of substantive sources on his later life casts a blanket of mystery over Akinari's medical thought. These problems notwithstanding, even in the standard narrative of his life, Akinari's turn towards the profession of medicine is noted, and seen as motivated by need to provide for his wife and adoptive mother after the loss of his printing company to a fire in 1771.<sup>6</sup> In several entries in his collected notes *Tandai Shōshin Roku* (1808), we clearly see details of his interaction with patients. In addition, Akinari was part of the vast intellectual network in the *kamigata* region (which roughly encompassed modern day Kyoto and Osaka) that was the center of medical advancements in the mid-Edo period. It is well known that he had many

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<sup>6</sup> See Anthony Chambers, "Introduction," in Ueda Akinari, *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, trans. Anthony Chambers (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 4; Ueda Akinari Kenkyūkai, *Ueda Akinari Kenkyū Jiten* (Tokyo: Kasama Shoin, 2016), p. 422.

connections to important figures at that time – including Kimura Kenkadō (1736-1802) whose extensive collection of medical specimens had been well documented.<sup>7</sup> In terms of the question of who Akinari’s medical teacher was, the general consensus among scholars is that he was trained by physicians linked to the *kohō* school of *kanpō* medicine, most likely through the mentorship of Tsuga Teishō (1718-1794).<sup>8</sup> This connection is crucial in understanding the ways in which Akinari situated his *kokugaku* as we shall see shortly. Moreover, due to his relations with many famous physicians of his time, Akinari also very likely had access to the major medical and *honzōgaku* texts such as the widely used *Bencao Gangmu* by Li Shizhen.

The aim of this section is to attempt a sketch of the historical context in which Akinari could have practiced as a physician. It will begin with an understanding of the rise of the *kohō* school, before examining the text of Kagawa Shūtoku (1683-1755) with whom Akinari’s purported teacher, Teishō, had trained under. My reading Shūtoku’s medical treatises in relation to Akinari’s own writings will lay the groundwork for my analysis of one of his major texts *Odaegoto* in the main section of this chapter.

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<sup>7</sup> Akinari was on close terms with Kimura Kenkadō, who was mostly known for his cataloguing of herbs and plants. In *Ashikabi no Kotoba*, Akinari recounts his visit to Kimura Kenkadō. See *UAZ* Vol. 11, pp. 26-34. Also Mizuta Norihisa has shown how this text is almost similar to a biographical account of Kenkadō, and that in portions of the text, Akinari recounts the narrative as told by Kenkadō during his stay at the latter’s home. See Mizuta Norihisa, *Kinsei Naniwa Gakugei Shidan* (Osaka: Nakao Shōsendō Shoten, 1986) pp. 279-283.

<sup>8</sup> With the exception of Nakamura Yukihiro, most scholars on Akinari are of the opinion that Akinari had picked up the art from Teishō, who, being the foundational figure of the genre of *yomihon*, was also Akinari’s literary mentor as well. Teishō himself was a student of Kagawa Shūtoku, one of the main figures of the *kohō* movement. Kagawa’s school, the *Ippondō*, attempted to justify medical profession, by claiming that Confucian study and Medical profession are one and the same. According to Kagawa, the investigation of words and that of medicinal plants are central to any medical practice, a point which I will return to later in this chapter when I discuss Akinari’s own perception of textual learning in medical practice.

As its name implies, the *kohō* (lit. old methods) school championed the “ancient” and “original” methods of Sinitic medicine. As a medical paradigm, it is no surprise that the school arose alongside the increasing importance of Ogyū Sorai’s (1666-1728) philosophy in Tokugawa intellectual circles. In many respects, Sorai’s call to return to the “Way of the Ancient Kings” provided the justification for the *kohō* school’s own “return” to the purported pristine, “experimental” and “practical” medical approach to illnesses.<sup>9</sup> By directing the study of the Way away from the Neo-Confucian emphasis on principle (*li*) towards the bodily and ritualistic aspects of self-governance through songs, poetry and dance, Sorai’s critique emphasized the practical methods of rituals of governance seen in the five classics. A large part of Sorai’s intervention was anchored in his emphasis on the materiality of *things* and their importance to the attainment of knowledge, a method derived from Zhu Xi’s investigation of things (*gewu zhizhi*). Citing the *Doctrine of the Mean*, he stated that “once things have come, knowledge is perfected.” By this, he refers to internalization of the myriad of *things* within the *self*. While there is some ambiguity as to what this means specifically, it is clear from his criticism of Zhu Xi or *Shushigaku* (the designation for the teachings of Zhu Xi) that he was not calling for a single law that permeates all things:

“In Master Zhu’s interpretation, “exhausting to the utmost the principle of things,” we see how the words “exhausting principle” are added to “the investigation of things,” in the hopes that thereafter their meaning would begin to attain perfection. [...] Indeed, were [his ideas] not far-fetched? [...] Master Zhu wanted to extend our knowledge by exhausting the principles of the external world. His views should be called forced, and that is all.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Daniel Trambaiolo, “Ancient Texts and New Medical Ideas in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Japan,” in *Antiquarianism, Language and Medical Philology*, edited by Benjamin A. Elman (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> John A. Tucker, ed. *Ogyū Sorai’s Philosophical Masterworks: The Bendō and Benmei* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), p. 331.

For Sorai, Zhu Xi's alignment of the investigation of things with the explication of principle was questionable given the excess of knowledge that the external world presented to the student of the Way. Although he did not deny the importance of investigating things, he argued that it is not possible for non-sages to comprehend the totality of principle.<sup>11</sup> For him then, at least in his present age, the investigation of *things* was doomed to be incomplete due to the fact that the principle of the external world of things always exceeds the realm of human understanding.<sup>12</sup>

In accordance with Sorai's critique of Zhu Xi's insistence on the *a priori* nature of principle, most *kohō* school physicians criticized the identification of medicine with Zhu Xi's cosmology centered on principle (*lixue*; the study of *li*) – a practice which *kohō* advocates derogatorily labelled as *gosei* or *Gosei-ha* (lit. Later-Age school) in contrast to their “older” and thus more authoritative and empirical approach. The treatments that the *Gosei-ha* prescribed were anchored in the identification of diseases' origins with the disequilibrium caused by the movements of *ri* (principle; *li*) and *ki* (*qi*), which in turn causes imbalances in the bodily energies of yin and yang, and the body's five phases.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to this *Gosei* school's medical practices which were largely based on the metaphysics of principle (*li*), encapsulated by the postulation that the bodies of people are merely a smaller version of the greater universe school as Zhu Xi had conceived (and what

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<sup>11</sup> For Sorai, every individual after Confucius cannot be considered a sage. This is because of the impossibility of these people to understand these teachings. In multiple places in *Benmei*, Sorai appropriated Confucius' statement that “people can be made to follow a teaching, but they cannot be made to understand it” to make his point. (See *Ibid.*, p. 298).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 331.

<sup>13</sup> Federico Marcon, *The Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge in Early Modern Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 32.

we have seen in the earlier chapter on Nakae Tōju and Kaibara Ekiken),<sup>14</sup> the *kohō* school thus utilized Sorai’s attention to the physicality of things in and of themselves to assert that *Shushigaku*’s principle was insufficient in explaining both medical practice as well as treatment. As Daniel Trambaiolo had pointed out, Sorai’s methodology of excavating a pristine point in the sagely way provided for the proponents of the *kohō* school a set of methodologies and conceptual frameworks to substantiate their claims.<sup>15</sup>

This seemingly coevalness of the Sorai and the *kohō* school has led some scholars in medical history such as Aoki Toshiyuki to point out that, just like Sorai’s reactive criticism of Zhu Xi as a merely speculative metaphysics, the *kohō* school began as a reaction to the practices of *Gosei* physicians – particularly those belonging to the lineage of Manase Dōsan (1507-1597)<sup>16</sup> – and their lack of empirical substantiation of their theories.<sup>17</sup> The above picture is however not as straight-forward: to react to a fixed set of metaphysical “rational” principles that explain the world does not completely entail that one is more inclined to approaching the same world empirically. Indeed, as Minamoto Ryoen has warned, albeit in the tangential context of *jitsugaku* (Confucian practical studies), while it may somewhat be recognized from our standpoint today that the rise of *kohō* school could be conceived as a general shift towards a kind of empiricism, this form

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<sup>14</sup> This view of bodies being a smaller but true version of heaven and earth is seen in medical texts belonging to the *Gosei* school lineage. For instance, in Shimotsu Jusen’s preface to his treatment guidebook *Kishitsu Benran* (“A handy guide to odd diseases”; 1712), Jusen claims that “people’s bodies are like the small heaven-earths, and that [like the] heavens and earths, [they are difficult] to comprehend (*sore jinshin wa hito ko-tenchi nari, aa tenchi no hakari-gatashi*).” Shimotsu Jusen, *Kishitsu Benran* Vol. 1 (Kyoto: Rakuyō Shobō, 1712), p. 1-*ura*.

<sup>15</sup> Trambaiolo, pp. 87-89.

<sup>16</sup> One of two main schools of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the prominence of Dōsan’s school in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was due to the patronage of the Ashikaga Shogunate and later the Tokugawa Shogunate.

<sup>17</sup> Aoki Toshiyuki, *Edo Jidai no Igaku: Mei’i tachi no sanbyaku-nen* (Medical knowledge in the Edo Period: The three hundred years of famous doctors) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kōbun-kan, 2012), p. 33

of empiricism was qualitatively dissimilar from what we, writing in the English language, understand the concept of empiricism to mean. Particularly, in the context of Confucian knowledge production, he proposes the term “empirical rationalism” (*keiken-teki gōri-shugi*):

“Empiricism, of course, is the philosophic view which has knowledge originate in experience, while rationalism sees knowledge based on experience as confused and argues that reliable knowledge originates in *a priori* principles which are immanent and self-evident. *Empirical rationalism does not oppose rational principle to actual substance (or, principles to things), but seeks instead to clarify the rational principles of actual substances (or, the principle of things).*<sup>18</sup>

It is important to understand Minamoto’s intervention here to prevent the possible risk of reducing the historical importance of the *kohō* school to one teleological moment towards scientific empiricism. According to Minamoto, empirical rationalism is an extension of a line of reasoning within the Zhu Xi’s philosophy in which principle is not opposed to the actual substance of things. As he claims, “the relationship of priority and posterity is not temporal *but logical*, not generative but *ontological*.”<sup>19</sup> The external world – as the manifestation of material force in the substance of things – although presupposed by principle in so much as principle is the basis of material force, is itself also the concrete existence of principle. Principle is thus *both* metaphysical and physical, being and non-being. Minamoto therefore hints that as an extension of Zhu Xi’s philosophy, the rise of empirical rationalism in practical spheres such as medicine was *not* an exposition of principle as opposed to material force, but instead the investigation of *the* “principle of

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<sup>18</sup> Minamoto Ryōen, ““Jitsugaku” and Empirical Rationalism,” in *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), pp. 375-376. Emphasis mine.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

material force.”<sup>20</sup> As he describes elsewhere, “[this empirical rationalism] is the [pursuit] of the principle in their experiential world (*keiken no sekai*) – in other words, *not* the supreme vacuity (*kyō*) of [Zhu Xi’s] principle, but the principle *in the world*, and the search for principle laws (*jitsuri*) of the world. [... Such was a view] of introspective truth-seeking that was present within the paradigm of Confucianism [in Edo society then].”<sup>21</sup> Indeed, although the major figures in the *kohō* school do generally call for an empirical approach to illnesses,<sup>22</sup> their ideas were often framed through the empirical rationalism of investigation of things in which Zhu Xi Confucianism had provided.<sup>23</sup>

Nowhere is this notion of empirical rationalism more salient than in the writings of Kagawa Shūtoku (also known as Kagawa Shūan), who is also known historically as one of the most “empirical” figures in the *Kohō* school.<sup>24</sup> His renunciation of any theory

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 376-378.

<sup>21</sup> Minamoto Ryōen, *Tokugawa Shisō Koshi* (Tokyo: Chuō Kōronsha, 1973), pp.122-123. Minamoto extends this notion of empirical rationalism onto the medical achievements of Sugita Genpaku (author of *Kaitai Shinshō* (1774)) and Hiraga Gennai. He particularly emphasizes their adoption of Dutch knowledge (*rangaku*) as an extension of the line of reasoning of empirical rationalism within Zhu Xi metaphysics.

<sup>22</sup> Nagoya Gen’i (1628-1696) who is often named as the pioneer of the *Kohō* school argued for the adoption of Zhang Zhongjing’s *Shang Han Lun* (jp. *Shokanron*) due to the text’s emphasis on empirical methodologies. Purportedly written sometime before 220 A.D in the Han dynasty, the *Shang Han Lun* states that all illnesses can be traced back to the element of cold (傷寒). The manual uses both evidential (ch. *kaozheng*; jp. *kōshō*) and empirical methodologies to determine the relation of each symptom to “cold” and their corresponding treatments. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this text became one of the major medical treatise used by many physicians regardless of their intellectual/political orientation. Gen’i argued that one should follow the empirical methodology laid out by Zhongjing’s text, as it represented a more empirical approach.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel Trambaiolo has showed how in the writings of one main *kohō* school figure Yamawaki Tōyō (1706-1762) – in particular his *Record of Organs* (*Zōshi*; 1759) – Tōyō had often attempted to fit his understanding of the human body to a preconceived framework that he deemed rightful. He had for instance ignored the difference between big and small intestines because “[i]n a range of ancient texts, [...] the intestines were mentioned only as a single organ [and by] counting the intestines as a single organ [this] meant that the total number of organs would correspond neatly to the “nine organs” mentioned in the *Rituals of Zhou*. See “Ancient texts and New Medical Ideas in Eighteenth century Japan,” pp. 92-93.

<sup>24</sup> Sakai Shizu describes Shūtoku as a “complete empiricist” (*tetteishita Jishō Shugi-sha*). See *Nihon no Iryō-shi* (Tokyo: Tokyo Shōseki, 1982), pp. 240-241. As Wai-Ming Ng has also pointed out, Shūtoku refused to accept any medical knowledge without proof from a clinical experience. Particularly, he did not accept the idea of yin-yang, and even criticized his favorite medical text, the *Shang Han Lun*, for

grounded in the metaphysical frameworks of *li* and Yin and Yang is clear in his preface to his *Ippondō Kōyo Igen* (The compiled teachings of Ippondō<sup>25</sup>). Here, I will give an extended citation:

[After studying with the *kogaku* scholar Itō Jinsai for five years,] I realized that the thousand teachings and ten thousand sayings of the sages are all based on the tenet of cultivating one's body. Without cultivating one's body, one would not have the leeway to do anything else. In this sense, to cultivate one's body, it is important to prevent illnesses from happening. If one's body is ill, he/she would not be able to fulfil the duties of filial piety and loyalty, not to mention the governing of other people! With this in mind, I had decided to learn medicine from teacher Gotō Yōan.<sup>26</sup> Initially, Gotō *sensei* did not agree to teach me. His reason was, "in all likelihood, you being a doctor, like your request here, is impossible." He rejected my request to be his student three times, simply hoping that I stop yearning to be a doctor. However, I pressed him to accept me, and as a result, devolved three years to learning the art of medical knowledge. I read extensively, practically internalizing all medical texts new and old. In spite of that, there was no single text that touched my heart (i.e. I could agree upon). Thus I studied again the *Suwen*, the *Lingshu* (i.e. the *Huangdi Nei Jing*) and the 81 issues of the *Nanjing*, reading it repeatedly through and through.<sup>27</sup> In the end, I tossed aside the books and in a fit of fury proclaimed that, 'these are all heretical teachings! How can they be of any use?' If I do not follow these teachings how can I continue my medical career? What should I use as a basis for all things medical? Traditions and schools of Confucians have, if anything, relied on (these) heretical fallacies in cultivating their bodies and governing people! Even if these people are able to transform themselves into [legendary doctors] such as Qi Bo and Bian Que,<sup>28</sup> this is not what I wish for myself! This is not sufficient for my earnest desire!" Next I picked up Zhang Zhongjing's *Shang Han Za Bing Lun* (i.e. *Shang Han Lun*), pouring over

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using this concept. See Wai-ming Ng, *The I-Ching in Tokugawa Thought and Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), p.163-164.

<sup>25</sup> Ippondō was the name of Shūtoku's school, and his sobriquet (*gō*).

<sup>26</sup> That is Gotō Konzan (1659-1733), one of the pioneers of the *kohō* school. According to Konzan, illnesses arise out of the stagnancy (bloating/excess) of *qi* (jp. *ki*). This in turn can be the result of both one's diet as well as the seven human feelings of happiness, anger, melancholy, emotions, sadness, fear and shock. Illnesses are all the result of stagnancy of one's original *qi* (*genki*). Diagnosis should follow the "four observatory actions" (*yo-shin*; 四診) of observation/seeing (*bōshin*; 望診), listening to the pulse (*bunshin*; 聞診), questioning the patient (*monshin*; 問診) and touching (*sesshin*; 切診). Historically, Konzan's practice, due to its emphasis on observatory actions, was the first to become known as the *kohō* school. See Aoki, pp. 36-38.

<sup>27</sup> These were the major texts in Sinitic medical tradition in all Sinitic cultures. They are still cited often in the context of Sinitic medical traditions in China, Japan, Korea as well as other East Asian countries now.

<sup>28</sup> Legendary and mythical doctors. Qi Bo was said to have been employed by the mythical Yellow Emperor because of his extensive knowledge of medical texts, and Bian Jue was said to be the earliest known Chinese physician.

the text repeatedly for three or four years. I came to the conclusion that this was the most superior (text) of all medical treatises old and new – there is no other text that can be on the same standing as it. This is the miraculous method of treatment. Truly, has it come to this? Alas, how regrettable! Zhang Zhongjing’s discussion comes mostly from the *Suwen* while not escaping Yin-Yang interpolation. Because of this it has one or two [sections that are] incoherent and haphazard. Is there a thing more regrettable than the state of medical knowledge in the history of the world? [...] It is at this juncture that [I decided] to depart from my own tradition, and conceive of the main tenets of the *Ippondō*... Henceforth, whenever I give a lecture or engage in a discussion, I do so with this unobstructed perspective I have achieved. What I am only afraid of is the fact that I am creating a new tradition that people have been hesitant to do.<sup>29</sup>

It is clear that Shūtoku was lamenting the way in which medical knowledge had been influenced by the metaphysics of Yin-Yang theory, something which was central to the *Gosei* school of medicine as I have briefly touched upon above. A crucial criticism hidden in his preface is the idea that medical knowledge had simply followed “texts old and new” without questioning their validity. By listing all the famous and authoritative texts in the Sinitic medical canon, and by claiming these same texts were erroneous, Shūtoku thus justified his departure from the set conventions as a necessity at that historical moment. What is however surprising is how, despite his dissatisfaction with Confucian medical practice, Shūtoku nonetheless framed his own methodology and practice *within* the then prevalent Confucian boundaries as a practice of self-governance and self-cultivation.<sup>30</sup> In the main portions of the texts (which comprises of thirty volumes) however, the revolutionary methodology of Shūtoku’s practice is clear. He attempted to account for illnesses using a more “empirical” and “experimental approach” based on case studies

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<sup>29</sup> Kagawa Shūtoku, *Ippondō Kōyo Igen* Vol. 1 (Kyoto: Bunsendō, 1788).

<sup>30</sup> The discourse of *yōjō* (ch. *yang sheng*) was immensely popular in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Edo Japan, as evidenced by Kaibara Ekiken’s *Yōjōkun* (A Guide to Nourishing Principles) being a best selling work since its publication in 1713. It is no doubt that Shūtoku was also toiling in the same tradition as Ekiken.

collected from various sources as well as his own experience as a physician.<sup>31</sup> His prescribed treatments were also seemingly derived from his experience, with an occasional reference to Zhang Zhongjing's *Shang Han Lun* when explicating on more "traditional" illnesses such as *taiyang bing* (*taiyōbyō*; heat afflictions).<sup>32</sup>

This general suspicion towards the prevailing treatment can also be seen in another text, *Ippondō-Yakusen* ("Selections of useful medicine by Ippondō"; 1738). As with *Kōyo Igen*, Shūtoku emphasized in this earlier work the importance of clarifying the use of herbs (*honzō*) due to what he saw as a decline in physicians' capability to prescribe herbs as medicine appropriately. In no other work is Shūtoku's attempt to propound a re-investigation of herbs through the framework of the investigation of things clearer. According to him, any treatment of illness should first be familiar with the illnesses' characteristics (*ki*; 器) and the selection of medical herbs (*honzō*). If one does not do so, "it is like attempting to win a battle without first training the troops."<sup>33</sup> This foregrounding of the relation between the symptomatic identification of the diseases' essence and herbs, was very much similar to what Michel Foucault, in the *Birth of the Clinic*, describes as the *botanical model* of medication, where "disease [was] perceived fundamentally in a

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<sup>31</sup> In an interesting section on "not eating," Shūtoku detailed the various cases of women displaying what we would now describe as anorexia. In his suggested treatments, Shūtoku was sensitive to the various variations to a large "disorder" such as "not eating," clearly hinting at his methodology of treatment based on "clinical" trial and error. The paradigm of collating case studies is itself an interesting problematic given that in Qing China, this methodology was also gaining importance as a way of knowledge production. For the historical importance of case studies in Qing China, see Charlotte Furth, "Introduction: Thinking with cases," in *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*, ed. Charlotte Furth, Judith Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

<sup>32</sup> It is perhaps due to this championing of the *Shang Han Lun* that despite Shūtoku's call for a shift away from Yin-Yang theory, his "empiricism" was still bounded by the metaphysics of *Yin-Yang* categorization found in Zhang Zhongjing's original text.

<sup>33</sup> Kagawa Shūtoku, *Ippondo Yakusen*, in *Kinsei Kanpo Igaku Shoshu-sei* vol. 68 (Tokyo: Meicho Publishing, 1979), pp. 321-327. The character, 器 (*utsuwa*), is used not in the usual fashion of "receptacle" but more of "characteristic" or "essence".

space of projection without depth.”<sup>34</sup> For Foucault, the pre-pathological field of medicine shared a lack of depth, no doubt due to the impossibility of peering into the darkness of the human body. This, according to him, was also the main reason why diseases were understood as related based on the similarity of symptoms in the same way one describes the botany of plants and herbs. Even though in the context of Edo Japan, this will soon change with the publication of *Kaitai Shinshō* in 1776,<sup>35</sup> in Shūtoku’s text still, the reader would perceive how such a botanical model of symptomatic identification of illnesses underscored his approach to herbal prescriptions.<sup>36</sup> It is as though diseases were conceived as the law of nature, and they were, to use Foucault’s words, “a ‘carbon copy’ of the world of life.”<sup>37</sup> This law of similarity allowed for a particular form of production of essences based on the kinds of symptoms observed. Shūtoku’s gaze as a physician was not so much the observation, in a scientific manner, of the disease in question; rather, it was the symptomatic identification of both the disease’s essence<sup>38</sup> as well as its corresponding

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<sup>34</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Clinic*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), pp. 6-7.

<sup>35</sup> There are numerous studies that show how the publication of *Kaitai Shinsho* led to a reorientation of the ways in which the body was perceived. *Kaitai Shinsho* is a book on human dissection and it is the first text in which the inner body is made visible on text. The gap between the visible anatomical inner body, and that of theoretical knowledge physicians had been accustomed to possess led to the “exposure” of the empirically “unfounded” theories of Sinitic medicine. See for instance Chapters 3 and 4 of Sugimoto Tsutomu, *Kaitai Shinsho no Jidai* (Tokyo: Waseda University Press, 1987); John Z. Bowers, *Western Medical Pioneers in Feudal Japan* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1970), pp. 71-72. Aoki also describes the controversies arising from Sugita Genpaku’s *Kaitai Shinsho* within the Confucian tradition. See his *Edo Jidai no Igaku*, pp. 113-116.

<sup>36</sup> See Kagawa Shūtoku’s *Shokan-zatsubyōron tekiyō* where he classifies the number of symptoms that might be due to the essence of the common cold. Rather than treating them as all different, he describes each symptom based on how each symptom is experienced vis-à-vis the essence of “cold.” See Kagawa Shūtoku, *Ippondo Koyo-iron* 20, in *Kinsei Kanpo Igaku Shoshu-sei* vol. 68, pp. 5-114.

<sup>37</sup> Foucault, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> Kosoto Hiroshi, “Classics of the Chinese Medicine and Its Acceptance and Succession in Japan,” *Nihon Tōyō Igaku Zasshi* 47 (2) (1996): 238. Ironically, despite the production of essences of diseases based on the similarity of symptoms being the underlying premise of the *kohō* (old treatment) school of medicine, they had likely inherited this understanding from the *Gosei* (lit. later ages) school who propounded the usage of the five elements, yin-yang, and Neo-confucian metaphysics to understand diseases.

treatment through a thorough understanding of the historical usage of herbs and plants as medicine (i.e. *honzōgaku*).

As I have mentioned earlier, Shūtoku had taught Akinari's literary and possibly medical mentor Tsuga Teishō<sup>39</sup> and while we are unable to discern if Akinari had actually received Shūtoku's teachings through Teishō due to the scarcity of information relating to their day to day interaction, it is beyond doubt that Akinari was familiar with Shūtoku's writings given the popularity of his texts.<sup>40</sup> This is hinted in a passage in one of Akinari's later works, *Kuse-monogatari* (1791), in which Akinari echoed Shūtoku's criticism of doctors who blindly following texts and prescribe without knowing the diseases' essence. As though giving a general description of the state of medical practitioners during his time, Akinari writes, "In antiquity, there were many instances of people selling medicines who also doubled as doctors. These people wrote respectable manuals such as *Shōkanron*, *Kinki-yōryaku*, [...]."<sup>41</sup> Even in the later periods [i.e. now] people continued to use these manuals as the standard guides of their medical practice and [of course, also] as references."<sup>42</sup> As scholars have pointed out, this passage generally shows Akinari's cynicism with regards to the practice of medicine – particularly those "doctors" who simply prescribe herbs by following the textbook treatments without knowing the *history*

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<sup>39</sup> Yoshimaru Katsuya, "Akinari to Igyō," *Tokyo Daigaku Kokubungaku Ronshu* 5: 74.

<sup>40</sup> Fukuda Yasunori has shown there were many literary parodies written about Shūtoku's writings, and Akinari, being an active member in many literary circles, would have had come across Shūtoku's writings in one form or another. See Fukuda's *Igakushō no naka no Bungaku: Edo no Igaku to Bungaku ga Tsukiriageta Sekai* (Tokyo: Kasama Shōin, 2016), pp. 6, 76-77. Also, Shūtoku's *Ippondō Kōyo Igen* was one of the most popular medical texts during its time and as such, had major influence amongst not only physicians but also the important literary and Confucian figures. This very text was also praised by the shogunal doctors in Edo as one of the best source texts for treating illnesses.

<sup>41</sup> Here Akinari gives an extended list. As hinted above in the preface of *Ippondō Kōyo Igen*, the *Shōkanron* had been Shūtoku's favorite text. In addition, many texts on the lists were introduced into medical circles by Shūtoku and his students through a series of annotations and translation. See Kosoto, p. 239.

<sup>42</sup> *UAZ* Vol. 8, p. 29.

of such prescriptions.<sup>43</sup> What is more crucial to recognize is the possibility that, like Kagawa Shūtoku, Akinari probably understood his medical practice as the need to understand both the disease's characteristics/essence and its relation to *honzō* in a more “clinical” and empirical fashion as seen in his famous equation of treatment (*yi*; 医) with the complex character (*yi/kokoro*; 意) (which could mean meaning, heart, mind, sincerity and feeling).<sup>44</sup>

This general acceptance between the need to recover the essence of diseases as well as the verification and historical understanding of herbs (*honzōgaku*) is perhaps the reason why in *Tandai Shōshin Roku* (1808), a series of miscellanies possibly written in the last decade of Akinari's life, one sees entries of historical investigations of medical herbs.<sup>45</sup> More importantly, as I will show in the rest of this chapter, this methodology from manifests itself in the same way as Akinari's methodology of *kokugaku*. That is to say, the central tenet in *kokugaku* to investigate language thus overlaps with the practice of medicine as the subject and medium of investigation. Nowhere is this more visible in *Odaegoto* (1803). In my reading of the text, I will propose the following argument: the investigation of *honzōgaku* as an aspect of medicine offers an alternate approach to historical inquiry for Akinari. More specifically, the identification of particular herbs as medicine provides a medium and a gauge of the phenomenal and material world that links both the present and the learning about the past. It is with medicinal herbs – its usage and its presence in both nature and society which seem to provide, for Akinari, an alternative

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<sup>43</sup> Hama Mitsuharu, *Naniwa no Machi Ishi*, 82.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> See for instance entries number 76-80, 82, and 85, in *UAZ* Vol. 9, pp. 177-182. For an annotated English translation, see *Ueda Akinari, Tandai Shōshin Roku*, trans. William Clarke and Wendy E. Cobcroft (Sydney: PMJS, 2009), pp. 109-115.

possibility of envisaging the ideal lifeworld of antiquity than the conventional *kokugaku* approach based on the purity of language.

### ***Playing the Stringless Koto***

*Odaegoto* (1803) was written towards the end of Akinari's life. Interestingly, most scholars also point to the immense productivity during these final years when Akinari wrote a number of important treatises and narratives, such as *Harusame Monogatari* (Tales of Spring Rain) that effectively summarizes his thought. Nonetheless, *Odaegoto* had traditionally been analyzed as a rebuttal of Motoori Norinaga's philological methodology, specifically that which was presented in the latter's *Kojiki-den* (1790). Using this particular frame in reading *Odaegoto*, Susan Burns has also shown how the text proposes an alternate vision of history that is radically different from the usual narrative of corruption adopted by *kokugaku* figures such as Norinaga. The title of this text *Odaegoto*, written in *Manyōgana*, literally means a *koto* without any strings (*o-tae-koto*) – a silent *koto* – one that is impossible to be strum. As Burns correctly points out, the irony of a silent instrument is a reference to the writings of Motoori Norinaga, the main intellectual rival of Akinari.<sup>46</sup> In the 1780s, Akinari and Norinaga had engaged in a famous heated debate with regards to status of imperial histories such as the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*.<sup>47</sup> These series of debates will prove to be formative to Akinari's *kokugaku*, given

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<sup>46</sup> Susan Burns, *Before the Nation: Kokugaku and the Imagining of Community in Early Modern Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 115.

<sup>47</sup> The principal record of this debate that has survived to us is *Kakaika* (1790), which was prepared and compiled by Norinaga. Its form is reminiscent to a master-student dialogue in which Akinari was placed in the lower position of a student questioning the “wise” Norinaga. According to Blake Morgan Young, *Kakaika* was “prepared by Norinaga in order to uphold the verity of his own conclusions.” Blake Morgan Young, *Ueda Akinari* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1982), p. 80. For a summary of the points of contention between the two, see Young, pp. 80-87.

that he continued to write a series of works refuting Norinaga (such as *Yasumigoto* (1792/3)). For Akinari, Norinaga's belief in the pureness of the language within the *Kojiki* is exactly like a musician strumming a stringless *koto*: by claiming that language within the text represents reality, Norinaga effectively *voices* an otherwise *silent* text. From the perspective of Akinari, Norinaga's major work – the *Kojiki-den* – can be said to be an attempt to rewrite the *Kojiki* in the sounds of *kana*. While it is possible to simply characterize this emphasis on the voiced component of Chinese characters as an attempt to decipher the text, this was not the purpose of Norinaga's project. As I have highlighted in the chapter on *fumi*, Norinaga purposefully avoids voicing any of the characters in the *Kojiki* in Sino-Japanese readings.<sup>48</sup> In another text, *Kanji San'onkō* ("The Three Sounds of Sinitic Characters"; 1785), Norinaga summarizes this attempt to voice texts in *kana* by redefining the conceptual boundaries of phonic annotation. In the work, Norinaga sought to completely subvert the three established ways of pronouncing Sinitic characters.<sup>49</sup> Instead of this tradition of pronunciation, Norinaga argues that "without distinguishing the various ways of sound and the natural sounds, it is difficult to even clarify the pronunciation of words."<sup>50</sup> By effacing completely the historical basis of pronunciation, Norinaga calls for a different triad of pronunciation: "imperial" (*sumera*), "foreign" (*gai*), and "natural" (*shizen*). In addition to conflating the three "Sinitic" ways of pronunciation above into one category called "foreign," Norinaga also championed what he called the

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<sup>48</sup> Naoki Sakai, *Voices of the Past: The status of Language in Eighteenth-Century Japanese Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 257.

<sup>49</sup> That is the *kan'on*, *tō'on*, and *go'on*, ways of reading a specific Sinitic graph based purportedly on the period of transmission from China. In addition, there are general consensus that these sounds are also geographical.

<sup>50</sup> Motoori Norinaga, *Motoori Norinaga Zenshū* Vol. 5 (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1968), p. 381.

“correct sounds of the imperial country” (*Sumera-mikuni no tadashiki oto*). At the same time, he places the category of “natural” sounds as derivative to “imperial sounds,” as they purportedly derived from the same root of the gods. The rationale, according to Norinaga, of such a complete upheaval of established ways of pronouncing – and hence reading – texts was “because [our country] holds an important position [amongst other countries] as the place of the descendants of Amaterasu.” Hence, to him, “Japan’s” sounds from voices of its people and their language is the “true, pure, elegant sound in the heavens and earth.”<sup>51</sup> In line with his *Kojiki-den* then, *Kanji San'onkō* posits a native language as both “natural” and possessing that of the correct mythological lineage. Both works foregrounded the observation that in Norinaga’s thought, the rewriting of a purported “native” history and the discovery of “natural” and “imperial” language occurred contemporaneously vis-à-vis one another. In this case, his attempt to re-figure the *Kojiki* within a solely “native” epistemology, and his “re-discovery” of language have to be understood together as one conceptual move geared towards recovering the pristine antiquity of “Japan”.<sup>52</sup>

Against this almost idealistic vision, Burns has pointed out that in *Odaegoto*, Akinari acutely questions the possibility of even *hearing* the pristine Japanese language, and by extension, the very possibility of returning to the past through the philological method. Hino Tatsuo has called Akinari’s fundamental position in the work, “textual nihilism (*bunken-teki nihirizumu*).”<sup>53</sup> Hino’s characterization of Akinari’s position is

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 382.

<sup>52</sup> Naoki Sakai, “Preface,” in Motoori Norinaga, *Kojiki-den Book 1*, trans. Ann Wehmeyer (Ithaca: Cornell East Asian Series, 1997), p. viii.

<sup>53</sup> Hino Tatsuo, *Norinaga to Akinari* (Tokyo: Chikubo Shobō, 1984), p. 245.

clearly formulated in direct opposition of Norinaga's assertion of textual purity. And indeed, *Odaegoto* does raise the question of very nature of these "history" texts (such as the *Kojiki*, and *Nihon Shoki*) as tools for political legitimization instead of mere attempts to inscribe and record into texts the pristine world of antiquity. For Akinari therefore, these "histories" were not written descriptive records of the real world but instead attempts by those in power to cast themselves as descendants of the Gods. By highlighting the historical fire which destroyed the imperial library during Soga no Iruka's insurrection of 645, which resulted in the loss of a major portion of ancient historical records,<sup>54</sup> Akinari claims that one is unable to know for sure whether the texts of *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* were an accurate reflection of what people then believed in or simply fictionalized ornamented accounts of the imperial lineage. It is clear to the reader then that Akinari's position was completely antithetical to Norinaga's belief in the textual purity of the *Kojiki*. In an earlier treatise *Yasumigoto* (1792), Akinari too suggested that Norinaga's ideas presented in the *Kojiki-den* can be traced to those of priestly families of the court that were contemporaneous to the imperial histories. Specifically, by showing how Norinaga attempted to explain changes in society – by positing the two oppositional gods Naobi no Kami ("God of Rectification") and Magatsubi no Kami ("God of Mischief") as forces that respectively maintains order and causes chaos – can be traced to the writings of the Nakatomi clan, Akinari suggested in *Yasumigoto* that Norinaga had severely misread ancient texts in order to pass his own theological ideas as timeless truths.

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<sup>54</sup> For a brief note on this see Peter Kornicki, *The Book in Japan: A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001), p. 365.

In fact, Akinari had himself misread the evidence he presented in *Yasumigoto*. The text he cited to show Norinaga's indebtedness to the theology of the Nakatomi clan was the *Engishiki* (927), which supposedly preserves some of the courtly rituals (*norito*) of earlier times. In the ritual of "Mikado Festival," Akinari points to a section of ritual utterances that stated "the god called Magatsubi was the cause of bad things..." to prove his point.<sup>55</sup> Contrary to his assertion that this was an utterance by the Nakatomi clan, it was in actuality a sentence that was usually ritually uttered by the Inbe clan who were the court rivals of the Nakatomi.<sup>56</sup> Hence, despite his goal of deconstructing Norinaga's claim to historical truth, it is evident that historical accuracy was not an important tenet for Akinari himself.<sup>57</sup> While Akinari's main aim was to refute Norinaga, he also hints that it is impossible to separate the "writing" of these "old texts" from the power struggles that were happening in the imperial court during that time.<sup>58</sup>

Even though Hino has called this general dismissal of the authenticity of text as "textual nihilism," it should be noted that in the wider context of the eighteenth century intellectual discourse, Akinari's "textual nihilism" was not unique to himself. Hino's observation is on point in many aspects. However, we need to realize that Akinari himself was not alone in his criticism of such an attempt (by Norinaga and others) to return to a kind of material purity through a correct reading of texts. Miyagawa Yasuko has also pointed out that Akinari's general methodology of criticizing Norinaga's belief in the

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<sup>55</sup> *UAZ* Vol. 1, pp. 18-19.

<sup>56</sup> See Aoki Kigen, *Norito Zenhyōshaku* (Tokyo: Yūbun Shoin, 2000), p. 86, 232-233.

<sup>57</sup> There were also portions in *Yasumigoto* where his cited evidence and his claims had no logical relation. See *UAZ* Vol. 1, p. 25 for instance.

<sup>58</sup> Iikura Yōichi has also pointed out that Akinari contextualizes the establishment of the *Nihon Shoki* within the feud between Emperor Tenmu and Prince Otomo. According to him, Akinari clearly expresses in *Yasumigoto* and *Odaegoto* the opinion that the text was written to legitimize Emperor Tenmu. See Iikura, *Akinari-kō*, p. 57

textual purity of the *Kojiki* mirrors that of Tominaga Nakamoto's criticism of Ogyū Sorai's postulation of the bodily ritual in Sorai's *Way of the Ancient Kings*. Despite the fact that the metaphor Akinari used in entitling his text – that of a stringless *koto* – can be traced back to the Chinese Six-Dynasty poet Tao Yuan Ming's (A.D. 365-427) playful strumming of a stringless *koto*, and Akinari's own writing does indeed hint at this,<sup>59</sup> Miyagawa shows that Akinari was in fact also making a reference to Nakamoto's *Gakuritsu Kō* (*Thoughts on Music and Rituals*). In this sense, any close reading and contextualization of *Odaegoto* cannot be effectively done without understanding Nakamoto's text.

Evidently, Nakamoto's *Gakuritsu Kō* was written as a critique of Sorai's earlier work of the very same title (with the same characters). Sorai, in his "original version," argued that there was a parallel between (a) the relation of musical court rituals of the pristine past and his present, and (b) the relation of pristine old language and those used in his present. Thus, by postulating this parallel, Sorai attempted to elucidate the point that just as it is possible to return to the old language through proper textual exegesis, it is therefore also possible to return the courtly *Way of the Ancient Kings* by studying, comprehending and performing the rituals laid out in the five classics. Nakamoto, by mirroring Sorai's title, sought to show in his text that this return to the past cannot be achieved, since it is practically impossible to *hear* the music regardless of how well one reads the classics. In Nakamoto's view, even if one were to accept the postulation that there had existed a "proper" set of music rituals in the past, it is impossible to bridge the historical gap between that moment and the now. As Miyagawa explains, for Nakamoto,

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<sup>59</sup> Moriyama Shigeo, *Ueda Akinari: Shiteki Jōnen no sekai* (Tokyo: San'ichi Shobō, 1986), pp. 5-6.

“music of antiquity is already lost, and it is impossible to retrieve it in time... even if one is able to retrieve this [old music], the typical ‘sound of the old courtly styles sung in praise’ of the old *koto* is no longer existent [because] this sound changes according to each historical juncture.”<sup>60</sup> In other words, unlike the “acoustic” quality Sorai attributes to Five Classics, Nakamoto points out the fundamental silence that was always at the core of these same texts. In Miyagawa’s words, “the strings of that old *koto* [for Nakamoto] had already been severed.”<sup>61</sup>

The similarity of the metaphor used by both Nakamoto and Akinari cannot be more overstated. It is highly likely that Akinari was familiar with most of Nakamoto’s writings as evidenced by his commentary on Nakamoto’s *Nihon Shunjū* (*Spring Autumn Annals of Japan*). It is also likely that Akinari could have learned of Nakamoto’s thought (however unorthodox it may have been) during his younger days when he was a student at the Osaka merchant school Kaitokudō which Nakamoto’s father had helped establish.<sup>62</sup> Compounded with the similarity of Akinari’s argumentation in his attack on Norinaga’s ideas, we thus need to resituate Akinari not as an unorthodox thinker within the *kokugaku*

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<sup>60</sup> Miyagawa Yasuko, *Tominaga Nakamoto to Kaitokudo* (Tokyo: Perikan, 1998), pp. 106-107.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>62</sup> Takada Mamoru has pointed out that while sources on Akinari’s younger life remains fuzzy, judging from his proximity towards several major figures of Kaitokudō, it could be possible that he had major links with them (in particular, his intimate friendship with Nakai Chikuzan and Nakai Riken). What is notably telling of this affiliation is how, in *Tandai Shōshin Roku*, he referred to one of the early major figures of the school, Goi Ranshū (1697-1762), as Goi-sensei, a title he reserved for only two other individuals (Tsuga Teishō and Katō Umaki (1721-1777)). For Takada, both pieces of evidences – Akinari’s own close relation with the school, accompanied with the immense respect displayed in the entry – meant that Gōi could have been one of Akinari’s teacher (as with Teishō and Umaki). To put it differently, it could be possible that Akinari could have been trained at the school at one point in his life. Presently, most major scholars on Akinari agree with Takada’s interpretation. See Takada Mamori, *Ueda Akinari Nenpu Kōsetsu* (Tokyo: Perikan, 2013), pp. 50-51. Elsewhere, Takada also hints that this connection could have explained some of Akinari’s exposure to early medical ideas (see p. 104).

canon but rather, as a thinker who was part of a broader movement of skepticism towards any return to the pristine past, a sentiment that likely permeated 18th century Osaka.

Upon exposing the impossibility of recovering any *absolute meaning* or *sound* from the texts of antiquity, Akinari then proposes an alternative. The second part of *Odaegoto* may be seen as a meditation on such a methodology. In that latter portion, he hints that it is only possible to understand the past through the investigation of the lifeworld in which people of antiquity experienced. As I have already suggested in the earlier section of this chapter, this methodology is based on the idea that it is possible to uncover the essences that might still exist within the world of *natural* things: *mono*. As Frederico Marcon hinted in his study of nature, *kokugaku*'s obsession with things (*mono*) or to make things (*mono-su*), is linked to the wide spread sentiment amongst intellectuals to investigate things for their essences which was a fundamental lineage inherited from Zhu Xi Philosophy.<sup>63</sup> While Akinari's emphasis on the efficacy of the chrysanthemum and medicine appears to be part of this vast movement to investigate things, I have also shown that this emphasis on the materiality of plants possibly stems from Akinari's interest in botanical knowledge due to his training under the *kohō* school of medicine, specifically those of Shūtoku's. It is however important to note that unlike Shūtoku who was more interested in discovering the rational *universal* principle underpinning medical treatment, Akinari's attempt to investigate the efficacy of things appears to be more aligned towards the foregrounding of geographical differences between native and foreign. In so doing, his attempt to investigate the native lifeworld of the ideal (and not pristine) past came to be in line with this particular emphasis on plants, herbs, and their

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<sup>63</sup> Marcon, p. 53.

relation to people. As with the scholars of the *kohō* medical school, his investigation of things in general was to deal with a particular epiphany central to his *kokugaku*: how can one investigate the ideal native past if words are themselves unreliable? That is to say, how is it possible to know the past in a relatively objective manner if the various versions of the past are only present within the subjective writings passed down, or if one may suggest, translated over the generations – either textually or orally transmitted? While not addressing this directly, the second part of *Odaegoto* does appear to give the reader a glimpse of such a possibility through the investigation of the medical and material medium of plants and herbs. It comes to no surprise then that, after his criticism of Norinaga, Akinari goes on a seemingly tangent in *Odaegoto*, as if to present an alternative investigation of the past.

The general arc of part two of *Odaegoto* may be viewed as such: it continues with the distrust of words, before going on to the focus on plants and herbs as a medium of inquiry into the pristine past. It is through explaining how words are untrustworthy that allows Akinari to ground his analysis in the basis an investigation of herbs as things. In this sense, his critique of Norinaga’s philology was but a long prelude that led up to this main section. Akinari begins this main portion of *Odaegoto* by first utilizing the sayings of Lao Zi in *Dao de Jing*: “Banish Learning, no more grief. Between Yes and no, how much the difference? (*gaku wo taeteba ui nashi, i to a to aisarukoto ikubakuzo.*)”<sup>64</sup> It is crucial to note that Akinari immediately likens this quote from Lao Zi, to another from the Sima Qian’s *Shiji*: “one should not twist truth in order to cater to the world/people’s

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<sup>64</sup> *UAZ* Vol. 1, p. 116. 絶学無憂、唯之与阿、相去幾何。English translation is taken from *Tao Te Ching*, trans. Stephen Addis and Stanley Lombardo (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), p. 20.

wishes (*gaku wo magete motte yoni omoneru koto nakare*).”<sup>65</sup> By bracketing these two otherwise very different messages together, the reader senses that for Akinari, the truth in Laozi’s statement was not so much a message of banishing learning. “Learning,” here in Akinari’s appropriation, refers not so much to education in general but rather the Neo-Confucian form of what learning is. It is the clarification of Confucian concepts through extended commentaries. At the same time, the verb *omoneru* in the second appropriated phrase from Sima Qian does not refer to the catering of worldly fashion. Instead, due to its relation to Lao Zi’s proverb, *omoneru* refers to the flattering of those in power. By reading these two sayings in conjunction, Akinari probably proposed to the reader the following deduction: ‘the difference between responding yes or no to those in power – to flatter – will not change the truth of the world.’ Given that *Odaegoto* was written in a period where it is commonplace for patrons in political power to provide stipends for scholars, Akinari was proposing to separate the work of scholars from those in power who often provided monetary/economic support.<sup>66</sup> Conversely, one may frame Akinari’s assertion as the pursuit of intellectual knowledge not as work, but because such a knowledge takes us closer to philosophical truth. When we compare how this section begins, with the first portion of *Odaegoto*, it becomes clear that Akinari’s critique in this section diverges from the earlier section in which his main target was Norinaga. In other words, he is not extending his critique of Norinaga who he thought was dogmatically

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid. 「無曲学以阿世」 (From Vol. 10 of the *Shiji*) Translations mine.

<sup>66</sup> This may be the reason why many scholars have identified Akinari as the epitome of *bunjin* (ch. *wenren*) consciousness. Lawrence Marceau in his study on *Takebe Ayatari* defines a *bunjin* as “independent “free” artists”, “many [of which] turned their backs on the established order, either to organize or to participate in “alternative” orders...” (pp. 10-11). For a more detailed research history on the terms, see Marceau’s summary in *Takebe Ayatari: A Bunjin Bohemian in Early Modern Japan* (Ann Arbor: Center of Japanese Studies, 2004), pp. 6-13.

distorting the *Kojiki* in order to promote his theological binary of *Naobi no kami* and *Magatsubi no kami*.<sup>67</sup> Rather, his critique was also targeting the common social position of Confucian scholars in the time that Akinari lived in. As though mirroring Lao Zi's critique of the "theoretical" Confucian interpretations, Akinari therefore begins the second part of *Odaegoto* with a critique of learning as distorting language in general.

It is thus not surprising that he continues to use of tropes taken from Lao Zi. In the same stanza as the above quote from the *Dao De Jing* for instance, Lao Zi went on to claim that he has "the mind of a fool, confused, confused, [...] dull, dull, drifting on the ocean, blown about endlessly" whereas others are "bright and intelligent."<sup>68</sup> Double-voicing Lao Zi's line of reasoning, Akinari too resumes his argument in *Odaegoto* with an extensive critique of what he calls intelligent people (*chijin*). Using examples taken from the *Shoku Nihongi* to highlight his point, he claims, "[i]f disposition (*sai*) is the color and scent of a flower, then intellect (*chi*) is that of the fruit (of the plant). It is difficult to meet a person who is [truly] wise (*jōchi*). A large portion of intelligent people (*chijin*) are [just] flatterers (*nei*), and wicked (*kan*). Thus, [one] should be wary of the hearts of intelligent people. Not to mention, those with both disposition and intellect are a rarity in this world."<sup>69</sup> Like Lao Zi, Akinari's distrust of intellect is pronounced; to him, being intelligent is akin to that of possessing craftiness, a propensity to flattery, without any

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<sup>67</sup> Akinari gives an extended critique of this binary in *Yasumigoto* (1792). In that text he explicitly made fun of Norinaga's use of the two gods. Nonetheless Akinari's view of Norinaga – at least the view that he displayed in his writing – was no doubt one sided and based solely on his earlier disagreement with the latter arising from Akinari's reading of the *Kojiki-den* vol. 1. See *UAZ* Vol. 1, pp. 21-22.

<sup>68</sup> *Tao Te Ching*, p. 20.

<sup>69</sup> *UAZ* Vol. 1, p. 118.

upright disposition. For Akinari, those who are truly intelligent are those with the upright disposition.

To highlight his point, Akinari recounts the story of Wake no Kiyomaro detailed in the *Shoku Nihongi*. As it is widely known, in the midst of a political battle of succession, Empress Shōtoku sent Kiyomaro to the Hachiman Shrine of Usa (in present day Oita prefecture) to gather a sense of the *kami*'s wishes regarding the placing of the Buddhist monk Yuge no Dōkyō on the chrysanthemum throne. When Kiyomaro returned to the capital, he brought an oracle that effectively prevented Dōkyō's ascension. It is noteworthy that, in *Odaegoto*, Akinari quoted this oracle in full:

“Ever since the founding of the Yamato state, emperors and empresses have been selected by their predecessors. But no minister has ever become an emperor. An emperor or empress must necessarily be selected from those who are in the genealogical descent of Amaterasu. A person not selected in accordance with this principle should be summarily rejected.”<sup>70</sup>

Akinari then goes on to explain the meaning of this incident through the lens of Lao Zi:

“[As we can see,] the heart of an intelligent person is untrustworthy. If the heart (mind) of Kiyomaro was weak against the craftiness of Dōkyō, the throne would have been succeeded by a subject (*jinshin*). As a result, our august country would have had picked up the bad ways of the western land (“China”), and our august succession would have been broken.”<sup>71</sup>

As we can see, the truthfulness of Kiyomaro is juxtaposed with the crafty intellect of Dōkyō. Both figures are also defined as subjects (*jinshin*) and thus, are precluded from

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<sup>70</sup> It appears that for Akinari, there is a general distinction between commoners (of which ministers are included) as well as those who are in the inner circle of divinity (emperors, princes, and so forth). This appears to be the general distinction on his theory of *bundō* in *Yasumigoto*. The idea of meritocracy – the ability of a commoner to become a ruler through study was unnatural. This is the reason why he goes on to say later in *Otaegoto*, “one should not allow the ministers (公) to further their intellect as they like; the deeper and the more one thinks, the shallower their loyalty.” (Ibid., p. 124) See also Iikura Yōichi's analysis of the concept of *bundō* in *Akinari-Kō* (Tokyo: *Kanrin Shobō*, 2005), pp. 54-78.

<sup>71</sup> *UAZ* Vol. 1, p. 123. It is evident that Akinari was also referencing Mencius who most clearly enunciated the concept that subjects have the right to dispose of a ruler who has lost the mandate of heaven by unjust/unwise rule.

possible ascension. Kiyomaro however is painted as an upright and “sincere” subject who simply followed the orders of his empress, while, Dōkyō was an example of Lao Zi’s crafty persona, who had used his intellect to flatter and advance beyond his rightful position within the social order.

The influence of Lao Zi cannot be more salient, as Akinari not only mirrors Lao Zi’s criticism of Confucian intellect, he also directs the same critical reasoning towards Buddhism.<sup>72</sup> It is not impossible to see that for Akinari, this criticism of intellect, craftiness, and flattery was also a criticism of records: “because of the toying of words [for flattery], records are now more a play of words, that is why [these old books] are a pain to read.”<sup>73</sup> Given Akinari’s investment in *kokugaku*, this general distrust in language is intriguing as I have noted earlier.<sup>74</sup> Nonetheless, this general distrust in both language and the political economy of ancient texts are the bases for an alternate inquiry into the past. As I have mentioned earlier, this inquiry is based in the realm of *things* (*mono*), and particularly, *things in nature*. The last portion of this latter section of Odaegoto appears to be a mediation on not so much nature per se, but the *rhythm* of the native world and the nature of *things* within the phenomenological world that Akinari presents.

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<sup>72</sup> In another passage, Akinari cites Kukai’s response to a question from Emperor Ninmyō about the two kinds of Buddhist teachings. “Kukai explains, ‘there are two methods of achieving Buddhahood. The first is through exoteric teachings (*kengyō*), the second is through esoteric teachings (*mitsu-ju*). If we were to liken them to medical teachings, exoteric teachings are like the natural (*tai-so*) plants and herb (*honzō*) sutras, they investigate the origin of the illness and distinguish between the essence of plants. Esoteric teachings are like the medicines such as ginseng and perennials – we follow prescriptions and treat illnesses.’” Akinari disagrees with this interpretation, as it shows that “he (Kukai) is not separating himself from the hearts of the layman, simply talking nonstop about something he does not know.” (Ibid., p. 131.)

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 117. In addition, not only are written records unreliable, oral transmissions are also not reliable: “to simply memorize and narrate what was said by someone else, this is simply playing with words too.” (p. 131)

<sup>74</sup> Iikura Yoichi and Susan Burns have both noted the use of play (*asobi*) in Akinari. As play and word-usage are often synonymous in the sense that where there is textual inquiry involved, Akinari is quick to dismiss any attempt to textual purity. See Burns, pp. 119-122; and Iikura, *Akinari-kō*, pp. 72-85.

To investigate the rightful native rhythm, Akinari first derived the concept of nature (*shizen*) from the way it was treated in poetry. As if echoing Kamo no Mabuchi's emphasis on the *natural aspect of the kokugaku way*, he claims, "poetry of the past is recited with relation to things and according to the nature (*shizen*) of the heavens and earth (*ametsuchi*). The various flowers, plants, sounds of birds, insects of the four seasons are not determined by the speed (*chisoku*) of the year."<sup>75</sup> The phrase "speed of the year," appears to be a reference to the understanding that the year passes by based on a fixed calculation of the seasons. According to Moriyama Shigeo, this attempt to divorce nature from the seasonal year was in fact the criticism of understanding nature via the calendrical system of Yin-Yang and the Five elements. As he claims, "[to Akinari], since the lay of the lands are different [in Japan and the Mainland], it is only logical that the nature of seasons [in Japan] is also distinct. In the same way, the modality of the similar species [even if they are from various regions] will be different because of this distinct flow of nature."<sup>76</sup> Given that there is a certain ambiguity to Akinari's writing in *Odaegoto*, I hesitate to conclude (as Moriyama so simply did) that it was the calendrical system of Yin-Yang which was being singled out as the target of criticism. Nonetheless, Moriyama's point on the distinct flow of seasonal time in Japan seems to be accurate.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, I agree with his observation that Akinari was more interested in returning a certain essence of life into the understanding of "native" seasons. This is clear when Akinari claims,

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<sup>75</sup> He goes on to show how there are many instances in poetry that documents both early and late blooming of certain flowers, the delayed coming of summer, the indeterminacy of the period of fall foliage, and the rainy seasons. Despite this indeterminacy of the seasonal year, Akinari notes that animals and plants appear to be able to feel the changes. See *UAZ* Vol. 1, p. 132.

<sup>76</sup> Moriyama Shigeo, p. 202

<sup>77</sup> In the end of *Odaegoto*, Akinari reiterates this point: "since the two countries (regions) are different, so is their sense of time." (*UAZ* Vol. 1, p. 140.)

“if we were to re-examine the common (mis)understanding of season as belonging to the circular logic of birth and ageing, we see that [in reality] the periods and natures of each season are not fixed... In recent years for instance, the winters are warm, the springs are snowy and dreary; even in spring, insects do not emerge from their slumber. If we were to follow that fixed understanding (*hō*), it is as though the heavens and earth are dead.”<sup>78</sup>

This attempt to invest the spontaneity of time into the understanding of seasons is also seen in *Toshi no Nanafu*. As I have pointed out, seasonal time is narrated seemingly without an overarching structure. Important counters such as months and weeks are apparently downplayed to foreground the spontaneity in which the narrative proceeds. In such a way, as though to respond to the problems of the indeterminacy of seasons highlighted above in *Odaegoto*, *Toshi no Nanafu* is more interested in the world as it is experienced phenomenologically than any fixed calendrical understanding.

Nonetheless, it is crucial here to see that Akinari was not calling for a view of the world as essentially lawless; on the contrary, *Odaegoto* appears to be interested in how “animals and plants, even now, follow the seasons’ activities with their own [rhythm]” without any *a priori* theorization of the movement of the world.<sup>79</sup> The whole purpose of calling into question the understanding of seasons based on “foreign” models thus forms the basis for the need to re-examine the native world of nature. As I have mentioned, Akinari was toiling in the same intellectual lineage as what Minamoto Ryoen described as “empirical rationalism” – he was looking for the principle of *native things around him* to guide his exegesis of the past. In *Odaegoto*, this is achieved by the examination of several plants and flowers, ranging from the cherry blossom to bush clover (*hagi*), the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., pp. 134-135.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

peony plant to the Kumquat. One particular herb that reveals Akinari's *kokugaku* method is the one called “*wasuregusa*,” or “*kensō*” (ch. *xuancao*):

“If one sees [the flower of the plant called] *kensō/wasuregusa* (sci. *Hemerocallis fulva*; eng. orange daylily), he/she forgets any troubles and worries [that is on its mine]. Thus, its effect [as medicine] should be the ability to make [its user] forget his/her worries when it is worn (*hai*; *obiru*) it [to one's body]. According to Ji Kang's [Yang Sheng Lun (*yōjō-ron*; “on nourishing life”)],<sup>80</sup> “[this grass] aids in the forgetting of sorrow, [and along] with *nemunoki* (sci. *Albizia julibrissin*), appeases anger.” The flowers of these two plants bloom at the same time. And even if one is sleepless because of his frustration with the world, these feelings of frustration, anger, anxiety, and restlessness are dispelled immediately upon seeing [these flowers]. [...] It is said that this was probably the rationale behind the names of these flowers but [I wonder if that is true...] Yet, [the *wasuregusa*] is also called *sendansō*. It is said that if a pregnant lady consumes this, she is bound to give birth to a boy. Thus is the herb's function.”<sup>81</sup>

This passage is an almost complete adaptation from the entry on *xuancao* in the herb section of Li Shizhen's *Bencao Gangmu*:

Li Shizhen adds: Xuan (萱) was originally written as (諼). The meaning of this character is “to forget”. How does one get rid of melancholy? It is to amuse oneself (ch. *wan*, jp. *mote-asobu*) with this Xuancao, or the “forget herb.” [...] Zhou Chu in his book *Fengtu Ji* said: When a pregnant woman wears the flower of this herb, she is likely to [conceive] a baby boy. [This is why the plant is also] called Yinan (i.e. suitable for a boy).<sup>82</sup>

Given the importance of Li Shizhen's *Bencao Gangmu* since its inception in Edo society, Akinari's almost-direct quotation would have been recognized by his readers. As though hinting at the universality of herbs in the world *in spite of the difference in seasonal rhythms*, and by placing these series of archaeology on the usage of plants at the end of

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<sup>80</sup> How Akinari came across this reference is unknown. It should be noted that Ji Kang's work was not included in Li Shizhen's *Ben Cao Gang Mu (Compendium of Materia Medica)*, which was the reference book for both *honzo* scholars as well as physicians.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138. The fact that *wasuregusa* was used in many of his writings is telling of how important this herb-sign-thing-medicine is important to his overall thought. See for instance his reference to it in “Asajiga-yado” in *Tales of Moonlight and Rain*, and *Masurao Monogatari*. It should also be noted that the term *wasuregusa* was also a slang for tobacco, which interestingly was gaining popularity around the time Akinari lived.

<sup>82</sup> Translation taken, with minor edits in [brackets], from Li Shizhen, *Compendium of Materia Medica (Bencao Gang mu)* Book III, trans. Luo Xiwen (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2003), pp. 1757-1758.

*Odaegoto*, Akinari indicates the importance of investigating herbs *as things* to understanding the ideal past. As the above portion on *wasuregusa* reveals, the relation of the human body to nature is foregrounded and mediated by medicine as a thing. By making reference to Li Shizhen's text, Akinari therefore suggests that the consumption, appreciation, presencing, and absorption of *wasuregusa* and its effects, allows a person to follow the native and *natural* seasons that govern both the world and one's body. It is through these plants that people can participate in the non-verbal transmissions of socio-nature that linked their present to the ideal past. For Akinari then, the investigation of herbs therefore allowed the building a temporal continuity that one sees often within the thought of *kokugaku* scholars.

### ***The Question of Nature***

If we accept that Akinari was indeed attempting to use the relation between pharmacological herbs and their medicinal properties for human bodies as a method of investigating the past, what looms behind his framework is then the question of how he could have understood advances of empirical rational "sciences" within his schema of *kokugaku*. From my reading of *Odaegoto*, Akinari can be seen as attempting a rediscovery of the ancient lifeworld through properties of medicine. At the same time, it appears that some portion of these ancient lifeworld persisted into his contemporary world through these medicinal properties, a portion which can be recovered through the investigation of the external world of *things*. In other words, we can postulate that central to his *kokugaku* discourse is this *natural world of things* that is assumed to be the same both in the past and the present, a tenet we can also read in Mabuchi's writings about the body in the world.

As we have seen above, what is at stake in Akinari's view of "nature" is the notion of identifying its rightful rhythm, one that is *naturally* moving according to rules that cannot be understood by human intellect. The word "nature" here should, however, be treated cautiously. In the English language, as Raymond Williams have famously pointed out, "nature" is one of the most complex word to define. According to Williams, the term "nature" in English has at least three broad and overlapping senses: it is the (1) "essential quality and character of something" (i.e. the nature of things); (2) "inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both" (i.e. "natural" laws); and (3) "the material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings." By historicizing these three different senses of the word, he shows how there was a general shift in the meaning of "nature" over time from senses (1) to (3) that accompanied the gradual secularization of how the world was characterized. In other words, the notion of divine forces implicit in sense (1) gradually unfolded to the singular quality of nature that is seen in sense (3).<sup>83</sup> What this means is that, as a concept, "nature" is imbued with semantic excess that enables it to refer to both *something* innate to a thing while at the same time referring to the environment in which it is placed. This semantic excess too assumes implicitly some kind of relation between the thing in the world and the world at large.

In the case of Akinari (and 18<sup>th</sup> century Edo society in general), this use of "nature" poses a series of problems to us. As Federico Marcon has also pointed out, not only was there no equivalent term for the concept of "nature" in traditional East Asia that "had a semantic universe as wide and all-encompassing as the English [word] 'nature,'" but there

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<sup>83</sup> See Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 219-223.

existed a vast number of terms that referred to some aspect of ‘nature’.<sup>84</sup> Further complicating the situation is the fact that these terms were also used inconsistently depending on their religio-philosophical contexts and their utterers. That is to say, unlike “nature” in English which could refer to not only the natural world but also the phenomena in the world, there was no single term in early modern discourse that is able to encapsulate such unity of meaning. As we have seen in the chapter on the body, the word *banbutsu* (or a myriad of things) was used to refer to all phenomena in the world as well as their material manifestations. Yet, as a term, *banbutsu* does not refer to the notion of “nature” or whether these phenomena are natural. It is only by coupling it with *rei* (spirit) that we come close to the notion of *the* “nature” of phenomena even though *banbutsu no rei* (spirit of all things) does not explicitly refer to the *essential nature* of all things but rather *the essence* itself. What this analysis shows is that it is near impossible to identify a single concept in the Edo period that can serve as an adequate translation for “nature”. Even the conceptual term that Akinari uses, *shizen*, despite being the modern translation of “nature,” does not possess the conceptual boundaries of the word delineated by Williams. As a term, it was usually used during the time in its adverbial sense: *shizen-ni* (or *onozukara*), which meant “spontaneously” rather than “naturally”. Yet, at the same time, we clearly see his usage in a noun-form, as though there is *something* out there one may call “nature”. Rather than taking this as an ambiguity in meaning, I suggest that *shizen*’s conceptual and semantic network hints at a larger ontological question: that of “nature” without humans at the center. In order to elucidate this, I propose that we return to the understanding of “nature” within being-in-the-world as a starting point.

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<sup>84</sup> Marcon, p. 21.

As I have shown in the chapter on *wabun*, Mabuchi sought to uncover a certain pristine being-in-the-world through philological praxis that extended. In so doing, Mabuchi figured the praxis of writing as a poesis and mimesis of phusis. By so doing, natural form (phusis) appears to be something that is external to the embodied human producer of *fumi*. Despite Akinari’s general agreement with Mabuchi, I will argue however that his concept of *shizen* does not seem to place humans apart from “nature” – it does not appear to be conforming completely to a Heideggerian schema of being-in-the-world despite clearly following Mabuchi’s call to return to the past. Nowhere is this clearer than in a series of entries in his collected notes *Tandai Shōshin-roku* (1809). In these entries, Akinari attempted to elucidate the names of medicinal plants not through etymology or philology, but rather their *non-use*, a concept which I will argue feeds directly into his understanding of the rhythm of nature. In the seventy-eighth entry for instance, Akinari recounts an incident in which he presents a medicinal herb to his neighbors:

*Waremokō* has the Chinese name [*diyu*]; it is grown only as a medicine. It is charming that it should flower alongside *ominaeshi* (女郎花; *Patrinia Scabiosaefolio*) in the autumn fields. One day, I went out and picked it, put pampas grass and gentian with it and presented it to the people next door. At the time, they were holding the tea ceremony for some guests. My neighbors [only] used them for the formal decoration [of the ceremony]. The guests did not know *waremokō*. One of them having asked what it was, their host told them, “If the flowers were white, they would be like plum blossom, but they aren’t. The old man next door gave them to us. Ask him what they are on your way home.” One of the guests knew me and came to ask me about it. I replied, “I saw it in the old literature. Don’t you know it, my dear fellow?”

*Kikyō karukaya waremokō* Bellflower, pampas grass, burnet  
*yaiba no tachi wo kō haite* (I also thus) wear a long broad blade  
 so the saying goes,” whereupon he went on his way, laughing uproariously.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Translation taken with minor edits from from Ueda Akinari, *Tandai Shōshin Roku*, trans. William E. Clarke and Wendy E. Cobcroft (Sydney:PMJS, 2009), p. 111. Clarke and Cobcroft notes that Akinari was

In this entry, while acknowledging that the plant was only grown for its medicinal purposes, Akinari's non-use of it is merely that of an aesthetic punning to produce a witty humorous affect. A reader during his time who was familiar with medicinal herbs would also notice that Akinari's presentation of the plant to his neighbors during a tea ceremony could have been with the intention of providing them with an herbal substitute to traditional tea leaves.<sup>86</sup> Considering too that he added two other herbs, the gentian and pampas grass, both known for being bolstering the digestive system, one can then reread the statement "My neighbors used them for the formal decoration [of the ceremony]" as expressing a tinge of disappointment. Yet, instead of impressing the guest with his medical knowledge which was contemporaneous to the time, he claimed that he simply saw it in "old literature" reaffirming its definition merely within the plant's classical "context."

This non-use is also seen in entry eighty-two:

The peony, iris, globe-flower and azalea bloom right into summer. In the [imperial anthology] *Shikashū*, the "twenty-day bush" (i.e. peony) is mentioned, but the name was originally from a verse of Master Bo (Juyi)'s called "Twenty Days from Budding to Fall". This does not mean that one flower will last twenty days, but that blooming and falling one after the other they will last about twenty days. As the first character of the *botan* (peony) is 牡 (*osu* "male"), the tree peony is said to be male (雄), while the bush peony (another variety) is female (雌). I am told this flower is used for firewood in Sichuan. They were exceedingly prized during the Kaiyuan and Tianbao eras [of the Tang Dynasty]. The Wei purples and the Yao [yellows] were famous varieties. There were poems about the [yellows] in the Sung dynasty, but not in Ming times...<sup>87</sup>

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punning on the name *waremokō* with "I will put [it] on too" (*ware mo kakō*) to produce the intended humor. For the original, see *UAZ* Vol. 9, pp. 178-179.

<sup>86</sup> In *Bencao Gangmu* Vol. 12 Entry 24, Li Shizhen records the usage of *diyū* leaves as a substitute for tea that is very effective for eliminating pathogenic heat.

<sup>87</sup> Akinari, *Tandai Shōshin Roku*, trans. Clarke and Cobcroft, p. 113. Minor edits in brackets are mine. For the original see *UAZ* vol. 9, p. 180.

Again, it appears that Akinari was attempting to trace the genealogy of naming the peony flower. Despite likely getting his observation that the first character refers to maleness, as well as the completely reiterating the notion that this flower is used for fuel, a notion he adopts directly from volume fourteen of the *Bencao Gangmu*,<sup>88</sup> Akinari was simply content with describing the flower's history without any specific use.

There is therefore a clear aporia in his discursive frame: on one hand, at the core of this question of “nature” within his medicinal-*kokugaku* discourse is the question of an object in the world in the world that possesses certain qualities that are not always completely defined and named through its procedural usefulness to human society. In other words, there appears to be a strict break between the etymological/philological determinism (as in Mabuchi's and Norinaga's direct link between body and words) and that of the object itself as the nature of the object is foregone in favor of the humorous affect that the pun produces. As Marcon has also pointed out in the case of empirical rational fields of knowledge in the mid Edo period, “all natural phenomena were the noematic forms they assumed in accordance with the intellectual activity of human beings. That is to say, they changed their names in accordance with the noetic stances and interventions of different scholars for different social function.”<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, by positing a similarity of essence in plants – that which can be used to recover the ancient lifeworld – Akinari appears to also accept the possibility of recovering this being-in-the-lifeworld through the investigation of names. In other words, as with Mabuchi, it is not

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<sup>88</sup> Compare with Li Shizhen, *Compendium of Materia Medica (Bencao Gangmu)* Book II, trans. Luo Xiwen (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2003), p. 1499. Li Shizhen adds that peony is cultivated as firewood in Danzhou and Yanzhou but does not name Sichuan.

<sup>89</sup> Marcon, p. 22.

merely one of describing and discovering the excess of the world around people but also an attempt to reorient the ontological position of the world. This temporal bind, between the present and the past, appears to be at the core of Akinari's view of *kokugaku*: how is it possible to recover the past through plants if our investigation of the plants themselves are based on the clarification of names?

Iikura Yōichi has pointed out this very aporia in Akinari's thought. As I have shown, Akinari did not trust the "laws" of nature prescribed by human intellect and he posited that nature even at his time followed its own rightful rhythm regardless of how humans attempt to control it. Iikura appears to agree with my observation as he claims that for Akinari, "nature" is self-governing, and follows a logic of its own. Building on this observation, Iikura postulated that Akinari's held two contradictory yet seemingly complementary positions of nature, positions that Iikura dubbed as "nature as ideal" (*risō toshite no shizen*) and "nature as reality" (*genjitsu toshite no shizen*). The former, "nature as ideal," refers to the pristine world of the past in which every *thing* was related in a harmonious manner – a position that mirrors Mabuchi and Norinaga. On the other hand, "nature as reality" refers to Akinari's present moment, in which "foreign influence" – including that of Confucianism – continue to hold sway in society. According to Iikura then, because Akinari held the view that nature was self-governing, and that it followed its own rhythm, it also necessarily followed a path of development that is beyond human control. In addition, because "nature" had followed its own path of development, then the present situation – in which "both Confucianism and Buddhism have secured a placing in our country – should be recognized as simply the "operation" (*untan*) of this law of

nature.”<sup>90</sup> In Iikura’s reading then, Akinari’s “nature” as an external world “out there” was not oppositional to human society and development, and Iikura attributes a kind of historical determinism onto Akinari’s view of nature: “if we were to think of it, the “principles” (*hō*) that have been conceived by people’s intellect were also formed alongside the world and that itself is perhaps a kind of “natural state” (*aru ga mama*) of development.”<sup>91</sup> By pointing out this emphasis on “the present” by Akinari, Iikura argues then that Akinari, “instead of basing on those unreliable textual methods, [likely] viewed the pursuit of “nature as ideal” through *escaping* (*shōyō*) into the world of antiquity through one’s contemporary linguistic senses (*genko kankaku*).”<sup>92</sup> According to Iikura’s reading then, Akinari’s “return” to the past can only be done through a playful escaping into words and the world of the past – it is not possible in reality. “Nature in reality” is but a medium to experience the ideal nature of the past.

Although I agree generally with Iikura’s observations, in particular his reading of “play” into Akinari’s understanding of “nature,” I have shown in this chapter that it is impossible to completely divorce any explication of “nature” from the socio-intellectual context of the time like Iikura did. In addition, I assert that even if we were to accept Iikura’s dialectical framing of nature as belonging to the levels of ideality and reality, Akinari’s aesthetic worldview of the chrysanthemum appears to sublimate both aspects into one united worldview. Thus, in order to address the aporia central to Akinari’s nature –

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<sup>90</sup> Iikura, p. 17. Iikura argues that this emphasis on “nature as reality” is due to his disagreement with Norinaga. As Iikura explains, “Although Akinari likely had been heavily influenced by Mabuchi school *kokugaku* and had accepted the need to return to and re-present “nature as ideal” – that is to say, a return to the past – it is likely the appearance of Norinaga that sparked Akinari’s own conscious suppressing of this inclination [in favor of “nature as reality.” (p. 29.)

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

the non-separation of humans from the world while appearing to adhere to Mabuchi's ontological privileging of the human body in reorienting the world – I argue that we need to understand Akinari's "nature" and the place of humans in what Levi Bryant calls a kind of "flat ontology", a "rejection of any ontology of transcendence or presence that privileges one sort of entity as the origin of all others and as fully present to itself."<sup>93</sup> That is to say, as Bryant points out, such a flat ontology refuses any subject-object relation or human-world relation, arguing that "all entities are on equal ontological footing and that no entity [...] possesses greater ontological dignity than other objects."<sup>94</sup> Through reading Akinari's "nature" as a form of flat ontology, I argue that he was able to bridge the huge divide between Mabuchi's phonocentrism and his attempt to return humans to their natural and proper position as subject-objects in nature.

Modern scholars studying Akinari had long pointed out that he held views that can be characterized as a kind of animism, that is, views that spirits and gods dwelled in objects and animals.<sup>95</sup> Susanna Fessler for instance had previously shown that Akinari sought to separate *gods* from any attempt to determine it by human intellect. By using entries in *Tandai Shōshin Roku*, she had explained that animals, gods, and inanimate objects were potentially the same and they are characterized by not being bounded by human morality and ethics prescribed by Buddhism and Confucianism.<sup>96</sup> Unlike Fessler who grounded her analysis of Akinari in his religious thought, I feel it is more productive

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<sup>93</sup> Levi R. Bryant, *The Democracy of Objects* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2011), 245.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

<sup>95</sup> See entries 13, 30, and 31 of *Tandai Shōshin Roku* for instance.

<sup>96</sup> Susanna Fessler, "The Nature of the Kami: Ueda Akinari and *Tandai Shōshin Roku*," *Monumenta Nipponica* 51 (1) (1996): 1-15.

to read Akinari's view of "gods" alongside his view of the world of "nature" as a kind of flat ontology informed from the perspective of the philosophy of Lao Zi.

Lao Zi's influence on Akinari should be clear from my reading of the latter's *Odaegoto* above; the former's framework was used as the basis in Akinari's criticism of Norinaga and more importantly, of the refutation of any conceptual determining of things. It is in Lao Zi that Akinari found a way to sublimate that contradiction at the heart of his *kokugaku* practice. A major concept in the *Dao De Jing* is the championing of the state of *wu wei* in the governing of the realm. Often translated as "non-action", the philosophy of *wu wei* dictates that one should be in a state of being "natural." It is not a state where a person "intends" but simply "to be". Lao Zi gives a clear example of non-action in verse 8 of the text: "Best to be like water, which benefits the ten thousand things, and does not contend. It pools where humans disdain to dwell, close to Dao."<sup>97</sup> As with water existing in the world, by merely being water, it benefits the many things in the world without trying to do so. For Lao Zi then, the crux of human existence *should* be like water – it should not act, and contend – but merely be. In verse ten, Lao Zi highlights one possible way of being *wu wei* (non-action; jp. *mui*): "Can you control your breath, gently, like a baby? Can you love the people, and govern the country without knowledge?"<sup>98</sup> It is clear that for him, the baby's mind and heart are exactly in the state of non-action. As he goes on to elaborate "Give Birth and cultivate. Give Birth and do not Process. Act without dependence. Excel but do not rule." The baby, because it is given birth to, but not asked to process the world, can be said to be in a state that is "natural".

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<sup>97</sup> *Tao Te Jing*, p. 8.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Hino Tatsuo has pointed out that Lao Zi's philosophy, which politically dictates that people remain where they are in society without any intent to better one's circumstances, became a fundamental justification for the Tokugawa system of class immobility. According to him, from the Kyōhō Era (1716-1736), with the mass publication of Lao Zi's texts, literati in cities came to be acquainted with Lao Zi's philosophy. Due to its emphasis on the individuation of life away from the state – Lao Zi's view of governance can be seen as a kind of “micro-management” of the self through non-action, or the inconsequentiality of one's *private actions* – Hino highlights that “literati consciousness (*bunjin ishiki*) and *kokugaku*'s emphasis on the private interiority came to be heavily entwined with the philosophy of Lao Zi and Chuang Zi.”<sup>99</sup> Tateno Masami has also pointed out that in the context of Sinitic medicine from the same period, Lao Zi's philosophy had a huge impact in Edo society, especially amongst the proponents of the *Kohō* school. According to him, Lao Zi's philosophy allowed for the approaching of the world away from the concepts imposed by Confucian rhetoric on society while emphasizing one's “natural” position in the world *without intending to be*.<sup>100</sup> In his view, Lao Zi's philosophy was predicated on a world where “there is no subject-object relation... [and] that the form of the baby is exactly [this embodiment] of the Way (*Dao*) of subject-object unity (*shūkyaku ichi no Michi*).”<sup>101</sup> Tateno's observation is important, as it allows us to see how Bryant's flat ontology and its similarity to the way Edo medical circles accepted Lao Zi's thought. Although Tateno argued that Lao Zi became important

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<sup>99</sup> Hino Tatsuo, “*Kokugaku Seiritsu no Kiban to Tenkai*,” in *Hino Tatsuo Chōsaku Shū* Vol. 2 (Tokyo: Perikan, 2005), p. 79.

<sup>100</sup> Tateno Masami, *Chūgoku Igaku to Nihon Kanpō: Igaku Shisō no Tachiba kara* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014), p. 5.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

to medical physicians because his philosophy anchors non-action in the body of a baby precisely because it is in a stage of “not-knowing” or “unprocessed” and “pristine”, I have suggested that in Akinari’s case, his usage of Lao Zi’s philosophy is related to how the latter’s philosophy treated language.

In the *Dao De Jing*, it is not language per se that is being attacked, but rather the conceptual ontological nature of language inherent in learning that is at the core of Lao Zi’s criticism. In verse one, Lao Zi claims, “The Dao can be called Dao, but it is not the Dao. Names can name no lasting name.”<sup>102</sup> For Lao Zi, there is no name – no concept – no act of naming that will exhaust the object. Names are simply designations that do not completely embody the object. This is likely the reason why in verse 48 as well, he argues against pursuing “knowledge” for it takes one away from non-action. By positioning the epitomic state of a body in non-action then, Lao Zi appears to be attempting to return to an ontic definition of human. Humans are merely objects in the world, just like any other. This is perhaps why he claimed, “Take the world as nothing. Make the least effort and the world escapes you.”<sup>103</sup> Akinari appears to be adopting this position with his elucidation of plants as a method to return to the pristine state of being-in-the-world. Unlike Mabuchi who postulated the primacy of language in understanding the being-in-antiquity, Akinari’s textual nihilism led him to point out that their names and their occurrences in past texts have little to do with the reality that is placed in front of him. In addition, just as humans have no determination of the plants in front of them – as can be seen in his entry 83 of

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<sup>102</sup> *Tao Te Ching*, p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

how humans simply follow the gendered hierarchy of plants and not vice versa<sup>104</sup> – Akinari likely followed Lao Zi in defining humans on the same ontological level as plants. It was only by adopting such a “flat ontology” could he have resolved the contradiction between the return to a pristine being, while acknowledging that *that* being was just one among many other non-hierarchical parts of a whole “nature.”

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<sup>104</sup> “In all birds, beasts and flowers, the male is the better and the female is inferior. I wondered why it was that only with people was the woman superior. On giving this matter further thought, I believe the male is superior with people as well...” (*Tandai Shōshin Roku*, p. 114)

CONCLUSION

**KOKUGAKU IN A SHIFTING WORLD:  
SUPERNATURAL WRITING, MEDICINE,  
AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SENSIBLE**

*Rethinking Kokugaku within Shifting Perceptions in the World*

In my dissertation, I have sought to show the relation between mid-eighteenth century *kokugaku* and the movement's attempt to address a world presented to them. I argued that any understanding of *kokugaku* cannot be complete without how they incorporated the neighboring fields of empirical rationalism. In my chapters, I have constantly pointed out that the tangential fields of medicine and pharmacology presented avenues for *kokugaku* scholars as they sought to rediscover the pristine being-in-the-world posited in an originary past. While beginning with an attempt to recover the pristine lifeworld through language, that language led *kokugaku* scholars to redefine the role of humans vis-à-vis nature. Attempts by Mabuchi and Norinaga at conceptualizing a voicing body within a world, and Akinari's denial of the centrality of humans within any ontological rendering of the world are both part of this larger question of shifting perceptions of the role of humans within the world, and their bodies' relations to nature in general.

In Chapter One, I have hinted at this perceptive shift through discursively analyzing how Kaibara Ekiken's concept of the physiological body was imbued with a certain permeability despite his acceptance of the philosophy, *hito wa banbutsu no rei*.

This emphasis on a body within the world, and a body that can be *cultivated* through *yōjō* and *raku* (rituals, poetry, songs, etc.), I argued, formed the basis for *kokugaku*'s understanding of a body-in-the-world to be discovered through poetry. In Chapter Two I postulated that the question of language for *kokugaku* scholars were also intricately tied to their urgent need for an adequate medium to describe the world around them. These same scholars experimented with different forms and styles in order to write *fumi* to transmit both knowledge and truth. In Chapter Three, I asserted that Akinari's attempt to rediscover the relation between the human body and its being in the world through medicinal herbs as a medium was a part of a broader movement of empirical rationalism within the medical field. In all three chapters, I have shown how the question of the world, in its wholeness, was always a looming question behind their philological, medical, and philosophical investigations. In this conclusion then, I will attempt to resituate *kokugaku* in the shifting relations between the discourses of Sinitic medicine and literature in the 18th century Edo society. In particular, I show that in the years *kokugaku* were developing, there was a broad shift of perception vis-à-vis the boundaries of supernatural phenomena and medicine. At our present moment, medical texts and collections of supernatural tales hardly intersect with each other, and in some senses, one may place both "genres" of textual material on the polar ends of a spectrum of rationality and irrationality. In 18th century Edo Japan however, one sees a particular convergence of both genres in texts such as *Kishitsu Benran* (奇疾便覽; 1712), which will be discussed in this concluding chapter. The genres of "medicine" and "supernatural tales" (or *kaidan*; ch. *guaitan*) cannot of course be separated so simply. However, for analytical purposes, I will assume in this conclusion that both discourses

were genres in their own right. To attempt to situate *kokugaku* in these shifting perceptions of what constituted medicine and what constituted supernatural tales, I attempt to show that the 18<sup>th</sup> century in which *kokugaku* flourished, was also a period in which immense changes in the sensible fabric of society were happening. To think about the issue of medicine and supernatural tales, is also to consider the boundaries between the rational and the irrational, the natural and the supernatural.

As a point of departure then, I echo the work of Fukuda Yasunori in his recent book “The Literary in Medical texts” (*Igakusho no naka no bungaku*). In that work, Fukuda shows how literary and medical texts in the mid-Edo period had various intertextual relations ranging from parodies to satires and didactic analogies. Specifically, he shows how there was no strict division between the two genres, and in their publication, their generic boundaries appear to be permeable despite their respective conformity to the norms of the publishing industry. Central to his argument of impermeability is the assertion that while medicinal literary texts were read by the general populace as literary texts for entertainment, the general intertextual relation was unidirectional, in which medical content is taken up and re-treated in literary works.<sup>1</sup> I do agree that this premise of specialist medical knowledge filtering down through mass literature generally holds true in most contexts, especially in the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> However, instead of identifying intertextual similarities in terms of content as Fukuda Yasunori did in his work, I propose in this paper that we look at the structure in

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<sup>1</sup> Fukuda Yasunori, *Igakusho no naka no 'bungaku': Edo no Igaku to Bungaku ga tsukuriageta sekai* (Tokyo: Kasama, 2016, pp. 241-242.

<sup>2</sup> See also Mihoko Katafuchi, “Ki-meguru Shintai: Kinsei zenki yōjōron ni okeru inyō gogyō (Yin-Yang and the Five Elements Theory on Personal Health Care in Early Edo era),” *Wakayama University Department of Education Bulletin* 60 (2010): 56.

which medical knowledge and literary tales were produced. Thus, in addition to assertion that there was a broad shift in sensibilities, I argue also that the methodology of collating case studies (案) that was often used by medical specialists to understand illnesses, was also a vital methodology used by those who edited supernatural anthologies from various provinces during the Edo period. The notion of “collecting” cases of supernatural is, as I will show, one of the main methodologies in which supernatural tales (*kaidan*) shared with the medical texts. In such a way, by reading both kinds of texts conjunctively, I suggest that there is a need to rethink the popularity of supernatural tales with reference to the growing urge in society to document and know the material world.

As we have seen in Chapter One, in the eighteenth-century Edo period, the body became a central concern for Neo-Confucian scholars such as Kaibara Ekiken. Ekiken’s concept of *yōjō* postulated that the body was one in the world, and that the visible body formed a mere permeable boundary between the world and the “interior”. Ekiken’s theory of the body, despite being important to *kokugaku* scholars’ conceptions of a body in the world is but one theory. In reality, there was a proliferation of theories on the body by different schools of Sinitic medicine. As I have hinted in Chapter Three where I discuss Ueda Akinari, it is in this context that the body, like the world, became a knowable yet mysterious entity. This investigation of the body arose alongside the gradual dissemination of a kind of pharmacology known as *honzōgaku* (*bencaoxue*) in which the *things* in the world suddenly became an entity that should be categorized and documented empirically and investigated *as themselves*. As I have also stated, this discovery of the body as a mysterious object coincided with a methodological revolution

happening in the realm of Sinitic medicine. That is, it coincided with the emergence of Kohō school of medicine and the decline in the *Gosei* school which were the dominant 17<sup>th</sup> century paradigm of medical practices deriving from the writings of Jin-Yuan dynasty physicians Li Dongyuan (1180-1251) and Zhu Danxi (1281-1358).

While there are many issues with this narrative, such as the historical linearity implicit in its version of medical developments – an issue I will return to when I discuss the author of *Kishitsu Benran* – it is important to note that with this broad general shift from “theorization” towards empirical medical practice, the image in which the body was defined previously as a smaller version of the elemental and yin-yang flows of the heavens (i.e. *hito wa banbutsu no rei*) had begun to destabilize. It is in line with this general perceptive crisis in medical definition of the body that there was an increasing objectification of the body. In other words, the body, like each *thing* in the world, was increasingly viewed as *something* to be investigated alongside the investigation of the phenomenal world. In this regard, it is no coincidence that the gradual popularization of everyday *kaidan* occurred alongside the increasing focus on such an empirical study of the world and body (as well as the rise of tourism, a point I will return to later in this paper). *Kaidan*, as I hope to show, rode the wave of documenting the world, albeit for quite different purposes as medicine. In this presentation, *kaidan* will be defined broadly to include not merely “ghostly” tales but also those tales of strange and odd occurrences.

### ***Kishitsu Benran (1712) and Kaiyō Kojidan (1774)***

In within these contexts that the text I will discuss today, *Kishitsu Benran*, is significant: it was published *both* as a medical text, as well as a collection of *kaidan*.

Published in 1712, *Kishitsu Benran* was written by a physician called Shimotsu Jusen. Unfortunately, there is little information about the author that survives to us; we do not know who he really was, or the years in which he lived. What we do know is that he was affiliated with the medicinal hall of Okamoto Ippō, who most scholars now will recognize as the youngest brother of the famous playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon. Jusen could have been Ippō's student, since they share similar pseudonyms. Ippō also provided a preface for one of Jusen's works, as is a relatively common practice for a teacher to do so for his student. We also know that he practiced in the Kyoto area possibly close to Ippō's own medicinal hall. Looking at other texts written by him, such as *Furyō Hōi* 婦療方彙 (Gynecological precepts) and *Kokin Yōka tekiyō* 古今幼科適用 (Pediatrics, old and new), it is obvious that he was well versed with the important medical texts of his time such as the *Shang Han Lun*, and he had close contact with other doctors belonging to the *Gosei-ha* while familiar with the important central texts of the *Kohō-ha*. Looking at Jusen's use of medical texts, as well as the knowledge he displayed, it is clear that the boundaries between *Gosei-ha* and *Kohō-ha* were not as clearly marked. But if we had to conjecture, Shimotsu Jusen was a physician likely trained in the Sinitic medicine lineage of Manase Dosan (1507-1594) who is often highlighted as a main figure in the *Gosei-ha* due to his emphasis on the synthesis of Song Confucian metaphysics and medical practice.<sup>3</sup>

This is clear when one examines *Kishitsu Benran*. The text is written as a collection of odd patterns (證) that are then followed up by historical cases as well as

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<sup>3</sup> For an overview of the lineage of Okamoto Ippō, see *Kyōto no Igakushi*, 1980, pp.378-379.

remedies. With regards to the cases, they are generally taken from Sinitic texts, organized based on each case's similarity to others. Charlotte Furth has pointed out that in the context of Chinese history, case studies were central to the way in which specialists gathered knowledge. She claims that "such practices of thinking with cases reveal historically specific epistemologies that offer insight into how Chinese experts mediated between individual instances and more general patterns, how they dealt with tensions between classical canons and norms and practice-based judgment."<sup>4</sup> To her, what is fundamental about cases is that they are "connected to one another by common patterns, while at the same time, [...] never deny[ing] the priority of individual cases over any possible generalizations invoking them." As Furth observes, the peculiarity of cases is found in its ability to handle between the general and the particular, and to invoke itself as evidence for a widespread phenomenon while not denying its own authority as a factual instance. As she goes on to explain, when a story or a tale is recorded as a case, it "affects the status of the particulars narrated: a story may be about real people and events, assumed to related a factual history, but *a case transforms facts into evidence.*"<sup>5</sup> That is to say, in their remodeling as cases, stories are therefore imbued with certain evidential authority that changes them into a kind of source of reference. As we will see shortly, *Kishitsu Benran* was written in this format.

According to Furth, the case study as a format was already an established genre in 16<sup>th</sup> century China and continued to be one of the main methods of knowledge

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<sup>4</sup> Charlotte Furth, "Introduction: Thinking with cases," in *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History*, ed. Charlotte Furth, Judith Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), p.3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4. Emphasis are mine.

production in Chinese medical literature.<sup>6</sup> The timing of this is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, not only *Kishitsu Benran*, but majority of Jusen's works were also written in this format of case studies. Secondly, we see variations of this method in a number of important Sinitic medical texts such as Kagawa Shutoku's *Ippondō Kōyō Igen*, raising the question of the relation between the two country's medical traditions. For the purposes of this paper, it is important to note is that, on the one hand, Jusen was toiling in a similar tradition as his mainland counterparts. On the other, the fact that *Kishitsu Benran* was also composed in a similar fashion hints at its aim as a text that portrayed "stories" as "evidences," without questioning the factuality of these stories. The point I am trying to make here is that, despite dealing with weird diseases, as its title implies, the format in which *Kishitsu Benran* was composed meant that Jusen intended for it to be used as a kind of source book for medical treatment. It should also be noted that by portraying these Sinitic stories as "evidence," Jusen appears to accord a certain textual authority and factuality to these stories due to their appearances in Sinitic medical texts. The textual authority is thus doubled: not only are these cases supposedly "true" as cases, but they are also "true" because they are from Sinitic texts. This is likely the reason why, in every single medical pattern, these case studies are reiterated alongside its sources, which range from "medical" ones such as *Bencao Gangmu* (*Honzō Kōmoku*) and the *Su Wen*, to canonical "historical" texts such as Sima Qian's *Shiji* and Song Dynasty Emperor Taizu's *Taiping Yulan*. His sources are extensive (a total of 172!), and there is little doubt that this text was composed in the same manner as his other collections of medical case studies.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

Jusen's preface too pointed to the usage of these "supernatural" cases for medical treatment. For instance, in the first few sentences of the preface, Jusen frames *Kishitsu Benran* by making a reference to the denial of supernatural phenomenon as worthy of medical analysis, an extension of a particular reading of the Analects. According to Koyasu Nobukuni, in the case of Japan, this particular denial of the supernatural as a sphere of scholarly (i.e. Confucian) analysis can be traced back to the school of *kogaku* 古学 scholar, Itō Jinsai (1627-1705), in his famous work *Gomō Jigi* (1683).<sup>7</sup> It is likely that Jusen was familiar with Jinsai's work, since Jinsai's school in Kyoto flourished around the time that Jusen was also there. While Jusen does not directly refute this avoidance of the supernatural in "intellectual inquiry," he does talk about the infathomable nature of the human body – as "vast" and complex as the universe. It should be noted that when placed in the history of Sinitic medicine in the Edo period, in particular, with the rise of the more empirical *kohō* school in the *Kamigata* region (roughly modern day Kyoto and Osaka), this characterization of the body as seemingly related to its environment and hence, an unfamiliar "space" to be explored, coincides with the general years in which *Kishitsu Benran* could have been composed. In line with the brief context of Edo medicine I have sketched above,

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<sup>7</sup> See Koyasu Nobukuni, *Kijinron: Juka Chishikijin no Deisukuuru* (Tokyo: Fukutake Shoten, 1992), pp. 13-18. In section of "ghosts and spirits," the *Gomō Jigi*, Jinsai explains, "In the *Analects*, Confucius seldom discussed ghosts and spirits. In the *Mencius*, they are not even mentioned! [...] When Fan Zhi asked about wisdom Confucius explained, 'Wisdom consists in encouraging people to be moral. It also involves revering, yet maintaining a distance from, ghosts and spirits.' [...] When Zilu asked about serving ghosts and spirits, Confucius replied, 'How can someone hope to serve ghosts and spirits when they cannot serve other people?' These passages reveal Confucius' profound concern that people were not making sufficient effort to practice the moral way of humanity. They also reflect his fear that people might be mystified by unfathomable matters related to ghosts and spirits. [...] People who follow the right course do not need divination... We must decide these matters of [living] for ourselves [and not through ghosts and spirits]." (Translation taken from John A. Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomō Jigi and the Philosophical Definition of Early Modern Japan* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp.203-205.

*Kishitsu Benran* appears to also take the human body as a mysterious entity to be investigated. Accordingly, that is perhaps the main reason why he does not simply reject these odd diseases as fictive.

In the main portions of the texts, we get a sense of the nature of the medical text. Let us look at one pattern of illness. In Volume Five of *Kishitsu Benran*, we see the case of “bleeding on the surface of one’s tongue”. Here, Jusen begins with a case from the Song dynasty text *Furen Daquan Liang Fang* (jp. *Fujin Daizen Ryōhō*; 1237) by Chen Zi Ming:

“There is a person of lowly status. For no reason whatsoever, his tongue started bleeding. In other words, there are small holes (on the surface of it). Doctors do not know what this illness is called. Incidentally the pattern has come to be called tongue bleeding. It is treated by brushing the ends of a sophora flower on the tongue. [After thorough] historical investigation, Chao [Yuanfang] (550-630) explicated [the cause] as such. The heart governs blood vessels that run through the tongue. [When] there is heat in the master [that is the] organ of the heart, blood will gush out of the surface of the tongue, as though it is like a fountain spring. Shan Fu (another physician of the Sui dynasty) explained as such, in various cases of bleeding being indicated, they are all patterns of (excess) heat. Because the sophora flower is able to treat the heat in the blood, it is [able to] treat [this illness].”

Jusen then goes on to give various remedies and their preparation. For instance, the Aged Mugwort Soup which is able to cure the problem of heat in the heart; or the “Fragrant ginseng Pill” which can be used for the same purpose. The language, format, style used in this case is similar in every entry of ailments treated in all five volumes of *Kishitsu Benran*.

As seen above, there is little or no indication that this is indeed a collection of supernatural instances. Rather, we see that Jusen sought to address the “odd diseases” found in classic texts regardless of their “genre” which previously had no remedies. This

display of the superiority of textual knowledge, as well as the confidence in the factual quality of the cases and their remedies, is also shown in the more “supernatural” of patterns. In Volume Two for instance, Jusen writes about the instance of “Soul separation”:

“According to Xia Zi Yi’s 夏子益 *Qi Ji Fang* 奇疾方, ‘There is this person. Suddenly his/her body (*karada*) became two people, making it impossible to distinguish between the real and the false. Even if one asks him/her [of something] there is no response. This is none other than [the pattern] of “soul separating [from the body].” [In order to rectify this illness, first,] slowly boil a red sand ginseng, and a poria root (*fukujin*) and have the patient ingest this concoction. By so doing, his *qi* would be invigorated. [Consequently,] the false version will be dispelled.’ Jusen adds, [using the following ingredients:] slowly boil one stem of Ginseng, and one *sen* each of dragon tooth (fossilized mammal bones), red tuckahoe, and one or half a cup (*san*) of water. [After doing so,] add one *sen* of the tip of a cannibar (*shusha*/meteorite?) and have the patient ingest the decoction before he turns in. Every night, [he/she should in-take] one serving. After the third night, the real [version of his/her body] will be invigorated and the false [version] will therefore be dispelled. In another case, according to the [writings] of Luo (Guo Wang; Early Qing Dynasty doctor), ‘the illness of soul separation is due to the emptiness of the liver network causing bad *qi* to attack this [area]. The liver is the place that holds the soul of [the person]. [Due to this predicament,] the soul now wanders, and transforms into [something corporeal]. For normal people, their liver is not impacted by this bad [*qi*]. Thus when they lie down, their souls return to their liver, and they are able to sleep without any interferences to their minds. Now, when there is bad [*qi*] in the liver, the soul is unable to return to [its rightful place during sleeping]. As such, this illness presents itself [in such a person].’ In [my] opinion, [in cases] that which are called the illness of soul separation, this illness occurs when a person lies down and another body is externalized from one’s [real] body. The patient experiences the [separation out of one to another body]. However, they merely do not talk about it. This is the pattern of the weakening (i.e. lack of good *qi*) in the heart and liver. This is what people these days refer to when two people say the same things at the same time. When this is seen by someone’s own eyes, they will likely not be able to comprehend it. It is not something that can be perceived by another person (other than the patient). If this is caused by the emptiness in the heart and the liver, [the patient] should experience this [being of] two people.”

As one can see from this description given by Jusen, the pattern of “out of body experiences” is understood within the boundaries of medical discourse. This illness is

the result of the emptiness or lack of *qi* in the network linking the organs of heart and liver. Like the case of tongue bleeding, the separating of the soul from the body is also the result of the imbalance of *qi* within the bodily system, a medical pattern that requires medical treatment and attention. It is important to note in passing that in the context of *kaidan* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were many tales written that detail such an “illness.” It will be interesting for instance to read Jusen’s account of this illness in conjunction to Akinari’s famous tale of out of body experience in *Ugetsu Monogatari* (Tales of Moonlight and Rain; 1776) where a master painter falls ill and experiences a dream that turns out to be real.<sup>8</sup> The point I am rising here is that those illnesses that we today may call supernatural — such as “mice emerging out of lumps in the body” (from Vol. Two) or “Bugs emerging from one’s nose” (Vol. Four) — are also understood within this curious epistemological field of knowledge that traverses both medicine and literature. In other words, what we have here is a text that is curiously published as a source of medical reference and “practical” knowledge while not denying the supernatural quality of the cases it presents as medical evidence and patterns.

As I have mentioned earlier, *Kishitsu Benran* was also published as a collection of supernatural tales (see Figure 1):

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<sup>8</sup> Scholars have also pointed out that around the time Akinari wrote his famous collection *Ugetsu Monogatari*, was also about the time *kokugaku* became increasingly popular in the Kamigata region. The influence of *kokugaku* on *Ugetsu* is remarkable. See Dennis Washburn, *Translating Mount Fuji* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 39-40.

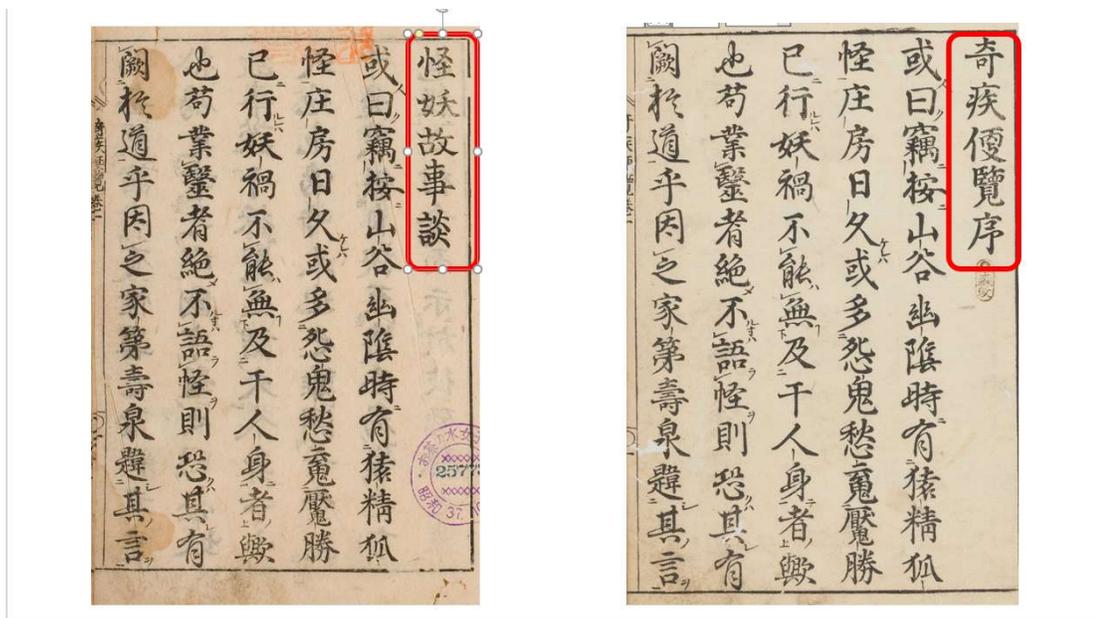
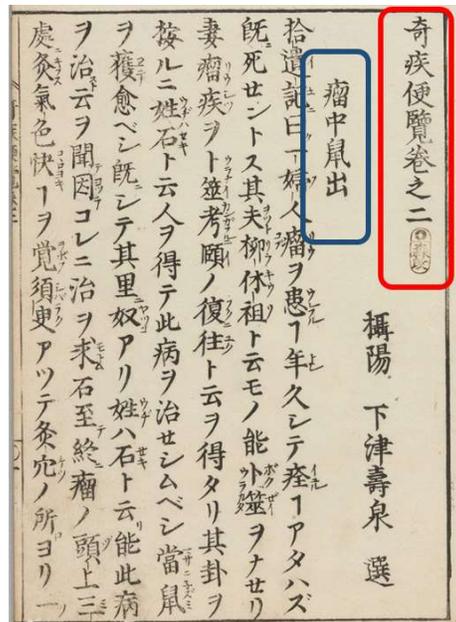
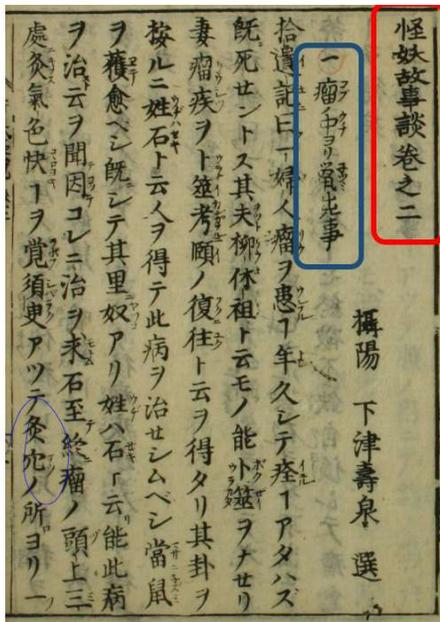


Figure 1: Prefaces of *Kishitsu Benran* (on the right) and its *kaidan* reprint (left)

Reprinted under a different title as *Kaiyō Kojidan* 怪妖故事談 (or “Stories of Strange incidents”), and then republished at least twice in 1774, and again in 1859, *Kishitsu Benran* was repackaged with its contents remaining exactly the same. In addition to the change in title, the main difference is also a semi-translation of the individual titles for “tales” with the inclusion of *koto* or “the incident of” in every single one of them (see Figure 2).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> It is noteworthy that in Vol. 5 of the reprinted version, a portion of one section is omitted. A close look at the version that survives to us hints that the original blocks had degraded in the years between the two publications, leaving a blank or undecipherable section that the publisher attempted to then cover up by placing his establishment’s information.

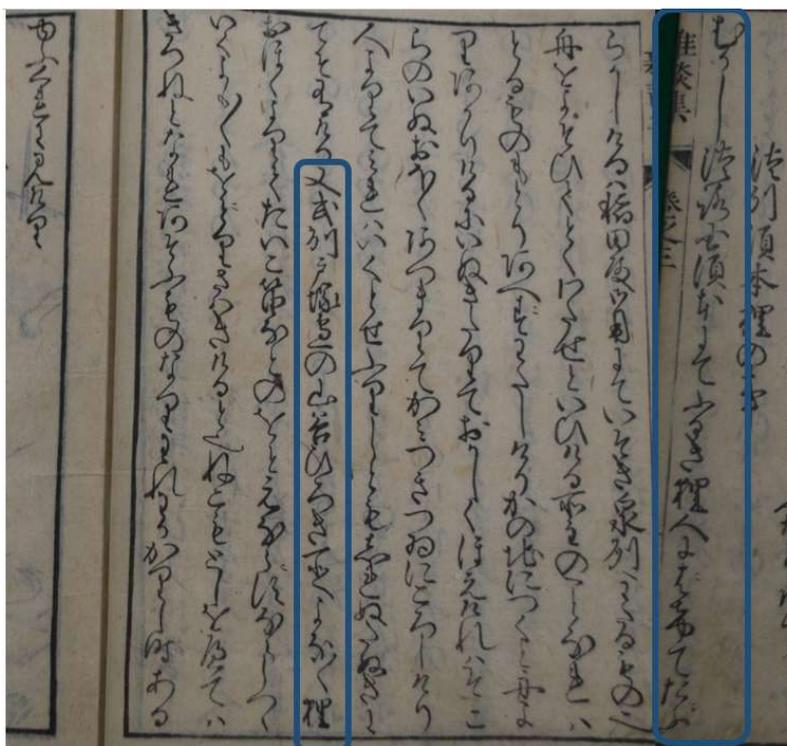


(Figure 2: *Kishitsu Benran* and *Kaiyō Koji-dan*, same contents, different titles)

In such a way, the intricate relation between individual cases and the overall category of a seemingly universal disease seen in *Kishitsu Benran* is brought down onto the “local” level of similar “incidents of such weird occurrences.” This repackaging, in particular, the use of “xxx-no-koto,” (or “the incident of xxx”), likely led its readers to consume this text as a kind of collection of strange tales (*kaidan*) even though its content is relatively loaded with medical jargon. This is perhaps most evident in the fact that, despite the retention of the main portions of each “disease,” *Kishitsu Benran* or *Kaiyō Kojidan* was used by later *yomihon* authors such as Jippensha Ikku as a reference in composing tales of the supernatural.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Hashimoto Shinichi argues that Jippensha likely used the earlier version of *Kishitsu Benran* instead of the later republication due to the proximity of his tales to the parts omitted as mentioned in the previous footnote. See Hashimoto Shinichi, “Kaibutsu Yoron to *Kishitsu Benran*,” *Kokubungaku Kenkyū* Vol. 115 (1993) (3), p. 88.

What this example of *Kishitsu Benran* shows is that accompanying the shift in the social perception of the body in the eighteenth century, there is also a simultaneous shift in what constitutes a *natural* cause of illnesses. The rational frame that was initially placed on the text when it was *Kishitsu Benran* is removed in favor of an entertainment and supernatural frame that dominates the reading of *Kaiyō Kojidan*. As a way of returning to my original argument, I will suggest that this methodology seen in *Kishitsu Benran* of collecting similar “tales” as examples of cases was also one of the main ways in which *kaidan* was composed in mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, in volume three of *Kyojitsu-zatsudanshū* 虚実雑話集 (or *Miscellaneous fictive and factual tales*, 1749), one sees a story about the *tanuki* cases (see Figure 3).



(Figure 3: *Kyojitsu Zatsudan-shū*; the incident of a *tanuki* in Suwato, Awaji)

According to the “report,” in Sumoto in the country of Awaji (an island off modern day Hyogo Prefecture), there was an old *tanuki* (a Japanese racoon dog that was believed to have mythical powers) who turned into a human in order to take a boat across the body of water separating *Honshu* and *Shikoku*. When the *tanuki* arrives on the other side, dogs came over and started barking at it before biting it to death. When it died, it returned to its original form and people realized it is a *tanuki*. The narrative then goes on to talk about another case of *tanuki* which happened at a “vast canyon surrounded by mountains” near Totsuka in the province of Musashi, in which the *tanuki* reacted violently to a local village drumming of the *taiko*. Although there is no clear affinity or relation in terms of the causes and effects of *tanuki* “incidents” in both two cases, it is the way in which the writer places them together that deserves our attention as cases of a broader pattern of supernatural *tanuki* incidences. We see this also in a tale from volume one of the same work about “odd occurrences in Sagami province”, where parallels are drawn to other incidents occurring in other places as caused by the same supernatural entity. What these two instances amongst many others suggest is that parallels were being drawn across different provinces by ignoring the specificities of time and space with the purpose of reaffirming, via cases, the possibility of the particular supernatural patterns.<sup>11</sup> As with the medical cases in *Kishitsu Benran*, what was important is not the *context* of the tales so much so as the fact that they are part of an atemporal pattern that is legitimized by the cases. When understood in this manner, this

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<sup>11</sup> For this reason, most stories end with the statement that the author penned this story down at a certain time but does not state where or when the stories took place. The preface of Jōkanbō Kōa’s *Kokin Jissetsu: Kaidan Otoi Warawa* (1772) begins conspicuously with “[we do not know] where and when these stories took place, but [they are true],” before laying out tales from various provinces.

may perhaps shed light on the reason why there was a proliferation of supernatural tales specifically from different provinces. By drawing parallels between cases of different provinces, what we see is a certain determining of what defines the specific “patterns” of *kaidan* in the same way medical patterns are defined in texts such as *Kishitsu Benran*.

The publication history of *Kishitsu Benran* as both a medical text *and* a text of supernatural tales thus provides a glimpse of how the perceptive fabric of what constitutes natural and supernatural could have shifted in the years that *kokugaku* developed as a movement. Not only does it show this shift in perceptive fabric, the format of case studies in which it is written with was adopted to document the world of narratives both across and within individual regions.

### ***Thinking Kokugaku within the Framework of Distribution of the Sensible***

To think *kokugaku* within this larger trend to document the world, alongside the shifts in the perception of what constituted rationality, we can rethink *kokugaku* then as an attempt at affecting what Rancière has called the “distribution of the sensible.” It is to understand *kokugaku* as one movement amongst many others that framed their study of the ancient lifeworld within a world to be discovered. This broad social trend to document the world can also be seen in Norinaga’s *Tamakatsuma* (The Jeweled Box). As a text that is made up of snippets, *Tamakatsuma* acts as a kind of encyclopedia for Norinaga’s students with entries ranging from advice to his students, to native history. Interestingly, Norinaga prefaces his study by saying the entries he uses are like “fresh herbs,” hinting at how they provide reference points for students seeking

“rectification.”<sup>12</sup> Of interest to our study is the entry on “Researching Old Names”. In addition to philologically re(dis)covering from ancient texts the proper names of “things” in the outside world, Norinaga claimed:

“[One’s] work will be insufficient unless you actually visit the place and talk to people there. Also, it is insufficient to visit the place just once. The [student] thus needs to visit the place, *look and ask around*, then return home and search the records again and *compare the two sets of information*. Then you *must go out again*. Without doing this, it is difficult to reach accurate conclusions.”

As if attempting to arrest the discrepancy between text and the world, Norinaga urged his students to *go out* into the world and reaffirm the facts in ancient texts. This ethnographic tendency on the part Norinaga (and also other scholars such as Akinari who sought to negotiate region differences in dialects)<sup>13</sup> was an attempt to determine the boundaries of perception with ancient texts as the guiding frames – it was an attempt to chart, in Rancière’s wording, the distribution of the sensible through rectifying names vis-à-vis the world of things. It is perhaps by taking into account these shifts in the sensible fabric of society can we then have a more holistic picture of not only the field of *kokugaku* discourse, but also other adjacent fields of empirical rational knowledge in the Edo period. Perhaps, a new kind of study of *kokugaku* would require us to understand not how this movement should figure within our long *durée* of “Japanese” history, but rather, how *kokugaku* was itself an attempt to arrest the series of shifts in perception and sensibilities.

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<sup>12</sup> John R. Bentley, *Tamakatsuma: A Window into the Scholarship of Motoori Norinaga* (Ithaca: Cornell East Asia Series, 2013), p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> See the tale of a “One-eyed God” in his *Harusame Monogatari* (Tales of Spring Rain; 1803) in *UAZ* Vol 8, pp.173-174, 293, 348. See also his “Uta no Homare” in the *Tenri* scroll version of *Harusame Monogatari*, *Ibid.*, pp. 376-377.

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