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The Jeweled Broom and the Dust of the World:
Keichū, Motoori Norinaga, and Kokugaku in Early Modern Japan

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Emi Joanne Foulk

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Jeweled Broom and the Dust of the World:
Keichū, Motoori Norinaga, and Kokugaku in Early Modern Japan

by

Emi Joanne Foulk

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Herman Ooms, Chair

This dissertation seeks to reconsider the eighteenth-century kokugaku scholar Motoori Norinaga's (1730-1801) conceptions of language, and in doing so also reformulate the manner in which we understand early modern kokugaku and its role in Japanese history. Previous studies have interpreted kokugaku as a linguistically constituted communitarian movement that paved the way for the makings of Japanese national identity. My analysis demonstrates, however, that Norinaga—by far the most well-known kokugaku thinker—was more interested in pulling a fundamental ontology out from language than tying a politics of identity into it: grammatical codes, prosodic rhythms, and sounds and their attendant sensations were taken not as tools for interpersonal communication but as themselves visible and/or audible threads in the fabric of the cosmos. Norinaga's work was thus undergirded by a positive understanding

of language as ontologically grounded within the cosmos, a framework he borrowed implicitly from the seventeenth-century Shingon monk Keichū (1640-1701) and esoteric Buddhist (*mikkyō*) theories of language. Through philological investigation into ancient texts, both Norinaga and Keichū believed, the profane dust that clouded (sacred, cosmic) truth could be swept away, as if by a jeweled broom.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first chapter takes a historiographical look at the study of *kokugaku* and Norinaga's central role therein. It also sets out the thesis that the remaining three chapters of the dissertation attempt to substantiate: that *kokugaku*, at least up to Norinaga's time, ought to be considered as a form of philology, traditionally conceived. It was, in other words, an attempt to uncover cosmological truth from the language of ancient texts. In the second chapter, I present a genealogy of Norinaga's *kokugaku*, tracing Norinaga's thought back to Keichū. This chapter attempts to demonstrate that Keichū's empirical methodology was a direct result of his esoteric Buddhist training and background and, indeed, was grounded firmly within an esoteric Buddhist doctrinal system. It then goes on to argue that Norinaga's philology and positive valuation of language, too, is predicated on a Buddhological framework that stresses the immanence of the truth in the world known by ordinary people. The third and fourth chapters explore Norinaga's conception of language and its role in the world, looking specifically at his studies of *teniwoha* and his much celebrated theory of *mono no aware*. In these final two chapters, I demonstrate that *mono no aware* and *teniwoha* lie at the foundation of both Norinaga's epistemology and ontology, offering a means for knowing and apprehending the cosmos as well as a model for how that cosmos itself exists.

The dissertation of Emi Joanne Foulk is approved.

Torquil Duthie

William Marotti

Herman Ooms, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

For my family

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VITA

Emi Foulk received a B.A. in Religion from Wesleyan University in 2005. She also received a M.S. in Journalism from Columbia University in 2007 and a M.A. in History from the University of California, Los Angeles in 2011. She was a visiting research student at the University of Tokyo from 2013 to 2014.

INTRODUCTION

In his landmark study on nationalism, *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson posits the belief in a sacred language as one of the three defining characteristics of classical community formations—the other two being a hierarchical society vertically organized around a divine center, and a cosmological conception of time which allowed for ahistorical simultaneity between past, present, and future. According to Anderson, the “very possibility of imagining the nation” arose only after these three characteristics “lost their axiomatic grip on men’s minds.”¹

While Anderson’s book has been criticized in the thirty plus years since its first publication for being too general (and perhaps for being too popular), I find his simple formula thought-provoking when considering Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801), the eighteenth-century philologist whose work is the primary subject of this study. By far the most famous thinker of a loosely knit eighteenth- and nineteenth-century intellectual movement that came to be known as kokugaku, Norinaga has been cast as a seminal figure in Japan’s progression toward nationhood. Because Norinaga was seen as excavating an unadulterated Japanese language from classical Japanese texts, and in doing so uncovering a distinct “Japanese” identity, he was credited in the early twentieth

¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 36.

century as a kind of proto-nationalistic founding father-in-spirit who helped to separate out centuries of Chinese cultural influence to successfully uncover a timeless and pure Japaneseness. Even in the modern academy, where the “invented” and “imagined” nature of the nation is typically accepted, Norinaga continues to fill a similar role of “founding father,” albeit of a necessarily more constructivist nature. Thus studies of Norinaga over the past fifty years almost uniformly focus not on any kind of “excavation” or “rediscovery” of Japanese culture, but rather on Norinaga’s role in engendering new identity formations that came in time to constitute modern Japanese nationality.

Yet, Norinaga held dear all three of Anderson’s quintessentially pre-modern “characteristics” of imagining one’s place in the cosmos. Indeed, Norinaga effectively claims in his treatise on the Way of ancient Japan, *Naobi no mitama* 直霊 (1771), that one can come to know the true Way either by studying the correct language of the past (by means of reading the *Kojiki* 古事記 (712) and other ancient texts) or by revering the emperor, whom he perceived as a divinely descended reification of the Way.² The emperor himself, moreover, existed for Norinaga in a kind of eternal, ritualistic now-time, with “no differentiation between the present and the age of the kami” (今も神代もへだてなく).³ This ability to transcend historical time is something that Norinaga

² MNZ 14, pp. 120, 134. This is the third draft of *Naobi no mitama*, and is fairly similar in content to the final version of the same name (but written 直毘霊), published at the end of the introduction to the *Kojiki-den* in 1790 (found in the *Motoori Norinaga zenshū*, vol. 9). I use the earlier version here because it is closer in date to the composition of Norinaga’s more explicitly linguistic works, which make up the bulk of the materials I examine in this dissertation. Thus I want to stress that these views were not later developments in Norinaga’s thought as he became ostensibly more enmeshed in the study of the ancient Way and not explicitly related to this grammatical and phonological inquiries.

³ MNZ 14, p. 120.

attributed not only to the emperor but to the purported language of ancient Japan itself, a language he claimed was derived from the kami and capable of existing in an eternal state of purity somewhere beyond the purview of the living. Significantly, Norinaga believed this language existed in its pure state only before the arrival of Chinese influence on the Japanese archipelago, and thus before the arrival of writing and literacy as well.

This dissertation seeks to reconsider Motoori Norinaga's perceptions of language, and in doing so also reformulate the manner in which we understand kokugaku and its role in Japanese history. The title of the dissertation, "The Jeweled Broom and the Dust of the World," points to what I believe is the underlying motivation behind Norinaga's brand of kokugaku: a search for cosmological truth, played out in the medium of language. Itself a reference to a passage from the Shingon Buddhist monk Keichū's 契沖 (1640-1701) commentary on the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (late 8th c.), the *Man'yō daishōki* 万葉代匠記 (c. 1687), the jeweled broom, or *tamabahaki* 玉帚, can also be considered as a metaphor for philology, or more specifically the philological pursuit of finding truth in worldly language.

Keichū, whom Norinaga considered to be the founder of his school of learning (which he most often dubbed "ancient studies," or *inishie manabi* 古学⁴), refers to waka poetry as a "jeweled broom [used] to sweep away the profane [or worldly] dust within the breast (胸中の俗塵を払ふ玉帚なり)."⁵ The imagery of the jeweled broom comes from classical Japanese poetry and can be found as far back as the eighth-century *Man'yōshū*

⁴ See Chapter One for more on "kokugaku" and "ancient studies" as terms for the early modern study of Japanese antiquity.

⁵ KZ 1, p. 159.

poetry anthology⁶; worldly dust (*zokujin* 俗塵), on the other hand, is a common Buddhist trope that perceives worldly defilements as occluding the six sensory faculties.⁷

According to Keichū, both waka composition and philological inquiry into waka can be considered as a means of sorting through worldly dust and defilement to find the truth that resides therein.⁸ While Norinaga never used the metaphor of the jeweled broom to describe his own studies, the task of finding truth by means of philology was very much the *raison d'être* of his scholarship. (It is worth noting, moreover, that Norinaga does refer to the jeweled broom in his poetic treatise *Isonokami sasamegoto* 石上私淑言 (1763) as a means of liberation from worldly desires.⁹) According to Norinaga, the Way of the kami was the “superior, true Way of the world” (世にすぐれたるまことの道)¹⁰ that all of the countries between heaven and earth ought to uniformly follow.¹¹ While Norinaga lamented that only bits of threads (糸筋) of this Way existed in the world at

⁶ For instance, *Man'yōshū* 20: 4493, reads:

Hatsuharu no	At the first of spring
Hatsune no kyō no	On the first Day of the Rat
Tamabahaki	I take in hand
Te ni toru kara ni	The jeweled broom, and all my soul
Yuraku tama no o	Tingles with the tinkling gems.

(Translation from Cranston, *A Waka Anthology, Vol. 1*, p. 481).

⁷ The earliest extant mention of “dust” (*chiri*) being used with this Buddhist connotation in Japan can be found in the *Hitachi fudoki* 常陸風土記 (c. 717-724).

⁸ As I discuss in Chapter Two, Keichū would characterize his own research into the *Man'yōshū* as finding the “truth within the profane” (俗中之真).

⁹ MNZ 2, p. 162.

¹⁰ MNZ 1, p. 448.

¹¹ MNZ 1, p. 248. Both this pronouncement and the previous one come from entries from *Tamagatsuma* 玉勝間 (1793) entitled “The Way” 道.

present due to the wayward antics of the evil kami Magatsubi,¹² he also believed that truth could be found through the investigation of ancient texts and that the ancient Way could be thus revived.

In shifting the focus away from the decidedly modern concerns of cultural and national identity, I hope to partially rethink the picture of Japanese “early modernity” that much of the scholarship on kokugaku has depicted to date. Just as “modernity” has its distinguishing characteristics—from an interconnected world of nations to the “discovery of interiority” to a new understanding of time as homogeneous and empty—so, too, does Japan’s early modernity, a period that is typically construed as synonymous with the two-hundred and sixty-eight years of Tokugawa rule spanning from 1600 to 1868. As many scholars have pointed out, the early modern in Japan is marked by a democratization of knowledge and culture powered by the proliferation of printing and the rise of both a money economy and a commoner class, which together with other interrelated factors (such as rapid urbanization, increased literacy rates, and increased levels of social mobility) can be said to represent an epistemic shift in how the world was lived and experienced by many denizens of the Japanese archipelago.¹³ To paint in overly broad strokes, one might say that the religious grounding that epitomized the medieval period gradually gave way in the early modern period to more positivistic epistemologies in fields as disparate as medicine and art, cartography and literature. Part and parcel of this democratization of knowledge, the Tokugawa period was characterized by the public dissemination of many hitherto occult transmissions, including those concerning poetry

¹² MNZ 1, p. 448.

¹³ See, for instance, Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, Ch. 2; Berry, *Japan in Print*, Ch. 2; Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan*, Ch. 3; Burns, *Before the Nation*, Ch. 1.

and poetic interpretation. Keichū's *Man'yō daishōki*, for instance, moved away from the secret transmissions, or *hiden*, passed down by the courtly poetic houses, approaching the *Man'yōshū* from a more philologically informed perspective.¹⁴ Thus rather than interpreting the ancient poems in accordance with closely guarded orthodox readings, Keichū criticized the blind following of *hiden* and attempted to correct what he perceived to be previous commentators' errors based on his own empirical observations of the ancient poetry anthology.¹⁵

Certainly, Motoori Norinaga fits squarely within this early modern world: a doctor by trade born into a family of provincial merchants, Norinaga was able to spend his twenties in the imperial capital of Kyoto learning medicine and, more importantly for posterity, poring over Japan's classical canon. Texts from the *Kojiki* to the *Kokinshū* 古今和歌集 (905) to the *Tale of Genji* 源氏物語 (c. 1008), as well as centuries of commentaries treating these texts, were made newly available to those such as Norinaga who hailed from outside aristocratic circles yet had the financial means and leisure time to procure teachers and enroll in specialized schools. Indeed, Norinaga himself noted the seachange that had occurred during his own lifetime in terms of the ease of locating both printed and handcopied manuscripts and records. Pointing to the *Man'yō daishōki* as an example, Norinaga wrote less than a decade before his death that, until a mere twenty or

¹⁴ As Mary Elizabeth Berry puts it in her description of the “Library of Public Information” that she claims was created in the Tokugawa period, “authors of information texts” “took esoteric knowledge typically possessed by closed circles—of poets, tea practitioners, flower arrangers, masters of military etiquette, healers, and chess players—and arranged it in manuals of instruction available to anyone” (Berry, *Japan in Print*, p. 35). Also see Bodiford, “When Secrecy Ends” for an excellent account of the partial dissolution of esoteric Tendai Buddhist practices that took place in the early modern period.

¹⁵ See, for instance, KZ 1, p. 635.

thirty years earlier, Keichū’s invaluable manuscript¹⁶ had still been in fragmentary form and almost impossible to locate; as a result, even those who studied poetry knew nothing of Keichū’s discoveries and, in turn, nothing of the “true heart of the past” (古のまことのこころ) that ancient poetry preserved and Keichū, in turn, uncovered. This textual scarcity had rapidly changed thanks to the prosperity of the era (御代の御栄), Norinaga remarked with satisfaction, and print of all sorts had become far more prevalent and easy to access.¹⁷

Both Keichū and Norinaga have been celebrated for spearheading a new, more empirical approach to scholarship, relying on their own readings of ancient texts rather than on secret lineage-based teachings dictating how a text should be interpreted; and indeed, theirs is an approach that might be called quintessentially “early modern” for that reason. Yet, I want to emphasize the distinctly non-modern worldview both thinkers espoused, which just as significantly was also very much of their time. Keichū, for instance, explicitly considered his work to be consistent with esoteric Buddhist doctrine, likening waka poetry to Sanskrit mantra in its ability to encapsulate truth in thirty-one

¹⁶ There are actually two manuscripts of Keichū’s *Man’yō daishōki*, known as the *Shokkōbon* 初稿本 and the *Seisenbon* 精選本. The *Shokkōbon* was completed around 1687, whereas the *Seisenbon* was completed in 1690. The earlier *Shokkōbon* was built upon the work of Shimokōbe Chōryū 下河辺長流 (c. 1627-1686), Keichū’s close friend who had worked on a *Man’yōshū* commentary for the Mito daimyo Tokugawa Mitsukuni 徳川光圀 (1628-1701) until shortly before his death. Unable to continue the commentary due to illness, Chōryū recommended Keichū to Mitsukuni to finish the task. The later *Seisenbon* is the official version presented to Mitsukuni by Keichū and contains numerous revisions of the *Shokkōbon*. However, it is the *Shokkōbon*—which had been copied out by one of Keichū’s disciples—that circulated during the Tokugawa period and was read by Norinaga and others. The *Seisenbon*, in contrast, was placed in the Mito domain library, where it remained largely forgotten until the Meiji period, when it was re-discovered by Kimura Masakoto 木村正辞 (1827-1913) and subsequently published.

¹⁷ MNZ 1, p. 84.

syllables. Norinaga's theories of language, themselves formulated in conjunction with his reading of ancient and medieval texts as well as of more chronologically proximate authors such as Keichū, reveal a complex interaction between sound, grammar, sensation, and ideology that undergirds a cosmological worldview that places the ancient Way of Japan at the sacred center and all else on the periphery.

In looking at Keichū and Norinaga and the manner in which their respective worldviews informed their scholarship, I argue that we can add nuance to our understanding of the “early modern” and reconceptualize early modernity as more than just the era that preceded the modern. Thus, in calling Keichū and Norinaga “quintessentially early modern,” I intend to call attention also to the continuities within their thought with the period that preceded it. Both Keichū's thought and that of Norinaga, I argue, may better be understood as systemizations of medieval notions of language; in their writings, medieval notions of language—including, especially, the fundamental idea that language is a means or “Way” for ordering and patterning the cosmos—are not eliminated but rather raised to the level of axiomatic assumption for empirical research. And it is precisely this crucial aspect of both Keichū and Norinaga's thought that previous modernity-centric approaches have failed to understand.

The dissertation is divided into four chapters, which are followed by a short conclusion and an appendix discussing the history of the fifty-sound chart, or *gojū-onzu*, in Japan. The first chapter, entitled “Historical Revisionism and the Contours of a Kokugaku Ideology,” takes a historiographical look at the study of kokugaku and Norinaga's central role therein. It is because our current understanding of kokugaku has been shaped to a great extent by its modern legacy that I begin in the modern period. The

peak of Norinaga's ideological significance did not occur during his lifetime, but rather in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as his works were appropriated by Meiji nationalists for their own state-centric purposes. Indeed, Kōnoshi Takamitsu has written of this inverted causality that, "it would be a mistake to see Norinaga's opinions as the basis for the canonization of the *Kojiki* in the modern period. Instead, it was the modern state's need for a national canon that caused it to discover Norinaga."¹⁸ While he was alive, Norinaga's influence extended primarily to intellectuals interested in waka poetry and classical Japanese texts. His renown was impressive for a kokugaku scholar, certainly¹⁹; but it would be an overstatement to say that Norinaga's works had a popular following amongst Tokugawa society at large.²⁰ Chapter One thus sorts through modern interpretations of Norinaga's work and of kokugaku more generally in an attempt to gauge how much of what we consider kokugaku to be is the result of later ideological motivations. Examining the numerous ways "kokugaku" has been interpreted from the

¹⁸ Kōnoshi, "Constructing Imperial Mythology," p. 64.

¹⁹ For instance, when the daimyō of Kii domain, Tokugawa Harusada 徳川治貞 (1728-1789), asked Norinaga for formal political and economic advice in 1787, he was the first non-Confucian scholar to be asked to do so by a shogun or daimyō; four years later, in 1791, a manuscript of the *Kojikiden* was shown to the emperor Kōkaku 光格天皇 (1771-1840; r. 1780-1817).

²⁰ When Norinaga died in 1801, his school, the Suzunoya, in his hometown of Matsusaka, Ise province, had nearly five hundred registrants, forty percent of whom came from within Ise. Part of Norinaga's lasting influence may be credited to his sheer prolificacy. Norinaga left an enormous paper trail, which has proven useful to subsequent Norinaga scholars. In addition to his famous treatises on poetry, classic Nara and Heian period texts, and classical Japanese grammar, among others, Norinaga left behind thirteen volumes of diaries (*nikki*), documenting his entire life, from birth to shortly before his death. He also maintained travel journals distinct from his daily diaries, reading records, records of texts he copied and purchased, copies of his correspondence with others, records of his household finances and medical practices, and composed over 81,000 poems. The *Motoori Norinaga zenshū*, published by Chikuma shobō across a quarter-century, fills twenty-three sizable volumes, but is hardly exhaustive in its content.

eighteenth century onward, I question in this chapter whether kokugaku itself is a useful term for critical inquiry. This first chapter also sets out the thesis that the remaining three chapters of the dissertation attempt to substantiate: that kokugaku, at least up to Motoori Norinaga's time, ought to be considered as a form of philology, traditionally conceived. It was, in other words, an attempt to uncover cosmological truth from the language of ancient texts.

In Chapter Two, “‘Ancient Studies was Founded by Keichū’: Kokugaku and the Influence of Esoteric Buddhism,’ I present a genealogy of Norinaga's kokugaku, tracing Norinaga's thought back to the Shingon esoteric priest Keichū. Keichū's influence on Norinaga, and in turn on kokugaku more broadly, is often acknowledged in passing as a matter of methodology alone (i.e., a matter of favoring a new philological empiricism over traditional secret transmissions). Those who have delved deeper, moreover, have typically focused on Keichū's use of linguistic techniques such as the fifty-sound chart that he borrowed from Siddham studies²¹ and applied to the analysis of Japanese kana. Not surprisingly given this linguistically oriented focus, the tendency has been to minimize emphasis on the Buddhist doctrinal context in which Keichū labored, accordingly overlooking the role of esoteric Buddhism on the formation of kokugaku. In this chapter, I instead attempt to demonstrate that Keichū's empirical methodology was a direct result of his esoteric Buddhist training and background and, indeed, was grounded firmly within an esoteric Buddhist doctrinal system. I then go on to argue that Norinaga's philology and positive valuation of language, too, can ultimately be traced to the

²¹ Siddham, or *Shittan* 悉曇 in Japanese, is a script used to transcribe Sanskrit. Because dhāranis tended to be left as is in Buddhist sutras, the study of Siddham became important in Japanese esoteric Buddhism.

Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi sutra 大日經 (Jp. *Dainichikyō*, Ch. *Dari jing*) (c. 640) and the central principle set forth therein that ultimate truth lies in worldly truth (*zoku ni soku shite shin* 即俗而真), not outside it or beyond it. I contend that Norinaga’s philology is thus predicated on a Buddhological framework that stresses the immanence of the truth in the world known by ordinary people.

The third and fourth chapters, “Signposts for the Way: Motoori Norinaga’s Theory of Language” and “The Grammar of Pathos: Norinaga’s *Mono no aware* and the Cosmic Function of Poetry,” explore Norinaga’s conception of language and its role in the world, looking specifically at his studies of *teniwoha* and his much celebrated theory of *mono no aware*. For Norinaga, *teniwoha* てにをは/天爾遠波—a term he used to indicate uninflected function words, inflected verb endings, exclamations, and at times grammar more generally—captured the spirit of words, transmitted vital sensations, and even ordered heaven and earth themselves.

In Chapter Three, I show how Norinaga’s conviction in *teniwoha* as a cosmological ordering device enabled him to “recreate” the language of ancient Japan, which he understood as the exemplary means of knowing *mono no aware* 物のあはれ, or the “pathos of things,” and truly living in the world. I thus argue that, in analyzing the language of the *Kojiki* and other ancient texts, Norinaga was not attempting to construct a national language informed by notions of ethnic or cultural superiority, but rather considered himself to be uncovering a cosmological truth language that existed in accordance with both the kami and the laws of nature. I demonstrate, moreover, that this pursuit was hardly *new* in its essence; rather, it consisted of holistically expanding classical and medieval notions of poetry and language to what we might consider the

level of religion. At the same time, this expanded scope set the grounds for the systemization of grammatical categories along the lines of a nascent linguistics.

Chapter Four continues to explore the significance of *teniwoha* in Norinaga's thought, demonstrating how, for Norinaga, the grammatical and prosodic production and reproduction of *mono no aware* constituted a means for perceiving the cosmos. Here, I argue against the popular, romantic conception of *mono no aware* as embodying the essence of personal emotional expression while at the same time looking beyond the more academic notion of *mono no aware* as a means for consolidating cultural community to try to grasp the significance of Norinaga's *mono no aware* on its own terms. While scholars who have pointed to the norm-enforcing efficacy of *mono no aware* are certainly correct on the level of practice (and thus, one might say, from the perspective of cultural history), this chapter takes the intellectual historical position that we must also attempt to understand Norinaga's *mono no aware* for its ostensible function if we are to understand Norinaga's thought at all. Norinaga's pronouncements on *mono no aware* and its dependence on correctly ordered words and sound patterns, I argue, provide us with a window into how he conceived his world; for *mono no aware* and *teniwoha* lie at the foundation of both Norinaga's epistemology and ontology, offering both a means for knowing and apprehending the cosmos and a model for how that cosmos itself exists.

If this study deemphasizes the kind of sociopolitical contextualization that has typically served as a framework for treating kokugaku ideology, it is because I believe its significance has been exaggerated in previous scholarly works. The centuries-long intertextual discourse that motivated many kokugaku scholars, on the other hand, has

been left woefully under-examined. Of course, this is not to say that scholars engaged in the study of ancient Japan were utterly unaware or unaffected by the societal contexts in which they lived. One need only look as far as Norinaga's diaries to see that he was cognizant of the far from ideal state of present affairs. For instance, during the Tenmei famine of 1783 to 1788—an event that began with the eruption of Mt. Asama, northwest of Edo, and the resultant destruction of much of the Kantō area's food crops—Norinaga notes that grain prices are exorbitant and people are going hungry in neighboring districts. Kikuchi Isao estimates that the famine accounted for hundreds of thousands of starvation-related deaths,²² a reality reflected in Norinaga's Tenmei 6 (1786) observation that, “all the world is in extreme poverty” (世上甚困窮).²³

Nevertheless, it is my conviction that sociopolitical exigency took a backseat in the intellectual discourse in which Norinaga and others were taking part. As we will see in later chapters, language had ontological significance for Norinaga and existed as such *a priori* to the social. Correct language was, for Norinaga, autonomous of contemporary patterns of language use. Deviation from this correct usage resulted in detrimental social outcomes, certainly, but could not inherently alter language or its role as a cosmic ordering device. As I demonstrate in Chapter two, Norinaga's emphasis on finding the truth through the exegesis of ancient texts was very much of its time. “Return to the past/origins” (*fukko*) movements proliferated in Confucian, Buddhist, and Shinto intellectual circles alike, and it is possible to link these movements to contemporary

²² Kikuchi, *Kikin kara yomu kinsei shakai*, p. 197.

²³ MNZ 16, p. 411. Norinaga makes an almost identical pronouncement regarding grain prices and the world's poverty a year later, in the twelfth month of Tenmei 7 (MNZ 16, p. 414).

sociopolitical currents. Yet this does not change the fact that, for Norinaga, the writings of classical and medieval poets were as important to the correct understanding of the world as any event in his temporal present.

**HISTORICAL REVISIONISM
AND THE CONTOURS OF A KOKUGAKU IDEOLOGY**

Rarely have people discussed kokugaku as much as they have recently. This is a result of a growing academic appreciation of our country's unique learning, and indeed is worthy of celebration. However, I cannot help but fear that this interest is not accompanied by a full understanding of philology (bunkengaku)—which has been equated with kokugaku—or of the scholarly nature of kokugaku.¹

-Muraoka Tsunetsugu, 1939

So begins an essay by the eminent intellectual historian Muraoka Tsunetsugu 村岡典嗣 (1884-1946) that appeared in the journal *Bungaku* (Literature) in December of 1939. Written two years after the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War and two years before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, it is hardly surprising that kokugaku, with its

¹ 国学の論議せられること近時の如く盛んなるは、けだし従来稀に見たところ。これ学界の、我国固有の教学に寄する関心の昂まり来つた結果の一つといふべく、また喜ぶべしと言はねばならぬ。しかも吾人の看るところを以てすれば、或ひは国学に擬せられる文献学てふ概念に対し、或ひは国学の学的性格に対して、世に往々、十分なる理解が伴はないおそれなしとしないものがある (Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō-shi kenkyū*, p. 88).

undeniably chauvinistic overtones, was then in vogue. Japanese imperialism and ultra-nationalistic sentiment were at their height; and, then as now, if one were looking to bolster an argument for Japan's cultural and linguistic uniqueness, kokugaku texts more often than not provided ample material to work with.²

Kokugaku, a problematic umbrella term used to describe, among other things, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century study of ancient “Japanese”³ texts, has often invoked an antiquarian-tinged nostalgia. Many so-called kokugaku scholars idealized the pure, untrammelled realm ostensibly depicted in these same ancient texts, decrying its later contamination and degradation by foreign (predominantly Chinese) influences. Yet, Muraoka attempted to distance kokugaku from the explicitly xenophobic elements so prominent in many kokugaku treatises, arguing that the real value of kokugaku—which he all but equated with its most famous proponent, Motoori Norinaga—lay in its intellectual, scholastic achievements. It was as philology—or “*philologie*,” as Muraoka put it, glossing the Japanese term *bunkengaku* with the German loanword—that kokugaku should be understood and accordingly appreciated.⁴

² Kokugaku texts remain a favorite of certain right-wing Japanists. For one example, see the blog <http://www.norinaga.jp>.

³ Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century kokugaku scholars generally did not use the term “Japan” (or its Japanese equivalents, Nihon and Nippon) to describe the subject of their studies, though the term itself certainly existed and was used to indicate some portion of the Japanese archipelago as far back as the seventh century. I discuss the problematic nature of “Japan,” nation, and country later in this chapter.

⁴ Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō-shi kenkyū*, p. 94. Muraoka acknowledged in his *Motoori Norinaga* 本居宣長 (1911) that, in comparing kokugaku to philology, he had been inspired by the literary scholar Haga Yaichi's 芳賀矢一 (1867-1927) 1904 lecture at Kokugakuin University, “Kokugaku to wa nan zo ya” 国学とは何ぞや (What indeed is kokugaku?), where Haga makes the same comparison. Because Haga's idea of philology was so closely tied to the concept of the nation—he explicitly stated on multiple occasions that the goal of kokugaku was to retrieve and investigate a national essence (e.g., MBZ 44, p. 233)—Muraoka's more positivistic but

Protesting the ridicule he claimed was often piled upon kokugaku as an outmoded form of academic inquiry, Muraoka emphasized its empirical, expositional nature. For Muraoka, kokugaku was not just about native deities (*kami*) and the mythological origins of Japan, nor about the magical words, or *kotodama*, said to uniquely imbue the Japanese language with a “word-spirit”; nor was it merely about adhering to proper conduct in accordance with ritualized norms. Although kokugaku certainly involved superstitious, religious, and subjective ethical elements, he claimed, it was by no means solely an ideological foray into the study of the “ancient Way” (*kodō* 古道) ostensibly the “Way” of Japan before the advent of Chinese influence. Indeed, for Muraoka, the ideological aspects of kokugaku could be segregated from its real significance as a rigorous intellectual pursuit into the nature of language and hermeneutics that both constituted and marked the beginnings of the history of Japanese thought, or *shisō-shi*.⁵

Muraoka’s attempts to re-cast kokugaku speak to far larger questions surrounding kokugaku—what it is, what it represents, the historical role it fills—that have trailed the term since its inception as a mode of scholarship. In this chapter, I trace kokugaku’s multilayered evolution as both a linguistic term and a field of inquiry. Muraoka is but one in a long line of early modern and modern thinkers who have sought to “gloss” kokugaku according to their own variegated interests, each gloss providing a distinct ideological claim and historical trajectory. Kokugaku has been presented by contemporary scholars as in turns antiquarian and backward-looking and, conversely, socially innovative and

nevertheless ideological approach is, for our purposes, more useful. I return to Haga and his nationalistic vision of both kokugaku and philology below.

⁵ Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō-shi kenkyū*, p. 112. Muraoka became the country’s first professor of *shisō-shi* at a national university (Tōhoku Imperial University) in 1922. He remained at this post until his retirement from academia in 1946, shortly before his death the same year.

responsible for establishing a new social “imaginary.”⁶ Both of these narratives hold some truth; but neither a story of nostalgia nor a story of rupture sufficiently captures the many nuances and inconsistencies of this far from unified genealogy or network of thought. Indeed, it is its historical open-endedness, its lack of firmly established canon or narrative, that renders kokugaku so pliable to continuing interpretation.

The attempt to define, and in turn legitimate or condemn, kokugaku has continued for as long as the term itself has been used to describe currents of thought or groups of intellectuals. If the substance of this dissertation focuses predominantly on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theories of language, it is nevertheless with the knowledge of kokugaku’s twentieth-century development in mind. It is, of course, due to postwar historians’ tendencies to overlook the grammatical and phonological contributions that Tokugawa period kokugaku scholars made (including the effects these contributions had on the manner in which the Japanese language came to be conceived in the modern period), that the subject is in present need of examination. The focus on kokugaku has remained fixated on issues of Japanese identity into the present day, Muraoka’s wartime protestations notwithstanding. The laudatory tones of prewar nationalists have been inverted to make way for more cautionary observations on the historical constructedness of nation and nationality, certainly. Yet, the underlying conviction that kokugaku was a movement concerned with identity above all else is a Meiji period legacy that remains firmly in place.

Even as the ahistoricity of “premodern nationhood” has come to be more widely recognized, there is still a tendency to focus on “community” as a kind of pre- or proto-

⁶ Prime examples of these two paradigms can be found in English in Peter Nosco’s *Remembering Paradise* and Susan Burns’ corrective account, *Before the Nation*, respectively.

national, transhistorical category that upholds many of the same characteristics as the nation, albeit in a seemingly less pernicious fashion. This tendency has been particularly prominent in the modern study of kokugaku as an early modern phenomenon. Susan Burns' relatively recent scholarly treatment of kokugaku, for instance, characterizes the primary concern of kokugaku scholars as absorbed by the following questions: 'What is "Japan?" How did it emerge and how is it maintained? What binds those within it together?'⁷ According to Burns, these questions formed the core of a new discourse on language that came to define and constitute an even newer community known as "Japan." This "Japan," she claims, transcended and subsumed prior forms of identity based on religion, locality, status, and so forth. To her credit, Burns goes through pains to draw attention to the "lack of linearity" between the "Japan" she maintains was articulated by kokugaku scholars and Japan as a modern nation-state.⁸

But to treat kokugaku merely in terms of a "prehistory of the nation form" (Burns' term, following Etienne Balibar) is to miss something in kokugaku and the textual tradition it was engaged in, and perhaps also in modernism itself. If we are to truly understand kokugaku for its historically specific significance, and not merely via Meiji period and later nationally informed interpretations, I argue, it is necessary to critically rethink the ethnolinguistic community Burns and others have put forth. Thus we must return to precisely that which is cited as new, modern, and "community"-forming in

⁷ Burns, *Before the Nation*, p. 2.

⁸ Burns, *Before the Nation*, p. 9. I adhere to the common academic view that it was not until the late-nineteenth century that the concept of nation as a type of community—wherein shared global consciousness, race, culture, territoriality, temporality, and so forth can be considered as self-reflexive referents—came to be widely accepted.

kokugaku discourse—namely, its treatment of language—to elucidate the distinctly non-modern continuities and consistencies that persisted therein.

Secondary academic literature has made much of kokugaku thinkers' emphases on language, but it has done so with the base understanding of language as a mode of self-expression and interpersonal communication, and hence a site of communality. Left unexamined within this Romantic notion of language are the substantial ontological aspects of kokugaku discourse that highlight a linguistic paradigm where communication and self-expression are clearly not the *sine qua non*. Rather, what is privileged are grammatical codes, prosodic rhythms, sounds, and sensations that themselves were thought to make up the fabric of the cosmos. It is, to be sure, a paradigm in opposition to many modern attitudes toward language, and perceptions of language as culture construct specifically. But it is this modern perspective that we must distance ourselves from if we are to rescue kokugaku “from the nation,” albeit not in the manner Prasenjit Duara used the phrase to envision alternative forms of collective identity not necessarily headed toward national assimilation.⁹ Rather, it is the modern historical framework that situates a politics of identity as preeminent that has obfuscated kokugaku theories of language and which must be confronted.

In the following pages, I explore the category of practice that is “kokugaku.” Kokugaku is itself a predominantly modern term that can be considered as a shifting historical claim and an ongoing political idiom.

⁹ See Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A TERM

“Kokugaku” was first used under the eighth-century *ritsuryō* political and legal system to differentiate academies in the imperial provinces, or *kuni*,¹⁰ from the university (*daigaku*) in the capital. The first known appearance of the word used to indicate the study of “Japan” as a whole, however, does not occur for another millennium. In 1728, Kada no Azumamaro 荷田春満 (1669-1736)—sometimes considered to be the “founding father” of kokugaku, alongside the Shingon scholar-monk Keichū—is said to have submitted a petition to the eighth Tokugawa shogun, Yoshimune 徳川吉宗 (1684-1751), entreating support for a new academy dedicated to Japanese study. Written entirely in literary Sinitic, the petition bemoans the ill effects of the Tang and Song dynasty Buddhism and Confucianism that it claims had infiltrated both Shinto studies and waka poetics. Requesting a tract of land for the construction of a school in Kyoto, the petition lays out the plan for a library of ancient Japanese texts as well as a research center where Shinto and waka poetry would be studied without Sinological influence. If the petition is real—some modern scholars have suggested that it is a later forgery by members of either the Kada or Hirata schools¹¹—it was summarily rejected; in either case, no kokugaku academies were established as a direct result.¹²

¹⁰ “Koku” and “kuni” are different readings of the same logograph 国.

¹¹ See Burns, *Before the Nation*, p. 254, note 23.

¹² Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, p. 94, note 68. See also pp. 90-96.

“Kokugaku” was not commonly used until the early- to mid-nineteenth century to indicate learning dedicated to the reading and interpretation of ancient Japanese texts as well as to ancient Japan more generally. Its growing popularity can be traced to Motoori Norinaga’s “student” Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843) and his followers, who appropriated the term to refer retroactively to the exegetical scholarship of Azumamaro, his student Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769), Mabuchi’s student Motoori Norinaga, and Atsutane himself. Known as the “four great men,” or *shiushi*, of kokugaku since the early Meiji period,¹³ this lineage was propagated by the Atsutane school as a legitimating device for Atsutane’s own shaky claims to Norinaga’s intellectual legacy. Although Atsutane formally enrolled in Norinaga’s school, the Suzunoya, he did so only after Norinaga’s death, coming under the tutelage of Motoori Haruniwa 本居春庭 (1763-1828), Norinaga’s oldest son. Norinaga and Atsutane never met in life, though Atsutane claimed in 1805, four years after Norinaga’s death, that he had been visited by Norinaga in a dream. Using this dream as evidence of a master-disciple relationship, Atsutane positioned himself as Norinaga’s intellectual heir and had no small success as a propagator of kokugaku.

During the early half of the nineteenth century, Atsutane claimed a wide following both in the shogunal capital, Edo, and in the countryside. Part of Atsutane’s ascendancy can be attributed to the fact that there was no clear successor to Norinaga’s

¹³ Hirata Kanetane 平田鑣胤 (1799-1880), Atsutane’s adopted son and heir, went so far as to give these “four great men” Shinto deity names. In the new Meiji government, Kanetane served as a magistrate at the Bureau of Divinities (Jingi jimukyoku 神祇事務局) and helped to establish the Kōgakusho 皇学所, a school revolving around the study of Azumamaro, Mabuchi, Norinaga, and Atsutane. The Kōgakusho, however, only lasted for roughly nine months, between the end of 1868 and the autumn of 1869. Kanetane resigned from his government post in 1870.

school. Ideological squabbles erupted in the years following Norinaga's death and the Suzunoya splintered into various factions, each purporting to uphold the most important aspects of Norinaga's research.¹⁴ Indeed, Muraoka points to Norinaga as the representative (and perhaps only) scholar of kokugaku precisely because he alone engaged with all of the various disparate elements of study that are today lumped together as "kokugaku," an allegedly distinct school of thought.¹⁵

It is all the more ironic, then, that Norinaga himself never used the term "kokugaku" to describe his studies. Instead, he preferred a handful of monikers—predominantly *inishie manabi* 古学 (ancient studies) and *sumera mikuni manabi* 皇国学 (imperial country studies)—that were to be read, naturally, with a *kun* 訓 (literally, "glossed" with "Japanese" words, as opposed to read with an adapted Sinitic *on* 音) pronunciation. He also used the more widespread term *Yamato manabi* 和学, or Yamato studies, more commonly read as *Wagaku*. In *Uiyamabumi* 宇比山踏 (1798), an introductory manual of sorts intended for new students, Norinaga defines his scholarship chronologically, as that which focuses purely on antiquity and does not utilize texts from later ages. Unlike Atsutane's lineage, given above, Norinaga explicitly points to the Shingon Buddhist monk Keichū as the founder of his line of scholarship:

As for the ancient studies of our cohort, "ancient studies" indicates a mode of scholarship wherein we do not base anything on the texts of later ages but rather cast light on antiquity using only ancient texts and that which we find within them. This type of scholarship was begun in recent times by Dharma Master Keichū. Although Keichū's work was limited to poetic

¹⁴ For more on kokugaku and lineage formation, see McNally, "Who speaks for Norinaga?"

¹⁵ Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō-shi kenkyū*, p. 89.

texts, he is the one who opened this [scholarly] Way; and thus it is he who should be called the forefather who began this field of study.

古学の輩の、古学とは、すべて後世の説にかからはず、何事も、古書によりて、その本を考へ、上代の事を、つまびらかに明らむる学問也、此学問、ちかき世に生まれり、契沖ほふし、歌書に限りてはあれど、此道すちを開きそめたり、此人をぞ、此まなびのはじめの^{オヤ}祖ともいひつべき、¹⁶

Norinaga continues on to credit Kada no Azumamaro for expanding the scope of ancient studies to non-poetic texts and Kamo no Mabuchi for bringing this scholarship east to the shogunal capital of Edo.

Despite his frequent own use of “ancient studies” and “imperial realm studies,” Norinaga occasionally protested that all were essentially problematic and that the only term that really ought to be used to describe research into the ancient Way was the generic term “scholarship” (*mono manabi* 学問). Any qualifying prefix, Norinaga claimed in *Tamagatsuma* 玉かつま (completed 1801, published 1795-1812), implicitly upheld Chinese studies as the de facto mode of scholarship. This, he complained, revealed a woeful inability to determine what easily ought to have been the primary focus of research:

We should refer to [studies of] our imperial country without hesitation as simply “scholarship.” For instance, Buddhist studies may be called “Buddhist studies” by outsiders [i.e., those outside the Buddhist clergy] as a means of differentiation, but among dharma masters, it is merely called “scholarship” and they do not say “Buddhist studies.” This is as it should be. When we say “kokugaku,” there may be some who think this is reverential, but the character “koku” [land/country] is restrictive and thus is not a term we should use.

¹⁶ MNZ 1, p. 15.

此皇国のをこそ、うけばりてただに学問とはいふべきなれ、仏学なども、他よりは分て仏学といへども、法師のともは、それをなむただに学問とはいひて、仏学とはいはざる、これ然るべきことわり也、国学といへば、尊ぶかたにもとりなさるべけれど、国の字も事にこそよれ、なほうけばらぬいひざまなり¹⁷

Because imperial subjects ought to study the ancient past of the imperial country as a matter of course, Norinaga suggests, no further descriptive terminology is necessary. In making this claim, Norinaga also slyly intimates the inverse: within the imperial country, at least, studies of other subjects do not qualify as scholarship per se. The affiliations of those engaged in these “faux-scholarly” pursuits unrelated to Japan’s ancient Way are left in question. The most significant aspect of this passage, however, is Norinaga’s argument that anyone using a geographical qualification such as “*koku-*” runs the risk of effectively ghettoizing scholarly research into the imperial country and its past. “Kokugaku,” in other words, is too particular a moniker for a pursuit that Norinaga implies ought to be considered universally.¹⁸

Although Norinaga is pointing to others using “kokugaku” to refer to the imperial country as a whole in the previous passage, when he himself used the word “*kuni*” in his writings more often than not he did so to indicate diverse domains within Japan. For

¹⁷ MNZ 1, p. 48.

¹⁸ Norinaga’s conviction in the universality of the imperial country can be found explicitly in his written debate with Ueda Akinari, known as the *Hi no kami ronsō* 日の神論争 (1780s). There, he claims that the kami of the sun Amaterasu is none other than the sun itself and thus the tales in the *Kojiki* apply to world as a whole and not just to Japan. When Akinari argues that Japan is merely a small country amongst many, Norinaga counters that size is irrelevant, pointing out that one-third of the earth is covered by wasteland where grasses and trees fail to grow. While other areas may be larger, Norinaga concludes, they are by no means greater or more important. He then goes on to claim that the august imperial country is the original suzerain of the four seas and the myriad countries (MNZ 8, p. 405).

instance, in his *Kokinshū tōkagami* 古今集遠鏡 (c. 1794), an early modern vernacular rendition of the tenth-century *Kokinshū* imperial poetry anthology, Norinaga notes that speech varies without standard from one *kuni* to the next.¹⁹ While Norinaga followed the convention of the time in opting to translate the Heian period text of the *Kokinshū* into a Kyoto dialect, he explains it was impossible for him to create a vernacular edition that would be comprehensible from one end of the archipelago to the other.²⁰ It is clear that *kuni* and *koku*, variable readings of the same logograph, did not hold the connotation of a singular sovereign “nation” as it does today. It is worth noting that the same polysemic evolution applies to *kokugo*, a term that is now conventionally translated as “(our) national language” and refers exclusively to Japanese. It was not until the nineteenth century that the use of *kokugo* to indicate anything other than regional dialect appeared, and even then the term had yet to take on national specificity. In his 1815 book *Rangaku kotohajime* 蘭学事始, for example, the Dutch Learning physician Sugita Genpaku 杉田玄白 (1733-1817) uses the word to indicate the Dutch language.²¹ Only in the late nineteenth century did *kokugo* come to be understood, gradually, as exclusively referring to an official and national Japanese language.²²

The anachronistic nature of *kokugaku* as an organizational category is nowhere more evident than in Ueda Akinari’s 上田秋成 (1734-1809) mockery of those who

¹⁹ Tellingly, Ueda Akinari explicitly glosses the word *hōgen* 方言, now commonly translated into English as “dialect,” as *kuni kotoba*, or the speech of a specific *kuni* (see, for instance, Ueda, *Yakanashō*, p. 21).

²⁰ MNZ 3, p. 6.

²¹ Ramsey, “The Polysemy of the Term *Kokugo*,” p. 38.

²² Mair, “Buddhism and the Rise of the Written Vernacular in East Asia,” p. 731.

studied it. Akinari, characterized unequivocally by most scholars today as a *kokugakusha*, or kokugaku scholar, wrote in 1791 that, “a *kokugakusha* is just a Shintoist who has grown three more strands of hair.”²³ Consensus concerning what (or whom) the word kokugaku refers to has never been reached in all the two hundred and twenty plus years since Akinari made his disdainful remark. Among various other meanings, kokugaku has been used by modern historians to indicate the scholarship of the “four great men,” mentioned above; those four men with the added company of Keichū; Motoori Norinaga’s oeuvre alone; Hirata Atsutane and his school alone; any collective of the above scholars and their respective “schools”; and any scholarship from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries (and sometimes beyond) treating the reading, interpretation, and syntactic investigation of ancient Japanese texts, the writing and analysis of classical Japanese poetry, ancient Shinto mythology, and/or theories of Japanese identity utilizing one or more of these subjects. Restricting the term to encompass just a few key figures has been contested as succumbing to a Meiji understanding of kokugaku that sought to create a coherent lineage-supported narrative that bolstered and legitimated the late

²³ Quoted from *Kuse monogatari* 癩癩談 (1791) in Teeuwen, “Kokugaku vs. Nativism,” p. 230. Ironically, even as modern scholars assert Akinari’s place as a kokugaku scholar, they typically add the disclaimer that he held different ideological and methodological standards than many of his peers. Rai Ki’ichi writes, for instance, that, “Akinari held a different position toward mythology than most *kokugakusha*... looking at the development of early modern kokugaku, Akinari occupies a place clearly distinct from the mainstream” (Rai, *Nihon no kinsei*, p. 266). Likewise, Yamashita Hisao argues that Akinari is “refreshingly free” of any kokugaku ideology that prioritizes the “imperial country” over the rest of the world, though he argues that Akinari’s considerable philological work on the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, the *Man’yōshū*, and other classical texts cannot be explained outside the framework of kokugaku (Yamashita, *Akinari no “kodai,”* p. 9). Susan Burns astutely observes that the easy identification of Norinaga with mainstream kokugaku is responsible for this modern taxonomical displacement, effectively marginalizing as it does anyone whose ideology ran in contradistinction to Norinaga’s writings: “Modern commentators have accordingly described Akinari’s work as ordered by the rationalism of the Confucian tradition and thus at odds with the ethos of belief said to characterize kokugaku” (Burns, *Before the Nation*, p. 10).

nineteenth-century nation building project.²⁴ Yet using “kokugaku” as a blanket term to cover any and all mid- to late-Tokugawa period studies of ancient Japan is surely problematic as well.

KOKUGAKU IN THE MODERN PERIOD

Given the lack of clear consensus surrounding kokugaku in the early modern period, it is hardly surprising that the polysemic nature of the term persisted after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the foundation of the modern Japanese nation-state. Even as self-identified kokugaku scholars—predominantly members of the Atsutane school—filled high-ranking posts in newly established government bureaus dealing with state religious policy, the exact ideologies and practices that constituted kokugaku remained ambiguously defined. So extreme was this ambiguity that, in 1904, the prominent literary scholar Haga Yaichi 芳賀矢一 (1867-1927) felt the need to address the issue head-on when invited to give a talk at Tokyo’s Kokugakuin University. In the talk, aptly titled, “What, indeed, is Kokugaku?” (*Kokugaku to wa nan zo ya* 国学とは何ぞや),²⁵ Haga

²⁴ See Burns, *Before the Nation*.

²⁵ This echoed Haga’s attempt four years earlier to define kokugaku in his *Kokugakushi gairon* 国学史概論 (1900). An implicit note of exasperation creeps into his description of the multitude of topics the “one name” (that is, “kokugaku”) was used to encompass: “Amongst those called *kokugakusha*, there are grammarians who study grammar. There are also people who investigate the ancient language. Distinct from that type of linguistic scholar, there are people who read ancient romance tales. There are also people who, lacking any considerable influence, create ancient songs and ancient texts with the aim of creating a different society (*betsudan shakai*). These, too, are called *kokugakusha* by the world. Again, those who study Shinto, and people who investigate the studies of the culture of the court nobility and samurai (*yūsoku kojitsu*), are also called *kokugakusha*. Somewhat more broadly, people who study ancient history generally speaking are also called *kokugakusha*. There is one name, “kokugaku,” but it is split into numerous specializations” (国学者といふ中には文典を研究する文法学者もある。古言など

wonders aloud what the students of an institution so dedicated could possibly be spending their time researching. Among kokugaku scholars, Haga observed, research ranged from poetry to Shinto to linguistics to literature to the court nobility. But what was it that made all of these pursuits “kokugaku”? As he put it,

What is it that makes someone who investigates Shinto a *kokugakusha* [kokugaku scholar]? ...What makes someone who investigates ancient romance tales (*monogatari*) a *kokugakusha*? What makes someone who attempts to master history a *kokugakusha*? It seems that we have forgotten what it is that is valuable to kokugaku.

何が故に国学は大切なものであるか、何が故に神道を説くものも一つの国学者であるか...何が故に物語を説くものも国学者であるか、何が故に歴史を修めるものも国学者であるかといふことは、往々にして忘れてしまっているものもあるやうであります。²⁶

Being the Meiji nationalist that he was, Haga went on to argue that it was the underlying goal of uncovering a national essence that defined kokugaku as such. That is, the task of kokugaku was to take all of the various disciplines that it encompassed and tie them specifically to the nation. Haga held that as the distinctions between nations faded in an increasingly globalized world—here he pointed specifically to the Trans-Siberian Railroad, then in the thirteenth year of its construction—the importance of studying the past became ever more important. In short, for Haga, it was only in the past that a

を調べて居る人もある。さういふ語学者とは違つて、古い物語を読んで居る人もある。古い歌、古い文章を作つて別段社会に向かつては著しい感化力のないやうな人もある。それらも世間では国学者と名付ける。或は又神道を研究する人もあり、有職故実の学問を調べる人も国学者として数へられる。又もう少し広く、一般に古い歴史を調べる人も国学者と名づけられる。国学といふ一つの名はあるが、専門は種々に別れて居ります) (MBZ 44, pp. 205-06).

²⁶ MBZ 44, p. 227.

nation's essential uniqueness, its *kokutai*, could be retained and retrieved.²⁷ Haga believed that academic disciplines, too, would become more globalized as they became more scientific, making the necessity of maintaining a nationally-focused kokugaku all the more apparent.²⁸

It must be stressed that this was an aspirational, exclusionary vision; for Haga explicitly cast doubt on whether much of the purported “kokugaku” study going on really qualified as kokugaku at all. Indeed, one might argue that the reason that all of the disparate pursuits of “kokugaku” are so difficult to coherently tie together is because they have no real organizing logic behind them—a point that Muraoka Tsunetsugu hinted at but stopped short of stating explicitly when he declared Motoori Norinaga as perhaps the only true kokugaku scholar.²⁹ Kokugaku's various splinter disciplines are not, in other words, the building blocks necessary to investigate the nation and its past, but rather are grouped together by dint of Motoori Norinaga having invested interest in all of them.

From the Meiji Restoration onward, many have credited kokugaku, and Norinaga in particular, for having developed a nascent idea of the Japanese nation-state, sometimes using the term “proto-nationalist” to describe Norinaga's anti-Chinese, pro-“native” rhetoric. While any actual connection between Norinaga and other contemporaneous

²⁷ Here we see Haga engaging in what Manu Goswami has called “methodological nationalism,” a practice still very much prevalent in modern day scholarship. Goswami defines methodological nationalism as, “the common practice of presupposing, rather than examining, the sociohistorical production of such categories as a national space and national economy and the closely related failure to analyze the specific global field within and against which specific nationalist movements emerged” (Goswami, *Producing India*, p. 4). It is the modern, globalized world that creates the conditions wherein the nation-state is at once first articulated and perceived to be under threat of erasure.

²⁸ MBZ 44, p. 234.

²⁹ See Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō-shi kenkyū*, p. 89.

scholars interested in Japan's past to Japanese nationalism is more the result of aggressive appropriation by later nineteenth- and twentieth-century ideologues than an intentional nationalistic agenda on their part, Norinaga and his followers were derided in the anti-imperialistic backlash that followed Japan's defeat in the Second World War. Prominent intellectuals like Maruyama Masao 丸山真男 (1914-1996) faulted Norinaga and kokugaku more generally for normalizing a discourse of Japanese exceptionalism that easily lent itself to international aggression. This discourse, Maruyama claimed, laid the groundwork for Japan's imperialist ventures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in turn could be held at least partially accountable for their disastrous consequences. Kokugaku itself was dismissed as a fascistic ideology out of sync with Japan's newly humbled place in the postwar world order.

Muraoka's attempt to isolate the expositional aspects of kokugaku scholarship, discussed in the beginning of this chapter, has long been seen as a blatant attempt to whitewash a troublingly xenophobic tradition. Scholarship on kokugaku since World War Two has tended to focus on the forced dichotomy of self and other, native and foreign, that many kokugaku thinkers erected. Most notably, Koyasu Nobukuni argued in 1995 that Muraoka's erstwhile attempt to academically appropriate kokugaku, retroactively selecting those aspects that fit a more scholarly rigorous description and throwing out as unimportant those that did not, was logically specious. For Koyasu, one of the most influential specialists on kokugaku alive today, the very act of discounting the xenophobic, chauvinistic elements of Norinaga's thought—his flat condemnation of most things related to China, for instance—negates any kind of academic celebration of

Norinaga's philological work.³⁰ It was only against a linguistic "other," conveniently provided by the long history of literary Sinitic writing, or *kanbun*, on the Japanese archipelago, that Norinaga's *Yamato kotoba* could take form at all.

Yamato kotoba (Yamato language) was for Norinaga and other likeminded scholars the preliterate language spoken in the ancient Yamato polity³¹ before writing was imported from mainland Asia between the fourth and sixth centuries CE. Koyasu argues, however, that, far from a purely oral language unearthed through the reverse-engineering of ancient *kanbun* texts, Norinaga's *Yamato kotoba* was a new "écriture" created through Norinaga's own imagination, a negative of the literary Sinitic he sought to eradicate.³² Drawing on the so-called "linguistic turn" in critical theory and the work of Jacques Derrida in particular, Koyasu describes Norinaga's *Yamato kotoba* as an inorganic and idealized "model language" (規範的言語) that came to encapsulate the "imago" (イマーゴ) of modern Japanese identity.³³ As Derrida himself has said of models, they provide an Aristotelian ideal, an exemplar that defines the thing itself. Thus, to use Derrida's example, "the one who is *most*, most purely, or most rigorously, most

³⁰ Koyasu, however, holds that part of the problem stems from kokugaku being an eighteenth-century phenomenon, whereas philology is a twentieth-century one (Koyasu, "*Motoori Norinaga mondai*" *to wa nanika*, p. 45). As we will see, neither designation is entirely true and is certainly contestable.

³¹ Yamato refers to the land ruled by the Yamato clan in the southwest of the main island of Honshū, around present-day Nara prefecture. While the beginnings of the Yamato polity are disputed, it traditionally was thought to have existed from around 250 CE. The earliest extant mention of what is likely the Yamato people occurs in the late third-century Chinese dynastic history, the *Wei zhi* 魏志. The *Wei zhi* describes a country named Wa 倭 (also read as Yamato), ruled by a shaman queen, Pimiko.

³² Koyasu, '*Motoori Norinaga mondai*' *to wa nanika*, p. 113.

³³ Koyasu, '*Motoori Norinaga mondai*' *to wa nanika*, pp. 115-116; also see pp. 44-70.

essentially, Franco-Maghrebian would allow us to decipher *what it is to be* Franco-Maghrebian *in general*.”³⁴ Koyasu operates under the notion that, in constructing this “Japanese” language par excellence, Norinaga also set in motion the construction of modern Japanese identity.

It is difficult to overstate the impact this position has had on the field of kokugaku studies. Indeed, kokugaku as presently understood in the modern academy is first and foremost concerned with questions of collective identity,³⁵ itself linked to the idea of a culturally constructed “native” language. By demarcating what Japan was not through analyses of “native” and “foreign” language (that is, of self and other), the explanation goes, kokugaku scholars shored up earlier conceptions of what it might mean to be “Japanese,” giving a more concrete culturalized framework to previously fuzzy acknowledgements of difference.

The idea of a linguistically constituted community—whether considered to be imaginary, aspirational, national, or otherwise in practice—has loomed large in

³⁴ Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*, p. 11.

³⁵ Demonstrating this continuing fixation is Peter Nosco, James E. Ketelaar, and Yasunori Kojima’s 2015 edited volume, *Values, Identity, and Equality in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Japan*. While not all articles in the volume address kokugaku, Nosco’s article, on “The Early Modern Co-Emergence of Individuality and Collective Identity,” takes up the familiar mantle of kokugaku and identity. Nosco’s contribution is the argument that individual identity was part and parcel of a new collective identity that emerged in Japan during the one hundred years between 1710 and 1810, thanks in part to kokugaku thinkers such as Kamo no Mabuchi and Motoori Norinaga. Nosco is undoubtedly correct regarding the dialectical nature of individual and collective identity, which is to say that any collective identity is never completely uniform or entirely hegemonic and relies on individual traits. But that this claim, which Nosco himself calls “seductively obvious” (p. 114), is only being made now says much about the state of kokugaku studies in the American academy (See Nosco, “The Early Modern Co-Emergence of Individuality and Collective Identity,” pp. 113-133).

scholarship on kokugaku, a trend that is particularly strong in the West.³⁶ Naoki Sakai has claimed, for instance, that the eighteenth century was “the moment when Japanese as a linguistic and cultural unity was born.”³⁷ Likewise, Susan Burns contends that “the ideal of an original, authentic, and enduring ‘Japanese’ language”—an ideal that she argues came into being in the eighteenth century and both birthed and sustained kokugaku discourse—“was a powerful means to explain and thereby constitute cultural identity.”³⁸ Numerous scholars have pointed to the famous “Broom Tree” chapter of the eleventh-century *Tale of Genji* to demonstrate that Heian period courtiers did not consider themselves as Chinese, certainly, but neither did they perceive the Sinitic script which they regularly utilized to be foreign in nature. The lack of linguistic difference presented in Murasaki Shikibu’s 紫式部 (late 10th-early 11th c.) account of kana and mana writing as fictionalized in *Genji* has been widely noted in recent years. As the terms *kana* (“borrowed graphs”) and *mana* (“true graphs”) themselves imply, the distinction between literary Sinitic and the kana script was primarily considered to be graphic in nature.³⁹

³⁶ See also Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony*; Harootunian, *Things Seen and Unseen*; Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*.

³⁷ Sakai, *Voices of the Past*, p. 17. In Sakai’s preface to Ann Wehmeyer’s translation of Book One of the *Kojikiden*, Sakai argues that in “reading” the *Kojiki*, Norinaga created the “conditions of possibility for the knowledge of the Japanese language to emerge. As a result of these changes, the possibility of talking about Japanese ethnic or national language emerged” (Sakai, “Preface,” p. ix).

³⁸ Burns, *Before the Nation*, p. 12.

³⁹ See Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, pp. 325-333. This is not to say that kana and mana did not come with their own constellations of social significance, as the Broom Tree (*hahakigi* 帚木) chapter itself demonstrates well. The chapter includes a discussion between a seventeen-year-old Genji, his friend and brother-in-law, the Secretary Captain (Tō no Chūjō 頭中将), and two other courtiers wherein the four men discuss the various merits and deficiencies of women they have been intimate with. The Fujiwara Aide of Ceremonial (Tō Shikibu no Jō 藤式部丞) recounts an

According to this perspective, championed by Koyasu, Burns, and Sakai, among many others, it was only in the early modern period that shifting conceptions of Japanese language gave rise to new ideas of Japaneseness and Japanese identity.

Inquiry into the role of kokugaku in engendering new identity formations is, of course, seductive. While most scholars today would refrain from drawing a direct line from kokugaku ideology to the foundation of the modern Japanese nation-state, investigations into how kokugaku thought may have influenced or been appropriated by later nationalistically minded ideologues are hardly barren in their findings.⁴⁰ Insofar as kokugaku language theory is concerned, there is certainly one current, espoused by Norinaga and others, that contains a virulent critique of literary Sinitic. For Norinaga, Chinese words literally disarticulated the world. A lack of grammatical indicators and a general predilection toward ornate, flowery language created a fundamental disconnect between words and things; and this, in turn, had dire consequences on the way in which people experienced the world. As Norinaga put it in *Kamiyo no masakoto* 神代正語 (1789), the “minds of people through the ages have been clouded by the dust of Chinese texts” (世々の人の心。からぶみの塵にくもり).⁴¹

It would be easy to read the above line as distinguishing a pure Japanese mind from a contaminated Chinese one; and “Chinese” (or more accurately “Tang” dynasty) texts are faulted as the corrupting factor here. But, crucially, the sheer longevity of this

affair he had with an exceptionally learned scholar’s daughter, who wrote exclusively with *mana*, thought to be unsuitably masculine for a woman, but not particularly foreign.

⁴⁰ Some have also argued that kokugaku should not be relegated to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and in fact has been an influential social and intellectual force in the twentieth century and into the present day. See Wachutka, *Kokugaku in Meiji-period Japan*.

⁴¹ MNZ 7, p. 485.

corruption effectively excludes the people of the world—and more to the point, the people of Japan—from any real claim to purity. Likewise, “Chinese” for Norinaga was largely divorced from any geographical location or standing state polity, and most certainly from the Qing Dynasty in power on the continent at the time, as well as from Qing subjects. Norinaga is very clear that by “Chinese mind” (*karagokoro*), he is not indicating merely those people who are enamored of China and can only speak well of the country. That is, he is not merely indicating self-conscious Sinophiles residing on the Japanese archipelago. Rather, he says, he is pointing to anyone who thinks him- or herself capable of differentiating between good and bad among the world’s myriad things, or indeed thinks the world is organized according to such discernable (human) reason. Very similar to the esoteric Buddhist refutation of the Mahāyāna doctrine of two truths, discussed in the following chapter, Norinaga presents a skeptical attitude toward human logic and rationality, placing faith instead in greater if more mysterious forces such as the kami and the cosmos itself. Norinaga is careful to note that the people contaminated with the Chinese mind are not limited to those who read Sinitic texts (*karabumi*); for even those who have never once set eye on such texts are adversely affected. After a millennium of Chinese influence, Norinaga says, “that [Chinese] intention has naturally pervaded in the world and seeped into the very depths of people’s minds, becoming the ground for everyday life” (おのづからその意世中にゆきわたりて、人の心の底にそみつけて、つねの地となれる故).⁴²

Thus we see that Norinaga’s “Chinese”-ness was very much at home on the Japanese archipelago: it existed, internalized, within the peoples who lived there and the

⁴² MNZ 1, p. 48.

languages with which they spoke, wrote, and read. There was, in other words, no one who could be identified as inherently superior due to his or her position within a specifically Japanese ethnolinguistic community, for there was no such community to speak of in practice. As Norinaga lamented, hearing the words of the past had come to be for his contemporaries like “listening to the chirpings of a foreign language they do not understand” (聞き知らぬ異国のさへづりをきくがごとく).⁴³ Norinaga here echoes Murasaki Shikibu’s words in the *Tale of Genji*, when one of the aristocratic characters says of rural villagers that, “their speech was as incomprehensible as the chirping of birds,” which in turn is an allusion to the ninth-century Tang poet Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) describing commoner speech.⁴⁴ Charles Holcombe notes that, in the *Genji*, the “effect is to suggest a common literate universe inhabited by both Heian aristocrats and Tang literati in which neither Japanese nor Chinese commoners could necessarily partake.”⁴⁵ Later in the same treatise, Norinaga admits that people in more recent days have at least come to be concerned with these matters; nevertheless he maintains that, “Out of ten million people, there are only one or two who really feel the true Way of the kami” (神のまことの道を思う人は、千万人の中に、ただ一人二人にて).⁴⁶

It is clear from Norinaga’s statements that exclusionary, even chauvinistic, elements of kokugaku exist. Yet, chauvinism should not be equated to (proto-) nationalism or patriotism here; rather, it must be understood in the more general sense, as

⁴³ MNZ 1, p. 298.

⁴⁴ *Genji monogatari* 2:208. Translation from *The Tale of Genji*, Seidensticker, trans., p. 327.

⁴⁵ Holcombe, *The Genesis of East Asia*, p. 45.

⁴⁶ MNZ 1, p. 440.

“excessive loyalty to or belief in the superiority of one’s own cause, and prejudice against others.”⁴⁷ A cause does not necessarily imply the presence of a community united behind it, just as prejudice against others does not necessarily imply solidarity at home. Lee Yeounsuk has compellingly argued that *kokugo*—referring to the modern Japanese language—cannot be said to stem from kokugaku, precisely because the language idealized by kokugaku scholars was not “Japanese,” or *kokugo*, but *Yamato kotoba*. Whereas *Yamato kotoba* was defined negatively by the ostensible absence of Chinese elements, she says, *kokugo* was “the ultimate representation of the idea of connecting the Japanese language to the Japanese spirit.”⁴⁸ If the nation is “imagined as a *community*, because ... [it] is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship,”⁴⁹ as Benedict Anderson famously proposed, the exclusionary conceptions of ideal language put forth by kokugaku scholars surely precluded any real notion of linguistic community, let alone of nation and shared nationality.

While Lee divorces Meiji nationalism from Tokugawa period kokugaku discourse on language, she does so by utilizing Koyasu’s analysis of *Yamato kotoba* as inherently

⁴⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, “Chauvinism,” www.oed.com/view/Entry/31017, accessed 9/15/2015 at 9:53 am.

⁴⁸ Lee, *The Ideology of Kokugo*, p. 4. It is worth noting that Haga Yaichi’s conception of kokugaku would encompass Lee’s conception of *kokugo*. Haga specifically argued that the intolerance and subsequent lack of curiosity that *kokugakusha* displayed toward foreign influence was no longer acceptable. Part of kokugaku, he said, had to be about accounting for the manner in which foreign culture impacted and helped shape Japan: “We must know from where Chinese civilization entered Japan; furthermore, we must also investigate how the Way of Japan developed, where side roads converged. There is no civilization that developed autonomously” (それ故支那の文明はどこから日本にはいつて来て居るかといふことも、これからは知らなければなりません。それから日本の道はどういふ風に発達して来て居つて、横の道はどこからはいつて来て居るかといふことも取調べなければなりません。如何なる文明でも、決して単独に発達した文明はありません。) (MBZ 44, p. 234).

⁴⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

negative in nature. Still present, in other words, is the reduction of kokugaku to a paradigm dominated by identity: binaries of Japanese/Chinese, native/other, community/outside, Japan/world, and so forth, continue to hold sway. The result is a dismissive, if more implicit, assignation of nationalistic—or, at the very least, chauvinistic—ideology onto a far more nuanced conceptualization of language that extends beyond the purview of identity formation and identity politics. Indeed, as I attempt to demonstrate in this study, Norinaga's work was undergirded by a positive understanding of language as ontologically grounded within the cosmos, a framework he borrowed implicitly from Keichū and esoteric Buddhist (*mikkyō*) conceptions of language. Through philological investigation into ancient texts, both Norinaga and Keichū believed, the profane dust that clouded (sacred, cosmic) truth could be swept away, as if by a jeweled broom.

This positive element of Norinaga's endeavors, however, is one that has been largely overlooked in modern scholarship. As Koyasu's critique, above, suggests, the postwar academic impoverishing of kokugaku discourse is due in part to a wariness of slipping into the affirmative approaches espoused by twentieth-century apologists such as Haga, Muraoka, and Tokieda Motoki 時枝誠記 (1900-1967). Fueled by a desire to distinguish Japan as 'separate but (at the very least) equal' vis-à-vis the West, all three scholars sought to present kokugaku as a uniquely Japanese yet scientifically progressive phenomenon, an empirically sound, rationalistic inquiry into the nature of language that could hold its own against similar Western pursuits.

Haga made a one-to-one equation between his streamlined vision of kokugaku and Western philology, which he likewise perceived as being intimately intertwined with

excavating a unified national essence lodged in the texts of the past. Drawing on Haga's thought but doing away with the heavy emphasis on nation, Muraoka argued that kokugaku made the same kind of empirical contributions to Japanese intellectual history as did German philology, but not only developed independently of the latter movement but also preceded it.⁵⁰ Tokieda, on the other hand, drew on kokugaku grammatical theories in order to claim that Western linguistics could not simply be applied whole cloth to the analysis of the Japanese language, due to its singularly distinct grammatical make-up. Considering grammar to be culturally, historically, and linguistically specific, Tokieda argued that it was not feasible to affix the grammar (theories, terminology, concepts) of one language onto that of another.⁵¹ Although their efforts certainly contain their merits, Haga, Muraoka, and Tokieda are widely perceived as very much products of their time, their work outmoded attempts to contribute to a myth of Japanese exceptionalism.

GLOSSING KOKUGAKU TODAY: NATIVISM

More than a century after Haga first glossed kokugaku, the most common translation of kokugaku in English language scholarship is “nativism.” Despite its relative novelty as a critical term in Japanese historiography, the connotations “nativism” holds—of excluding those perceived as being other and of returning to an ostensibly native

⁵⁰ Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō-shi kenkyū*, p. 94. Haga Yaichi articulated one of philology's appeals when he noted that, whereas countries lacking civilization (文明のない国) could be the subject of linguistic study (言語学), only civilized ones could be the focus of philology (MBZ 44, p. 229).

⁵¹ See Tokieda, *Kokugogakushi*.

homogeneity—align very much with Haga’s Meiji understanding of both philology and kokugaku. A trend that began in earnest with H.D. Harootunian’s 1978 essay, “The Consciousness of the Archaic Form in the New Realism of Kokugaku,” Harootunian posits “nativism” as “a new mode of discourse which could comprehend the felt perceptions of those social groups which had not been represented in the formalized consciousness of Tokugawa Japan.”⁵² Harootunian argues that Tokugawa nativism, or kokugaku, re-constituted reality according to a new structure of consciousness organized along so-called “native” lines. But even Harootunian admits to some inadequacies in using “nativism” as a translation for kokugaku, noting that there are inconsistencies between kokugaku and the connotations nativism holds in historiographies outside of Japan.

Other scholars have also pointed to difficulties with the term. For instance, in his 2005 monograph, *Proving the Way*, Mark McNally characterizes Tokugawa nativism as referring to “classical literary studies prior to 1800,” as well as to Shinto scholarship in the nineteenth century exclusive of kokugaku. Kokugaku, on the other hand, is for McNally a more religiously oriented scholarship that began with Norinaga’s self-proclaimed disciple Hirata Atsutane and continued on with members of the “Norinaga school” in the nineteenth century.⁵³ McNally very recently (in 2016) came out with a second book, subtitled “Exceptionalism and Nativism in Early Modern Japan,” where he amends this position. According to McNally’s new analysis, a better translation of what

⁵² Harootunian, “The Consciousness of the Archaic Form in the New Realism of Kokugaku,” p. 64. Harootunian continued the practice of rendering kokugaku as “nativism” in his monograph on kokugaku, *Things Seen and Unseen: Discourse and Ideology in Tokugawa Nativism* (1988).

⁵³ McNally, *Proving the Way*, p. 1, note 1.

most Western scholars have termed kokugaku is “exceptionalism,” reflecting an emphasis among eighteenth-century kokugaku scholars on self-praise over rejection of foreign cultures.⁵⁴ Yet McNally cautions that exceptionalism, too, ought not be easily equated with kokugaku. He argues, moreover, that kokugaku is primarily an emic category, privileging the “participants’ point of view,” whereas nativism is an etic one; both may at times refer to the same events, texts, or thinkers and at other times diverge.⁵⁵

Making a similar distinction, albeit implicitly, Peter Flueckiger opts not to use kokugaku at all in his study of mid-Tokugawa “Confucianism and nativism,” referring to as nativist anyone who “sought to purify Japanese culture of foreign influences, whether or not they belong to what is normally labeled as ‘Kokugaku’,” the latter which he acknowledges is a “category with flexible boundaries.”⁵⁶ John Breen also divorces kokugaku from a one-to-one equation with nativism, defining nativism broadly as any attempt by a society to revive or maintain some aspect of indigenous culture. He thus concludes that one can see a “nativist continuum throughout much of Japanese history.”⁵⁷ For Breen, some, but not all, kokugaku can be considered nativism; and some, but not all, nativism can be considered kokugaku.

⁵⁴ McNally, *Like No Other*, p. 4.

⁵⁵ McNally, *Like No Other*, pp. 12, 19. McNally writes later on in the book that, “It is time to embrace the notion that Kokugaku was many things; it more easily conforms to other analytical categories, notably (ethnic) nationalism. Nationalism, of course, is perhaps already a crowded field in Japanese history, and restoring Kokugaku to it potentially would yield little analytical benefit. Singling out Kokugaku for inclusion in the category of Japanese nativism conjures up a kind of infamy it likely does not deserve” (p. 65).

⁵⁶ Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony*, p. 233, note 1.

⁵⁷ Breen, “Nativism Restored,” p. 430.

Susan Burns, in contrast, does not address the term “nativism” in depth in her monograph on kokugaku, *Before the Nation*. She does, however, allow a brief endnote to explain why she has opted not to use the term in her book—essentially, because it overemphasizes the relation between “Japan and the foreign other.”⁵⁸ Burns chooses to use “kokugaku” untranslated for most of *Before the Nation*, though she does utilize “nativist” to refer to Meiji period and later “new” *kokugakusha* (新国学者), such as Muraoka Tsunetsugu, Haga Yaichi, and Orikuchi Shinobu 折口信夫 (1887-1953). As Mark Teeuwen has noted, this suggests that Burns sees little need for distinction between “nativism” and “nationalism.” Rather, the shift from kokugaku to nativism is presented as more or less analogous to Duara’s idea of a pre-nationalist “culturalism” that happened to segue together with the beginnings of the modern nation-state into a more institutionalized nationalism.⁵⁹

While I hesitate to conflate nativism with nationalism, I am in agreement with Burns that the term “nativism” obscures the affiliations to other (non-“native”) forms of thought that many kokugaku scholars openly espoused, as well as the numerous distinct strains of “native” that existed on the Japanese archipelago. To label something as unproblematically native not only reifies the false dichotomy between native and non-native, but also implicitly asserts an anachronistic framework of nations, wherein the Japanese nation-state is substituted in for the category of native, and the Chinese nation-state for that of non-native.

⁵⁸ Burns, *Before the Nation*, p. 232, note 1.

⁵⁹ Teeuwen, “Kokugaku vs. Nativism,” p. 230.

The fallacy of this framework is demonstrated by many so-called kokugaku scholars who make an appearance in this study: Keichū is first and foremost a monk of Shingon esotericism, an affiliation I argue is integral to the subsequent development of Norinaga's scholarship (see Chapter Two). Ueda Akinari is most famous for penning ghost stories and, as previously mentioned, made light of self-identifying *kokugakusha*. Suzuki Akira 鈴木 脰 (1764-1837) can be considered as both a kokugaku and Kangaku (Sinology) scholar, and he penned commentaries on the *Analects* and Confucian medicine as well as on the *Tale of Genji* and ancient Japanese grammar. Fujitani Nariakira 藤谷成章 (1738-1779), the younger brother of the celebrated Kangaku scholar and grammarian Minagawa Kien 皆川 淇園 (1735-1807), was also deeply indebted to Kangaku in his approach to grammar, and its treatment of auxiliary verbs more particularly.⁶⁰

This study takes the position that even Norinaga, traditionally considered the kokugaku scholar *par excellence*, was heavily influenced not only by Confucianism (as is regularly noted), but also by esoteric Buddhist metaphysics and medieval court poetics and grammar. Moreover, those typically characterized as kokugaku scholars regularly explored linguistic differences that they detected within Japan: for instance, the distinctions within the spectrum of language (both written and oral) ranging from vulgar to refined; between the language of the capital and that of various rural areas; and between key moments of the past and the ongoing present.

⁶⁰ The kokugogaku scholar Yamada Yoshio first noted the probable influence of Kien on Nariakira in his *Kokugogakushi-yō*, published in 1935. Yamada privileged Nariakira over Norinaga, claiming that, since Keichū, there had been no one who could be considered greater in the history of Japanese linguistics (Yamada, *Kokugogakushi-yō*, p. 205).

Before the publication of Harootunian's essay and subsequent book, an older generation of scholars (as well as a handful afterward⁶¹) opted to translate kokugaku "literally" as "National Learning." However, this, too, proves problematic, as it uses out of context a later understanding of "*koku*" and runs headlong into the question of whether Tokugawa Japan can be said to be a nation at all. I have already touched upon some of the dangers of engaging in a transhistorical understanding of nationhood, but a few more words about the applicability of the nation to the study of kokugaku may be useful.

In his essay, "In the Name of the Nation," Rogers Brubaker considers the nation as a political claim and a category of practice, as opposed to a substantialized entity. Beginning with Ernest Renan's (1823-1892) oft-quoted 1882 Sorbonne lecture "What is a nation?," Brubaker proposes that the titular question is itself misleading: it assumes ethnocultural fact where in reality no such thing exists. Nation is not something that can be found substantiated *a priori*, Brubaker stresses, but is rather better understood as a socially constructed linguistic category. The question that Brubaker's essay instead sets out to tackle is thus more nuanced if not more complex: "How does the category 'nation' work?"⁶² By this, Brubaker is seeking to bring attention to the manner in which "nation" functions in language, as a political idiom as well as a practical claim. As he puts it, "nation is in the first instance a category of practice, not a category of analysis."⁶³ Which is to say, the idea of the nation is reified socially in the workings of the modern nation-

⁶¹ For instance, Naoki Sakai uses "National Studies" in his 1991 book on eighteenth-century Japanese linguistic discourse, *Voices of the Past*.

⁶² Brubaker, "In the Name of the Nation," p. 116.

⁶³ Brubaker, "In the Name of the Nation," p. 116.

state. Brubaker's emphasis on the self-reflexive constructedness of both nation and language is clear. The socially-constructed language that is used to describe nationhood itself shapes the manner in which the nation is conceived.⁶⁴

This mode of rethinking the nation can be helpful in considering kokugaku's fate in the modern academy, not least because kokugaku itself has long elided definition. As Koyasu's late twentieth-century discomfort with Muraoka's mid-century wartime attempt to rehabilitate kokugaku demonstrates, kokugaku's modern legacy is intricately intertwined with the equally fraught history of Japanese nationalism. As previously mentioned, kokugaku was largely considered within the context of national or proto-national identity politics in the postwar years, a trend that persists to this day and that has often resulted in the easy identification of kokugaku with jingoistic conservatism. Indeed, glossing kokugaku as "nativism" takes this jingoism for granted, as the baseline from which to launch further inquiry. The problem of translating kokugaku as "nativism," moreover, has parallels in Brubaker's problematization of the nation. The real issue with nativism is one of categorization; that is, "nativism" implies a categorical misrepresentation. Nativism suggests that we are talking about a more or less coherent school of thought or body of ideas, when what we are really dealing with is a broad appellation.

⁶⁴ Brubaker argues that it is necessary to "decouple the study of nationhood and nationness from the study of nations as substantial entities, collectivities, or communities," to "focus on nationness as a conceptual variable [...] not on nations as real collectivities" (Brubaker, "Rethinking Nationhood," p. 5).

GLOSSING KOKUGAKU TODAY: PHILOLOGY

I began this chapter with Muraoka's fears that the intellectual future of kokugaku—specifically, its philological nature—was under threat, overshadowed by a sensationalistic enthusiasm for ultra-nationalistic ideology. It was a fear that proved prescient, though most of that enthusiasm has been replaced by an equally sensationalistic consternation. It is here that “philology” comes in as a potentially useful gloss, albeit understood with a connotation somewhat distinct from those propagated by Haga and Muraoka. A gloss, as I understand it, is a claim to knowledge. It allows for subjective paraphrase—which is to say, for *translation*—and inevitably “glosses” over some aspects of a word while highlighting others.

Tejaswini Niranjana has described translation, traditionally conceived, as being dependent on notions of reality, representation, and knowledge wherein “Reality is seen as something unproblematic, ‘out there’; knowledge involves a representation of this reality; and representation provides direct, unmediated access to a transparent reality.”⁶⁵ Interestingly, this traditional understanding of translation, this equation of knowledge with reality, undergirds the very core of both kokugaku and philology. Modern philology has its origins in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German Romanticism, with thinkers

⁶⁵ Niranjana, *Siting Translation*, p. 2. Needless to say, this is not a definition of translation that Niranjana actually espouses herself. Theories of translation in the modern academy is thoroughly entrenched in postcolonial discourse, and scholars from Niranjana to Lydia Liu to Arjun Appadurai have all noted the asymmetries in power between languages, as well as the violence those asymmetries can effectuate in translation.

like Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824) and his student August Böckh (1785-1867).⁶⁶ At the crux of modern philology was the idea that antiquity (in this case, Classical Greece) could be understood more completely, not just as an agglomeration of things and events represented by specific texts but as a lived world accessible through these texts. As Böckh famously put it, philology was “the knowledge of what is known.”⁶⁷

This overwhelmingly comprehensive, and accordingly disciplinarily vague, conception of philology is close to the kind of scholarship that Norinaga, at least, considered himself to be engaged in. For instance, in a private letter to Īda Hyakkō 飯田百項 dating from the third month of An’ei 6 (1777), Norinaga writes of his progress on the *Kojikiden*, noting that he sought to create something that encompassed the entirety of ancient studies. As he none too modestly put it, “the Way of ancient studies will be largely completed with this text [i.e., the *Kojikiden*]” (大よそ古学の道は、此ふみにつ<し).⁶⁸ For Norinaga, as with the contemporaneous German Romantic philologists, entire worlds could be uncovered by the correct readings—or one might say, by the correct translation—of texts. A project that Norinaga explicitly perceived as beginning with Keichū, Norinaga cast himself as the man who would complete the task of ancient studies—the pursuit, in other words, of knowing what is known.

⁶⁶ Incidentally, Michel Foucault singles out three texts by Friedrich Schlegel (1772-1829), Jacob Grimm (1785-1863), and Franz Bopp (1791-1867), published between 1808 and 1816, as marking the beginnings of this “new philology” (Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 282).

⁶⁷ Boeckh, *On Interpretation and Criticism*, p. 9.

⁶⁸ MNZ 17, p. 62. Although no part of the *Kojikiden* would be published until 1790, and not in its entirety until 1820, nineteen years after Norinaga’s death, Norinaga was working on what would become *Naobi no mitama* 直毘靈 (the end of the introduction to the *Kojikiden*, notorious for its explicit ideology) as early as the 1760s.

Norinaga's expansive claims to knowledge bring to the fore questions of what knowledge is, and what worth, what value, it actually has. We have with the quote from Niranjana the more-or-less conventional idea that knowledge provides us with a means to access reality. Which is to say, of course, that knowledge allows us a means not to access reality so much as to construct a reality that accords with the knowledge that we purport to have. To say the same thing from another perspective, what is at issue is not knowledge at all, and perhaps the attempt to pin down what kind of knowledge, what kind of content, that kokugaku ostensibly encompasses, was wrong-headed from the very beginning. Indeed, Muraoka described both kokugaku and philology as not only "cognition" (認識) but also "re-cognition" (再認識),⁶⁹ a claim that reflects this attitude toward knowledge well.

Because the parameters of "philology" itself are far from agreed upon—and depending on who is doing the defining, it may be understood as anything from simply "close reading" to a pointed investigation of national essence—a comparison of kokugaku and philology run across the same kind of taxonomical quandaries. A look at philology's fate in the modern university provides a nice analogy; for philology, like kokugaku, is riddled with its own identity crises.⁷⁰ For example, Wilhelm von Humboldt

⁶⁹ Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisōshi kenkyū*, p. 96. One might read hints of Freud's *fausse reconnaissance*, or false recognition, in here as well. Freud described the sensation as an uncanny experience where "we want to take something in as if it belonged to us" (quoted in Johnson, "The Curse of Enthusiasm," p. 109).

⁷⁰ After its heyday in nineteenth-century Europe, where philology constituted a considerable portion of all humanistic research, the discipline had what can only be described as a fall from grace. Nietzsche quipped in his posthumously published, largely denunciatory essay, "We Philologists" (1874), that, "Philologists, when discussing their science, never get down to the root of the subject, they never set forth philology itself as a problem. Bad consciousness? Or merely thoughtlessness?" (Nietzsche, "We Philologists," p. 146). As suggested by Nietzsche's

saw philology as the key to the folk, to the uncovering of national origins. Ferdinand de Saussure, on the other hand, situated it as an outmoded phase, a historical stepping-stone in the full realization of a scientific linguistics (as manifest in his own semiology). Locating philology in the history of linguistics as falling chronologically between “grammar” and “comparative grammar/philology” as a popularly espoused methodology, Saussure argued that philology had failed because it was “too slavishly subservient to the written language, and so neglects the living language.”⁷¹

This is, of course, a criticism Norinaga would have found issue with, if indeed we can call his work philological. He believed, after all, that he *was* investigating a preliterate orality through the examination of texts. While perhaps not a “living” language, it certainly was not, for him, merely a written one. Interestingly, Michel Foucault’s conception of philology aligns here with Norinaga’s perception of his own research: Foucault differentiates between “general grammar,” where language derived from the *letter*, and philology, where “it is accepted from now on that language exists when noises have been articulated and divided into a series of distinct *sounds*. The whole being of language is now one of sound... Language is sought in its most authentic state: in the spoken word—the word that is dried up and frozen into immobility by writing.”⁷² As we will see in later chapters, however, Norinaga entertained a unique understanding of grammar in which (correct) grammar determined authenticity as much as sound. And this was precisely because grammar was understood as being itself inextricable from sound.

condemnation of his own field, philology came to be seen as dull, passé, the well-worn and uncritical methodology of a previous generation.

⁷¹ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, p. 1.

⁷² Foucault, *The Order of Things*, p. 286. Emphasis in original.

Is philology a useful reference point, then, when speaking of kokugaku? The linguist and self-described philologist Roman Jakobson described philology merely as “the art of reading slowly,” a disposition or practice, as opposed to a field. Countless articles with titles the likes of, “What is Philology,” “An Apology for Philology,” “The Return to Philology,” “The Consolation of Philology,” and “Future Philology?” have appeared in academic journals of various stripes over the past thirty years, clearly demonstrating that the search for a “better” (or perhaps merely a more precisely defined) philology is far from over.⁷³ Even when Sheldon Pollock relatively recently set out to produce a “rough-and-ready working definition” of philology in light of the great confusion surrounding the term’s meaning, the result was something that can fairly be called less than straightforward:

Philology is, or should be, the discipline of making sense of texts. It is not the theory of language—that’s linguistics—or the theory of meaning or truth—that’s philosophy—but the theory of textuality as well as the history of textualized meaning. If philosophy is thought critically reflecting upon itself, as Kant put it, then philology may be seen as the critical self-reflection of language.⁷⁴

In Pollock’s formulation, linguistics occupies a position outside of language—it is “the theory of language”—while philology occupies a position within it. That is, while linguistics promises, or threatens, to reify the subject/object binary, philology attempts to collapse it. Philology understood thus posits a particular strategy of knowledge production wherein knowledge is seen as an unfolding of self-reflection. What Pollock is

⁷³ Ziolkowski, “What is Philology”; Wardropper, “An Apology for Philology”; Richardson, “The Consolation of Philology”; Pollock, “Future Philology?” An edited volume, *World Philology*, co-edited by Pollock, was published by Harvard University Press in 2015.

⁷⁴ Pollock, “Future Philology?,” p. 934.

perhaps getting at—and what is hinted by the lack of consensus on what philology *is*—is that “philology” is not a *thing*, or at least that it is not a discipline or even a methodology. Rather, we might consider it as a kind of desire, a desire to capture in texts something of the past beyond that which the text includes. Kokugaku can surely be considered likewise.

This desire is something that we can consider on multiple levels. To return to Haga Yaichi, recall that Haga would have had kokugaku defined by its connection to the nation, to national essence. In *Kokugaku to wa nan zo ya*, Haga was addressing an audience of would-be *kokugakusha* at the Kokugakuin, and ostensibly talking about *their* desires, what their desires should be vis-à-vis their research. Yet, it is his own desire, to see kokugaku as a coherent body of study, that comes across most prominently, and the same might be said of other thinkers over the last couple hundred years (e.g., Hirata Atsutane, Muraoka) who have attempted to mold kokugaku according to their own interests, and defined or positioned it accordingly.

CONCLUSION

So should we continue to use the term kokugaku ourselves? It goes without saying that, as historians, we are stuck with “kokugaku” as a range of phenomena that have been referenced, refined, redefined, and reified over the years. But is it useful as a modern historiographical category? Considering that any definitive description inevitably implies equally problematic holes, the only responsible approach may be to specify as much as possible what particular “specialization” (to use Haga’s term) of kokugaku one is referring to in any given situation. One cannot do away with the fact that kokugaku has been, and continues to be, used regularly; but we can at least try to be aware of its

critical shortcomings. The task at hand for scholars of this nebulous genre, then, must be one of complication and problematization more than explication. There is no such thing as Kokugaku, but there are many things that pass as kokugaku.

Part of my argument in this dissertation is that kokugaku is not just about binary oppositions, and that some of those oppositions that have been taken for granted by modern historians need to be undone. By focusing on Norinaga's grammar and poetics and the multivalent factors that influenced them, I hope to demonstrate how at least some forms of kokugaku revolutionized the understanding of the Japanese language while simultaneously drawing on and incorporating a long history of textual criticism, grammar, poetics, myth, Buddhist cosmology, and Chinese thought. Because of the difficulty in translating kokugaku, I have chosen to use the term as is in this dissertation where appropriate. However, my own inclination is that Norinaga's studies fall more aptly under the term by which he frequently chose to describe them, *inishie manabi*, or ancient studies. "Ancient studies" captures well the philological impulse that Norinaga inherited from Keichū and Kamo no Mabuchi and that characterizes the vast majority of Norinaga's work. It is, furthermore, more universalizing in its purview than the geographically confined "kokugaku," as Norinaga himself pointed out. Accordingly, ancient studies better describes Norinaga's all-encompassing vision of a cosmos constituted by the sounds and patterns of the ancient Japanese language.

“ANCIENT STUDIES WAS FOUNDED BY KEICHŪ”**Kokugaku and the Influence of Esoteric Buddhism**

The first century and a half of Tokugawa rule witnessed massive societal and economic change across the Japanese archipelago. The *sankin kōtai* system instituted in 1635, mandating domainal lords to alternately reside in Edo and their home domain every other year (while their family members remained as permanent hostages in the capital), provided the impetus for the construction of vastly improved roads and transportation networks. The Tokugawa bakufu dictated, moreover, that all samurai be relieved of their lands and corresponding incomes and garrisoned in castle towns, making them dependent on pensions distributed by their overlords. Byproducts of these policies, which were put in place by the regime as safeguards against future rebellion, were rapid urbanization and the emergence of an established merchant class, which in turn led to the growth of cash crops, a money economy, and increased literacy rates.

The Genroku period (1688-1704), often portrayed as a brief era of cultural efflorescence, witnessed the emergence of a widespread publishing industry that allowed for a level of cultural discourse hitherto impossible in Japan. By the eighteenth century,

records list a remarkable 536 publishers in Kyoto, 564 in Osaka, and 493 in Edo.¹ Private academies sprouted in these urban centers, catering to merchants and samurai alike, as did schools in the countryside. Basing their argument on the continuing shift in knowledge transmission from oral to textual mediums, a phenomenon that exploded as a literate urban public emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, scholars have argued that texts came to be seen for the first time in the early Tokugawa period as embodying both a temporal break between past and present, and a geographical break between foreign and native. According to this narrative, this in turn had the effect of rendering textual content (that is, textual transcription) and its interpretation suspect.

Keichū, often touted as the “forefather” of kokugaku,² is widely accepted as spearheading the new, philologically grounded trend of research into ancient Japanese texts. Hisamatsu Sen’ichi 久松潜一 (1894-1976), editor of Keichū’s collected works, has done much to situate Keichū historically in a kind of Genroku cultural “renaissance.” Claiming that Keichū had ushered in a new early modern intellectual moment largely free of the superstitious and unempirical tendencies that characterized scholarship of the medieval period, Hisamatsu emphasized Keichū’s ostensibly “free” (自由) and “liberated” (解放) scholarly methodology while downplaying Keichū’s grounding in esoteric

¹ Rubinger, *Popular Literacy in Early Modern Japan*, p. 83.

² See, for instance, Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, p. 43; Kuginuki, *Kinsei kanazukai-ron no kenkyū*, p. 3; Murphy, “Esoteric Buddhist Theories in the Thought of Early Kokugaku,” p. 68. In contrast, Muraoka Tsunetsugu—in my opinion more accurately—calls Keichū “the founder of the early modern ancient studies movement” (近世古学運動の創始者) (Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō-shi kenkyū*, p. 202).

Buddhist doctrine and ritual studies, or mikkyō.³ Likewise, Muraoka Tsunetsugu went so far as to call Motoori Norinaga's *Kojikiden* a “thorough execution of Keichū's objectivism and positivism” (ここに、契沖の客観主義、実証主義の到底的実行を見得る).⁴ Muraoka, for his part, attempted to establish the empirical nature of Keichū's scholarship, emphasizing Keichū's influence on Norinaga over that of Kamo no Mabuchi, whom Muraoka considered to be less “modern” in his outlook.⁵

This chapter attempts to correct the systematic elision of esoteric Buddhism from the historical study of kokugaku—an elision that was in many ways initiated by Norinaga and then later expanded and promulgated by nationalist ideologues in the Meiji period and beyond. While Norinaga's self-acknowledged debt to Keichū's methods is very much real and considerable, the Buddhist aspect of Keichū's influence should not be dismissed out of hand.⁶ For it was not merely an incidental knowledge of Siddham, a script used to

³ See Hisamatsu, *Keichū-den*, pp. 13-22. Mikkyō, literally “esoteric teachings,” can theoretically be found in any school of Buddhist thought; historically, however, it has been most closely affiliated with Keichū's Shingon school, which is unique among the schools of Buddhism in having no exoteric component, as well as the Tendai school. Tendai esotericism is known as Taimitsu.

⁴ Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō kenkyū*, p. 213.

⁵ Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō kenkyū*, pp. 202-203.

⁶ To my knowledge, the only Western book-length study that explicitly connects Buddhism to kokugaku is Regan Murphy's 2010 dissertation, “The Urgency of History: Language and Ritual in Japanese Buddhism and Kokugaku.” As Murphy observes, “Modern scholarship has taken relatively little interest in the intellectual life of Buddhism in the early modern period. Scholars of religion have remained largely silent on the topic. Intellectual historians have viewed nineteenth-century Kokugaku as a form of nativism that arose out of Neo-Confucian [sic], the other recognized “intellectual” influence. Modern disciplinary boundaries that separate Buddhism—a religion—from Kokugaku—an intellectual and literary movement—have fortified a narrative of opposition that began in the writings of later Kokugaku figures in which Buddhism and Kokugaku have been seen as wholly separate” (pp. 13-14). Murphy also has an article, “Esoteric Buddhist Theories of Thought in Early Kokugaku,” that covers much of the same ground as her dissertation chapter on Keichū. I am very sympathetic to Murphy's argument and have learned much from reading her work. That said, I do not believe Murphy sees her argument fully through;

transcribe Sanskrit, and the use of the fifty-sound chart (*gojū-onzu*) in Siddham studies that informed Keichū’s investigations into ancient Japanese, as is often claimed. Rather, fundamental to Keichū’s research and his research methodology was the central principle of esoteric Buddhism—traceable to the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi sutra* 大日經 (Jp. *Dainichikyō*, Ch. *Dari jing*) (c. 640)—that ultimate truth lies in worldly truth (即俗而真). This was effectively a nullification of the Mahāyāna doctrine of two truths (二諦), wherein the ultimate truth (the view of reality as experienced by the enlightened) is considered ineffable; all verbal statements operate only at the worldly or conventional level and are true or false only at that level. In other words, according to two truths doctrine, all language is ultimately illusory and can never represent the real without distorting it. Esoteric Buddhism, in contrast, claimed that ultimate truth could be known, as such, in this world and in language, by way of Sanskrit incantations known as mantra and dhāranī. This affirmative valuation of language, I argue, provided the basic assumption that governed Keichū’s analysis of classical waka poetry—written, after all, not only in a “profane” or “conventional” language (俗語) of the world, but in the doubly

for even as she argues for the significance of Buddhism in kokugaku, she follows the kokugogaku scholar Kuginuki Tōru in largely restricting that significance to the transmission of the fifty-sound chart, or *gojū-onzu*. Moreover, because she focuses her attention on Keichū, the historicist philosopher Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715-1746), and the Shingon priest Jiun 慈雲 (1718-1805), she does not treat any of the thinkers most commonly thought of as comprising kokugaku (that is, the “four great men,” Kada no Azumamaro, Kamo no Mabuchi, Motoori Norinaga, and Hirata Atsutane), save in passing.

It is perhaps emblematic of this “Buddhism lacuna” in kokugaku studies that a 2011 article on “Shingon Buddhism in the Early Modern Period” contains an intriguing sub-heading entitled, “Early Modern Shingon Innovations: Keichū and Kokugaku and Precepts Revival” that nevertheless neither touches on Keichū nor kokugaku. The missing section is not found misplaced under another subheading but is merely conspicuously absent; the text under the errant subheading instead treats the Meiji Restoration and legislation on the removal of Buddhist images. (See Ambros, “Shingon Buddhism in the Early Modern Period,” pp. 1015-1017.)

profane⁷ language of Yamato. It was precisely this affirmative valuation, moreover, that enabled the exaltation of *Yamato kotoba* as a purely oral truth language that we see in Norinaga's works, albeit bereft of any Buddhist overtones.

Kokugaku is typically characterized by intellectual historians as a development of, and reaction to, Confucian investigations into ancient texts as espoused by Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁齋 (1627-1705), Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728), and their respective followers. The many Buddhist influences prominent in Norinaga's work, on the other hand, are often overlooked. Ironically, this is a tendency that runs against the lineage that Norinaga claimed for himself and his disciples. As Norinaga writes in *Tamagatsuma*:

Some people say that ancient studies [here indicating Norinaga's studies of Japan's past] is dependent on the writings of the ancient phraseology (*kobunji*) school of Confucians, but this is not the case. Our [school of] ancient studies was founded by Keichū. As for the beginnings of the ancient studies of the Confucians, people such as Itō [Jinsai] worked at around the same time as Keichū, though Keichū predated him slightly. Ogyū [Sorai] was even later yet. How could we have been modeled after them?

ある人の、古学を、儒の古文辞家の言にさそはれていできたる物なりといへるは、ひがこと也。わが古学は、契沖はやくそのはしをひらけり、かの儒の古学といふことの始めなる、伊藤氏など、契沖と大かた同じころといふうちに、契沖はいささか先だち、かれはおくれたり、荻生氏は、又おくれたり、いかでかかれにならへることあらむ。⁸

This passage has long been dismissed as a not-entirely-honest disavowal on Norinaga's part as he attempted to distance his scholarship from any taint of Confucian

⁷ “Doubly profane” in that the Yamato language was not even the Sanskrit of mantra and dhāranī, traditionally considered by esoteric schools to encompass the ultimate truth via true words (*shingon*).

⁸ MNZ 1, p. 257.

“foreignness.”⁹ The glaring inconvenience of Keichū’s own Buddhist (and thus equally “foreign”) affiliation, moreover, has largely been discounted by early modern and modern scholars alike as an anomaly in Keichū’s scholarship. Keichū’s Buddhism, in other words, has typically been cast as at best unrelated, and at worst antithetical, to his aforementioned “free” and “liberated” mode of evidential scholarship. Peter Nosco, for instance, claims that Keichū’s scholarly career unfolded “despite his vocation as a Buddhist priest.”¹⁰ I will argue the opposite: it is precisely *because* Keichū was steeped in the esoteric Buddhist study of language and ritual that he was able to renovate study into Japan’s ancient language and past.

In the following pages, then, I explore the esoteric Buddhist underpinnings of Keichū’s philology and attempt to demonstrate how it constituted the epistemic conditions for the development of Norinaga’s poetics and theory of language. First, however, I provide a brief account of the Buddhist intellectual context within which Keichū’s scholarship arose. Both Confucian and Buddhist attempts to enact scholarly reform through a hermeneutical “return to the past” were integral to the emergence of

⁹ For instance, Maruyama Masao writes after quoting this passage that, “In my opinion, these denials and criticisms are themselves the best proof of the close similarity between National Learning [that is, kokugaku] and the Sorai school.” Channeling Hegel, Maruyama continues, “For National Learning, the scholars of the Sorai school resemble the Jews in that ‘it is precisely because they stand directly before the door of salvation that they are and have been the most reprobate and abandoned’” (Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, pp. 145-146).

¹⁰ Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, p. 65. Susan Burns, in contrast, takes the position that the question of influence is irrelevant: “Modern scholars, as well as those of the late Tokugawa period, would argue which came first, Keichū’s work or that of Sorai, but ultimately the problem of chronology—or of influence and reception—is less important than the fact that from the late seventeenth century onward there emerged a series of attacks on the transculturalism and transhistoricism that had been the intellectual norm” (Burns, *Before the Nation*, p. 52). I strongly disagree with Burns on this point: the question of “Keichū or Sorai” should hardly be reduced to one of chronology, for each scholar’s investigations into language are premised on radically different ontologies and epistemologies.

what we now consider as kokugaku, though Confucianism's role is far more widely acknowledged. After looking at the Confucian and Buddhist intellectual historical milieux in which Keichū and Norinaga's thought took form, I turn to Keichū's poetics and his waka-dhāranī theory more specifically. By demonstrating how Keichū's esotericism was fundamental to his evidential scholarship, I attempt to shed light on how that same esotericism provided the basic assumptions underlying Norinaga's own pursuits within ancient studies.

CONFUCIANISM AND ANCIENT STUDIES

Modern scholars have characterized the culturally rich Genroku period as followed by a century of slow disintegration, situating Norinaga and the development of kokugaku within this framework of social decline. And indeed, the eighteenth century was by all accounts a difficult time for the Tokugawa shogunate: natural disasters, epidemic diseases, and bureaucratic scandals, among other factors, led to considerable societal upheaval both in urban centers and in the countryside. Three major government reforms, the Kyōhō Reforms (1736), the Kansei Reforms (1787-93), and the Tempō Reforms (1841-43), each ushered in new economic policies targeted at ameliorating shogunal debt to little long-lasting effect.

Norinaga and proponents of kokugaku more generally are often portrayed as the “second wave” of a backlash against the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy long considered to have been patronized by the Tokugawa shogunate. According to this narrative, made popular by the political historian Maruyama Masao during the early postwar years, the Song dynasty philosophies of the Cheng brothers (Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) and

Cheng Yi 程頤(1033-1107)) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), espoused by such thinkers as Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1657), Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇齋 (1619-1682), and their followers, lost favor as droughts, fires, famines, epidemics, peasant uprisings, and class and economic instabilities offered hard proof that all was not right in the realm.¹¹

Denigrating what they considered to be the solipsistic metaphysics of Zhu Xi thought (the dominant strain of Neo-Confucianism), Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai after him preached a return to the Confucian classics as they had ostensibly been when first composed. Jinsai is most notable for emphasizing the ethical aspects of Confucianism and restricting the Way to humans, making the argument that the Way of Heaven was something beyond the reach of even the sages. Although he was highly critical of Jinsai, Sorai, too, espoused ancient studies (“kogaku,” in this case in a Chinese Confucian context), but went further in claiming that even the *Mencius* 孟子 (Ch. *Mèngzi*; J. *Mōshi*) (c. 4th c. BCE) and the *Doctrine of the Mean* 中庸 (Ch. *Zhōng yōng*; J. *Chūyō*) (c. 3rd c. BCE) were later, adulterated texts. Significantly, Sorai historicized the sages and

¹¹ Two of the Tokugawa period’s most devastating famines occurred during Norinaga’s lifetime, the first shortly after his birth, and the second when he was in his early fifties. The third of the Tokugawa period’s three “great” famines, the Tempō famine (1833-38), happened well after Norinaga’s death. Other sizable famines during Norinaga’s lifetime include the Kansei famine (1749-1750) and the Hōreki famine (1755-1756) (See Kikuchi, *Kikin kara yomu kinsei shakai*). Peasant protests took place throughout the Tokugawa period, in response to various aggravations, including famines and high tax rates, but the number of violent demonstrations exploded in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Whereas there had only been twenty-seven forceful demonstrations recorded across the archipelago between 1651-1700, that number had more than sextupled a century later, with 184 forceful demonstrations documented between 1751-1800 (Vlastos, *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan*, p. 46). For more on eighteenth-century unrest, see Kikuchi, *Kikin kara yomu kinsei shakai*, Kinoshita, “Mortality Crises in the Tokugawa Period,” and Vlastos, *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan*. For accounts on the perceived relation between this unrest and kokugaku, see Burns, *Before the Nation*, pp. 20-26; Nosco, *Remembering Paradise*, p. 153.

personified Heaven, elevating the latter as a thing “with a heart,”¹² capable of knowing the world but inscrutable to men, and accordingly beyond the human capacity for inquiry.

Pointing to Sorai’s conviction that the Way of the sages was not about the cosmic issues of heaven and earth and yin and yang, but instead merely about historically contingent human society and statecraft, Maruyama famously held that it was Sorai who had politicized Confucianism. Thus, according to Maruyama, Sorai could be said to symbolize the birth of modern political consciousness in Japan.¹³ Maruyama considered Norinaga the heir to the “private” (and negative) aspect of Sorai’s thought, and faulted him for upsetting the trajectory toward the modern that he claimed Sorai had so recently set in place. Maruyama perceived kokugaku—which he defined as the “[intellectual] system developed by Kamo no Mabuchi and perfected by Motoori Norinaga”¹⁴—as a conservative, “apolitical” movement that merely affirmed the Tokugawa shogunate’s feudal social structure.¹⁵

¹² Quoted in Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, p. 81.

¹³ Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, p. 171.

¹⁴ Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, p. 143. Maruyama also called Norinaga “the purest exponent of the mode of thought of National Learning” (p. 267). In doing so, he echoed Muraoka Tsunetsugu, who lionized Norinaga as what amounted to a one-man kokugaku show (see, for instance, Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisō-shi kenkyū*, p. 105).

¹⁵ Maruyama, *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*, pp. 264-68. Maruyama held that kokugaku proved political by dint of being apolitical, making its political import subterranean, perhaps, but not altogether absent. Susan Burns points out that after 1798 (three years before Norinaga’s death), new students entering the Suzunoya were made to sign a pledge stipulating that, “I will not violate official (*ōyake* 公) policies and laws.” But Burns, too, argues that the Norinaga’s “private realm” had political implications in that it served to “question the representations of social order sanctioned by the political authorities” (Burns, *Before the Nation*, pp. 97-98).

Yet, this narrative has considerable flaws. The story Maruyama sketches of Japan's thwarted modernity has been recognized as at least in part a reaction to the Japanese fascism of the interwar years, Maruyama's search for a causal explanation for Japan's recent and disastrous ultra-nationalism. Peter Flueckiger has argued, among others, that Sorai in fact did not liberate the political subject as Maruyama claimed, nor did Norinaga free the emotional one, as is often suggested. Both Sorai and Norinaga, Flueckiger says, ultimately imposed transcendental norms on emotionality and individual subjectivity.¹⁶

On a broader scale, there are problems as well with the historical role that Neo-Confucianism, kogaku, and kokugaku are often said to have played during the Edo period. As Herman Ooms has demonstrated, Neo-Confucianism was hardly the bakufu orthodoxy established in 1600 by the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu (1543-1616), as the Razan school would have liked history to believe.¹⁷ Rather, for much of the early seventeenth century, it occupied a religio-philosophical backwater, surpassed in social and political significance by Buddhism, and Tendai and Zen Buddhism in particular. Ooms notes that whereas numerous books on Buddhism, military science, and history were printed under Ieyasu's patronage, only two books on traditional Confucianism, and nothing on Neo-Confucianism, were produced.¹⁸ Indeed, Buddhist works make up the lion's share of published works in the early Tokugawa period: in a bookseller's catalogue

¹⁶ Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony*, pp. 20, 26. Kurozumi Makoto has also criticized Maruyama on this count, as has Haga Noboru. See Kurozumi, "Tokugawa Confucianism and its Meiji Reconstruction," and Haga, *Kokugaku no hitobito*. See Chapter Four of this dissertation for more on normative emotionality and individual subjectivity in Norinaga's thought.

¹⁷ See Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*.

¹⁸ Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*, p. 74.

dating from 1666, for instance, Buddhist texts fill out 117 of 266 pages.¹⁹ And just as the beginnings of Tokugawa Neo-Confucianism have been historiographically misrepresented, so too has its fate in the latter half of the Tokugawa period. Kurozumi Makoto has argued that, far from being eclipsed by kokugaku-related strains of thought, Neo-Confucianism gradually expanded during the second half of the Tokugawa regime, largely because it was able to supply new thought systems (e.g., Western science) with descriptive and analytical terminology.²⁰

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that even as kokugaku gained popularity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it never eclipsed Kangaku, Buddhism, Shinto, or Rangaku (Dutch learning) as predominant forms of thought during the early modern period, nor were these necessarily mutually exclusive. As Hino Tatsuo points out, moreover, these are broad disciplinary categories that were not necessarily adhered to in the early modern period.²¹ Many straddle the divide between “philosophy” and “religion” and cannot be considered as autonomous fields in themselves. For much of Japanese

¹⁹ This number excludes temple publishing, which would further expand the number of printed Buddhist texts (Deal and Ruppert, *A Cultural History of Buddhism*, p. 184). Deal and Ruppert also note that the Zen monk Suzuki Shōsan 鈴子正三 (1579-1655) claimed that Buddhist books were big sellers and thus private publishers were attempting to locate old preaching materials to publish (p. 184).

²⁰ Kurozumi, “Tokugawa Confucianism and its Meiji Japan Reconstruction,” p. 379.

²¹ Hino brings to attention two Osaka area guides, the *Naniwa suzume* 難波省 and the *Naniwamaru kōmoku* 難波丸綱目, dating from 1679 and 1747 respectively, both of which list different kinds of teachers in the region. The earlier *Naniwa suzume* lists only four types: scholars of waka (歌学者), lecturers [of Confucianism] (講釈師), “men of letters” (文字知り), and mathematicians (算者). Some seventy years later, this had expanded and become more disciplinarily focused to include astronomers (天文者), theologians (神学者), calendrical scholars (曆学者), Confucians (儒者), phonologists (韻鏡者), *kanshi* scholars (詩文学者), physicians (医学者), and herbalists (本草者), in addition to the previously mentioned waka scholars and mathematicians (Hino, *Norinaga to Akinari*, p. 6).

history, Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism flourished side by side and, more often than not, one bled into the other in both matters of rites and teachings. Indeed, to label them as distinct traditions as I have just done may be considered problematic, for it was not until the Meiji period that these various forms of learning were forcibly separated. And it was only during the Meiji period that the ideological leanings Norinaga is most commonly associated with, namely nativism and nationalism, came to constitute a hegemonic discourse.

TOKUGAWA BUDDHISM AND PRECEPT REFORM

As the longstanding narrative surrounding Confucianism in the early modern period reveals, the role of Tokugawa Buddhism has been overlooked by intellectual historians of the period, a lacuna that is even more pronounced when it comes to historians of kokugaku. Early Tokugawa Buddhism of all stripes faced considerable change and expansion as new regulations (including the institution of the temple affiliation system, or *jidan*) were imposed upon Buddhist institutions by the Tokugawa shogunate, on the one hand, and Buddhism faced criticism from outside (primarily from Neo-Confucians in the Hayashi school), on the other.

Buddhist scholars have pointed to a renewed promotion of doctrinal studies (*kyōgaku*) and precept reform as the common currents that can be seen across all schools of Japanese Buddhism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. With patronage from the shogunate, regional training centers known as *danrin* were established across the archipelago alongside seminaries, providing rigorous schooling and certification in monastic practice. Research into the foundational texts of each school—Shingon, Zen,

Pure Land, Tendai, etc.—were extensively promoted, as were related publications. Finally, the Buddhist canon (*Daizōkyō*, consisting of sutras, precepts, and treatises) was first published in its entirety in Japan by the Kan'eiji temple 寛永寺 in Ueno between 1637 and 1648, with support from the shogunate. Although this first publication, known as the *Tenkai-ban*,²² was not widely disseminated, it was followed thirty years later by the *Ōbaku-ban Daizōkyō*, published by the Ōbaku Zen lineage in 1678.²³ Printed in 6,771 volumes with funds collected from across Japan (and Ryūkyū), copies were made relatively widely available and helped to encourage a new trend in non-lineage based evidential scholarship within Buddhism.²⁴

Even as Shingon, Zen, Pure Land, and Tendai temples experienced increased surges in membership as new revenue came in from both the shogunate and lay practitioners, there emerged a distinct sense among many that monks had grown corrupted and lazy from this largesse. Keichū would write in his poetry, for instance, that the Shingon center at Mt. Kōya, where he spent a decade training in his teenage years, had fallen from the high ideals of Kūkai 空海 (774-835), the founder of Shingon

Buddhism in Japan:

²² This edition is known as the *Tenkai-ban* after the Tendai monk Tenkai 天海 (1536-1634), who secured its publication. Prefiguring this attempt, Tokugawa Ieyasu collected Song, Yuan, and Goryeo versions of the canon and donated them to Zōjōji temple 増上寺 in Edo. According to Nishimura Ryō, Ieyasu harbored ambitions of collecting various versions of the canon from across East Asia to compile and publish a comprehensive canon (Nishimura, “Kyōgaku no shinten to Bukkyō kaikaku undō,” p. 202).

²³ Ōbaku Zen takes its name from the Chinese style monastery Manpukuji that was built on Mt. Ōbaku (黄檗山万福寺) in Uji in 1661. However, it also refers retroactively to the Chinese monasteries that were built in Nagasaki in the 1620s and 1630s and the late Ming Chan monasticism that they practiced.

²⁴ Jōgon, Keichū's close friend and mentor, acquired an Ōbaku *Daizōkyō* for his and his students' use (Ueda, *Jōgon Wajō denki shiryō-shū*, p. 8).

*Snow falls atop the leaves of the trees of Mt. Kōya
Oh how distant is the Way of the past*

高野山木の葉の上に雪降りて
昔の道やいくつへだてし

*The light of the dharma of Mt. Kōya has not yet disappeared
Thousands of lights flickering in the deep hermitage*

高野山法の光そまた消えぬ
おくのみむろのちゝのともしひ²⁵

There is a stubborn hopefulness in the second poem: in studying the texts of the tradition (by flickering light, late into the night), Keichū suggests, Shingon devotees will eventually revitalize the light of the dharma to a level comparable to that of Kūkai's day. Nevertheless, the symbolism in the first, of the snows falling atop the leaves and the great distance that must be overcome to return to the Way of the past, is clear.

It was in this political climate that the various Buddhist precept reform movements emerged. In contrast to the *danrin* system, which attempted to perpetuate a top-down orthodoxy centered on key texts, precept reform was largely taken up by renunciant monks who often traveled from province to province advocating the correct practice of monastic rules. Because such efforts were ostensibly more “free” (自由) and “individualistic” (個性的)²⁶ than the monastic scholarly traditions that had been handed down since the medieval period, and because they tended to be motivated by a desire to escape what was perceived to be the corrupted and degraded practices of latter day

²⁵ KZ 13, p. 380.

²⁶ Nishimura, “Kyōgaku no shinten to Bukkyō kaikaku undō,” p. 207.

monasteries and “return to the origin” through the close reading and annotation of ancient texts, Buddhist historians have drawn parallels between the Buddhist restoration movements and both Confucian kogaku and kokugaku.²⁷ The renewed interest in Buddhist precepts, including that within the Shingon school, however, was in fact stimulated in large part by influence from Ōbaku Zen, which brought to Japan late Ming Dynasty Buddhist practices wherein monks and nuns followed moral rules about sexual practices, alcohol consumption, vegetarianism, and so forth, much more strictly than in Japan.

A prominent actor in the precept reform of the Tokugawa period was the priest Jōgon 浄嚴 (1639-1702), founder of the early modern Shingon Precept school (Shingon Risshū 真言律宗). Jōgon is best known for his groundbreaking empirical studies into the Siddham script as well as for his efforts in restoring the traditional precepts of the *Four Part Vinaya* (J. *Shibunritsu*; Ch. *Sifenlü* 四分律) as a basis for monastic ordination.²⁸ His treatise on Siddham, the *Shittan sanmitsushō* 悉曇三密鈔 (1684), is now considered canon in Japan and is included in the Taishō *Daizōkyō*. Jōgon also founded two temples dedicated to the restoration of Shingon precepts, Enmeiji 延命寺 in his hometown of Kawachi (Osaka) in 1677 and Reibunji 靈雲寺 in Edo in 1691, the latter under the patronage of the fifth Tokugawa shogun Tsunayoshi. What makes Jōgon particularly

²⁷ See, for instance, Sueki, *Nihon Bukkyō-shi*, p. 187; Nishimura, “Kyōgaku no shinten to Bukkyō kaikaku undō,” p. 211; Ueda, *Jōgon Wajō denki shiryō-shū*, p. 10.

²⁸ The *Shibunritsu/Sifenlü* is the Chinese translation of the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, which was thought throughout China to be the only valid scriptural authority for monastic ordination practice in the eighth century. It was brought to Japan in 753 or 754 (Pinte, “Shingon Risshū,” pp. 845-846). It was still in use in Ming and Qing China, leading Japanese Buddhist reformers to believe that it was indeed the true method of ordination that ought to be restored in their country, as well.

important for our purposes, however, is his close lifetime relationship with Keichū. Keichū's senior by just one year, Jōgon and Keichū overlapped on Mt. Kōya for the duration of Keichū's stay on the mountain, between 1653 and 1663.²⁹ Jōgon would remain Keichū's friend and mentor for much of his adult life.

JŌGON, KEICHŪ, AND THE *MAHĀVAIROCANA SUTRA*

Due in large part to the work of the twentieth-century historical linguist Yamada Yoshio, the aspect of Keichū and Jōgon's relationship that has been emphasized to date is Keichū's use of the fifty-sound chart, or *gojū-onzu*.³⁰ There were many competing theories in the Tokugawa period surrounding the origins of the fifty-sound chart—the kokugaku scholar Tachibana Moribe 橘守部 (1781-1849), for instance, claimed that the chart had been handed down from the age of the kami, whereas Kamo no Mabuchi argued that it originated with the legendary Emperor Ōjin 応神天皇 (traditionally said to have reigned in the late third to early fourth centuries).³¹ Keichū acknowledges in his

²⁹ Keichū spent ten years on Mt. Kōya, from the time he was 13 until he was 23. Jōgon's time at the Shingon Buddhist center was considerably longer, spanning twenty-three years from the time he was 10 until he was 33.

³⁰ See Yamada, *Gojū-onzu no rekishi*. For the results of Yamada's influence, see, for instance, Kuginuki, *Kinsei kanazukai-ron no kenkyū*; Murphy, "Sanskrit Studies in Early Modern Japan." See the Appendix of this dissertation for a short discussion of the fifty-sound chart and its history.

³¹ Yamada, *Gojū-onzu no rekishi*, pp. 8, 13, 24. The large number of different orderings found in pre-Muromachi period *go'on* charts, many of which do not follow the established Siddham order, led Yamada to argue that the fifty-sound chart's provenance in Siddham studies was difficult to confirm. According to Yamada, all of the *go'on* charts, despite being frequently included in Buddhist texts, are used to explain the sounds of *fanqie*, and thus are more likely to be related to Chinese than to Sanskrit. *Fanqie* is a pronunciation aid that combines the initial and final elements of two common syllables to determine the reading of a third, more obscure graph. A system that has been used in Chinese dictionaries until relatively recently, *fanqie* is thought to

Wajishōranshō 和字正濫鈔 (1695), however, that he took the chart whole cloth from Siddham studies.³² According to Yamada, it was Jōgon's *Shittan sanmitsushō* specifically from which Keichū borrowed, though Keichū corrected Jōgon's ordering of *e* え and *we* ゑ, putting them into the *a* あ and *wa* わ columns, respectively.³³ Because the fifty-sound chart accounts for both phonology and orthography unlike the purely orthographic *Iroha* song, a song that uses every character of the classical Japanese syllabary including the now defunct *wi* ゐ and *we* ゑ characters once and only once,³⁴ it proved helpful in

have first developed in the Eastern Han (25-220 CE), in the writings of Ying Shao 應劭 (140-206 CE). Supporting Yamada's hypothesis, the Tendai esoteric monk Myōgaku 明覚 (1056- c.1122) writes in a postscript that the *go'on* in fact derive from Confucianism (*Gojū-onzu no rekishi*, p. 112). Yamada also notes the existence of *go'in* 五音 (also known as *gosei* 五声) in Chinese music theory, referring to a pentatonic scale of five tones used in classical Chinese and Japanese music. The *go'in* consists of *kyū* 宮, *shō* 商, *kaku* 角, *chi* 徵, and *u* 羽. Yamada argues, however, that this is not relevant to the *gojū-onzu* (p. 111). According to Richard W. Bodman, by contrast, *fanqie* itself was most likely influenced by Sanskrit, which allowed for analysis based on the division of words into their component syllables (Bodman, "Poetics and Prosody in Early Modern China," p. 112.)

³² KZ 10, p. 112. Ironically, Keichū did not arrange the *Wajishōranshō* according to the fifty-sound chart after the second volume (out of a total of five volumes), although it informed his understanding of ancient kana and historical *kanazukai* throughout. According to Kuginuki Tōru, Keichū chose to adhere to the older *Iroha* ordering because it would be more familiar, and thus more accessible, to his readership (Kuginuki, *Kinsei kanazukai-ron no kenkyū*, p. 53). Interestingly, the *Iroha* song may have highlighted its own shortcomings. The kokugogaku scholar Hashimoto Shinkichi 橋本進吉 (1882-1945) argued that cognizance of euphonic change was only possible *because* of the existence of the *Iroha* song. Otherwise, he rationalized, no one would have noticed the redundant syllables that suggested pronunciations had altered over time (See "Hyōon-teki kanazukai wa kanazukai ni arazu" in Hashimoto, *Moji oyobi kanazukai no kenkyū*).

³³ Yamada, *Gojū-onzu no rekishi*, pp. 164-165.

³⁴ Although Kūkai has long said to be the author of the *Iroha* song, it likely postdates him by a century or more. The earliest extant work referring to the song dates from the early twelfth century. Other evidence pointing toward a later date includes the argument, not agreed upon by all scholars, that the 7/5 morae patterning that the *Iroha* song takes did not come into use until the mid-Heian period; and that the distinction between /e/ and /ye/, and /ko/ and /kō/ that was thought to have existed until the late tenth century is absent (that is, the poem does not include characters representing /ye/ or /kō/) (Tsukishima, *Rekishiteki kanazukai*, pp. 19-20).

isolating “problem” sounds, places where euphonic change had clearly occurred.³⁵

Accordingly, it was fundamental to Keichū’s overhaul of Fujiwara no Teika’s 藤原定家 (1162-1241) *kanazukai*, or kana usage, and eventually came to replace the *Iroha* song as the de facto orthographic ordering system for the Japanese language.³⁶

There is no question that the fifty-sound chart is important to the history of Japanese language study. Yet, in focusing narrowly on the transmission of the chart first from Jōgon to Keichū, and then from Keichū to Norinaga, we fail to understand the epistemic framework that made possible both the elaboration of the chart and its transmission. Indeed, Tsukishima Hiroshi argues that Keichū’s research into *kanazukai* and the fifty-sound chart have been overemphasized in modern scholarship on Keichū because of its later significance to Japanese linguistics. For Keichū himself, Tsukishima says, the underlying question of how the Japanese language fit into an esoteric Buddhist framework far surpassed any comparatively surface linguistic problematics regarding sound or sound change.³⁷ Keichū’s fifty-sound chart, in other words, was just one element of his theory of language and truth. His influence on Norinaga’s ancient studies, in contrast, extends beyond the chart to the very assumptions that undergirded Norinaga’s investigations into language itself.

³⁵ Norinaga penned a *Iroha*-esque song, included in volume five of his *Suzunoyashū* 鈴屋集, that used all the sounds of the syllabary amending for the “repeated” syllables. Norinaga titled it, “A song of forty-seven unrepeated characters” (同じもしなき四十七もしのうた) (MNZ 15, pp. 91-92).

³⁶ The predominance of the fifty-sound chart over the *Iroha* song was limited to scholarly circles throughout the Tokugawa period, however. It wasn’t until 1891 that a general purpose dictionary (the *Genkai* 言海, published by Ōtsuki Fumihiko 大槻文彦 (1847-1928)) utilizing the fifty-sound chart was made available (Frellesvig, *The History of the Japanese Language*, p. 177).

³⁷ Tsukishima, “Keichū no gogaku to Bussho,” p. 353.

Key to Keichū's theory of language was the *Mahāvairocana sutra* and the *Dari jing shu* 大日經疏 (Jp. *Dainichikyō-so*) (725), a commentary on the sutra by the Shingon patriarch Yixing 一行 (683-727). Thought to have been introduced to Japan during the Nara period, it was Kūkai, the founder of the Shingon school in Japan, who was the first to elaborate a hermeneutic that explained the sutra's significance. Both sutra and commentary have been highly influential in Shingon and Tendai esotericism alike from the eighth century onward, and have provided key scriptural loci in scores of commentaries and treatises. Originally a Sanskrit text, the sutra was introduced to China in the early eighth century by the Indian monk Śubhakarasiṃha (675-735). Aware of this history, Jōgon believed that the sutra preserved the original and pure Indian form of esoteric Buddhism.³⁸ Yixing, the author of the *Dari jing shu* commentary, moreover, was a disciple of Śubhakarasiṃha and aided him with the translation of the sutra into Chinese.³⁹ Accordingly, Jōgon utilized both commentary and sutra as authoritative texts for the restoration of Shingon to its true origins. As he would write in a letter to the Tokugawa bakufu with regard to his bakufu-sponsored temple Reijunji, he believed that

³⁸ Ueda, "Jōgon no mikkyō shisō," p. 35.

³⁹ Śubhakarasiṃha traveled the Silk Road from India and arrived in Chang'an in 716. Although his copy of the sutra was confiscated by the Tang emperor Xuanzang, with the help of Yixing, he was able to access another copy, said to be a condensed version of the sutra brought to China some thirty years earlier by the pilgrim Wuxing 無行 (d. 674). Śubhakarasiṃha and Yixing together translated the sutra into Chinese between 724 and 725, the same year that Yixing penned his commentary. No Sanskrit versions of the sutra predating the Chinese translation remain. See Hodge, trans., *The Mahā-vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra*, pp. 14-28 for more on the historical background of the sutra and its compilation.

with these texts he could revitalize the practice of the precepts within the Shingon school.⁴⁰

The *Mahāvairocana sutra* presents the Mahāvairocana Tathāgata, or Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来 in Japanese, as the personification of enlightenment (Sk. *bodhi*, Jp. *bodai*). Enlightenment, in turn, is defined within the sutra as “knowing one’s mind as it really is” (如実知自心).⁴¹ The mind, Mahāvairocana explains to an audience of innumerable bodhisattvas and vajradharas,⁴² is marked by empty space: it is “free from discriminating thought and [also free from] the absence of discriminating thought” (虚空相心。離諸分別無分別),⁴³ and thus can neither be rejected nor embraced by the mind of discrimination. The sutra takes the position that any duality—for instance, purity versus defilement, suffering versus enlightenment—perceived by the mind is a result of reification. The mind, just as it is (which includes its deluded, discriminating thought), is originally pure; and the originally pure mind is free from any distinction between self and other, knower and known. Yet when ignorance prevails, the sutra claims, this non-duality

⁴⁰ Jōgon writes: “The Shingon Ritsu maintains the teaching of its patriarch Kōbō Daishi [Kūkai] that one should devoutly uphold the two precepts of exoteric and esoteric. Within Shingon esotericism, it takes as its foundation the teaching that is called samaya precepts, which are the four grave [sins] and ten prohibitions [set forth in] the *Mahāvairocana sutra*. Based on the procedure called the three pure precepts that are accepted and disseminated by bodhisattvas, it also spreads and transmits the precepts of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna” (真言律と申候者、祖師弘法大師、顕密二戒堅固に受持可致との教誡を守り候而、真言密教の中、大日経の四重と十禁との三摩耶戒と申す戒法を根本と仕、菩薩通受之三聚浄戒と申候作法に抛り候而小乗戒・大乘戒共に通受仕候). (Cited in Okamura, “Kinsei no mikkyōsha tachi: Jōgon to Keichū,” p. 238).

⁴¹ T no. 848, 18.1c.

⁴² A vajradhara (持金剛) is a bodhisattva who carries the vajra, a ritual implement symbolizing insight into the esoteric teachings.

⁴³ T no. 848, 18.1c.

is forgotten and suffering arises as a result. It is only through a return to the origins by means of esoteric Buddhist ritual technique that the practitioner may realize once again that everything is, and always was, emptiness. And precisely because everything is emptiness, according to the sutra, that emptiness is also suchness, or the way things truly are. This suchness, then, is not the object of awareness, but rather awareness itself, suchness-as-awareness. The awareness that is suchness characterizes perfect enlightenment—which is also none other than Mahāvairocana, the Cosmic Buddha of the eternal present.

Far from a nihilistic theory of emptiness, the *Mahāvairocana sutra* ultimately asserts an affirmative view of reality wherein ultimate truth can be grasped within worldly or conventional truth.⁴⁴ Significantly, this optimistic view on the possibility of knowing truth—and thus of knowing suchness—enabled a similarly optimistic view of language as a locus in which this knowing takes place. For the delusion that is marked by conventional truth and conventional language is itself the locus for enlightenment; accordingly, one should not try to remove this delusion, any attempt at removal being itself a delusive act.

Just as important is the rationale behind the truth potential of worldly or mundane language, namely its relation to the originally uncreated syllable *A* (阿字本不生). According to the *Mahāvairocana sutra*, all sound is the transformation of the originally uncreated syllable *A*, which is itself the first syllable of the root mantra *A Vi Ra Hūm Kham* chanted by Mahāvairocana from his cosmic palace. “Uncreated” (不生) here is an

⁴⁴ This is, of course, the esoteric interpretation of the Madhyamikan doctrine of two truths, discussed above.

abbreviation of “Uncreated/unborn and undestroyed/undying” (不生不滅), meaning that *A* is the ultimate reality/sound that transcends birth and death, creation and annihilation. Calling it the “most secret of secrets” (秘密中最秘), the sutra presents Mahāvairocana as revealing the essence of all mantra in a poem:

The so-called syllable *A* is the heart/core of all mantras,
And from it there issue forth everywhere immeasurable mantras

所謂阿字者 一切真言心 從此遍流出 無量諸真言⁴⁵

In esoteric Buddhist thought, the syllable *A* is believed to exemplify the truth of the originally and eternally abiding presence of Mahāvairocana, and thus is considered as itself the manifestation of Dharma-nature.⁴⁶

The Mahāvairocana’s preaching, furthermore, is ultimately nothing more than the empowerment (*kaji* 加持) of the conventional language of the world. Accordingly, all language has the potential to be used, following Mahāvairocana’s example, as mantra. As Yixing explains in his commentary, the *Dari jing shu*:

World-Honored One, the faculties of living beings in the world to come will be dull and, for this reason, they will be deluded with regard to the two truths, not knowing that the ultimate [truth] lies within the worldly [conventional truth]. Therefore, let us adduce an example: “Lord of

⁴⁵ T0848_18.0038a26-27.

⁴⁶ The emphasis on the syllable *A* was more prominent in Tendai esotericism than in Shingon thought, where more weight was placed on the six sensory faculties, following Kūkai. Jōgon, however, was an exception to this trend. According to Ueda, Jōgon’s elevation of the syllable *A* can be considered as part of a *fukko* (復古; “return to antiquity”) effort to reconcile Kūkai’s thought with the *Mahāvairocana sutra* and *Dari jing shu* (Ueda, *Jōgon Wajō denki shiryōshū*, p. 11).

Mysteries, what is the mantra [lit. “true words”] path of the Tathāgatas? It is the empowering of these written words and letters.”⁴⁷ Mundane texts and speech have real meaning; therefore, Tathāgatas use the real meaning inherent in mantra to empower them. If one supposes that, outside the Dharma-nature, there separately exist mundane words and letters, that is the perverse view of a deluded mind which thinks that, all in all, there is no Real Substance that can be sought but the Buddha [nevertheless] uses his divine power to empower it. That is a distorted view. It is not the [path of] true words.

復次世尊。以未來世衆生鈍根故。迷於二諦不知即俗而真。是故慳勤指事。言秘密主。云何如來真言道。謂加持此書寫文字。以世間文字語言實義。是故如來即以真言實義而加持之。若出法性外。別有世間文字者。即是妄心謬見。都無實體可求。而佛以神力加持之。是則隨於顛倒。非真言也。⁴⁸

Here, Yixing reiterates the non-duality of the cosmos articulated in the *Mahāvairocana sutra* and uses it to claim that, “mundane texts and speech (世間文字語言) have real meaning.” The truth, he explicitly states, can be found in the mundane language of the world, for they do not depart from the Dharma-nature (being but transformations of the syllable *A*). Taking this non-duality to its logical conclusion, Yixing goes on to claim that Mahāvairocana’s mantra can *only* be found in the mundane language of the world. The appeal of Yixing’s observation from the point of view of philology is clear; for the investigation of worldly texts, too, would seem to be granted the potential for sacred profundity. Both Jōgon and Keichū would cite this exact passage from the *Dari jing shu* in the *Shittan sanmitsushō* preface and the *Man’yōdaishōki sōshaku*, respectively.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ From Chapter two of the *Mahāvairocana sutra*. See T no. 848, 18.10a.

⁴⁸ T no. 1796, 39.650c.

⁴⁹ See T no. 2710, 84.716a for Jōgon’s citation; and KZ 1, p. 191 for Keichū’s.

The dialectical relationship posed between mantra/true words and mundane language in the *Mahāvairocana sutra* and the *Dari jing shu* notwithstanding, mantra itself was long considered to fall within the exclusive purview of Sanskrit. Valued for their sonic qualities rather than semantic content matter, mantras (also known as dhāranī) were thus either left as is in Chinese translations of Sanskrit sutras or, as was far more often the case, transliterated with Sinitic loan characters that were to be read phonologically. In East Asian Buddhist texts, the Sanskrit term “dhāranī” is frequently translated as “upholding everything” (總持/惣持) or “charm, spell, incantation” (呪) but is sometimes merely transliterated as 陀羅尼. In either case, neither Jōgon nor Keichū appear to draw much distinction between dhāranī and mantras, using them at times interchangeably.

According to Ueda Reijō, Jōgon was the first to posit a connection between the production of the sounds of the fifty-sound chart and the originally uncreated syllable *A*, despite the fifty-sound chart’s use in Japanese Siddham studies since the Heian period.⁵⁰

Thus Jōgon writes in the *Sanmitsushō*:

Moreover, the foregoing syllables [of the fifty sound chart] all may be interpreted as having the meaning of originally uncreated. That is because all syllables derive from the syllable *A* and arise thereby. That they may be used for the purpose of “upholding everything” [dhāranī] derives precisely from this syllable *A*.

復次下去諸字皆轉積本不生義。諸字皆自𑖀字而生故也。旋轉總持職而斯由𑖀阿。⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ueda, *Jōgon Wajō denki shiryōshū*, p. 10.

⁵¹ T no. 2710, 84.791b.

The logic of equivalence at work here cannot be over-stressed: according to Jōgon, all sounds—including those represented by Japanese kana—derive from the syllable *A*; and because of this, the kana syllabary too holds the potential for being dhāranī.

Jōgon’s research into the Siddham script itself was motivated by his interest in restoring ritual protocol (儀軌) to its original, correct form. Because Shingon rituals utilize dhāranī—considered as a means to attain the empowerment of the Tathāgatas—knowledge of Siddham was necessary if one were to accurately pronounce the characters in the dhāranī and, in turn, properly perform the ritual in question. (Interest in Siddham grammar and syntax, as well as the meaning of phrases, did not emerge until the mid-Tokugawa period, however, with the work of the Shingon priest Jiun 慈雲 (1718-1805).) To this end, Jōgon dedicated a great deal of time affixing both kana and phonological Sinitic glosses to dhāranī.⁵² Jōgon, moreover, was groundbreaking in that he attempted to explain the *meaning* of dhāranī in Japanese, doing away with the long practice of using the Chinese transliterations of Sanskrit, which provided only a guide to its pronunciation. Thus he attempted to revert to the original Sanskrit dhāranī, which could then be translated into Japanese. As Jōgon writes in his *Hokke shinchū kanchūryakkai* 法華新註冠注略解, “When one understands the meaning [of a dhāranī], then one can evaluate it in good faith; but when one does not understand the meaning, one remains in doubt and does not decide. Therefore, it is better to translate” (若し纔かにも其の義を解するとき

⁵² Jōgon was also prolific in publishing kana renditions of Buddhist sutras. Known as *kana hōgo*, these were intended to be more widely accessible to lay audiences. See Ueda, *Jōgon Wajō denki shiryōshū*, pp. 18-19.

は或は信決定す、義を解せざるときは或は疑て決せざる者有り、故に之を翻ずるも亦宜なり).⁵³

Keichū was heavily influenced by Jōgon’s research into ritual manuals and even received a dharma transmission (*denbō* 伝法) initiation from Jōgon at Enmeiji in 1679. Dharma transmissions typically involve the transmission of a special teaching (or dharma) through a succession of masters and disciples who are already ordained monks, thus perpetuating an elite “dharma lineage” of spiritual “fathers,” “sons,” and so forth. Keichū’s dharma transmission from Jōgon was one of five such transmissions that Jōgon would give in his lifetime. Keichū is known to have written out two hundred scrolls of esoteric Buddhist ritual manuals based on copies made in Jōgon’s own hand, including scriptural texts describing the protocol for rites and images. Furthermore, Keichū copied out Jōgon’s edition of the *Dari jing shu*. In borrowing from Jōgon in his appropriation of the fifty-sound chart for a Japanese language context, Keichū was relying on the same esoteric Buddhist logic of equivalence wherein all language could ultimately be reduced to the originally uncreated *A*, the first syllable of the root mantra of the Dharmakāya Mahāvairocana. As we will see, it was precisely due to this conviction that Keichū believed that waka held the potential for dhāranī.

⁵³ *Hokke shinchū kanchūryakkai*, vol. 12; cited in Ueda, *Jōgon Wajō denki shiryōshū*, p. 15.

WAKA AS DHĀRANĪ

In the *Man'yō daishōki sōshaku*, Keichū refers to a line from the *Yijing* 易經 (“Book of Changes”) that states, “Writing does not exhaustively express speech, and speech does not exhaustively express intention” (書不尽言、言不尽意). The *Yijing* goes on to explain that, “The sage creates simulacra and expresses thereby his intention. He manipulates hexagrams and exercises thereby his [judgment of] true and false. He examines words and explains thereby language” (聖人立象以盡意、設卦以尽情偽、繫辭焉以盡言).⁵⁴ These two lines, of course, make opposite claims: the first, that language is inadequate in expressing the workings of one’s mind; the second that language manifests one’s inherent virtue. Characteristic of his penchant for eclecticism,⁵⁵ Keichū parses the passage using another passage from the Chinese apocryphon *Shi moheyan lun* 釈摩訶衍論 (Jp. *Shaku makaenron*; “Interpreting the *Treatise on the Mahāyāna*”), a commentary on the Buddhist treatise *Oixinlun* 起信論 (Jp. *Kishinron*; “Awakening of Faith”). Because of its significance to Keichū’s understanding of language, and of the language of waka poetry specifically, I will quote it here at length.

Here the line, “writing does not exhaustively express speech, and speech does not exhaustively express intention” resembles the way that the four views on language—as signs, dreams, delusive attachments, and beginninglessness—do not bind or meet with the Principle of the True, [as expounded in a discussion of] the five views on language in the *Shi moheyan lun*. To say “the sage creates simulacra” resembles how [this

⁵⁴ Cited in KZ 1, p. 216.

⁵⁵ Even Inoguchi Takashi, author of an authoritative 2006 book on Keichū’s thought, observes that Keichū’s abundant citation of Sinological materials may elicit “feelings of irritation” among some (Inoguchi, *Keichū-gaku no keisei*, p. 3).

text] explains the principle of the truth potential [in language] in the fifth [view], “language as having the meaning of suchness (*nyogi gonzetsu*).” Those who do not attain this meaning think that the highest [teaching] in the Buddhist and non-Buddhist canons is cut off from language. To think this is to have not yet attained the inner meaning (*okugi*) [of either canon]. Waka, too, should be modeled after this [fifth view of language, *nyogi gonzetsu*]. Is there someone who could attain its myriad inner meanings? If one believes in this principle, rejects falseness, and attends to truth (*makoto*) wherever one casts one’s mind, then even the luminous kami will accept this [waka poetry].

この中に書不尽言、言不尽意といふは、釈摩訶衍論の五種言説の中
にの、相と夢と妄執と無始との、四種の言説の真理に契当せざるか
ことし。聖人立象といふより下は、第五の如義言説の能真理を説が
ことし。此意を得ざるもの、内典外典ともに至極にいたりては、言
語を離れたりとのみおもへるは、をのをのその奥義をきはめざるな
り。和歌もまたこれに准すへし。よろつの奥義は誰かきはむる人あ
らん。此理ありと信じて、いつはりをすてて、心のをよぶ所まこと
につかは、神明もこれをうけたまふべし。⁵⁶

According to the *Shi moheyan lun*, which Keichū esteemed as an authoritative text composed by the second- to third-century Indian scholar-monk and Shingon patriarch Nāgārjuna,⁵⁷ there are five views of language. As Keichū explains in the above passage, these are language conceived as signs, as dreams, as delusive attachments, as beginninglessness, and as suchness.

Following Kūkai, Keichū understood the first four views as positing an understanding of language as essentially false—that is, as *mōgo* 妄語, or deceptive speech,

⁵⁶ KZ 1, p. 216.

⁵⁷ The *Shi moheyan lun* is attributed to Nāgārjuna, who was believed to be the author for over a millennium in Japan. Scholars now agree, however, that the *Shi moheyan lun* was most likely composed not in India by Nāgārjuna in the second to third centuries, but rather in Silla between the seventh and eighth centuries. For Keichū, however, Nāgārjuna’s purported authorship confirmed the text’s authoritative nature: Nāgārjuna is claimed as one of the eight patriarchs of Keichū’s Shingon school as well as of every other school of East Asian Buddhism. According to esoteric Buddhist myth, Nāgārjuna was also the first human to receive the *Mahāvairocana sutra*, having found it in an iron stūpa in southern India.

one of the ten basic evil actions (十惡) in Buddhist ethics. Kūkai explains in his *Benkenmitsu nikyōron* 弁顯密二教論 (814) that the view of language as signs is derived from phenomena, as dreams from empty conceptualizations, as delusions from erroneous past expressions, and as beginninglessness from the passions, going on to associate each form of *mōgo* with a competing school of exoteric Buddhism. Language perceived as suchness, in contrast, is alone based on truth for Kūkai and is made manifest in mantra (*shingon*, literally “true words”). Accordingly, Kūkai identified this fifth view of language, *nyōgi gonzetsu*, with his own Shingon lineage, making a claim for the superiority of esoteric Buddhism over exoteric Buddhism in the process.⁵⁸ Very much aligned with the passage from the *Dari jing shu*, cited above, Kūkai subscribed to the idea that mantra is set apart from the deceptive language that makes up the bulk of worldly discourse.

Keichū, however, diverged from Kūkai in claiming that both Confucian understandings of language and waka poetry also contained an “inner meaning”—which is to say, an esoteric meaning—where language and truth coincide. According to Keichū, as long as one believes in *nyōgi gonzetsu* and attends to truth, the kami themselves will recognize waka as mantra. Adapting the esoteric Buddhist belief that ultimate truth could be found within worldly truth, Keichū argued that truth could be found in the profane. As he wrote in a 1695 letter inviting the Haikai poet Ishibashi Naoyuki 石橋直之(1655-1712) to attend his lectures on the *Man'yōshū*, his own findings shed light on the “truth within the profane” (俗中之真), in contrast to Naoyuki’s worldly studies, which merely traced

⁵⁸ T no. 2427, 77.378a. Kūkai identified Hossō (Yogacara) with the view of language as signs, Sanron (Madhyamika) with dreams, Tendai with attachments, and Kegon (Huayan) with beginninglessness. See also Inoguchi, *Keichū-gaku no keisei*, p. 140.

the “profane within the profane” (俗中之俗).⁵⁹ Referencing this letter, Muraoka Tsunetsugu claimed that Keichū was able to study the classical Japanese canon despite his Shingon Buddhist affiliations because he was, in the final analysis, a “priest of truth” (真の層侶).⁶⁰

Of course, these Shingon Buddhist affiliations had everything to do with Keichū’s quest for truth in language. Indeed, Keichū would go so far as to pun on “truth” (*makoto* 誠) and “mantra” (*ma-koto/shingon* 真言) associating both with the “true heart” (*magokoro* 真心) that would later become so integral to Motoori Norinaga’s thought and poetics. Keichū writes:

To have no falsehood in the heart and to be earnest is what is called having a “true heart” (*magokoro*). To have no falsehood in words is called “truth” (*makoto*). True heart (*magokoro*), true words (*makoto/shingon*). Thus if we call a heart without falsehood “truth,” the heart and words of a person without falsehood will correspond; nothing will be hidden in the words that he says and they will be easy to understand.

心のいつはりなくまめやかなりをは、まこゝろといひ、言のいつはりなきを、まことといふ。真心真言なり。さるを心にいつはりなきをもまことゝのみいふは、いつはりなき人は、こゝろとことはとあひかなふへに、いふことはあらはにて、知るやすければなり。⁶¹

Keichū deftly aligns the truth of mantra/dhāranī with the truth of the heart, effectively arguing that only the words of a person with a true heart will themselves be true. Having

⁵⁹ Cited in Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisōshi*, p. 397. Kobayashi Hideo and Inoguchi Takashi also emphasize the importance of this statement to Keichū’s overarching scholarly vision (see Kobayashi, *Motoori Norinaga*, pp. 78-79, and Inoguchi, *Keichū-gaku no keisei*, p. 143).

⁶⁰ Muraoka, *Zōtei Nihon shisōshi*, p. 398.

⁶¹ KZ 1, p. 194.

made this critical connection, Keichū continues on to identify poetry as that which captures the truth of the heart. Thus it is poetry, Keichū concludes, that ultimately expresses the quintessence of truth in words. Keichū, in other words, is identifying waka poems as themselves constituting true words, or mantra. As Keichū succinctly put it in both the *Man'yō daishōki sōshaku* and the *Wajishōranshō*, “Waka are the dhāranī of this country” (和歌は此国の陀羅尼なり).⁶²

In making this claim, Keichū was explicitly referencing a passage from the thirteenth-century poet-monk Mujū Ichien’s 無住一円 (1226-1312) *setsuwa* collection, the *Shasekishū* 沙石集 (1283). In the *Shasekishū*, Mujū uses the *Dari jing shu* together with *honji suijaku* ideology (i.e., the medieval Japanese theory that kami were manifestations of buddhas and bodhisattvas) to argue for the underlying Buddhist efficacy of waka. According to Mujū’s logic, waka’s status as dhāranī is ensured by its divine origins in the kami Susano’o, depicted in the *Kojiki* as composing the first thirty-one syllable poem (that is, what later became known as waka). Because Susano’o (as a kami) is himself a manifestation of the Buddha, Mujū argues, his words too can be considered as dhāranī:

With regard to the virtue of waka, it eliminates the mind of distraction and impulse and has the virtue of quieting and stilling [the mind]. Also, with only a few words it encapsulates the mind (*kokoro*). It has the virtue of upholding everything. Upholding everything is “dhāranī.” The kami of our kingdom are flowing traces of buddhas and bodhisattvas, a kind of response body. Susano’o composed the first thirty-one syllable composition, the “Eight-layered fence of Izumo.” This is no different from the words of the Buddha. The dhāranī of India (Tenjiku), too, are just the speech of the people of that country. Using this [language], the Buddha

⁶² KZ 1, p. 215; KZ 10, p. 114.

composed dhāranī. Thus in the *Dari jing shu* of Meditation Master Yixing it says, “the language of the various regions are all dhāranī.” If the Buddha emerged from our country, he would compose dhāranī using the language of our country. Upholding everything [i.e., dhāranī], fundamentally, has no words or letters. Words or letters [merely] reveal the upholding of everything.

和歌の徳を思ふに、散乱僂動の心をやめ、寂然静閑なる徳あり。また詞は少なくして心を含めり。惣持の徳あり。惣持は即ち陀羅尼なり。我が朝の神には、仏菩薩の垂迹、応身の随一なり。素盞雄尊、すでに出雲八重垣の三拾一字の詠をはじめ給へり。仏の詞に異なるべからず。天竺の陀羅尼もその国の人々の詞なり。仏、これを以て陀羅尼を説き給へり。この故に、一行禪師の大日経の疏にも、「随方の詞、みな陀羅尼」といへり。仏、若し我が国に出で給はば、ただ和国の詞を以て陀羅尼とし給ふべし。惣持は本文字なし。文字は惣持をあらはす。⁶³

The transferability of mantra to the language of the world articulated in the *Dari jing shu* is by now a familiar concept. It is worth noting, however, that the logographic compound “*zuihō*” 随方, which I have loosely translated here as “various regions,” is a specifically Buddhist term that refers to the way in which the Buddha conforms his teachings so that they accord with (随) the local customs of a particular time and place. As Miyagawa Yasuko notes, *zuihō* encompasses the notion that the historical and geographical transformation of written languages notwithstanding, the inherence of the real mark (実相) perseveres equally in diverse languages.⁶⁴

What is particularly interesting in the passage from Mujū quoted above is the emphasis on the mind (*kokoro*) when comparing dhāranī to waka. Mujū suggests that waka fulfills the same function as dhāranī in that it stills the mind and encapsulates

⁶³ SNKZ 52, p. 252.

⁶⁴ Miyagawa, “Keichū-gaku no keifu,” pp. 14-15.

intention using but a handful of words. Yet, dhāranī were not chanted for their semantic value (which was incomprehensible to East Asians, and to most Indians as well due to their lack of comprehensible grammatical structure) but for the real mark that their sound and rhythm alone made manifest. Mujū thus introduces a novel paradigm for evaluating waka: in Mujū’s estimation, the aural form of a poem appears to supersede content matter in terms of import. As we will see, this is a characteristic that is also recognizable in Motoori Norinaga’s evaluation of poetry, though semantic content still holds some value for Norinaga, to be sure. Even as I do not want to suggest that there exists any direct correlation between the emphasis placed on form and truthful intention in Mujū’s understanding of waka as dhāranī and Norinaga’s later poetics (discussed in Chapters Three and Four), it bears mention that significant similarities exist. And we may surmise, at least, that the idea appealed to Norinaga in some way; for he copied out this same *Shasekishū* passage in his own personal notes, believed to date from the 1760s.⁶⁵

While the first instance of comparison between waka and dhāranī specifically occurs in the *Shasekishū*, the equivalency Mujū draws between Japanese and Sanskrit was relatively widespread in the medieval period. A substantial component (alongside *honji suijaku*) of the late Heian and Kamakura period *sangoku sekaikan*, or “three countries worldview”—a worldview that sought to bypass the preeminence of China by comparing Japan directly to India—Japanese was aligned favorably with Sanskrit (and

⁶⁵ MNZ 13, p. 242. The passage Norinaga cites is longer, beginning at the same point but extending for a paragraph or two beyond what I have cited here. It is worth noting that Norinaga’s copy diverges somewhat from versions of the *Shasekishū* that are today preserved in the *Shinpen Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* (cited here) and the *Nihon koten bungaku taikai*. Norinaga’s copied out text aligns as far as the above citation is concerned; however, shortly thereafter he either skips or did not have access to a brief sentence on the originally non-arising syllable *A* contained within the SNKBZ version, continuing directly to a comparison between the thirty-one chapters of the *Mahāvairocana sutra* and the thirty-one syllables of waka.

kana with Siddham) at the expense of Sinitic as early as the late twelfth century. The eminent poet-monk Jien 慈円 (1155-1225), for instance, argues in his *Shūgyokushū* 拾玉集 (early 13th c.) that the forty-seven syllables represented by kana are closer to Sanskrit than Chinese, and accordingly closer as well to the mantra that emerges from the mouth of the Buddha. Thus Jien writes, “Sanskrit, in contrast [to Chinese], is closer, and indeed can be said to be the same as *Yamato kotoba*” (梵語はかへりて近く、和語に同じといへり).⁶⁶

Despite this cross-Asiatic association, Jien’s description of *Yamato kotoba* has many similarities with Norinaga’s own pronouncements on the language some six hundred years later. Jien identifies *Yamato kotoba* as both “the speech of our country” (わが国のことわざ) and a sacred language that has been handed down from the kami since the heavens first opened. Because *Yamato kotoba* is the language of the kami, Jien argues, no other language—including, presumably, Sanskrit—precedes it. Jien, of course, was struggling against a prevailing view that cast Japan as inferior due to its late arrival to literacy and lack of native orthography.⁶⁷ He thus defensively states in the *Shūgyokushū* that the presence or absence of letters is merely a matter of custom (国々の風俗) and not an indication of inferiority or superiority. Jien, moreover, compares the five lines of waka (which he understood as the exemplary form of *Yamato kotoba*) to the

⁶⁶ WBT 59, pp. 253-254. The paraphrase of Jien’s argument in the following paragraph also comes from these same two pages.

⁶⁷ Itō, “Bon, Kan, Wago dōikkan no seiritsu kiban,” pp. 213-214. See Sueki, *Nihon Bukkyō shisō-shi ronkō*, pp. 354-355 for the argument that *honji suijaku* has its origins in the perception that Japan was a small and marginal country (小国意識).

five elements, aligning the latter with everything from the body of the Buddha to the insentient grasses and trees. Itō Satoshi has called this the “linguistic counterpart” of *honji suijaku*, making the argument that this succeeded in elevating kana beyond its status of “borrowed characters,” as its name literally implies, to that of a sacred language on par with Sanskrit.⁶⁸

Keichū, too, would subscribe to the idea that waka began during the age of the kami, taking the dhāranī analogy to indicate that waka, like dhāranī, encapsulated myriad meanings and ought to be investigated for their component sounds. As Keichū states shortly after referencing the *Shasekishū* in the *Wajishōranshō*, “The forty-seven syllables used in creating waka, these too can be called dhāranī” (和歌につつらぬさきの四十七言、早く陀羅尼といふへし).⁶⁹ Having thus put in place a rationale for the syllable-by-syllable analysis of waka and of his research into *kanazukai* in turn, Keichū continues on to discuss the fifty-sound chart.⁷⁰ If waka are things that are to be offered to the buddhas

⁶⁸ Itō, “Bon, Kan, Wago dōikkan no seiritsu kiban,” pp. 222-223.

⁶⁹ KZ 10, p. 114.

⁷⁰ Keichū by no means invented the fifty-sound chart, but he was the first to appropriate it specifically for the study of historical kana usage. The earliest extant chart mapping out (most of) the fifty sounds is found in the early eleventh-century *Kujyakukyō ongi* 孔雀經音義, a Buddhist text that treats word pronunciation in the Chinese translation of the *Buddhamātykā mahāmayūri vidyārājñī sutra*. Already in this text, the author writes that people frequently are ignorant of the characters that make up the *go'on*, indicating the five vowel sounds that in time came to head the five columns of the fifty-sound chart. Accordingly, mistakes are made in the *fanqie*, the two characters that are used to establish the pronunciation of a third character. The chart provided in the *Kujyakukyō ongi* arranges the vowels in an *i, o, a, e, u* order. The Tendai esoteric monk Myōgaku’s slightly later chart in *Han'on sahō* 半音作法 (1093), on the other hand, arranges them according to the *a, i, u, e, o* sequence borrowed from the Siddham script that we are familiar with today. Unlike the *Kujyakukyō ongi* chart, Myōgaku’s *onzu* is complete, including all of the phonemes found in modern kana lists; however, the ordering of the consonant rows diverge from what is now recognized to be correct (Yamada, *Gojū-on no rekishi*, p. 83).

and the kami, Keichū says, it is crucial for the kana to be correct.⁷¹ With Keichū, as with Jien, the sounds of Sanskrit are seen as providing the touchstone for correctness. Keichū notes, for instance, that, “Although this kingdom borrows its writing from China, its sounds, in contrast, are closer to that of India” (本朝は大唐の文字をかり用といへとも、音韻はかへりて天竺によく通す).⁷²

I want to stress the emphasis on sound—that is, the phonocentricity—that Keichū demonstrates here. Japan may utilize Chinese logography to represent language in writing, he says, but in terms of sound it is closer to India, and it is sound that matters. The specificity of sound is critical for Keichū, of course, because he espouses an esoteric Buddhist worldview in which the sounds of language themselves make up the constitutive materiality of the cosmos. In contrast to exoteric Buddhist views, this cosmos is not merely empty (空) and therefore equal or homogenous, but is rather composed of self-nature (自性; Jp. *jisshō*, Sk. *svabhāva*), of essences—specifically, the essence of emptiness itself. As such, it encompasses both equality (homogeneity/similarity) and discrimination (heterogeneity/difference). As Keichū writes:

Myōgi hōshi [? – 1429] says the likes of *o/wo*, *e/we*, and *i/wi* all ought to be written as similar, without differentiation. This is “seeing similarity and not knowing difference.” Taking similarity and difference and distinguishing between them is much like taking the warp and weft of a cloth. Difference is horizontal. Similarity is vertical. Without the horizontal of difference, there is nowhere to weave the vertical of

⁷¹ KZ 10, p. 123.

⁷² KZ 1, p. 213. Likewise, Keichū writes in the *Wajishōranshō*, “Although this country is far from India, it nevertheless corresponds in [terms of] sound” (此国は天竺には遠ながら。声はかへりて能通じ) (KZ 10, p. 113).

similarity. When one looks at a cloth horizontally, the weft becomes the warp, and the warp in turn becomes the weft. This is the similarity that exists within difference. Yet, even when one looks at [the cloth] horizontally, the respective virtues of the warp and weft are not confused. Thus when there is similarity, difference is not lost. Similarity and difference are the two wheels [of a cart] or a pair of wings and should not be taken away from each other [i.e., are mutually dependent].

明魏法師は、をお、えゑ、いゑ、のたくひ、みな通してかくへきよしをいへり。これは通を見て別をしらさる」なり。通別相まちてたかひになりこと、たとへは経緯の布をなすかことし。別は経なり。通は緯なり。別の経なくは、通の緯つくる所なし。布を横にみる時は、緯はかへり経てとなり、経はかへりて緯となる。これは別の中に通あるなり。しかれとも横にみるといへとも、経緯をのをのその徳を混ぜず。これを通の時、別をうしなはさるなり。通別は両輪変翼にしてかくへからず。⁷³

This passage is frequently read with an attention to Keichū's appreciation of *kanazukai* and sound change within kana—which is to say, from the perspective of phonology. And certainly, that is one important consequence of Keichū's point here. According to Keichū, the fifty-sound chart enables a more nuanced way of imagining now similar yet once distinct sounds—such as *o/wo* and *e/we*—by distinguishing between consonants (vertical axis) and vowels (horizontal axis).

Yet, if we free ourselves from a modern linguistic framework, it is clear that Keichū places far greater significance on the mere fact *that* difference and similarity must be equally countenanced. Needless to say, the rationale behind this perspective is an esoteric one, valuing non-duality. As Keichū explains immediately following the previous passage:

Differentiation is discrimination (*shabetsu*) and commonality is equality (*byōdō*). Though the teachings of the inner and outer canon are countless,

⁷³ KZ 1, p. 206.

they can be reduced to these two [that is, discrimination and equality]. These two are simultaneously the dharma; there has never been anything before or after.

別は差別、通は平等なり。内典外典の教、無量なれども、畢竟このふたつに通ず。ふたつは俱時の法にして初より前後せず。⁷⁴

Prioritizing the esoteric Buddhist view that esotericism is at once superior to exotericism but also encompasses it, Keichū argues that discrimination and equality are ultimately compatible. He posits that equality and discrimination are dharmas—here referring to qualities of phenomena—before going on to claim that they pervade throughout the cosmos as mutually compatible vantages: “Heaven and earth are discrimination; the four directions are equality. The three times [past, present, and future] are vertical and are discrimination; the ten directions [north, east, west, etc.] are horizontal and are equality” (天地は差別、四方は平等なり。三世は豎にして差別なり。十方は横にして平等なり).⁷⁵ Discrimination and equality can always be perceived dialectically, Keichū suggests, just as one may study the language of waka/Yamato for its unique specificity yet countenance its place as just another of the languages of the “various regions.” Likewise, Mahāvairocana can rightfully be seen as standing above all else in the cosmos even as he is revered as a personification of the Dharmakāya, the substance that makes up the cosmos itself.

It is abundantly clear that Keichū’s ultimate focus here is not on the Japanese

⁷⁴ KZ 1, p. 206. Supporting this claim, Tsukishima argues that Keichū neither interrogated *kanazukai* phonologically nor questioned the value of *kanazukai* itself (Tsukishima, “Keichū no gogaku to Bussho,” p. 352).

⁷⁵ KZ 1, p. 206.

language, and neither are the consequences of his vision restricted by linguistic parameters. Indeed, even as Keichū's fifty-sound chart is typically construed as an ordering device for the Japanese language, Mabuchi Kazuo has noted that such characterizations are overly narrow in their scope. For Keichū perceived the fifty sounds as encompassing the entirety of the sounds that filled the cosmos. As Keichū writes in the *Wajishōranshō*:

Although there are numerous sounds, they do not number beyond fifty. This is not just among humans. From the buddhas and kami above to the demons and beasts below, all emit these [fifty] voices. Again, this is not only among sentient beings, but also the tree as it is moved by the wind and water as it is moved by a rock. Among inanimate things, too, there is nothing that falls outside of this.

種々の音声ありといへども、その数五十に過ず。唯人間のみならず。上は仏神より、下は鬼畜に至るまで、此声を出す。又唯有情のみにあらず、風の木にふれ水の石に触るるたぐひの、非情の声までもこれより外に出る事なし。⁷⁶

The fifty sounds, Keichū makes explicit, are not just limited to human languages, and most certainly not to specific languages within humanity. They are truly universal, encompassing everything from buddhas to beasts to winds and waters.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Keichū, *Wajishōranshō*, book 1. Cited in Mabuchi, *Gojū-onzu no hanashi*, p. 49.

⁷⁷ This is something that is also seen in Kamo no Mabuchi's account of the fifty sounds, expressed in his *Goikō* 語意考 (1769). Mabuchi calls these the "spontaneously arising fifty voices of heaven and earth" (天つちのおのつからなるいつらの音), though a more explicitly Japan-centric worldview has crept in to his still universal characterization (Kamo no Mabuchi, *Goikō*, p. 124).

THE LAND OF THE KAMI:
FROM KEICHŪ TO NORINAGA

As the mention of buddhas and kami suggests, Keichū firmly believed in *honji suijaku* and the notion of Japan as a divine country (*shinkoku*) where buddhas and bodhisattvas unfurled their traces. Following a long and variegated tradition of Buddhist Shinto (which is to say, most, if not all, Shinto before the early modern period⁷⁸), the hierarchy between buddhas and kami is often blurred in Keichū's writings. It is thus somewhat unclear which divinity occupies greater significance for Keichū, and given his stress on non-duality and the dialectic between equality and discrimination, we may surmise that that obscurity is intentional.⁷⁹ As we have already seen, Keichū entertains a healthy dose of what might anachronistically be called syncretism in his methodology, and this is something that extends to his cosmology as well. Indeed, Motoori Norinaga's claim that Keichū was the "forefather" of his own school of ancient studies is all the more believable given the prominent roles both the kami and Shinto play in Keichū's thought. For Norinaga—who wanted to "return" to a more pure Shinto that ostensibly existed prior to outside influence—Keichū's work very plausibly provided a more attractive scholastic model than Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai's more strictly historicist, China-oriented approaches, Buddhological elements notwithstanding.

⁷⁸ As is widely recognized, even Ise Shinto (Watarai Shinto), sometimes seen as being anti-Buddhist, not only emerged but also established itself within the context of esoteric Buddhist *hongaku* (original enlightenment) thought. See Kuroda, "The Discourse on the 'Land of the Kami' (*Shinkoku*) in Medieval Japan."

⁷⁹ Miyagawa Yasuko characterizes Keichū's refusal to sublimate either discrimination or equality at the expense of the other as part of a larger early modern reinterpretation of Shingon which moved away from Kūkai's more "discriminatory" stance in the *Jūjūshinron* 十住心論 (c. 830) (Miyagawa, "Keichū-gaku no keifu," p. 19).

The idea that kami were emanations of buddhas and bodhisattvas can be seen as early as the ninth century, when kami were considered as expedient means, or *hōben*. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, however, the kami had come to be seen in Japanese esoteric Buddhism not merely as emanations of Buddhist divinities, but as embodiments of Mahāvairocana’s enlightenment itself. A Japan-centric development of the medieval “three countries worldview,” Taimitsu scholar-monks such as Kōshū 光宗 (1276-1350) would use this identification to claim that Japan surpassed India, being itself the site for the origins of both Buddhism and the cosmos. As Kōshū writes in the *Keiran shūyōshū* 溪嵐拾葉集 (1319): “The luminous kami are Mahāvairocana (Dainichi); Śākyamuni is a transformation-body buddha. Our country is the original country of Mahāvairocana, and India (Saiten) is the country of Śākyamuni’s appearance” (神明は大日なり。釈迦は応迹の仏なり。此の時、我が国は大日の本国、西天は釈迦応迹の国なり).⁸⁰

Although Keichū at times seems to prioritize India and/or Siddham over Japan/kana, he, too, would claim that Amaterasu was none other than an emanation of Mahāvairocana. He writes in one poem, for instance, that Mahāvairocana and Amaterasu were both the sun, and thus to pray to the Buddha was also to pray to the kami.⁸¹ Inoguchi Takashi characterizes Keichū’s views on Shinto as a fluid one, pointing out that he unproblematically weaves the Ryōbu (dual) Shinto of the Shingon school together with the Shinto of Kitabatake Chikafusa’s 北畠親房 (1293-1354) *Jinnō shōtōki* 神皇正統記. Whereas Ryōbu Shinto is characterized by the identification of Amaterasu with

⁸⁰ Quoted in Sueki, *Nihon Bukkyō shisō-shi ronkō*, p. 365.

⁸¹ KZ 18, p. 496; see also KZ 1, p. 358. Inoguchi discusses several more passages where Keichū makes similar equivalences (see Inoguchi, *Keichū-gaku no keisei*, pp. 165-167).

Dainichi Nyorai/Mahāvairocana, the *Jinnō shōtōki* states that Yamato alone is the land of the kami (神国) and likewise can alone claim the kami of the sun (Amaterasu) as its progenitor.⁸²

Interestingly, although Norinaga despised the Shinto of his day, seeing both Ryōbu and Yuiitsu Shinto as being contaminated by centuries of Confucian and Buddhist logic,⁸³ he believed that Keichū’s “return to the origins” scholarship shed light on truth.⁸⁴ For Keichū’s belief in a Buddhist cosmos notwithstanding, he also held that Shinto predated the historical religion of Buddhism in Japan. For example, Keichū claimed that, in antiquity, heaven and earth were governed by means of Shinto alone.⁸⁵ Coming upon the same philological quandary that Norinaga would later confront, Keichū believed that true [i.e., pre-continental influence] Shinto was “neither explained nor studied [because] there was no writing and [accordingly] no texts” (不説不学無字無書).⁸⁶ It was only in later studies, such as the *Nihon shoki* and the *Kojiki*, as well as in waka, Keichū argued, that one could come to learn about the Shinto of antiquity. Yet, precisely because Japan was the “land of the kami,” in Keichū’s mind, these later texts actually proved reliable in relaying the past:

⁸² Inoguchi, *Keichū-gaku no keisei*, pp. 161-167. Kuroda Toshio notes that even the idea of Amaterasu as the “divine ancestor” of the imperial line seen in the *Jinnō shōtōki* is derived from contemporaneous Buddhism; for instance, the *Keiran shūyōshū* states that Japan is the land of the kami because its “original deity” is Amaterasu, who is none other than Mahāvairocana (Kuroda, “The Discourse on the ‘Land of the Kami’ (*Shinkoku*) in Medieval Japan,” p. 375).

⁸³ See, for instance, MNZ 1, pp. 133-135 for Norinaga’s excoriation of Ryōbu Shinto.

⁸⁴ MNZ 1, p. 170.

⁸⁵ KZ 1, p. 192.

⁸⁶ KZ 7, p. 457.

Because our kingdom is the land of the kami, even after it has become the age of men, what is written in the histories of the country is none other than the kami. We must simply respect this and believe in it.

ことに本朝は神国にて、人の代となりても、国史に記する所、神異かそへかたし。たゞ仰てこれを信すへし。⁸⁷

Keichū here erects a rationale for the philological investigation of ancient texts grounded on Shinto mythology that complements his Buddhological reasoning for the truthfulness of profane language that we examined above. Like Norinaga's explanation a century later that the kami insured the veracity of Japan's ancient texts through the miraculous power of words known as *kotodama*,⁸⁸ Keichū advocates something akin to faith when it comes to establishing the value of the *Kojiki*, the *Nihon shoki*, and the *Man'yōshū*.

Keichū's attitude toward the past also has numerous parallels to Norinaga's later positions wherein Norinaga condemned "Chinese" tendencies of overly theorizing and rationalizing the cosmos to the point of abstraction. In both Keichū's and Norinaga's writings, there exists a strong predisposition to explain things "as they are," even if they elude cognition or easy rationalization. As Keichū writes in the *Seigo okudan* 勢語臆断 (1692), an analysis of classical and medieval commentaries on the *Ise monogatari*:

This kingdom has its origins in Shinto. Thus we should not hand down in disarray the events that have taken place since the age of the kami, nor should [people of] later [ages], thinking to distance themselves from disdainful events, criticize the past. Likewise, we should not use the past as an example for later ages. *Let us just describe it as it is (ari no mama).*

⁸⁷ Quoted in Inoguchi, *Keichū-gaku no keisei*, p. 161.

⁸⁸ See, for instance, MNZ 8, p. 125. Keichū also believed in the power of *kotodama* and references them relatively frequently. See, for instance, KZ 10, p. 110.

本朝は神道を本とす。然るに神代よりありける事なればみだりに譲すべからず。後には嫌はしき事とはなれるをもて、むかしを難ずべからず。また昔をもて後の例とすべきこともあらず、ただありのままにさてありなん。⁸⁹

Similarly, Norinaga writes in *Kuzubana* ぐず花 (1781) that, “Everything is as it appears; there is nothing beyond it” (見に見えたるまゝにて、其外に何もなき), going on to claim that even as most kami were no longer visible in his day, they were visible to those in the age of the kami.⁹⁰ Although pronouncements such as these have been cast by modern historians as typifying a tendency toward philological empiricism and evidential research—and indeed have that result in practice—they are motivated not by scientific positivism in the way that we typically conceive the term, but rather by a “mystical” or “religious” conviction in the kami. A continuation of that logic, for instance, is Norinaga’s claim in *Tamagatsuma* that the sun deity Amaterasu is none other than the “heavenly orb” (i.e., the sun) that shines in the sky each day. That such a feat is difficult to comprehend using the inherently limited human reason we have at our disposal, Norinaga argues, is precisely as it should be.⁹¹ This kind of religious conviction is apparent in both Keichū and Norinaga’s writings, though of course it extends in Keichū’s case beyond the kami to the Dharmakāya and the esoteric Buddhist belief that the world exists as reverberations of the Cosmic Buddha’s mantra.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Hisamatsu, *Keichū-den*, p. 267. Emphasis added.

⁹⁰ MNZ 8, p. 160.

⁹¹ MNZ 1, p. 53.

Keichū openly espoused the “three Ways” of Japan—Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shinto—claiming that Shinto was in some ways more similar to Confucianism, in other ways more similar to Buddhism, and in other ways still different from both.⁹² It was waka, however, that Keichū held as emblematic of the commonality shared by all three Ways. As he states in the preface to the *Kōganshō* 厚顔抄 (1691), waka was “understood by the kami and supportive of Confucian teachings” (神に通じ、儒を扶け). Moreover, as an amalgamation of the forty-seven syllables, it was ultimately “passed down from the Buddha” (仏よりす).⁹³ Waka occupies this rarefied position of privilege for Keichū, furthermore, because it was not only “Close to the ears in speech, and learned from kami in significance” (語、人の耳に近く、義、神明に習ふなり),⁹⁴ as the *Kokinshū* “Mana preface” claimed, but also capable of “affecting the sensibilities of people of the world” (世間の人情にも叶へり), another classical sentiment.⁹⁵

Having established its significance as a universally accessible medium for connecting people to the divine, Keichū goes on to claim that waka is a “jeweled broom [used] to sweep away the profane dust within the breast” (胸中の俗塵を払ふ玉箒なり).⁹⁶ This imagery of waka as a means to sweep away “profane dust” is one that Keichū uses repeatedly in his writings; and, as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation,

⁹² KZ 1, p. 196.

⁹³ KZ 7, p. 460.

⁹⁴ KZ 1, p. 160.

⁹⁵ KZ 1, p. 159.

⁹⁶ KZ 1, p. 159. See also KZ 1, p. 217.

it refers specifically to the Buddhist belief that the dust of the world defiles the six sensory faculties (六根) of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. With waka, as with dhāranī, Keichū says, one may clear away sensory defilements to see the world as it really is—which is to say, to see the truth (*makoto*).

To recall Norinaga’s statement from *Kamiyo no masakoto* quoted in the previous chapter, Norinaga too would ascribe the delusion he perceived around him to “dust” (*chiri* 塵). Thus he claimed that, “the minds of people through the ages have been clouded by the dust of Chinese texts” (世々の人の心。からぶみの塵にくもり).⁹⁷ Although Norinaga has substituted Chinese texts for the profane world as the underlying cause of dust and defilement here, the desire to find the truth, to find *makoto*, beneath the dust remains. Indeed, according to Norinaga, it was this aspect of Keichū’s scholarship—an aspect that I have argued had its roots in esoteric Buddhism cosmology as well as the precept reform movement of the early- to mid-Tokugawa period—that rendered Keichū’s work so far superior to that of his contemporaries. For instance, Norinaga praises Keichū’s analysis in the *Seigo okudan* of a poem supposedly written by the *Ise monogatari* hero Ariwara no Narihira 在原業平 (825-880) on his deathbed. Norinaga approvingly quotes Keichū’s appreciation of Narihira’s sincerity of emotion upon facing his imminent demise as differing from the “wild words and embellished phrases” (*kyōgen kigo* 狂言綺語) of typical poetry before going on to lionize Keichū as a teacher of the truth:

⁹⁷ MNZ 7, p. 485.

These do not sound like the words of a dharma master, and they are incredibly venerable. Those people who have a Yamato spirit (*Yamato damashī*), even if they are dharma masters, may still be so [i.e., a person with a Yamato spirit]. A Shintoist or a waka poet with a Chinese heart (*karagokoro*) would never say such things. Dharma Master Keichū teaches the truth of the people of the world. Shintoists and waka poets only teach lies.

ほうしのことばにもにず、いといとたふとし、やまとだましひなる人は、法師ながら、かくこそ有けれ、から心なる神道者歌学者、まさにかうはいはんや、契沖法師は、よの人のまことを教へ、神道者歌学者は、いつはりをぞをしふなる、⁹⁸

It is truth, or *makoto*, that is most important, Norinaga argues, regardless of one's superficial affiliations to Shinto, Buddhism, or waka. And this truth is something that Keichū, precisely because he was a “dharma master,” espoused.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to argue that Keichū's influence on Norinaga extended beyond matters of linguistic and philological methodology to the underlying principle, derived from esoteric Buddhism, that the truth could be found within the profane. Even the universal conceptualization of the fifty sounds, so important to Norinaga's conception of language, is informed by the esoteric Buddhist tradition, stemming from the idea of the originally uncreated syllable *A* and the root mantra of the Mahāvairocana Tathāgata. As we have seen, it was the Shingon priest Jōgon who first determined the correct arrangement of *i* and *wi* in the *a* and *wa* rows of the sound table in the *Shittan sanmitsushō*, followed a decade later by Keichū, who established the correct placement of *e* and *we* in the *Wajishōranshō*. Norinaga credits Keichū for this

⁹⁸ MNZ 1, p. 170.

accomplishment, though he pointedly makes no mention of Jōgon despite being familiar with his works. As Norinaga writes in the *Kojikiden*:

At this point, there was a monk named Keichū of Naniwa; he studied the ancient texts carefully and was the first to realize that the kana usage of antiquity was correct. From this monk, the Way of ancient studies (*inshie manabi*) first opened little by little, and this is all because of his achievements.

ここに難波の契沖といひし僧ぞ、古書をよく考えて、古の仮字づかひの、正しかりしことば、始めて見得たりし、凡古学の道は、此僧よりぞ、かつがつも開け初ける、いともいとも有がたき^{イサフ}功になむ有ける。⁹⁹

Norinaga commends Keichū as the first person to have deciphered historical kana usage, claiming that, in so doing, he also opened the Way of ancient studies. Here we see Norinaga elide the esoteric Buddhist impetus behind Keichū’s research to focus instead on kana usage alone. Yet, the idea of a “correct” form of linguistic usage, ostensibly corresponding not only to the language of a more pure antiquity but also to the cosmos itself, remains wholly intact.

In determining the ordering of *o* and *wo* a century after Keichū, Norinaga would situate himself squarely in this concocted genealogy of language heroes. In a section of *Mojigoe no kanazukai* 字音仮名用格 (1775) entitled, “On the placement of *o* and *wo*” (おを所属弁), Norinaga writes,

O should be made light and placed in the *a* row; the *wo* should be made heavy and placed in the *wa* row. However, this was in the past confused and *wo* was placed in the *a* row and made light, and the *o* was placed in the *wa* row and made heavy. Many texts did not distinguish between these

⁹⁹ MNZ 9, p. 27.

two, and for hundreds of years up until this day, there was no one who could rectify this error. But to understand the ancient language, it is necessary to have the *o/wo* correct.

おハ軽クシテあ行に属し、をハ重クシテわ行ニ属ス、然ルヲ古今錯リテ、をヲあ行ニ属テ軽トシ、おヲわ行ニ属シテ重トス、諸説一同ニシテ、数百年来イマダソノ非ヲ曉レル人ナシ、故ニ古言ヲ解ニモ、此おをニツキテハ此彼快カラザル事アリ、¹⁰⁰

Although Norinaga makes it clear that he is the one who has rectified this error, there is some uncertainty over who discovered the discrepancy first. A manuscript of Fujitani Nariakira's *Ayuishō* (published 1778) predating Norinaga's *Mojigoe* exists that includes a précis with a phoneme chart (*tatenuki no kata* 経緯図) demonstrating the correct ordering.¹⁰¹ Norinaga's followers, however, accused Nariakira's disciples of going back and changing the ordering in the manuscript after seeing Norinaga's 1775 publication.¹⁰²

Whether it was Norinaga or Nariakira who first corrected the ordering of *o* and *wo* is, of course, unimportant for our purposes. Rather, I want to stress the seemingly seamless transition Norinaga enacts as he borrows from Keichū's (and Jōgon's) scholarship, positioning both himself and the Shingon monk as philologists and phonologists foremost, motivated by the seeking of truth. As we will see in the following two chapters, the very truth that Norinaga sought—through texts and through the organization of sounds—was informed by Keichū's esoteric Buddhist cosmology. It was

¹⁰⁰ MNZ 5, p. 331.

¹⁰¹ There, a disciple of Nariakira's has written, "The people of the world who do not know the principle of *tatenuki* place the /o/ character of the "a" row in the "wa" row, and the /wo/ character of the "wa" row in the "a" row; this is a mistake" (世に経緯の理を知らぬ人。あ経のお文字をわ経に置き。わ経のを文字をあ経に置くは誤り) (FNZ J, p. 568).

¹⁰² In Nariakira's earlier *Kazashishō* かざし抄 (1767), the ordering remains mistaken. See FNZ J, p. 1210.

this cosmology, after all, that held that truth could be found in language and that sounds comprised the cosmos.

SIGNPOSTS FOR THE WAY:

Motoori Norinaga's Theory of Language

Motoori Norinaga followed classical poetic convention in perceiving the cosmos as composed of vocalizations and rhythms—the cries of the bush warbler in spring, the cuckoo in summer, frogs, insects, winds, and so forth—with these vocalizations and rhythms not only representing cosmic order but ordering the cosmos as such. The human contribution to these rhythms, moreover, could be found in language. The manner in which properly pronounced words were ordered into phrases via set linguistic rules and principles thus took on metaphysical import for Norinaga. Indeed, it was ultimately correct sounds and sound sequences that Norinaga believed could render knowable the cosmological workings of the universe.¹

¹ Scholars have long intuited the relative expediency of grammatical rules. The ancient Indian grammarian Patañjali (c. 150 BCE), for example, claims in his *Mahābhāṣya* that grammar is the most reliable manner by which to understand the world because it provides a means for efficient linguistic production. The *Mahābhāṣya* also makes a correlation between good language and good action, citing for instance an old proverb that states, “The proper use of a single word, founded on grammar and known to be so, can grant one’s wish in the world of heaven.” Likewise, following a similar logic, “A word corrupt in accent or phoneme improperly used not only does not transmit its sense but becomes a thunderbolt to destroy the sacrifice” (Quoted in Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, p. 183).

Nearly two millennia later, Scottish political economist Adam Smith (1723-1790) compared the “rules of grammar” to the “rules of justice,” arguing that both were “precise,

Significantly, these correct sounds and sound sequences were found in the idealized language of ancient Japan, a language which Norinaga believed had become woefully divorced from the language of the present after a millennium of Chinese influence. As a form of rectification, Norinaga sought to philologically recover the sonic elements of the ancient Japanese language through an investigation into its grammar, prosody, and morphology. These linguistic components, he believed, directly determined how words were heard, whether aloud or in the mind, and accordingly also directly regulated the rhythms and patterns of language as such. Norinaga's emphasis on grammar and prosody thus developed somewhat counter-intuitively, a means to regulate in text the all-important albeit indeterminate sounds of an idealized Japanese language.

In Norinaga's formulation, correct grammar is derived from the *kami* just as correct sounds are; indeed, the two are mutually dependent, the one unable to exist without the other. The sounds of language—if they are to count as language at all—are always expressed via a certain grammatical order. Grammar understood thus is necessarily premised on a static understanding of language and, in turn, of “proper” pronunciation. Thus Norinaga would exclude common phonemes in Japanese such as voiced and semi-voiced consonants (*dakuon* 濁音 and *handakuon* 半濁音), as well as the moraic nasal /N/ ん, claiming that such sounds were incorrect, not part of the fifty

accurate, and indispensable,” and accordingly had to be learned “by rule, with the utmost infallibility” (Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 205). Unlike Norinaga, Smith juxtaposed the precision and infallibility that grammar provided with the vague lines governing “the attainment of elegance or sublimity in writing,” which he believed were far more difficult, perhaps even impossible, to master (Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 205). Norinaga, on the other hand, considered precisely the opposite to be true, closely associating elegance (*miyabi* 雅) with grammar. Smith, of course, perceived the relationship between grammar and justice analogically (as a matter of resemblance), whereas Norinaga's conception of grammar was of a more ontological nature.

original voices of heaven and earth that ostensibly animated ancient Japan.² This insistence is critical to Norinaga's perception of grammar, for the possibility of a natural grammar is dependent on the existence of an originary perfect language. Any change this perfect language undergoes over time can only be considered a corruption, and by no means an evolution. This conceit is requisite, of course, if one is to promote an archaic and effectively dead language as correct, divinely transmitted, and cosmically connatural—which is to say, as sacred.³

Norinaga's ideas about grammar revolve around his theories on *teniwoha* てにをは/天爾遠波, a term used to indicate uninflected function words that navigate between grammatical classes such as nouns and verbs, as well as inflected verb endings. *Teniwoha* have been considered critical to poetic expression since at least the Kamakura period (1185-1333).⁴ In the Tokugawa period (1600-1867), however, *teniwoha* emerged at the

² See, for instance, Norinaga's arguments in *Ashikariyoshi* (MNZ 8, pp. 378-413). Norinaga does in fact concede that euphonic change and linguistic corruption occurs naturally over time; this, however, rather ironically does not also render the corrupted sounds that are introduced into language "natural."

³ Sheldon Pollock argues against the use of the term "dead" language when discussing Sanskrit, noting that it is a conceptual anachronism: the metaphor of language "death" has its origins in Italian humanism, and has no place in what Pollock calls the "language world" of pre-modern South Asia, where "linguistic options were far more multiple than in modernity [and] such notions as mother-tongue were absent" (Pollock, *The Language of the Gods in the World of Men*, p. 49). A similar argument could convincingly be leveled against calling ancient Japanese "dead" in this case. That said, I find the metaphor useful here, as it stresses for modern readers (us) the static quality of Norinaga's sacred language. It was not dead from Norinaga's perspective, certainly, but as Ueda Akinari's and Fujitani Nariakira's differing conceptions of language change reveal, his insistence on its unchanging nature was somewhat unusual. Interestingly, Norinaga does use the metaphorical language of "living" (生) and "dead" (死) in referring to Japanese and literary Sinitic, respectively (MNZ 5, p. 388). This terminology, however, is justified by Norinaga by the presence of verb inflection in Japanese, something that is absent in Sinitic.

⁴ *Teniwoha* include interjectory and final particles used to indicate emphasis, emotion, and rhyme, as well as more syntactically oriented conjunctive and case particles, among other things. I return to the medieval *teniwoha* studies later in this chapter.

center of an ideologically charged theory of grammar and prosody as the principal determinant of aesthetic and ontological value. Such attention to *teniwoha* represents a shift away from the classical Japanese poetic paradigm in which content and emotion (*kokoro*) were prioritized over words and form (*kotoba*). In contrast to their classical and medieval forebears, early modern aestheticians and grammarians placed emphasis on a cosmologically imbued grammatical and aural structure—rather than on semantic elements—as preeminent in both poetry and prose. According to Norinaga and others around him, it was *teniwoha* that captured the spirit of words, transmitted vital sensations, and even ordered heaven and earth themselves.⁵ Norinaga explicitly equated the ordering of *teniwoha* and the correspondences between them with the “rule of the ever mysterious *kotodama*” (いともあやしき言霊のさだまり),⁶ granting *teniwoha* ontological status with supernatural potency.

This chapter focuses on the philological research that undergirded Motoori Norinaga’s attempts to critically describe the sounds of an idealized Japanese language. In doing so, it examines the manner in which Norinaga fashioned the “language of the kami” as something that could be revealed implicitly via *kanbun kundoku* as well as explicitly via kana glosses for ancient logographic texts. *Kanbun kundoku* refers to the reordering of literary Chinese text (*kanbun*) into a grammatically correct, semantically

⁵ See, for instance, FNZ J, p. 25; Suzuki Akira, *Gengyo shishuron*, p. 61; MNZ 2, p. 100.

⁶ MNZ 5, p. 21. *Kotodama* can be translated as “word spirit” and refers to a supernatural power imbued within words. Fujitani Mitsue 富士谷御杖 (1768-1823) would claim that Norinaga was inconsistent in his treatment of texts because he did not actually understand *kotodama* (see Koyasu, *Norinaga to Atsutane no sekai*, pp. 64-66). Norinaga, of course, believed that it was part of the Chinese mind to investigate matters too rationally or rigorously. Thus he would claim time and again that the ways of the kami extended beyond the capacities of human understanding (See, for instance, MNZ 8, p. 127).

coherent Japanese (*kundoku*). To borrow David Lurie’s straightforward definition, *kundoku* is “a complex of practices that: (1) associate logographs of Chinese origin with Japanese words and (2) transpose the resulting words into Japanese order while (3) adding necessary grammatical elements, thereby producing an actual or imagined vocalization in Japanese.”⁷ The second and third components of Lurie’s definition relate directly to *teniwoha*, with the added grammatical elements comprising *teniwoha* themselves.

It must be stressed that this by no means indicated one coherent system of production, resulting in a uniform transformation/translation of any given *kanbun* text. On the contrary, many methods of *kundoku* proliferated in the Tokugawa period, each of which could produce variant readings (often with variations in meanings) of logographic transcription. Indeed, early modern *kundoku* can be split into two types, early and late, roughly demarcated by the publication of Ogyū Sorai’s *Yakubunsentei* 訳文筌蹄 (1715). Whereas the early half is heavily influenced by medieval *kundoku* methods passed down through scholarly lineages, the latter is far more simple, characterized by a heavy use of *ondoku* (pronouncing a character according to the Sinitic “*on*” reading) and an attempt to read aloud all of the logographs.⁸ I will argue that it is precisely this lack of fixity in *kundoku* parsing methods that enabled Norinaga to position both the language of the *Kojiki* and later Heian poetry as manifesting an ideal, cosmological truth language.

⁷ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, p. 175.

⁸ Saitō, *Kinsei ni okeru kanbun kundoku-hō no hensen to Issai-ten*, p. 157. Different parsing methods include Hayashi Razan’s 林羅山 (1583-1657) *Dōshun-ten* 道春点, Gotō Shizan’s 後藤芝山 (1721-1782) *Gotō-ten* 後藤点, Satō Issai’s 佐藤一斎 (1772-1859) *Issai-ten* 一斎点.

Combining *teniwoha* theories with a discussion of the *Kojiki* and *kanbun kundoku* may strike the reader as unusual, given that the former are the focus of medieval waka poetics and the latter deals with the unorthodox logography of a primarily prose text dating from the Nara period (710-794). Despite the difference in textual medium and date of composition, however, Norinaga did not see these as two disparate fields, even in terms of linguistic inquiry. Because Norinaga operated under the assumption that the *Kojiki* was a kana text occluded by logographs, he was interested in *teniwoha* for its analysis and interpretation—or, in other words, for purposes of excavating a pure Japanese language from underneath the visible Sinitic characters.

Norinaga's understanding of language as static and unchanging (or effectively synchronic) in its ideal state did away with any real need for taking into account history and historical change in any structural sense. It is thus necessary to appreciate the ontological nature of Norinaga's *teniwoha* theory to properly understand his seemingly cavalier attitude toward the parsing of the *Kojiki* into readable kana text. In his introduction to Norinaga's treatise on *teniwoha*, *Kotoba no tama no o* 詞の玉緒 (1785), Norinaga's soon-to-be adopted son Ōhira characterized *teniwoha* as “signposts for the Way” (道のしるべ).⁹ As that moniker suggests, in Norinaga's (and Ōhira's) view, *teniwoha* were fixed, cosmically determined principles independent of human history and

⁹ MNZ 5, p. 7 Norinaga adopted Ōhira (born Inagake Shigeo 稲懸重穂, 1756-1833), one of his disciples, as his son and heir to the Suzunoya in the early 1790s, after it became clear that his natural born son Haruniwa 春庭 (1763-1828) would lose his vision completely due to a degenerative eye disease (thought to be uveitis). Following Norinaga's death in 1801, Ōhira ran his school out of Wakayama, whereas Haruniwa continued running a second Suzunoya (called Nochi-Suzunoya) out of Matsusaka.

culture that led people to the true understanding of the Way. In many ways, this chapter argues, *teniwoha* itself constituted that Way.

MEDIEVAL TENIWOHA STUDIES AND THE ROOTS OF KOKUGAKU GRAMMAR

Before exploring Norinaga's thoughts on *teniwoha* further, I want to provide an overview of the intellectual contexts in which they took form. As with his poetics, Norinaga was heavily influenced by medieval scholars of language in formulating a coherent *teniwoha* theory.

Grammatical research came relatively late to the Tokugawa period's new trend of empirically inclined Japanese language investigation, first begun with Keichū's *Wajishōranshō*. It was not until the mid-eighteenth century, nearly a century after the publication of the *Wajishōranshō*, that an empirically grounded interest in the grammatical construction and form of waka, and by association of the Japanese language, emerged.¹⁰ Front and center in this new interest was *teniwoha*.

Teniwoha is a composite word made up of four function words, *te*, *ni*, *wo*, and *ha*. "Te", "ni," and "wo" are conjunctive particles that indicates connection, similar to "and then" or "therefore," for "te"; and "because" for "ni." "Ha" (or "wa") is, among other things, a bound particle that acts as a topic marker, akin to the English "as for." Because Japanese is a primarily agglutinative language, these *teniwoha* mark the

¹⁰ This is not to say that there were no works on *teniwoha* in the early half of the Tokugawa period. However, these were largely critiques of the medieval secret transmissions (*hiden* 秘伝) on *teniwoha*, and did not produce any real technical advances in grammar. For a summary of these texts, see Ozaki, *Kokugogaku-shi no kisoteki kenkyū*, pp. 18-19.

grammatical function of words. *Teniwoha* are used to indicate, for instance, which terms constitute the subject or object of a sentence. Some examples of *teniwoha* are given below in boldface:

Uninflected function words:

Inishie **no** *kokoro*
古の心

The heart **of** the past

Natsu **wa** *hototogisu* **wo** *kiku*
夏はほととぎすを聞く

As for summer, one listens to the [**object marker**] cuckoo

Teniwoha in the broad, pre-modern sense in which Norinaga understood the term also includes inflected verb endings and interjectory and final particles used to indicate emphasis, emotion, and rhythm, as well as more syntactically oriented conjunctive and case particles, among others. Thus Norinaga would compare Japanese favorably to literary Sinitic, noting that in Sinitic a reader or listener would merely be given compounds such as 飲食, indicating drinking and eating, without any specification in the words themselves as to how or when these activities were being done: such important details would have to be gleaned from the surrounding context, Norinaga bemoans. In Japanese, on the other hand, the working of *teniwoha* differentiated clearly between a desire for food and drink, an order, a refusal, and so forth.¹¹ Norinaga also counted exclamations such as *ana* (“oh!”) and *aya* (“ah!”) as *teniwoha*, associating them with the primordial breath.¹² Indeed, that was the etymological explanation that Norinaga

¹¹ MNZ 5, pp. 387-388.

¹² MNZ 2, p. 101.

provided for the poetic topos “*aware*,” or pathos, that was so fundamental to his thought and poetics (discussed at length in the following chapter). Norinaga claimed that “*aware*” was made up of a combination of two emotive particles, “*aa*” and “*hare*,” the sounds that were wrangled from one’s body when the heart moved in response to sensation.¹³

Equally important to Norinaga’s language theory are *kakari-musubi* 係り結び, a term used to describe the manner in which *teniwoha* are ordered in sentences. Put briefly, *kakari-musubi* are the syntactical rules governing the correlative relationship between *kakari* (or affecting) prepositional particles and the inflection of *musubi* (tying) predicates.¹⁴ While Norinaga used the terms *kire/tsuzuki* 切れ/続き, and Fujitani Nariakira used *sue/hiki/nabiki* 末/引き/靡き, all refer more or less to these correspondences. The actual term “*kakari-musubi*” was first used in 1826, in Togashi Hirokage’s 富樫広蔭 (1793-1873) *Kotoba no tamahashi* 詞玉橋;¹⁵ but because *kakari-*

¹³ The following chapter deals at length with the grammatical basis of Norinaga’s most widely known idea, *mono no aware*, or “the pathos of things.”

¹⁴ John Timothy Wixted summarizes *kakari-musubi* as “the linking that occurs in classical Japanese BETWEEN certain particles (namely, *zo* ぞ, *ya* や, *namu/nan* なむ/なん, *ka* か, and *koso* こそ) when they occur in the middle of a sentence (or at the end, with *ka* か) AND the final verb-suffix at the end of a sentence. When this linking occurs, the final verb ends in something other than the SHŪSHIKEI [‘final form’] that one would otherwise expect” (Wixted, *A Handbook to Classical Japanese*, p. 65. Emphasis in original). Norinaga, however, offers a somewhat broader conceptualization of *kakari-musubi*, including for instance *wa* and *mo* as also triggering a final predicator. Bjarke Frellesvig compares *kakari-musubi* to the Greek ‘*theme-rheme*’ relation, wherein *théma* involves “that which is set up” and *rhéma* “that which is said” (Frellesvig, *A History of the Japanese Language*, p. 249). In distinguishing those verb endings that end sentences (*kire/musubi/sue*) from those that are dependent (*tsuzuki/kakari/hiki/nabiki*), George Bedell has argued that kokugaku grammarians had discovered the noun-phrasal modifier-head relation, as well as the subject-predicate relation (Bedell, “Kokugaku Grammatical Theory,” pp. 44-45).

¹⁵ Hirokage was a student of Norinaga’s son Motoori Haruniwa at the Nochi-Suzunoya.

musubi is the conventionally accepted term for these correspondences today, I use it anachronistically here to avoid confusion. *Teniwoha* was used by Norinaga to refer at times to grammar as a whole, and at other times to particles, interjections, auxiliary verbs and adjectives, and verb correspondences more narrowly. In either case, *teniwoha* was seen by Norinaga as comprising the building blocks of the ancient Japanese language. Thus a mastery of *teniwoha* and *teniwoha*-related correspondences was prerequisite to any meaningful interaction with ancient Japanese poetry and prose, itself crucial to understanding the true Way of Japan.

The history of *teniwoha* studies encompasses much of what we would now categorize as grammar and grammatology.¹⁶ *Teniwoha* take their name from Heian period *kundoku* methods that were used to parse literary Chinese into a readable Japanese. In this practice, marks known as *okoto-ten* 乎古正点 could be made around logographs. The name refers to the particle *o* (*wo*) and the nominalizer *koto*, grammatical forms found in

¹⁶ It was not until the mid-nineteenth century, when an unprecedented influx of Western materials and texts entered the Japanese archipelago, that “*bunpō*” 文法—used today as a synonym for the English word “grammar”—emerged as a field of academic inquiry into grammar and language composition. There are, however, scattered references to the term as early as the mid-Muromachi period, when its connotation as a means of ordering language first seems to have taken hold. The term appears in this context in the *Shikishō* 史記抄 (1477), a mid-fifteenth-century commentary on the *Shiji* 史記 (c. 91 BCE). The term “*bunpō*” itself can be traced at least as far back as the early tenth century, when it appears in the *Kankebunsō* 菅家文章 (900), a collection of literary Chinese poetry (*kanshi* 漢詩) compiled by the court scholar Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845-903). However, here it is used to indicate legal codes that had been written down (literally, “text laws” or “written regulations”), and does not refer to grammar as such (*Nihon kokugo daijiten*, entry on “*bunpō*” 文法). By the Tokugawa period, the signification of *bunpō* as language ordering was well in place. The Confucian thinker Kaiho Seiryō 海保青陵 (1755-1817), for instance, used *bunpō* in the title of his 1798 treatise, *Bunpō hiun* 文法披雲, describing the term as “the rules governing the writing of text...rules that work based on the topography of sentences” (文ヲ書ク法ニユヘ、...先凡ソ文章ノ地形ヨリ築ク法ナリ) (Furuta, “*Bunpō no rekishi*,” p. 302).

Japanese but not in Chinese. Starting from the bottom left corner and progressing in a clockwise manner, these *okoto-ten* indicated by means of lines, dots, or some other form of marking where the gerund *te* and the particles *ni*, *wo*, and *ha* should be added to the text.¹⁷ Depending on the *okoto-ten* system one was utilizing, there could be markings indicating other particles as well. Although “*teniha*” テニハ/手爾波 is typically used interchangeably with “*teniwoha*” and both essentially refer to the same function words, the term derives from a slightly different parsing method. Whereas *teniwoha* was a technique first utilized by Heian period Kangaku (Sinology) scholars, *teniha* was developed by Sanronshū priests at Tōdaiji temple in Nara, and involves the insertion of *te*, *ni*, *ha* in the left bottom, center, and top of graphs.¹⁸ However, the actual terms *teniwoha* and *teniha* indicating this provenance do not appear until the Kamakura period, when poetry composition came to be dominated by a handful of competing poetic lineages within the imperial court.

Tokugawa period research into *teniwoha* and *kakari-musubi* can be seen as direct heirs to medieval poetics, when *teniwoha* and conjugation first came under scrutiny within the context of poetry composition. Most notably, the medieval Nijō school (*Nijō-ha* 二条派) of court poets advocated song composition in a poetic language dating from

¹⁷ Until relatively recently, scholars had thought that the application and use of guiding markers that assisted readers of *kundoku* were unique to Japan. However, we now know that similar markers existed for reading Sinitic texts from around the eleventh century onward in Korea as well (Yoshida, Tsukishima, et. al., *Kuntengo jiten*, p. 3).

¹⁸ Ōno, “Kaidai” to MNZ 5, p. 10.

the Heian period (as represented in, for example, the *Kokinshū*).¹⁹ The school acknowledged three main difficulties with their chosen literary affectation²⁰: First, composing poetry in what amounted to an artificial, poetic language was technically challenging in syntactical terms—a difficulty that related to issues of *teniwoha* and *kakari-musubi*. Second, in a semantic version of the first, the meanings, phrases, and allusions used in classical poetry were difficult for contemporary poets to understand and in turn appropriate for their own use. Third was the problem of imitation, related to the borrowing practice of *honkadori*, literally “taking from original songs.” This practice was first formulated in the medieval period and was associated with the Mikohidari poetic faction of Fujiwara no Shunzei and his son Teika. It is the first of the three Nijō school issues that concerns us here.

The *Teniha taigaishō* 手爾葉大概抄, an anonymously authored²¹ fourteenth-century treatise on the significance of *teniwoha*, moves away from a solely grammatical understanding of the term. Widely considered to be the earliest of the *teniwoha* secret transmissions, the *Taigaishō* aestheticizes function words as first and foremost purveyors of emotion. The treatise, a mere six hundred and forty-three characters of *kanbun* text,

¹⁹ The Nijō school takes its name from Nijō Tameuji 二条為氏 (1222-1286), the oldest son of Fujiwara no Teika’s son, Fujiwara no Tameie 藤原為家 (1198-1275). The school name refers to Tameuji’s descendants and their disciples.

²⁰ Kanno, *Motoori Norinaga*, p. 240. Kanno notes that along with the regulations surrounding these three general difficulties, Nijō poetry composition also involved numerous strictures unrelated to the actual poetry itself. For instance, there were certain etiquettes concerning how paper should be folded, concerning the kind of paper that should be used (long, thin strips), and so forth.

²¹ Long erroneously considered to be written by Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162-1241) for his son Tameie 藤原為家 (1198-1275) when Tameie was young, the *Taigaishō* has a postscript (*Teniha taigaishō no shō* 手爾葉大概抄之抄) dating from 1483 penned by the famous *renga* poet Sōgi 宗祇 (c. 1421~1502).

begins by defining *teniha* as the characters left unpronounced in *kundoku* readings of classical Chinese (唐土之置字),²² which were typically replaced with *kana* particles, conjunctions, and other function words. Going on to equate these function words with *teniha* themselves, the author states that *teniha* are the accoutrements that work to order, and in turn express, the “degree [of intensity] of feelings” (輕重之心).²³ In a passage that would have lasting effect on the way *teniwoha* were perceived into the modern period, the *Taigaishō* elaborates on their world-ordering faculty:

Words are like temples and shrines, *teniha* are like sacred ornaments (*shōgon*) [that adorn temples and shrines]. Using *teniha* ornaments, one can order the high and low of temples and shrines.

詞如寺社手爾波如莊嚴。以莊嚴之手爾波定寺社之尊卑。²⁴

It is the ornaments (i.e., buddhas, sacred imagery), or in this case, the *teniha*, that render the temples and shrines—which is to say, the words—sacred. Words are limited, the author continues, but *teniha*, in moving words and ordering them anew, present a means to express the boundlessness of the human heart.²⁵

²² I.e., 焉, 矣, 耳, 而已, 於, 于, 也, 哉.

²³ *Teniha taigaishō*, p. 41.

²⁴ *Teniha taigaishō*, p. 41.

²⁵ Norinaga’s own metaphorical understanding of *teniwoha* as the jeweled thread that strings together the words (*kotoba no tama no o*) spread across the world and enables the understanding of things has a similar tone (see MNZ 5, pp. 7-8), as does Suzuki Akira’s literary homology characterizing *teniwoha* as the “voice of the heart/intention” (心の声). A string of jewels, or *tama no o*, was itself a conventional Heian period term for a human life (Shirane, *Traditional Japanese Literature*, p. 201, footnote 164).

The *Anegakōjishiki* 姉小路式, a mid-Muromachi secret *teniwoha* transmission influenced by the *Taigaishō*, likewise uses figurative language to expound on the merits of *teniwoha* while simultaneously giving a faux-etymological interpretation:

As for *teniha*, it is written as ‘emerging leaves.’ Without the leaves of plants, it is difficult to know what kind of plant something is. [Teniha] is like seeing the leaves that emerge and knowing it is *that* tree, *that* plant. With the *teniha* of Japanese readings (*wakun*), one determines propriety and principle.

てにはとは出葉とかけり。草木の葉なくは何の草何の木といふこと
知かたし。葉に出すを見てその草その木と知るかことし。和訓てに
はをもて其儀其理をしるなり。²⁶

In both the passage from the *Taigaishō* and from the *Anegakōjishiki*, poetic language is bifurcated into “words” (*kotoba* 詞) and *teni(wo)ha*, and *teniwoha* are granted the advantage in terms of determining and ordering words, making words decipherable.²⁷ It is known that Norinaga copied out the *Taigaishō* during his student days in Kyoto, together

²⁶ *Anegakōjike teniha-den*, p. 63. (*Anegakōjishiki* is the more common name for the same text.) This same paragraph can also be found in the *Shunjukenpishō* 春樹顯秘抄, which included much of the same content as the *Anegakōjishiki* with further added material (*Shunjukenpishō*, p. 91). The *Shunjukenpishō* is an anonymously authored text, dating from either the late Muromachi or early Tokugawa periods. It is worth adding that the *Anegakōjishiki* does connect *teniwoha* to *kanbun kundoku*, noting that, “In China (*Morokoshi* もろこし), one can immediately read and understand. In Japan (*Nihon* 日本), one understands though reading by returning [i.e. reading out of order]” (*Anegakōjike teniha-den*, p. 63).

²⁷ Tokieda Motoki described this as an interrelation of two distinct dimensional planes of semantic function, between “things that encompass” (包むもの) and “things that are encompassed” (包まれるもの). *Teniwoha*, constituting intentional action (志向作用), act upon words, understood as the intentionalized object (志向対象). Thus, Tokieda concluded, these illuminate difference in syntactical structure and can be considered a foundational theory of research into Japanese diction (Tokieda, *Kokugogakushi*, p. 56). Words are equated to *kokoro* as content-determining factors, and *teniwoha* to *katachi* as factors primarily governing form and affecting content matter only secondarily.

with the *Teniwoha kudenshō* てにをは口伝抄, another medieval secretly transmitted manual and a variation of the *Anegakōjishiki*.²⁸

Already in the medieval period, there existed an appreciation for the importance of *teniwoha* correspondences. Although, as we will see below, Norinaga would elevate this importance to a cosmological level, the linguistic significance of *teniwoha* was well remarked upon in medieval poetics. For example, Nijō Yoshimoto 二条良基 (1320-1388) writes in his treatise on *renga* (linked poetry), *Renri hishō* 連理秘抄 (c. 1349), that, “*Teniwoha* are an important thing. No matter how fine the verse (*ku*) is, if the *teniwoha* do not match up, none of it will come together” (てにをはは大事の物なり。いかによき句もてにをはたがひぬれば惣てつかぬなり).²⁹ For Yoshimoto, it was simply the onus for good *renga* that was placed on *teniwoha* correspondences. Norinaga argued that the court poets’ usage of *teniwoha* was woefully inadequate as well as appallingly inaccessible, thanks to a long tradition of secret transmission.³⁰ Nevertheless, the perceived importance of *teniwoha* and *kakari-musubi* in the early modern period was in many ways an extension of medieval poetics.

²⁸ It is also known as the *Kadō hizōroku* 歌道秘蔵録. Ōno Susumu describes it as a panoply of the author’s thoughts and not a systematic treatment of *teniwoha* and *kakari-musubi* (Ōno, “Kaidai” to MNZ 5, pp. 5, 7).

²⁹ Quoted in Tokieda, *Kokugogakushi*, p. 57.

³⁰ E.g., MNZ 2, p. 51. Norinaga’s *Sōanshū tamahahaki* 草庵集玉帚 (1768) is a critique of the Nijō-ha’s late fourteenth-century poetry selection, the *Sōanwakashū* 草庵和歌集. This latter text was seen during the Edo period as the representative work of the Nijō school, one of the lineages that came out of the Mikohidari branch of court poets following Fujiwara no Teika’s death (Kanno, *Motoori Norinaga*, p. 257).

ORDERING THE COSMOS

Norinaga expanded on the medieval understanding of *teniwoha*, arguing that they were critical to the comprehension of language as a whole and not merely to the correct composition of poetry. As he writes in *Kotoba no tama no o*:

[Some people] understand *teniwoha* as only something that pertains to poetry and not to language that is not poetry, which they see as things that do not have a fixed order (*sadamareru totonoe*). Looking at the writings of people of later times, we can see that all of them have many instances where things do not match up. But this kind of ordering is not found just in poetry. Plain language, too, has always been fixed. People of antiquity, even when carelessly writing one throwaway line, never had lines that were mismatched. It came to them spontaneously/naturally”

てにをははただ歌のうへの事とのみ心得て。さらぬ詞には。さだま
れるととのへなどもなき物とや思ふらん。後世人のかける物を見る
に。皆かなはぬことのみぞおほかる。そもそも此ととのへは。歌の
みにはあらず。ただのことばにも。もとよりみなさだまりあること
にて。いにしへ人の。なほざりにただ一くだり書すてたる物まで
も。たがへるふしはさらになし。おのづからのことなるがゆゑなり
31

Prose, like poetry, is dependent on *teniwoha* for proper articulation and expression, Norinaga avers. Thus those who consider *teniwoha* as a linguistic issue limited to the composition of songs are foolish, ignorant of how language really works.

Indeed, Norinaga opens the first volume of *Kotoba no tama no o* with primordial claims for the origins of *teniwoha*, arguing that they have spontaneously (*onozukara*) ordered the myriad words of the world since the age of the kami.³² Norinaga goes on to posit correct *teniwoha* usage as the single most important factor in writing, claiming that

³¹ MNZ 5, p. 298.

³² MNZ 5, p. 17.

even (and especially) something as emotive as poetry is defined by the *teniwoha* with which it is comprised. Norinaga writes, for example, that without the perfect correspondence provided by *teniwoha*, “Songs and everything else, too, will become merely useless words” (歌も何もすべていたづらごとになんなるめる).³³

With a hitherto unprecedented attention to grammatical structure and morphology, Norinaga’s position was motivated by the ideal of a fixed and unchanging language. Thus Norinaga insisted on the grammar of the early Heian period and before as most closely embodying the sounds of the ancient Japanese language. In the centuries that had elapsed between the Heian period and the present, he claimed, the Japanese language had become syntactically as well as sonically degraded, a kind of turbid, creole variation of its erstwhile self. Norinaga went so far as to advocate the renunciation of Sinitic linguistic elements in the Japanese language, taking this to include not only the common use of *kanbun* in formal writing but also the vast proliferation of words articulated with Sinitic *on* pronunciations both in writing and in speech. Norinaga, one may say, opted for a linguistic system that effectively nobody used, belonging as it did to a mythologized version of a long ago past.

For his own literary-minded contemporaries, Norinaga advocated a style of writing and composition that he called the “ancient style,” or *inishie-buri*, but is more commonly known as *gikobun*, a neoclassical “imitation of ancient texts.”³⁴ Not too

³³ MNZ 5, p. 17.

³⁴ While there are appearances of the term “*gikobun*” in Edo texts, the word did not become widely used to describe composition in an artificially ancient style until the Meiji period. Instead, terms such as “*gabun*” 雅文 (refined text) and “*wabun*” 和文 (Japanese text) were used (Nakamura, “Gikobunron,” p. 396).

surprisingly, Norinaga delimited his own standards for how writing in this ancient style was to be undertaken. Whereas *gikobun* practitioners composing poetry in various “ancient” styles abounded in kokugaku circles, Norinaga condemned most of them, including his own teacher Kamo no Mabuchi’s other disciples.³⁵ The Mabuchi school’s attempts to recreate poetry akin to that found in ancient anthologies, he argued, were ultimately nothing more than superficial insertions of ancient lexicon into a modern syntactical framework:

Although my contemporaries who compose songs in the ancient style according to the *Man’yōshū* are very careful about their use of historical kana usage (*kanazukai*), they pay no attention to the arrangement of *teniwoha*. Thus there are many instances where their songs and their prose are disordered. Because of this, their *kanazukai* has no means of being ordered and their words have no power in themselves, nor can they stir the heart. If all one wants to do is write [in a style] after the ancient texts, this is very easy. But to have all of the *teniwoha* in correct order [...] and to understand that ordering, that is not simple at all.

萬葉集によりて。古風の歌をよむともがら。假字づかひをばくはしくさだすめれど。てにをはのことはたえてさだせず。さる故に歌もさらぬ詞も。とゝのはざることのみぞおほかる。さるはかのかなづかひは。定まれるのりなければ。みづからのちからもて。こゝろえわきまふることはなくして。たゞふるきふみ共にかけるあとによるよりほかのわざしなければ。いとやすきを。てにをははみな定まれるとゝのひの有て [...] そのさだまりをわきまへさとりことたやすからず。³⁶

³⁵ Norinaga’s thinly veiled criticisms were most likely primarily directed at the Edo-*ha* poets Katō Chikage 加藤千蔭 (1735-1808) and Murata Harumi 村田春海 (1746-1811) (Cf. Koyasu, *Norinaga to Atsutane no sekai*, p. 27, and Ikeda, “Kinsei gikobun no kaishaku to bunpōjō no mondai-ten,” p. 256).

³⁶ MNZ 5, p. 253. The Mabuchi school modeled their poetry after the older *Man’yōshū*, whereas Norinaga idealized the early Heian period imperial anthologies.

Norinaga reserves a deeper level of poetic understanding for those who can claim mastery over *teniwoha*. Significantly, the goal here is not just to create songs in imitation of ancient texts—if that were the case, Norinaga makes clear, the superficial tactics employed by other poets will be sufficient.³⁷ But if the songs are to “stir the heart,” if they are to have real power, it is crucial for the *teniwoha* to be ordered correctly, a far more difficult endeavor.

Norinaga’s own *gikobun* style was lampooned by Ueda Akinari as unwittingly prioritizing writing with all of its artificial formalities over the more fluid, spontaneous, and natural speech of the past that he purportedly sought out. Akinari, we might say, adhered to a more modern conception of what is considered “natural,” in that he did not countenance Norinaga’s strict division between a cosmic naturalness and what came to people “naturally,” without effort. Characteristically, Akinari ridiculed the idea that antiquarian-leaning poets and scholars such as Norinaga might recreate an original orality by adhering to man-made grammatical forms found in texts from long ago. Since Keichū first began scholarly inquiry into the language of the long ago past, Akinari observes, those who have started using the writing of that past have greatly increased. But, he says,

³⁷ Nakamura Yukihiro notes that Norinaga’s *Naobi no mitama* 直毘靈 (1790), supposedly modeled after the writing of the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, *Kogo shūi* 古語拾遺 (807), and the like in *kakikudashi* form, actually contains numerous grammatical elements only found in later *wabun* texts, such as the mid-Heian period *Tale of Genji* (Nakamura, “Kinsei gikobun no gohō,” p. 112). Indeed, Nakamura goes so far as to characterize mid- to late-Heian period *wabun* (中古和文) as providing the grammatical “base” (ベース) for *Naobi no mitama* (p. 102). Incidentally, Norinaga wrote *Naobi no mitama* over a number of drafts, four of which are still extant today. See Nishimura, “The Way of the Gods,” pp. 22-24, for a brief overview on the text’s evolving style from one draft to the next.

he fails to see the point of adhering to strict rules, whether they that are supposedly reflected in ancient words and texts or in present usage. As Akinari incredulously asks:

Whether we adhere to ancient rules or today's prescriptions, both are the subjective products of human construction. How can we say which is right and which is wrong? As for those who worry, "Should I rely upon the old or the new?" when writing prose or composing poetry, they should just do as they like.

古-則今-法いづれによるとも。人-工のわたくし物なるには。何の是-非を云べき。ただ哥をよみ。文なだらかにほはさまくする人は。今-古いづれの便りにもよれかすと云事を。おもふにまかせてかいつおくなりけり。³⁸

This passage comprises the penultimate section of Akinari's *Reigotsū* 霊語通 (1797), and is strikingly cavalier for the conclusion of a study on historical kana usage. Here we see the fundamental disagreement in Norinaga's and Akinari's conceptions of language, and indeed of nature, rendering effectively moot Akinari's critiques save at the most basic of levels. Although Akinari protests that speech is the work of the living whereas writing belongs to the dead,³⁹ Norinaga saw Akinari's perceptions of language itself as obtuse.

In championing the existence of an inherently static and perfect language, it was possible for Norinaga to dismiss as facile any criticism that relied on an understanding of

³⁸ UAZ 6, p. 112. This freeform approach to composition was one that Akinari himself adhered to. Akinari's fiction collections *Ugetsu monogatari* 雨月物語 (1776) and *Harusame monogatari* 春雨物語 (ca. 1808) comprise a mixture of time periods, styles, and formats. According to Norinaga's pronouncements in *Tamagatsuma*, these tales would surely be considered poor writing (悪文) (See Nakamura, "Gikobunron," p. 410).

³⁹ UAZ 6, p. 97.

grammar as humanly manufactured and synthetic. For example, Norinaga observes in *Kotoba no tama no o* that his contemporaries who were interested in composing in ancient styles believed that the texts after which they were modeling their writing predated rules governing *teniwoha*. But this is where they err, Norinaga cautions, for *teniwoha* “rules” are not rules at all, at least not in the sense of being man-made or historically contingent:

My contemporaries who study the ancient style do not think of it as something that has ordering, believing that the ancient style lacks fixity in *teniwoha*. But this ordering is not something that became fixed in later times. It was given to human language from the beginning of the age of the kami and is something that spontaneously/naturally had fixity.

古風をまねぶともがら。これをばとゝのへむ物とも思へれぬは。いにしへぶりには。てにをはの定まりはなきことと思ふらむ。そもそも此とゝのひは。さらに後の世に定めたる物にはあらず。神代の始より人の言の葉にしたがひて。おのづから定まれる物にし有ければ。⁴⁰

Teniwoha, Norinaga makes clear, is not a technical aspect of humanly constructed language but rather a primordial element of the cosmos, existing from the beginning of the age of the kami. It constitutes an ordering system that is made manifest in human language but is not limited to that language.

Key to the understanding of language as a fixed entity is Norinaga’s perception of *teniwoha* as comprising a finite and coherent ordered system that needs only to be deciphered and charted out. Another significant departure from his medieval predecessors, Norinaga explicitly criticized the medieval *teniwoha* transmissions for failing to grasp

⁴⁰ MNZ 5, p. 253.

teniwoha in any coherent, self-enclosed fashion. It was due to this failure, he argued, that the medieval *teniwoha* manuals did not actually provide the means to master what they purported to elucidate. Inverting the explanation offered in favor of *teniwoha* in the medieval *Teniha taigaishō*, Norinaga held that because words were limitless, merely memorizing the particular examples offered in the medieval transmissions would ultimately prove futile.⁴¹ By contrast, once the cosmic and eternal rules governing *teniwoha* were internalized, one could successfully apply them to an infinite number of terms.

For Norinaga, *teniwoha* were manifestations of a universal thought process that brought syntactical elements explicitly to the surface. And because *teniwoha* were something lacking in other languages, he took this as “proof” of the ultimate superiority of Japanese. Even in his early writings, generally considered to be less chauvinistic than those of his later years when his ancient Way studies dominated his output, Norinaga adhered to this kind of thought. For example, he writes in the poetic treatise *Ashiwake obune* 排蘆小船 (1757):

Teniwoha are the most important aspect of waka. And this [significance] is not limited to the entirety of waka, but also applies to our country’s language as a whole: all of it uses *teniwoha* to facilitate the clear understanding of things. That our country’s language is superior to the myriad [other] countries, that it is unequivocal and detailed, is due to its use of *teniwoha*. Because the languages of other countries lack *teniwoha*, they cannot approach the clarity and precision we have in our country. [...] Our country’s language creates words with but forty-eight phonemes and, because of *teniwoha*, never fails in its detail.

テニヲハト云モノ、和歌ノ第一ニ重スル所也、スヘテ和歌ニカキラ
ス、吾邦一切ノ言語、コトコトクテニハヲ以テ分明ニ分ルル事也、

⁴¹ MNZ 2, p. 50.

吾邦ノ言語万国ニスグレテ、明ラカニ詳ラカナルハ、テニハアルヲ以テ也、異国ノ言語ハ、テニハナキユヘニ、ソノ明詳ナル事、吾邦ニ及ハス [...] 吾邦ノ言語ハ、只四十八言ヲ出テズシテ、シカモ詳ラカニ、至ラヌ所ナキハ、テニハニヨツテ也。⁴²

Norinaga's esteeming of Japanese over other languages due to the supposed simplicity of its phonographs, itself ostensibly reflecting the inherent naturalness of the language, was not particularly new or unusual in the history of Japanese thought.⁴³ But the argument that Japanese exceeded the host of world languages specifically because it utilized *teniwoha* as a superior syntactical structuring system certainly was.⁴⁴

Norinaga expressed this view again some thirty years later in *Kanji san'onkō*, where he all but reiterated verbatim the importance of *teniwoha* to language laid out in *Ashiwake obune*:

Because there are *teniwoha* such as *wa, mo, zo, koso, te, ni, wo, ya, kamu*, and the like, we can understand these meanings [...] Between heaven and earth, I am convinced that there is no country with a language so accurate and precisely detailed [as ours].

⁴² MNZ 2, p. 50. Ironically, a look at Norinaga's diary from around this time (*Zaikyō nikki* 在京日記, in MNZ 16) reveals considerable errors in *kakari-musubi* usage. However, to Norinaga's credit, such errors disappear from his writings shortly thereafter (Ozaki, *Kokugogaku-shi no kisoteki kenkyū*, pp. 94, 96).

⁴³ Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697-1769), for instance, pointed to the thirty-eight thousand logographs he claimed were commonly used in China and rather practically asked, "Even if one tries to learn so many characters, can one even remember them?" (NST 39, p. 381). Earlier still, Yamazaki Ansai 山崎闇齋 (1618-1682) believed that spoken Japanese prior to the introduction of Chinese characters was a "natural" language, and Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1561-1619) held that ancient Japanese was natural "like the cries of a newborn" and "truthful because it takes Heaven and Earth as its text" (Ooms, *Tokugawa Ideology*, pp. 265, 93).

⁴⁴ It is perhaps self-evident that Norinaga was not particularly knowledgeable of languages beyond Japanese and (literary) Chinese. He refrains from referencing foreign languages in his works save in the most general of fashions, and even then seems only to be aware of the existence of Korean, Sanskrit, and Dutch.

ハモゾコソテニヲヤカム等ノ^{テニヲハ}辞アリテ其意ヲ分ツ。[...] 凡ソ天地ノ間ニ。カクバカリ言語ノ精微ナル国ハアラジゾ思ハルル。⁴⁵

The syntactic placement and selection of *teniwoha* particles—for instance, the insertion of the nominative “*ga*” instead of “*wa*” to signal the grammatical subject, or the inclusion of the genitive “*no*”—was thought to fill out the semantic connotations otherwise left unexpressed. Whereas all other words are inherently connected to concepts or things, *teniwoha* terms possess no meaning in and of themselves. Instead they represent the cosmic processes that, together with the correlative alignment of *kakari-musubi*, order these concepts into both a comprehensible linguistic sequence and a comprehensible world.

According to this understanding, without the particles and inflections that *teniwoha* explicitly highlight, words, language, and indeed experience itself, lose their value and meaning. Yet because there are a finite number of *teniwoha*, they can be learned and memorized; and once they are learned and memorized, they are not likely to be read or written in error. As Norinaga writes in *Kotoba no tama no o*, published the same year as *Kanji san'onkō*, “Although in today’s books there are many mistakes in reading order (*kun*) as a whole, in the readings of *teniwoha*, there are not very many mistakes at all” (但し今の本。すべての訓には誤りいとおほけれ共。てにをはの訓には。大かた誤りすくなし).⁴⁶ By dint of rendering language more precise, more transparent, and less vague, *teniwoha* elevate Japanese to a preeminent place among the

⁴⁵ MNZ 5, p. 383.

⁴⁶ MNZ 5, p. 263.

languages of the world. According to this belief, Japanese is the language that cleaves most closely to a linguistic ideal-type.⁴⁷ Purely logographic transcription (e.g., literary Chinese) seen from this perspective can be said to lack semantic certainty. *Teniwoha*, by contrast, represented for Norinaga the ostensible infallibility, and ergo superiority, of the ancient Japanese tongue.

THE MYTHICAL LANGUAGE OF THE *KOJIKI*

Ironically, it was this vague, logographic transcription with which Norinaga had to work when dealing with Japan's oldest extant written records, most notably the *Kojiki*. Produced by the seventh- and eighth-century Yamato court, the *Kojiki* details the mythological origins of Japan, as well as the lives of both legendary and historical

⁴⁷ George Bedell has made the argument that Norinaga and other *kokugakusha* were approaching a generative grammatical model, wherein language is understood as an abstraction which links “classes of complex noises,” or sounds, with “mental representations,” or meanings (Bedell, “Kokugaku Grammatical Theory,” p. 8). Under this model, language is perceived “mentalistically” and is, as such, divorced from a speaker’s language-specific linguistic faculties. As Noam Chomsky explains, “the theory of generative grammar must provide a general, language-independent means for representing the signals and semantic interpretations that are interrelated by the grammars of particular languages” (Chomsky, *Topics in the Theory of Generative Grammar*, p. 12).

This understanding of language has its roots in the speculative grammars of the medieval Scholastics and the universal grammars of their Enlightenment period intellectual heirs. Seventeenth-century French grammarians centered around the abbey of Port-Royal, for instance, considered grammar as a kind of mental process, a point delineated in their *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* (1660). As James Turner explains, “Port-Royal deemed linguistic forms to be logical, not merely conventional” (Turner, *Philology*, p. 58). Needless to say, Norinaga and others’ understandings of *teniwoha* do not fit neatly into this conceptualization; and Bedell, a doctoral student of Chomsky’s at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1960s, was self-admittedly motivated to position kokugaku grammar within the context of Chomskian linguistics (see Bedell, p. 26). Nevertheless, there are certain elements of the mentalistic conception of language that render Norinaga’s insistence on universality and exclusivity somewhat more graspable. If particular languages are considered as variations of abstract objects that nevertheless all stem from the same human mental faculties, it follows that if it were possible for a language to create the closest, or *least arbitrary*, linkage between sounds and mental representations, this language would function better, or more universally, than any other language.

Yamato sovereigns up to the reign of the Empress Suiko 推古天皇 (554-628). The actual writing contained in the *Kojiki* is not “Japanese” per se, but rather consists of a combination of literary Sinitic (*kanbun*), hybrid Sinitic, and *man’yōgana*, or Sinitic logographs used phonetically to spell out “Japanese” words. (Hybrid, or mixed, Sinitic refers to a style wherein orthodox literary Chinese is combined intermittently with Japanese lexicon and syntax.⁴⁸) Yet, in Norinaga’s mind, the fixed rules of *teniwoha* made it possible to uncover the original and pure language of ancient Japan, ostensibly preserved within the text of the *Kojiki*. Because Japan was unique among the myriad countries as a land aided by *kotodama* and where *kotodama* flourished, Norinaga argued, the ways of a past that existed prior to writing could still be transmitted to the present.⁴⁹ Norinaga discusses the respective merits and demerits of textual and oral transmissions in the opening pages of his *Kuzubana*. Even as he compares Chinese texts to “poisoned wine” (毒酒), he makes the rational argument that both written and oral transmissions have the potential to hand down truth and falsehoods alike. However, according to Norinaga, the presence of *kotodama* in the imperial country provides an exception to this rule, rendering the past wholly knowable.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ For an excellent overview of the writing of the *Kojiki* and its complexities, see Chapter Five of David Lurie’s *Realms of Literacy*. As Lurie explains, “The *Kojiki* has been called a blend of Chinese and Japanese, but this confuses orthographic variety with linguistic difference. Some portions of the work are written in phonographs, some in a mixture of phonographs and logographs, and some entirely in logographs (sometimes arranged consistently with literary Chinese usage), but the *kundoku* reading process ensures a degree of linguistic homogeneity inconsistent with the idea of a mixture of languages” (pp. 231-32).

⁴⁹ MNZ 8, p. 125

⁵⁰ MNZ 8, pp. 123-124.

Critical to Norinaga's interpretation of the *Kojiki* text is the meta-linguistic preface by Ō no Yasumaro 太安万侶 (d. 723), the mid-level bureaucrat tasked with the compilation of the *Kojiki* by the Empress Genmei 元明天皇 (661-721, r. 707-15). Yasumaro used the chronicle's preface to justify this orthographic variability, explaining that it was necessary to efficiently convey the language of ancient Japan without becoming mired in an overabundance of phonographs:

But in high antiquity both words and meanings were simple, making it difficult to write them out in sentences and form them into phrases. If the account were to use characters only for their meaning, then the words would not correspond exactly with what was intended. But if the record were to rely on characters only for their sound, then it would grow long and hard to get through. Thus at times a single sentence may combine characters used for their spoken sound with those used for their written sense, while at other times a single affair is recorded using only the latter.⁵¹

Although Yasumaro suggests here that the intricacies and nuances of the Japanese language have thus been preserved, the reality is that the heavy utilization of logographs obscures any set pronunciation or reading from being perpetuated in the text. As Lurie notes, “the prose of the *Kojiki* does not specify in detail the phonetic dimensions of its own potential vocalization.”⁵²

In the preface, Yasumaro explains that he has transcribed the oral recitations of Hieda no Are 稗田阿礼, a figure who was apparently blessed with a prodigious memory but is otherwise unknown.⁵³ Norinaga points to Are as proof that the *Kojiki* had

⁵¹ Ō no Yasumaro (Heldt, trans.), *The Kojiki*, pp. 4-5.

⁵² Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, p. 228.

⁵³ Yasumaro describes Are as a 28-year-old royal attendant (Ō no Yasumaro, *The Kojiki*, p. 3).

successfully managed to safeguard a more pure Japanese orality that only needed to be excavated from beneath the literary Sinitic trappings of the material text.⁵⁴ Because the Emperor Tenmu 天武天皇 (c. 631-686) had supposedly tasked Are with reciting and committing to memory the *Sumera mikoto no hitsugi* 帝皇日嗣 and the *Sakitsuyo no furukoto* 先代旧辞 (both no longer extant chronicles), Norinaga claims that Are was able to preserve intact the ancient spoken language of Yamato along with its many distinctions. Norinaga supports this claim rather simplistically, arguing that its truthfulness is evident because there is no other explanation for the peculiarity of having Are involved in the *Kojiki* composition process at all.⁵⁵ He thus rhetorically asks:

If one wanted to construct a record (*kiroku*) that was unrelated to language and based on reason alone, then would not having a person orally recite a text and commit it to memory be sheer foolishness?

もし語にかかはらずて、ただに義理コトワリをのみ旨とせむには、記録を作らしめむとして、先ヅ人の口に誦習ヨミナラはし賜はむは、無用イタズラごとならずや、⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Norinaga dates the contamination of the ancient Japanese language, as well as of the upright hearts/minds of people, to the three-hundred-year period between Emperors Ōjin and Tenmu (MNZ 8, p. 126).

⁵⁵ Interestingly, Norinaga's teacher, Kamo no Mabuchi, held that Yasumaro's preface and the body of the *Kojiki* text could be traced to altogether different times, with the preface being written more recently than the body. While Mabuchi considered the *Kojiki* preface to be written in the Nara period, he believed that the body dated from the reigns of Emperor Jomei (r. 629-641) and Empress Kōgyoku (r. 642-645) and thus was not Yasumaro's work. (See Yamashita, *Akinari no "kodai,"* p. 50.) Needless to say, Norinaga was convinced that both the *Kojiki* preface and body were written by Yasumaro as transcriptions of Are's oral transmission of Emperor Tenmu's words.

⁵⁶ MNZ 9, p. 32.

For Norinaga, the answer is an unequivocal yes; and to his credit, that is indeed what Yasumaro is suggesting in his preface. Of course, whether the *Kojiki* actually reflects this mediated orality is doubtful at best.

Tellingly, when Norinaga created a kana gloss of the *Kojiki*, he inserted numerous conjunctive *teniwoha* in order to create the appearance of a longer, more “oral” narrative style. Although the original *Kojiki* text is comprised largely of succinct couplets of four characters, a typical literary Sinitic structure, Norinaga’s kana rendition takes on a more languid, elongated style closer in form to Heian period kana literature.⁵⁷ Moreover, in his parsing of the *Kojiki*, Norinaga consistently used honorific language, or *keigo*, not reflected in the original text. For instance, Norinaga’s *Kojikiden* rendition of the *Kojiki*’s opening lines describing the moment of cosmogony include his own insertions of honorific prefixes and verb inflections, represented within [brackets] in the English translation below and underlined in Norinaga’s original Japanese:

When heaven and earth first appeared, the [honorific] names of the spirits who [honorific] came about in the high plains of heaven are these: First was the spirit Master Mighty Center of Heaven. Next was the spirit Lofty Growth. Next was the spirit Sacred Growth. All three spirits were single and [honorific] concealed themselves.⁵⁸

アメツチノハジメノトキ、タカマノハラニナリマセルカミノミナハ、
アメノミナカヌシノカミ、ツギニタカミムスビノカミ、ツギニカミ
ムスビノカミ、コノミバシラノカミハ、ミナヒトリガミナリマシテ、
ミミヲカクシタマヒキ。⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Kojima, “‘Kojiki’ kundoku no shūhen,” pp. 38-39.

⁵⁸ Ō no Yasumaro, *The Kojiki*, p. 7; Norinaga’s [honorifics] added.

⁵⁹ MNZ 9, p. 121. See ‘Appendix: “Reading the Kojiki”’ in Burns, *Before the Nation*, for an interesting comparison of various parsings of this famous passage.

According to Norinaga, honorifics are always to be added when reading the *Kojiki*, as they were mostly likely omitted by Yasumaro out of convention and for the sake of brevity. Indeed, Norinaga goes so far as to caution would-be *Kojiki* readers that to be unaware of this practice of abbreviation (略)—and thus to assume that the original text was “out of order and in error” (亂れ誤れる物)—was gravely mistaken.⁶⁰ This was just one way that Norinaga effectively mythologized the *Kojiki* in order to present an ostensibly more authentic narrative that lay beyond the text.

In 1789, one year before the *Kojikiden* first began to be published,⁶¹ Norinaga published *Kamiyo no masakoto*, or “the Correct Language of the Age of the Kami,” a kana rendition of the age of the kami chapters (*maki*) of the *Kojiki*. As Norinaga explains in a preface to the text, the impetus for the kana rendition came from one of his disciples and patrons, Yokoi Chiaki 横井千秋 (1738-1801), who wanted a version of the *Kojiki* unmarred by *kanbun* and with the *teniwoha* properly ordered. This, Chiaki convinced Norinaga, would be helpful for people new to the study of the Ancient Way and would work to “accustom both their mouth and ears” (口なれしめ耳なれしめ) to the kind of ancient writing explicated in the soon-to-be released *Kojikiden*.⁶² Interestingly, what

⁶⁰ MNZ 9, pp. 35-36.

⁶¹ The *Kojikiden* was published over the course of thirty-two years, with the final volumes coming out in 1822, more than two decades after Norinaga’s death.

⁶² MNZ 7, p. 488. In his “Kaidai” to the volume, Ōno Susumu speculates that Norinaga must have had in mind the numerous new disciples that had enrolled in the Suzunoya from Nagoya (Owari domain, where Chiaki was a retainer) that year (Ōno, “Kaidai” to MNZ 7, p. 23). Owari ranked only second after Ise in providing students for Norinaga’s Suzunoya (*Motoori Norinaga jiten*, p. 205).

Norinaga produced at Chiaki's request was not merely a kana rendition of the first several chapters of the *Kojiki*, but rather a kana narrative that combined the contents of the age of the kami chapters of the *Kojiki* with parallel contents from the *Nihon shoki*, and from other sources when both of the former two texts were found wanting. Norinaga, in other words, filled the gaps or holes that he perceived in the *Kojiki* with supplementary information from the *Nihon shoki* and other ancient sources, despite what he considered to be the *Nihon shoki*'s sycophantic obsession with Sinitic writing styles and flourishes.⁶³

This free-flowing borrowing can be explained by Norinaga's attitude toward logography more broadly. As is well known, Norinaga tends to prioritize speech over writing because it is the only form in which a pre-Sinicized Japanese language ever existed. Indeed, Norinaga explicitly distances both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* from the textual medium in his essay *Tamakushige* 玉くしげ (“The Jeweled Comb Box”) (1789), published the same year as *Kamiyo no masakoto*. In it, he argues that it is the content, and not the compilation, of a work that is important, at least if that content has divine origins:

The *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, unlike the frivolous books of China, should not be discussed according to their date of compilation. The date of compilation may be later, but the contents remain just as they were in the age of the kami. Thus they are, on the contrary, older than the ancient texts of China.

古事記日本書紀なれば、かの軽薄なる唐戎のあらはせる書どもと同じみに、時代を以て論ずべきにあらず、撰録の時代こそ後なれ、その傳説の趣は、神代のまゝなれば、唐国の古書ともよりは、返ってはるかに古きことなるをや、⁶⁴

⁶³ MNZ 7, p. 489.

⁶⁴ MNZ 8, p. 314.

Norinaga goes on to fault the compilers of the *Nihon shoki* for corrupting the original oral narratives (though not their content) with Chinese prose. In contrast, he holds that the *Kojiki* truly transmits the past and thus offers a means for real knowledge.

In writing *Kamiyo no masakoto*, Norinaga claimed that he was offering beginners an opportunity to learn the elegant words of the past (古の雅言) without being bogged down by the mistaken readings of later times (後の世のひがよみ), with their corrupted sounds and abundant room for confusion when differentiating between voiced and unvoiced consonants.⁶⁵ As Norinaga makes clear, the correct language of the past was not one so readily accessible in eighteenth-century Japan—and thus the considerable contribution that *Kamiyo no masakoto* represented.⁶⁶ Yet, Norinaga’s ideal Japanese theoretically existed as a system bound by cosmo-linguistic laws that lay outside of time and was accordingly free of worldly change. Just as speech-acts do not in themselves affect language, the inviolate language of antiquity is, in Norinaga’s configuration, independent of human mediation. As such, this language is retrievable, knowable. We might say that Norinaga’s ideal language possesses an internal structure, but to get to this structure, and to understand this structure, Norinaga had no choice but to rely on the

⁶⁵ MNZ 7, p. 489. The significance of “elegant words” or “refined speech” was by no means unique to Norinaga’s thought and was critical in classical Chinese scholarship as well. See, for instance, Saitō, *Kanji sekai no chihei*, pp. 110-112.

⁶⁶ Norinaga writes in *Tamagatsuma* that despite his prolonged interest in voiced and unvoiced sounds, he was unable to reflect those distinctions in the *Kojikiden* for want of time. He recommends those who are interested in these matters to read *Kogen seidakkō* 古言清濁考 (1801), a treatise on voiced and unvoiced words in ancient times, written by one of his disciples, Ishizuka Tatsumaro 石塚竜麿 (1764-1823). According to Norinaga, the treatise contains many insights that he had not considered, even in his *Kamiyo no masakoto*. (MNZ 1, pp. 143-144.) See also MNZ *bekkan* 2 for Norinaga’s critiques of Tatsumaro, entitled *Ishizuka Tatsumaro gimon* 石塚竜麿疑問 (1791) and *Ishizuka Tatsumaro kana seidaku gimon* 塚竜麿仮字清濁疑問 (1790).

written word. Thus we see the careful balancing act he had to maintain in order to at once discredit the logography of the *Kojiki* and claim the *Kojiki* as an accurate transmission of ancient speech. Norinaga had to give some credence to the extant Chinese-derived graphs or otherwise admit that his *Yamato kotoba* was fabricated entirely.⁶⁷

TENIWOHA AND KANBUN KUNDOKU

As we have seen, the process of reading literary Sinitic known as *kanbun kundoku* offered somewhat of a lucky break for Norinaga. For what he effectively had to work with was content—the significations provided by the logographs—without an accompanying form by which he was bound to interpret it. Because Norinaga rejected the structure and syntax of the literary Sinitic given on paper, he was free to rearrange the text in a manner he deemed more befitting an immaculate language of antiquity. In other words, Norinaga could insert *teniwoha* as he saw fit; and if *teniwoha* are “signposts for the Way” as Norinaga believed them to be, the Way that was accordingly indicated was very much Norinaga’s to play with (though needless to say, that is not the way he perceived the matter). This is not to say, of course, that Norinaga did not follow any kind of convention in annotating ancient texts; indeed, his entire project is informed by his philological investigation into the ritualized *kundoku* readings of the *Nihon shoki* that

⁶⁷ Sawai Keiichi calls Norinaga’s “deceptive” *Yamato kotoba* a kind of “spell.” He writes, “Norinaga’s ‘discovery’ of *Yamato kotoba* should not be considered as anything other than a deception, an introducing of something that is in fact brand new as old” (Sawai, “Kundoku kara ‘henkyō’ wo kangaeru,” p. 301). Likewise, Koyasu Nobukuni writes, “Although Norinaga truly believed, and made others believe, that he was recovering an ancient language, what he was really doing was creating a ‘model language’ (規範的言語), *Yamato kotoba*” (Koyasu, “*Motoori Norinaga mondai*” to wa nanika,” pp. 115-16).

dated back to the Heian period. Nevertheless, he was able to distance what he perceived to be the language of ancient Japan from literary Sinitic while at the same time emphasizing its cohesion to patterns of a cosmic nature.

Kanbun kundoku is often described (and oversimplified) as the “reading of Chinese text in Japanese,” but is perhaps better conceived as a method of reading, writing, and interpreting “Chinese” logography (not language) with a Japanese morphology. David Lurie observes, “On the page nothing could be starker than the contrast between purely phonographic transcription and logographic writing in literary Chinese style, but it is possible in principle for the vocalizations of such texts to be identical.”⁶⁸ As Lurie notes, thanks to the *kanbun kundoku* parsing method, diverse scripts—logographic, phonographic, and mixed styles—could “inhabit the same linguistic space” regardless of their visual dissemblance. Conversely, the same logographic text might be vocalized in a number of different vernaculars as well. For much of its history, *kundoku* was not considered as the translation of a foreign language, and this is precisely because *kundoku* prevents “Chinese” logographs from being exclusively tied to the Chinese language. Written styles were conceived graphically—as kana or mana, “borrowed characters” or “true characters”—and not linguistically, as “Japanese” or “Chinese.”

Pre-modern *kundoku* may best be considered not through the lens of spoken language, but rather as a language that has the potential to eschew orality altogether. As Saitō Mareshi has pointed out, a long history of logocentrism has obscured alternative modes of language comprehension, making it difficult for us to imagine anything other than the status quo. Once naturalized in a paradigm where a generative conception of

⁶⁸ Lurie, *Realms of Literacy*, p. 208.

voice is privileged over an inherently derivative text, it can be very difficult to perceive text as anything but the transcription of sound.⁶⁹ Yet, Japanese *kundoku* was divorced from speech insofar as it was not directly representational of it; and it remained as such for well over a millennium after its first appearance on the archipelago. While it is commonly assumed that all Japanese *kanbun* texts were intended to be re-ordered and read via *kundoku*, moreover, this is likely to be inaccurate. As William Bodiford notes, many pre-modern Buddhist texts that were composed in Japan were not subjected to *kundoku*, and instead were read in a “Chinese” or Sinitic word order.⁷⁰ It is not entirely clear when *kundoku* practices first became prevalent on the Japanese archipelago, but it is now thought to date back to the seventh century. Until relatively recently, the general consensus amongst scholars of Japanese writing dated it to the ninth century with the advent of phonetic scripts (kana) in the Heian court, but others have challenged this chronological sequence, observing that *kundoku*, broadly defined, was by no means a process unique to the Japanese archipelago and was similarly practiced in Vietnam and Korea as well.⁷¹

⁶⁹ In order to highlight the blinders that modernity’s deeply ingrained logocentrism effectively mimics, Saitō gives the example of ancient Chinese glyphs as found on Zhou dynasty oracle bones. Of the characters that have been understood to date, roughly twenty percent contain vocal markers, a number that contrasts sharply with Chinese writing since the Han period, where roughly eighty percent of characters contain some form of sound indication. The vocalization of the text is nearly impossible to decipher without sound markers, Saitō tells us, and all the more so because the glyphs are not written in verse and hence provide no guiding meter. Ancient Chinese glyphs, Saitō concludes, were neither intended to represent nor record speech. Writing, in contrast, came to itself create a formalized kind of ritual speech (Saitō, “Tokushō no kotoba,” p. 21).

⁷⁰ Bodiford, *Myth and Counter-myth*, p. 291, fn. 40.

⁷¹ See Iwatsuki, “Betonamu ‘kundoku’ to Nihon ‘kundoku,’” and Yoshida, Tsukishima, et. al., *Kuntengo jiten*. The Silla scholar Seol Chong 薛聰 (650-730), for instance, is thought to have standardized the *idu* script, which played a similar role in Korea as *kundoku* did in Japan, during the late seventh to early eighth centuries (Yoshida, Tsukishima, et. al., *Kuntengo jiten*, p. 2). In

By Japan's early modern period, *kundoku* had been used commonly amongst the literati for centuries; the majority of texts written during the Tokugawa period were done so in *kanbun*. Accordingly, most texts necessitated *kundoku* to mentally reorder sentence structure into comprehensible Japanese; these *kundoku* readings, moreover, differed from colloquial speech in terms of grammar, lexicon, and phraseology (they were written in a literary style). Nevertheless, the designation of *kundoku* as translation was a conceptual shift that took place only in the mid-Tokugawa period, beginning with the Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai and his critique that it resulted in an obfuscating corruption of Chinese texts; and even then, the shift was gradual.

Sorai claimed that if one wanted to properly understand the Confucian sages, it was mandatory to master the literary Chinese in its original form.⁷² If a reader were to digest the Confucian Classics with *kundoku*, Sorai argued, he would merely be inserting his own cultural biases and linguistic insufficiencies into the text. As Sorai put it, “What I see is a reflection of myself” (吾視ることなお吾のごとし).⁷³ Koyasu Nobukuni has argued that this assertion—that the content of the text was dependent on the reader—changed the intellectual playing field of eighteenth-century Japanese thought

the Japanese context, Lurie has argued, among others, that *kundoku*, *ondoku*, and *hentai* readings evolved coevally and were all available to literate circles in the Yamato polity from the late Asuka period. This, of course, throws a wrench into the notion of two distinct, reified spheres of Chinese and Japanese literary production, and with it any notion of a pure Japanese that may have survived unmarred by Chinese influence.

⁷² Peter Flueckiger makes the interesting observation that Sorai's insistence on the differentiation between Chinese and Japanese implies a new understanding of language as experiential: “Tied to Sorai's presentation of separate languages as distinct spheres of meaning is the idea that to know a language means to inhabit its world, rather than to grasp it as an external object of knowledge” (Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony*, p. 71).

⁷³ Quoted in Koyasu, *Motoori Norinaga*, p. 39.

significantly. It was this position, this “othering” of Sinitic writing, Koyasu says, that both led anti-Sorai Confucians to speak out against the Sorai school and opened the door to the formulation of the self-referential discourse espoused by kokugaku scholars.⁷⁴ Of course, these were trends that were also visible among Buddhist schools, as we saw in the previous chapter. To recall, Jōgon too insisted on translating mantras and dhāranī into Japanese.

Nevertheless, the parallels in Sorai’s and Norinaga’s thinking are considerable, Norinaga’s distaste for scholars who privileged “Chinese” learning over that of their native land notwithstanding.⁷⁵ Norinaga’s goal of uncovering an unadulterated, pure text is nothing if not similar to Sorai’s stress on reading the Classics in their original tongue. In his *Gakusoku* 学則 (1727), Sorai outlines the manner in which he believes aspiring scholars should approach classic Chinese texts. Briefly, he disparages the practice of reading literary Sinitic according to Japanese grammar (和訓), arguing that this popular method prohibited readers from sufficiently grasping the meanings of texts. Underlying his insistence that Chinese be read as Chinese is the perception that the Way (a man-made Way) can be accessed through writing and, just as importantly, the proper reading of that writing. Sorai states,

One thousand ages pass. Customs change, and physical things perish. One must not rely on the precedent [i.e., the present readings of old

⁷⁴ Koyasu, *Motoori Norinaga*, pp. 39-40. Koyasu has written an entire book, *Jiken to shite no Sorai-gaku*, exploring the intellectual “event” that was Sorai’s methodology and its effects on eighteenth-century Japanese thought.

⁷⁵ It is worth noting, however, that Norinaga studied under the tutelage of Hori Keizan 堀景山 (1688-1757), a disciple of Sorai’s who was also connected to Keichū, while in his twenties in Kyoto.

words]... That said, what does not decay is the text, for it exists, complete, in writing.

千歳^ゆ逝きぬ。俗移り物亡ぶ。故^この恃^{たの}むべからざるなり…然りといへども、不朽なる者は文にして、その書^{つぶさ}具に存す。⁷⁶

Norinaga, too, subscribed to a similar logic, wherein the past could be accessed through writing. However, he added the phonocentric caveat that linguistic retrievability through text was limited to phonological writing. Possibly referring to Sorai's above words, he writes:

Truly, the ears cannot travel back one thousand years to hear the sounds of the past, but fortunately if there are kana, we can achieve this with the eyes.

まことに耳は千歳の上にわたりて上古の音を聞ことあたはずといへとも、幸いに仮字といふ物有れば、眼を以て是得べし⁷⁷

Shakespearean resonances notwithstanding, it should come as no surprise that “hearing with the eyes” is a shaky claim in this context and one that should not be taken at face value. Although Norinaga held that he was comparing various ancient Japanese texts (*Nihon shoki*, *Kojiki*, *Man'yōshū*, *norito*, etc.) to determine pronunciations, the places where this can actually be done are few and far between. As a result, Norinaga frequently had to resort to Chinese *fanqie*⁷⁸ dictionaries and rhyme indices such as the *Guangyun* 広

⁷⁶ NST 36, pp. 190-191.

⁷⁷ MNZ 8, p. 389.

⁷⁸ *Fanqie*, which Victor Mair has described as a method of “‘cut-and-splice’ pseudospelling or quasispelling,” uses two logographs phonetically to explicate the pronunciation of a third character (Mair, “A Hypothesis Concerning the Origin of the Term *fanqie* (‘Countertomy’),” p. 2). *Fanqie* certainly has its utility in terms of determining word pronunciation (though decidedly less so in Japanese than in Chinese), but its glaring deficiency for Norinaga's purposes almost

韻 (1008) and the *Yunjing* 韻鏡 (circa eleventh century) in order to produce his glosses.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Norinaga argued that the kana script allowed for sufficient phonological reconstruction; Norinaga stressed the sounds of the past where Sorai stressed text, and indeed had no choice but to do so. If a language unmarred by Chinese influence existed, it had to do so at the level of speech.

It is, then, the very indeterminacy of grammatical composition in *kanbun kundoku* that enabled Norinaga to imagine an ontologically grounded language inherently immune to problems of equivocality. More specifically, I want to argue that it is *kundoku*'s status as what Roland Barthes has called a "second order semiological system" that renders *kundoku* at once the antithesis and apotheosis of ideal language as Norinaga perceived it. Drawing on Barthes' explication of semiological systems in modern mythologies, it can be said that the shift from a literal sign (in the first order linguistic system) to an ideologically loaded, abstract signifier (in the second order mythical system), and the draining of meaning that that transfer entails, provides an empty space that can be filled with theories of an inner, "invisible" vernacular the likes of which Norinaga espoused.⁸⁰

Yet, because a signifier is form, a capacity for a plurality of significations is also instantiated. Thus the ambiguity and open-endedness of the referent in *kundoku*, given

goes without saying. Quite simply, a reliance on *fanqie* undermines any claim that an unadulterated, non-Sinocized Japanese is being uncovered.

⁷⁹ Tsukishima, *Rekishiteki kanazukai*, p. 123. The rhymes of the *Guangyun* are arranged by tone (rising, falling, even, entering) and consist of a total of 206 rhymes, with each rhyme having about one hundred characters listed under it. The *Yunjing* is made up of forty-four sound tables, with the first giving initial consonants and the remaining forty-three dedicated to rhymes.

⁸⁰ See "Myth Today" in Barthes, *Mythologies*. "Invisible vernacular" is a term I borrow from David Lurie, who uses it in his article, "The Development of Japanese Writing."

substance only at the moment of creative reading and verbalization, makes at least conceptually possible a language that collapses the distance between signifier and signified. It is my contention that it is only through *kundoku* linguistic structure and its receptivity to metaphor that Norinaga was able to afford the luxury of the *coincidentia oppositorum* that his theories of language encapsulated. Ironically, the very “invisible vernacular” that ostensibly exists “within” or “behind” *kundoku* and renders an unadulterated language conceptually possible is also responsible for ensuring that this same interior language can never ultimately be anything other than a linguistic shadow.

It is, in other words, the very indeterminacy and lack of signs for agreed upon vocalization in *kundoku* that made feasible claims that *teniwoha*, and classical Japanese in general, constituted a pure, univocal, cosmological truth language. Indeed, by imbuing text with a hidden vernacular, Norinaga effectively transformed *kundoku* into this “second order semiological system”—that is, a mythical system one step removed from its original linguistic counterpart. In such a system the sign is drained of its original, singularly specific meaning, leaving behind mere form. For instance, Barthes gives the example of a North African soldier on the cover of a newspaper, in a French uniform, saluting—and the literal meaning is just that: a real individual saluting at a certain moment in a specific location. But the image also signifies other things: that 1960s France is an empire of people united both militarily and culturally, with no racial discrimination and no oppressed colonial underclass yearning to break free. This would be inaccurate, of course, but that is precisely the point of myth—to construe as real that which, objectively speaking, is not.⁸¹

⁸¹ Barthes, *Mythologies*, pp. 116-117.

Writing in response to Fujiwara Korenari's 藤原維濟 (1747-1818) *Kokka hachiron sekihi saihyō* 国歌八論斥非再評, an essay on the nature of poetry,⁸² Norinaga claims that, “Form (*sugata*) is difficult to fake, but to fake content (*kokoro*) is easy” (姿ハ似セガタク意ハ似セ易シ).⁸³ Typically associated with the relation between emotion and *teniwoha*—a point I will return to in the following chapter—the passage highlights well Norinaga's awareness of the different levels of interpretation at work in his own hermeneutics. Form and content are always engaged in dynamic tension, the one informing the other, and vice versa. Because the “first” meaning (in Barthes' example, that of a particular individual in a specific setting) is never entirely done away with, its implicit significations are legitimated. It is this interplay between meaning and form that constitutes myth.⁸⁴ Barthes explains:

And it is again this duplicity of the signifier which determines the characters of the signification. We now know that myth is a type of speech defined by its intention (*I am a grammatical example*) much more than by its literal sense (*my name is lion*); and that, in spite of this, its intention is somehow frozen, purified, eternalized, *made absent* by this literal sense (*The French Empire? It's just a fact: look at this good Negro who salutes like one of our own boys.*) This constituent ambiguity of mythical speech has two consequences for signification, which henceforth appears both like a notification and like a statement of fact.⁸⁵

⁸² Part of an extended intellectual debate on poetry, *Kokka hachiron sekihi saihyō* was written in response to Norinaga's previous response (*Kokka hachiron sekihi hyō*) to Ōsuga Nakayabu's 大菅中養父 (1710-1778) response (*Kokka hachiron sekihi*, 1761) to Kada no Arimaro's 荷田在満 famous *Kokka hachiron* (1742). The original *Kokka hachiron* debate occurred between Arimaro, Kamo no Mabuchi, and Tayasu Munetake 田安宗武 (1716-1771), the second son of the eighth shogun Yoshimune 吉宗 (1648-1751). Norinaga's second response was aptly titled *Kokka hachiron sekihi saihyō no hyō*.

⁸³ MNZ 2, pp. 512-13.

⁸⁴ Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 118.

⁸⁵ Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 124.

To say that *kanbun kundoku* operates similarly may appear a stretch—it is, after all, but the reading of *kanbun*, and the meaning imparted would seem to be limited to the semantic content of that script. This may be true, if one were to read logographs for their sake alone, linguistically and not mythically, as it were. But considered under the sanction of Norinaga’s polemic against Sinitic, it is precisely the latter (mythic) method that is utilized. The original base content of the logographic text is *a priori* degraded: its literal sense is sublated to its intention, the valorization of “Japanese” at the expense of “Chinese.”

Indeed, Norinaga explicitly instructs readers of the *Kojiki* to interpret those passages written entirely logographically specifically for their underlying “intention” (*kokoro* 意), to be determined by the general feeling the passage gave them:

There are places where every single line is written completely in Sinitic (*kanbun*) and are very far stylistically from the language of antiquity. When this happens, do not get so hooked on the characters. Just grasp the intention, then think of an appropriate reading in the language of antiquity that is in line with the overall feeling of the passage.

又全く一句など、ひたぶるの漢文にして、古語にはいと遠き書ざまなる処往々フリフリにあるなどは、殊に字には拘はるまじく、たゞ其意を得て、其事のさまに随ひて、かなふべき古言を思ひ求めて訓べし、⁸⁶

⁸⁶ MNZ 9, p. 36.

Again, Norinaga denigrates the significance of actual, physical text, arguing that it merely amounted to anachronistic markings from a later era and could accordingly be ignored:

These characters are merely borrowed graphs applied much later, what deep reality could they represent? Truly, it is only by thinking through and understanding the language of antiquity again and again that one can come to know well the ways of the past; this is the real purpose of study.

まして其文字は、後に当たる仮の物にしれば、深くさだして何にかはせむ、唯いく度も古語を考へ明らめて、古のてぶりをよく知こそ、
モノマナビ ムネ
学問の要とは有べかりけれ、⁸⁷

Close reading, this is not. It is perhaps small wonder that Ueda Akinari would accuse Norinaga of concocting clever half-truths when penning the *Kojiki-den*. As Akinari put in an explicit jab at Norinaga, “To attach legs to a snake is not to transmit the past, but rather to oneself affix meaning, after the fact and according to one’s own subjective interests” (蛇に足を添へしは、いにしへを伝へたるにはあらで、我私言を後につたふる題目にこそあらめ).⁸⁸ According to Akinari’s logic, Norinaga had constructed a monster, a legged-serpent chimera that represented nothing about the world and everything about one individual’s absurdist fantasies.

Of course, the veracity of Akinari’s statement depends on how one conceives of “the past,” and on how one perceives “fact,” two points on which Akinari and Norinaga diverged considerably. If, following Walter Benjamin, the task of the translator “consists in finding the particular intention toward the target language that which produces in that

⁸⁷ MNZ 9, p. 33.

⁸⁸ UAZ 1, p. 110.

language the echo of the original,”⁸⁹ we might say that Norinaga was on to something—though surely Akinari would disagree here as well. Indeed, in an inversion of writing and reading as we typically consider the two to function, the literal sense of the text cannot be accessed without acknowledging a certain absence in form (the grammatical form of ancient Japanese), if not the ideological position aggrandizing that absent form. At the same time, and seemingly paradoxically, the mythic intention is also “frozen, eternalized, *made absent*” by the text’s literal sense, always latently available. The intention—the designation of a pure and ancient truth language—cannot be present without a permanent threat of being negated.

Because it *is* absent and a-textual, moreover, it is not possible to engage this “invisible vernacular” without a speech-act. That is, one must actively reorder, rewrite, read, and interpret the text if one is going to engage *kundoku*. We have, then, not a “work” in Barthes’ understanding of the term, but a “text,” an open-ended and iconoclastic bleeding between production and reception. A work, according to Barthes, is that finished piece of literature whose signification is sealed by the mark of the author. A text, in contrast, has no demiurgic agent and hence no “correct” mode of decipherment. It is worth noting that Ryūichi Abé makes a similar claim for Kūkai, the founder of Shingon Buddhism:

Kūkai approaches the text as a yet-to-be-bound—or, perhaps more appropriately, never-to-be-bound—constantly reworked manuscript. For Kūkai, the text is not a book but a writing that remains open-ended. It is

⁸⁹ Benjamin, “The Task of the Translator,” p. 258. Umberto Eco points out that the problem of translation itself points toward a perfect language in Benjamin: “Since it is impossible to reproduce all the linguistic meanings of the source language into a target language, one is forced to place one’s faith in the convergence of all languages”—which is to say, a Pure Language (Eco, *In Search of the Perfect Language*, p. 345).

endlessly related to other texts, and only by means of its openness does it reach totality. In other words, the world is made of texts and only of text—not of their representational function but of their materiality.⁹⁰

Just as the Barthesian text defies closure and totality, so too does *kundoku* defy the absolute creation of a perfect world (an unsullied, sequestered, singular, and permanent idea of *sumera mikuni*, the emperor’s august country)—the desire for which was, in the final analysis, the driving force behind Norinaga’s forays into language and grammar. As Norinaga states in the *Kojikiden*, “To wash off and dispose of this Chinese learning is the task of ancient studies” (この漢の習氣ナラヒを洗ひ去るぞ、古学イニシヘマナビの務には有りける、).⁹¹ This is not to say that Norinaga should be applauded for some kind of radical refusal to assign fixity, however unintentional; on the contrary. I merely want to highlight the contradiction at work in Norinaga’s own attempts to apprehend a sacred language and render it knowable and absolute.

THE EXCEPTIONAL NATURE OF *TENIWOHA*

In defending the superiority of *teniwoha* and Japanese more generally, Norinaga went through pains to distinguish *teniwoha* from Chinese postpositional particles, or *joji* 助字. By the time Norinaga was writing, attention to *joji* had come to play a significant role in Tokugawa period Kangaku studies, and had been compared to *teniwoha* by such prominent scholars as Ogyū Sorai, Sorai’s student Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1680-1747),

⁹⁰ Abé, *The Weaving of the Mantra*, p. 276.

⁹¹ MNZ 9, p. 32.

and Fujitani Nariakira's older brother Minagawa Kien.⁹² Norinaga asserts, however, that *teniwoha* far surpass Chinese *joji* in their import. The difference, he says, is that these latter particles “merely aid language” (語を助くるのみ) but are not capable of distinguishing between fine variations in meaning, as *teniwoha* are.⁹³ He also makes the claim that Chinese particles are in excess of the text, a kind of “inertia” (余勢) that can as soon be done without.⁹⁴ While Norinaga acknowledges that surface similarities between Chinese particles and *teniwoha* might exist, he asserts that those who truly believe that the two are comparable are ignorant of the actual world-ordering function of the latter terms.

Recently, certain people have said that *teniwoha* are comparable to the postpositional particles of Sinitic texts. This may seem to be accurate, and people who think in this vein are many. But in truth, even if they appear to be very similar, those who think in this way do not know *teniwoha* well. This is because the postpositional particles of Sinitic texts cannot match the base and the end, and do not have a perfectly correspondent order and fixity. *Teniwoha* [on the other hand] most certainly have this fixity; if there is even a small difference, the words will not be sufficient. Songs and everything else, too, will become merely useless words.

近き代に或人。てにをはは漢文の助字の如しといへり。此言あたれるやうなる故に。さることとのみ心得をる人おほかめり。まことにいとよく似てはあれども。しか思ふは猶てにをはをよくしらぬものになん有ける。そのゆゑは。かのからぶみの助字といふなる物は。その本と末とをあひてらして。かなへあはするさだまりはなきものなるを。てにをはは。たしかに此さだまりのあと有て。いささかも

⁹² Sorai discusses this in his *Kunshaku jimō* 訓釈示蒙, Shundai in *Watoku yōryō* 和読要領, and Kien in *Joji shōkai* 助字詳解.

⁹³ MNZ 9, p. 37.

⁹⁴ MNZ 2, pp. 51-52.

たがひぬれば。言の葉ととのはず。歌も何もすべていたづらごとに
なんなるめる。⁹⁵

Even slight errors in correlation are enough to alter the entire meaning of words, Norinaga claims, no small matter when language is correlated with the cosmos. For Norinaga, the value of a given text and the correctness of the grammar expressed therein are one and the same.

The level of importance Norinaga granted to *teniwoha* is also apparent in Norinaga's *Kokinshū tōkagami* 古今集遠鏡 (1793), a vernacular translation of the *Kokinwakashū* poetry anthology.⁹⁶ The *Kokinshū* is commonly thought to mark the rise of kana poetry (*waka*) in the Heian court; and Ki no Tsurayuki's 紀貫之 (872-945) assertion in the opening sentence of the *Kokinshū* "Kana preface" that *waka* "take the

⁹⁵ MNZ 5, p. 17.

⁹⁶ *Kokinshū tōkagami* translates the Tsurayuki's Kana Preface, as well as the entirety of the *tanka* included in the volume. Norinaga's position with regard to the vulgar language of the vernacular (俗語) is somewhat inconsistent. On the one hand, he takes a hardline stance on the importance of correct (classical) grammar use and the need to properly understand "refined language" (雅語). On the other, he translated nearly the entirety of the tenth-century poetry anthology, the *Kokinshū*, into a modern vernacular, allowing greater access to what he considered to be a helpful handbook for beginners learning poetry. As with any scholar whose oeuvre spans multiple decades, Norinaga's own positions shifted over time on a number of subjects; consistency was not necessarily Norinaga's strong suit. Indeed, Norinaga addresses scholarly contradictions that occur over time in a section of *Tamagatsuma* entitled, "When a theory changes over time" (前後と説のかはる事). Because one learns more as one's research progresses, he says, it is only natural that one's theories too will evolve. (Norinaga adds the caveat, however, that while it is generally accurate to take a thinker's later work as more definitive than the work he produced earlier in his career, this is not a hard and fast rule. Ultimately, he says, it is up to the reader to decide which theory is best (とにかくにえらびは、見む人のころになむ) (MNZ 1, p. 121).) Yet, if we are to trace a loose ideological arc of Norinaga's scholarship, Norinaga's views regarding proper language grew more stringent over time, something contradicted by the relatively late date of *Kokinshū tōkagami*. Written at the behest of his students, the text is believed to have been completed around 1793, only eight years before Norinaga's death. The publication expenses for *Kokinshū tōkagami* were covered by Yokoi Chiaki, who had also requested its undertaking, along with the earlier *Kamiyo no masakoto*.

human heart as their seed” has been highly influential in the manner in which waka were interpreted from the tenth century onward. Perhaps following the convention set by *hanashibon*, Norinaga opted to translate the Heian text of the *Kokinshū* into a contemporary Kyoto dialect. For example, the famous opening line of the “Kana preface” is rendered, “*uta to iu mono wa hito no kokoro ga tane ni natte iroiro kotoba ni natta mono jawai*” (歌ト云物ハ人ノ心ガタネニナツテイロイロノ詞ニナツタモノジヤワイ).⁹⁷

Norinaga goes to some length to explain the various difficulties involved in a vernacular translation, carefully spelling out and justifying his translational methodology. Norinaga explicitly acknowledges the significant degrees of geographic variation that were found in the demotic languages of Japan. Even when largely working within one specific vernacular, he admits, difficulties arise. Among vernacular terms, there are those that he had to omit due to their “altogether too vulgar, or too humorous, or too faddish” (あまりいやしき、又たはれすぎたる、又時々のおいまめきことば)⁹⁸ nature. He notes as well that one ought to use a “feminine” style over its “masculine” counterpart, because feminine language tends to be more attuned to genuine emotion.⁹⁹ Likewise, it is preferable to translate using plain words over highly ornamented ones. The original text

⁹⁷ MNZ 3, p. 15.

⁹⁸ MNZ 3, p. 6.

⁹⁹ Although Kamo no Mabuchi privileged the *Man'yōshū* over the later imperial collections, arguing that the former's “masculine” style (*masurao-buri*) was superior to the softer, more “feminine” style (*taoyame-buri*) of the *Kokinshū* and subsequent anthologies, Norinaga considered the *Shinkokinshū* and the *Sandaishū* to be the ideal poetry volumes until the end of his life. Even after being rebuked by Mabuchi, Norinaga did not change his preferences; he continued, moreover, to write his own poetry in the style of the medieval Nijō school (Kanno, *Motoori Norinaga*, p. 237).

may seem formal or elegant to modern eyes, Norinaga suggests, but the feeling that was originally meant to be conveyed might be far more casual in nature. Thus, the simpler and more contracted modern vernacular form is able to transmit more accurately the intention of the poem, at least to classical Japanese neophytes. Somewhat akin to his own (decidedly non-vernacular) rendition of the *Kojiki* published in the *Kojikiden*, Norinaga also holds that it is better to strive to capture the overall aura of the poem than to translate literally line-by-line.¹⁰⁰

Yet, when it comes to *teniwoha*, Norinaga is far less loose in his treatment, suggesting that *teniwoha* are all but untranslatable. For instance, taking the bound particle *zo* ぞ used for emphasis in Heian texts,¹⁰¹ Norinaga acknowledges that there is nothing that corresponds to *zo* in contemporary written Japanese. Using a verse that begins, “*Hana zo mukashi*” 花ぞ昔, about flowers giving off fragrances reminiscent of the past, he writes:

The *zo* for emphasis is, in the vernacular, rendered as *hana ga*, and emphasis should be placed there in order to convey the intention of the *zo* in the [original] refined language. However, the emphasis that is placed in the mouth cannot be written down [using the modern vernacular]...

殊に力を入たるぞなるを、俗語には、花ガといひて、其所にちからをいれて、いけほひにて、雅語のぞに意に聞することなるを、しか口にいふいきほひは、物には書とるべくもあらざれば...¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ MNZ 3, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ “*Zo*” was derived from the Nara period “*so*,” bound to the end of a sentence by the attributive form (*rentaiki*). Use of “*zo*” diminished in the medieval period and had disappeared by the end of the Muromachi period (Shirane, *Classical Japanese*, p. 210).

¹⁰² MNZ 3, p. 8.

Norinaga arbitrarily opts to leave a katakana *sa* サ after the *ga* of “*hana ga*” in order to mark emphasis, but highlights the considerable difficulty of conveying emotion via text in the vernacular.

All human language, even when the same thing is being said, will be heard as deep or shallow, happy or sad, depending on the way it is said or the energy with which it is said. Poetry in particular is something that is supposed to reflect simply what is in the heart. The manner in which the words are uttered by the mouth are then heard by the ears. If this is difficult to decipher, one must taste the shape of the words (*kotoba no yō wo yoku ajiwaite*) and guess the heart of the person who wrote it, and then interpret/reflect that energy [in translation]. For instance, when one translates the *sedōka*,¹⁰³ “In spring, the meadow flower that blooms first,” one should add “*he, hehehe, hehe*” at the end to impart laughter; currently, that joking tone is absent.

すべて人の語は、同じくいふことも、いひざまいきほひにしたがひて、深くも浅くも、をかしくもうれたくも聞ゆるわざにて、歌はことに、心のあるやうを、ただにうち出たる趣なる物なるに、その詞の、口のいひざまいきほひはしも、ただ耳にききとらでは、わきがたければ、詞のやうをよくあぢはひて、よみ人の心をおしはかりえて、そのいきほひを訳すべき也、たとへば「春されば野べにまづさく云々、といへるせどうかの、訳のはてに、へ、へへへ、へへと、笑ふ聲をそへたるなど、さらにおのがいまのたはぶれにあらず、¹⁰⁴

This passage can be read as a defense of *teniwoha*, an argument for their necessity and utility. *Teniwoha*, including as they do interjections and exclamations, are indispensable in making sense of songs, or at least songs in their textual manifestation. It is not possible to “taste” the shape of the songs directly from the page otherwise. For this reason, Norinaga’s *Tōkagami* preface lingers on the variant ways in which Norinaga chose to

¹⁰³ *Sedōka* 旋頭歌 is a poem that involves six verses arranged in a 5/7/7/5/7/7 moraic pattern.

¹⁰⁴ MNZ 3, p. 7.

render obsolete particles into the contemporary vernacular, explaining in detail the thinking behind his translational methodology.¹⁰⁵

Much of Norinaga's grammatical advancements involved determining the correspondences between cutting words and receiving words, linking different *teniwoha* with different *musubi*. He charts this out in his meticulously researched *Teniwoha himokagami* てにをは紐鏡 (1771).¹⁰⁶ Organized as table displaying in three vertical columns which *teniwoha* take which *musubi*, *Teniwoha himokagami* is the end result of a survey of all fourteen thousand songs included in the *Man'yōshū* and the *Hachidaishū* 八代集, the first eight imperial poetry collections.¹⁰⁷ Grouping *kakari* into three columns,

¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, Fujitani Nariakira (whose work Norinaga became familiar with only after Nariakira's death in 1779) would claim that it was impossible to successfully affix vernacular glosses to ancient poetry. Because words have changed over time, he argued, it was as difficult to accurately and precisely translate the poems of the past into a modern vernacular as it was to render one of the five "untranslatable" expressions of Sanskrit into Japanese. As Nariakira put it in the *Ayuishō*: "To affix vernacular glosses to the words of poetry is like trying to translate the Sanskrit sutras. Among the five untranslatable expressions, "maka" combines connotations of greatness, multiplicity, and sublimity. There are not a few such examples. The words of the past are broad in meaning and powerful in reason; it is difficult to choose just one word from today's vernacular that corresponds perfectly. The meanings of today's words may align in various ways or they may completely diverge. The ancient word "hanagame" corresponds to the modern word "hanaire." But "hanatsuzu" or "hanaoke" only corresponds to "hanaire" and not to "hanagame." This is because in the past there was one straightforward path, but now it is completely different. [...] It is like looking at a person's face, clearly visible at noon but hazy at night. Thus even vernacular words that seem to correspond well [to ancient words] are difficult to understand in their deepest meaning unless they align perfectly" (歌の言葉に里言を当つること梵經を翻訳せむがごとくになれるよ。五種不翻の一つに。摩訶は大多勝の三つの心を具へたれば。訳しかねたなるに等しきこと少なからず。古の詞は心広く理強くして。今一つの里言に当てがたきもあり。今の詞はた心方々に通ひ理さまざまに乱れて。古の詞に適ひがたきもあり。古の花瓶にあらず。これは古は一筋に今はさまざまなるが違へり。[...]たとへば昼見たる人の顔の夜目にたどたどしきがごとし。しかればよく当たれりとおぼゆる里言も。詳しく思ひあてざれば。深き心は得がたくべし) (FNZ J, p. 542).

¹⁰⁶ Included as a very long foldout in MNZ 5.

¹⁰⁷ The *Hachidaishū* span the three hundred years from the publication of the *Kokinshū* in 905 to the publication of the *Shin-kinshū* in 1205. As this chosen corpus implies, "correct" language for Norinaga is very much intertwined with imperial authority.

the chart shows the *musubi* attached to 1.) *wa* は, *wo* を, and “*tada*” 徒; 2.) *zo* ぞ, *no* の, *ya* や, and pronouns; and 3.) those associated with the *teniwoha koso* こそ. “*Tada*” here refers to cases lacking *teniwoha*, whereas “pronouns” include terms such as “what?” (なにに), “where?” (いずら), “how?” (いかに), and “*nani*” 何, *nani* understood not as a single particle but as a class of interrogatives. Other *teniwoha* are categorized under the above classes. The chart matches the three types of *kakari* with forty-three rows of *musubi*, effectively making the novel claim that there is indeed a sum of forty-three *musubi*, no more and no less.

Teniwoha himokagami is, quite simply, the end result of an attempt to create a comprehensive list of *teniwoha* correspondences. It serves, moreover, as reference material for Norinaga’s *Kotoba no tama no o*, which takes thousands of examples of *teniwoha* usage from the *Hachidaishū* and categorizes them according to the organizational rationale of *Himokagami*. Although Norinaga generally uses the early imperial anthologies as demonstrations of *teniwoha* properly composed, he here includes a section on “various errors,” where he delineates instances where *teniwoha* have not been accurately paired. For instance, he gives an example from the *Shūishū* 拾遺集 (1005~07) where the *musubi* “*nurure*” ぬるれ corresponds erroneously to the *kakari* “*yukaba*” ゆかば.¹⁰⁸ The accurate *kakari* would be “*yukeba*,” Norinaga intones, although he exonerates the original Heian poets from any wrongdoing, pointing his finger

¹⁰⁸ The full poem, from volume six of the *Shūishū*, reads, “*tabi yukaba/ sode koso nurure/moru yama no/ shizuku ni nomi wa/ ōsezaranan*” 旅ゆかば袖こそぬるれもる山のしづくにのみはおほせざらん。

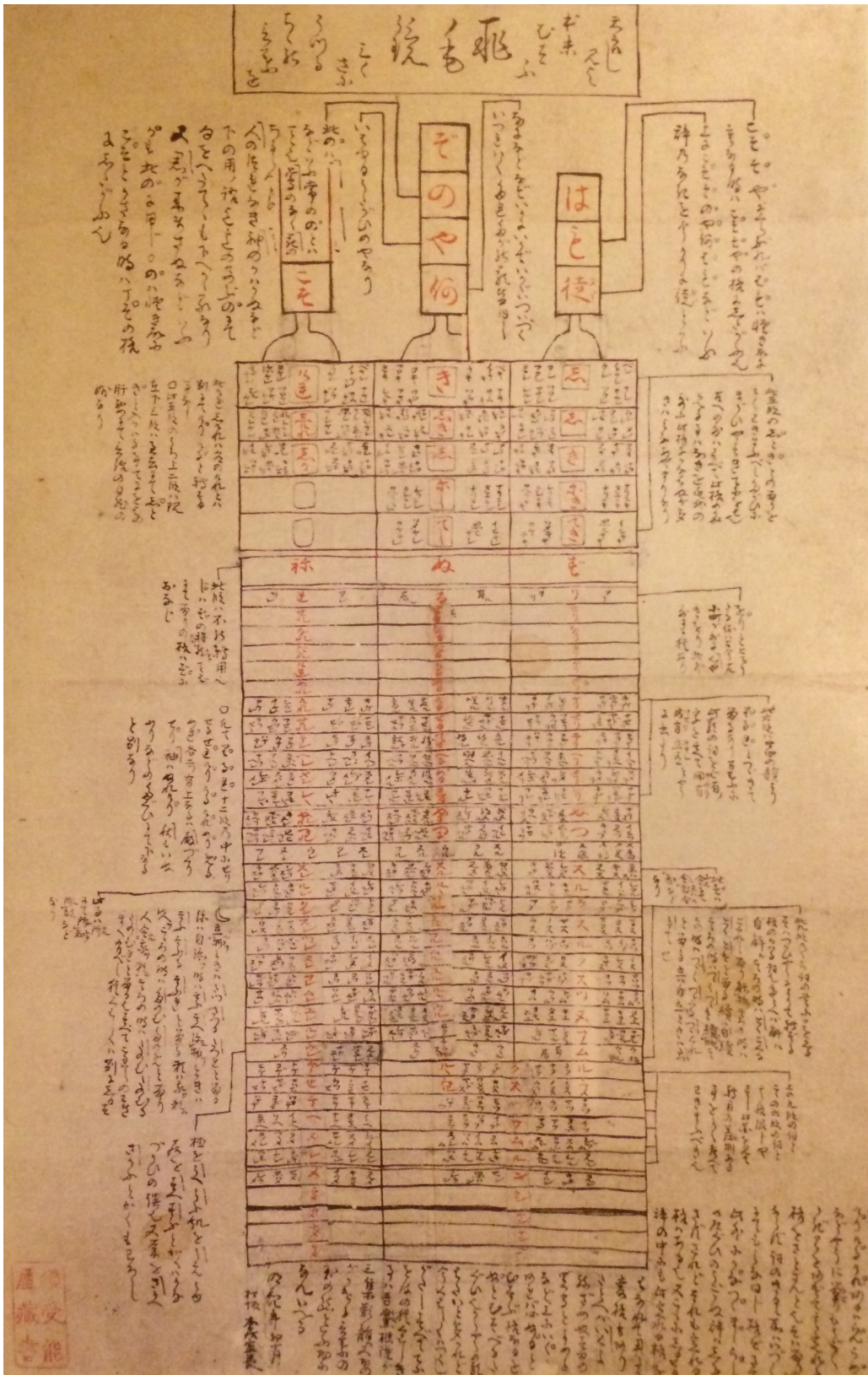


Figure 1: Motoori Norinaga, *Teniwoha himokagami* (1771)

instead to later clerical carelessness. A tactical move seen throughout *Kotoba no tama no o*, Norinaga by and large attributes Heian period errors in *teniwoha* correspondence to faulty transcription by copyists of a later age.¹⁰⁹

Prior to Norinaga (and Fujitani Nariakira, who was working at around the same time on the same syntactical correspondences, which he termed *uchiai* 打ち合い¹¹⁰), there was no systemized understanding of conjugation. Norinaga and Nariakira, then, were in some ways working “from scratch” when they set out to order *kakari-musubi* holistically. Neither Norinaga nor Nariakira completed this grammatical work during their lifetimes, and much of the organization of the conjugation of verbs was completed by Norinaga’s son, Motoori Haruniwa 本居春庭 (1763-1828).

More precise understandings of conjugation were still underway as late as 1939, however, when Ishida Haruteru found that all *musubi* conjugations did not take the attributive form, or *rentaikei*, as previously thought. In pre-Heian texts, Ishida determined, the *kakari* “*koso*” instead continued on with a contradictory conjunction (逆説) and tied to a *musubi* in the perfective form (*izenkei*).¹¹¹ Although *koso* came to simply indicate emphasis over time, it is now known that it originally was used to form the premise phrase (前提句) of the condition to be established. Small oversights notwithstanding, many of the conjugational categories (e.g., *yodan katsuyō*, *kami nidan katsuyō*) used today in learning, reading, and interpreting classical Japanese were established through Norinaga’s work.

¹⁰⁹ MNZ 5, pp. 82-83.

¹¹⁰ Nariakira succinctly defines the term in the *Ayuishō*. See FNZ J, p. 569.

¹¹¹ Tsuta, “Koso: *izenkei kenkyū shishō*,” pp. 36-37.

CONCLUSION

For Norinaga, the sounds of antiquity were the key to recovering the proper place of humans in the cosmos. Using the *Kojiki* and the early imperial poetry anthologies, Norinaga thus sought to re-create these sounds, which he believed were one and the same as the sounds of an idealized ancient Japanese language. Far from the megalomaniacal fabrication of language *ex nihilo* that many modern scholars have portrayed Norinaga's endeavors to be, Norinaga himself thought he was carefully excavating the sounds and rhythms of the past through a rigorous attention to *teniwoha*. Because *teniwoha* in Norinaga's mind were imbued with the powers of the kami and had existed unchanged since the beginnings of time, they provided a reliable rubric by which language across history could be measured against. *Teniwoha*, in other words, themselves provided the truth within the profane by which the sacrality of the cosmos could be apprehended. As such, they could be considered as "signposts for the Way," markers that unfailingly led one to the true heart of the ancient past.

This static conceptualization of *teniwoha*, and indeed of language more generally, may seem naïve or superstitious from a modern perspective; but it is worth remembering that it leads directly to a more empirical mode of philological research. For it is precisely the perception of language and grammar as fixed that renders them potentially wholly knowable, prime subjects for comprehensive analysis. Norinaga's *Kojikiden* is without doubt his most well-known work. But his grammatical treatise, *Kotoba no tama no o*, which continues to shape how classical Japanese is taught in public schools across Japan

into the present day, may very well be the most influential.¹¹² In developing and reworking the courtly poetics of medieval poetry houses such as the Nijō to cover language more generally, Norinaga also expanded a longstanding esoteric poetic tradition into the new, more public realm of what we might call a nascent linguistics.

¹¹² According to Kanno Kakumyō, instruction in high school *kobun* 古文 classes still revolve around Norinaga's idea of *kakari-musubi* (the correlative relationship between *kakari* (or affecting) prepositional particles and the conjugation of *musubi* (tying) predicates) (Kanno, *Motoori Norinaga*, p. 256).

THE GRAMMAR OF PATHOS:

Norinaga's *Mono no aware* and the Cosmic Function of Poetry

This chapter continues to explore the significance of *teniwoha* in Motoori Norinaga's thought by attempting to clarify how his theory of grammar and prosody informed his famous conception of *mono no aware*, or the pathos of things. Pathos in this sense should not be understood as just melancholy or sadness, but is rather referring to passions or emotions more broadly. More importantly, *mono no aware* is about the pathos that exists inherently in *things*, or *mono*, and the way these things interact with, and impress upon, people.

Four interrelated concepts have typically been said to govern Norinaga's poetics: *koe* (voice), *aya* (patterning), *sugata* (figure/form), and *mono no aware*. As Michael F. Marra has succinctly put it, "the sound of words (*koe*) takes on a poetic form (*sama* or *sugata*) by being externalized into written signs (*aya*), a process informed by the poet's ability to be moved by the external surroundings (*mono no aware*)."¹ I will argue that *teniwoha* is integral to all four of these concepts. Looking at the direct associations Norinaga drew between *teniwoha* and *mono no aware*, a poetic topos popularly

¹ Marra, *The Poetics of Motoori Norinaga*, p. 5.

considered today to encapsulate the essence of the Japanese spirit, I demonstrate that, for Norinaga, the grammatical and prosodic production and reproduction of *mono no aware* by means of voice, figure, and patterning, constituted an exemplary means for knowing the cosmos. For Norinaga, in other words, *mono no aware* was about a universal, ontological reality.

In Norinaga's theory of poetry, *aware* and knowledge of the cosmos are mutually constitutive: it is only through knowledge of *mono no aware* that one may experience the cosmos in all of its teeming flux and variety; and *mono no aware*, moreover, can only truly be "known" (*shiru* 知る) through the aural experience of correctly ordered language. Norinaga understood the cosmos as replete with celestial rhythms and terrestrial forms, a world filled to the brim with the pathos of things. For humans to live in harmony with this world, Norinaga believed, it was necessary to "know" *mono no aware*. Critically, this access point was found in classical Japanese waka poetry. More precisely, it was through the *grammar* of classical poetry—and not the content matter—that humans could best cognize and recognize the pathos of things. This reciprocal relationship between grammar and pathos, I will show, lies at the center of Norinaga's discourse on language and provided a framework through which he presented his ideas about the formation of human emotionality, subjectivity, and sociality.

MONO NO AWARE: THE SOURCE OF ALL POETRY

Mono no aware is popularly understood as the essence of personal emotional expression and, as such, the inversion of the rigid, socially bound etiquette that Norinaga so vehemently abhorred in Confucian thought. Through the decades-spanning popularity of *Nihonjinron* (theories of Japaneseness, the modern literary genre expounding on the alleged uniqueness of the Japanese people) into the present day, *mono no aware* has come to be seen by many as characterizing a unique and essential aspect of the Japanese psyche. As the catalogue from a 2013 exhibition on “‘Mono no Aware’ and Japanese Beauty” at the Suntory Museum of Art in Tokyo helpfully informs us, *mono no aware* remains “an unaffected part of Japanese sensibilities today.”² *Mono no aware*, the catalogue argues, is part of the Japanese patrimony; it is found across generations of Japanese, experienced through the shared “cycles” of life that ostensibly remain unchanging despite the passage of time. The catalogue, moreover, explicitly stresses that *mono no aware* is transhistorical: “The elements that evoke a sense of *mono no aware* are not locked away in tradition but are constantly being renewed...the heart that experiences *mono no aware* in episodes of contemporary life beats on today.”³

Unsurprisingly, this modern, romantic, popularized understanding of *mono no aware* diverges from Norinaga’s original pronouncements on the matter, first formulated

² “*Mono no aware*” to *Nihon no bi*, p. 222. The catalogue (which includes sections in English as well as in Japanese—the language quoted here is in English in the original and is not my translation) is referring here to the *mono no aware* that is evoked by “Themes such as Snow, Moon, and Flowers, or Birds and Flowers and the Wonders of Nature, inspired by a love of the natural beauties of the changing seasons,” which it nevertheless also admits is “derived in part from Chinese culture and poetry.”

³ *Mono no aware*” to *Nihon no bi*, p. 219. English in original.

in his essays on the *Tale of Genji* (1008).⁴ If anything, it owes more to the twentieth-century philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō's 和辻哲郎 (1889-1960) reading of *mono no aware*, conceived as a kind of purified desire for an original constancy standing apart from temporality altogether.⁵ Watsuji argued that Norinaga's understanding of *mono no aware* was inexorably inhibited by his overly narrow focus on Heian period literature and *Tale of Genji* author Murasaki Shikibu in particular. This, he said, added a localized provinciality, an effete lack of willpower, to what was nevertheless erroneously conceived as a transcendental phenomenon.⁶ More recent scholarship, on the other hand, has attempted to situate Norinaga's conception of *aware* historically within the Confucian paradigm of culturally constructed norms, holding that adherence to such norms worked to solidify a self-referential vision of a culturally delimited community.⁷

Both the academic “constructivist” critique of Norinaga's *mono no aware* and its more popular “romantic” predecessor can be said to be projections of modern concerns, particularly those regarding the formation of the Japanese nation-state. In the romantic

⁴ See MNZ 4.

⁵ Watsuji, *Nihon seishinshi kenkyū*, p. 151.

⁶ The view that *mono no aware* is central to Japanese culture is not foreign to English-language scholarship either. In her study of the medieval renga poet Shinkei, for example, Esperanza Ramirez-Christensen has called *aware* “the most durable strain in popular culture,” defining its function “in Japanese culture” writ large as “ultimately nothing more, or less, than an empathetic response to temporality, or the presence of death in life” (Ramirez-Christensen, *Heart's Flower*, p. 257).

⁷ See, for instance, Ch. 6, “Motoori Norinaga and the Cultural Construction of Japan,” in Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony*, pp. 173-209. It is worth noting that numerous modern scholars (e.g., Yoshikawa Kōjirō, Minamoto Ryōen, John A. Tucker) have pointed out the family resemblances between Ogyū Sorai's (Confucian) kobunjigaku (ancient phraseology) and Norinaga's kokugaku. Typically, the focus is on the similarities in methodology that are at work in the two, ostensibly opposing, schools of thought. An attention to philology, the privileging of an originary language that holds some sort of truth, and the bemoaning of the present state of affairs, are all parallels in Sorai's and Norinaga's works.

interpretation, *mono no aware* is understood as liberating individual interiority from the normative strictures of pre-modern society, in turn allowing for a new kind of (proto-national) empathic community; in the cultural constructivist interpretation, conversely, it is consolidating community by re-centering those same strictures, albeit around the new focal point of “Japan” and “Japaneseness.” In both readings, Norinaga plays a pivotal role in establishing the foundations of what came to be Japanese identity, a role for which he has been variably lionized and demonized over the last century by Japanese historians and lay people alike.

I demonstrate in this chapter, however, that in his analysis of grammatical codes and prosodic rhythms, Norinaga was fundamentally concerned with the possibility of rendering more fully knowable the resonant forces that make up the cosmos. To contend that such analyses present language as a tool for the construction of a cultural or ethnolinguistic community is thus to project backward a Western modern constructivist understanding of language as a site for community formation that is incapable of countenancing what was really at stake for Norinaga, and indeed for his community of readers. I argue that it is Norinaga’s often overlooked grammatical and linguistic works that shed light on Norinaga as a quintessentially early modern thinker, and indeed highlight a new way of interrogating being and ontology in early modern Japan. They are also the backbones upon which Norinaga’s more explicitly ideologically-oriented thought rest, and without which I argue we cannot adequately understand Norinaga and his theory of *mono no aware*.

The term *mono no aware* makes its first known appearance in the *Tosa nikki* 土佐日記 (935), Ki no Tsurayuki’s pseudo-anonymously penned diary recounting his return

to the capital after serving as a governor in the provinces.⁸ In the diary, Tsurayuki describes a boat captain as given to drink and ignorant of *mono no aware*, drawing an association between refinement and pathos.⁹ The scene involves the courtiers reciting poetry mourning the sudden death of a young woman, made all the more tragic because she had been longing to return to the capital and was at last about to see her longings fulfilled. But the captain is a crass commoner, Tsurayuki suggests, and can think of nothing but the changing winds and the tides; he thus obtusely rushes the weeping courtiers onto the boat.

“*Mono no aware*” is also found scattered across other Heian period vernacular texts, such as the *Kagerō nikki* 蜻蛉日記 (c. 974) and the *Tale of Genji*. While the emotion of “*aware*” as a standalone term can be dated as far back as the *Kojiki*, it is explicitly linked to poetry by Tsurayuki in the *Kokinshū* Kana preface (905). Poetry, Tsurayuki famously writes, can bring even the invisible demons and divinities to feel *aware*. Nearly three centuries later, the celebrated court poet Fujiwara no Shunzei described *aware* in the *Korai fūteishō* 古来風体抄 (1197) as something that was heard when songs were recited aloud and chanted to rhythm:

Read aloud and chanted to a rhythm, a waka poem (*uta*) sounds charming (*en*) and has *aware*. Waka poetry was originally called “songs for recitation,” thus whether they sound good or bad depends on the voice.

⁸ Nihon kokugo daijiten, entry on “*mono no aware*.” Accessed at <http://japanknowledge.com/lib/display/?lid=2002042a218dn2fJhQoI> on 3/10/2015. See also Yamazaki, “*Aware*” to “*mono no aware*” no *kenkyū*, pp. 49-53.

⁹ Yamazaki Yoshiyuki argues that the *mono no aware* presented here represents a kind of universal reality or mode of being, which nevertheless the ferryman does not grasp (Yamazaki, “*Aware*” to “*mono no aware*” no *kenkyū*, p. 52).

歌はただ、よみあげもし、詠じもしたるに、何となく艶にもあはれにもきこゆる事のあるなるべし。もとより詠歌といひて、こゑにつきて、よくもあしくもきこゆるものなり。¹⁰

Aware as used by Shunzei above refers neither to *kokoro* (heart) nor *kotoba*

(words/diction), traditionally considered to be the two main components of poetry.

Rather, Shunzei's *aware* in this instance is associated with the medium of sound, of the voice, and with the recitation of waka poetry more particularly.¹¹ A critical attribute of a poem when read aloud, Shunzei suggests, is its possession of *aware*. For Shunzei, *aware* derives from and arises out of the poetic medium of the voice.

Norinaga also maintains this close connection between *aware* and the voice introduced by Shunzei, but at the same time extends it by taking into consideration the additional role that sensation plays in the evocation and appreciation of *aware*. Indeed, he advocates knowing the world and the essential nature of things through a kind of sensory cognition based on experience. It is relatively well known that Norinaga defines poetry by virtue of *aware*, claiming, for instance, that, “The Way of poetry has no meaning beyond the one word *aware*” (歌道ハアハレノ一言ヨリ外ニ余義ナシ).¹² But just as importantly, it is through the physical acts of seeing things, places, and events, and

¹⁰ Fujiwara no Shunzei, *Korai fūteishō*, p. 10.

¹¹ Mark Meli notes that Shunzei was somewhat unique in favoring *aware* as a positive critical term: “In the extant poetry contests left by Shunzei and recorded in the *Shinpen Kokkataikan*, there are 39 judgments from seven different contests wherein Shunzei uses ‘*aware*’ in the critical evaluation of a poem. This equals twice the total of critical appearances of the word in the judgments of all other individual contest judges in this period combined” (Meli, “‘*Aware*’ as a Critical Term in Classical Japanese Poetics,” p. 78).

¹² MNZ 4, p. 585.

hearing sounds, voices, and cries, Norinaga says, that classical poetry can be properly understood, and, in turn, lead to knowledge and expression of *aware*. For example, Norinaga claims that there is an etymological connection between the lengthening of both breath and voice into song (*nagamuru*) when one is moved to aware and the act of gazing upon things with the eyes (*nagameru*).¹³ As Norinaga puts it, drawing explicitly from the *Kokinshū* Kana preface, “*Mono no aware* derives from the things one sees and hears” (見る物きく物につけて。物のあはれをいひのぶる也).¹⁴

The caveat here, of course, is that these sights and sounds cannot be just any sight or sound sourced from the world at large but rather must correlate to those sensations described in ancient texts if they are to be successful in invoking *aware*. Sensation and pathos in Norinaga’s thought, in other words, are not unmediated by culture and tradition—although that culture and tradition have been here rendered “natural” (or cosmological) and hence not merely “cultural” in the modern sense of the term. Norinaga notes that one ought to visit locales mentioned in ancient poems, not once but over and over again, talking to people who live there and perusing local records that may have been transmitted to better understand the past.¹⁵ Likewise, he suggests that, when having difficulty expressing *aware*, it is helpful to rely on “the sound of the wind as it is heard in one’s ears” (耳にふるゝ風の音) or the “the smell of flowers or the color of snow as it is

¹³ MNZ 2, p. 124.

¹⁴ MNZ 2, p. 111.

¹⁵ See, for instance, MNZ 1, p. 201. Norinaga warns against putting too much faith in other people’s words, however, especially if they are making grandiose claims about the past.

seen in one's eyes" (めにふるゝ花のほほひ雪の色).¹⁶ Predictably, he immediately follows this advice with a nod to the *Kokinshū* Kana preface, crediting it for these insights. As Norinaga's repeated citations of poems from the *Kokinshū* and other Heian period poetry anthologies in order to demonstrate the manner in which *aware* may be experienced clearly evinces, it is ultimately a classical textual precedent that dictates true feeling. For when one appreciates the smell of a cherry blossom or admires its ephemeral bloom, it must be done in a manner reminiscent of classical poetry if one is to experience *aware*.

What it is, exactly, that constitutes this "manner reminiscent of classical poetry" is a topic we will return to shortly. For now, let it suffice to observe that *mono no aware* carries a kind of affective autonomy for Norinaga, adhering as it does to a "genuine emotion" that nevertheless does not align with the perceived emotions of the individual. As Norinaga writes, "The person who knows *mono no aware* cannot avoid being moved whenever he comes in contact with *aware*; even when he does not think it is moving, it will be difficult to feel otherwise" (物のあはれをしる人は。あはれなる事にふれては。おもはじとすれ共。あはれとおもはれてやみがたし).¹⁷ The person who knows *mono no aware*—which, as we will see, is also the person who is well versed in classical Japanese waka forms and contexts—feels *aware* regardless of his or her own intention. Or to put it another way, the affective force that is *mono no aware* is patterned not according to the whims of the individual, but rather according to cosmic forms. And the

¹⁶ MNZ 2, p. 110.

¹⁷ MNZ 2, p. 109.

most readily accessible of these forms to humans is the form of properly composed poetry.

Kanno Kakumyō has argued that, contrary to the hermetic, aestheticized “waka universe” that Norinaga’s *mono no aware* theory is typically seen as constituting, we can see a positivistic philological discourse that dates back to Keichū as undergirding Norinaga’s worldview.¹⁸ Thus, Kanno says, far from a “Way of poetry” ruled by the vagaries of sentiment, Norinaga’s world is rooted more broadly (and more concretely) in an empirically based “Way of language.”¹⁹ That is, it is not just a subjective and thus vaguely defined sensitivity to finer feelings and emotions that fills out Norinaga’s poetic world, but a critique of the perceived arbitrariness and artificiality of both Confucian mores and medieval poetics from the standpoint of language. When Norinaga disapproves of the “rites and music” championed by the Confucian sages, for instance, he argues that they “do not match human emotions”:

Those [Confucian] regulations may be erected as regulations, but they are not the true Way. Because they do not match human emotions, those who actually follow them are exceedingly rare.

其制は制と立しかども、まことの道にあらず、人の情にかなはぬことなる故に、したがふ人いとまれなり²⁰

Norinaga’s pronouncements here on Confucian regulations going unheeded because they diverge from human emotions notwithstanding, he frequently pointed to his

¹⁸ Kanno, *Motoori Norinaga*, pp. 41-42. Kanno is arguing specifically against Hino Tatsuo’s (1940-2003) reading of Norinaga’s poetics and *mono no aware-ron*.

¹⁹ Kanno, *Motoori Norinaga*, p. 253.

²⁰ MNZ 9, p. 60.

contemporaries' Confucian worldview as evidence that they themselves had lost touch with their emotions. As mentioned above, Norinaga located authentic emotions in a space apart, without correlation to what people in his own time felt “spontaneously” in their hearts. Due to an ongoing assault wherein arbitrary rites and principles had become internalized to the point of unrecognizability, Norinaga believed, people had become divorced from their true feelings. They thus needed the aid of classical poetry—and therefore also of set grammatical and prosodic rules, encapsulated by Kanno's “Way of language”—to rediscover their better natures.

I am in agreement with Kanno that Norinaga's poetic world—which is also to say, Norinaga's idea of *mono no aware*—is informed by an empirically based conception of language defined by a philologically rigorous intertextuality.²¹ Yet stopping at a “Way of language” as Kanno does may be stopping a little too short; for Norinaga's ideas of *mono no aware* erect a universe that not only includes linguistic forms but also extends to

²¹ Drawing on Hino's work, Thomas Harper has recently argued that *mono no aware* did not play as significant a role in Norinaga's thought as previous scholars have claimed. Rather, he says, Norinaga was merely drawing on popular literature of his day in using the phrase “to know *mono no aware*” (*mono no aware o shiru*), and was never particularly invested in the concept itself. Harper backs this claim up by arguing that “the popular usage [of knowing *mono no aware*] corresponds precisely with the sense in which Norinaga uses it, meaning ‘to empathize or sympathize with the feelings of others’” (Harper, “The Tale of Genji: A Little Jeweled Comb, 1799,” p. 415). This, of course, overlooks the grammatical grounding of *mono no aware* that is so crucial to Norinaga's understanding of the term. Whether the phrase “to know *mono no aware*” was used in contemporaneous popular literature to indicate empathic sensitivity toward others—and I have no doubt that it was—is beside the point. Interestingly, Harper goes on to defend Norinaga's *Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi* by arguing that the text's real significance was in being the first to recognize *The Genji* as a psychological novel. According to Harper, however, Norinaga's “extraordinary exposition of Murasaki's even more extraordinary vision was all but lost in the shadow of *mono no aware*” (p. 419). Thus, in Harper's vision, Murasaki Shikibu penned a psychological novel that was nevertheless not appreciated as such for close to eight hundred years. It was only with Norinaga and his *Genji monogatari Tama no ogushi* that Murasaki's original intentions were at last recognized, and even then only partially so, due to the unfortunate attention accorded in the text to *mono no aware* as a “convenient [organizational] rubric” (p. 419).

sensation and affect. As we will see, the grammatical and prosodic rules by which Norinaga abides are not merely linguistic in their purview; and they most certainly are not social or historical in their perceived origin.²² Fujihira Haruo has suggested that at the center of Norinaga's worldview lies a "transcendent cosmic force beyond the scope of humans" (人間をこえた超越的宇宙的な力)²³ that adheres to an absolute order preordained by the kami. While knowing *mono no aware* may not enable people to get any closer to the kami, it can facilitate greater understanding of this cosmic order—of how things work not only in and through language, but in the world as such.

KNOWING *MONO NO AWARE*, KNOWING THE COSMOS

Norinaga's epistemology is based on a kind of empirical positivism wherein all things can be known through firsthand experience, and this is an epistemology that persists from his earlier poetic treatises to his later works on the ancient Way. A pointed criticism of Neo-Confucianism, Norinaga holds that in contrast to the arbitrary principles of yin and yang that cannot be independently confirmed, everything exists exactly as it appears. In *Kuzubana*,²⁴ for instance, Norinaga describes a world where perception is preeminent and sensation forms the basis of all knowledge:

²² Perhaps needless to say, this differs significantly from Ogyū Sorai, who argued in his *Benmei* 弁明 (1717), for instance, that the ancient Confucian kings created rites and music to pacify the people by transforming (化) them, something punishment and forceful regulation could not accomplish (NST 39, p. 219).

²³ Fujihira, *Fujihira Haruo chosakushū* 4, p. 124.

²⁴ *Kuzubana* was written in response to Ichikawa Kakumei's 市川鶴鳴 (1740-1795) *Maga no hire* まがのひれ, itself a critique of an earlier version of *Naobi no mitama* 直毘靈 known as *Michi to iu mono no ron* 道テフ物ノ論.

When I say, “as seen by the eye,” I mean that such things as the moon, the sun, fire, and water can be seen by the eye and it is from there that we can speak of them. Even beyond this, with things we cannot see with the eye, we hear in the ears those things that possess voice, and smell with the nose those things that possess scent. Again, with things such as the wind that stir neither our eyes nor ears nor noses, we know them because they stir our bodies. Beyond this, regardless of what it is, we know of all things from, and through, the place where they move us. With things such as the heart (*kokoro*), even if nothing external is moved, we come to know of them through our feelings. The myriad kami are like this too. The kami of the age of the kami may not be visible to us today, but they could be seen by those of that age. And among them, there are some like the Great Kami Amaterasu [the Sun] that can still be seen in the present. Furthermore, there are kami who could not be seen in the age of the kami and still cannot be seen today. But even among these [kami], each have their [own divine sphere of] action; and as people are moved by them, so too can they be known.

目に見えたるまゝにてといへるは、月日火水などは、目に見ゆる物なる故に、その一端につきていへる也、此外も、目には見えぬ共、声ある物は耳に聞え、香ある物は鼻に嗅がれ、又目にも耳にも鼻にも触れざれ共、風などは身にふれてこれをする、その外何にてもみな、触るところ有て知る事也、又心などと云物は、他へは触れざれども、思念といふ事有てこれをする、諸の神も同じことにて、神代の神は、今こそ目に見え給はね、その代には目に見えたる物也、其中に天照大御神などは、今も諸人の目に見え給ふ、又今も神代も目に見えぬ神もあれ共、それもおのおのその所為ありて、人に触る故に、それと知事也、²⁵

Using logic very similar to that found in esoteric Buddhist theories of non-duality, Norinaga suggests that people inhabit the world from within their bodies and it is thus through sensation that everything that is can be recognized and known. Even the invisible kami exist, not figuratively or on another plane, but in actuality; and they can accordingly be felt and known through their actions. Although Norinaga is not discussing *mono no*

²⁵ MNZ 8, p. 160.

aware here, the same language we see in his earlier poetic texts is at work. Knowledge is acquired by means of being moved by external things.²⁶

According to Norinaga, *aware* originally comes from the breath, a sigh expressing one's deepest feelings, similar to exclamations such as “ah!” or “oh!”²⁷ While acknowledging that the meaning and usages of *aware* shifted over time—for instance, to indicate feelings of sadness over other emotions—Norinaga adheres to this earlier notion of *aware* as being moved to breath and verbal intonation through coming into contact with the natural world. Indeed, Norinaga holds that it is only through “being moved by all things that exist in this world, and by knowing their power and essence” (すべて世中にありとある事にふれて。其おもむき心ばへをわきまへしりて)²⁸ that one can know *mono no aware*.

²⁶ The cosmic function of poetry is also visible in a short essay on calendrics, *Shinrekikō* 真暦考 (1782), that Norinaga wrote a year after *Kuzubana*. Here, Norinaga argues against the Chinese lunisolar calendar in use in Tokugawa Japan as arbitrary and inaccurate, lauding a more natural experience of time according to sensory perceptions that he says existed in ancient times. The seasons change according to the will of the kami, Norinaga states, and people of old knew of these changes based on sensations of coldness and warmth, observing the activities of animals and the appearance of plants, and so forth (MNZ 8, p. 205). Norinaga points to the poetry (*uta*) of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* as not only evidence for this worldview but also as constituting it. The ancients knew a year was beginning because warblers began to sing (p. 203); but it was because poetry had in turn consecrated the warbler as a harbinger of the new year (spring) that this could be known. This is, of course, reminiscent of Fujiwara no Shunzei's pronouncements in the opening section of the preface to the *Korai fūteishō* on the “original heart,” or *moto no kokoro*, where he intones that without poetry, people would not know the color or scent of such things as the cherry blossoms in spring or the crimson leaves in autumn. Incidentally, Ueda Akinari explicitly criticized *Shinrekikō* in his *Kamiyo katari* 神代かたり (See UAZ 1, p. 163.)

²⁷ MNZ 2, p. 101. Fujitani Nariakira offers a similar explanation of *aware* in his *Kazashishō* かざし抄 (1767), explaining that it is “the spirit that is moved by events before one's eyes, and which comes forth from this external emotion” (ただ今目の前にある事に触れて、外の感情を引出したる心なり) (FNZ J, p. 33). According to Nariakira, the word was generally placed at the end of a line to express emotion in antiquity (上古), but started to be placed at the beginning of lines from the medieval period (中古).

²⁸ MNZ 2, p. 106.

Taking the iconic opening lines of the *Kokinshū* Kana preface as a point of departure, Norinaga states that every living creature possesses a heart that is capable, upon coming into contact with things, of feeling; and in turn every living thing is capable of producing songs expressing that feeling. Amending Ki no Tsurayuki's wording in the Kana preface, Norinaga goes on to claim that the cries of the bush warbler, of the quail, the deer, the chirping of insects are all examples of *aware* being expressed. Norinaga goes so far as to argue that Tsurayuki's well known claim that waka poems take "the human heart as their seed" is referring not to the human heart per se, but more specifically to the "heart that knows *mono no aware*" alone (此こころろといふがすなはち物のあはれをしる心也).²⁹

But what does this actually mean? *Mono no aware*, Norinaga is careful to explain, is a universal, cosmic quality. Yet at the same time, knowledge of this universal quality is not evenly distributed. For instance, according to Norinaga, humans have the capacity to feel *aware* most deeply:

There is a difference in the depth with which living things feel *aware*. When an animal feels it, it is shallow. Compared to a person, it is as if there is no welling up of emotion at all.

事の心をわきまへしるに。浅深のたがひ有て。禽獣は。浅ければ。人にくらぶるときは。物のわきまへなきがごとし。³⁰

This should not, however, be mistaken as an indication of social parity across people, nor as an implication that all humans know *mono no aware* in actuality. Even if possessing

²⁹ MNZ 2, p. 99.

³⁰ MNZ 2, p. 100.

the potential to feel *aware* more forcefully than birds and beasts, there still exists a sharp disparity between those people who fulfill that potential and those who do not. Norinaga continues:

Even amongst people, [appreciation of *aware*] may be shallow or deep. When compared to someone who knows *mono no aware* deeply, one who knows it shallowly appears not to know it at all. The difference is so great that there are many people of whom we would say do not know *mono no aware*.

その人の中にも浅深有て。ふかく物のあはれをしる人にくらぶるときは。むげに物のあはれしらぬやうに思はるる人も有て。大に異なる故に。常には物のあはれしらぬといふ人もおほき也。³¹

This qualitative difference in the appreciation of *mono no aware* among humans is not insignificant, for *aware*, Norinaga contends, is not only a matter of sensations and percepts but also a source for the cognition of feelings:

Thus *mono no aware* is the happy feeling, the sad feeling, that one feels when one is moved by something. If you do not know the heart/content of something, there is nothing happy nor sad. In your heart, you do not feel at all. *Songs will not emerge*.

されば事にふれてそのうれしくかなしき事の心をわきまへしるを。物のあはれをしるといふ也。その事の心をしらぬときは。うれしき事もなくかなしき事もなければ。心に思ふ事なし。思ふ事なくては。歌はいでこぬ也。³²

³¹ MNZ 2, p. 100.

³² MNZ 2, p. 100. Emphasis added.

Without an awareness of phenomena and their attendant emotions, one will not feel and in turn will not produce poetry. As Norinaga explicitly states, “All waka derives from knowing *mono no aware*” (スベテ和歌ハ、物ノアハレヲ知ルヨリ出ル事也).³³

This is, of course, a thoroughly un-modern understanding of emotion and its relation to the self; and, indeed, it is deeply indebted to classical and medieval Japanese poetics, in which Norinaga was very well-versed and which influenced him greatly. In the medieval Japanese poetic concept of *hon'i honjō* 本意本情, for instance, waka poems are seen as the expression of objectified, universalized emotions. Under this definition, a mere outflowing of random sentiment does not qualify as a poem, even if it is composed as poetry and set to the proper poetic meter. For poetry to be poetry, it has to capture an object's true meaning (*hon'i*), as reflected onto the poet's true emotions (*honjō*). As Nakamura Yukihiro explains, if one were to see a beautiful flower, one could not simply express the unfiltered or spontaneous emotions one had at the time and expect to produce poetry. Rather, it would be necessary to first internalize the external object (in this case, the flower) and confirm against the existing poetic oeuvre that one correctly understood the beauty of this object, this flower.³⁴ Needless to say, this is something that can only be accomplished through the long study and eventual mastery of poetic practice and an adherence to strict conceptions of decorousness and normalized elegance. Because waka is ostensibly about universal expression, one must ensure that the poem produced is “universal” in its appeal. “Genuine emotion” in *mono no aware* works similarly for

³³ MNZ 4, p. 585.

³⁴ Nakamura, *Nakamura Yukihiro chojutsushū*, vol. 2, pp. 197-198.

Norinaga: waka acts as the streamlining device that makes the singularly and irregularly born affective forces and emotions “universally graspable.”

Waka is, in other words, a medium through which the human heart can come to know the unique emotional resonance of a particular thing or creature in the world. Furthermore, what makes waka an effective means for knowing *aware* is its character as a social medium. Through waka, *aware* is not only known, or cognized, but re-cognized by others; and it is only in this recognition that *aware* attains its fullest expression (for all parties involved).

Norinaga elaborates on this mediating function of poetry in his 1763 poetic treatise, *Isonokami sasamegoto*, theorizing that the first, or upper, two lines of a waka poem (*kami no ku*) represent the emotions felt in the heart (おもふ心), whereas the remaining, or lower, three lines (*shimo no ku*) merely provide verbal patterning (詞の文^{アヤ}) devoid of emotion. Norinaga gives an example from the thirteenth-century *Shinkokinshū* poetry anthology, taking the first poem from the first book on the topic of love:

<i>Yoso ni nomi</i>	Must I end my days
<i>Mite ya yami namu</i>	Gazing upon you only from afar—
<i>Kazuraki ya</i>	White clouds
<i>Takama no yama no</i>	Around the peak of Mt. Takama
<i>Mine no shirakumo</i>	In the mountains of Kazuraki ³⁵

³⁵ SKKS 11:990; quoted in MNZ 2, p. 113. The poem also appears in the *Wakan rōieshū* 和漢朗詠集 (c. 1013) under the topic “clouds.”

Thee upper two lines describe the clarity (and, indeed, the possibility) of vision that comes only with distance, and thus according to Norinaga contain the key emotional elements of the poem. They alone, in other words, convey the intention of the poet, what the poet wants to say. Norinaga holds that, in contrast, the bottom three lines, detailing the white clouds dispersing around the peak of Mount Takama in the Kazuraki mountains, are “useless” (無用) words that merely determine the poem’s tone and meter (*shirabe* 調).³⁶

This theory of the poem is not a denigration of the bottom half of the poem as essentially empty or disposable. Rather, Norinaga explicitly asserts the contrary: it is only due to the “patterning of these [latter] useless words” (無用の詞のあや) that the *aware* of the first two lines can be conveyed.³⁷ While Norinaga does not elaborate further on this poem, I take this to mean a few different things. First, in evoking wisps of white clouds off a faraway peak, the poet creates imagery that anyone can relate to—the listener or reader doesn’t need to know *who* is being yearned after in the first two lines to fully understand the unattainable mystery and fleetingness that she or he embodies: the clouds can only be seen from afar (once on the peak, one would see only clouds), and even there, they are ephemeral, being broken apart by the peak. Second, anyone versed in the waka poetry tradition would recognize Mt. Takama and the Kazuraki mountains. The mountains are in present-day Nara prefecture, but frequently appear in classic verse (and later in *noh* plays and ghost stories) as symbolizing a mystical other-worldliness. Lastly,

³⁶ MNZ 2, p. 113.

³⁷ MNZ 2, p. 113.

readers versed in classical Japanese would recognize the genitive use of “*ya*” in “*Kazuraki ya Takama no yama*” in the third and fourth lines, making Kazuraki modify “*Takama no yama/Mt. Takama*” more emotively than the genitive particle “*no*” that would typically be used.

Crucially, the effective evocation of *aware* in someone else is as important for the person initially moved to *aware* to fully feel *aware* as it is for the person to whom he or she seeks to convey it. Because the experience of *aware* is essentially empathic—indicating what is in effect a shared knowledge of the cosmos—(an ostensibly universal, cosmic) form becomes for Norinaga the factor that ultimately determines whether one can be moved to deep feeling. Norinaga holds that those who cannot understand waka properly—an ability that he believed grew out of a mastery of classical Japanese grammar, prosody, and phonology—are incapable of feeling *aware* to any significant degree.

The purpose of language here is neither one of romantic self-expression nor one of rational communication. Rather, of significance are the sounds, patterns, sensations, and emotional resonances that language organizes into intelligible forms, and which, in turn, harmonize individuals into the larger cosmic order. In many ways Norinaga’s amendment of Ki no Tsurayuki’s song-producing “human heart,” mentioned above, is not so far-fetched, for he shares similar poetic goals with the Heian courtier poet (not in the least coincidentally). In discussing the *Kokinshū* Kana preface, Thomas LaMarre notes that Tsurayuki’s emphasis is not on emotion as an expression of interiority, but rather on

the “mechanics of vocalization, gesticulation, and rhythm.”³⁸ As LaMarre explains, for Tsurayuki, nature is replete with songs, patterns, beats, and forms that emerge prior to humans, and with which humans engage and follow, themselves becoming part of that nature:

Tsurayuki’s poetics constitutes a kind of normative order in which the expression of human feelings are directed and delimited, not liberated. Of course, the same might be said of any form of expression: it gives form. But Tsurayuki’s poetics are particularly adamant on this point: emotive forces are to be patterned in accordance with celestial rhythms or terrestrial forms; and when he uses song to engage the realm of sensation, he does not aim to liberate emotion from forms. On the contrary, his goal is to make sensation coincide with the cosmos in such a way that perception becomes mediator and so serves to channel emotive forces into their proper circuits.³⁹

LaMarre may as well be speaking of Norinaga’s poetics in the above passage. Although the manner in which poetic “form-giving” was understood differs from Tsurayuki to Norinaga—Norinaga places far greater emphasis on grammar and prosody—the stress placed on patterning emotive forces according to “celestial rhythms or terrestrial forms” is very much the same. In the remaining pages of this chapter, I discuss in detail how Norinaga perceived form, looking particularly at how he cast *teniwoha* as a patterning mechanism on the cosmic level.

³⁸ LaMarre, *Uncovering Heian Japan*, p. 146.

³⁹ LaMarre, *Uncovering Heian Japan*, p. 165.

MEDIATING FORMS

Some kind of understanding of form, or shape, has played an important role in waka poetics since the Heian period; and it is an idea that shows up repeatedly in Norinaga's texts as well, albeit in a decidedly different manner. The interdependent relationship between the form of a poem, typically represented by the words (*kotoba*) that comprise it, and its content, intention, or "heart" (*kokoro*) can be considered one of the predominant themes of waka poetry reaching back across a millennium. In the *Kokinshū* Kana preface, as we have seen, Ki no Tsurayuki holds that words emerge from the heart, welling up organically as the heart is moved by emotion. Similarly, Fujiwara no Teika emphasizes the supremacy of meaning/heart in the following description of his father Shunzei's poetics, recorded in Teika's *Maigetsushō* 毎月抄 (1219):

Meaning (*kokoro*) and words (*kotoba*) should be like the left and right wings of a bird. However, if meaning and words cannot be combined, needless to say, rather than diminish the meaning, it is better to countenance clumsy words (*kotoba no tsutanaki*).

心詞の二は、鳥の左右の翅のごとくなるべきにこそとぞ思給侍ける。
但、心詞の二をともしにかねたらむは、いふに及ばず、心のかけたら
んよりは、詞のつたなきにこそ侍らめ。⁴⁰

While both words and meaning are important, Teika implies, when push comes to shove, meaning is the primary determinant of a poem's quality. Words are secondary, for at its essence poetry is not about form so much as the human emotion that poets seek to invoke and evoke.

⁴⁰ Fujiwara no Teika, *Maigetsushō*, pp. 176-77.

According to many literary historians, this longstanding poetic tradition prioritizing meaning and intention over words and structure was inverted in the early modern period, part and parcel of the growing esteem for form within intellectual circles.⁴¹ Typically associated with Confucian moralists who linked outward appearance, proper etiquette, and performance with heaven and destiny,⁴² modern scholars have also argued that formalistic attempts to enact a kind of social normativity can be applied to kokugaku scholars like Norinaga as well.⁴³ In *Isonokami sasamegoto*, Norinaga resituates the classic hierarchy of *kokoro* (heart/mind) over *kotoba* (diction/form). Words and form,

⁴¹ The significance of form in Tokugawa society has been widely recognized by intellectual historians and linked with everything from the four-tiered social hierarchical system to the military origins of the shogunate to an emergent, at times risqué, “culture of play.” William R. Lindsey has gone so far as to argue that the centrality of ritual and form in Tokugawa Japan was so predominant that it may be characterized as a “unitized society,” a society that “stresses the social reality of each unit and its membership to such a high degree that identity outside of recognized units is considered anomic” (Lindsey, *Fertility and Pleasure*, p. 19). In discussing Tokugawa period “form,” broadly writ, Herman Ooms has associated “form” with “norm,” arguing that under the shogunate’s new order, “Manner often overwhelmed matter; content lost substance and disappeared...leaving room only for form” (Ooms, “Forms and Norms in Edo Art and Society,” p. 34). Ooms references the well-known system of alternate attendance (*sankin kōtai*) as well as regulations surrounding culinary and sartorial practices as examples of the newfound emphasis on “norm, form, and formality” that stratified early modern Japanese society in hitherto unprecedented degrees.

⁴² For example, Yamaga Sokō 山鹿素行 (1622-1685) held that, “All things have their natural form; those who are humble display a humble form, those who are highborn display a highborn form” (物皆自然ノスガタアリ、イヤシキニハイヤシキスガタヲ屋敷スガタヲ表シ、貴キニハ貴キ形ヲアラハス) (NST 32, p. 41). That is, form provided the structure upon which a contingent meaning could be interpreted and comprehended. Thus, Sokō claimed, in order to understand the heart (*kokoro* 心) some kind of outside mediating form (*katachi* 形) was required. Without such an aiding apparatus, any inquiry would inevitably lead to failure: “To use the heart to seek the heart would result in my inquiring after my heart for eternity, in the end never knowing anything” (心を以て心を求むるは、いつまでも我が心をたずぬるゆえに、ついに不可知) (Quoted in Kojima, “Kinsei Nihon shisō-shi ni okeru ‘kokoro’ to ‘katachi,’” p. 102). Similar pronouncements on the importance of form and rites can be found in writings by other Tokugawa period intellectual heavyweights like Yamazaki Ansai, Ogyū Sorai, and Ishida Baigan 石田梅巖 (1685-1744), to name a few. See NST 29, NST 36, and the *Ishida Baigan zenshū*.

⁴³ See, notably, Flueckiger, *Imagining Harmony*. Also see Kojima, “Kinsei Nihon shisō-shi ni okeru ‘kokoro’ to ‘katachi.’”

Norinaga argues, should not be considered as superficial ornaments, for they are themselves prerequisite for emotional content:

“Flowers” merely indicate ornamenting words on their own in a beautiful manner. “Fruit” indicates something that holds a likeness to the true form of the *kokoro*. Thus while it is unfortunate for either to be diminished, one must sometimes be put first. People think that it is obvious that flowers lacking fruit would be bad for the world and say to put fruit first; but in poetry, flowers should be put first as a matter of technique. It is the same as what I said above about the state of *kokoro* and words (*kotoba*). If we put this in terms of plants, without the growth of flowers, there is nothing from which the fruit can form. Even if one wants to put the fruit first, the flowers must first grow.

花とはただ詞をのみはなやかにかざるをいひ。実とは心のまことしき方をいふめり。さればいつかたも缺てはあしかりねべき事なる中に。なをいづれをさきとすべきぞといふに。実のなくて花のみならんは。よにわろきことなれば。実をむねとせよといはむは。人ごとにげにとおもふへけれど。猶歌は花をなん先とすべきわざなりける。大かた上にいへる心と詞との心ばへに同じかるべし。これを木草のうへにたとへていはば。まづ花さかで実のなることはなき物なれば。実をえうするにつきても。まづ花をこそさかすべきものなりけれ。

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This passage, which has been cited by historian Kojima Yasunori as representative of the early modern shift toward form, places an unmistakable emphasis on words and form. But just as importantly, it is grammar and a grammatically informed affectivity that Norinaga perceives as the determining factor of this form, something scholars have overlooked. In his reading of this passage, Kojima equates shape with words and asserts that they *together* create a binary relationship with *kokoro*. Thus Kojima describes a “directional progression from the ‘figure’ (*sugata*) or ‘shape’ (*katachi*) of ‘words’ (*kotoba*) to ‘*kokoro*’

⁴⁴ MNZ 2, p. 181. In his *Maigetsushō*, Teika uses the analogy of fruit and flowers in the exactly opposite fashion (Fujiwara no Teika, *Maigetsushō*, p. 176).

that absolutely does not work in the inverse”⁴⁵ but fails to recognize that words do not possess *sugata*⁴⁶ in and of themselves.

Norinaga uses the term *sugata* to express the general feel of a poem, including its aural quality, emotionality, and structure. In *Kotoba no tama no o*, for example, Norinaga explains that people have recently ceased abiding by the strictures pertaining to the prepositional particles “*zo, no, ya, nani,*” instead matching correlative predicates that belong elsewhere haphazardly to these four terms. This, he says,

differs from the natural ordering and because of this the words are not arranged. The *sugata* of the poem will sound vulgar. The closer the text is to recent times, the more mistakes there are.

そはおのづからの定まりに違へる事なる故に。言葉ととのはず。一首のすがたいやく聞ゆる物也。文章には近代ことに此あやまりおほし。⁴⁷

Sugata here is explicitly tied to the sounds of a poem, the aural tones that are perceived by the ear. Significantly, Norinaga is suggesting that grammar forms a causal relationship with these sounds. The *sugata* of a song is determined by the proper sequencing and mutual correspondence and harmony of words and *teniwoha* as much as by intonation and timbre. This correct ordering not only determines whether a song is poorly or well

⁴⁵ Kojima, “Kinsei Nihon shisō-shi ni okeru ‘kokoro’ to ‘katachi,’” p. 123.

⁴⁶ “*Sugata*” as a poetic term is first seen in Fujiwara no Kintō’s (966-1041) *Shinsen zuinō* and refers to the “aural flow” of a poem. It then came to be used to describe the style in which a poem was written, before evolving into the sense that Fujiwara no Shunzei developed in the *Korai fūteishō*, reflecting a relationship between *kokoro* and *kotoba* (Meli, “‘Aware’ as a Critical Term in Classical Japanese Poetics,” p. 81).

⁴⁷ MNZ 5, p. 20.

executed. An exceptionally stringent ‘guardian at the (lyrical) gate,’ grammar also governs what can rightly be considered a song.⁴⁸ That is, a poem has to exist *a priori* as a particular, idealized grammatical form in order to qualify as poetry. Norinaga is propagating the idea that words and intention/feeling are superseded by a third, more significant, somatically grasped and grammatically informed category.

The hierarchical relation between form and content can be seen clearly in Norinaga’s commentary on Fujiwara Korenari’s *Kokka hachiron sekihi saihyō*. Here, Norinaga again refers explicitly to *sugata*: “*Sugata* is difficult to fake, but to fake content/meaning (*kokoro*) is easy” (姿ハ似セガタク意ハ似セ易シ).⁴⁹ The figure, or form, of a text, Norinaga suggests, is inherently less malleable and accordingly far more arduous to reproduce than a mere mimicry of semantic content or emotion. It is, in turn, more reliable, more uniform, more authentic, more universal—or in other words, more effective as a vehicle for *mono no aware*. Form (which includes, of course, aural form) adeptly facilitates emotional identification and understanding where more specific content-matter cannot.

In discussing the same line from Norinaga to Korenari in his bestselling biography *Motoori Norinaga* (1977),⁵⁰ Kobayashi Hideo summarizes the importance of form thus:

⁴⁸ MNZ 2, p. 52.

⁴⁹ MNZ 2, pp. 512-13.

⁵⁰ In the epilogue to “*Motoori Norinaga mondai*” *to wa nanika* 「本居宣長問題」とは何か (What is the “Motoori Norinaga problem?”), Koyasu Nobukuni recounts how, as a young scholar in the late 1970s, he received Kobayashi’s book from the renowned author himself. The book, Koyasu recalls, was discomfiting in that Kobayashi relied not on objective facts to inform his writing, but rather on his supposed ability to enter into Norinaga’s psyche. Koyasu quotes Kobayashi’s self-acknowledged method: “I had only one method. To, as much as possible, enter

If a certain song is beautiful, does this not mean that the form (*sugata*) of the song is experienced as beautiful? Now, it is the words that render a certain form to be clearly perceived as beautiful. And though words are not substance (*jittai*), neither are they merely symbols (*fuchō*). The form that words create is not a form that the physical eye can see, but it is without a doubt an image that the mind (*kokoro*) can clearly reflect.

ある歌が麗しいとは、歌の姿が麗しいと感ずる事ではないか。そこでは、麗しいとはっきり感知出来る姿を、言葉が作り上げている。それなら、言葉は実体でないが、単なる符牒とも言えまい。言葉が作り上げる姿とは、肉眼に見える姿ではないが、心にはまざまざ映ずる像には違いない。⁵¹

Kobayashi does not reference the ostensible ease with which emotion or content might be faked, focusing instead on the prioritization of form over emotion implied in Norinaga's statement. Similar to the analogy between flowers and fruit, Kobayashi gives an example in which beauty (emotional content) is produced through the figure of words. For Kobayashi, the figure/form that is referenced is a metaphorical one, one that can be seen “in the mind's eye” but not in any external or physical fashion.

Yet, there is another, not necessarily mutually exclusive, way in which Norinaga's passages may be read. For it is the ordering of words into a certain form—by means of grammar—that creates both the physical (seen graphically on the page and/or heard in its

into this person's [Norinaga's] interior (内部) and, once in, not come out. From within this person's ideas (発想), to adhere to the ideas, to adhere scrupulously in order to rectify his words—that is what I have done” (p. 207). Koyasu notes that whereas Kobayashi's monograph had already been reprinted thirteen times within six months of its initial publication date (1977), his own book released the same year, *Norinaga to Atsutane no sekai* 宣長と篤胤の世界 (The world of Norinaga and Atsutane), has never been reprinted once in the twenty-three years since. This is far from an indictment on the state of early modern intellectual historiography in Japan today; however, it demonstrates well the degree to which Norinaga's claims of Japanese exceptionalism have been internalized.

⁵¹ Kobayashi, *Motoori Norinaga*, vol. 1, p. 317.

voicing) and mental (understood in the mind) fabric from which emotion and content can emerge. It is not just the “form” that is important, but also the “being-formed.” Bearing this in mind, one can argue that both Kojima and Kobayashi are guilty of oversimplifying Norinaga. Focusing on the thesis that words/*kotoba* precedes emotion/*kokoro*, they gloss over Norinaga’s most original arguments regarding the nature of language itself. For Norinaga, figure and form are constituted by the grammatical structuring of a song—that is, by its correct usage of *teniwoha*—as well as the aural articulation of that form. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that, “No matter how beautiful one might perceive a song, if there is even one place where the *teniha* do not correspond, it cannot be called a song” (イカニ美シキ歌ニテモ、一ツモテニハノカナハヌ所アレハ、歌ニアラスト云ヘキナリ).⁵² One might perceive a “song” to be beautiful, but without proper *teniwoha* usage, it cannot be considered a song. Because it is itself part of the cosmic order, grammar is fundamental to aesthetic experience and prerequisite to sensations of poetic beauty, depth, and sentiment.⁵³

⁵² MNZ 2, p. 52.

⁵³ One of Norinaga’s most prominent disciples in the Suzunoya, Suzuki Akira 鈴木胤 (1764-1837), made the relationship between grammar and emotion even more explicit, calling *teniwoha* the “voice of the heart” (心の声). Although the association between *teniwoha* and the “voice of the heart” is something more or less unique to Akira (in the twentieth century Tokieda Motoki borrowed the term and incorporated it into his Language Process Theory), the phrase itself has a far longer history. Yamaguchi Akiho has suggested that Akira borrowed it from the Han dynasty scholar Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE), who in his *Yangzi fayan* 揚子法言 asserted that, “words are the voice of the heart, writing is the picture of the heart” (言心声也書心画也). Zhao Jing, however, has challenged this view, arguing that Akira’s purported awareness of Yang Xiong cannot be confirmed (Zhao, “‘Kokoro no koe’ shōron,” p. 120). A more certain source is the Neo-Confucian scholar Kaibara Ekken 貝原益軒 (1630-1714), who indirectly referenced Yang Xiong in his *Yamato zokkun* 大和俗訓 (1741): “People of the past say that words are the voice of the heart. The substance of people’s hearts, through words, emerge into the outside world” (言は心の声なりと、古人いへり。人の心の内にあること、言によりて外にいづ) (Cited in Zhao, “‘Kokoro no koe’ shōron,” p. 121). A catalogue of Akira’s library reveals that Akira at least

“ONLY UTTERANCES WITH PATTERNING”

Norinaga articulates the causality between grammar and affect explicitly when he claims that it is *teniwoha* that indicates feelings. Let us take Norinaga’s example of Izanami and Izanagi’s verbal exchange as they circle around the heavenly pillar in the beginning of the *Kojiki*.⁵⁴ According to the commentorial tradition of the *Kokinshū* Kana preface, Izanagi’s dialogue with his sister Izanami was considered the first “song.” As the two sibling deities circle, Izanagi calls out: “Ahh, what a beautiful young girl (*ana ni yashi, e otome o* 美哉好少女を).”⁵⁵ In analyzing this line, Norinaga claims that “*ana*,” an exclamatory particle, expresses the surprise the kami felt at first discovering sexual difference. Thus, he continues, this exclamatory *teniwoha* expresses the significance of the entire exchange.⁵⁶ Norinaga gives another example slightly later in the same text,

owned *Yamato zokkun*, and it can be assumed that he was likely familiar with its contents as well. In either case, it is worth noting that the phrase comes from a Sinological context, as Akira himself was well aware.

⁵⁴ The *Kojiki*, one of the oldest extant Yamato texts, includes a section in which the two kami Izanami and Izanagi circle around a “heavenly pillar” in order to give birth to the myriad lands that now constitute the world. The myth holds that the first landform they successfully created was the island of Onōgōrō (“self-curdling” island), thought to be in Japan’s Inland Sea. The island is mentioned in the beginning of the *Kojiki* and again in a song by the Emperor Nintoku (Philippi, ed. *Kojiki*, pp. 49-50, 540).

⁵⁵ Tsukamoto, ed. *Kojiki, norito, fudoki*, p. 11. In the original phonographs, the passage reads 阿那邇夜志愛哉登賣哉.

⁵⁶ MNZ 2, p. 91. Suzuki Akira grouped exclamations and interrogatives such as “*aya*, *ana*, and *anaya*” and “*ya* and *yayo*” together as “liberated *teniwoha*” (独タルテニヲハ), which he distinguished from other kinds of *teniwoha* as well as from all other language. Glossing them as “mourning voices,” “laughing voices,” and “calling voices,” Akira believed that these “materialized in the voice of the human heart, and are the true form of *teniwoha*” (人ノ心ノ声ニアラワルルニテ。テニヲハノ本体ナリ) (Suzuki, *Gengyo shishuron*, pp. 342-343). Slightly later in the same text, Akira writes that, “The beginnings of *teniwoha* are when a person’s heart moves and voice emerges. [...] With this voice, the myriad things are distinguished and given

comparing a phrase with *aware* to a similar phrase without. According to Norinaga, if one simply says, “It is sad, it is sad” (*kanashi kanashi* かなしかなし), no emotion will be evoked in the speaker, listener, or reader. However, if *teniwoha* are added to a sentence with similar semantic content—thus getting something like, “Ah, how sad it really is, oh, oh” (*ara kanashi ya nōnō* あらかなしやのふのふ)—the words will naturally possess patterning (*aya*) and the voice will resemble song.⁵⁷ As Norinaga writes,

Only those utterances that have patterning can be called song; everything outside of this is not song but merely words. [...] To have patterning is to have words that are well arranged and in order and not in disarray.

あや有てうたはるるを歌といふ。其外は歌にあらずただの詞也。
[...] あやあるとは。詞のよくととのひそろひてみだれぬ事也。⁵⁸

Patterning is responsible for the creation of songs, and grammar is responsible for the creation of patterning.

The significance of patterning, prosody, and pronunciation is perhaps nowhere more evident than in *Kanji san'on kō* 漢字三音考 (1785), home to some of the most

names; this is the beginning of the words of the body” (人ノ心ノ動ケルサマ音聲ニアラワルルハ、テニヲハノハジメ也。[...] カクテ其音声ヲ以テ万ノ物事ニ名目ヲツケテシルシ別ウ、コレ体ノ詞ノハジメナリ) (p. 347).

⁵⁷ MNZ 2, p. 110.

⁵⁸ MNZ 2, p. 88. The poetic idea of patterning or prosody (Ch. *wen*; J. *aya*) has a long history in Chinese belletristic writing. The oldest extant etymological dictionary of Chinese terms, the *Shuo wen jie zi* 說文解字 (c. 100), traces “*wen*” to the *Yijing*, particularly to the Yellow River Diagram and the Luo River Writing. Modern scholars argue, however, that it wasn’t until the Han period that *wen* came to refer to written composition; before then it was broadly used as a ritualistic term whose precise significance is now lost. For more on *wen*, see Falkenhausen, “The Concept of Wen in the Ancient Chinese Ancestral Cult,” and Cai, “Wen and the Construction of a Critical System in ‘Wenxin Dialong’.”

chauvinistic of Norinaga's language theories. Although the title of the treatise refers to the three strata of Chinese pronunciations imported to the Japanese archipelago over the course of a millennium (*go'on* 呉音, *kan'on* 漢音, and *tō'on* 唐音⁵⁹), the work also compares at some length the language of the "imperial country," the language of other lands, and natural language, stressing the merits and naturalness of the imperial language and the flaws of all other tongues. To this end, Norinaga effectively rejects all syllables that do not follow the Japanese pattern of a consonant followed by the phonemes /a, i, u, e, o/, claiming that anything falling outside of these specific sound patterns is inherently incorrect.⁶⁰ Those speaking foreign languages might make noises just as birds, beasts, and inanimate objects do, he acknowledges, but they are not capable, as speakers of the imperial tongue are, of producing the fifty correct sounds unique to (human) *language*:

The drawn out sounds, twisted sounds, and plugged up sounds of foreign countries, the sound *un*, the semi-voiced sounds (*handaku-on*) of the *ha* row, these are all incorrect sounds and are not the correct sounds of people. They fall within the category of the voices of the myriad birds and beasts.

外国ノ引音曲ル音^{ツマル}急促音^ンノ音^ハノ行ノ半濁音等ハ。皆是不正ノ音ニシテ。人ノ正音ニ非ズ。鳥獸万物ノ声ノ類セル者也。⁶¹

⁵⁹ The *go'on* strata are thought to reflect pronunciations of the Six Dynasties period (317-589), while the newer *kan'on* reflects Tang Dynasty (618-907) pronunciations. The *tō'on* readings, based off of Song Dynasty (960-1279) readings (its name notwithstanding), entered Japan after the Kamakura period, and thus are the newest of the three. In *Mojigoe no kanazukai* 字音仮名用格 (1775), Norinaga chooses only to treat *go'on* and *kan'on*, explaining that *tō'on* has nothing to do with the transmission of ancient texts (MNZ 5, p. 327).

⁶⁰ MNZ 5, pp. 382-84.

⁶¹ MNZ 5, p. 386.

Put in modern linguistic terms, Norinaga is claiming that the long tones (引音), palatized sounds (曲ル音), geminated consonants (急^{ツマル}促音), the moraic nasal (ㇿノ音), and /p-/ sounds (ハの行ノ半濁音) are not found in the Japanese language as such.⁶² Norinaga goes on to list various onomatopoeic animal cries, claiming after each example that they are reminiscent of foreign speech patterns. Thus, he concludes, “it is clear that the sounds of the imperial country are correct and the sounds of foreign countries are incorrect” (コレ皇国ノ音ハ正シク。外国ノ音ハ正シカラザル明徴也).⁶³

In what became an extended literary debate on phonology known as the *Hi no kami ronsō* 日の神論争 (1780s), Ueda Akinari would criticize Norinaga on these points, dismissing the latter’s position as subjective and absurd. It was ludicrous, Akiranari said, to call the sounds of animals, or nature, or of foreign languages, incorrect. For example, he dubiously asked:

If the myriad countries all have this long tone and our august country alone does not, how can we say that they are incorrect? Saying that only the past is correct, or that long sounds are incorrect, these are all just in the mind of one old man; if every country has sounds/vocal tones that emerge naturally, there is no theory there.

萬國皆音の長きを御國のみひとへなるが反て正しからすといはむにはいかが、元來ひとへなるが正しきといふも、音の長きが不正とい

⁶² Even if the equation of a pre-Nara Japanese language with Japanese as a whole is accepted, Norinaga was wrong on at least one count: linguists generally agree that the semi-voiced /p-/ was found in ancient Japanese. Over time, it was largely replaced by the voiceless bilabial fricative [ɸ], which in turn had been delabialized and replaced by an /h-/ sound by Norinaga’s time. (See Nakada, *Nihon no kanji*, pp. 311, 362).

⁶³ MNZ 5, p. 386.

ふも、叟一人の心にこそあれ、いつれの國々も自然に出る聲なれば、
何の論なき事也⁶⁴

Regarding /N/, moreover, Akinari claimed that just because the sound was not represented in ancient texts did not mean that it was not spoken by the people of antiquity. In Sino-Japanese words, Akinari pointed out, the sound /N/ clearly existed, though no single graph corresponded to it. In writing his response, Norinaga admitted that Akinari was correct insofar as Sino-Japanese loan words were concerned, but countered that the simple and straightforward nature of Japanese sound meant that *onbin*, or euphony, did not exist in the Japanese language as such.

Ironically, Norinaga acknowledged that even as such changes corrupted Japanese into something different (something “un-Japanese,” as it were), these changes themselves occurred naturally. But as he made explicitly clear, this naturalness by no means guaranteed correctness.

To vocalize *kamu* as *kan*, or to voice the name 三郎 with *san-* or *samu-* or *sabu-*, all of these are results of natural euphonic change (*onozukara no onbin*) and came to be articulated as such as a matter of course. All corruptions of sounds and words are natural things; there are reasons for their corruption and that corruption happens naturally. However, just because this is the case, it would be a great error to think that this brokenness and corruption is correct.

さてかむをかんと唱へ、右三郎をさん共さむ共さぶとも唱へなれたるは、いかにも自然の音便にして、おのつから然唱へなれたる物也、凡て音を訛り言を訛るも、皆自然の事にて、然訛るべき理有ておのづから訛る也、然りといへ共、自然の理なればとて其頽れ訛りたるを正しと心得るは、大なるひがことなり、⁶⁵

⁶⁴ MNZ 8, pp. 382-383.

⁶⁵ MNZ 8, p. 381.

Thus both Norinaga and Akinari accepted that the phonemes *mu* and *nu* were vocalized as /N/ in some composite words—for instance, *ikamu* becoming *ikan*—though they disagreed when exactly this shift occurred, or more accurately whether there had been a shift at all. Akinari, for his part, argued that such efficiencies and contractions in pronunciation had always been practiced but simply had not been reflected in writing. Indeed, much of Akinari’s criticism of Norinaga hinges on the perceived lack of correspondence between writing and speech. In Akinari’s words, Norinaga foolishly “relied on [written] characters alone to call incorrect what is actually natural sound” (字ノミニ附テ自然ノ音ヲ不正トシモ云ハ如何).⁶⁶

Because Norinaga held that what constituted Japanese *qua* Japanese was fixed and static, he was able to exclude any sound that fell outside of his own idealized linguistic boundaries. Using the contemporary, in his mind corrupted, vernacular as an example, Norinaga wrote:

As for this /N/, if we were to determine correctness based on the present, that would mean that when we see *tada hitotsu* (‘just one’) in the ancient texts, we should assume that ancient people read this aloud as *tatta hitotsu* just because nowadays we tend to read *tada hitotsu* as *tatta hitotsu*. It is to say that because people lacked the kana to signify geminated sounds, they abbreviated it in writing to *tada hitotsu* but knew when reading that it ought to be pronounced *tatta hitotsu*.

此^んの音のこと、もし今を以て証とせば、唯一^{タダヒトツ}を今はたッた一ツといへば、古書にただひとつと書るをも、今を証として、古人とても口語にはたッたひとつといひつらめでも、つまる音の仮字なかりし故に、略きてただひとつとは書る也といひて、よむときはたッたひとつとよむはよしとすべきねや。⁶⁷

⁶⁶ MNZ 8, p. 423.

⁶⁷ MNZ 8, p. 378.

For Norinaga, it is not only erroneous to posit people of the past as speaking in a manner that did not conform to the text, but also a symptom of present-day anachronism and lax scholarship. Moreover, Norinaga continues, just because something happens naturally of its own accord by no means guarantees that it is correct. People frequently slur words. For instance, it is commonplace to contract the Buddhist incantation *Namu Amida Butsu*—literally, “adoration for Amida Buddha,” derived from the Sanskrit phrase *Namo Amitābhāya*—into a more palatable *Nan ’mamidabutsu*.⁶⁸ If one is saying the phrase particularly quickly, Norinaga notes, one might even foreshorten the whole phrase to a brief *namaida*. Yet no one thinks that uttering the name of Amida as *namaida* is correct; and if pressed to pronounce the phrase more carefully, all would vocalize it according to its original pronunciation. The irony in Norinaga’s insistence on the “correct” pronunciation of a Sanskrit phrase notwithstanding, Norinaga claims that the same principle holds for words such as *kamikaze* (in Norinaga’s day, frequently voiced as *kankaze*) and *tada hitotsu* as well.

Akinari and Norinaga’s disagreement, of course, stems from two distinct conceptions of what constitutes language as such. Norinaga’s idea of language is a synchronic one, consisting of a static *langue* that maintains its form despite superficial shifts in individual and even collective speech patterns over time. It allows for the existence, in other words, of a sacred language, a non-arbitrary truth-language, through which ontological reality could be apprehended.

⁶⁸ In Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, the recitation of the name of the celestial buddha Amitābha is considered to be the only requirement for entering the Pure Land.

In comparing Norinaga's laudation of this originary imperial "Japanese" to Kamo no Mabuchi's similar privileging of the language before him and Hirata Atsutane's after him, Koyasu Nobukuni has noted that only Norinaga's estimation is rooted in tautology. Whereas both Mabuchi and Atsutane argue that (an idealized version of) Japanese is preeminent due to an ostensible affinity to nature that far surpasses other languages, Norinaga merely states that the imperial tongue occupies its superlative position merely by dint of being the imperial tongue.⁶⁹ Although Koyasu interprets this as evidence of Norinaga's blindly partisan illogic, it in fact reveals something more substantial about Norinaga's understanding of ancient Japanese: it is superior as such, which is to say, superior in the ontological sense. Indeed, Norinaga goes on to claim shortly after the above cited passage that the language of the imperial realm is a living language (生言), whereas the language of all other lands are akin to dead languages (死言ノ如シ).⁷⁰ This is a claim based on the existence of inflection in Japanese verbs—which is to say, on the existence of *teniwoha*—that Norinaga argues is absent in literary Sinitic and the languages of the world more broadly.⁷¹

As can be seen from the sharp division Norinaga cuts between the world of animals and the world of people, he is speaking in broadly sweeping metaphysical terms that do not apply merely to linguistic (and ontological) correctness within the confines of

⁶⁹ Koyasu, "Norinaga mondai" to wa nani ka, pp. 77-78.

⁷⁰ MNZ 5, p. 388.

⁷¹ While Norinaga is correct about the lack of inflection in literary Sinitic, he is of course mistaken when it comes to the more overarching claim about the languages of all other lands.

the Japanese language or the boundaries of the Japanese archipelago.⁷² Norinaga harshly criticizes his Japanese contemporaries for themselves using the incorrect sounds of the animal kingdom, leaving unclear who it is that possesses the capacity for “human” language in the first place. As Norinaga makes explicit, the sounds of the “imperial country” are prescribed by the ancient sounds of the past, not by the living language of the present. They are, moreover, fixed to the “fifty sounds” as represented in the fifty-sound chart:

The ancient language of the imperial country does not stray from the fifty sounds. These use only the pure, correct, and elegant sounds of heaven and earth and are not adulterated by muddled incorrect sounds.

皇国ノ古言ハ五十の音ヲ出ズ。是天地ノ純粹正雅ノ音ノミヲ用ヒテ。
溷濁不正ノ音ヲ廁^{マシ}ヘザルガ故也。⁷³

Strikingly similar to Keichū’s pronouncements on the fifty sounds seen in Chapter Two, Norinaga is here referring to the fifty sounds represented in the fifty-sound chart. For Norinaga, like Keichū, the ancient Japanese language possessed a fixed order, a distinct arrangement of sounds that corresponded with the arrangement of the cosmos. Left unspoken for, however, are the roughly thirty million people who lived on the Japanese archipelago in Norinaga’s time, and most certainly did not speak with only the fifty correct sounds of heaven and earth.

⁷² Interestingly, a perceived proximity to the sounds of animals did not render these foreign languages more natural for Norinaga. By contrast, in arguing that Hebrew was the oldest (and hence most superior) of all the human languages, the French judge Claude Duret (1570-1611) attempted to show that it was also closest to the language of animals (Turner, *Philology*, p. 56).

⁷³ MNZ 5, p. 382.

The inability to pronounce the Japanese syllabary proves more problematic still when we consider that Norinaga defines human song as comprised of drawn out utterances arranged in a 5/7 moraic order.⁷⁴ From the age of the kami to the present, Norinaga says, songs have never strayed from this patterning, and the consistency of the 5/7 ordering can be considered a “spontaneous miracle” (自然おのづからの妙).⁷⁵ Now, this assertion should raise the eyebrows of anyone familiar with the poetry of the *Man'yōshū*, as it no doubt did amongst Norinaga’s verse-literate contemporaries. If one adheres to the written text, it simply is not true. Norinaga addresses the potential quandary head on by denying it completely:

To say that the number of characters (*moji*) in ancient songs is not in order is a mistake. Songs in the age of the kami never strayed from five and seven morae (*koto*)⁷⁶ [in terms of ordering]. Of these, five morae were sometimes written out as four syllables or even three syllables. There are also many cases where seven morae were written out as six or eight syllables. But when people sang, if the syllables were lacking, they would extend the note (*fushi*) and add it; if they were in excess, they would abbreviate the note and sing it shorter. Everything fulfilled the five and seven morae tempo when sung; even three syllables, four syllables, six syllables, eight syllables, when sung they all became five and seven morae.

⁷⁴ Waka verses, for instance, are generally arranged according to this schematic: *tanka* are set to a 5/7/5/7/7 pattern, whereas *chōka* involve an indeterminate number of 5/7/5 phrases, with the last phrase containing seven morae.

⁷⁵ MNZ 2, p. 89. Norinaga allows that animals outside of humans have other patterning models that still qualify as song.

⁷⁶ Norinaga uses the term *koto* 言, generally translated as “word,” here. Although this may be frowned upon by more literally minded translators, I have chosen to render it variably as “mora(e)” and “syllable(s)” here for reasons of clarity. The use of 言 in this context comes from Chinese prosody to describe graphs in verse. In *Tamagatsuma*, Norinaga addresses the use of both *koto* 言 and *ji* 字 to describe the syllables of a song, noting that while recent scholars use *moji* 言/もじ, the *Kokinshū* specifically refers to a song as composed of thirty-one graphs (*moji* 文字/もじ) (MNZ 1, p. 54).

上代の歌は文字の数もさだまらずといへるは誤也。神代の歌といへ共。五言と七言とにもる事なし。其中にあるひは五言を四言又は三言によみ。七言を六言八言によめる事もおほけれ共。それもみなうたふときは。たらざるをば節を永くしてこれを足し。あまれるをば節をつづめてみじかくうたひて。みな五言七言の調にかなへてうたへるものなれば。三言四言六言八言も。うたふ所はみな五言と七言也。⁷⁷

Stressing the importance of prosody and meter, Norinaga holds that even those songs that appear in their transcription to have more or fewer morae than required are in actuality flawless. Syllables do not necessarily have a one-to-one correspondence with morae, the latter of which can be understood as occupying one rhythmic unit per mora.⁷⁸ Thus poetry can simply be remedied during the physical act of singing to conform to the appropriate patterning. Indeed, Norinaga tells us that originally the logograph 歌 (“poetry, poem, song, to sing”) had no nominal signification and indicated only the action (verb) of lengthening the voice. It was only later that the words that were thus elongated and sung became known as “song” (a noun).⁷⁹ Norinaga brought attention to this “etymology” in an attempt to demonstrate the affinity to the cosmos and cosmic order that Japanese poetry inherently possessed; ironically, in doing so, he relied on the ability of the “Chinese” graph to denote multiple parts of speech without specification.

Having set numerous criteria as to what constitutes song, as well as what counts for knowledge of *mono no aware*, Norinaga presents us with a very prescribed

⁷⁷ MNZ 2, p. 89.

⁷⁸ For a detailed explication of morae in the Japanese context, see “Appendix I: The Japanese Mora” in Kawamoto, *The Poetics of Japanese Verse*, pp. 293-97.

⁷⁹ MNZ 2, p. 116. Norinaga explains that to “elongate” (ながむる) and to “sing” (うたふ) often mean the same thing, but that the latter is actually a subset of the former. Only the elongation of tones with patterning (*aya*) can be considered to be singing (MNZ 2, p. 122).

conception of humanity. Under Norinaga's logic, the full actualization of humanity is dependent on the capacity to be moved by things in a manner reminiscent of classic Japanese literature and poetry; and this in turn is dependent on an ability to write and read songs made up of correctly parsed and pronounced literary Japanese, itself ostensibly ontologically correct.⁸⁰ This prescribed, form-based *mono no aware* is clearly not about organic feeling. Rather, it is circumscribed by "correct" reactions to things, determined by conventions taken from classical Japanese texts and facilitated by a certain cosmically grounded understanding of grammar and form. Grammar and form, together with prosody and auralty, mediate corporeal and emotional experience. Not surprisingly, then, one who does know *mono no aware* feels *aware* regardless of his or her conscious registration of emotion. Norinaga states that being moved to *aware* derives from,

For instance, encountering something that one ought to be happy about and feeling happiness—one understands the essence of that very thing about which one should feel happy and becomes happy. Likewise, when one encounters something that should be sad and has sad thoughts, one's sadness derives from the understanding of the essence of that very thing about which one should feel sad. Therefore, to be moved by things and to understand the essence of that sad or happy thing, that is what it is to know *mono no aware*.

たとへば。うれしかるべき事にあひて。うれしく思ふは。そのうれしかるべき事の心をわきまへしる故にうれしき也。又かなしかるべき事にあひて。かなしく思ふは。そのかなしかるべきことの心をわ

⁸⁰ The construction of a hierarchy of humanity, and the exclusion of some people from the ranks of this hierarchy entirely, was hardly something unique to Norinaga. Kaiho Seiryō, for instance, divided people into various ranks, ranging from "superior people" (貴人), defined as those over the rank of daimyo; to "middle people" (中人), those over high retainers; to inferior people (下人), or "couples without servants." Below this were others, such as vagabonds, whom Seiryō considered to be on par with beasts. Seiryō goes on to refer to the rank of outcastes known as *eta* as being "no different from beasts" and whom, as such, ought to be "treated as beasts" (Ansart, "Kaiho Seiryō on 'What it is to be a Human Being,'" p. 68).

きまへしる故にかなしき也。それば事にふれてそのうれしくかなしき事の心をわきまへしるを。物のあはれをしるといふ也。⁸¹

There are emotions that humans *should* feel, and if they are *human enough*, they will inevitably feel them. Humanity is a matter of hierarchy, of degree. The question of whether they are human enough, of course, may “just” be a matter of grammar and prosody.

CONCLUSION

Norinaga elaborated a complex aesthetic system based on form and affect first and content second; and in doing so, he borrowed heavily from the medieval poetic appropriation of *teniwoha* as both an analytical and emotional ordering device. Norinaga sums up the critical import of *teniwoha* and proper grammar in language in a simple analogy:

For *teniwoha* to not correspond is like sewing a garment with an unskilled hand. How could those words possibly become a beautifully patterned brocade?

此てにをはのとのはざるは。たとへば。つたなき手して縫たらん衣のごとし。その言葉はいかにめでたき綾錦なり共。⁸²

It is a rhetorical question, needless to say, and the answer is simple. Without mastery of *teniwoha*, beautiful words cannot emerge. By examining the string of causalities

⁸¹ MNZ 2, pp. 99-100.

⁸² MNZ 5, p. 253. Incidentally, James Turner notes in his tome on the history of Western philology that the English “text” and “textile” share the same Latinate root, indicating something woven (Turner, *Philology*, p. 1).

Norinaga attached to this seemingly straightforward proposition, we have seen the manner in which he perceived syntactical correspondences and well-placed particles as ultimately facilitating aesthetic appreciation and determining categories of ontology.

The important role that so-called “proper language use” plays in Norinaga’s thought has been connected to the construction of an ethnolinguistic community by modern historians—and this is because Norinaga’s ideas of proper, or correct, language was so closely tied to classical Japanese poetry. By looking at how Norinaga understood poetry, and its grammatical make-up more specifically, I have attempted in this chapter to show how modern ideas of language—as modes of communication and self-expression—do not wholly apply to Norinaga’s conceptions of being in the world. For Norinaga, humans found their place in the cosmos through their knowledge of *mono no aware*, the pathos that was imbued in all things. And this knowledge, this cosmic knowledge that cemented one’s being, could be attained through the careful study of classical poetry. Because poetry in Norinaga’s formulation was a cosmic, universal form existing since the beginnings of time, it offered people a rare opportunity to harmonize themselves within the greater cosmos. *Mono no aware*, I have argued, was for Norinaga neither an aesthetic ideal nor a national characteristic; and neither was it merely a matter of decorousness, on the one hand, or emotional self-discovery, on the other. *Mono no aware*, for Norinaga, was universal, inherent, ontological—and just as importantly, it was not mystical or mysterious (as opposed to the kami and their ways). Through poetry and grammar, it could be known, cognized, and recognized.

While “proper” language use is supremely important to Norinaga’s conception of *mono no aware*, then, seeing language here as a tool for the construction of a new kind of

community is to blind ourselves from seeing what was really at stake for Norinaga, and indeed for his community of readers. And what was at stake was not so much the construction of a cultural community or national identity, but rather a deeper understanding of the cosmic forces and patterns that language embodied and made manifest. It was these patterns and forces that evoked the feelings and sensations that defined, for some, what it meant to be human in early modern Japan. I have argued that it is this ontological notion of *mono no aware*, itself informed by an empirical attention to language, that makes Norinaga's theory distinctly early modern in nature.

Given the close interrelation Norinaga constructed between poetics, aesthetics, and grammar, it is hardly surprising that his grammatical writings were begun shortly after he abandoned unfinished *Isonokami sasamegoto*, the last and most famous of his poetic treatises.⁸³ Grammar formed a category for Norinaga that encompassed all of the important elements of poetry, but proved larger, more omnipresent, than verse alone. Indeed, Norinaga's grammar operated at the level of language itself, and hence also far beyond it.

⁸³ Although *Kotoba no tama no o*, Norinaga's main linguistic text, was not published until 1785, it is thought that he began work on it twenty years earlier, only one year after he ceased work on *Isonokami sasamegoto*. By 1771, Norinaga's personal correspondence indicates that both *Kotoba no tama no o* and *Teniwoha himokagami* were completed, as was much of his research on phonemes and *kana* usage (Ōno, "Kaidai" to MNZ 5, p. 7.)

CONCLUSION

I began this dissertation with reference to Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and the contention that Motoori Norinaga's thought ought not to be considered under the history of Japan's transformation into a modern nation-state. Using Anderson's description of "classical communities"—his counterpart to the "imagined communities of modern nations" that make up our world today—I argued that despite Norinaga's long association in modern scholarship with Japanese nativism and nationalism, Norinaga himself was very much "classical" in his worldview. That is, Norinaga firmly believed in a sacred truth language, a divinely descended emperor, and a cosmological conception of time wherein both the former could coincide, unchanging, transcendent of history.

The first, third, and fourth chapters were largely elaborations on this argument, together a concerted attempt to demonstrate just how myopic our placement of Norinaga at the cusp of modernity really is. While kokugaku has certainly come to be associated with questions of Japanese identity (or of specifically "Japanese" imagined communities, one might say), a closer look at its most paradigmatic icon, Norinaga, reveals significant distance from any real ethnolinguistic genesis let alone national identity formation. Norinaga investigated language not as a key to uncovering a new, but ostensibly age-old, ethnic fraternity, nor did he do so to solidify a vernacular more proximate to a new, but ostensibly age-old, unified speakership of worthy compatriots. Rather, as I have

attempted to show over the course of these four chapters, Norinaga valued the study of ancient language because he perceived it to be sacred and true, which is to say, ontologically aligned with the cosmos and accordingly aligned with cosmic patterns and divine powers as well. It is precisely because of this “classical” vantage point that Norinaga espoused that approaching him through a modern, nation-centric lens has its limitations.¹

It is, then, the objective of the second chapter—of creating a genealogy of kokugaku—where I believe more work needs to be done, and indeed where I hope to dedicate further attention in the future. Michel Foucault describes the task of genealogy as one of analyzing “descent” and “emergence,” of exploring the epistemological conditions of possibility wherein certain movements arise.² In my view, it is thus not the epistemic shift from early modern to modern that sheds the most light on Norinaga and his thought, but rather the earlier shift from medieval to early modern. For it is from this milieu that Norinaga’s thought is descended and from this milieu that it emerged. As I have attempted to show in this dissertation, Norinaga was heavily indebted to both late classical and medieval thinkers, from the *Kokinshū* Kana preface author Ki no Tsurayuki to Buddhist poet-monks such as Jien and Mujū Ichien, from the court poets Fujiwara no Shunzei and Fujiwara no Teika to their descendants in the Nijō school. And as “ancient studies,” the moniker by which Norinaga frequently described his own work, explicitly

¹ As many premodernists would likely agree, Anderson’s characterization of the “classical” or “premodern” is general and vague, reducing to three simple truisms the entirety of the world prior to the European Enlightenment. Anderson is, of course, being unjustly accused here; to be fair, his focus is on the modern formation of the nation-state and not on the premodern world that he characterizes so pithily.

² See Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.”

suggests, Norinaga was steeped in the learning of the past, philologically engaging not just with the most ancient Japanese texts available to him but also with more recent poetry anthologies and the long tradition of commentaries surrounding both.

Of course, Norinaga was also introducing something new in his approaches to these old materials—but what was new, I have argued, was not a notion of self or language as being uniquely Japanese, as previous studies have suggested. Indeed, some kind of notion of a superior “Japaneseness” can be found at least as far back as the Tendai esoteric monk Annen 安然 (b. 841),³ who can be linked to Norinaga through the writings of esoteric Buddhist monks such as Keichū, Jōgon, and Mujū. Thus the question remains, what was it that Norinaga contributed to Japanese understandings of language, country, and culture? In the future, I hope to pursue further the thesis that Norinaga provided a new systematic foundation for medieval conceptions of the Japanese language and country; and that, in doing so, he was excising Buddhist content while retaining an esoteric Buddhological framework wherein truth could be found in this world, in language and in texts. If we are to truly understand Norinaga—and, it follows, if we are to truly understand kokugaku, and indeed the nationalistically driven movements and ideologies that later borrowed from kokugaku—we must explicate a genealogy that reveals the heterogeneous currents of thought, Buddhist and otherwise, that informed Norinaga’s thought.

³ See Annen’s *Taizō kongō bodai shingi ryaku mondō shō* 胎藏金剛菩提心義略問答鈔 (*Bodaishin gishō*) (c. 884): “We Japanese (*warera Nihonjin*), all the way from the cities to the villages, all know Buddhahood” (我日本人。乃至市厘皆知成佛). T no. 2397, 75.488c.

APPENDIX

THE FIFTY-SOUND CHART AND EARLY PHONOLOGICAL STUDY

It is unknown when the fifty-sound chart first came into use, though the earliest reference to anything like it dates from the late Heian period. In his *Wakadōmōshō* 和歌童蒙抄 (c. 1145), Fujiwara no Norikane 藤原範兼 (1107-1165) talks of phonemes such as /re/ and /ri/, and /chi/ and /tsu/, being the “same sound” (同音). He refers, however, to “five sounds” (*go'on* 五音), not fifty, indicating the five vowel sounds that in time came to head the five columns of the fifty-sound chart. The earliest extant chart mapping out (most of⁴) the fifty sounds is found in the early eleventh-century *Kujyakukyō ongi* 孔雀經音義, a Buddhist text that treats word pronunciation in the Chinese translation of the *Buddhamāṭṛkā mahāmayūrī vidyārājñī* sutra. Already in this text, the author writes that people frequently are ignorant of the characters that make up the *go'on*, indicating the five vowel sounds that in time came to head the five columns of the fifty-sound chart. Accordingly, mistakes are made in the *han'on* 反音, the two characters that are used in *fanqie* to establish the pronunciation of a third character.⁵ The chart provided in the *Kujyakukyō ongi* arranges the vowels in an *i, o, a, e, u* order. The Tendai esoteric monk Myōgaku's 明覺 (1056-c. 1122) slightly later chart in *Han'on sahō* 半音作法 (1093), on the other hand, arranges them according to the *a, i, u, e, o* sequence borrowed from the

⁴ The *na* row is missing, making it in fact a “forty-five sound” chart.

⁵ Yamada, *Gojū-onzu no rekishi*, p. 83.

Siddham script that we are familiar with today. Unlike the *Kujyakukyō ongi* chart, Myōgaku's *onzu* is complete, including all of the phonemes found in modern kana lists; however, the ordering of the consonant rows diverge from what is now recognized to be correct.

It is also in Myōgaku's work that the first known mention of *onbin* 音便, a term used to describe both euphonic and morphophonological change, occurs. Myōgaku notes a phonetic shift from /ki/ to /i/ in his *Shittan yōketsu* 悉曇要訣 (c. 1101): what was once pronounced *kakite* had morphed into *kaite*, he writes. Likewise, *tsukite* had morphed into *tsuite*, and *nakimono* into *naimono*.⁶ Myōgaku presents these euphonies as belonging to speech only, thus marking a discrepancy between written and oral forms of language. Yet, Myōgaku's purpose here was not to explicate this sound transfer, but rather to provide an explanation of phonetic shifts in Siddham by means of analogy to Japanese. Indeed, Myōgaku made no systematic effort to classify this phonological information whatsoever, something that was not attempted until 1734 with the monk Shōten's 盛典 *Wago renjōshū* 和語連声集.⁷

The earliest extant work with a section dedicated systematically to historical kana usage, or *kanazukai*, is Fujiwara no Teika's 藤原定家 (1162-1241) early thirteenth-century poetry volume, the *Gekanshū* 下官集. In the *kanbun* preface to the section, "On unpleasant characters" (*Moji wo kirafu koto* 嫌文字事), Teika writes that the text in hand is merely his own humble opinion (愚意) and will likely remain unheeded by others.

⁶ Chaudhuri, "Siddham in China and Japan," p. 105.

⁷ Chaudhuri, "Siddham in China and Japan," p. 106.

Nevertheless, he says, he feels the need to address the great disorder and lack of standardization in the words people write, and accordingly seek to rectify the problem.⁸ Teika goes on to distinguish the phonemes /e, he, we/ and /i, hi, wi/ in ways that differ from the standard “historical kana usage” (*rekishiteki kanazukai*) with which we read classical texts today.⁹ For instance, Teika opts for *tsuwini* つゐに instead of *tsuini* つひに, and *koto no yuhe* ことのゆへ rather than *koto no yuwe* ことのゆゑ.¹⁰ Sometimes known as Teika *kanazukai*, Teika’s standard of reading and writing Japanese was only espoused by waka poets of Teika’s Mikohidari lineage during Teika’s lifetime, but was to have lasting influence in poetry circles and beyond into the Tokugawa period. Teika’s *kanazukai* work became relatively widely available after the Southern and Northern courts period poet Gyōa 行阿 (c. mid-14th century) republished it in a more systemized and expanded form in his treatise, *Kana mojizukai* 仮名文字遣 (1363). Thus Teika *kanazukai* is also sometimes known as Gyōa *kanazukai*, though the two are not identical.¹¹ Whereas Teika only treated a handful of words, Gyōa provided the spellings of over one thousand.

Teika’s *kanazukai* was later debunked by Keichū as being based on insufficiently ancient texts and thus failing to take into account earlier phonemic shifts. It is significant, however, in that it long served as the only authoritative spelling reference available and

⁸ Tsukishima, *Rekishiteki kanazukai*, pp. 32-33.

⁹ *Rekishiteki kanazukai* is a reform of Keichū’s reforms of Teika’s *kanazukai*, and was used for official documents beginning in the Meiji period until the language reforms in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

¹⁰ Tsukishima, *Rekishiteki kanazukai*, p. 33.

¹¹ It is worth noting that Teika himself never used the term “*kanazukai*,” a later appellation.

clearly demonstrates an awareness of euphonic change amongst literary scholars as far back as the early Kamakura period. It is now thought that by the end of the tenth century the sounds approximating /fa, fi, fu, fe, fo/ had merged into /wa, wi, u, we, wo/. Around the same time, *wo*, *ho*, and *o* began to be used interchangeably, as did *i*, *hi*, and *wi*.¹² Because there are few texts from the Kamakura and early Muromachi periods that seek to capture the nuances of contemporary speech, however, speech patterns during this time have remained elusive. Only with the development of *kyōgen*, farcical skits that act as comic relief between *noh* acts, in the latter half of the Muromachi period, and the tendency toward fully writing them out (as opposed to merely sketching them in outline form) in the early Tokugawa period, does there resurface written resemblances to what scholars think might have been the vernacular speech of the time.¹³

Thanks to tight restrictions on both social and geographical mobility imposed by the Tokugawa shogunate, language tended to develop in relatively isolated speech communities. Furukawa Koshōken's 古川古松軒 (1726-1807) 1788 account of his journey to northern Honshu and Hokkaido accompanying shogunal inspectors captures well this inter-regional unintelligibility. As Koshōken continues north, he notes that both the customs and language of the people are becoming more and more difficult to comprehend, a trend that is unsurprisingly exacerbated when he travels through

¹² Tsukishima, *Rekishiteki kanazukai*, p. 13.

¹³ Nomura, "*Shōmono no sekai*," pp. 132-33. Nomura Takashi argues that discrepancies in dialect from Kantō to Kyūshū were in fact less pronounced during the Muromachi period than during the Edo period. This is, however, a conclusion he derives from the lack of textual evidence during the Muromachi period documenting linguistic difference (i.e. there are no extant texts from this period that decry the inability to communicate with others from different locales), and not supported by any positive information (p. 148).

extremely rural and thinly populated areas.¹⁴ Koshōken writes, for instance, of the dialect in Tajima (present-day Fukushima prefecture):

The mountains are immeasurably deep, and the people and the language are backwards [...] Both sides [the locals and Koshōken's party] can understand only half of the other's language. Even at the inns, there was nothing we could do but laugh about it heartily, it was so difficult. When we asked for *chazuke* [tea poured over rice] they brought *yuzuke* [hot water over rice] instead, and we would have to go into the inn kitchens each time and make it ourselves.

深山はかるべからず、人物・言語も至って悪しく [...] 言語も半ばならでは双方ともに解せず、宿々にも大笑いすることのみにて、いかんともなし難し。茶漬にしてくれといえは湯づけにして出すゆえ、各おの宿々の台所へ出て用事を自弁せしなり。¹⁵

While knowledge of Japanese as spoken in the shogunal capital of Edo may have been necessary for government functionaries, it was hardly privileged across the archipelago.

Rather, the “prestige” language of spoken communication remained that of the imperial capital Kyoto throughout the Tokugawa period. Until the latter half of the eighteenth century, “dialect” dictionaries translated local words into Kyoto speech merely out of convention. A comparison of *hanashibon* 咄本, anecdotal books written in the vernacular, dating from the early Tokugawa period against those dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries does reveal geographical and phonetic shifts in both writing and speech, however.¹⁶ Satō Tōru finds that, in looking at *hanashibon* from

¹⁴ Occasionally Koshōken is pleasantly surprised that he *can* understand the local speech, despite the distance he has come. Typically, this seems to be the result of proximity to the sea. See, for instance, Furukawa, *Tōyū zakki*, p. 75.

¹⁵ Furukawa, *Tōyū zakki*, p. 15.

¹⁶ One example is Shikano Buzaemon's 鹿野武左衛門(1649~1699) *Shika no makifude* 鹿の巻筆 (1686), which ordered Edo dialects and compared them with Kansai accents. Shortly after

the early and latter halves of the Tokugawa period, there are roughly one hundred and fifty *kango*, or words pronounced with Sinitic readings, that correspond across the sample periods, whereas approximately six hundred and eighty do not. Satō also notes a linguistic infiltration from the Kantō (area surrounding Edo) to the Kansai (Kyoto and Osaka) regions, reflecting the growing predominance of Edo culture across the archipelago as the Tokugawa period progressed.¹⁷ Phonologically, too, Japanese during the early modern period witnessed a number of shifts. Though less pronounced than the bevy of changes that took place between Old Japanese and Middle Japanese from the Nara through the Muromachi periods, these included the delabialization of /f/ to an /h/ sound, and the loss of some glides. For instance, the labial glide /gwa/ and /kwa/, found in old romanizations of words such as *gwannen* (*gannen*) 元年 and *Kwannon* (*Kannon*) 観音 disappeared during the early modern period.

Norinaga himself proposed in his *Kanji san'onkō* that there were four basic types of *onbin*, or euphony, that gradually took place from the Nara period to the present.¹⁸ Despite its original associations with a fantastical idea of a “pure Japanese,” Norinaga’s understanding of *onbin* remains largely in place in modern Japanese linguistics. To give just a few examples, Norinaga’s /N/ *onbin*, now known as *hatsu onbin*, generally involves the introduction of a nasal stop—for instance, *shinite* becoming *shinde* and *tobite* becoming *tonde*. What Norinaga dubbed *tsumaru onbin* is now known as *soku onbin* and

Shika no makifude, Yonezawa Hikohachi 米沢彦八 (birth and death dates unknown) came out with *Karukuchi gozen otoko* 軽口午前男 and *Karukuchi ōyakazu* 軽口大矢数, both effectively vernacular dictionaries.

¹⁷ Satō, *Edo jidai-go no kenkyū*, pp. 133, 215.

¹⁸ MNZ 5, pp. 423-432.

refers to consonant gemination, for instance the shift from *mochite* to *motte*.¹⁹ Linguists generally agree that these *onbin* changes were the “defining set of linguistic changes” of Early Middle Japanese, a linguistic period spanning 800-1200 CE.²⁰

As we have seen, Norinaga believed that the precise sounds of the ancient Yamato tongue could be recovered by means of the phonographs found in the *Kojiki*, which he held up as encoding a pure, unadulterated language the likes of which he held were spoken on the Japanese archipelago before the advent of Chinese influence. Thus he claimed that there were sounds that existed in the contemporary vernacular that could not be counted amongst the “vocal tones of language” (言語ノ声音). In other words, there were sounds, such as /N/, that, although spoken, could not in fact exist within the phonemic inventory of language as such. This was the topic of an extended literary dispute known as the *Hi no kami ronsō* that took place between Norinaga and Ueda Akinari in the 1780s, mentioned in Chapter Four. As Norinaga put it in one of his responses to Akinari:

The sound /N/ coming about naturally as a result of *renjō* did not occur until the Heian period (*naka mukashi*), when euphonic change resulted in a corrupted language (*namari goto*). It did not exist in the original correct language.

さて連声に従ひて自然にんの音あるを、中古以来音便にくづれたる訛言にして、本の正しき言にはあらず。²¹

¹⁹ MNZ 5, pp. 426-430.

²⁰ Frellesvig, *A History of the Japanese Language*, p. 192.

²¹ MNZ 8, p. 379. (Also in UAZ 1, p. 192.) *Renjō*, a translation of the Sanskrit term *sandhi*, today refers specifically to the phonetic shift that occurs when two kanji are combined to make a composite word wherein the first character is a syllable final consonant and the second character falls within the *a*, *ya*, or *wa* columns of the fifty-sound chart. In this case, the pronunciation of the second character will shift to carry the consonant of the first character. For instance, the Buddhist bodhisattva Kannon 観音 is written with graphs typically read *kan* and *on*, but when combined

In ancient times, Norinaga claimed, only sounds such as /mu/ and /mo/ existed; the “extremely discordant” (甚聞きぐるしい) /N/ was but a euphonic corruption of a later age.²² Norinaga also claimed that the long tones, palatized sounds, geminated consonants, and the semi-voiced sounds (半濁音) of the /ha/ row (eg., /pa, pi/) that were currently found in Japanese were all foreign corruptions that belonged not to human language but rather to the “voices of the myriad birds and beasts.”²³

the second character takes on a *non* sound. Bjarke Frellesvig notes that, because euphonic change in lexical and grammatical morphemes were not automatic or exception-less (i.e., not structural) it is arguable whether these shifts can actually be considered as “sound changes” (Frellesvig, *A Case Study in Diachronic Phonology*, p. 21). I use “sound change” here in a general, non-linguistic sense. Similarly, I use the term *onbin*, or euphony, in the broader manner that Norinaga and other kokugaku scholars understood it, not in the narrower definition generally agreed upon by linguists today. *Onbin* in the broader sense includes *rendaku* 連濁 and *renjō*. *Rendaku* describes the phenomenon when the non-initial consonant in a compound word is voiced, though it would be unvoiced if standing independently. For instance, *naga* (long) + *kutsu* (shoes) = *nagagutsu* (rain boots).

²² MNZ 8, p. 378.

²³ MNZ 5, p. 386. (Norinaga makes this claim in his debate with Akinari as well (see MNZ 8, p. 379), but in less colorful terms.)

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