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Translating the Path: Principles of Progression
in the “Shakkyō-ka” Book of the *Senzaishū*

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It has been more than fifty years since Konishi Jin'ichi and his translators, Robert Brower and Earl Miner, “embarked upon an essay of rediscovery—of a new concept of poetry and re-assessment of a crucial aspect of centuries of a poetic tradition.” (68) The rediscovery of which Konishi wrote was the principles of integration known to all of us as association and progression. According to Konishi, the concept of the integration of poetic sequences was originally presented by Kazamaki Keijirō in his book *Shinkokin jidai*, but was not elaborated upon until 1956 when Matsuda Takeo published his book *Kin'yōshū no kenkyū*. The difference between Konishi's essay and Matsuda's discussion in *Kin'yōshū no kenkyū*, say Brower and Miner, is that Matsuda did not discuss the origins of the practice or elaborate in detail on how the principles were deployed. Konishi's elaboration of how the principles of integration work in the seasonal and love books of the *Shinkokinshū*, in particular, has influenced a generation of scholars who adapted his ideas for use in our lectures and scholarship on the poetics of court *waka*.

Since the late 1950's, however, there has been little follow up on this “rediscovery.” Most Western *waka* scholars have incorporated Konishi's ideas into their work as foregone conclusions, but there have been few attempts to go beyond these conclusions and explore other aspects of the integrated long sequence of *waka*. Some of the questions we might ask are: does every book in an imperial anthology have a narrative of some kind? And if so, what is that narrative? Are the “lesser” books (parting, laments, congratulatory) compiled with the same attention to detail as Konishi has shown

in the seasonal and love books? What would be our standard for comparing books of poems in two or more anthologies? Are the principles applied to the spring books in the *Shinkokinshū* the same as those applied to the spring books in the *Shinchokusenshū* or the *Fūgashū*? And finally, if the principles of integration obtain for all the imperial poetry anthologies, are some anthologies more successful than others in employing those principles—and what might be the marker of that success?

When I began researching *shakkyō-ka*, I hoped, in my naivete, that each *waka* on a Buddhist topic would be a gem of sparkling poetic enlightenment—brilliant flashes of insight into the nature of the human mind, but which still observed all the rules of court poetry. There *are* such poems, but more frequently Buddhist *waka* and *shakkyō-ka* are, like most court *waka*, subtle and allusive, and not always easily excavated for meaning.

One of the most important things I learned over the years is that for court *waka* to be Buddhist in theme, it needed to be Janus-faced: that is, true to (or true enough to) the rules and traditions of court poetry, and, at the same time, reflective of the *courtly engagement* with Japanese Buddhism—whether that engagement was derived from participation in a Buddhist service, ceremony, or lecture or was derived from some (perhaps superficial, perhaps not) understanding of a Buddhist text. Therefore, *waka* on Buddhist themes could be either occasional or they could be topical or they could be a mixture of both.

Finally, what I also came to understand (and this should not have been a surprise given the proof provided by Konishi in his article) is that poets and compilers were fond of narratives. These narratives could be found in the Buddhist text that was being *waka*-fied (as we know, the Lotus Sutra was filled with

narratives) or they could be the story of a poet (or perhaps I should say, the speaker of a poem) who seeks some spiritual solace in an event, person, or action. These narratives were often enlivened in the headnotes, and then sustained, through the careful work of the compiler, throughout the sequence or book.

One such narrative that some compilers used to underscore the experience of engaging with Japanese Buddhism was the built-in narrative of the *michi*, the journey upon which every believer must embark on his or her way to enlightenment. We see this demonstrated first in the sequence of 23 *waka* on Buddhist themes (not yet called *shakkyō-ka*) that we find at the end of the last book of *waka* (*aishō-ka* or Laments) in the third imperial anthology, *Shūishū* (compiled in approximately 1005). The narrative that is constructed in the *Shūishū* is not as complex as that which we see in the *Senzaishū*, but it is instructive about what such a narrative would later become.

The narrative found in the *Shūishū* sequence is roughly composed of three sections: (1) awakening to and taking refuge in the Buddhist teachings, (2) showing devotion to (or practicing, we might say) those teachings in some way, and (3) realizing the ultimate truth of Buddhism—that is, enlightenment.

It could be debated where this sequence begins in the “Aishō-ka” book, and in my forthcoming manuscript on Buddhist *waka* in the early imperial anthologies, I do provide a close reading of the poems in the latter section of the book to demonstrate such a starting point, but I contend that the sequence begins with a *waka* (#1329, **on page A1**) by an anonymous poet that reads: *yamadera no / iriai no kane no / koegoto ni / kyō mo kurenu to / kiku zo kanashiki* (with each call / of the mountain

temple bell / as darkness falls / I hear today too / is gone: / sad, knowing that—). With this poem, the tone and subject matter of the laments that precede this sequence change course. What was initially a long sequence of poems on death and grief becomes a sequence whose focus is the Buddhist path. It is my contention that poem #1329 is a transitional poem between the laments themselves and the 22 Buddhist *waka* that follow.

Let's turn our attention now to poem #1330. It demonstrates the thematic direction the next seven poems will take. Poem 1330 is by Yoshishige no Yasutane, who was, as many of you know, active in the formation of the Kangaku-e, or Society for the Advancement of Learning, and who was later known as the priest Jakushin. The headnote to Yoshishige's poem reads "Written and left at home when he departed to become a priest." Embedded in the headnote are the characters for "leave" (*idekeru*) and "house/home" (*ie*)—or, if you will, *shukke: ukiyo o ba / somukaba kyō mo / somukinan / asu mo ari to wa / tanomu beki mi ka* (if I'm going to turn my back / on this terrible world / it ought to be today— / can this body / count on any tomorrow?)

The six *waka* that follow Yoshishige's poem all touch on the theme of leaving the home, taking the tonsure, or putting on black robes—acts that signal the start to one's journey on the path.

The second segment of these 22 *waka* on Buddhist themes can be broadly classified under the topic of practice and devotion. If we conceive of the path in linear terms, grounding one's decision to take the tonsure in the religious acts of practice and devotion would be the next spiritual step on one's journey to

enlightenment. Found among these 8 poems on practice and devotion is the famous *waka* by Izumi Shikibu (1342), the headnote to which reads (“Sent to her teacher “Shōkū Shōnin”): *kuraki yori / kuraki michi ni zo / irinu beki / haruka ni terase / yama no ha no tsuki* (the path I had to take / led from dark to darker— / o moon / on your mountain edge / shine across / the vast emptiness). Here we encounter one of the most heartfelt lyrical cries for guidance on the path that can be found among the Buddhist *waka* or *shakkyō-ka* in any of the imperial anthologies. But this is also a poem that relies on the Buddhist scriptures—the Lotus Sutra, in this case, and in particular, The Parable of the Conjured City—to underscore its religious meaning.

The theme of the last seven *waka* of this 22-poem sequence concerns either enlightenment or the enlightened being. This is a very unusual group of poems in a number of ways, and we don’t really have time to look at it in much detail, but let me just say that their significance lays partly in the attributions. The presumed authors of these poems all date from the 6th-8th centuries and include such august figures as Gyōki (known of course as a *bosatsu*), Empress Kōmyō (known for her extensive work in building Buddhist temples), the Indian monk Bodhisena (who, according to Gyōki, is comparable to the Buddha), and Prince Shōtoku (the so-called “founder” of Japanese Buddhism). The following poem by Gyōki (1348) is a good example of how enlightenment and the enlightened are depicted in this section of the sequence. Here, Gyōki is greeting the Indian monk Bodhisena to Tōdai-ji where the consecration is about to take place in 759: *ryōsen no / shaka no mimae ni / chigiriteshi / shinnyo kuchisezu / aimitsuru kana* (to Shakyamuni on Vulture Peak / I made a vow of reunion— / never having let that promise rot— / I greet your face

again). There are numerous interesting aspects to this poem, not the least of which is the unusual diction, *ryōsen*, or Vulture Peak, and *shinnyo*, thusness or *tathāgathā* referring to the Buddha himself. Bodhisena's reply to Gyōki is that he considers himself to be gazing upon the countenance of Gyōki as Manjuśrī.

These *waka* by Yoshishige, Izumi Shikibu, and Gyōki are not, of course, the whole picture, but they provide a glimpse into how the *michi* was created poetically in the *Shūishū*.

The literary construction of the Buddhist path would exhibit a greater complexity when, almost two hundred years later, Fujiwara no Shunzei compiled the *shakkyō-ka* in the *Senzaishū*, the first independent book of such *waka* in the imperial poetry anthologies. I would contend that Shunzei constructed this sequence to reflect two kinds of Tendai Buddhist ideology: the first is the organization of the *Makashikan*, by the Chinese monk Chih-i, and the second is five-periods system (or *goji*) of the Buddhist teachings. While the chapters of the *Makashikan* are explications on the meditative or contemplative process of Buddhist practice, the five-periods system reflects Tendai ideology about the order in which the sutras were preached as well as about the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra (and, as we'll see, the Nirvana Sūtra). The structures of both schemas are hierarchical—that is to say, the chapters of the *Makashikan* represent the contemplative process from the stage of a beginner (“Arousing the Great Thought of Enlightenment”) to the final stage of enlightenment (“Returning the practitioner to the ultimate emptiness of all dharmas”) while the *goji* schema purportedly ranks the level of complexity and difficulty of the sutras according to the era in which they were taught, with the early

sutras at the beginning and the profound Lotus Blossom of the Law—or Lotus Sutra (and the Nirvana Sutra)—at the end.

I do not believe that either system is in perfect alignment with the topics I identify in the fifty-four-poem *shakkyō-ka* sequence, but I do believe that both served either consciously or unconsciously as guiding principles for Shunzei’s work.

Broadly conceived, there are five overarching topics in the “Shakkyō-ka” book in the *Senzaishū*. **[Please look at page B1]** They are: (1) [and this is a two-part step] *shakkyō-ka* about making an initial connection to the teachings (*kechien*) and the subsequent practice (*shugyō*) that a practitioner undertakes after such a connection is made, (2) *shakkyō-ka* about awakening (*satori*) as a result of one’s practice, or the awakened heart (*bodaishin*), (3) *shakkyō-ka* on the concept of emptiness (*kū, śūnyatā*), (4) *shakkyō-ka* on the Lotus Sutra (*Hokke-kyō-ka*), and (5) *shakkyō-ka* on nirvāna (or *nehan*).

Five Topics of the *Senzaishū* “Shakkyō-ka” Book

1. an initial connection to the teachings and the subsequent practice that a practitioner undertakes after such a connection is made (*kechien* and *shugyō*)

[Poems 1202-1214]

2. awakening as a result of one’s practice, or the awakened heart (*satori* and *bodaishin*)

[Poems 1215-1227]

3. *shakkyō-ka* on the concept of emptiness (*kū, śūnyatā*)

[Poems 1228-1238]

4. *shakkyō-ka* on the Lotus Sutra (*Hokke-kyō-ka*)

[Poems 1239-1248]

5. *shakkyō-ka* on nirvāna (*nehan*)

[Poems 1249-1255]

First, let's look at the organization of the *Makashikan* to see how it aligns with my topics. The *Makashikan* is comprised of 10 “greater” chapters and 5 “lesser” chapters and, this structure in its entirety is called *goryaku jikkō*, or five abbreviated and ten wide. What concerns us here is the *goryaku* part of the structure (what I will refer to as the five “lesser” chapters). The five “lesser” chapters were given the following titles: (1) *hosshin* (arouse the heart), (2) *shugyō* (practice), (3) *kanka* (translated as “summon the rewards”), (4) *retsumō* (translated as “rend the net”), and (5) *kisho* (translated as “return to the abode”). *Hosshin*, or awakened heart, and *shugyō*, or practice, are fairly obvious. *Kanka* is not as straightforward as *hosshin* and *shugyō*, but the translators of the “lesser” chapters of the *Makashikan*, Dan Stevenson and Neal Donner, claim that the word refers to the result or reward that comes to fruition with the causal path of practice (or *shugyō*, Chapter 2). The fourth “lesser” chapter of the *Makashikan*—“Retsumō”—refers to breaking through the net of doubt. This development of contemplative practice arises as a result of a complete understanding of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. The final “lesser” chapter of the *Makashikan*, “Kisho” or returning to the abode, refers to that state of contemplation in which, according to Stevenson and Donner, “the reach of discursive thought is annihilated. Eternally quiescent, it is like open space.” This can refer not only to the highest state of contemplative practice, but also to the *parinirvāna* of the Buddha.

If we pair up my topics with the “Five Lesser Chapters,” they would look like
what you see on page B2:

B2

Topics

Five Lesser Chapters of the *Makashikan*

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>kechien</i> and <i>shugyō</i>
1202-1214 | 1. <i>Hosshin</i> (awakening/awakened heart) |
| 2. <i>satori</i> and <i>bodaishin</i>
1215-1227 | 2. <i>Shugyō</i> (practice) |
| 3. Emptiness (<i>kū, śūnyatā</i>)
1228-1238 | 3. <i>Kanka</i> (summoning the rewards) |
| 4. Lotus Sutra (<i>Hokke-kyō-ka</i>)
1239-1248 | 4. <i>Retsumō</i> (rending the net) |
| 5. nirvana (<i>nehan</i>)
1249-1255 | 5. <i>Kisho</i> (returning to the abode) |

As I said, this schema does not align with my five topics precisely, but topics 1 and 2 are generally in alignment with “lesser” chapters 1 and 2. Topics 4 and 5 are not in perfect alignment, but correspond with “lesser” chapter 5. If we look at all five chapters as expressions of the Tendai principles of the three truths, or *santai*, then the principle of provisionality or *ke* would correspond to chapters 1 and 2, emptiness or *kū* would correspond to chapter 3, and *chū*, or the middle would correspond to chapters 4 and 5.

Let’s turn now to the *goji*, or five periods system, as it was delineated by the Korean monk, Chegwan, in the *Tendai shikyōgi*. **(If you’ll turn now to page B3)**

B3

<u>Topics</u>	<u>Five Lesser Chapters</u>	<u>Five Periods</u>
1. <i>kechien</i> and <i>shugyō</i> (1202-1214)	1. Hosshin (awakening/ awakened heart)	1 & 2. Kegon-ji/Rokuon-ji (Avatamsaka/Mainstream Buddhist texts)
2. <i>satori</i> and <i>bodaishin</i> (1215-1227)	2. Shugyō (practice)	3. Hōdō-ji (Mahāyāna texts other than Avatamsaka, i.e., Vimalakīrti)
3. <i>kū/śūnyatā</i> (1228-1238)	3. Kanka (summoning the rewards)	4. Hannya-ji (Prajñāparamitā sutras)
4. Lotus Sutra (<i>Hokke-kyō-ka</i>)	4. Retsumō (rending the net)	5. Hokke-nehān-ji (Lotus & Nirvāna Sūtra)

(1239-1248)

5. nirvana (*nehan*)

(1248-1255)

5. Kisho
(returning to the
abode)

5. Hokke-*nehan*-ji
(Lotus & Nirvāna Sūtra)

The first two periods of the *goji* schema are the Kegon and Rokuon periods during which the Avatamsaka Sutra, or Kegon-kyō, and the various Āgamas, or early scriptures from what is called Mainstream or Theravāda Buddhism, were preached. There is some discrepancy here between my topics and the Kegon period (especially *shakkyō-ka* 1202-1205), but, as I argue in my book, there may have been other reasons for starting the sequence with these poems. For example, the presumed authors of these four poems—Fujiwara no Kintō, ex-Emperor Kazan, and Genshin—were famous in the poetic, imperial, and religious spheres of the 10th and 11th centuries, and Shunzei may have wanted to pay homage to them. There are other reasons as well, but I'll leave it at this for the time being.

The Rokuon, or the Deer Park, period refers to the early sutras and scriptures that the Buddha taught. What we find here are *shakkyō-ka* pertaining to practice and devotion. If we look at the headnotes alone, we will notice that they are punctuated with references to events such as the *Kechien* Lecture, the *Ippon-kyō-kuyō*, pilgrimages to Tennō-ji and the Kannon statue at Anō, copying the Lotus Sutra, and finally *jikyōsha no kechien* (or, actuating a relationship with the teachings for one who “holds” the Lotus Sutra). So it is in this way that my first topic incorporates both chapters 1 and 2 of the *Makashikan* and periods 1 and 2 of the *goji* schema.

The third period known as *Hōdō* (Expanded and Equitable) corresponds to my topic #2 (that is, “awakening the heart—corresponding to *satori* in Japanese—or the awakened heart—corresponding to *bodaishin* in Japanese”) and the third chapter of the “lesser” chapters of the *Makashikan*, or “Kanka.” According to Tendai ideology, it was during the third period that the Buddha preached Mahāyāna texts other than the Avatamsaka and the Āgamas, sutras such as the Vimalakīrti Sutra and hundreds of others. These sutras—of course, it is difficult to speak of these as a homogenous group—were not the most important in Tendai thought—that honor went to the Lotus Sutra. However, I think we can presume that the “other” Mahāyāna sutras possessed the power to awaken, and they certainly exhibited the kind of rewards that practice or *shugyō* might bring.

Turning to the kinds of vocabulary we find in the headnotes and the poems, in this case to poems 1215-1227, we see words like *hotoke*, *nyorai*, *sokushin jōbutsu*, *bosatsu*, and *satori*. We also have vocabulary in the poems themselves that implies these concepts either through contrast or circumlocution: *madoi* (confusion suggesting *bonnō*, or the *kleśas*), *tsuki no kage* (suggesting the rays of enlightenment), and *chikai...tanomaba kazu ni irinan* (counted among the saved if one relies upon a vow, suggesting bodhisattvahood since this vow is Samantabhadra’s vow).

The fourth period is *Hannya-ji* or the period during which the Buddha taught the *prajñāparamitā* sutras on emptiness. Since “emptiness” is my third topic (poems #1228-1238), this is not an exact alignment. Three of the poems in this sequence are based upon topics from one of the *prajñāparamitā* sutras, while

another four express concepts such as emptiness, insubstantiality, and radical nonduality. The remaining four poems are connected more tangentially to these concepts, but in ways that do not stretch the imagination too much.

The final period—the *Hokke-nehān* period—corresponds well to topics #4 and 5. *Hokke* refers, of course, to the period during which the Buddha preached the Lotus Sutra while *nehān* refers to nirvana or the Nirvana Sutra. The final (*nehān*) period is one and the same with the poems based upon the *Nehān-e* conducted at Kōfuku-ji as well as the *Nehāngyō*, or upon references to cremation and smoke, rebirth (*ōjō*), or worshipping the Buddha’s relics at Tennō-ji, subjects that all suggest the Buddha’s *parinirvāna*.

I’ve never before gone into such detail in a presentation about the *shakkyō-ka* in the *Senzaishū*, and you may wish that I hadn’t today. I do hope it’s of some use in understanding the poems in this book. But before we end, I’d like to look briefly at the poems that fall under my third topic and the fourth period of the *goji* schema—the poems on emptiness (1228-1238).

Before we look at these poems, however, it is important to emphasize that the connection between any group of poems and their topic (and their correspondence to a *Makashikan* chapter or *goji* period) can be either direct or indirect. That is, there is not always an obvious link between what I have designated as a theme (such as emptiness) and what the poem first appears to be about. *Waka* were situated within a book for a variety of reasons, some of which had to do with theme and others that had to do with imagery, diction, and a variety of other considerations.

If I can draw your attention to the last two handouts: the translations of the emptiness poems **(C1-C6)** and the final diagram **(D)** that has “Fujiwara no Shunzei 1114-1204” at the top of the page, this is a list of the poems in the “emptiness” section of the “Shakkyō-ka” book in the *Senzaishū*. Let’s look first for more obvious indicators of the concept of emptiness. The first four poems I’d like to point you to (not necessarily the first four poems in the list) are based upon the collection of Prajnaparamita sutras. Look with me, if you will, at poem #1228 by Fujiwara no Takanobu. You’ll notice that the word “*munashi*” (under “Distinguishing Characteristic”) appears in the *waka* (thus, the “w”) and that the sutra/religious occasion (the 5th column on the page) is the Prajnaparamita sutras: *kuretake no / munashi to tokeru / koto no ha wa / miyo no hotoke no / haha to koso kike* (those leaves of words / that teach “the emptiness / of bamboo” / are mother to the Buddhas / of the three worlds: / thus have I heard).

Similarly, with poem #1229 by Tango, the words “*munashiki*” and “*sora*” appear under “Distinguishing Characteristic” and that the poem is based upon the Heart Sutra: *munashiki mo / iro naru mono to / satore to ya / har no misora no / midori naruran* (it says: / wake up! things are empty! all the colorful forms! -- / is that why “empty” equals “sky”? / why the sky of spring shows green?)

If you’ll skip three poems and look at the entry for poem #1233 by Jakuchō, you’ll notice that the poem is based upon the Larger Prajnaparamita Sutra, and is focused especially upon the figure of Jōtai Bosatsu, or the Ever-Wailing Bodhisattva: *kuchihatsuru / sode ni wa ikaga / tsutsumamashi / munashiki no tokeru / minori*

narazu wa (how could I keep anything / in sleeves as ruined as these-- / if there were no Law / to teach (the heavens equal) emptiness?)

Those are the more obvious indicators of the theme of emptiness.

Second, I'd like to direct your attention to four more poems that are not connected to the Prajnaparamita sutras, but that are based upon concepts like emptiness, insubstantiality, and radical nonduality: those are poems #1230 by Minamoto no Moronaka, 1234 by Fujiwara no Sukekata, 1235 by Priest Tōren, and 1237 by Chūjō of Shikishi Naishinnō's residence.

Poem #1230 by Minamoto no Moronaka is based upon the Lotus Sutra, but the word "*kū*" appears in the *kotobagaki* (thus, kg) and the word "*munashiki*" appears in the poem: *nagaki yo mo / munashiki mono to / shirinureba / hayaku akenuru / kokochi koso sure* (the long night, too, / was an empty thing-- / when I knew that -- / I felt the light / dawn quickly).

Poem #1234 by Fujiwara no Suketaka is based upon the Yuima-kyō and exploits the well-known dream-reality dichotomy that was often a topic of Japanese court *waka*: *miru hodo wa / yume mo yume tomo / shirareneba / utsutsu mo ima wa / utsutsu to omowaji* (because I can't know / that dreams are dreams / while I'm dreaming-- / I'm also like never / to believe / that reality is real).

Poem #1235 by Tōren continues the theme of the dream/*yume* begun with Sukekata's poem: *odorokanu / wagakokoro koso / ukarikere / hakanaki yo oba / yume to minagara* (my ignorant heart! / troubled while it dreams / the dream of the always- / disappearing world).

And finally, poem #1237 by Chūjō focuses on the theme of radical nonduality in the expression “*bonnō soku bodai*” (samsāra is none other than the awakened state): *omoitoku . kokoro hitotsu ni / narinureba / kōri mo mizu mo / hedatezarikeri* (after meditating, untangling, melting-- / my heart became one— / ice was never different / from water, or water / from ice).

The last four poems that I’d like to speak only briefly about are #1231, 1232, 1236, and 1238 and they cannot be identified readily with the theme of emptiness. (I’m not going to read these poems, but you can look at them on your handouts.) However, I believe there are other factors that account for their inclusion. Saigyō’s poem (1231), for example, continues the visual imagery of light and dark that we can trace back to poems #1229 and 1230, while Fujiwara no Akinaka’s poem (1232) echoes the visual imagery of darkness and light by focusing on reflections in a pond. It’s not much of a stretch, I don’t think, to trace the theme of emptiness (or the visual imagery of light and dark) to Jakuren’s poem (1236) about a pilgrimage to Mt. Kōya, since Kūkai was the progenitor of the Shingon esoteric teachings that argued for one kind of radical nonduality. Finally, poem #1238 by Taira no Tokitada, the last poem in this section, is based upon the vow of Kannon to bring comfort to all sentient beings, but its visual imagery suggests the possibility of something (flowers) blooming out of nothing (*karenishi eda*), even though it is not the season for blossoms at all.

In conclusion, though I have sped through these materials, I hope I’ve given some sense of how the principles of progression are deployed in the “Shakkyō-ka” book in the *Senzaishū*. Thank you very much.

