

The Courting of Kume no Zenji: The Allurement of Waka under the Tenji Court

Masahiro MURATA*

Keywords: waka, Man'yōshū, Kume no Zenji, sōmon, Tenji era

Explanatory Note

This paper presents an analysis of the “Five poems exchanged in the courting of Ishikawa no Iratsume by Kume no Zenji” (poems 96-100, compiled under the reign of Emperor Tenji) found in the *sōmon* (poems of courting or dialogic exchange) of the *Man'yōshū*, Book 2. This representative set of *sōmon* is centered around the two pillars of the “bow” and the concept of “*nochi no kokoro*” (opposite of *shoshin*; the state of enlightenment achieved through accumulated training) and limns their relationship from the man’s initial overture, through their romantic acrobatics, and eventuating in wedlock. Within the context of these two pivot words, of particular notice is the name given to the male courter: Kume no Zenji. While it is impossible to know anything concrete about him, as he makes no other appearances in the literature, it is possible to extrapolate based on his putative name: “Kume,” according to mythology, is the family name of a brave warrior who is said to have accompanied the descent to earth of Amaterasu’s grandson; and “*zenji*” is the title of a priest that has achieved enlightenment through the teachings of the Buddha. It is this paper’s contention that this set of five poems, hinging on the pivot words of the “bow” and “*nochi no kokoro*,” is intimately connected to the dual nature of the name of “Kume no Zenji.” A product of the Tenji era (661-671), an emergent stage within the hundred-some years of the *Man'yōshū*’s compilation, these poems deserve particular attention within the study of early poetry in the archipelago as they reveal an advanced level of *waka* production and enjoyment from very early on.

The present article was first published in *Bungakushi Kenkyū (Studies of Literary History)* No.26, Society of Japanese and Japanese Literature, Osaka City University, 1985. The original title is Kume no Zenji no tsumadoi: Tenji-cho fūryū no omokage (The Courting of Kume no Zenji: Remnants of the Literature of the Tenji Court). For the convenience of English readers, the translated article was fully reviewed, and necessary information about proper names, historical events, and Japanese titles was added.

1. In the face of anecdotic lacunae

A written work’s anatomization often devolves on the information known about the author’s career. Saying nothing of Yamanoue no Okura, Ōtomo no Tabito, or Ōtomo no Yakamochi, poets of whom a relatively good deal is known, the identification of the elusive Kakinomoto no Hitomaro as a “court poet,” at least conceptually, greatly shed light on his character and deepened our understanding of his work. In this light, it is only natural that this area of inquiry within textual commentary has, regardless of success, continued its search into the lives of the poets.

There is a significant number of authors, however, about whom no legacy remains. In fact, over forty percent of the *Man'yōshū* (*A Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*) poems, concentrated mainly in Books 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, lack any attending identification of authorship. Treatment of such poems of unknown authorship or of whose authors nothing is known naturally demands the appropriate methodological approach – efforts to treat these poems as if they were *utaimono* (“lyrical music”) or *utagatari* (“poem tales”) and the push to understand their forms of expression in this light being an important example.

Kume no Zenji – the author of several *sōmon* (courting or exchange poems) under Emperor Tenji’s reign (662-671) in Book 2 of the *Man'yōshū* – is one such author of whom no biographical information is known. No traction

* Litt.D. Professor, Department of Japanese Language and Literature, Graduate School of Literature and Human Sciences, Osaka City University
3-3-138 Sugimoto, Sumiyoshi-ku, Osaka-shi, 558-8585 Japan
murata@lit.osaka-cu.ac.jp

is gained in an analysis of his identity from the traditional perspective; indeed, a majority of annotations are no more generous than to note “biographical details unknown.”

As the development within the series of poems to which he contributes mirrors the characteristics inherent in the name of the male protagonist, Kume no Zenji, it would seem more beneficial to shift our focus from the nature of his background to the nature of the name, itself. In this paper, through a careful reading of the five poems surrounding Kume no Zenji’s overtures of courting, I will offer an approach to such cases when there exists a paucity of biographical information and, additionally, a consideration of the literature of the Tenji Court.

2. “The Fine Bow of Shinano”

The five poems exchanged in Kume no Zenji’s courting of Ishikawa no Iratsume open with the following:

If I pull the fine bow of Shinano, where bamboo is reaped, I fear you will play the noble-lady and say, “No”
Zenji (2:96)

Without having pulled the fine bow of Shinano, where bamboo is reaped, you cannot claim to know how its string is
affixed
Iratsume (97)

These two poems present the priest’s subtle overture under the pretext of “pull[ing] the fine bow of Shinano” and Iratsume’s reproach of it as being insincere.

The “pull” or “draw back” (*hiku*) of the priest’s poem can be understood as a suggestive invitation – his desire to spend the night together. It becomes evident through the following examples found elsewhere in the *Man’yōshū* that this describes something that has advanced beyond mere possession (*shimeyū*).

The trek up the steep and jagged mountainside is wearisome and the firm-rooted sedge will not budge, so I simply tie
my rope and mark it as mine
(3:414)

Come obediently to me like the rock vine from Ōya Field off the road to Irima that comes obediently when pulled.
Please do not break off with me
(14:3378)

Additionally, we notice a play on “to sleep” (Modern Japanese: *neru*) in the “*nuru*” (Classical Japanese form) of “*hikaba nuru nuru*” (“that comes obediently when pulled”). While the priest expresses his intent to woo her, his addition of “I fear you will play the noble-lady and say, “No”” is surely a bit of discretion to soften his suggestiveness. Meanwhile, the priest says that he will draw the “fine bow of Shinano.”

The Court ordered that the 1,020 catalpa bows dedicated to the Court from the province of Shinano be appropriated
to the stores of Dazaifu.
(*Shoku Nihongi* [*The Continued Chronicles of Japan*], Book 2, Taihō 2.3.27)

The Court ordered that the 1,400 catalpa bows dedicated to the Court from the provinces of Shinano be appropriated
to the stores of Dazaifu.
(*Shoku Nihongi*, Book 3, Keiun 1.4.15)

Send messengers bearing the following items by the twelfth month to the presented: 180 bows of various construction

from Kai and Shinano for the Kinensai, 80 *keyaki* bows from Kai, and 100 catalpa bows from Shinano. (*Engishiki* [*Procedures of the Engi Era*], Book 3, Jingi 3, “Rinjisai”)

At the time, Shinano was renowned for its bows¹ (Keichū, *Man'yō Daishōki* [*Commentary on the Man'yōshū Completed in the Stead of Shimokōbe Chōryū*], *seisenbon*, Book 2, Part 1). Considering this, we must then interpret the priest's selection of words as freighted with the confidence befitting a bow of this nature – able to claim any prize forthwith. That “Shinano” is preceded by the *makura kotoba* “where bamboo is reaped” (*Mi komo karu*), which lauds the renown of the bows, surely suggests this intentional double meaning. While “I fear you will play the noble lady and say, ‘No’” is discretion used to soften the directness of the priest's suggestion that he might “pull the bow,” it can also be understood as his “refusal to allow her to say, ‘No’” (*Daishōki, seisenbon*).

Iratsume's response (“Without having pulled the fine bow of Shinano, where bamboo is reaped”) is given in reproach of his insincere intent, as his “If I pull the bow” is grammatically a hypothetical (Kubota Utsubo, *Man'yōshū Hyōshaku* [*The Annotated Man'yōshū*], Book 2, Tōkyōdō, 1947). In other words, she admits that “pulling the fine bow of Shinano, where bamboo is reaped” is a legitimate means of attracting her, and this admission is predicated on her perception of the priest's confidence. Furthermore, she suggests that perhaps the reason he will not pull the bow in earnest is that he does not know how to string a bow, let alone pull the bow – piercing ridicule aimed at the priest's confident overtures.

Concerning this exchange, Inaoka Kōji (in Book 2 of the *Man'yōshū Zenchū* [*The Fully Annotated Man'yōshū*], Yūhikaku, 1985) posits a connection between the reference to “the fine bow of Shinano” in Kume no Zenji's poem and the military house of the same name, suggesting that the priest is a member of the warrior house of Kume. He goes on further to suggest that the women's chastening reply turns on her criticism of a man from such a proposed background who does not know how to string a bow. Indeed, the mention of the “Kume” house brings to mind “Amatsu Kume no Mikoto,” who accompanied the descent to earth of Amaterasu's grandson, *Ninigi no Mikoto*. According to Book 1 (*The Age of the Gods*) of the *Kojiki* (*Record of Ancient Matters*):

Everything being in order, Ame no Oshihiko no Mikoto and Amatsu Kume no Mikoto heralded the coming of the gods with a quiver of strong arrows on their backs, strong swords at their waists, bows that could pierce their target from any distance in their left hands, and sharp arrows with the swiftness of deer in their right hands. This Ame no Oshihiko no Mikoto is the ancestor of the Ōtomo house and Amatsu Kume no Mikoto is the forefather of the Kume house.

We find tales of similar flavor in other sources, as well: The fourth variant text in the ninth section of Book Two, Part Two, of the *Age of the Gods* in the *Nihon Shoki* (*The Chronicles of Japan*) bears a similar account; furthermore, the “Song in praise of the imperial rescript to present the gold discovered in Mutsu Province” (*Man'yōshū*, Book 18:4094) and “Song of instruction for the Ōtomo house” (Book 20:4465) by Ōtomo Yakamochi contain similar accounts. The latter, in particular, relates the heavenly descent of Amaterasu's grandson as follows: “[The Ōtomo ancestor Ame no Oshihiko no Mikoto] bore a superb bow in his left hand and sharp arrows as swift as the deer in his right and entrusted Ōkume no Masura Takeo, the ancestor of the related Kume house, at the forefront, with a quiver pregnant with arrows . . .” It is apparent that this tradition had developed a good deal of currency by the time.

Of particular note are the references to the Ame no Haji Yumi bow (and the Ame no Maka Goya arrow and Ame no Iwayukigi quiver), the principal appurtenance of Amatsu Kume no Mikoto, the forefather of the Kume no Atae, who accompanied the Ōtomo no Muraji ancestor, Ame no Oshihiko no Mikoto, in the imperial descent to earth (alongside Ame Kushitsu Ōkume, Ōkume Nushi, and Ōkume no Masura Takeo). While the previously mentioned fourth variant in the *Nihon Shoki* and work by Yakamochi present some variance in tradition, they are constant in

1. In addition to Shinano and Kai, bows are also recorded as being produced in China (*Shoku Nihongi*, Book 12, Tenpyō 7.4.26 [735]), Chikuzen, Chikugo, Hizen, Higo, Buzen, Bungo, Hyūga, and other provinces (*Shoku Nihongi*, Book 23, Tenpyō Hōji 5.7.2 [761]). The Chinese bows, however, were presented to the court by Shimotsumichi (Kibi) no Makibi after returning from his studies overseas. Additionally, the bows from the other provinces listed in the *Shoku Nihongi* were not in constant manufacture: they were ordered to make up for the weak defenses of the Saikaidō (Kyushu), which did not produce yearly reserve arms. Renowned for its bows, therefore, was Shinano, followed by Kai.

ascribing bows and the attending articles to their owners. This is no doubt a reflection of the belief that the ancestor deity of the Kume house was a mighty god proficient in the way of the bow and arrow.²

There can surely be no great mistake in proposing that the priest, of this Kume stock, invoked the bows of Shinano in his courtship overture in order to conjure this tradition. In addition to being a renowned bow of the time, the identity of the “fine bow of Shinano, where bamboo is reaped” is buttressed by the legend of the “Ame no Haji Yumi bow” of the Age of the Gods; considering its incontestable might and authority, his female target should have no recourse in the face of this drawn bow.

Iratsume, however, adroitly moves to the offensive. As mentioned previously, this involves her leveraging the hypothetical nature of the priest’s comment, “if I pull the bow.” Her ridicule (“you cannot claim to how its string is affixed”), however, presents a bit of a curiosity. Regardless of its hypothetical nature, the priest’s comment, “if I pull the bow” is no doubt predicated on his knowledge of “how to string a bow” and his very intent to “pull” it. Aspersions to the opposite could easily be parried with, “Yes, I do” – and the exchange would cease forthwith. More than anything, it does not stand congruent with the shift to the offensive of her first line, “Without pulling the fine bow from Shinano, where bamboo is reaped.”

Let us now direct our attentions to the fact that, in addition to identifying himself as a “Kume,” he also bears the title of “*zenji*.”

“*Zenji*” is the title given to priests devoted to contemplation over all matter (*issaihō*; *Shakushi Yōran* [A Commentary on Buddhist Terminology and Traditions], Book One, “Titles”). Differentiated from the precept-bound *risshi* ascetic and the *biku* (monk) and *bikuni* (nun), who abandon their occupations, beg for food, and undergo purification (*shōjō*), *zenji*, being devoted to such pansophic contemplation, were viewed as proficient and knowledgeable about all matters and known to have cared for the sick and offered free medical treatment. They were consequently accorded a great deal of respect.

On the 5th day of the 5th month of summer, Ōwake no Ōkimi and Woguro no Kishi were dispatched as ambassadors to Paekche On the 1st day of the 11th month of winter, the king of Paekche had an envoy return to Japan with Ōwake no Ōkimi and entrusted their party with several sutras and commentaries, a *vinaya ascetic* (*risshi*), a meditative monk (*zenji*), a nun (*bikuni*), an incantatory, a craftsman of Buddhist images, and a temple architect, totaling six individuals. These were eventually made to serve at the Ōwake no Ōkimi Temple in Naniwa. (*Nihon Shoki*, Book 20, 6th year of Bidatsu’s reign [577])

(Upon the illness of Retired Emperor Shōmu) A doctor, *zenji*, and government official, one each, were sent out to the eastern and western halves of the capital and the various provinces of the Kinai to tend to those suffering from sickness. [This act of benevolence was conducted to pray for the emperor’s recovery. The emperor, however, died on the second day of the 5th month.] (*Shoku Nihongi*, Book 19, Empress Kōken, Tenpyō Shōhō 8.4.29 [756])

And the words of the Empress Kōken were as follows: Priest Hōyō [*zenji*] was of spotless character, vigorously followed the precepts of Buddhism, and attended faithfully to the care of the ill. Therefore, he was called from distant lands [around Fukuoka Prefecture in Kyushu] and made to tend to medical matters in an official capacity. Owing to this, Emperor Shōmu was able to recover his health on numerous occasions; Priest Hōyō was therefore entrusted with great confidence and the emperor saw no other doctors but him. However, just as it is impossible to stop the flow of running water, the emperor inevitably passed away. Priest Hōyō then made a pledge to renounce the world and serve at the retired emperor’s grave, chanting Mahayana sutras for the repose of the emperor’s soul. I [Kōken] desire to express my gratitude by allowing the priest’s petition The county of Priest Hōyō’s birthplace is to be relieved from taxation and exempted from labor.

2. Glimpses of the *Kubutsuchi no tachi* (hammer-pommel sword), another of Kume no Mikoto’s implements, can be found throughout the *Kume-uta*: for example, “The vigorous Kume youth shall make the decisive blow with his hammer-pommel and stone-pommel swords in hand” (*Kojiki Kayō* 11 and *Nihon Shoki Kayō* 9), as recounted in the legend of Emperor Jimmu’s eastward trek.

(*Shoku Nihongi*, Book 19, Empress Kōken, Tenpyō Shōhō 8.5.23 [756])

Shūnan, Kōtatsu, Enshū, En'e, Shuyū, Shōjō, Hōgi, Sonkyō, Yōkō, and Kōshin – these ten *zenji* were found worthy of praise for faithfully keeping the Buddhist precepts and were renowned for their care of the sick. Emperor Kōnin thus ordered for the court to provide assistance to these *zenji* and for this assistance to be offered for life, for these original ten *zenji* to be called the “Ten Great *Zenji*,” and accorded a great deal of respect, and, if the number was to drop below ten, for the deficiencies to be supplemented by appointing priests of pure and proper conduct.

(*Shoku Nihongi*, Book 32, Emperor Kōnin, Hōki 3.3.6 [772])

During the reign of Empress Jitō [687-697], there was a *zenji* from the land of Paekche [which was destroyed by Silla in 663, and it is conjectured that he would have entered Japan at that time]. His name was Tarajō [reading uncertain]. He lived in Hōkisanji temple in Takechi county, Yamato Province [present Nara Prefecture]. He underwent purity rituals and kept the precepts and made caring for the sick his priority. This priest's care gave life once again to those on their death beds. Every prayer of his conducted over a sick person was accompanied by a miracle . . . Empress Jitō highly respected him and extended support to him and the people embraced and respected him. The priest's nature was due to his Buddhist training. His renown spread far beyond the capital and his benevolent acts toward the sick have been praised for generations to come.

(*Nihon Ryōiki* [*Record of Miraculous Tales from Japan*], Book 1, Story 26)

To the above examples, Dōkyō's title of “The Great Meditation Master of the Rank of Chancellor who Leads the Various Venerated Priests” (found in *Shoku Nihongi*, Book 27, Empress Shōtoku, Tenpyō Jingo 2.10.20 [766], Edict 41) serves as a particularly aggrandized instance. Of course, in the case of Kume no Zenji, it is not clear whether he was simply a layman who abrogated the title of *zenji* (one suggestion raised in Daishōki, *seisenbon*) or a true *zenji*, as the name suggests (Kimura Masakoto, *Man'yōshū Mibukushi* [*The Trowel of the Man'yōshū*], Book 2, Kōfukan Shoten, 1911). Even allowing that he was a layman, however, it still stands that he was nevertheless received by the name of an ordained renunciate.

It seems safe to allow him the name of “Kume” in light of the confident overtures advanced by dint of his bow. Regardless of his status, lay or tonsured, however, he nevertheless bears the title of *zenji*. Iratsume's rejoinder aimed at the hypothetical nature of his advance (“if I pull the bow”) is no doubt predicated on her assumption that, to the extent he is a man of meditation (*zenji*) who has renounced the secular world, any “pulling” would be in name only – regardless of any purported Kume stock. Taken one step further, she retorts that he most likely does not know the first step of even *stringing* a bow.

He could not expect defiance of her rejoinder (“I *do* know how to string a bow!”) to end well for his entreaty. To the extent that he has adopted the title “*zenji*,” he was bound to be outdone. To his favor, however, Iratsume, albeit harsh in her upbraiding, does not appear intent on refusing him in earnest: This is evident in her first line, “Without having pulled the fine bow of Shinano, where bamboo is reaped.” As already mentioned, her phrasing does admit that “pulling the fine bow of Shinano, where bamboo is reaped” is indeed a legitimate means of courting her. Given this, then, it is not the case that the priest is left with no room for persistence. Her last line, however, is too severe to invite prompt insistence. Even for Iratsume, this was at cross-purposes with her intent – surely the reason she addresses an additional poem to the priest in redress.

3. “*Nochi no Kokoro*”

The following two poems begin with that by the woman:

Although I would draw near to you if you pull the catalpa bow, it is difficult to know your heart afterwards (*nochi no*

kokoro)

Iratsume (98)

He who fixes the string and pulls the catalpa bow is one who is already mindful of how his heart will go (*nochi no kokoro*)

Zenji (99)

It is apparent from the previous references from the *Shoku Nihongi* and *Engishiki* that the bows of Shinano were made from catalpa – so-called “catalpa bows.” Iratsume’s comment, “if you pull the catalpa bow,” was made in response to the priest’s hypothetical, “if I pull the bow.” Furthermore, Iratsume’s poem responds to the first two (poems 96-97), while revealing her true intent hinted at in poem 97: It can be understood as prodding for confirmation of his sincerity and assurance of his lasting feelings (*nochi no kokoro*; 後心).

Needless to say, the priest seizes the opportunity to offer a sincere response: “He that fits the string to his catalpa bow and takes careful aim at his catch is already mindful of how his heart will go; he that that courts in earnest is already set to his pledge.” This poem is understood as replying at once to both of Iratsume’s previous poems (97 and 98; Kubota, *Hyōshaku*). In other words, his response asserts his knowledge of both how to string a bow (a rejoinder to the criticism of poem 97) and how his preknowledge of his *nochi no kokoro* has informed his advance (a rejoinder to the concern of poem 98). Said differently, we can interpret this as meaning that to the extent that he is cognizant of his *nochi no kokoro*, it is only natural that he is aware of “how to string the bow,” requisite for the act of shooting it. In this manner, we can understand the relative function of the priest’s poem as a closure to the exchange. This is also highly suggestive of Iratsume’s acquiescence to the priest’s overtures.

While that the priest was able to parry Iratsume’s rejoinder and engender an outcome congenial to himself is in part no doubt due to the fact that Iratsume was content to acquiesce to his advances from the start, it cannot necessarily be consigned away only as such. What played a larger role in his success lies in the preceding poem (98) by Iratsume. In this regard, poem 98 serves as a primer for the priest’s attainment of his desire. More than anything, what encouraged the priest, reeling from Iratsume’s pointed jab, was her concern over his *nochi no kokoro*.

Looking back, we see that the exchange, which began with “pulling the fine bow of Shinano,” temporarily settles amidst concern and relief over the priest’s *nochi no kokoro*. In our understanding of this group of poems, this concept of “*nochi no kokoro*” takes center stage. There remains, however, one point of concern regarding this “*nochi no kokoro*.” *Sōmonka* poems within the *Man’yōshū* that reference the bow include the following:

While I do not know how things will end, like the ends of the catalpa bow (*sue*), I am drawn now to you, my lord
(Book 12:2985)

We will lie together, drawn nigh as the ends (*sue*) of the catalpa bow. But now, as many are watching, I leave you
halfway (Book 14:3490)

From the poem collection of Kakinomoto no Asomi Hitomaro

The reader should notice that “*sue*” 末 is generally used as a term to point to the future (including the 12:2985 variant, 12:2988, 12:3149, etc.), while “*nochi*” 後 is limited to matters of the moment. Book One (Book 2 of the main work) of *Man’yōshū Dōmōshō* [*A Beginner’s Companion to the Man’yōshū*], lectured by Kada no Azumamaro and recorded by Kada no Nobuna, says “Old manuscripts and woodblock-print books record the reading as ‘*nochi no kokoro*.’ This is a word stylistically unrelated, however, to the bow. Related words include ‘*moto*’ (the bottom edge of the bow) and ‘*sue*’ (the top edge of the bow). I [Kada no Azumamaro] thus propose to read this not as ‘*nochi no kokoro*,’ but as ‘*sue no kokoro*.’” The reading “*sue no kokoro*” for that commonly read as “*nochi no kokoro*,” predicated upon this analysis, is truly incisive. All instances of “*sue*” referring to the future and in relation to the bow, however, use the character 末; moreover, throughout the whole *Man’yōshū*, 末 is glossed as “*sue*,” while 後 is glossed as “*nochi*.” “*Nochi no kokoro*” would thus seem to be the more appropriate reading.

Assuming so, why then does a set of poems so focused on the bow prefer “*nochi no kokoro*” to “*sue no kokoro*”? To the extent that “*nochi no kokoro*” is understood as one of the pivot words in this set of poems, it is rather the contention of *Dōmōshō* that demands a careful reconsideration.

We cannot dismiss the fact that both poems that refer to this word utilize the characters 後心, the character combination of which is originally from the Chinese. In light of its apparent nature as a rather peculiar word and considering that all instances of it in the *Man'yōshū* are limited to matters of the moment, it does not seem inappropriate to infer that there was a specific purpose behind the cooption of the Chinese 後心. It is important to notice, however, that this word does not appear widely in Chinese poetry until the mid-Tang Period (766-835) and belongs to the Buddhist lexicon, scattered in religious and related texts.

“The first attainment of *duramgama* (*ongyōchi*) [the seventh stage of the *dasabhumī*] is called the stage of change. As the mind has already realized 後心 the three dimensions of time [past, present, and future], it can thus deepen the seeds of wisdom.”

“Epigraph on the statue of King Ashoka at Chōsaji Temple in Jingzhou, China,” by Emperor Yuan of the Southern Liang (*Yiwen Leiju* [*An Encyclopedia of Literature Arranged by Category*], Book 76, *Neidian* [The Inner Texts] Part 1, *Neidian*)

“Because the jade principles are obedient to the movement of the heavens, the path of the celestial bodies remains steadfast and one will move steadily toward deliverance from delusion. Then, one will achieve indescribable, complete enlightenment, forsake all *klesha*, and reach the awakened mind 後心; relying on the Buddhist images and drawing nigh to the voice and figure of the Buddha, one can achieve deliverance through the venerable teachings of the Buddha.”

“Epigraph of Chūji Temple” by Wang Sengru of the Southern Liang: (*Yiwen Leiju*, Book 77, *Neidian* Part 2, “Temple Inscriptions”)

These examples draw our attention to the usage of 後心 to refer to an enlightened state of deliverance from *klesha* (afflictions or mental “poisons,” Jpn: *bonnō*).

This term is also often discussed as the counterpart of *shoshin* 初心. Let us turn to two salient examples.

And the Buddha said to Zengen the *biku*, “. . . peerless correct perfect enlightenment is not achieved from the initial determination to realize awakening 初心, nor is it achieved divorced from the initial determination to realize awakening. Supreme enlightenment is not achieved from the post-awakened mind 後心, nor is it achieved divorced from the post-awakened mind. Such distinctions as these are nothing more than expedients. All of the Bodhisattvas and Great Beings managed to achieve peerless correct perfect enlightenment by cultivating the perfection of wisdom and gradually developing their virtuous roots (*zenkon*).”

The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom (Daihannya Haramitakyō), Fascicle 450

Furthermore, all those who have attained enlightenment say, ‘The post-awakened mind 後心 is untainted by the impurities of the secular world, while one’s heart at the outset is not so.’ If you begin to desire to attain enlightenment, you will come to understand that the post-awakened mind and one’s initial heart are not two disparate entities. The paradigm that the post-awakened mind is superior and the initial heart is immature or undeveloped is nothing more than an homiletic expedient; depending on the mind of he that has set upon the path of Buddhist discipline, not only is the post-awakened mind pure, but the initial heart is as well.

Jōmyō Genron [*Commentary on the Vimalakīrti Sūtra*], Book 2, “*San: Rontokui Mon*”

The first example explains that supreme enlightenment cannot be attained through the initial determination to realize awakening or the post-awakened mind, alone; rather, one must achieve perfect knowledge and cultivate virtuous roots (meritorious acts deserving of reward). The second example asserts that there is no distinction between

the two states, as they are both of spotless repute to the extant one desires to attain enlightenment. Focusing on the temporal contrast of the heart and mind, the former is one's innermost state at the start of one's journey, while the latter should be understood as one's state after accumulating training.³ Moreover, while there is a general tendency to focus more on the latter than the former (such as in *Jōmyō Genron*, etc.), there is ultimately no such distinction of import. For example, "A most exemplary heart at the outset of one's training can soon engender the post-awakened mind" (*Myōhō Shōnenjokyō*, Book 5): both minds are as one.

Based upon this, we can infer that the reason Iratsume follows her expression of acquiescence ("Although I would draw near to you if you pull the catalpa bow") with apprehension ("it is difficult to know your heart afterwards") is that she seeks words of firm reassurance – to the extent that he identifies as a priest (*zenji*), she naturally expects him to be cognizant of his own *nochi no kokoro*. Iratsume's second poem, which reins in her previous derision, expresses her concern following her acquiescence to his overtures through "*nochi no kokoro*," which is contrived in connection to the "*zenji*" identification; it is in her shift to now beckon the priest that we can find the pivot of the poem group.

And thus Iratsume's intent is laid bare and Zenji is provided with an opportunity to advance, whereby he provides the desired words of assurance. As mentioned previously, however, Zenji responds to both her concern ("it is difficult to know your heart afterwards") and criticism ("you cannot claim to how its string is affixed") together; here is an additional point that must not go unnoticed. Assuming that Zenji's words of assurance were in response to Iratsume's two poems, his response aligns with the Buddhist concept of both temporal states of the heart being one: through the device of "pulling the bow," he not only knows the prerequisite art of "affixing the string," but is also cognizant of his subsequent *nochi no kokoro*. Zenji's response is marvelously appropriate for the evolution of their exchange and the development of the poem group, in addition to serving to buttress his dignity. We would not be amiss to consider this quite the masterpiece.

It is in the *zenji* identity that we can find both (1) the reason for the criticism aimed at the priest and (2) the justification for the priming advanced by Iratsume in poem 98; that he is able to convince and comfort devolves upon his identity as a *zenji*. The interrelation between the first four poems hitherto discussed has been revealed through an analysis focused on the family name of "Kume" and the title of "*zenji*."

4. A Devised World

It appears that what began with "pull[ing] the fine bow of Shinano" concluded temporarily with the relief offered by "*nochi no kokoro*." To the four poems touched upon thus far can be added one additional poem by Zenji:

Just as the cords that bind the boxes of first fruits sent from the Eastern people, so have you been strapped atop my
heart
Zenji (100)

The first fruits (*nosaki*) refer to the tribute for the Kinensai festival sent by the provinces every year during the 12th month (before the first day of spring) that expressed allegiance and congratulations to the Ise Grand Shrine and the emperor (*Engishiki*, Book 8, "Kinensai prayers"; *Engishiki*, Book 16, "The day of first fruits," etc.). The tribute sent by the people of the East most certainly refers specifically to the "fine bow[s] of Shinano, where bamboo is reaped" (Kubota, *Hyōshaku*). The province of Shinano was one of the provinces comprising the Eastern lands; as mentioned in the second section of this paper, the area was known for presenting the court with specially made catalpa bows.

3. Within the Buddhist literature, the term *matsugo shin* (*matsugo nenshin*), which is seen several times, appears on first glance to be similar (*Jōyūshikiron Enpi* [Commentary on the *Jōyūshikiron*], Books 2 and 4, etc.). It differs, however, in that it refers to the depths of one's heart upon the end of one's life. Even if the author of our poems was familiar with the term *matsugo shin*, it would seem a stretch to associate it then with the bow imagery and have it be read, "*sue no kokoro*." This perspective should perhaps be included in our consideration of the background behind the use of the term "*nochi no kokoro*."

Moreover, “so have you been strapped atop my heart” refers not to a present, fleeting passion, but naturally reflects on his *nochi no kokoro*. Additionally, it has become apparent that Zenji’s final poem, which is structurally different from the preceding four poems, is a consequential development of those previous poems. Furthermore, as Andō Nukari mentions in Book 6 of *Man’yōshū Shinkō (A New Approach to the Man’yōshū)*, the first half (“the cords that bind the boxes of first fruits sent from the Eastern people”) functions as a metaphor of the second half (“so have you been strapped atop my heart”): “This poem relays Zenji’s resolute love for her, encompassing his heart many times over – as firmly bound as the ropes binding horseback goods of tribute sent from the distant Eastern land of Shinano to the capital.” Following his assurance to Iratsume of his *nochi no kokoro*, we can interpret this as an extra push for good measure: “you are the only one for me.”

While following the previous four poems, this final poem of Zenji’s is not an overture to Iratsume in the *taiei* style (a construction that supposes a partner in dialogue): It is manifestly a “solitary poem by Zenji” (Kamo no Mabuchi, Book 2 of *Man’yōkō [Analysis of the Man’yōshū]*). Of course, having said that, we should not assume this is a monologue with no concern to Iratsume. Rather, it is conceptually for “Kume no Zenji to relay his innermost thoughts. Aligning it with the poem directly preceding (Poem 99 by Zenji), he most certainly meant it to communicate his heart to Ishikawa no Iratsume” (*Man’yōshū Kōgi [An Encyclopedic Commentary to the Man’yōshū]*, Book 2, Part 1). To the extent that this final poem loses the dialogic nature of the previous four poems, however, it rewards consideration (Itō Haku, “Utagatari no Hōhō,” [“The Method of *Utagatari*”] *Man’yōshū no Hyōgen to Hōhō [Form and Method in the Man’yōshū]*, Part 1, Hanawa shobō, 1975). That the conversational exchange (*taiei*) ends in lieu of a solitary *dokuei* and that we notice an additional overture for good measure informs us that Zenji’s poem brings the courting to a close. That “the fine bow of Shinano” is replaced by “the boxes of first fruits sent from the Eastern people” in this concluding poem suggests exuberance over the consummation of their matrimony, establishing an association with the offerings for the Kinensai.

Tracing the development of the five poems in this set, we have focused on the two main pillars of “the fine bow of Shinano” and the priest’s “*nochi no kokoro*,” while analyzing the intimate relationship between the courting presented therein with the very name of the courter, Kume no Zenji. To the author, the development we have followed of the courtship poems between the priest and Ishikawa no Iratsume appears too contrived to be taken as a true account.

Turning our attention to Ishikawa no Iratsume, the focus of Zenji’s affections, the nature of her name rewards consideration, as well. While several scholarly inquiries have been made into her personage (Ogata Koreaki, “Ishikawa no Iratsume,” *Man’yōshū Sakka to Sono Ba* [Man’yōshū Poems and Their Context: An Investigation of Hitomaro], Ōfūsha, 1976; Kawakami Tomiyoshi, “Ishikawa no Iratsume Denshōzō,” [“The Identity of Ishikawa no Iratsume”] *Man’yō Kajin no Kenkyū [Research on Man’yōshū Poets]*, Ōfūsha, 1983; Aso Mizue “Ishikawa no Iratsume,” *Man’yō Wakashi Ronkō [Research on Man’yōshū Waka]*, Kasama Shoin, 1992; etc.), she nevertheless remains an elusive figure of the Tenji era. It is not inconceivable that this “Ishikawa no Iratsume” was an imaginary woman based upon the figure of one Ishikawa no Iratsume (Book 2:107-110; 2:126-129) of the later Fujiwara court whose *eika* survive – coincidentally, both are coquettish and adept at poetic exchange (Itō Haku, “Utagatari no Hōhō”). If we allow for this, however, it becomes difficult to explain why the *Man’yōshū* compilers decided to place this exchange in the earlier Tenji era. Was there an actual “Ishikawa no Iratsume” during the Tenji era, as well? Was the nature of the later Ishikawa no Iratsume foisted upon her? Or was the name of “Ishikawa no Iratsume” simply assigned to the tradition of this woman under the Tenji court? Whatever the case, surely we can assert that Tenji-era literature tastes played a role in the formation of this poetic exchange. As Kubota Utsubo explains in *Man’yōshū Hyōshaku*:

These four poems follow the beginning of courtship through its development between Zenji and Ishikawa no Iratsume. The final poem by Zenji brings the exchange to its conclusion, creating a unitary story. This is an example of an *uta-monogatari*. It is thus evident that stories developed through the medium of song were both enjoyed and employed in the Tenji era.

This fundamentally stands in agreement with the central contention of this paper.⁴

The ancient house of Kume is known for its *Kume-uta* songs (*Kojiki kayō* [*Songs of the Kojiki*] 10-14, *Nihon Shoki Kayō* [*Songs of the Nihon Shoki*] 7-14, etc.) and oral tradition of the courtship story of Princess Isekeyori, as found in the *kayō* surrounding *Ōkume no mikoto* (*Kojiki kayō* 16-19) in which he administers tattoos around his eyes (*geimoku*) to stimulate surprise, in addition for its involvement in the formation and passing on of the *Kume-mai* dance (Hayashiya Tatsusaburō, *Chūsei Geinōshi no Kenkyū* [*Research on the Entertainment of the Medieval Period*], Iwanami Shoten, 1960, etc.). Moreover, we notice something familiar in the *setsuwa* surrounding Kume no Sennin (Kume the Transcendent): Kume the Transcendent, infatuated with the white skin of a young woman's legs, loses his magical powers, only to construct the temple of Kumedera after an auspicious sign (*Konjaku monogatari shū* [*A Collection of Stories from the Past*], Book 11, Story 24, etc.). Even if one does not allow for similarities between Kume the Transcendent and Kume no Zenji, surely we can understand the courting poems of Kume no Zenji as one fulfillment of such traditions of the Kume house.

In many cases, we have no way of knowing when and by whom these traces of tradition surrounding the Kume family have been passed down. If we allow that the exchange of courtship poems concerning “Kume no Zenji” took place under the Tenji court within the *Man'yōshū*, however, we are provided with a valuable hint. As I touched upon in chapters two (“The Range of Early *Man'yōshū* Poems”) and three (“A Profound Response”) of *Man'yōshū Authors and their Art* (*Man'yō no Kajin to Sono Hyōgen*), the Tenji court saw the efflorescence of literature to an unexpected degree; according to our discussion in this section, the literature of this time was already capable of generating a fictional poem-set imbued symmetrically with all the characteristics expected of both a “Kume” and a “zenji.”

Not disconcerted by the complete lack of biographical information, we have devoted a considerable amount of space to the possibilities inferable from the name of “Kume no Zenji.” Incidentally, we do indeed find other examples of fictional poems that hinge on constructed names: for instance, the *shibi* (a type of tuna) speared by the fisherman (*ama*) in the exchange of songs (*utagaki*) between Woke no Mikoto and Heguri no Shibi (*Kojiki Kayō* 109 and 111 and *Nihon Shoki Kayō* 87). Moreover, poems such as this most surely have their roots in the ancient *kayō* traditions. At the confluence of these traditions and the efflorescence of literature we find these poems of courting by “Kume no Zenji.” This paper has attempted to understand the burgeoning literature of the time through the forms of expression of the “Five poems exchanged in the courting of Ishikawa no Iratsume by Kume no Zenji.”

Editor's Note

This paper was translated by Mr. Joseph Ryan (freelance translator) under the supervision of Akihiro Odanaka and Steven Evans (Editorial Board). The English translation of the original Japanese paper is permitted by the Society of Japanese and Japanese Literature, Osaka City University.

4. When considering *utagatari* that focus on the romantic relationship between a man and a woman, we should turn to such surmised examples as “Two poems composed by Fubuki no Toji” (Book 4:490-491) and “Four poems composed upon the appointment of Tabe no Imiki Ichiko to Dazaifu” (Book 4:492-495), both of which have intimate relationships to the individual's names in their titles: “Fubuki no Toji” (see Book 1:22), recorded as active during the early Tenmu era, and “Toneri Etoshi” (also Toneri Kine; see Book 2:152), known for her work during the Tenji administration.