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Kanshi: The Vehicle of Cultural Exchange and Feminism

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Kanshi: The Vehicle of Cultural Exchange and Feminism

Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Language and Literature
of Bard College

by
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Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

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To mom and dad,
who are on the other side of the Earth.

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Table of Contents

Note.....	1
Introduction.....	2
I. Chinese Classical Poetry.....	4
II. Origin of Kanshi in Japan.....	12
III. Connection of Chinese and Japanese Poetry: Format and Function.....	15
IV. Kanshi in Meiji and Taisho Eras.....	17
Chapter 1 Kanshi as Evidence of Transnational Communication.....	19
1.1 Abe no Nakamaro and His Chinese Friends.....	19
1.2 Kanshi in Meiji: Brush Talk and Diplomacy.....	27
Chapter 2 Kanshi and Feminist Consciousness.....	39
2.1 Female Writers in the Medieval Age.....	39
2.2 Female Poets in Meiji and Taisho	45
Conclusion.....	53
Bibliography.....	56

Note

The original texts of the poems selected in this paper are presented in different ways. Poems written by Chinese poets are in simplified Chinese. Poems written by Japanese poets are in traditional Chinese. The *waka* piece of Abe no Nakamaro (Chao Heng) is in old Japanese, it is a direct citation from *Kokin Wakashū*. The Chinese version of this *waka* is in traditional Chinese. His sinic poems are all in simplified Chinese as they were written when he's in China, and he was treated as one of Tang poets in history. All translations are mine unless mentioned otherwise. The citations of academic journals from Chinese sources are also translated by myself.

Introduction

In this Senior Project, I would like to discuss *kanshi* compositions in Japan. The idea was originated from an academic project I've done for a Japanese translation seminar. When I was translating Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's¹ travel notes about China, I was surprised by his ability to cite Chinese classics such as poems of Du Fu and allusions from *Romance of the Western Chamber*² so easily. When Akutagawa wrote down these travel notes, it was already 1921, fifty-three years since Meiji Restoration and thirty-six years since the publication of Fukuzawa Yukichi's³ article "Leaving Asia", Japanese society was experiencing a rapid modernization, and Western ideologies was becoming the mainstream, taking position of Kangaku (Sinic studies). However, the large number of references of Chinese poetry in Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's work provides evidence for the survival of Chinese influence even during the process of Westernization. Among Meiji and Taisho literati, there were scholars like Fukuzawa Yukichi who disavowed the value of Chinese classics, but there were also a number of them, like Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, who still held respect toward Sinic studies, and adhered to the practice of learning and even writing in *kanbun*, or Chinese writings. Since *kanbun* is a generic term which contains a lot of content, I would like to pay more attention on *kanshi* poetry made by Japanese people.

¹ Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介 (1892-1927) was a Japanese writer who was born in Meiji era and active in Taisho era. His famous works include *Rashōmon* and *Hell Screen*.

² *Romance of the Western Chamber* 西廂記 is a dramatic work of Yuan dynasty playwright Wang Shifu.

³ Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835-1901) was a scholar, educator, and entrepreneur of Meiji Japan. His portrait is printed on the 10,000 Japanese-yen banknote to memorize his contribution to Japan's modernization.

The *kanshi* 漢詩 composition is an important part of *kanbun* writing which could be traced back to centuries ago, it's the term for Chinese poetry or Sinic poetry in Japanese language. The appearance of *kanshi* practice in Japan was initially a result of Japanese elites' admiration toward China since the Asuka period (592-710AD), the missions of *kentōshi* 遣唐使 Japan sent to China for the sake of studying Chinese culture, since then, became a big deal in Nara and Heian. World-widely, there's not much voluntary cultural adaption happened in the same way as how Japanese adapted the tradition of Sinic poetry from China into their own, the uniqueness of *kanshi* makes it a topic worth discussing.

If considering Meiji and Taisho periods as the end point of the dominance of Chinese studies in Japan, the *kentōshi*'s missions of the medieval age marked the beginning, with a time span of over one thousand years. From Nara period to Taisho era, no matter what the political or social situations were during the time in between, the essence of *kanshi* was not wear down in Japan. Although its connection with Chinese poetry could not be denied, through years of development, *kanshi* had become part of Japan's own culture, therefore I think *kanshi* is not simply an example of cultural adaption.

On one hand, *kanshi* poetry tells the story of a transnational friendship between China and Japan, the ability to read and write in Chinese characters laid a foundation for Japanese to communicate with Chinese fellows, creating a bridge which connects two neighboring cultures. In the Nara and Heian periods, *kentōshi* played the role of messenger, delivering information back and forth. As Japan embraced more and more cultural input from China brought by the messengers, the overlap between the two cultures helped create a sense of closeness, facilitating communication within the concept of "Sinosphere"; In the debate over whether promoting Western ideologies or

keeping Chinese studies during Meiji and Taisho, *kanshi* became the weapon to fight against the occidentalists. In brush talks between Chinese and Japanese literati, *kanshi* compositions were also an event of exchanging thoughts and knowledge in diplomatic occasions. We can see that *kanshi* culturally connected people from the two East Asian countries under the shadow of Westernization, and this intercultural bond served as an opposing force when Japan was facing Western impact. On the other hand, *kanshi* poetry recorded the domestic evolution of social structure in Japan, one of the most important among all is the transitions of female's role in the literary world. In the patriarchal society of Japan, the participants of *kanshi* writing were not limited to men. From the works of Heian female writers, we could notice that women in the medieval age had already had the access to knowledge on *kanshi*, but the way they revealed their knowledgeability and the attitude of society toward them varied from what modern female writers had experienced. These Japanese women from different eras used *kanshi* to demonstrate their feminist consciousness, and their works also reflect a side view of the transition of female's role in Japanese society.

To help readers understand the idea of *kanshi*, in the following part of introduction, I'll provide some background information.

I. Chinese Classical Poetry

Poetry in Chinese literary history, at least to native Chinese people, is one of the most important parts in cultural lives. The "poetry" mentioned here is referring to classical or traditional poetry, though it is a generalized term in Chinese context including *shi* 诗, *ci* 词,

ge 歌, and *fu* 赋⁴, four different types of verses. Since one single *hanzi* 汉字 (Chinese character) could be enriched with various meanings, the extreme compressed form of classical poems, where a complete expression or story is able to be presented in restricted number of words, have shown an undeniable charm. Poetry, often included in a general genre called *wenyanwen* 文言文 (classical style of writing), plays the most crucial role in literary expression in China.

Due to the complication of Classical Chinese, the delicate style of writing is therefore often considered as exclusive products for elite and educated ranks. It is widely believed that during the early 20th century before Hu Shih 胡适⁵ published “A Preliminary Discussion of Literature Reform 文学改良刍议”⁶ and China started a language revolution of changing Classical Chinese to colloquial language in order to promote the increasing percentage of education, there were around eighty percent of the population who were illiteracy; even in modern days, Chinese classical poetry is still something most people would only acquire during school days, and people with good knowledge on ancient poems could be complimented as *wenhuaren* 文化人 (well-educated man). However, to look back at the history of Chinese classical poetry, it might be surprising to observe the close connection between poetry and ordinary people in China. In the introduction Witter Bynner writes for his translation work of *The Jade Mountain: A Chinese Anthology* (1964), he states: “... from early imperial days down to these even worse disordered days of the Republic, the sense of

⁴ *shi*, *ci*, *ge*, and *fu* 诗词歌赋 are the generic terms for Chinese poetry, the word contains four major types of Chinese classical poems.

⁵ Hu Shih (1891-1962) was a Chinese writer during republic era of China in the 20th century.

⁶ “A Preliminary Discussion of Literature Reform” was published on the New Youth magazine founded by Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 in 1917, the article advocated a reform on Chinese literature, and it had an impact on the New Literature Movement in China.

poetry as a natural and solacing part of life has lasted among the Chinese people.” Bynner is not wrong, especially not when he’s discussing Chinese poetry’s deep-rooted relation with and long-term impact on ordinary civilians.

It is widely considered that the earliest Chinese poems were included in a collection named *Shijing* 诗经 (*Classic of Poetry* or *Book of Odes*)⁷. The poems compiled into this collection could be dated back to as early as Western Zhou 西周⁸ (1046–771 BC) which was China’s earliest dynasty with written records. Though these poems present rather polished and elaborated dictions and styles with a very orderly four-character structure, it is believed that most of them were adapted from folk songs created and sung by ordinary people, inspired by daily life and customs of the time.

The first poem of *Shijing* is called “Guanjū 关雎,”⁹ it might be one of the most well-known ancient love songs of China, and possibly the oldest one.¹⁰ Though the themes of Chinese poems could include all kinds of topics from war to beautiful landscape, from patriotic thoughts to private feelings, it is still interesting to observe the fact that the first poem in the earliest poetry collection of China is about romantic relationships. The poem

⁷ *Shijing* is believed to be the very first collection of Chinese poetry. The topics include love story, daily life, ceremonies, rituals, and so on.

⁸ Western Zhou (1046-771BC) was the first half of Zhou dynasty, it began when King Wu of Zhou overthrew the rule of King Zhou of Shang. During this time, the ritual and moral standards were established, and they were considered as the model by later philosophers and scholars such as Confucius.

⁹ Guanjū is the first poem in *Shijing*, the title means “crying osprey”.

¹⁰ Since “Guanjū” is the first piece in *Shijing*, it may be the first love song written down in Chinese literary history, but there’s also a record of an early southern folk song named “Hourenxiyi 候人兮猗” with the repetition of these four characters throughout the entire piece, it simply means “waiting for you,” expressing the affection of a lady toward Dayu 大禹, or Yu the Great, who is famous for controlling flood during Xia Dynasty in Chinese legend. This piece is possibly older than “Guanjū”.

“Guanjū” expressed a *junzi* 君子 (gentleman)’s feelings on a *shunü* 淑女 (fair maiden), and

how he was sleeplessly missing her and imagining his life with her:

关关雎鸠，	Guan-guan go the ospreys,
	On the islet in the river.
在河之洲。	The modest, retiring, virtuous,
	young lady:
窈窕淑女，	For our prince a good mate she.
君子好逑。	Here long, there short, is the
	duckweed,
参差荇菜，	To the left, to the right, borne
左右流之。	about by the current.
	The modest, retiring, virtuous,
窈窕淑女，	young lady: Waking and sleeping,
寤寐求之。	he sought her. ¹

Just like the translation made by Scottish linguist, sinologist, and translator James Legge, which interprets *junzi* in this piece as “prince,” there are theories believing that this word implies the fact the romance depicted here is between two high-class people, because *junzi* in ancient China was often used to call an emperor or a noble male. Also in the later part of “Guanjū” I didn’t include above, the mention of *qinse* 琴瑟¹¹ and *zhonggu* 钟鼓,¹² Chinese

¹¹ *Qinse* is the combining word for two Chinese traditional stringed instruments called *qin* and *se*.

¹² *Zhonggu*, similar to *qinse*, is the word for two traditional percussion instruments in ancient China called *zhong* and *gu*.

transitional stringed and percussion instruments, which were typically used during ceremonies of nobles (e.g. wedding), might also show the special background of *junzi* and *shunü* in the story of “Guanjü.” However, regardless of the debates, this old piece still shows the very aesthetic and romantic nature of Chinese ancestors during the early age. As a matter of fact, except for “Guanjü,” there are many other love songs recorded in *Shijing*, their importance which had been approved by generations has demonstrated the key role of people’s common emotional life, instead of things like politics, in Chinese poetry.

It is said that the original version of *Shijing* had about three thousand pieces, the collection itself already contained many different topics, but after the appearance of *Shijing*, the development of Chinese poetry continued. Considering the fact that China was constituted of many vassal states before the first Emperor Shi of Qin dynasty 秦始皇 united the whole nation in 221 BC, the formats of poetry were significantly variable depending on their originations, and therefore could contain many regional features. For instance, *Chuci* 楚辞 (Verses of Chu)¹³ born in a southern state (now the area of central China) named Chu 楚 was much more flexible on structure and had a very distinctive modal particle *xi* 兮. This type of poetry is thought as the founder of Chinese romanticism, and the most representative poet is Qu Yuan 屈原, who is commemorated on *duanwujie* 端午节, or more widely known as the Chinese traditional Dragon Boat Festival. When Chinese families gather together and eat *zongzi* 粽子 to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival, they are always reminded of Qu Yuan, but it is not simply because of his talent on poetry writing. “Lisao 离骚” (“Encountering

¹³ *Chuci* is a poetry anthology of the Warring States period 战国 (475–221 BC), the contributors of this anthology are mostly Qu Yuan and Song Yu.

Sorrow” or “The Lament”), Qu Yuan’s most memorable piece could explain everything. The full poem has more than three hundred lines, but through two of the most famous verses, the readers could simply find the difference between this piece and “Guanjü” talked before:

老冉冉其将至兮，

恐修名之不立。

.....

乱曰：已矣哉！

国无人莫我知兮，

又何怀乎故都！

既莫足与为美政兮，

吾将从彭咸之所居！

For old age comes creeping and soon will
be upon me, and I fear I shall not leave
behind an enduring name.

.....

Enough! There are no true men in the state:
no one to understand me.

Why should I cleave to the city of my birth?
Since none is worthy to work with in
making good government, I will go and join
P’eng Hsien¹⁴ in the place where he abides¹⁵

When *Shijing* focuses more on social life, such as romances, weddings, wars, and rituals, Qu Yuan spent his efforts on expressing his personal aspiration and pursuit on politics, showing his anguish of being excluded by the corruptive court and his worries for the country and its people. Qu Yuan’s political life was obviously not successful, but his legend was passed down for centuries after he gave his life away for the collapsing Chu state in the Miluo River.

¹⁴ Peng Hsien 彭咸 (Peng Xian) was an aspirational and righteous minister of Yin 殷 dynasty according to Qu Yuan’s texts. There are no certain evidence shows the existence of this person, but he is mentioned in Qu’s several works for many times.

¹⁵ Translation of David Hawkes.

Shijing and *Chuci* exploited the magnificent world of Chinese classical poetry, which marks their significance as the cornerstone of this art form. The former one demonstrates the close relationship between ordinary civilians and classical poetry, the later introduces the emergence of poems produced by independent poets instead of folk songs sung by regional collective groups. Poems written by individuals are not unfamiliar with Chinese poetry readers; in fact, Han dynasty 汉朝 (202BC-220AD) following the early Qin period had given birth to some notable poets such as the Emperor Wu of Han, Liu Che 刘彻,¹⁶ the famous statesman and warlord of Three Kingdoms era, Cao Cao 曹操¹⁷ and his sons,¹⁸ and so on. At this moment, even though there were already individual poets, many of the poems were still about the life of commoners and were created to be sung and performed. Inheriting the essence of *Shijing*, *yuefu* 乐府¹⁹ is a governmental organization in charge of songs and dances. It was settled by the Emperor Hui of Han, and then expanded by the emperor Liu Che, aiming to collect folk songs popular among ordinary people. And since then, *yuefu* 乐府 became the name for the poems that could be melodized and sung out, that people call them as *yuefushi* 乐府诗 (*yuefu* poem) in Chinese. Although there were not a lot of names standing

¹⁶ Liu Che (156-87BC) was the seventh ruler, King Wu of Han, of Western Han dynasty (220BC-8AD). During his rule, he promoted the system of prefectures and counties, and was one of the greatest emperors in China's history. His talent on poetry composition is also outstanding.

¹⁷ Cao Cao (155-220) was a poet, statesman, and warlord of Eastern Han dynasty, the founder of Wei regime during the Three Kingdoms period.

¹⁸ Cao Cao's most well-known sons were Cao Zhi and Cao Pi. Cao Pi was the Emperor Wen of Wei, he envied the talent of his younger brother, Cao Zhi, and therefore requested Zhi to make a poem within seven steps or otherwise he would kill him. Cao Zhi created the well-known piece named "The Quatrain of Seven Steps 七步诗," which was cited by Elon Musk on his Twitter.

¹⁹ *Yuefu* is also known as music bureau, it's a governmental music institution which charged with collecting or creating lyrics. It later became the name for a poetic form. Representative poets who composed *Yuefu* poems include Du Fu and Bai Juyi.

out during Han, *yuefu* itself produced many excellent works and provided premise for the prosperity of Chinese poetry during the later Tang dynasty (618-907AD).²⁰

I believe that for most of Chinese people, their childhood memories in school must incorporate with reciting *Three Hundred Tang Poems* 唐诗三百首.²¹ Tang dynasty (618-907) was considered as one of the most prosperous dynasties in Chinese history, the regime achieved a majestic cultural fusion which not a lot of civilizations were able to do. “Religious tolerance and mental activity; cultured ease and extravagant pleasures; political and cultural contacts with the west, particularly through the new dominion in Central Asia—these represent the brighter side of early Tang period and something of it is reflected in contemporary literature” (Edwards, 579), the harmonious and liberal cultural atmosphere of Tang boosted the birth of Tang poetry. Absorbed the essence of earlier poetic works, Tang poetry had developed into a mature state, and provided a criterion of poetic creation for the later generations. Among the numerous Tang poets, Li Bai was one of the most famous one, his poem “Quiet Night Thought 静夜思” could give us a glimpse of the style of Tang poetry

床前明月光，

疑是地上霜。

举头望明月，

低头思故乡。

Moonlight shines in front of my bed,

I suspect that to be frost on the ground.

Raising head, I see the bright moon,

Lowering head, I think of my hometown.

²⁰ Tang dynasty is considered as the greatest era in China’s history, it was the peak of Han culture. The wise rule of Tang emperors assured a long-term prosperity with an open and diverse social atmosphere encouraged cultural exchanges with neighbor countries, including Japan.

²¹ *Three Hundred Tang Poems* was one of the famous anthologies of Tang poetry compiled by Qing scholar Sun Zhu in 1763. It contains roughly 300 pieces of Tang poems by Li Bai, Du Fu, Wang Wei, Bai Juyi, and so on. It’s one of the required readings for Chinese elementary school students.

Tang, as a golden age of China, attracted tons of foreigners to visit and even study, and one of the most famous groups was emissaries sent by the Japanese government, also known as *kentōshi*. They learned the Chinese language, traditions, ceremonies, philosophies, and poetry, and imported them to their own country. This opened the heyday of Sinic poetry, or *kanshi*, in Japan.

II. Origin of Kanshi in Japan

During modern days, the cultural origin for the countries in Eastern Asia, China, Japan and Korea, often falls under debate. Since China, Japan, and Korea share so much in common, from language to religions, clothing to festivals, it's impossible to deny the cultural connection of these countries. Considering the fact that China, Japan, and Korea are geographically close to each other, it's an inevitable consequence that their traditions and cultures influenced each other and intertwined together. Though extreme nationalists and populists of each nation tend to believe that their culture is the best of all and claim to be the origin, historical texts could actually give a clear answer. As both Japanese and Korean written language include *hanzi* 汉字 (Chinese characters), many people believe that it is more likely Chinese culture influencing others. Considering the fact that Japan has a long history of adapting Chinese language and words into its own, and is still using a large amount of Chinese characters in daily life, the relationship between Japan and China had caught my attention.

To understand the bond of Japan and China, one must look at *kentōshi*'s missions back in medieval age, "...the embassies to the Sui²² had a decisive impact on the

²² Sui 隋 (581-618AD) was a short-lived dynasty founded by Emperor Wen of Sui. It once experienced a prosperous period but soon decayed. One of the most impressive achievements of Sui was the open up of the Grand Canal. There were Japanese emissaries sent to Sui China, but since the most influential ones were those during Tang,

development of Japanese society, and can be counted among the great successes in the history of intercultural exchange in the sense that one society learned from another voluntarily and peacefully...The only concept of interchange between the Chinese and other societies provided by pre-modern Chinese theories of foreign relations assumed Chinese superiority as fundamental to that relationship” (Bingenheimer 28), the cultural exchange had significant impact on Japan’s culture. Tea ceremony, calligraphy, and Buddhist teachings, some important constituent parts which form people’s impression on Japan today were influenced by the outcome of *kentōshi* missions. These things did not only constitute Japan’s society, but also shaped China’s perspectives on Japan.

In the book *Borders of Chinese Civilization* written by D. R. Howland, it describes the historical origin of Japan and China in details, and how Japan was included in the cultural circle of China, which a large part of is the language. Howland demonstrates that “they [Chinese] specifically referred to Japan in terms of *tong wen*— ‘shared language,’ and by extension, ‘shared Civilization.’ For at the personal level of friendly interactions among Chinese and Japanese scholars, this element of the ideology of Civilization even more successfully served as a means to include Japan within Chinese Civilization” (Howland 43). Although the difference between Chinese and Japanese languages could be perceived, especially through different meanings of the same characters, their commonness largely influences the two countrys’ cultural and literary progresses mutually in the context of “Sinosphere.” For Japanese people, one of the most representatives is the development of *kanshi* 漢詩, which means Sinic poetry (written by Japanese people). The use of *kanbun* 漢文, literally means *han* writing, could also be traced back to Nara period (710-794) in Japan.

the dynasty after Sui, so the word *kentōshi* used here include all the Japanese missions sent to China around this time.

It was widely applied in Japanese imperial and intellectual works. *Kanshi* poetry as a derivative of *kanbun* practice also circulated in Japan.

Considered as an elegant format of writing, Sinic poems were popular among the educated elites since the era when Chinese characters were imported to Japan. The earliest collection of *kanshi*, *Kaifūsō* 懷風藻, was compiled in 751 by someone unknown, and was contributed by 64 poets, mostly monks, court officials, or members from the noble family, based on the model of Tang poetry, to praise the state's prosperity and peace under Emperor Tenji's rule. No matter who's the exact person that compiled the collection or what's the purpose of it, *Kaifūsō* was definitely the basis, and even the origin of Sinic poetry in Japan.

論道與唐儕

When he discusses the Way, he is the equal of Tang;

語德共虞鄰

When he speaks of Virtue, he is neighbor to Yü.

冠周埋尸愛

He caps the charity of Chou who buried the corpse;

駕殷解網仁

He outdoes the goodness of Yin who penned the nets.²³

In this poem written by Uneme Hirafu 采女比良夫, the mention of “Tang 唐,” “Yü 虞,”

“Chou 周” and “Yin 殷” is a surprisingly intense use of allusions. “Tang” is Tang dynasty, probably the most thriving period in Chinese history, “Yü” is the ancient regime established by Shun 舜, a wise and moral leader in legend, “Chou” is Zhou Dynasty started by King Wu of Zhou after defeating the fatuous rule of King Zhou of Shang, and “Yin” is the first regime in China's history.

²³ Translation of Donald Keene.

Although in *Kaifūsō*, there's an obvious political intention of eulogizing the emperor, which resulted in repetitional, characterless expressions, the effort of the poets alluding these stories demonstrates an undeniable good knowledge on Chinese famous rulers and dynasties. Donald Keene states: "These lines, in praise of a Japanese emperor, reveal less of his character than the familiarity of the poet with the proper Chinese literary allusions. When composing a *kanshi* it was not enough to write grammatically accurate and metrically correct Chinese, difficult though this was for a Japanese; the poet had to allude to Chinese poetry of the past and demonstrate also his knowledge of Chinese history" (Keene 76). The "less of character" might be caused by the political atmosphere of the time which make *Kaifūsō* lack of literary value, but the existence of this anthology is still important for later generations to understand the meaning and development of *kanshi* in Japan.

III. Connection of Chinese and Japanese Poetry: Format and Function

Chinese poetry experienced a development of millennia, there were tons of styles and genres created in its history, but syntax and rhyme, as well as the use of antithesis and synthesis in parallel couplets are almost always emphasized. The genre of *jueju* might epitomize the beauty of strictly structured Chinese poetry. Both considered as one of the most representative formats of Chinese traditional poems, the *wuyan jueju* 五言绝句 (Five-Character Quatrain, shortened as *wujue*) and the *qiyen jueju* 七言绝句 (Seven-Character Quatrain, shortened as *qijue*) were originated from Han dynasty 汉朝 (202BC-220AD) and Northern and Southern dynasties 南北朝 (420-529AD) respectively, and they both developed into a mature stage in mid-Tang dynasty. Just like how the names imply, five-character quatrains have five characters in each verse, normally with four lines, and seven-character quatrains have four seven-character lines in a row. Li Bai's "Quiet Night Thought"

mentioned earlier was a classic example of *wujue*. The prevalence of these two kinds of Chinese poetry might have had some impact on the development of Japanese poetry especially on haiku 俳句 and *waka* 和歌.

Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規²⁴ once claimed that although Japanese haiku, *waka*, and Sinic poetry have different forms, they share similar traits, because they were originated from *kanshi*. Looking at Japanese traditional poetry, Keene demonstrates that “the lines of the earliest surviving poems were irregular in the number of syllables, but by the seventh century a preference had emerged for lines of five or seven syllables. Chinese poems were often written in lines of five or seven characters, and this may have affected Japanese usage” (Keene 11). The time period, “seventh century,” is very sensitive, as it’s the time when *kentōshi* started their travels to China. There might be influence from a foreign country, but whether haiku and *waka* are variants of Sinic poetry or pure Japanese tradition, it’s still under debate, but the patterns of haiku and *waka* might be self-proving. —Haiku has a 5-7-5 format, and *waka* follows the meter of 5-7-5-7-7. Although by appearance, they look different from Chinese poetry, it’s not very convincing to say that their arrangements of five or seven syllables in a line, which are similar to *jueju*’s arrangement of five or seven characters, are only a coincidence.

Within the word limit of 17 or 31 syllables, Japanese traditional poetry “could not tell a story, nor enunciate moral truths, nor could it fully convey religious devotion” (Keene 2), so it’s natural that some poets choose another form of poetry, including *kanshi*, when they feel haiku or *waka* cannot fully express what they want to say. “The option of writing in Chinese when they found Japanese expression inadequate or constricting remained open to the Japanese until the twentieth century” (Keene 12), so *kanshi* composition didn’t disappear

²⁴ Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902) was a poet and literary critic of Meiji era. He was a haiku master, and wrote *tanka* poetry as well.

in Japan's history within one thousand and three hundred years since it's imported, and had an important place in Japanese literature.

IV. Kanshi in Meiji and Taisho Eras

The cultural hegemony of China left a long-term impact on Japan, that even until the 19th century, when Japan was under sakoku 鎖国 (self-isolation policy) and rejecting all the cultural or commercial exchange with any other countries, Sinology, or *Kangaku* 漢学, was still considered as a major subject other than Dutch studies, or *Rangaku* 蘭学, among Japanese scholars. However, the four warships of the American army, given the name of “black ships,” forced to enter the port of Edo in 1853 brought Japan a completely different culture of the Western world. After the Meiji Restoration 明治維新 directed by Emperor Meiji which introduced Western ideologies and lifestyles to Japanese society, wearing Western-style clothes 洋服 and learning English became the new trend. Realizing their rather underdeveloped situation compared to the West in the worldwide view, Japanese people started a process of self-reflection. Especially after the publication of “Datsu-a Ron 脱亜論” (“Leaving Asia”) written by Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉, which suggested that Chinese ideologies such as Confucianism were outdated, the Sinology which conquered the Japanese academia started to lose its position.

An obvious decay of *Kangaku* in Japan could be observed in the literary works of contemporary writers of the time, but it's surprising to see that the influence which lasted for hundreds of years was not entirely wiped off. As a type of shared knowledge of educated group in Japan, Chinese classics were still considered as necessary subject worth teaching, so

many Japanese literati who had a rather outstanding family background would be provided with Chinese education when they were young. As a result, the later audience could still find out some precious traces of the existence of Sinic poetry in their productions during Meiji era.

Chapter 1: Kanshi as Evidence of Transnational Communication

1.1 Abe no Nakamaro and His Chinese Friends

Kentōshi played a crucial role in the history of cultural interaction between China and Japan, and the emissaries sent to China during Tang dynasty could be the most successful ones. The cultural abundance of Tang China provided Japan with countless opportunities to study and assimilate, helped form part of the Japanese culture which incorporates with Confucianism ideology, Chinese characters, and so on. There were also Japanese missions to China before and after, but they didn't leave the impact as significant as the ones during Tang, and this might also be the reason why Tang poets Bai Juyi and Du Fu, instead of those of Han or Song or any other dynasties, earned so much more reputation in Japan. The earliest *kanshi* anthology *Kaifūsō* could be an immediate product of Chinese influence at that time, most of the poems in it tried to imitate the format and style of Chinese poetry, using allusions and wording of Chinese tradition by rote; fragments of Chinese poems found in Heian literature such as *The Tale of Genji* were also the living proof of the penetration of *kanshi* culture in the Japanese, especially elitist group's, literary world. Whether the composition of *kanshi* by Japanese poets or the citation of famous Chinese poems in Japanese literature, they both seem like mono-directional import of Chinese poetic culture. As the purpose of *kentōshi* was to learn, even the missions themselves look like a one-way street without the agency of interchange. Nevertheless, a member of *kentōshi* could help us to have an insight from another angle, that is Abe no Nakamaro 阿倍仲麻呂.

According to Howland, "civilization was [accordingly] a spatially expansive and ideologically infinite project. From the point of view of the emperor at the center, the realm was instantiated by establishment of regional and local bureaucratic offices, by voyages of

imperial envoys to and from the emperor's capital, and by the foreign envoys who came to call. In time, and assuming that imperial virtue shone forth, distant outsiders too would understand the Chinese classics and take a place within the civilizing realm" (Howland 14). The unification of Chinese society was based on the same cultural identity shared by its people, and the emperors' rule and the establishment of the bureaucratic system were all supported by that precondition, but when emissaries around the world came to Tang China and studied its culture, the process automatically created a realm which used Chinese classics as its boarding pass, helped create a "Sinosphere" which include foreigners as well. For instance, Abe no Nakamaro was selected to be sent to China with a *kentōshi* mission in 717²⁵ at the age of twenty due to his good knowledge on *kanbun*, and then he changed to a Chinese name Chao Heng 晁衡 when spending his time on Tang's territory. In this case, as Howland has suggested, Abe no Nakamaro is recognized as a participant of Tang poetry.

Chinese readers might not be very familiar with the Japanese name, but Chao Heng was not a stranger to the literary and political circle of Tang. In the poem "Presenting to the Japanese Jiaoshu Officer²⁶ Chao Heng in Luoyang²⁷ 洛中贻朝校书衡，朝即日本人也" written to Chao Heng by Tang politician and poet Chu Guangxi, the appreciation of Chu for this foreigner could be obviously perceived.

²⁵ Year 717 is the fifth year of Emperor Xuan of Tang's rule, and the seventh year of Nara period of Japan

²⁶ Jiaoshu Officer was a kind of court position which was in charge of organizing books. Chao Heng was posted to this position in 725.

²⁷ Luoyang was one of the capitals of Tang dynasty. It shared similar political, economic, and cultural importance as the other capital Chang'an.

万国朝天中	Among all the countries pilgrimage to the Tang's
东隅道最长。	capital,
	The path from the place of sunrise ²⁸ is the longest.
吾生美无度,	The scholar Chao Heng is extraordinarily talented,
高驾仕春坊。	Honored to be an officer in the court of Prince.

Considering Chao Heng's identity as a Japanese, the compliment on his capacities and accomplishment in the imperial court is impressive. By passing the imperial examination, Chao Heng soon acquired careers in the imperial court years after his arrival and won recognition from three emperors; because of his talents in literature, he was befriended with several famous Tang poets such as Wang Wei, Li Bai, and Chu Guangxi. Within the four decades of Chao Heng's stay in China, he left traces in the history of China as a foreigner and became one of the contributors to Chinese poetry.

After roughly forty years of service in Tang court, Chao Heng's homesickness couldn't be suppressed anymore. The Emperor Xuan of Tang finally approved Chao Heng's request of returning home, so on October 753, he got on the boat sailing to Japan in Suzhou. Just like how his friend Li Bai expressed nostalgic feelings through the medium of moon in "Quiet Night Thought," when Chao Heng was looking at the moon before departure, all the emotions came up and drove him to compose a *waka* "Reciting in Tang Land While Seeing the Moon 唐土にて月を見て読みける".

²⁸The place of sunrise is the literal meaning of Japan's country name, it's used to refer to Japan.

天原

振離けみれば

春日なる

三笠山に

出し月かも

When I look up at

The wide-stretched plain of heaven

Is the moon the same

That rose on Mount Mikasa

In the land of Kasuga

It's probably Abe no Nakamaro's only *waka* that has left, but it's compiled into both *Kokin Wakashū* 古今和歌集 (*Collection of Japanese Poems of Ancient and Modern Times*)²⁹ and *Hyakunin Isshu* 百人一首 (*Single Songs of A Hundred Poets*),³⁰ becoming a precious piece of treasure in Japanese culture. When the value of this *waka* is surely approved, there are debates and tales all over the place. When Chao Heng was reciting it, was he feeling excited to finally go back to the long-lost hometown? Or was he feeling melancholy, reluctant to leave the country which he lingered for decades? It also doesn't make a lot of sense that Chao Heng produced a Japanese traditional poem when he was in China, and that may explain why this poem is also presented in Chinese. The translation used here is a five-character-quatrain version.

²⁹*Kokin Wakashū* is one of the most influential ancient anthologies of *waka* poetry in Japan, compiled during Heian period by court poets upon demand of Emperor Uda (866-931).

³⁰*Hyakunin Isshu* is a classical anthology of *waka*, the most famous version was compiled by Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241) in Ogura district of Kyoto, so it's also known as *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*.

翹首望長天，神馳奈良邊。

三笠山頂上，想又皎月圓。

The translation might be made by Chao Heng himself when he was trying to explain the meaning of this poem to his Chinese friends, but there's also a theory saying that it's made by one of his friends Li Bai, since the style of this poem is very similar to Li's poems such as "Quiet Night Thought". In any case, it's a fact that while the *waka* poem of Abe no Nakamaro is included in Japan's anthologies, the translated version of this poem, titled as "Seeing the Moon in Mingzhou 明州望月," is recorded in China under the name of Chao Heng. This one person became a key figure who connected the history of poetry in both Japan and China.

In a macroscopic perspective, Abe no Nakamaro is a representative of the transcultural communication between two countries, and the *waka* has already provided evidence to that, but if looking at his personal life, *kanshi* was the major measure he used to build relationship with Tang poets and emperors. One poem written by Chao Heng is found in the largest collection of Tang poetry *Complete Tang Poems* 全唐诗³¹.

銜命將辭國，非才忝侍臣。天中戀明主，海外憶慈親。

伏奏違金闕，駢驂去玉津。蓬萊鄉路遠，若木故園林。

西望懷恩日，東歸感義辰。平生一寶劍，留贈結交人。

³¹ *Complete Tang Poems* is the largest collection of Tang poetry with 49,000 poems of more than two hundred poets. It was compiled during Qing dynasty as a request of Kangxi Emperor.

I'll leave the country with a mission, it's a shame to be a courtier without competence.
 When in China I love the wise ruler, as in the foreign country I miss my family.
 I bend to farewell the golden palace, the horses that hold the carriage leave Yu Jin.
 The landscape of hometown is distant, the trees resemble the forests in the old garden.
 Seeing the West, I'm grateful for the kindness, return to East I sigh for the good days.
 One treasured sword of my lifetime, I leave it to the friends I've made.

“Composed When Returning to Japan With A Mission 衔命还国作” is a five-character poem produced before Chao Heng's journey back home. Chao Heng was approved to return Japan as an emissary by the emperor of Tang, which has been implied by the first line “I'll leave the country with a mission 衔命将辞国.” It's an unbelievable accomplishment of Chao Heng as a foreigner to be the representative of Tang China. As a *kentōshi*, Chao Heng had a natural attachment to his motherland, but his feeling of belongingness to the Tang court could also be detected when he claimed himself to be a “courtier 侍臣.” Chao Heng's nostalgia toward Japan and his admiration for China made him linger, and with all the feelings intertwined, he said “one treasured sword of my lifetime, I leave it to the friends I've made 平生一宝剑，留赠结交人.” It's difficult to understand whether the “sword 宝剑” is physical or not, but one can sense a kind of solemnity in these two lines, perceiving an incredibly strong bond Chao Heng had created with his Chinese friends.

In fact, Tang literati did respond to Chao Heng with their poetry works. Several poets created poems to bid farewell to Chao Heng, among them one piece titled as “Sending Secretary Chao back to Japan 送秘书晁监还日本国” made by Wang Wei showed sincere worries and regrets for Chao Heng's leave. Back then, the technology of navigation was not

very well-developed, the two-hour flight from China to Japan today was extremely dangerous and distant. Wang Wei imagined the difficulties Chao Heng might encounter during his trip on the sea, and felt sad that they might never get in touch again once Chao Heng arrived home.

积水不可极，安知沧海东。九州何处远？万里若乘空。

向国唯看日，归帆但信风。鳌身映天黑，鱼眼射波红。

乡树扶桑外，主人孤岛中。别离方异域，音信若为通。

The stagnant water cannot reach to the end, how to know the east of the sea.

Where is far away from China? Thousands of miles are like the distance to the sky.

Looking at the sun to face your country,³² the sail of return can only rely on the wind.

The body of sea turtle black the sky, eyes of fish reflect the red waves.

The tree of hometown is outside in Fu Sang,³³ the owner of it lives in an islet.

Once parting we are in different territories, how can we get in touch with each other.

Wang Wei's worries were reasonable, Chao Heng met a storm during his trip, and soon got lost. Five months later, his friends in China still didn't get any message from him and assumed he's already passed away. With grief, Li Bai composed "Weep For Chao Heng 哭晁卿衡" to commemorate Chao Heng.

³² The name of Japan, *nippon* or *nihon* 日本, literally means the origin of sunrise.

³³ Fu Sang 扶桑 is a sacred place resides in the very east of the sea in Chinese legend, here it means Japan.

日本晁卿辞帝都，	Chao Heng from Japan left the capital,
征帆一片绕蓬壶。	With a single boat to go across Peng Hu ³⁴ .
明月不归沉碧海，	The bright moon ³⁵ sink to the azure sea
白云愁色满苍梧。	and never return,
	The green parasol tree is filled with
	gloomy face of white cloud

Lukily, Chao Heng didn't lose his life to the sea, but was brought to Huanzhou, nowadays Vietnam, by the storm. After surviving the bandit's attack in Huanzhou, Chao Heng had to return to Chang'an, the capital of Tang. When he heard about the poem Li Bai wrote to him, he felt very touched and composed a poem back to Li Bai. In this poem "Looking At the Hometown 望乡," Chao Heng showed his disappointment of not going back home successfully, and expressed his feeling of thankfulness for Li Bai's lament at the same time. At the end of the poem, he also demonstrated his concern on Li Bai's situation of being forced to leave the court.

³⁴ Peng Hu, also Peng Lai 蓬莱, is the celestial mountain on the sea in Taoist legends.

³⁵ Bright moon might refer to Chao Heng with an implication of his good qualities.

卅年长安住，归不到蓬壶。	Living in Chang'an for four decades,
	Failed to return to Peng Hu.
一片望乡情，尽付水天处。	A heartfelt feeling for the hometown,
	Is thrown to the place of water and sky.
魂兮归来了，感君痛苦吾。	The soul is back,
	Touched by your grief over me.
我更为君哭，不得长安住。	I cry for you too,
	That you can no longer live in Chang'an.

It's amazing that these pieces of poetry testified the contacts between Chao Heng and Tang poets, and through reading them, the readers could even follow the procedure of their intercourse. Crossing time and space, *kanshi* became the medium to connect people from different cultures, keeping vivid proofs of history of transnational communication in the 8th century.

1.2 Kanshi in Meiji: Brush Talk and Diplomacy

Abe no Nakamaro was sent to Chang'an, the capital of Tang China, because of his extensive knowledge on *kanbun*, or Chinese (classical) writing. The word literally means Han writing, and was with no doubt originated from Chinese culture. The ability to read *kanbun* was valued by educated elite class of Japan, and the affiliated skills of writing *kanbun* or composing *kanshi* were accessories. "From the ninth century, literate Japanese society treated written Chinese as if it were the same language as Japanese, and Japanese still ambivalently identify *kanbun* as culturally both Chinese and Japanese" (Howland 46), Howland argues, and it is true---- nowadays, there are still *kanbun* works in Japanese textbooks, and *kanji* (Chinese characters), or *hanzi* in Chinese, has been integrated into Japanese written language.

The unique position of Chinese characters in Japan provides convenience when it comes to Sino-Japanese interaction.

For some Chinese tourists who travel to Japan for the first time, it would be surprising for them to realize that they would experience much less language barriers in many daily occasions even if they don't have any Japanese learning background. For example, when a Chinese tourist wants to take subway, they may hardly miss the location of a station, as in Japanese the word for subway is *chikatetsu* 地下鉄, while the word in Chinese is *ditie* 地铁. Although they have completely different pronunciation, the presentation of the characters in both languages is almost the same. Until today, imported vocabularies from the Western countries have taken up a large part of Japanese language, and the increasing usage of katakana 片仮名³⁶ has been gradually erasing the resemblance between Chinese and Japanese, but the connection of two different cultures still exists. This connection is referred as *tong wen* 同文, or what Howland has translated as “shared language”. In a quatrain written by Kawada Ōkō,³⁷ he celebrated the Sino-Japanese bond created by the “shared language”.

大船巍巍馳火輪	Great vessels tower high, steamships surge forth-
風濤不隔異鄉人	The wind and waves no barrier for those from other lands.
雖然四海皆兄弟	And though it is true that all men within the four seas are
看到同文交最親	brothers,
	Those who read the same writing have the closest
	friendship. ³⁸

³⁶ Katakana is a syllabary used in Japanese writing language along with hiragana. It's often used when present a foreign words and objects.

³⁷ Kawada Ōkō 川田鸞江 (1830-1896), or Kawada Takeshita, was a Meiji sinologist.

³⁸ Translation of Robert Tuck.

When Meiji Japan was experiencing modernization, and was transforming into a more Westernized society, the linkage of China and Japan generated by language could not be easily cut off. Over a hundred years ago, this characteristic of the two languages had been utilized among scholars from both countries.

Following the defeats in the Opium Wars conducted by Western countries in the mid-19th century, the collapse of Qing dynasty didn't crush out Japan's respect toward China's cultural tradition completely. In 1871, the General Li Hongzhang 李鴻章 of Qing and the Marquis Date Munenari 伊達宗城 of Japan signed the Sino-Japanese Friendship and Trade Treaty,³⁹ which encouraged the bilateral communication of the two countries. At the time when learning Chinese language in Japan or learning Japanese in China hadn't been a trend, and translators were not easy to find, intercultural communication would be difficult. However, while this might apply to the transnational intercourse between other two countries with different cultures, for Japan and China, "translation has not been a prerequisite for full mutual intelligibility with character scripts that rely heavily on logographic writing, in which each character stands for a word...an educated Japanese could read a Chinese text by pronouncing it in Japanese without any knowledge of Chinese or any need for translation" (Denecke 204). The common ground shared by Japanese and Chinese written languages became the key to promote conversations. Lv Shunchang argues in "Conversation by Writing and Exchanges between Wu Rulun and Japanese Scholars 吴汝纶与日本学者的笔谈记录" (2019): "During this time, although there's little citizens who had listening or speaking skills for each other's languages in both countries, Japan attached importance to *kanbun* education

³⁹ The Sino-Japanese Friendship and Trade Treaty 中日修好条规/日清修好条規 was signed on 13 September 1871, it guaranteed the judiciary rights of consuls and fixed traded tariffs between the two countries.

since the Edo period, so Japanese people, especially the intellectuals, had good knowledge on Chinese characters. Under this circumstance, conversation by writing became a crucial method of communication, and was broadly used”. What Lv is trying to talk about here is brush talk, or *hitsudan* 筆談 in Japanese and *bitan* 笔谈 in Chinese, a special way of communication which merely depends on written scripts.

Brush talk, as the term suggested, is a kind of conversation conducted by “brush”, or pen. In some occasions, even with presence of interpreters, as Japanese and Chinese are essentially different languages, Meiji and Qing scholars might feel that translations could lead to misunderstanding, so they would exchange thoughts through writing down their ideas, since Chinese characters cannot be twisted. In the epilogue of *A Laugh at Mount Shiba* 芝山一笑⁴⁰ edited by Ishikawa Kōsai 石川鴻齋,⁴¹ Meiji sinologist Oka Rokumon 岡鹿門⁴² wrote: “I became familiar with Shen Meishi,⁴³ but didn’t understand Chinese language. Every time we have daily conversations or talk in social events, we would use brush.”⁴⁴ It’s not hard to imagine that brush talk is not an efficient way to have conversation in reality, but it broke the linguistic barriers and ensured the mutual relationship between Japanese and Chinese scholars. During this process of brush talking, *kanshi* composition was also an important part of communication.

⁴⁰ *A Laugh at Mount Shiba*, or *Shizan Issho*, is a collection of the poems produced during Ishikawa Kōsai and Qing literati’s communication. Published on 28 August 1878 by Tokyo Bunshodou 文昇堂.

⁴¹ Ishikawa Kōsai, or Ishikawa Ei (1833-1918) was a Meiji poet, painter and sinologist.

⁴² Oka Rokumon, or Oka Senjin (1833-1914) was a sinologist of late Edo and Meiji periods.

⁴³ Shen Meishi 沈梅史, or Shen Wenying 沈文莢 (1833-1886) was a Qing scholar, and was one of the most important contributors to the Sino-Japanese communication. He translated *Nihon shinji ko* 日本神字考 written by Sonora Hiroshi 園田弘.

⁴⁴ The original book is under the protection of copyright law and cannot be retrieved online, the translation is based on the description of Lv Liuying’s journal “Presence of Ekphrasis: A Path to Explore Poetry Exchange of East Asia in Late Qing”.

Due to the *kanbun* education Japanese intellectuals had received, Howland claims that “Japanese scholars were able to participate not only in ‘conversations’ conducted in the literary Chinese language but also in the ritualized play that most defined civilized sociability: occasional poetry” (Howland 43). Benefited from *kentōshi* of the medieval age, *kanshi* was one of the most important products that was brought back to Japan. The tradition of composing *kanshi* started from Nara period was passed down, experienced popularity among the educated elite class for generations, and even survived during Meiji era when “there was [equally] no shortage of Japanese intellectuals who advocated abandoning China and Joining the ranks of the Western powers” (Tuck 32). Just like how Chao Heng communicate with his Chinese friends by composing Sinic poetry, when this type of literature went abroad and gained applicability in Japan, it also served as a tool in the scenarios of transnational conversations between scholars of Japan and China in the late 19th century.

A Laugh at Mount Shiba mentioned before is an example of the transcultural friendship, it is a record of poetry exchange happened during communication between Ishikawa Kōsai and Qing literati. The collection includes seventy-nine poems in total, most of them are written by Ishikawa, and the rest are rhyme-matching pieces of Qing diplomats and scholars such as He Ruzhang⁴⁵, Zhang Sigui⁴⁶, and Wang Zhiben⁴⁷, replying Ishikawa’s works with the same rhymes. There are two independent poems of Shen Meishi as well. The topic of these poems varies from greetings to travels, some directly draw attention to the similarity of Japanese and Chinese languages. He Ruzhang and Zhang Sigui were the first

⁴⁵ He Ruzhang 何如璋 (1838-1891) was a Qing diplomat, he was sent to Japan in 1877.

⁴⁶ Zhang Sigui 张斯桂 (1816-1888) was a Qing diplomat sent to Japan in 1876, he had good knowledge on both Western and Japanese studies.

⁴⁷ Wang Zhiben 王治本 (1836-1908) was a Qing poet, he went to Japan in 1877 and spent thirty years there. He introduced *Dream of the Red Chamber* 红楼梦 to Japanese audience.

batch of people who were sent by late Qing government as envoys, with the establishment of China and Japan's bilateral treaty as the background, the interaction between scholars of the two countries was also very friendly. A line of Ishikawa Kōsai recorded in *A Laugh at Mount Shiba* is written as:

扶桑本是同文國⁴⁸

Fu Sang is originally a country of same language.

Ishikawa claims that Japan and China have the same origin of language, presenting his respect toward China, and one line of He Ruzhang demonstrates the same idea as Ishikawa:

字溯周秦道本同

The way is the same with words traced back to Zhou and Qin.

Addressing the essence of “*tong wen*,” Ishikawa Kōsai and his Chinese friends showed their feelings of intimacy toward each other despite their different nationalities, and with this affability supported by shared language, it explains the fluent communication between them through brush talk. In the poetry collection, there are also verses of Zhang Sigui and Ishikawa talking about their experience of having brush talk together.

张：同文赖有楮先生

Zhang: Shared language relies on the use of mister Chu.

石：考訂何須勞譯官

Ishikawa: There's no need to bother translator for correction.

⁴⁸ All the passages of “A Laugh at Mount Shiba” are from Guan Jing's “A Preliminary Study on Late Qing Officers and Japanese People”.

Zhang used “mister Chu,” a personified term for paper deprived from Chinese allusion, to show that, because of “shared language” of Chinese and Japanese which causes little trouble for each other to understand their writings, the only necessity in a setting of brush talk is paper (and pen); and Ishikawa states the fact that with brush talk as a way of communication, the presence of translators was not that important in these exchange events. These poetic compositions seem to be produced when Ishikawa Kōsai first met these Qing literati, brush talks made them realize the joint point of their cultures and created a feeling of belongingness, which provided the foundation of their profound transnational relationship. Surprisingly, when many scholars, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, embraced the Western ideologies and started to belittle *Kangaku* during Meiji period, some Japanese tended to keep a rather conservative attitude, and showed their respect toward Chinese culture not only in the action of writing *kanshi*, but also in the content of these *kanshi*.

孔道全衰異端滋，	Confucian way decays and heterodoxy starts to breed,
誰舉雙手轉狂瀾。	Who's raising their hands and try to turn back the tide.

Pointing out the status quo of Japan which Confucianism “decays” and Western ideologies, which he claims to be “heterodoxy,” started thriving, Ishikawa Kōsai explicitly expressed his negative feelings on modernization caused by Meiji Restoration. The poem almost sounds desperate, Ishikawa surely worried about the Japan’s society where Confucianism stopped to be the mainstream, and was hoping to change the situation with his own strength.

As what we have learned from the history, Ishikawa Kōsai’s dedication of ceasing the Westernization of Japan was obviously unsuccessful. Nevertheless, he was not the only person who was attempting to maintain a close connection with China. The second Qing

envoy Li Shuchang 黎庶昌⁴⁹ was posted to Japan in 1881, and when Li arrived at Japan, the country was not the same as what He Ruzhang and Zhang Sigui had faced. Japan-Korea Treaty of Amity 日朝修好条規 signed by Korea and Japan in 1876 forced Korea to open its port, the treaty broke the balance of the relationships among East Asian countries. Although Japan and Qing China still maintained the bilateral diplomacy, the issues over the Korea had led their relationship to an awkward situation. Politically, Li Shuchang and other Chinese diplomats could not avoid conflicts, but culturally, their communications with Meiji literati were fine friendly. Noticing his role as an envoy, Li Shuchang held many cultural events to introduce the similarities of both cultures. Although the political world in Japan might be filled with contradictions and debates because of its social reforms and ambition over territory of Korea, Li Shuchang made tons of Japanese friends in cultural exchange events. During Li Shuchang's tenure, he and his friends together had created many excellent *kanshi* works. In 1890, Li finished his duty in Japan and was about to leave. On the last Double Ninth Festival event, he concluded his career in this foreign country, with a sense of gloominess because of leaving and a grateful tone for the friends he'd had.

⁴⁹ Li Shuchang (1837-1898) was a Qing diplomat, he was sent to Japan in 1881. When he was in Japan, he collected thousands of Chinese classics and compiled them into *Guyi Congshu* 古逸丛书/ *Koitsu sōsho* 古逸叢書.

晖晖夕照映扶桑，

The glow of the setting sun shine upon Japan,

此日芝山又举觞。

Today we toast again in the Mount Shiba.

.....

.....

同文历劫终难废，

The shared language is doomed but cannot be easily
abandoned,

与国论心实易臧。

Talking with the country wholeheartedly is truly good.

嘉会不常许尽醉，

This event is not usual so please get yourself drunk,

劝君休赋菊花黄。

I suggest you do not make a poem about the
withered chrysanthemum.

Being a minister in Japan for about one decade, Li Shuchang had contributed a lot in the aspects of culture exchange and diplomacy. In this event, Meiji politician, poet, and

calligrapher Akizuki Tanetatsu 秋月種樹⁵⁰ affirmed the efforts Li had made and expressed his reluctance to bid farewell to Li through a *kanshi* piece which repeats the motifs Li Shuchang used in his poem.

欽君持節駐扶桑，	You were assigned to stay in Japan,
何幸傾顏接玉觴。	I'm honored to receive your jade chalice.
.....
善鄰知是互相輔，	Kind neighbors are meant to support each other,
維國須能同否臧。	To keep the relationship is to accept both good and bad.
只恨此筵則成別，	I only hate that after this event we shall be parted,
明朝空見菊花黃。 ⁵¹	Tomorrow morning, I can merely see the withered chrysanthemum.

Whether composing *kanshi* poetry in a short amount of time, or proficiently matching rhymes and motifs from another poet's poem, the talent of Akizuki are striking as a Japanese. Although *kanbun* was like a necessity for educated Japanese at that time, it still requires a lot of time and energy to be skillful at *kanshi* writing, especially considering it as something originally from another culture. There's no wonder why another Qing diplomat Huang Zunxian⁵² would be so amazed by *kanshi* poetry of Japan. According to Richard J. Lynn in his "Huang Zunxian and His Association with Meiji Era Japanese Literati (bunjin 文人)",

⁵⁰ Akizuki Tanetatsu (1833-1904) was a politician of late Edo and Meiji period. He was also a poet and calligrapher.

⁵¹ The poems of Li Shuchang and Akizuki Tanetatsu are from Lu Gaoyuan's "The Poets Assembly of Qing Diplomats".

⁵² Huang Zunxian 黃遵憲 (1848-1905) was a Qing poet, politician and diplomat. He went to Japan with He Ruzhang in 1877. He wrote *Records of Japan* 日本国志 which introduced details of Japan during Meiji Restoration in aspects of politics, economics, culture, and so on.

“Huang Zunxian, as a poet and critic of poetry and involved as he was with such Japanese poets, inevitably was moved to relate ‘This Culture of Ours’ to the Japanese tradition of *Kanshi*” (Lynn 101). It’s interesting to see that Huang seemed to find the true nature of Chinese poetry in *kanshi*:

几人溯汉魏根源	How many have followed poetry’s source back to the Han and Wei
唐宋以还格尚存	And, in the wake of the Tang and Song, kept the true style alive?
难怪鸡林贾争市	No wonder that Korean merchants fight to buy his works—
白香山外数随园	Except for Bai Xiangshan, Suiyuan ⁵³ is ranked the very best! ⁵⁴

The late 19th century was a chaotic period for East Asia, while China, Japan, and Korea were all dealing with rapid and complex domestic transitions, the Western influence intensified their situations. Under this circumstance, the transnational relationship between Chinese and Japanese literati was already at stake, but they figured out a way to remove linguistic obstacles and develop fraternity. Tuck states that “the discourse of ‘same writing’ thus took place against a background of fluidity and possibility; it allowed both groups of poets to advance claims of friendship, for Chinese poets to imagine a world in which cultural

⁵³ Suiyuan is a private garden built by Qing poet Yuan Mei in Nanjing, the world used here might refer to Yuan Mei.

⁵⁴ Translation of Richard J. Lynn.

ties might draw the Japanese to stand with them against the West, and for the Japanese poets to search for a notion of cultural parity with their neighbor” (Tuck 69). The lively collisions of ideas among the educated scholars through brush talk and *kanshi* composing during Meiji period provide us with a possibility of peaceful and friendly communication which can overlook the impact of politics and cultural barriers. *Kanshi*, as one of the results of *kentōshi*’s missions from Nara period, become not only a production of literature, but also evidence of cultural exchange in Meiji period. Across time and space, it witnessed the communications between friends from different countries, just like how Abe no Nakamaro communicated with his Tang poet friends centuries ago.

Chapter 2: Kanshi and Feminist Consciousness

2.1 Female Writers of the Medieval Age

In Chapter XVII of the *Analects*,⁵⁵ the master, Confucius, said “It is not pleasing to have to do with women or people of base condition. If you show them too much affection, they become too excited, and if you keep them at a distance, they are full of resentment.” This is the only sentence in the *Analects* that Confucius mentioned about women, and though controversial, Confucius’s seemingly negative attitude toward women was taken on for thousands of years in China. Xionggya Gao claims in “Women Existing for Men: Confucianism and Social Injustice against Women in China,” that according to this one quotation, “Confucius seems to suggest that women are to be forgotten, ignored, and passed over in silence” (Gao 115). It might not be the intention of Confucius, but his followers in the later generations comprehend as this way, developed a series of social standards for women, the gender was closely connected with household affairs, limited to the roles of daughter, wife, and mother.

Adopted Chinese Confucius ideology, Japan constructed a patriarchal and hierarchical society as well, education was not available to everyone, and literature was almost exclusive to educated elites. Although there were only few reliable records during Tokugawa period and Meiji era, some evidences could give a rough estimation of over 60% of population being illiterate that time, which made the majority of Japanese people have no agency to express their feelings literally, and the voice of female writers could even be less heard in the mainstream literary discourse. In *Seeds in The Heart*, Donald Keene argues: “Japanese

⁵⁵ *Analects* 论语, also known as *Analects of Confucius* is a collection of Confucius’ sayings and ideas. It’s compiled by Confucius’ disciples during the Warring States period. It is one of the most important classics in China.

literature, especially when compared with that of China and other countries of East Asia, is notable for the major role of women among the writers of poetry and prose. The importance of the women writers to the literature as a whole was not confined to their own works; the influence of such masterpieces as *The Tale of Genji* or *Makura Soshi* (The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon) affected male writers, who adopted the tone and sometimes even the content of typical writings by women” (Keene 8). The situation seems to be a little different than we have imagined, especially during Heian period (794-1185), the time when female writers like Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon, whose names were specifically pointed out by Keene, appeared. It might sound inconceivable, but these few names of women listed in the history of Japanese literature did have almost the most compelling impact over centuries. According to *Women Writers of Meiji and Taisho Japan* written by Tanaka Yukiko, “despite the country’s golden tradition of writers of the tenth and eleventh centuries, when such works as *The Tale of Genji* by Lady Murasaki and *The Pillow Book* by Sei Shōnagon were produced, Japanese women kept silent during the years prior to the period under consideration” (Tanaka 1). Lady Murasaki and Sei Shōnagon, as female writers, had surprisingly remarkable achievements surpassing their time, and left significant impacts on Japanese literature, but their appearance seems like an accident in history. Similar to Confucianism originated from China, Japan’s Neo-Confucian ideology constrained women as subordinate to men, that “women’s role was rigidly defined as wife and mother, nothing more; their place was the home, or *oku*, the back chambers of the estate” (Tanaka1). Under this kind of circumstance, few women could be fortunate enough to be educated, not to mention the possibility of them being writers and poets, especially when the education provided to women, regardless of their families’ background, primarily meant to sculpt a woman to better integrate into her husband’s house after marriage. Taking this situation for women into consideration, female writers must be uncommon, but the works of these selected few left prominent influences regardless of their gender, they did not only show their ability as writers, but also their

knowledge of *kanshi*, which was a form of literature mastered by almost only the noble class and those serve around them during Heian.

Murasaki Shikibu was one of the female writers who demonstrated her talent beyond time, impressing the readers with her knowledge of *kanshi*. In the second chapter of *The Tale of Genji*, “Hahakigi 帚木” (The Broom Tree), she depicted a scene of conversation between the male protagonist Genji and his friends. In this plot, when Genji and his friends and some of the officers were commenting on different types of women, a male *Shikibu* 式部,⁵⁶ or the Aide of Ceremonial, shared his story with a brilliant woman from a scholarly family. The family was well educated in the Chinese language, and all the notes made by the woman to this male Shikibu were in Chinese. The Shikibu mentioned that the woman taught him how to write Chinese poems, but what’s more interesting is the verse the woman’s father said during the party he threw for celebrating his daughter’s relationship with the Shikibu:

わが両つの途歌ふを聴け

waga futatsu no michi utafu wo kike

Hark while I sing of two roads in life.⁵⁷

Although the format seems to be different from Chinese poetry, this line is actually from one of the poems in “Qin Zhong Yin 秦中吟” (Songs of Qin) written by Bai Juyi 白居易⁵⁸ (Po Chü-I), a well-known Chinese Tang Poet. The original full verse from Bai’s poem is:

⁵⁶ Shikibu or Aide of Ceremonial, is a name for an official position in the royal court. Shikibu is a descriptive name in Lady Murasaki’s name as well, indicating her post in the court, her personal name is unknown.

⁵⁷ Translation of Royal Tyler.

⁵⁸ Bai Juyi was one of the most famous poets of Tang dynasty, he initiated the New Yuefu Movement.

四座且勿饮，听我歌两途。

May the guests hold the drinks, listen to me sing of two ways.

This is just one example of Murasaki Shikibu's adaption of Bai's works in *The Tale of Genji*. Shikibu's frequent usage of these verses presents her familiarity to Tang, at least Bai Juyi's, poetry. This might be because she had an educated father who was a government officer, and was a lady-in-waiting working for the empress in the imperial court, but easy access to Chinese poetry was definitely not normal to women of the era.

As what have been shown in the earlier passages, Sei Shōnagon is often listed together or even compared to Murasaki Shikibu. Similar to Lady Murasaki, "Shōnagon" in her name is also a reference to her position in the royal court, often translated as "minor counselor," and her detailed personal information such as name and marriage situation are hardly known. Living during around the same period, receiving similar education, sharing similar family and career background, and both wrote one of the greatest literary works in Japan, Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon had confronted each other back then. As talented as Murasaki Shikibu, she showed her hostility and envy toward Sei Shōnagon for many times, explicitly and implicitly. For example, in *The Diary of Murasaki Shikibu*, Murasaki Shikibu overtly criticized: "Sei Shōnagon is very arrogant. She thinks herself so clever and litters her writings with Chinese characters, but when you look at them carefully you will find many errors. Those who want to behave as if they were superior to others will lower their reputation."⁵⁹ The exact reason why Murasaki Shikibu didn't like Sei Shōnagon is not clear, when people talk about their relationship like a gossip, one fact that cannot be easily ignored is that, just like Murasaki Shikibu, Sei Shōnagon had a great extent of knowledge on Chinese

⁵⁹ Translation of Richard Bowring.

classics, and was not ashamed to show off her knowledge in her writings, even though the medieval thinking believed that “talented women lead to misfortune”.

In essay 78 of *The Pillow Book* written by Sei Shōnagon, a specific interaction between her and a *To no chujo* 頭中将 Tadanobu is an evidence of Sei Shōnagon’s knowledge on Bai Juyi’s poems. In this passage, Tadanobu sent a letter with a line from Bai’s poem and expected her reply with the following line, Sei immediately recognized the poem, but made up her own sentence instead of using the original line. Tadanobu wrote, on a “thin blue paper”:

蘭省の花の時錦帳の下

ransei no hana no toki kincho no moto

You are there in the flowering capital, beneath the Council Chamber’s brocade curtains.⁶⁰

Sei Shōnagon replied:

草の庵を誰が立つねむ

kusa no iori wo dare ga tatsu nemu

Who will come visiting this grass-thatched hut?

⁶⁰ Translation of Wiebke Denecke.

It appears that the line of Tadanobu is from the seventeenth volume of *Hakushi Monju* 白氏文集 named “Lodging for the Night in a Grass-thatched Hut in Mountain Lu Alone, Sending to Officers Niu, Li, and Yu”, this couplet of Bai Juyi says:

兰省花时锦帐下，庐山雨夜草庵中

When you enjoy your life serving the emperor during the blossom season,

I’m in a grass-thatched hut in the Mountain Lu during a rainy night.

It can be perceived is that the *To no chujo* Tadanobu directly cited what’s in Bai’s poem, and Sei Shōnagon created her own sentence by using one of the motifs, the “grass-thatched hut”, to show her pre-existing knowledge of it. In this passage of *The Pillow Book*, the exchange between Sei Shōnagon, a lady-in-waiting who served the Empress Taisho and whose role should be restrained to the residency of the empress, and Tadanobu, an officer whose job was tied to the emperor in the court, is unusual and almost romantic. What’s more interesting here is Sei Shōnagon’s choice of not to use Bai Juyi’s verse even she knew it. According to Sei Shōnagon herself, she couldn’t write the next line as a response because “it would look bad to parade the fact that I know the next line by writing it in my poor Chinese characters,” so instead she wrote something in vernacular language with an implicit information that she knew what is the next line.

Wiebke Denecke demonstrates in *Classical World Literatures: Sino-Japanese and Greco-Roman Comparisons* that Sei Shōnagon created her line because she needed to “adapt to Bo Juyi’s poem to her role as female, confined to the ‘women’s hand’ of the vernacular language” (Denecke 196). It seems that even though Murasaki Shikibu had criticized Sei Shōnagon for being “arrogant” by showing off her knowledge on Chinese characters, Sei Shōnagon didn’t get a chance to fully present those, that “Shōnagon has to fight much more

subtly, from the circumscribed social space she was confined to as a Heian elite woman, in a complex balancing act to make her talents shine or to keep them back, as circumstances demanded” (Denecke 200). Denecke claims: “Although Heian elite women like Sei Shōnagon and Murasaki Shikibu were often highly educated in Chinese literature, they did not produce Chinese-style literature, but wrote in vernacular Japanese genres such as waka, diaries and tales. Elite men, in contrast, were normally educated and productive in both” (196). His statement might explain the reason why though both Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon possessed the ability to quote and recreate *kanshi* poems, they had never produced their own works in Chinese but diaries and novels in Japanese language. This gives a general view on the situation of females in the realm of literature during Japan’s medieval ages, it suggests a supposed limitation on women’s access to Chinese literature including *kanshi*. In a Confucianism-inspired patriarchal society, even women who came from a more advanced social and educational background, like Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon, were forced to step back from specific areas of study, and wasn’t able to perform their intellectual strength exactly the same as men, it’s not difficult to imagine what the situation was for the majority of the female population back in the 11th century.

2.2 Female Kanshi Poets in Meiji Era

In the late 19th century, after the Japanese border was forced to open to the Western troops, and the Meiji regime was settled down following the nation-wide Meiji Restoration, “this circumstance was altered dramatically (when Japan opened its doors to the West)” (Suzuki 1). One of the most significant is the change of education for women. Similar as Murasaki Shikibu, some women from elite class might have already had the privilege to get access to education resources prior to Meiji era, but “only in the Meiji period were women identified as a group that could be harnessed to strengthen the nation” (Suzuki 14), and “the spread of compulsory education for girls within a national education system established a

foundation for women to improve their social status” (14). The extension of school subjects to literature, history, science, and so on, other than “domestic subjects” aim for being a “good” housewife, allowed various possibilities for girls’ careers. Meiji education for women focused on the combination of traditional and modern subjects, did not completely give up the part of teaching girls how to be a “good wife,” but therefore offered a chance for them to get in touch with Chinese classics, including *kanshi*, regardless of their social ranking. As a result, Suzuki argues in *Gendered Power: Educated Women of the Meiji Empress’ Court*, “to understand the foundational thinking of key members of the first cohort of educated Meiji women and those who became educators of women, we must examine the role that a Classical Chinese education played in preparing them” (15). The education on Classical Chinese was crucial in forming Meiji female cultural elites, many more women made their names visible in the realm of literature, leaving their traces in the history of Japanese *kanshi* making during the late 19th century and the early 20th century in Japan.

Quatrain anthologies contained *kanshi* made by Japanese poets were already popular in the Japanese publishing industry during mid-19th century, but in 1869 “one of the first such quatrain anthologies to appear after the Restoration⁶¹, *Quatrains by Thrity-Eight Poets of the Meiji Era (Meiji sanjuhakka zekku)*, broke new ground by including a verse by Yamagata Koran, widow of the celebrated poet Yanagawa Seigan 梁川星巖 (1789-1858)” (Tuck 48). Since then, female *kanshi* poets had caught more and more attention, and quatrain anthologies which were constituted of *kanshi* of female poets became a trend. *Nihon keien ginso* 日本閨媛吟藻 (Poetry Collection of Japanese Female) published in 1880 was probably the largest collection of *kanshi* written by female, containing fifty-four poets in total. While the woman poets in the first half of the collection were mainly active before Meiji

⁶¹ Meiji Restoration was the political and social reform started in 1868, the restoration restored the emperor’s rule, and introduced the Western ideologies and lifestyles.

Restoration, but the later part were mostly contemporary poets of Meiji period, and many of them were students and teachers in colleges or, at least, under guidance of a scholar. Tuch points out a *kanshi* group named *Nanamagari Ginsha* 七曲吟社 instructed by poet Suzuki Shoto 鱸松塘,⁶² “no fewer than ten of the female poets listed in *Nihon keien ginso* were...his direct disciples” (Tuck 49). The meaning of *Nihon Keien ginso* is not only that it completely presents the poetry of women, as this was also the case for many other published anthologies that time. The fact that these females were educated and talented enough to study and write *kanshi* poems might suggest a very refreshing education environment for women during Meiji period, and the social acceptance of them writing *kanshi* poetry which was considered more “masculine”.

This boom of female *kanshi* poets might not be able to prove the rising of all Meiji women demographically, but when looking at the poems written by these fifty-four poets, who might not leave much reputation for the later generations, the quality of them was fascinating. Although most of the poems didn't strictly follow the rule or structure of Chinese traditional poetry, and the application of parallelisms are sometimes off-standard, but the use of allusions, motifs, rhymes, and the fact that they are written in Chinese characters indicate these women's good knowledge on Chinese language, history, and *kanshi* itself, and their remarkable talents of writing them. For example, there is a poem in the anthology titled as “Wang Zhaojun 王昭君,” one of the four beauties of ancient China, written by a female named Onuma Yoshiki 大沼芳樹, it tells about the story of Zhaojun marrying to alien tribe, a famous one known as “Zhaojun Chusai 昭君出塞 (Lady Zhaojun Bidding Farewell Over the Frontier)”.

⁶² Suzuki Shoto (1824-1898) was a late Edo, early Meiji *kanshi* poet.

朝辭漢殿夕胡天， 馬上回頭路幾千。 悟了此身真薄命， 畫師何得誤嬋娟。	Leaving the Han Palace in the morning And by evening arrived at the foreign land ⁶³ Looking back on the horse There had been thousands of miles Realizing the ill fate of this life How could the painter wrong the beauty.
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In this poem, antithesis or syntax, which are often emphasized in Chinese poetry, can be hardly perceived. However, Onuma Yoshiki successfully narrates the story of Wang Zhaojun by taking the angle of this beauty herself. Indeed, the wording of “ill fate 薄命” and “beauty 嬋娟” which are authentic expressions Chinese poets would use, and the mention of the painter who was rarely known in the anecdote of Wang Zhao Jun both show Onuma’s familiarity with Chinese classics, the allusion of Wang Zhaoju. As according to the legend, Wang Zhaojun died young at the age of 35 after a tough life in an alienated place with two marriages to a father and a son respectively. It’s also said that Zhaojun didn’t bribe the painter in the court who painted for the emperor to choose concubines, so he didn’t paint Zhaojun beautifully which caused her to end up being a low position maid in the palace, and this eventually led her to the foreign land.

Shirakawa Kinsui is another female *kanshi* poet who got her poems recorded in *Nihon keien ginso*. Her poems were also compiled into *Dongying Shixuan* (collection of poetry from the eastern ocean). By Qing scholar Yuyue, and were highly regarded by Chinese literati that time, but were soon forgotten by later generations after her death. Studied in a women’s school and later became a teacher herself, Shirakawa Kinsui shows an extraordinary

⁶³ “Foreign land” in the original poem is written as “胡 (Hu)”, a term which is often

used to refer the Northwestern nomadic tribe Xiongnu 匈奴.

capacity of writing *kanshi*. In a poem named “Echoing Harmonies from Scarlet Strings 紅弦餘唱,” a reference to Chinese classics could also be observed.

啾啾黃鳥鳴春，	Chirp, chirp go the; yellow orioles, singing of the spring,
嚶嚶艸蟲語秋。	Chirrup, chirrup go the crickets as they tell of autumn.
聊學國風遺韻，	I have studied a little the poems bequeathed to us in the
以弄彤管煒。	“Airs of the States”,
雖亡詠絮卞藻，	And so I play around with the brightness of the red tube.
時寫紅閨情。	Though I may be bereft of the talent and skill to compose
然乏嫣然致，	poems of “willow catkins”,
而不免形似嘲也。	At times my verse conveys the emotions of the scarlet
	boudoir,
	But they lack any sense of charming gaiety,
	So inevitably they may seem like mockery. ⁶⁴

Unlike many other poems in *Nihon keien ginsō*, “Echoing Harmonies from Scarlet Strings” does not follow an orderly five-character or seven-character format. Since the first three lines all have six characters, it might look like a six-character quatrain at the first glimpse, which is something very rare but existent in Chinese poetry. However, starting from the fourth line “And so I play around with the brightness of the red tube 以弄彤管煒,” which has five characters, it becomes obvious that the number of characters in each line is not even. The last line is different from any others, which has seven characters. In fact, this freer way of writing poem resembles the style of *Chuci*. In the third line “I have studied a little the poems

bequeathed to us in the ‘Airs of the States,’” Shirakawa Kinsui is talking about one of the sections of *shijing* (Classic of Poetry), the earliest poetry anthology in China. The “red tube” following this line is also a term derived from the anthology, normally referring to a type of red pen female officers in the imperial household used. The “poems of ‘willow catkins,’” on the other hand, is a literary quotation from the story of a female poet Xie Daoyun 谢道韞 in Eastern Jin Dynasty. In *A New Account of the Tales of the World* 世说新语 composed during the Northern and Southern dynasties, the compiler Liu Yiqing tells the story of Xie Daoyun producing a verse at a young age when she was asked by her uncle to describe the snow, where she compared the snow in winter to “willow catkins” of spring. The allusion of “willow catkins” demonstrates the talent of Xie Daoyun even when she was only a little girl, Kinsui used the story in her poem to indicate an attitude of modesty, that she’s not as talent as Xie Daoyun, but her easy access to some obscure motifs in Chinese literature, despite her identity as Japanese, is already impressive.

The female poets’ works included in *Nihon keien ginso* reflect an awakening of women, who used *kanshi* to manifest their capacities the same as men; the anthology itself, moreover, indicates an attention the society leaned towards female writers. The ethos of Meiji society initiated Feminist movements, and Kishida Toshiko 岸田俊子 (later Nakajima Toshiko), or Shōen 湘烟, was one of the first feminists at the time who used literature, including *kanshi*, as her weapon. Born in a merchant class family in 1863, Kishida Toshiko had the advantage of both family and society, which allowed her to receive education on Chinese and information of Western new ideologies. The ability to write in *kanbun* and compose *kanshi* was the evidence of Shōen being well educated, and this privilege of her as an elite woman, similarly to Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon, provided her with opportunity to serve in the imperial court as lady-in-waiting for the Meiji empress. Witnessing life of women in the imperial palace, Shōen realized how suppressed Japanese

women were under the social structure and started to put herself into feminist movements. Shōen's insights made her understand the importance of human, especially women's, rights and her educational background helped her have the capacity to promote the feminist ideas to other female companions at the time.

Knowledge gave Shōen the confidence and strength to make her own sound public in the Meiji political world. On 12 October 1883, Shōen stepped on a podium in Otsu and gave a speech titled "Daughters in Boxes" in front of a crowd, talking about women's situation. The content of the speech was published on *Jiyu shimbun* 自由新聞. During the event, Shōen explained why she used the expression of "daughters in boxes."

"These girls are like creatures kept in a box. They may have hands and feet and a voice—but all to no avail, because their freedom is restricted. Unable to move, their hands and feet are useless. Unable to speak, their voice has no purpose...It is only for daughters that such boxes are constructed. Parents who make these boxes do not mean to restrict their daughters' freedom. Rather, they hope to guide their daughters along the correct path toward acquiring womanly virtues" (63).

Shōen was aware of women's being trapped in a "box" created by families and the society, where their roles were constrained to wife and mother, hence they couldn't have the chance to receive education which respected their own will and interest and couldn't make their own sound. Shōen was soon arrested after the speech was given for "discussing politics during an academic address," but her effort of addressing the problem was like a spark, inflaming the fire of feminist movements in Japan.

According to Suzuki, "her [Shōen's] acceptance by her male peers into a progressive political movement as a public speaker in the 1880s and in literary journals as a poet,

essayist, and fiction writer in the 1890s was contingent on her skill in *kanbun* studies, which incorporated Classical Chinese poetry, philosophy, history, and translations of Western worlds” (Suzuki 46). What Shōen had learned since her childhood became her weapon to fight, among them *kanshi* was also one of the measures to demonstrate her political statement. When Shōen was in detention, she wrote a *kanshi* poem.

身論道義繁刑縲	I spoke of human rights and was bound by police
正是明治文化時	Truly this is the era of Meiji cultural enlightenment
輪月多情故穿枕	The full moon with much passion pierces my pillow
寒風薄意痛砭肌	The cold wind without feeling painfully stabs my skin
人言政體不如刻	People say that a government is not so cruel
何事民間切唱悲	Then of what do the people ceaselessly cry out
軟骨亦能馴世味	My pliant body has become used to the ways of the world
獄中高臥賦吟詩	So that in prison, my pillow raised, I compose poetry

The first two stanzas of this poem that aren't included here mainly expressed Shōen's feelings of being parted from her mother in the prison. With a rather melancholy tone, she also clearly indicates her determination of being dedicated to her career as a human rights activist by saying that “even though my body bends like an inchworm 假令吾如蠅曲身, in my heart is a spirit that will yield to nothing 胸間何屈此精神.” When the former part of the poem focuses on Shōen's personal grievance, the second half of it shifts to an indignation toward the society. The action of talking about “human rights 道義” in public sent Shōen into prison, and the line “truly this is the era of Meiji cultural enlightenment” shows a sarcastic

attitude of her, criticizing the Meiji society that even though it's an era of "enlightenment" with cultural flourishing, it still discouraged certain movements which were against the social norms. The line "people say that a government is not so cruel 人言政體不如刻, then of what do the people ceaselessly cry out 何事民間切唱悲" sublimated the poem as well as the character of Shōen herself. Even when Shōen was in prison because of her speech, she didn't restrain from caring for the public, with her sensitivity, Shōen pointed out the reality of common people's sufferings and was willing to sacrifice her "pliant body 軟骨" for the sake of "the ways of the world 世味".

During the Meiji period, Shōen was not the only woman who had contributed to the literary world and feminist consciousness in Japan. As the connection between *The Tale of Genji* and Bai Juyi was mentioned earlier, the reputation of Bai Juyi in modern Japan, however, partly might be the contribution of Yosano Akiko 与謝野晶子 (1878-1942), the woman who translated *The Tale of Genji* into modern Japanese for the first time. Born in a merchant family, Yosano Akiko had the chance to receive education in her early ages. It's not certain what she was taught in schools, but it is said that Yosano Akiko wasn't satisfied with school materials and what supported her literary interest was mainly her father's library at home. It was from that extensive library Yosano Akiko was able to get access to many classical literary works, including those of Sei Shōnagon, Murasaki Shikibu, as well as poems of Tang poet Bai Juyi.

The translation of *The Tale of Genji* took Yosano Akiko around eight years, considered as one of her most prominent accomplishments, but she's also known as a talented poet, who published twenty collections of poems, including hundreds of tanka and *kanshi*. Yosano Akiko's career as a poet began since her high school time, the poetry magazine she subscribed to named "Myojo 明星" (Bright Star) later became the platform she published her works on. It was also through "Myojo," Yosano Akiko met the editor Yosano Tekkan who

taught Akiko how to write Tanka poetry and later became her husband. Yosano Akiko composed Kanshi during her life, but not as many as *tanka* and *waka*. More likely to use *kanshi* poetry as a medium to express her political views on human rights issues, Shōen was an unique exception, but if take a look at other Meiji and Taisho female writers, the abstinence of writing *kanshi* could be apply to almost all of them, regardless of their learning experiences on Classical Chinese.

While Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon didn't have the privilege to write *kanshi* poems even though they knew very well of them due to social pressure back in Heian period, female poets during Meiji and Taisho had a much more auspicious environment to practice this “masculine” type of literature the same as men did. However, the significant social educational changes Meiji Restoration had brought to women didn't lead to default change to people's opinions, especially the men's. In *Idly Scribbling Rhymers* written by Robert Tuck, he states: “While women's *kanshi* practice was rarely problematized in and of itself in these debates, this insistent emphasis on masculinity as an important qualification to be a ‘proper’ poet was hardly likely to encourage female *kanshi* poets” (35). In fact, women who are skillful at writing *kanshi* were once complimented in Japan, even in the scene when a group of men were talking about different types of women in *The Tale of Genji*, the one who was knowledgeable on Classical Chinese and was able to compose *kanshi* was praised by the male characters, indicating a tolerant attitude. However, in the early 20th century, when Japan was actively receiving western ideologies and breeding advanced cultural environment, the idea of separating language and literature into “masculine” and “feminine” modes significantly reduced opportunities for women in the literary domain.

Writing *kanshi* and *kanbun* wasn't banned from female writers in Meiji, but the criticism on female poets who produced “masculine” content existed. In a letter sent to *Yomiuri Shimbun* 読売新聞 in 1882 titled “Women Are Not As They Should Be,” the trend

of schoolgirls using masculine language and practice Chinese was blamed. The letter states that “women have been graced with virtue and obedience; their ephemeral language, quiet manner, and non-masculine ways are very much what is unique to women,” what Shōen had done—writing in *kanbun*, giving speech, canvassing girls to do whatever they want to— were no doubt a shame to these critics. Nevertheless, the arrest of Shōen for publishing a feminist speech and her reaction of writing *kanshi* poem, which was labeled as “masculine,” in response was actually a very interesting phenomenon, especially considering the influence she had left on Japan’s feminist movement. Marnie Anderson comments on the dilemma of Meiji women in “Kishida Toshiko and the Rise of the Female Speaker in Meiji Japan”:

If they adhered to proper gender and class behavior, they stood a better chance of being heard, as opposed to being dismissed as ‘unladylike’ or ‘tomboyish’. On the other hand, adherence to gender norms could lead to specific problems: although audiences and reporters may have appreciated a female speaker’s proper performance of femininity, they did not necessarily hear her message.” (Anderson 5)

The dilemma could easily get women stuck, that being either “womanly” or “manly” could hardly acquire respect from the society which the discourse right was majorly conquered by men. Ignoring the social standards for women to follow the so-called “proper behavior” and be “ladylike” requires courage and volition, but a few female writers lived during Meiji era presented that kind of power. In an article named “What is ‘Womanliness’? 女らしさとは何か” written by Yosano Akiko, she said:

When women have been liberated from the word ‘womanliness’, they will have awakened to their humanity and will no longer be reproductive or cooking puppets.

They will be humans and no longer dolls... We need not fear being called
'unwomanly.'

Shōen and Yosano Akiko, as well as many other female poets in Meiji and Taisho periods, used the “masculinity” as a tool to break the cage set for women, *kanshi* poetry, too, became one of the keys for women’s freedom. By practicing something they were criticized to use, modern Japanese women criticized the stereotypes on them. They presented a very different way of addressing *kanshi* from that of the medieval female writers who implicitly revealed their knowledge on Chinese poetry, but the spirits of feminism were the same. Looking at these female poets, the history of Japanese women’s revolution and evolution in the literary world is clearly resided in *kanshi* poetry.

Conclusion

Kanshi poetry cannot be simply identified as either Chinese or Japanese, the existence of itself implies a cultural relevancy between two countries which lasted for generations, but at the same time, it's a fact that *kanshi* witnessed the social changes happened within Japan, which in the case of this essay is the presence of female poets in the male-dominated literary realm.

In the 8th century when *kanshi* was initially introduced to Japan by *kentōshi* and started to become popular among educated elites, it led to a possibility of a more personal and intimate transnational relationship. Abe no Nakamaro's communication with Tang poets Wang Wei and Li Bai was benefited by his knowledge on *kanbun*, and when he put that knowledge into use, the difference between countries became inconsequential. The connection of the poets from different cultures was fortified by the "shared language," even life and death could not cut off the emotional bonds between them. When it came to modern era of Japan, with a completely social background, *kanshi* still served as a medium to communicate. The brush talk conducted by Qing and Meiji literati was lack of instantaneity, but it did help create a sense of cultural belongingness during a tense time period. When Japan was in the process of "leaving Asia," these scholars' *kanshi* compositions and rhyme-matching activities maintained the connection between Japan and China.

In addition, if put the effect on intercultural communication aside, *kanshi* also had an important role in Japan's own history, especially in the aspect of feminism. When searching on *kanshi* poets in Japan, there's an obviously lower number of females. It seems that women's participation in *kanshi* practice had been long ignored. In fact, through Japanese early literature we can see that Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon had already acquired sufficient knowledge on Sinic poetry, but probably caused by the oppression of social norms during Heian period, they didn't get a chance to publicly compose *kanshi*. As women from

elite class, these writers might have privilege to get access to Chinese classics, but the idealized image of women being inside their household still applied to them. This was also the case in Meiji and Taisho eras. Although Meiji Restoration brought more chances to female, the stereotypes were not removed. However, female poets such as Shōen and Yosano Akiko made a statement through writing and proved that women are as talented as men and deserved more possibilities.

In my opinion, *kanshi* is like a pivot linked to two branches, with one of them reached to China and the other extended within the land of Japan. It's extremely difficult to clarify the importance of *kanshi* in both Chinese and Japanese cultures in such a short piece of academic essay, but I tried my best to reveal a small part of it by addressing representative poets and writers in different eras. Although my intention was to focus on *kanshi* in Meiji and Taisho at first, I found it difficult to ignore the importance of the medieval age of Japan which left significant impact on the development of this type of poetry, so I spent much more time on Nara and Heian writers than I expected. Thus, it's a regret that I wasn't able to talk about the *kanshi* pieces composed by other famous writers in Meiji and Taisho periods, such as Natsume Soseki, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, and Nakajima Atsushi. Because of limited access to primary sources, I had to give up discussing some important texts in details as well.

The cultural relationship between China and Japan had always been my big interest, and my respect toward Akutagawa Ryūnosuke and the Chinese author Lu Xun had pinned my focus to the cultural interaction during Japan's Meiji and Taisho periods and China's late Qing and Republic eras. Four years ago before I entered college, I wanted to do a research on the relationship between Japanese poetry and Tang poetry, that dream partially came true in this Senior Project, but there were still a lot of things I failed to include in this essay. Again, Akutagawa Ryūnosuke's travel notes inspired me to write about *kanshi* in this project, in the future I would like to take a close look at the travel notes on China written by Meiji and Taisho writers. It's interesting to know how foreigners feel about a country. From Italian

explorer Marco Polo's *The Travels of Marco Polo*, we already knew how the view of an outsider could affect the world's attitude toward a nation, even that view might be biased. The same could be applied to travel notes produced by Japanese writers in the late 19th and early 20th century. They did not only reflect Japan's attitude toward China at the time, actually, they also revealed some truths which the insiders might not be able to perceive. That's what I plan to talk about in future studies.

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