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The Informing Image

'China' in *Genji Monogatari*

by DAVID POLLACK

IT is difficult to conceive of Japan apart from China; and yet, China seems strangely redundant when we think of Japan. To say that something Japanese was 'originally Chinese' is at once to state the obvious and to explain nothing. We think of the two countries as a cultural and geographical unit, the Great Tradition and its smaller cultural dependent, of tiny Japan lying at the edge of the massive sphere of Chinese cultural influence—just as the Chinese thought of Japan, when they thought of her at all.

By about the year 1000, the Genji period, the Japanese were already long in the habit of regarding China as a civilization of superior cultural resources. The 'real' China's occasional and inevitable lapses from that superiority were viewed by the Japanese with the same sort of chagrin, nostalgic regret, and finally disappointed truculence that has been reserved in recent years for an equally distressing America. The Japanese monk Ennin 円仁, as one example, was appalled as he witnessed the terrible suffering and destruction wreaked by the Chinese government's suppression of Buddhism after 845. As a foreigner traveling in China to gain first-hand knowledge of his religion's origins, texts, and practices, there is an additional edge of horror and disappointment to his reports, so objective in tone, which represent the best eye-witness accounts of the damage done to the Buddhist establishment in China during the course of the Hui-ch'ang 会昌 suppression.[1]

When political conditions in China continued to deteriorate, the Japanese court pragmatically decided to cancel a scheduled mission to what remained of the crumbling T'ang polity in 894. This event marked the end of official embassies that had begun in the Nara period and brought to a close the long era of cultural

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[1] See Edwin O. Reischauer, tr., *Ennin's Diary: The Record of a Pilgrimage to China in Search of the Law*, Ronald Press, New York, 1955, pp. 321 ff.

borrowing from China; at the same time, it signaled the rise of a new era of 'Japaneseness'. In terms of the symbolism involved, it perhaps is not coincidental that the person who petitioned the throne to have the mission canceled was Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真, 845–903, the leading exponent of Chinese literature of his time. His own fall from grace at court and subsequent exile to Kyushu in 901 appear to represent symbolically the continuation of this purging of China from Japan and a part of the casting out of China from the new world of the Fujiwara regents.

For their part, the Chinese were often gratified to know that these 'dwarf' barbarians were learning to ape civilized ways, but were not always pleased by what the Japanese were making of prized Chinese treasures. The T'ang poet Po Chü-i 白居易 had written in a preface to his collected works dated 845 that, aside from the three authorized editions of those works that he was depositing for safekeeping in separate temples (that year saw the start of the Hui-ch'ang suppression of Buddhism—a particularly bad time for keeping things safe in temples), and two others in the hands of relatives, later generations were to ignore especially those editions circulating among the populaces of Japan and Silla. Po was concerned about reports of spurious editions of his works that had made him famous in Japan in his own lifetime.[2] He had already been upset to discover, as he remarked in a letter to his friend Yüan Chen 元稹, that even in China it was the very poems that he considered the most frivolous that were 'on the lips of monks, courtesans, and unmarried women', rather than the highly moral *hsin yüeh-fu* 新楽府 poems for which he hoped to be remembered.[3] One can only imagine what he would have thought, then, had he learned that the Japanese were paring away from his collected poetry anything that did not adhere to an uncomplicated Six Dynasties and early T'ang taste for courtly elegance, leaving only select couplets that were clearly lyrical and not particularly edifying. When faced with a choice between the 'beautiful' and the 'instructive', the Japanese were never much impressed by the Chinese insistence that a tone of high moral seriousness always be the concomitant of lyrical attractiveness. Along with everything else they borrowed from China, they knew exactly what they wanted from Po's poems. Chinese of later centuries would find quite odd the Japanese infatuation for Sung-dynasty ceramics over the glossier and more colorful Ming wares, or their preference for the blurred and impressionistic landscapes of Yü Chien 玉澗 and the art of Mu Ch'i 牧谿, all of whose extant works are remembered in Japanese rather than Chinese records.

To a certain degree, even today we have come to accept the view from the continent that these preferences represent aberrations of taste. They are not, of course. It is simply that Japanese conceptions of China were rarely those held by the Chinese themselves. Japanese views began in an entirely native perspective that

[2] *Po Hsiang-shan Shih-chi* 白香山詩記, Shih-chieh Shu-chü, Taiwan, 1969, p. 4.

[3] Included in the *T'ang shu* 唐書 biography of Po, in ibid., p. 43.

ranged out selectively over materials within its purview, taking note only of things that resonated with some native aesthetic chord. It is clear that, no less than in the last century, Japan was never dictated to in its tastes by outside influences, at least not for very long. To the contrary, the Japanese genius for enthusiastically shaping often puzzlingly disparate bits and pieces of imported 'superior' cultures to its own ineluctable ends is clearly demonstrated in the uses that the Japanese made of Chinese culture throughout premodern history.

It is wrong, therefore, to inquire what influences Chinese culture exerted upon the Japanese, an attitude inherited in part from the Sinocentric sympathies of earlier Western scholarship. We need to inquire instead about those elements that the Japanese selected for abstraction from the broad continuum of Chinese civilization at particular historical moments. From this revised point of view, we must pay closer attention to the processes at work in selecting foreign cultural elements and synthesizing them into the native culture. For the purposes of this sort of analysis we must also understand that what we can perceive as a 'native' process is itself, in any period from which historical materials exist, already the product of countless earlier syntheses. We are concerned here, then, with the dialectic at work in adoption, adaption, and synthesis, rather than with any particular set of materials, although to illustrate this dialectical process at work we shall examine the way in which certain materials appear in *Genji Monogatari* 源氏物語. And even that dialectic must be regarded as part of a continuum that comprises every particular attempt at synthesis, each influenced by earlier and contemporary attempts, and each in turn influencing contemporary and later experiences.

China as a geographical entity was, of course, quite accessible to Japanese during portions of the Heian period. We are concerned here, however, with the 'China' that existed in the imaginations of Heian writers, so that the real geo-political entity concerns us very little except insofar as it corresponded to a need to identify something outside Japan itself. This 'something outside Japan' was alien or 'other', clearly not Japanese, and while inherently worthy of emulation, it was as the same time threatening, not merely to physical but also to cultural identity. It is almost as if, throughout the period with which we are concerned, the 'dragons' that lurked about the edges of the Japanese mental map of the world were much like those quite 'Chinese' dragons that circle the ceilings of the meditation halls of temples such as Shōkokuji in Kyoto, defining by their foreign presence as much what is not Japanese as what is 'Chinese'. 'Foreign' meant Chinese, or Korean (which is much the same thing), and the terms *Kara* 唐, *Morokoshi* 唐土, and *Koma* 高麗, seem to have conjured up for the Heian Japanese something of what names such as Xanadu and Cambaluc did for Romantic England, but even more intensely, at once intriguingly exotic and fearsomely different.

It was during the Heian period that the dialectic known as *wakan* 和漢, 'Chinese-Japanese', is first recorded, indicating the process whereby contemporary Chinese

and Japanese elements were brought into accommodation. The term itself tells us nothing concrete about that process, except that it involved placing elements of both cultures into some sort of relationship to one another, often as crudely as the two characters *wa* and *kan* are placed in conjunction to form a concept. Something like *wakan* clearly precedes the historical record, if only in the sense that elements of Chinese culture were to be found in comfortable integration with Japanese civilization many centuries earlier. The writing system is perhaps the earliest and most instructive paradigm in its initial awkwardness, its unsuitability for the Japanese language, and the sophistication and complexity of accommodation over centuries that resulted in the system that we know today, absolutely inseparable from Japanese culture itself. The operation of *wakan* was epitomized in the Heian period in the expression *wakon-kansai* 和魂漢才 (or in the native readings of those Sinate words, *karajie-yamatodamashii*), 'Japanese spirit, Chinese technique'. A millenium later, when the same dialectic was brought to bear upon Western rather than Chinese culture, it would become *wayō* 和洋 and its operation described as *wakon-yōsai* 和魂洋才, 'Japanese spirit, Western technique', or less tendentiously, *wayō-setchū* 和洋折衷, 'the accommodation of Japanese and Western'. Such phrases clearly convey little information about the operation of the dialectic itself; they seem to serve rather as conceptual icons, talismans that protected the speaker's sense of cultural identity from defilement by contact with that which was alien to it.

The earliest use of the term *yamatodamashii*, so pregnant for the Japanese in the centuries that followed, is said to occur in *Genji Monogatari*, where it is used in conjunction with another term for 'Chinese learning', *zae* 才, an earlier reading of *sai*: 'It is where there is a fund of Chinese learning that the Japanese spirit is respected by the world.'[4] The two concepts do not stand in opposition to one another; rather, as the passage tells us, 'It is precisely against the background of Chinese learning' (*zae o moto to shite koso*) that the elusive qualities of Japan are best defined, the more delicate pattern emerging coherently against a background of strong formal design. It is this relationship between Chinese and Japanese that is encapsulated in the term *wakan*.

The practice of combining or setting in some sort of relation to one another Chinese and Japanese forms in art and literature (as well as in other areas ranging from music to governmental institutions) was especially popular in Heian court circles about the middle of the tenth century, the period that serves as the setting for *Genji*. This practice is illustrated by a work such as *Wakan Rōeishū* 和漢朗詠集, 1018, by Fujiwara no Kintō 藤原公任, 966–1041, which places lines of poetry in Chinese, composed by both Chinese and Japanese, together with Japanese waka within categories that are similarly an awkward compromise between those of the Japanese imperial anthologies of poetry and Chinese encyclopedic compilations

[4] Edward Seidensticker, tr., *The Tale of Genji*, Knopf, New York, 1976, p. 367; Yamagishi Tokuhei 山岸徳平, ed., *Genji Monogatari* 源氏物語, Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei [NKBT] 15, Iwanami, 1959, pp. 277 & 460, n. 263.

known as *lei-shu* 類書. However we may choose to account for the popularity of *wakan* in this period, the question still remains as to exactly how placing Chinese and Japanese forms together functioned in practice.

An answer to this question is suggested in the very structure of *Genji*, ca. 1010, for in this work mention of China is often followed immediately by a clear preference for something native. China is brought in as a sort of glittering background against which a pattern of quiet native Japanese sensibility emerges. A good example is found in the 'Kiritsubo' 桐壺 chapter of the novel, where the former 'quiet charm' (*natsukashiku rōtage*) of the unfortunate Kiritsubo, the emperor's recently deceased favorite, is emphasized by the gaudiness (*uruwashū*) of a painting depicting the famous consort Yang Kuei-fei 楊貴妃, whose sad story, immortalized for the Heian audience in Po Chü-i's poem, *Ch'ang-hen ko* 長恨歌 ('The Song of Everlasting Sorrow'), provides the exemplary classical backdrop against which the unfolding tragedy of Kiritsubo is set off and given increased stature. 'The Chinese lady in the paintings did not have the luster of life. Yang Kuei-fei was said to have resembled the lotus of the Sublime Pond, the willows of the Timeless Hall. No doubt she was very beautiful in her Chinese finery. When he tried to remember the quiet charm of his lost lady, he found there was no color of flower, no song of bird, to summon her up.'[5]

Commentators point out that the story of Yang Kuei-fei is present from the very first words of *Genji*, and her tale as told by Po in *Ch'ang-hen ko* is usually treated as a source for the story of Kiritsubo. It is not a source—Murasaki Shikibu 紫式部 did not require foreign plots to create her fiction—but is rather a metaphoric (from Greek *metapherein*, 'translate') technique whereby Murasaki's plots and characters are endowed with the grandeur of classical archetype. 'Translated' to the stature of the magnificent Chinese consort, the tragedy of the otherwise insignificant and merely pathetic Kiritsubo rises to greater heights, and the despair of a rather foolish emperor is given greater dimension. We do not need to find exact correspondence in every part; commentators have made clear the disparities in the stories of the two emperors and their unfortunate loves. Each tale has its roots in its own culture and must be interpreted in terms of that culture. As third parties we may be tempted to view the story of Kiritsubo as more satisfactory in its lack of the heavy Chinese overtones of Confucian morality which would blame a ruler's deficiencies in the arts of government on an unbusinesslike eye for the ladies, but this is precisely where the Chinese over the centuries have chosen to find the most meaningful framework of construction. It scarcely mattered, on the other hand, whether the Japanese emperor 'went early to court' or not, while the direction he took to get there might mean everything. In this sense, what is important for *Genji* is the inconceivable power of karmic cause and effect that is unleashed by a passion whose very intensity constituted a rupture of the spiritual-temporal continuum, echoed and compounded on the temporal plane by the fatal

[5] Seidensticker, p. 12; Tamagami Takuya 玉上琢弥, *Genji Monogatari Hyōshaku* 源氏物語評釈, Kadokawa, 1964, I, pp. 84 ff; NKBT 14, p. 40.

mismatching of an emperor and a woman of insignificant backing at court. Their tragic love resulted in the birth of the Shining Genji, and from this excessive passion follows all the panoply of generations of life and death through the course of the novel.

Murasaki's technique of bringing in 'China' to elevate and set off 'Japan' has echoes and consequences throughout the work. 'Yang Kuei-fei as the subject of painting' (*e ni kakeru Yōkihi*), for example, brings to mind the well-known discussion of painting found in the 'rainy night's discussion of women' (*amayo no shinasadame*) in the 'Hahakigi' 帚木 chapter, in which a young guards captain compares matters of the heart (*hito no kokoro*) with painting as well as with calligraphy and craftsmanship. What is essentially and indubitably 'Japanese' in painting, the captain says, 'the things we know, mountains, streams, houses near and like our own', is contrasted with those alien 'things no one ever sees . . . paradises, fish in angry seas, raging beasts in foreign lands [*Karakuni*, 'China'], devils and demons.' The effect of these outlandish subjects is to 'terrify and astonish', while to the contrary the Japanese subjects provide 'a sense of affectionate familiarity' (*natsukashiku yawaraidaru koto*).[6]

During the course of this discussion, there is also the celebrated passage about a type of unfortunate woman that Murasaki knew well, and whose plight she and others like her—Sei Shōnagon 清沙納言 comes readily to mind—were at such pains to avoid, for they were well educated in Chinese, a quality far from desirable in women. This particular unfortunate woman's education in Chinese had the effect of rendering her so awesomely masculine that her speech alone, larded with three-decker Chinese words (*fubyō* 風病, 'a cold'; *gokunetsu* 極熱, 'fever'; *sōyaku* 草薬, 'medicine', and so forth), was sufficient to render her unattractive to men.[7]

'China' often seems very nearly the antithesis of 'feminine'. In the whole of *Genji* there are only ten instances of waka composed by women that contain allusions to Chinese poems, in contrast to the countless number of citations to Chinese poems by the author either as narrator or in the persona of a male character. Obviously it was not thought at all ladylike to make Chinese allusions. Sei did once, very gently, only to show that she had understood an allusion to a poem by Po Chü-i, and all she got for her pains was the unwelcome admiration of the gentlemen and the nickname Kusa no Iori 草の庵, or 'Grass Shack'.[8] Even in the single instance when Genji's wife Murasaki appears to have had a Chinese source in mind, she

[6] Seidensticker, p. 27; Tamagami, I, pp. 199–201; NKBT 14, pp. 68–69.

Sei Shōnagon describes a sliding screen (*shōji* 障子) in the Seiryō Palace, 'decorated with paintings of the stormy sea and of the terrifying creatures with long arms and long legs that live there,' which the court ladies find 'unpleasant'. The screen was kept in the northeast corner, the direction from which baleful influences were thought to come. Ivan Morris, tr., *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, Penguin, Baltimore, 1974, p. 34; Matsuo Satoshi 松尾聡 & Nagai Kazuko 永井和子, ed., *Makura no Sōshi* 枕草子, Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū [NKBZ] 11, Shōgakukan, 1974, pp. 84 & 85, n. 24.

[7] Seidensticker, pp. 35–36; Tamagami, I, p. 243; NKBT 14, p. 83.

[8] Morris, pp. 89 & 306, n. 190; NKBZ 11, p. 171.

was most likely referring not to anything she had gleaned from actually reading Chinese, but rather from a screen painting that 'softened' the Chinese scene in Japanese style.[9]

We are first introduced to such paintings in *Genji*—screen paintings and the sorts of paintings women are shown perusing in the *Genji Monogatari Emaki* 源氏物語絵巻—in the passage, cited above, in which the bereaved emperor cannot desist from brooding all day over the scroll or screen depicting the story of Yang Kuei-fei. In this way the alien subject matter was 'softened', or made *wa*, 'Japanised', 'accommodated to Japanese tastes'. Such screens often treated both Japanese and Chinese subjects together, with appropriate poetic texts written on cartouches (*shikishigata* 色紙形) affixed to the screen and bearing the Japanese and Chinese lines of poetry that provided the sources of the illustrative material. These *wakan* screens (*wakan byōbu* 和漢屏風) were the visual complements of the isolated lines of poetry in Kintō's *Wakan Rōeishū*, and it seems more than likely that each of the lines in that text was capable of evoking its visual counterpart in the Heian imagination.

Indeed, one of the best known of these Heian screens was selected and calligraphed by Kintō himself; the eleventh-century *Kokon Chomonjū* 古今著聞集 tells us that this particular '*wakan* screen' showed Chinese scenes on its upper part and Japanese scenes on its lower, the two portions separated, appropriately enough, by a central area depicting water. This screen is nearly exactly contemporaneous with the composition of *Genji*, having been presented to Ishi 威子, 999–1036, third daughter of Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長, upon her marriage to the child emperor Go-Ichijō 後一条 in 1018. It was doubtless by viewing such screens that the ordinary court lady garnered her knowledge of Chinese exempla and sententiae (to use the familiar Western terms), rather than by anything so unfeminine as reading Chinese books, as the young guards officer's opinion seems to confirm. There were of course women such as Murasaki Shikibu and Sei Shōnagon, both of whose fathers were classical scholars, who were better versed in Chinese letters than was the average male courtier, and had to live with a certain amount of discomfort all their lives as a consequence. Still, it was probably the sorts of images that she saw on these *wakan* screens that gave Murasaki, too, her most vivid mental images of such set pieces as the distress of Yang Kuei-fei, Wang Chao-chün 王昭君, and the other famous Chinese exemplars who stand, screen-like, behind their counterparts in *Genji*.

[9] This discussion follows Tamagami, I, p. 68, and Kawaguchi Hisao 川口久雄, ed., *Wakan Rōeishū* 和漢朗詠集, NKBT 73, 1973, pp. 13–19. See also Kawaguchi Hisao, '*Wagakuni ni okeru Daiga Bungaku no Tenkai*' 我国に於ける題画文学の展開, in Yamagishi Tokuhei, ed., *Nihon Kambungakushi Ronkō* 日本漢文学史論考, Iwanami, 1974, pp. 201–02. Kawaguchi points out that Murasaki's description of Genji's Suma is remarkably close to a line of Po Chü-i's poetry affixed to a cartouche near a hermit's hut on one such Heian screen still extant (see illustration in Tamagami, III, pp. 130–31). This is despite the fact that Murasaki herself noted in her diary that she 'had to look uncomprehendingly at the Chinese poems affixed to the cartouches above screen paintings.' Kawaguchi, p. 202.

I have included Wang Chao-chün along with Yang Kuei-fei here for good reason, for she figures if anything even more significantly than Yang as the informing Chinese image that raises Genji to the proportions of archetypal figure. The story of his exile to Suma and Akashi (in the chapters of those names) is an extraordinarily intricate fabric whose involved design is composed of a number of interwoven, self-contained motifs. All the various themes of exile, nostalgia for the court, and encounter on foreign strands in these chapters seem to group themselves about this one well-known Chinese exemplum of the wretched exile of the Lady Wang Chao-chün to the land of the Huns as a result of her failure to bribe a venal court artist to do justice to her natural beauty. Her story provides as powerful a structural motif for 'Suma' 須磨 and Genji's exile from the capital as that of Yang Kuei-fei does for the tragedy of Kiritsubo and all that follows from it. Of all the motifs in the 'Suma' chapter—and we shall discuss several—the exile of Lady Wang is by far that which resonates most fully with all the dimensions of Genji's own situation, and sheds the most light on the many disparate facets of the chapter.

In 'Suma' we are told several times of Genji's great 'crime' (or 'sin', *tsumi* 罪) that makes the hero's self-imposed exile unavoidable.[10] This is his secret paternity of Fujitsubo's 藤壺 child, the future Reizei 冷泉 emperor, ostensibly Genji's brother but in reality his son. In spite of Genji's constant agony over this terrible deed and the fearful consequences were it to be discovered, no one else knows the true situation, and so ultimately his misdeed was not the direct cause of his exile. In reality, Genji's real 'crime' is the same as Wang Chao-chün's: both were too beautiful for their own good, and both failed to temper their dangerous, naturally radiant beauty with the practical necessity of compromise with political realities, thereby making powerful enemies at court. Some commentators have found the difference in gender to be a problem, but I do not consider that it is a large one. In dealing with one crucial and ambiguous passage, Edward Seidensticker, along with translators into modern Japanese, elected to make Genji's wife, Murasaki, the object of his thoughts while in exile. Thus, Genji's own wretchedness is likened to that of an emperor who has been forced to 'dispose of a beautiful lady'.[11] The problem here is that although Genji has indeed been thinking of Murasaki in a passage immediately preceding, there follows a marked caesura in the text, the advent of a new season, indicated by the passage beginning, 'It was winter . . .' (*fuyu ni arite*). It therefore seems likely that the eerie passage that follows in fact refers to Genji himself: it is *he* who is being likened to the beautiful Wang Chao-chün; and if her fate was tragic, thinks Genji, then how much more miserable must be his own emperor, faced with the prospect of sending someone as beloved

[10] Seidensticker, p. 221; Tamagami, II, pp. 26–29; NKBT 15, p. 14. Also, Seidensticker, p. 226; Tamagami, III, pp. 51 & 54; NKBT 15, p. 24.

[11] The section begins, '*Mashite ikanarikemu*. . . .' Seidensticker, p. 240; Tamagami, III, p. 118; NKBT 15, p. 45.

as Genji from his side.[12] There follows an allusion to a line of poetry by Ōe no Asatsuna 大江朝綱, whose poem about Lady Wang was well known to the Heian audience, having been included, not as the usual couplet but rather line for line, in the *Wakan Rōeishū*:

One sound of the Tartar horn—frost puts an end to her [his?] dreams,
A myriad leagues from the Han Palace—her [his?] heart breaks before the moon.

These lines are equally ambiguous and may refer either to Wang or the Han Emperor. It is probable that any Heian reader would also have recognized here the keen recriminations felt by all parties, Chinese or Japanese, for he would mentally have finished the last two lines of the poem as it continues in the *Wakan Rōeishū*:

If only Lady Wang had paid the painter his bribe of gold,
She could have spent her entire life in the service of her lord.[13]

Such were doubtless Genji's thoughts at that moment. But even in such a situation the Shining Genji would never be anything less than radiant, and it is doubtful that even Po Chü-i, whose poem about Wang Chao-chün heads the seven lines devoted to her in the *Wakan Rōeishū*, could have depicted him in the same ironic light as he did the wretched Lady Wang:

Misery, bitterness, wretchedness, and hard labor have left her so haggard,
That now in reality she has come to resemble the portrait that did her such injustice.[14]

That the story of Wang Chao-chün may have been even more popular in the Heian period than that of Yang Kuei-fei, can be seen in the fact that Wang and no other historical personage is given a separate section to herself in the *Wakan Rōeishū*.

Yet later in *Genji* it becomes clear that there is a certain amount of discomfort, within the framework of an entirely Japanese court setting, with both Yang and Wang as possessing certain inauspicious qualities unsuitable to a Genji who has emerged renewed and triumphant from his ordeals in exile. Early in the 'Eawase' 絵合 chapter Genji and Murasaki are found sorting through their collection of illustrated narrative stories to use in the approaching picture contest. Those of the tragic Yang Kuei-fei and Wang Chao-chün are singled out for mention as 'particularly interesting', but are quickly rejected for exhibition at the contest (at

[12] See the end of n. 2 in Tamagami, III, p. 119.

[13] NKBT 73, p. 231, no. 702. It is interesting that the same confusion over whether the Emperor or Lady Wang is the subject also occurs in the retelling of the story by Minamoto Toshiyori (Shunrai) 源俊頼, 1055–1129, in *Shunrai Zuinō* 俊頼髄脳, NKBZ 15, pp. 237 ff & n. 13.

[14] *Po Hsiang-shan Shih-chi*, p. 152. See also Eugene Eoyang, 'The Wang Chao-chün Legend: Configurations of the Classic', in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, and Reviews*, IV:1 (January 1982), pp. 3–22.

which the emperor is to be present) as 'inauspicious' (*koto no imi aru*).[15] Again, however, the author has revealed her Chinese backdrop, and immediately afterward she has Genji decide to show Murasaki the paintings he did of his Suma exile. Later in the chapter the contest is won by these paintings, apparently not in their original form but mounted as elements of a *wakan* screen, that is, as pictures with Chinese and Japanese subjects provided 'with captions in cursive Chinese and Japanese' lines of poetry written on cartouches and affixed by the scenes to which they are related. Given the nature of the other purely Japanese illustrated stories against which Genji's are set in competition, it is clear that it is not merely the story of his exile but the exile against the ground of Chinese archetype that stands out so impressively among the rest of the paintings. The *wakan* screen is symbolic of Genji's ability to mediate in one person between China and Japan; it refers as a capsule reminder of this metaphoric function in the 'Suma' chapter and is placed firmly in antithetical relationship to both the 'inauspicious' Chinese themes as well as the purely Japanese ones.

The 'Suma' chapter first begins to weave its patterns of Chinese and Japanese motifs with a reference to the famous exile of Ariwara no Yukihira 在原行平, an association of 'exile' and 'Suma' that would have occurred automatically to any Heian reader, for 'When people in the Genji period heard the word "Suma", they thought of Yukihira's poem':[16]

Wakuraba ni	If someone should inquire
Tou hito araba	For me, reply:
Suma no ura ni	He idles at Suma
Moshio taretsutsu	Dripping brine
Wabu to kotae yo	From the sea grass.[17]

Yukihira was the brother of the poet Ariwara no Narihira 在原成平, traditionally held to have composed *Ise Monogatari* 伊勢物語. The celebrated episode of his exile appears to have arisen around this poem as a 'context' for it, for there is no historical record of Yukihira's exile to Suma in other sources. There is also a poem in *Ise Monogatari* (included also in the *Kokinshū* 古今集) to which Genji alludes upon his departure for Suma in a poem to Princess Ōmiya 大宮, the mother of his dead wife Aoi 葵:

Suma no ama no	Like the smoke
Shioyaku keburi	From the salt-burners' fires
Kaze o itami	Agitated by the wind,
Omowanu kata ni	The one I love has drifted off
Tanabikinikeri[18]	In an unforeseen direction.

[15] Tamagami, IV, p. 35; Seidensticker, p. 310; NKBT 15, p. 177. See also Abe Akio 阿部秋生 *et al.*, ed., *Genji Monogatari*, NKBZ 13, p. 378, n. 1.

[16] Tamagami, III, pp. 74 ff.

[17] Seidensticker, p. 231; *Kokinshū* 古今集, no. 962.

[18] Tamagami, III, p. 75; *Kokinshū*, no. 708; Fukui Sadasuke 福井貞助, ed., *Ise Monogatari* 伊勢物語, NKBZ 8, p. 227.

Genji's poem looks both ahead to the wretchedness of a Suma exile, as a native classical typos, as well as backward in its allusion to another poem recited by Genji at Aoi's funeral that mentions another kind of smoke, that of the funeral pyres at Mt Toribe, and so serves, as does Genji's visit to the Princess at this time, both to tie up a loose end and to foreshadow a later event.

There is also the well-known exile that provided the immediate historical model for Genji's, that of Minister of the Left Minamoto no Takaakira 源高明, forced into exile to Kyushu in 969 for three years, leaving the capital at precisely the same time of year as did Genji.[19] Murasaki's readers would have shuddered with recognition at the thought of Takaakira, whom the Fujiwara had removed from power with the charge of conspiring against the very emperor whose name, Reizei, Genji's dangerously illegitimate child will later assume upon succession to the throne. The way in which the elegant intricacies of the novel are acted out against the blunt realities of the often fatal consequences for those involved in the machiavellian Fujiwara manipulations at court adds an urgency to Genji's predicament that the Western reader can scarcely sense. Indeed, all the colorful and pleasant pageantry of the picture contest in 'Eawase' is played out against the brutal political rivalries of the Genji and Kōkiden 弘徽殿 factions at court, and the final decision in favor of Genji's paintings of his Suma exile represents his victory over his enemies.

And so the 'Suma' chapter begins with a variety of Japanese allusions, the motifs that the very name Suma would have conjured up in the imaginations of Murasaki Shikibu's readers. It is not long, however, before she begins to reveal the Chinese warp-threads into which the Japanese patterns of the exile theme are to be woven through Genji's frequent allusion to that 'other land', China, whose famous stories of exile were familiar to the Heian audience. And the Chinese exemplar whose exiles figure most prominently in 'Suma' is, as we should expect, Po Chü-i. We discover again in her frequent allusions to his poetry how far beyond the ordinary was Murasaki's education in Chinese literature.

When Genji sets out for Suma (but one day's journey from the capital, it should be noted), for example, the things he takes along, 'only the simplest essentials for a rustic life, among them a book chest, *The Collected Poems of Po Chü-i* and the like, and a seven-stringed Chinese koto' [*kin*],[20] are modelled upon the description of the contents of Po's house in exile at Mt Lu in the south of China, which included 'a lacquered lute and a few scrolls of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist writings'.[21] It is both amusing and instructive to find the Japanese author contracting the whole range of Chinese literature to its essentials—'*The Collected Poems of Po Chü-i* and the like'. Japanese commentators are helpful in locating for us the sources of such allusions; the fact is, however, that so much of Murasaki's description in this chapter echoes Po Chü-i that it is impossible to limit the sources of her manifold references to a few poems.

[19] Tamagami, III, pp. 18 ff.
[20] Tamagami, III, p. 48; NKBT 15, p. 22.
[21] *Po Hsiang-shan Shih-chi*, pp. 69–70.

We can locate a particular period of exile, however, that appears to have been the wellspring of most of Murasaki's allusions. This period lasted from 815 to 817, when Po was demoted to a low-ranking post in Chiang-chou, near Lake Po-yang in the south of China. As Po describes it, this was a place of 'yellow fogs and constant dampness'; the aboriginal native populace there played music and sang songs that grated harshly on the northern poet's sensitive ears. He called their speech 'as incomprehensible as the chirping of the birds', just as Genji's friend Tō no Chūjō 頭中将 characterized that of the natives of Suma.[22]

The house that Po built during this period of exile, located in an area below Hsiang-lu Peak 香炉峯 on Mt Lu, is clearly the source of one of the two somewhat contradictory descriptions of Genji's house at Suma, into which Genji moved on the 27th day of the third month, the same day that Po moved into his. The first description of Genji's house immediately follows the allusion to Ariwara no Yukihira[23] and would seem entirely Japanese. And yet the brook that is brought into the garden, the plants in that garden, and the house's setting deep in the mountains all call to mind the many poems that Po 'Inscribed on the Eastern Wall of His New House Below Hsiang-lu Peak',[24] in which he describes the dwelling as deep in the mountains, surrounded by herb and tea plants, and graced with a brook that the poet had run into the garden and prized above all else.

The other, 'Chinese' (*karameita*), description of the house at Suma is even more clearly modeled on Po's series of poems about his new home below Hsiang-lu Peak, with its fence of plaited bamboo, pillars of pine, and stairs of stone, all of which are mentioned in the first of Po's poems.[25] These few examples only begin to point out the complexities lying on the surface of the intricate fabric of allusion to Po Chü-i in the 'Suma' chapter.

Heian readers, once reminded of Po, would also have been put in mind of his best-known Japanese exponent, Sugawara no Michizane, whose tragic exile by the Fujiwara, recorded in the *Ōkagami* 大鏡, provided yet another thematic model for Genji's exile and reinforces the reader's consciousness of the allusions to Po. The relationship between the Chinese and Japanese poets is echoed especially in two lines of poetry. The first is by Po, addressed to his best friend Yüan Chen, who was also in exile at that time. In this poem Po recounts his thoughts while viewing the most famous moon of the year, on the 15th day of the eighth month, from the Imperial Palace, fearing that his distant friend will not see it as the moon will be 'hidden by the low damps of Ch'ang-ling in autumn.'[26] The allusion to a line by Michizane that follows refers to the Japanese poet's memories of the emperor in the capital, serving both to advance the time frame by its re-

[22] *Po Hsiang-shan Shih-chi*, p. 122; Seidensticker, p. 244; Tamagami, III, p. 132; NKBT 15, p. 50.

[23] Seidensticker, p. 231; Tamagami, III, pp. 73–74; NKBT 15, p. 30.

[24] *Po Hsiang-shan Shih-chi*, p. 177.

[25] Seidensticker, p. 244; Tamagami, III, pp. 129–30; NKBT 15, p. 49.

[26] *Po Hsiang-shan Shin-chi*, p. 144; Seidensticker, p. 238; Tamagami, III, p. 105; NKBT 15, p. 41.

ference to a festival in the ninth month, and to indicate by Po's thoughts of those at court that Genji is thinking of his brother, the Suzaku 朱雀 Emperor, and also, as we have seen in the figure of Wang Chao-chün, of the probable sadness of that emperor at having had to send from his side someone of such radiant beauty. Another reference to a poem by Michizane about the moon[27] will serve to intensify the exile's awareness of the sense of finality implicit in the moon's unswerving path through the night sky, ever sinking toward extinction in the west. And this same image of the moon will return at the end of 'Eawase' to illuminate the musical gathering in celebration of Genji's victory, and to bring back this same sense of the Shining Genji's sudden awareness of his own impermanence in the theme of Buddhist rejection of the world.

The longing for a distant friend that is implied in the references to Po's poems addressed to Yüan Chen is finally realized in 'Suma' by the visit of the rather timorous Tō no Chūjō to Genji in exile.[28] When Tō arrives, the two friends 'composed Chinese poetry all through the night,' and when the wine was served, 'their toast was from Po Chü-i: "Sad topers we, our springtime cups flow with tears." ' This line alludes to a poem written by Po in 819, when he chanced to meet Yüan again after a separation of four years.[29] At the time, Yüan was being recalled from exile and was en route to a posting near the capital, while Po was on his way from the capital to a post in Chung-chou. The encounter of the two friends occurred on the 11th day of the third month, and so precedes that of Genji and Tō no Chūjō by about a month. The fact that the dates do not match so well as others do suggests that Murasaki found the nature of the occasion of the Chinese poem to outweigh considerations of chronology.

The point of all this detail is not that Murasaki's plot is a patchwork of allusions. To say that is to say nothing at all, for it does not even begin to 'explain' the power of the story of Genji's exile; indeed, it explains away all the power of the writing and leaves nothing but a bare and ungainly skeleton for our consideration. It is rather to point out the particular method that Murasaki used, a sort of chiaroscuro technique by which she imparted to her figures greater depth and dimensionality, and made them and their actions stand out more clearly against the complexly interwoven designs of plot, place, time, and the working out of karmic destiny. She gave, as it were, Chinese shadows to her events and characters, in contrast to which they stand out all the more strikingly as distinctly Japanese. Such a consciously employed technique would seem to indicate that, by the beginning of the eleventh century, the author of *Genji* felt herself to be sufficiently distant from an immediate sense of the overwhelming presence of mainland culture that she could use its matter to lend archetypal significance to the life of her rather claustrophobic little court. We find in her diary, *Murasaki Shikibu Nikki* 紫式部日記, the same sense of a mind at once intricately involved with the details of court

[27] Seidensticker, p. 241; Tamagami, III, p. 119; NKBT 15, p. 45.

[28] Seidensticker, pp. 243–45; Tamagami, III, pp. 128–39; NKBT 15, pp. 49–52.

[29] *Po Hsiang-shan Shin-chi*, pp. 195–96.

life and at the same time able to endow those details with a feeling for history and destiny without which detail is no more significant than a mote of dust. In *Genji*, China sets for every aspect of court life the grand pattern against which, like the delicate tracery of feminine *kana* calligraphy against the impressive masculine geometry of prized Chinese writing-paper (*karakami* 唐紙), true elegance of character, the significance of apparently trivial detail, are shown to best effect.[30]

But Murasaki also shows us in *Genji* that there were those of her time who were not so entirely comfortable in the presence of alien matters. Not everyone mediated between China and Japan so successfully as Genji did, and not everyone could, like Genji, look perfectly at ease in a Chinese robe (*karagoromo* 唐衣);[31] or seem anything less than perfectly apt in reciting a Chinese poem, like the poor rhymers at the banquet in 'Hana no En' 花の宴;[32] or sound brilliantly talented playing the difficult Chinese seven-stringed koto (*kin* 琴). Genji himself is permanently identified throughout the story with this instrument; whenever he reaches for an instrument to play, it is almost invariably the Chinese koto. Entire chapters—'Akashi' 明石, for example, and the second 'Wakana' 若菜—seem to be built upon the playing of koto music, and this music can be heard whenever we are to learn of great and mysterious depths of character, whether Genji's or anyone else's.

Genji in fact can be regarded as a multi-dimensional improvement on an earlier fictional model, the character Toshikage 俊蔭 in *Utsuho Monogatari* 宇津保物語, ca. 960, whose sole dimension is his ability to play the lute. During the course of the picture contest in 'Eawase', illustrations from *Utsuho* are pitted against those from the even more ancient *Taketori Monogatari* 竹取物語, and we are told, 'Toshikage was battered by tempests and waves and swept off to foreign parts, but he finally came home, whence his musical activities sent his fame back across the waters and down through the centuries. This painting successfully blends the Chinese and the Japanese and the new and the old, and I say that it is without rival.'[33] Genji's own fame, by contrast, is compounded of all the senses, part music, part scent, part radiance. Even in music he demonstrates his multiple dimensions by playing, just once, the Japanese koto (*wagon* 和琴) to good effect in winning the affections of Tamakazura 玉鬘 in 'Tokonatsu'. Genji even contrasts the Japanese instrument to the Chinese with mock humility by belittling its name: 'It may be looked down on as just a "crude domestic product" [*yamatogoto to hakanaku misete*]', used by 'women who cannot know much about foreign things.'[34]

In a memorable scene, in the second 'Wakana' chapter, Genji assembles his various women on a veranda in the first month to present a remarkable 'female concert' for the emperor.[35] Murasaki is to play the *wagon*, the Akashi Lady the

[30] Seidensticker, p. 402; NKBT 15, p. 362; Tamagami, III, p. 87.

[31] Seidensticker, p. 474; NKBT 16, p. 80; Tamagami, VI, p. 72.

[32] Seidensticker, pp. 150–51; NKBT 14, p. 303; Tamagami, II, p. 327.

[33] Seidensticker, p. 312; NKBT 15, p. 180; Tamagami, IV, p. 40.

[34] Seidensticker, p. 144; NKBT 16, p. 17; Tamagami, V, p. 374.

[35] Seidensticker, pp. 600 ff; NKBT 16, p. 342; Tamagami, VII, p. 340.

biwa 琵琶, her daughter the Akashi Princess the thirteen-stringed Chinese *shō* 笙, and the Third Princess Genji's own seven-stringed Chinese koto. The instrument and music played by each woman are clearly intended to reflect her character. Thus, 'The thirteen-stringed koto [*shō*] holds its pitch on the whole well enough . . . but the bridges have a way of slipping in the middle of a concert.' Its player, the Akashi Princess, is not a worry to Genji on this account, however, since she has often performed in concerts before the emperor. And so, 'the thirteen-stringed Chinese koto, a gentle, feminine sort of instrument, takes its place hesitantly and deferentially among the other instruments.' Murasaki's Japanese koto, again deprecated by the term *yamatogoto*, 'was most likely to cause trouble,' for 'everything about it is fluid and indefinite, and there are no clear guides.' It is especially intriguing to Yūgiri 夕桐, Genji's son, who is always rather too curious about his beautiful stepmother. The instrument that Genji has the most reason to worry about is the *kin*; no one but Genji can play it well, rather like the bow in the sagas that none but the hero can bend, and Genji has been trying to teach it to the little Third Princess, a hopeless task and he knows it.

In the evaluation following the concert, Genji returns to soliloquize on the difficulties of his own instrument. 'The seven-stringed koto is the unmanageable one [a foreshadowing of the Third Princess' affair with Kashiwagi]. We are told that in ancient times there were many who mastered the whole tradition of the instrument, and made heaven and earth their own, and softened the hearts of demons and gods.' Here again Genji is referring to Toshikage of *Utsuho Monogatari*, and also to the statement concerning the properties of music found in the Great Preface to the *Shih Ching* 詩経. 'There was a time,' Genji continues, 'before the tradition had been established in Japan, when the most enormous trouble was required of anyone who sought to learn the art. He must spend years in strange lands and give up everything, and even then only a few came back with what they had gone out to seek. In the old chronicles there are stories of musicians who moved the moon and the stars and brought unseasonal snows and frosts and conjured up tempests and thunders. . . .' But now the world and Genji are both in decline: 'The seven-stringed koto was the instrument that moved demons and gods, and inadequate mastery had correspondingly unhappy results. What other instrument is to be at the center of things, setting the tone for all the others? Ours is a day of very sad decline. Only a madman, we say, would be so obsessed with an art as to abandon parents and children and go wandering off over Korea and China.'[36]

The koto is the thread that holds the long and rambling *Utsuho Monogatari* together—its discovery in a foreign land after Toshikage is shipwrecked en route to China, its journey back to Japan and secret transmission there through several

[36] Seidensticker, pp. 604–05; NKBT 16, pp. 351–52; Tamagami, VII, pp. 362–66. 'Strange land' in the quotation is *shiranu kuni* 知らぬ国 in the original text; this may be interpreted as China or Korea as well as the Hashi (Chinese P'o-ssu, or Persia) of Toshikage's Travels.

generations, and its final emergence after years of secret teachings as an entirely Japanese miracle of music.[37] This story of an Ur-koto is the model for Genji, anxious to transmit his own store of esoteric knowledge to his children and grandchildren, an anxiety that tells of his own ever-increasing sense of mortality. Toshikage's search is a tale that carries profound implications for Genji, but its significance goes even deeper; we can see in it the locus classicus of the theme of the absorption of China into Japan, and not of music alone but of language itself, if we consider the fairly common punning reading of *koto* for 'word' that occurs, for example, in the 'Yokobue' 横笛 chapter.[38]

There is more than a little cultural chauvinism inherent in this theme—Toshikage's achievements, as Genji remarks, were someday to astonish those very foreigners (*hito no mikado*, 'emperors of foreign lands') from whom the music was first learned. This turn-about theme can be seen in other contemporary sources as well. In the late-twelfth-century scroll relating the adventures of Kibi no Makibi 吉備真備, 693–775, in China, for example, the Japanese hero not only defeats the Chinese at every contest they set him—he is also made to outshine his Japanese contemporary Abe no Nakamaro 阿倍仲麻呂, 698–770, an earlier envoy to China who all too servilely gave in to slavish imitation of the Chinese and even went so far as to wear Chinese court robes. Kibi enlists poor Nakamaro's ghost to help him win against the Chinese when they resort to foul play, but only after the gruesome wraith has donned proper Japanese court attire.

If the theme of the voyage to China is in part an odyssey, a reaching out into the terrors of the dark unknown in order to return home with a renewed sense of the secure familiarity of one's own, we inevitably come out on the other side of the dialectic of the Great Model that elevates the lesser. For the natural concommitant of familiarity was contempt, and of successfully making the repeated quest to foreign lands, the thumbing of one's nose at what had seemed so awful in the first place. Thus, Michizane was banished as a creature of foreign influence; even his great model Po Chü-i was dethroned in a later century in the noh play *Hakurakuten* 白楽天, where he is bettered at his own game of poetry by the Japanese deity Sumiyoshi 住吉 in the guise of an old fisherman. Perhaps from the Japanese point of view there is always a price to be exacted from the superior in a relationship, and Ernst Robert Curtius suggests as much for the relationship between the Roman Imperium and the new empire established under Charlemagne.

> Let us not forget that the 'Latin Middle Ages' is nowise limited to the idea of Rome in the sense of a glorification of Rome or of an effort to renew it. The concept of *translatio*, indeed, implies that the transfer of dominion from one empire to another is a result of a sinful misuse of that dominion.[39]

[37] Kōno Tama 河野多麻, *Utsuho Monogatari Denbon no Kenkyū* うつほ物語伝本の研究, Iwanami, 1973, pp. 65 ff. Kato Shuichi, *A History of Japanese Literature: The First Thousand Years*, Kodansha International, 1982, pp. 163 ff.

[38] Seidensticker, p. 661; NKBT 17, p. 63; Tamagami, VIII, p. 189.

[39] Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Harper, New

For Japan, of course, 'Rome' was always offshore, whether in decline or in reinvigoration, inviting further translation, in every sense of the word, as well as further resentment. The Japanese could not have failed to notice in their studies that the Chinese dialectic of *t'ien-ming* 天命, the 'mandate of Heaven', taken from unworthy rulers and passed on to the worthy, was a two-edged sword that cut both ways; in times of national distress it is only natural that the barbarians should fail to remember the virtues of a crumbling empire. But just as the realities of a less than ruly peasantry seem to creep stealthily around the margins of the text of *Genji*, so is a less than ideal China still atenuated, suggested as yet perhaps only in those 'terrifying creatures' on screens that so alarmed the court ladies. China, like the pine-tree backdrop for the noh stage, stands as the incorruptible image against which the action takes on formal significance, a symbol of the immutable and eternal that endows the characters with their most human dimensions.

York, 1963, p. 29. The concept of *translatio* in the quotation refers to both *translatio imperii*, or the transfer of the Roman Imperium to another people, and *translatio studii*, or the transfer of learning from Rome to Paris.