1 INTRODUCTION

In the twelfth century, court waka—that most orthodox of genres—became the vehicle by which Japanese writers brought their literary and spiritual aspirations together in a new way. The shift they made from the practices of their cultural past, and the new mindset that was formed as a result of this shift, is the story of this study.

Several questions arise when we delve into the intersections of the literary and the religious—specifically, the intersections of waka poetry (a short thirty-one-syllable poem) as a genre of Japanese literature and Buddhist poetry as a category of that genre. The first question focuses upon the “shift” mentioned above. Japanese and Western scholars seem to agree that there was a change that occurred in the orientation of poetry during the twelfth century, when writers began to apply certain Buddhist philosophical concepts that had come to pervade various aspects of Heian life to the skill of writing waka. The poetry and prose of Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114–1204) is usually cited as the best evidence for this shift. This study will show that Shunzei’s “new” approach to waka was in fact the culmination of a synthesis that began in the Nara period (710–784), gave birth to new literary expressions in the mid to late Heian period (784–1185), and came to fruition under Shunzei’s direction in the compilation of the seventh imperial poetry anthology (Senzaiwakashū [hereafter Senzaishū], 1188), when he created two new independent books of waka called “Shakkyō-ka” (uta/waka on the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni) and “Jingi-ka”
(waka on kami matters).¹ It is the waka of the former kind that will be the focus of this study.²

A second, and more general, question pertains to the manner in which waka maintained its generic qualities in terms of topic, meter (syllabics), diction, rhetoric, and tone, after it began to accommodate the philosophical ideas of a soteriological religion like Buddhism. A thirty-one-syllable poem hardly seems the kind of genre that would—or could—explicate or embody these complex religious ideas.

A third question pertains to the venue in which Buddhist waka came to be compiled. While Buddhist waka appear in various kinds of anthologies, this study analyzes the evolution of Buddhist waka that were included within the imperial poetry anthology (chokusenwakashū [hereafter chokusenshū]) during the second half of the Heian period.³ As a literary project that originated by decree from the sovereign Daigo (r. 897–930) in the early tenth century, the chokusenshū was initiated as a public forum for the display of court poetry, and because it originated from the emperor himself, it was grounded, in the tenth century at least, in a kami-centered worldview, making it an unlikely repository for waka on nonnative (i.e., Buddhist) themes.

Finally, questions arise concerning particular Buddhist and Buddhist-related concepts that comprised the world of ideas during the Heian period. Were there certain concepts that may have contributed to the appearance of Buddhist waka more than others? Was the conflation of Buddhism and poetry that is said to have occurred during the twelfth century a result of an ongoing discussion

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¹. When referring to the kind, or sub-genre, of waka, shakkyō-ka will appear in italics with no capital letter. When I am referring to a book of shakkyō-ka, it will appear as “Shakkyō-ka.” Kami refers to the native Japanese “gods.”

². I will not take up jingi-ka in this study, but such poems were the subject of a recent MA thesis (2010) by Christina Olinyk at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst entitled “Poems of the Gods of the Heaven and the Earth: An Annotated Translation of the Jingi-ka Book of the Senzaishū.”

³. For the purposes of this study, unless indicated otherwise, the word “waka” and “poem/poetry” will be used interchangeably and will refer to all aspects of its appearance in an anthology: that is, its headnote (kotobagaki) or topic (dai), the thirty-one-syllable poem, and the poem’s attribution.
of these concepts or the result of certain kinds of experience to which
the imperial court opened itself at that time?

**What’s at Stake**

The questions posed above form the core of this study: the evolution of Buddhist *waka* from the time of the *Man'yōshū* (ca. 759) to the *Senzaishū* (1188), the specific nature of the shift concerning *waka* that occurred in the twelfth century, the preservation of *waka*’s courtliness as it assimilated Buddhist ideas, and the religious, philosophical and literary ideas that formed a conceptual locus out of which Buddhist *waka* could arise.

The impetus for this work arose from William LaFleur’s groundbreaking study of the Buddhist values that were assigned to literary works and the literary values that were assigned to the Buddhist teachings. *The Karma of Words* presented scholars with a new paradigm of Japanese medieval history, Buddhist philosophy, and literature in several genres. LaFleur’s claim that “the arc of Japan’s medieval experience” should rightly begin with the compilation of Kyōkai’s *Nihonkoku genpō zen’aku ryōiki*, or *Nihon ryōiki* (ca. 810–824), in the early part of the Heian period (784–1185), challenged previous periodization schemes by both Western and Japanese scholars that located the medieval in the political sphere. Likewise, his discussion of Fujiwara no Shunzei (1114–1204), medieval *waka* and Tendai Buddhist doctrines paved the way for other studies—mostly notably Edward Kamens’s translation and study of the *Hosshin wakashū* and Rajyashree Pandey’s work on Kamo no Chōmei—to explore Japanese Buddhist poetry in more detail.

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This study, however, does not focus on either “the medieval arc” of Japanese literary history or upon a particular work or poet, but rather upon the development of a particular sub-genre of poetry that came to be called shakkyō-ka. In The Karma of Words, LaFleur wrote the following about court waka and Buddhism: “In Shunzei’s view, a poem is Buddhist not because it has hidden within it an allusion to a scripture or an unambiguously sacred source, but because the trajectory back to that source itself produces a rejection of the distinction between sacred and profane literatures.”6 This is a provocative idea, not only because of what it reveals about Shunzei, poetry, and Buddhism, but also because of what it does not reveal: if Shunzei did believe that poetry was not Buddhist because of its allusions and references, then why did he feel compelled to create an independent book of shakkyō-ka—waka that clearly allude to sacred Buddhist sources—in the Senzaishū? If court waka did not need Buddhist appurtenances to be Buddhist, then why was it necessary to compile poems that were known by this time as shakkyō-ka (waka on the teachings of the Buddha)?

The aim of this study is to look carefully at the kinds of poems Japanese poets considered Buddhist—or compiled in such ways as to become Buddhist—as a means of clarifying how the Japanese came to regard the waka as holding salvific power. The principal argument of this study will be that while the writing of waka on Buddhist themes provided a familiar literary format whereby the aristocracy could select those teachings that were best suited for its literary sensibilities, the compilers of the imperial poetry anthologies were also selective about the arrangement of these poems. Because waka on Buddhist themes needed to fulfill their duties as courtly poems at the same time that they represented some aspect of the compiler’s interpretation of the Buddhist teachings, they occupied at once two epistemological realms—the literary and the religious. As a mediator of these two realms, waka on Buddhist themes would eventually contribute significantly to the concept known as kadō soku butsudō (the path of poetry is none other than the path of the Buddha).

AVENUES OF INTERROGATION

The primary pathway through which the idea that “the path of poetry is none other than the path of the Buddha” may be understood is to examine the gradual evolution of waka on Buddhist themes that led to that statement. During the era of the Man’yōshū, the chokusenshishū (imperial kanshi anthologies) in the early 800s, the Kokinwakashū (hereafter Kokinshū, 905) and the Gosenwakashū (hereafter Gosenshū, 951), it was not at all clear that waka would ever become the kind of genre that dealt with Buddhist occasions or Buddhist texts, much less Buddhist concepts. Unlike many Western literatures that expressed Christian ideas in poetic form very early in their histories, Japanese poetry did not find a way to express feelings and thoughts about Buddhist teachings until almost five hundred years after the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in 538. While we do find poems on Buddhist-related topics (character- or narrative-based, rather than on themes related to the teachings) during this era, it was not until the early eleventh century that a group of waka on Buddhist themes was compiled in the Shūiwakashū (hereafter Shūishū, ca. 1005–1007), the third imperial poetry anthology after the Kokinshū and the Gosenshū.

During the period of this evolution from the late 600s to the late 1100s, the compilers of the imperial anthologies, my focus here, seemed unsure at times what to call or where to include these waka. In the Shūishū, the compiler or compilers (which remains unclear) included them, without any titular designation, within the book of Laments (“Aishō-ka”). In the Goshūiwakashū (hereafter Goshūishū, 1086) the fourth imperial anthology, the compiler subcategorized nineteen waka on Buddhist themes within a book of “Miscellaneous Poems” (Zōka) calling them “Shakkyō.” In the fifth and sixth imperial anthologies, Kin’yōwakashū (hereafter Kin’yōshū, 1126–1127) and Shikawakashū (hereafter Shikashū, 1151) waka on Buddhist themes lost their “Shakkyō” title, though their location in books of “Miscellaneous Waka” did not change. Uncertainties about naming waka on Buddhist themes were not definitively resolved until the seventh imperial anthology, Senzaishū, in which for the first time the compiler
created an independent book of Buddhist waka called “Shakkyō-ka.” From this point forward, such books appeared in every subsequent imperial anthology up to and including the final one completed in 1439. The five imperial anthologies during which this evolution took place, from the Shūishū through the Goshūishū, Kin’yōshū, Shikashū, and Senzaishū, must therefore comprise the main focus of this study, though it will also be helpful to examine poetry on Buddhist topics before the Shūishū, when the role and development of such poems was still unclear.

Questions of terminology and categories are a recurring issue that is central to this study. These problems of terminology concerning waka on Buddhist themes are not merely confined to the realm of semantics. As many cognitive scientists have shown, what something is named and how it is categorized are deeply connected with our epistemological interpretations of the world, and have effective consequences thereafter. That these poems were not given any categorical distinction in the earlier eras of Japanese literary history, then later compiled as a variety of aishō-ka (lament), zōka (miscellaneous poem), and finally designated as shakkyō-ka (poems on the teachings of the Buddha), signals the gradual resolution of an internal tension among court poets. The primary causes of this tension had been uncertainty about the appropriateness of waka—a poetic form believed to have been transmitted from the kami—for Buddhist expression, as well as the appropriateness of the imperial anthologies—a representation of the imperial mandala, if you will—as a repository for such poems. Though definitive responses to such tensions did not occur at one specific time in history, in any single genre of literature, or with the support of any one Buddhist teaching, we will be able to point to certain temporal, literary, and religio-philosophical moments as signposts for understanding the process by which the literary and Buddhist religious spheres eventually conflated.

It will also be important to this study to examine the strategies by which poets and compilers maintained the courtliness of the waka form. This will entail a close look, not only at the internal projects
of the poems themselves, but also the strategies of association and progression within the sequences in which the poems appear, and by which their meanings were amplified. As the overarching task of this study is to track the development of a new subgenre of *waka*, the chapters progress chronologically. It will be helpful occasionally to refer to *waka* on Buddhist themes in other kinds of anthologies (personal [*shisenshū*] and private [*shikashū*]) as well as poetry competitions (*utaawase*) and one-hundred-poem sequences (*hyakushu-uta*), but the imperial anthologies will be the principal focus. It will be especially important to demonstrate how compilers of the imperial poetry anthologies schematically organized sequences of Buddhist *waka*, in some cases, as poetic reconstructions of the Buddhist path (J: *michi*, C: *tao*; S: *mārga*) and in other cases as *tableaux vivants* of certain themes, the organization of sūtra chapters, pertaining to certain kinds of Buddhist occasions, or even alluding to the relationship among authors to whom the poems were attributed. Close readings of individual poems in all of the anthologies during which this evolution took place will demonstrate how a variety of teachings were used to support the process by which compilers and poets came to write court *waka* on Buddhist themes, and how, eventually, these poems were granted status equal to other categories of court *waka*.

It will be important as we begin to establish a working vocabulary with which to describe the “modes” and “modalities” of poetry, to examine previous Japanese scholarship on the topic of Buddhist *waka* and *shakkyō-ka*, to ascertain the religiosity of both *waka* and Buddhist *waka*, to clarify terms and categories, and finally to describe our translation strategies and goals.

**Modes and Modalities**

It is important not to lose sight of the courtly nature of *waka* on Buddhist themes. It has become unfashionable and ethnocentric to discuss *waka* as the Japanese version of the Western lyric poem, and this study will not do so. However, it would not be helpful to
dissociate that which is *lyric* from the *waka*. Whether a poem arises from or is prompted by a public, social, or personal occasion, it can have lyric qualities—that is, it can express and/or evoke feelings (the hallmark of lyric poetry): it may simultaneously fill its personal and public responsibilities (such as taking a role in a poetry competition). The characteristics of the lyric mode are that it is often grounded in sensually specific vocabulary (imagery—but also pertaining to the other four senses), and that its focus tends toward subjectivity rather than objectivity. But the lyric is not the only mode in play: there are two other modes, narrative and meditative, which also play important roles in any given poem. In the case of reading *waka*, the narrative layer is often provided by either the headnote or the topic, by which the anthologizer provides readers with a “story” element often lacking in the poem proper: where and when the poem was composed, the person or people involved in the occasion (in addition to, in some cases, the author), and the situation that prompted its writing.7 The narrative “predicament,” as one poet calls it, does not need to be complex to qualify as a narrative: waiting for a lover or observing the cherry blossoms were common narrative predicaments for court poetry, which Buddhist poems would adapt or transform. (In the case of *waka* based on a topic rather than a headnote [often more generous in its information], frequently there is still a narrative element, either implied by the fact that the topic has been assigned, by someone [usually] other than the author, or appearing in the poem itself.) Reading *waka* or *shakkyō-ka* sequentially in an imperial poetry anthology, the narrative provided by the headnote or topic to a single poem is enhanced when read in conjunction with the previous and following headnote/topic and poem. When the anthologizer wished to create a longer or more complex narrative, as in the case of the *Shūishū*, poems were arranged in such a way as to imply that story. By such strategies, poets and anthologizers circumvented the inherent

narrative limitations of *waka*, and ensured that the narrative mode—essential to ground the poem in a specific reality—was in place to support the overall poetic project. Often when these poems were written, the recipient(s) understood the narrative context; it was later that the missing narrative element needed to be supplied by the anthologizer.

Finally, with the emergence of *waka* on Buddhist themes, a third poetic mode becomes more prominent: the meditative. Deployment of the meditative mode does not necessarily designate poetry that is contemplative or provoked by meditative discipline, though it could include both of those qualities. In the West, the label “meditative poetry” is often given to either to the metaphysical poets of seventeenth-century England or the mystical poetry of Rumi or William Blake. More recently, meditative poetry has also been associated with American poets like Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg. However, the meditative *mode*, rather than meditative *poetry*, is characterized by the way it focuses “on working out an idea or a philosophical argument or considers the *meaning* of narrative, in ways that appeal primarily to the intellect.”

Narrative belongs to the realm of facts, events, and other specifics that the poet may inflect toward the lyric or meditative modes, or toward both in varying degrees. While the lyric mode expresses and evokes feeling, usually strong feeling, the meditative mode is focused upon and characterized by logic, instruction, reasoned argument or debate (internal or external).

It is important to emphasize that these three poetic modes usually do not function alone, but together to support any particular poem’s project. If a mode *does* appear alone without the support of either of the other modes, or if one of the modes is excessively amplified, the poem may fail outright, or an aesthetic imbalance of the kind Ono no Komachi (early Heian period) created in her famous *hito ni awamu* poem (*Kokinshū* 1030) can result:

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I need to see him,
and there’s no moon—
love’s brazier
fires my sleepless breasts,
my heart burning and breaking—

— Ono no Komachi

Though this *waka* does hint at a narrative predicament (the lover will not come) the extreme emphasis on the metaphor of burning, viewed narrowly in terms of deployment of the modes, results in an almost claustrophobic lyric-overload. The poem does not seem set in any particular narrative space; it is performed almost solely within the realm of the speaker’s obsessive feelings—exactly the danger of any poem that seems to exclude all modes but the lyric. There are readers with an appetite for lyric excess, but this poem’s strategies must have seemed excessive even to the Japanese compiler, since it was not included among the love poems or even among the love poems in one of the Miscellaneous books. Poems with Buddhist themes would also, on occasion, express strong feeling, but in various ways they took steps to distance themselves from the destructive or delusionary influence of passion (most especially the kind on display in Komachi’s poem): one such strategy was deployment of the intellectualizing influence of the meditative mode.

A poem that leans heavily upon the meditative mode is this one by Kūya, from the *Shūishū* Buddhist *waka* sequence:

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10. The fact that Komachi’s poem was written in an uneven metric of 6, 7, 6, 7, 7 syllables probably explains why it was included in the book of “Miscellaneous Forms” (Zattei) in the *Kokinshū*. 
一度も南無阿弥陀仏と言ふ人の蓮の上にのぼらぬはなし
hitotabi mo / namu amida bu to / iu hito no / hachisu no ue ni / noboramu wa
nashi

LEFT ON THE MARKETPLACE GATE

among those who call
the Name
even one time

there are none
who won’t reach
the top of the lotus leaf

— Kūya Shōnin

The compiler(s) have supplied a narrative element in the headnote, whereby Kūya (903–972) is understood to have posted the poem on the marketplace gate for others to see, but the poem itself emphasizes its meditative argument: to “call / the Name / even one time” has salvific power. (The “Name” in our translation functions as a synecdoche for Namu Amida Bu[tsu], embedded in the poem itself, the actual mantra for which Kūya advocates.) Many Western readers would probably regard, and then dismiss, this poem as didactic, but this would be misguided. Didacticism, as LaFleur has said, needs to be grounded in the “history of ideas” prevalent at the time the poem was written. It is more helpful for the purposes of this study to recognize the didactic impulse as one symptom or characteristic of the meditative mode, which makes such poems appeal more to the intellect than the emotions (without completely neglecting the latter). Poets

11. According to Ishihara Kiyoshi, this poem also appears in the setsuwawa collection Kokonchomonjū. Ishihara Kiyoshi, Shakkyō-ka no kenkyū (Kyoto: Dōhōsha, 1980), 62.
12. Further discussion as well as the original source for this poem can be found in Chapter 3, 82 and 123–125.
wishing to deemphasize, for religious reasons, the passions of the lyric mode would have found the cooler temperatures of the meditative mode particularly useful. Kūya’s poem is indeed instructive, one of the principal characteristics of the meditative mode, and downplays whatever emotional aspects the poem’s predicament might have had in a different treatment. Moreover, Japanese readers did not view *waka* that displayed a tendency to guide or instruct with disdain in the mid- tenth century or for several centuries to come. Once the compilers created a literary space for *waka* with such a project, they became a part of the courtly tradition and the imperial poetry anthology. We will come to see which of the three poetic modes is deployed, and which predominates in any particular poem with Buddhist themes, may be seen as an important component of how that poem relates or responds to (or in some cases even seems to express conflict with) the Buddhist teachings.

Unlike a mode, which for our purposes describes how language is used and what its effects are, a *modality* for Buddhist *waka* may be described as having two components: (1) the spiritual source upon which the poem is based, and (2) the social reality to which it speaks. The modalities of importance to this study are heavenly/courtly, soteriological/courtly, and soteriological/monastic. A heavenly/courtly modality derives its spiritual sustenance from the world of the *kami* (heavenly) and speaks to the social reality of the imperial court. The primary—though not the only—mode of this modality is lyric. (This modality was preceded by one which will be of less importance to this study, but which we may call heavenly/tribal.) The second modality, soteriological/courtly, derives its spiritual support from the Buddhist promise of salvation, but maintains its orientation toward the values of the imperial court. The third modality, soteriological/monastic, retains the spiritual concerns of the second modality—that is, from Buddhist soteriology—but speaks to the social reality of the monastic complexes (and their teachings) that became increasingly prevalent in the beliefs of the imperial court. The primary—though not the only—mode of this modality is meditative. While the courtly modality primarily utilizes the images, diction, and themes of court *waka* as they were established in the *Kokinshū*, the monastic modality may
use some of those aspects, but also uses diction, images, and themes obtained from a particular Buddhist context. It may be assumed that both modalities have some kind of soteriological motivation behind them though the extent to which a poem was composed with that in mind might have differed considerably from poet to poet.

**PREVIOUS JAPANESE SCHOLARSHIP ON BUDDHIST WAKA AND SHAKKYŌ-KA AND THE PROBLEM OF TERMINOLOGY**

Most Japanese scholars refer globally to the Buddhist waka in the third through seventh anthologies as “shakkyō-ka.” Compounding the problem of whether or not a waka can be called a shakkyō-ka if it is not found in a book of the same name is the fact that Japanese scholars also use other rubrics in an attempt to describe the exact nature of these poems. One of the most common (and overlapping) terms for shakkyō-ka based upon a passage of text or a chapter title or a sūtra title is hōmon-ka (waka on the Dharma gate). Other terms include kyōshi-ka (waka on the essence or import of a scriptural passage or text, very similar to hōmon-ka), kyōri-ka (waka on a Buddhist doctrine or principle), and Bukkyō-ka (waka on the teachings of Buddhism). A review of some of the Shōwa-era scholarship that has shaped the study of shakkyō-ka demonstrates many different responses to problems of terminology and typology.

Two of the earliest scholars from the Shōwa era to address the topic of “shakkyō-ka” were Fukui Kyūzō in 1934 and Sakaguchi Genshō in 1935. Fukui’s work appeared in Tanka kenkyū under the title “Shakkyō waka ni tsukite.” In his article, Fukui presents a short history of what he calls both “shakkyō waka” and “shakkyō-ka.”

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14. I will use quotations around the word “shakkyō-ka” if a scholar or scholars tends to use that word as a homogenizing rubric for all waka on Buddhist themes.

15. A six-volume collection of Buddhist waka entitled Shakkyō kaei zenshū was also published in 1934 (and reprinted in 1978). As the title suggests, the editors and compilers used the word shakkyō-ka indiscriminately for any poem considered to have a Buddhist theme. Takakusu Junjirō, Fukui Kyūzō et al, eds., Shakkyō kaei zenshū (Tokyo: Tōhō Shuppan, 1934 [1978]).
starting with the famous Kataokayama waka attributed to Shōtoku Taishi, some waka on Buddhist themes from the Man’yōshū, and the bussokuseki-ka (poems on the footprints of the Buddha) at Yakushi-ji.\(^{16}\) He ends his article with brief mentions of Dōgen (1200–1253), Musō Kokushi (1275–1351), and Eisai (1141–1215) as well as the fourteenth and seventeenth imperial anthologies Gyokuyōshū (1313–1314) and Fugashū (1344–1346), but makes no effort to contextualize any of the poems he identifies. He prefaces his history with assertions about “our ancestors” (wareware ga sosen) of the Japanese “people” or “nation” (kokumin), stressing the role that the Japanese played in aestheticizing Buddhism: “our ancestors were the people who … aestheticized (geijutsuka shita) Buddhism.”\(^{17}\) This is followed later in the article with another nationalistic reference to the Saishō-ō-kyō and Ninnō-kyō Sūtras that existed “in my country as essential to [preserving] the nation-state” (kokka hon’i no waga kuni ni).\(^{18}\) In the end, Fukui’s article is little more than a polemic about the accomplishments of Japanese poets and what value these accomplishments held for the kokumin. However, it did at least attempt to identify the kinds of poems that might be regarded as “shakkyō-ka,” though he made no attempt to define the rubric.

Sakaguchi Genshō devotes considerable space to Buddhist waka in his work *Nihon Bukkyō bungaku josetsu*,\(^{19}\) without the nationalistic tone of Fukui’s article. In the Preface to his section on Buddhist waka, Sakaguchi points to three general areas of inquiry with which he is concerned. First, “he does not want to forget” (wasuretakunai) the particular “social circumstances” (shakaiteki jōsei) that led to the reflection of “a single Buddhist ideology” (hitotsu no Bukkyōteki shisō) in literature. Second, he says he will consider how Buddhist doctrines (kyōri) in literature ought to be categorized (dono hanchū

\(^{16}\) Shōtoku Taishi’s poem will be discussed in Chapter 3, while the Man’yōshū waka and the bussokuseki-ka will be discussed in Chapter 2.


\(^{18}\) Ibid., 319.

ni zokuseshimu beki ka), meaning apparently not only the doctrine but also the kinds of literature. Third, he states that he is interested in how the “content of Buddhist ideology” (Bukkyō no shisō naïyō) that is reflected in literature developed over time or how a single work (of literature) that reflects Buddhist ideology induced a certain “flavor” (aji), or effect.20

Like Fukui, Sakaguchi’s approach is chronological: he starts with poetry in the Man’yōshū and the bussokuseki-ka of Yakushi-ji, but does not regard them as shakkyō-ka. In a separate section titled “Shakkyō-ka no hatten” (The Development of Shakkyō-ka), Sakaguchi separates the rubric shakkyō-ka from the Nara period and assigns it to the Heian period instead.21 He identifies the “characteristics” (tokushoku) of poems in the Shūishū, and passes judgment on the shakkyō-ka in the Goshūishū, saying that its compiler, Fujiwara no Michitoshi (1047–1099), still did not have a clear idea of what kind of poetry belonged there.22

Sakaguchi also focused upon the role of Tendai Buddhism, and in particular that of Ryōgen (912–985), abbot of Enryaku-ji, in reviving the temple complex on Mount Hiei and the influence that such a revival might have had on composing waka on Buddhist themes. Sakaguchi closes his section on waka and Buddhism with a brief analysis of a few “shakkyō-ka” in the Kin’yōshū and the Shikashū as well as a slightly longer analysis of a few poems in the independent books of “Shakkyō-ka” in the Senzaishū and the Shinkokinshū.23

Two scholars from the 1950s who addressed shakkyō-ka were Sekiguchi Sōnen (1952) and Hori Ichirō (1955). Sekiguchi’s article, “Shakkyō-ka ron” (Discussion on Shakkyō-ka) appeared in the journal Bungei kenkyū.24 Here the author proposed a bipartite typology of shakkyō-ka that was influential on some scholars later because, for the first time, it targeted the “problem” (mondai) of religiosity and

21. Ibid., 236.
aesthetics as they applied to Buddhist *waka*. Sekiguchi’s solution was to designate two broad categories that he called *daieiteki na uta* (topical *uta*) and *taikenteki na uta* (experiential *uta*). For Sekiguchi the most successful *shakkyō-ka* were those that were able to “join” (*ketsugō*) these two categories (topical and experiential) whereby the “lyric flavor” (*jojōmi*), and thus its aesthetic value, were preserved in the emotions of the author as they related to the poem’s topic (*daiei*). Sekiguchi concludes with the judgment that the *shakkyō-ka* in the *Shinkokinshū* (1206) more successfully fused these two aspects than the *shakkyō-ka* in the *Senzaishū*.27

In an article from the journal *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* in 1955, Hori Ichirō returned to the historical process by which “*shakkyō-ka*” came to be formed.28 Already addressed by both Fukui and Sakaguchi, the historical development of “*shakkyō-ka*” was well known by this time, yet Hori claimed he would take a perspective that regarded these poems as a “problem of Buddhist history” (*Bukkyō-shi no mondai*) rather than “the problem of literary history” (*bungaku-shi no mondai*).29 This four-page article does not give him room in which to address this distinction. Hori focuses his attention on the Buddhist diction and themes of poems from the era of the *Man’yōshū* to the *Shūishū*, placing more emphasis on the earlier anthology. He is careful to make a distinction between “Buddhist *waka*” and “*shakkyō-ka*,” a distinction that occurred sometime after Saichō composed his *anokutara sanmyaku sanbodai* poem (the fifth poem [1920] in the “*Shakkyō-ka*” book of the *Shinkokinshū*), but other than pointing out the new category of “Shakkyō” poems in the *Goshūishū* in his first sentence (a point to which he does not return), he does not speculate further about the significance of different terminology.

The first scholars to present more complex typologies of Buddhist

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25. Ibid., 22.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., 26.
29. Ibid., 12.
waka were Yamada Shōzen in 1953 and Okazaki Kazuko in 1963. Both authors, like Fukui and Sakaguchi, homogenize all Buddhist waka under the umbrella term “shakkyō-ka,” but their typologies do attempt to elucidate certain characteristics of those poems. Yamada’s typology was presented, without much lasting effect on later scholars, in an article entitled “Kyōshi-ka no seiritsu (The Formation of Kyōshi-ka)” published in Buzan gakuho in 1953. Yamada used the term kyōshi-ka (sūtra shakkyō-ka) before Okazaki did, but within the article itself substituted it with the term hōmon-ka (poems on the Dharma gate), which in contemporary scholarship is often used as an alternative term for shakkyō-ka. The overlapping meanings of the three terms Yamada uses within his article are not easy to resolve. Perhaps this confusion was due in part to the unsettled nature of identifying terminology for Buddhist waka in the Heian period, but it is also possible that Yamada had not yet worked out his typology to its full extent.

Yamada’s tripartite typology consists of the following: (1) hōmon-ka (indistinguishable from kyōshi-ka), (2) waka composed on the occasion of Buddhist services, lectures, and ceremonies (butsuji hōe), and (3) poems on the reflections and feelings of religious wonderment when a poet is faced with the profundity of the Buddhist teachings (Bukkyōteki jukkai / eitan). For Yamada’s second type (more an explanation than actual name), Okazaki uses the word hōen-ka (about which I will say more next), but the definitions provided by both scholars are indistinguishable. The same holds true for Yamada’s third type of shakkyō-ka—again an explanation rather than a rubric—and Okazaki’s fourth type: jukkai(-ka). The only term not used in Yamada’s typology but found in Okazaki’s is kyōri-ka.

Okazaki’s four-part typology was unveiled in a seminal article for shakkyō-ka studies in 1963 called “Shakkyō-ka kō: hachidaishū o

32. No single term is provided for this category.
chūshin ni” (A Consideration of Shakkyō-ka: With a Focus on the First Eight Imperial Anthologies). The typology she presents is: (1) kyōri-ka (doctrinal shakkyō-ka), (2) kyōshi-ka (scriptural shakkyō-ka), (3) hōen-ka (covenant shakkyō-ka), and (4) jukkai (reflective shakkyō-ka). We may notice overlap in this typology: kyōshi-ka is often used to refer to poems on Buddhist doctrine (kyōri-ka) while jukkai-ka are often indistinguishable from hōen-ka. Okazaki’s typology has become the most prevalent used by reference works such as Waka daijiten and Bukkyō bungaku jiten, but some scholars and reference works either skip or modify her typology altogether. For example, the Nihon koten bungaku daijiten refers only to hōmon kyōri no uta (poems on Dharma scripture and doctrine) without reference to the rest of Okazaki’s typology. Finally, it needs to be emphasized that the terms used for these types of shakkyō-ka were created by modern waka scholars, and did not appear in the collections of Heian imperial anthologies.

Kyōshi-ka (sūtra shakkyō-ka) in Okazaki’s typology refers to shakkyō-ka based specifically on Buddhist scriptures. Under this type she places both shakkyō-ka based upon the general import of what is preached in the scriptures or on concepts from them. She also included waka based on topics that utilize the metaphors and parables in the scriptures, a short passage or verse from the scriptures, or are based upon the meaning of an individual chapter of a scripture. (For such poems, this information can frequently be found in the kotobagaki (headnote) and/or dai [topic], if there is one.)

Kyōri-ka (doctrinal shakkyō-ka), according to Okazaki, are shakkyō-ka based upon the principal doctrines preached in Buddhism

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34. These are my translations for each term.
36. Jukkai-ka, for example, is related to eikai, a term first used as a type of kanshi, or Chinese poem, in the second of the three imperial poetry anthologies of the early ninth century, while kyōshi-ka first appears as a term in a hyakushu-uta from 1355. (WDJ, 475 and 231).
in general as well as the import of more specialized Buddhist terms. Examples she offers are *waka* with *kotobagaki* or *dai* such as “[poems] composed on *gachirinkan*” (contemplation on the full moon disk), a Shingon practice, or “[composed on] the essence of the ‘wisdom that recognizes the equality of all’ when composing poems on the *tathāgatas* of the five wisdoms” (*byōdōshōchi*).

According to Okazaki, *hōen-ka* (covenant *shakkyō-ka*) are *shakkyō-ka* composed on the occasion of memorial ceremonies, lectures and readings on the scriptures, pilgrimages to temples, monasteries, and sacred sites, as well as on the feelings of joy and felicitation that arise during those occasions. These *shakkyō-ka* are the type that express a covenant (*kechien*) with the Buddhadharma. However, they can also express the sociality of a given occasion.

The fourth and final type of *shakkyō-ka* Okazaki proposes is *jukkai*-(-ka), *waka* that arise from the desire to express one’s longing for salvation, ambition to seek the Dharma on the path, reflections on one’s impermanent body, and revelations of religious feelings (thus, reflective *shakkyō-ka*). She characterizes such poems as more emotional in tone than the other four types, and as most often expressed after or as the result of an inspirational occasion.

Okazaki’s definition of the word *shakkyō* (Buddhist teachings) is useful because she connects it immediately to *shakkyō-ka*: “‘Shakkyō’ ordinarily means the teachings of the Buddha—in other words, Buddhism. On the occasions when [compilers] collected Buddhist-related *waka* in collections of *waka*, the [*waka*] sometimes formed a category called ‘shakkyō.’ We call the *waka* of this category *shakkyō no waka* or *shakkyō-ka*.” 37 Most notable about Okazaki’s definition is its detailed categorization schema, one that will be important in this work. The advantage of this definition of *shakkyō-ka* is that it is neither vague nor all-inclusive, that it forms a relationship with (*ni kansuru*) the Buddhist teachings, without ever defining exactly what

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that connection is. The definition is, however, also ahistorical in that it includes all *waka* on Buddhist themes after the *Shūishū* in the same category of “*shakkyō-ka*.”

Finally, as the author of the only full-length study of *shakkyō-ka*, Ishihara Kiyoshi deserves considerable credit for the extent of his research, though much is archival rather than theoretical. *Shakkyō-ka no kenkyū* (*Research on shakkyō-ka*) covers the *shakkyō-ka* in the third through eighth imperial poetry anthologies, as well as the *Hokke-kyō nijūhappon-ka* (*shakkyō-ka* on the twenty-eight poems on the Lotus Sutra) by Shunzei, Saigyō (1118–1189), and Jien (1155–1225). Here Ishihara presumed that all of the poems he analyzed were *shakkyō-ka* whether they appeared in a *shakkyō-ka* book or not. For the most part, Ishihara’s methodology was to trace the sūtra, doctrine, or occasion upon which a *waka* was composed and to link that source with his explication of the poem. He did not consider the poems he examined within the broader courtly context of the *waka* genre nor did he consider them as poems that were connected in any way to *waka* that proceeded or succeeded them in a sequence of poems. He presumed that the Buddhist source provided all the information necessary to understand the poem. Occasionally he also discussed rhetorical techniques used within a poem, but his primary effort was to provide a direct lineage from text, doctrine, or occasion to the “*shakkyō-ka*” in question.

In the Introduction to *Shakkyō-ka no kenkyū*, Ishihara noted that a “precise definition” (*meikaku na teigi*) of *shakkyō-ka* had not theretofore been presented. In order to redress this situation, Ishihara provided ten categories (*hanchū*) about which *shakkyō-ka* have been composed, though he later admitted there is both categorical imprecision and overlap among these. All of his categories (the Buddha, the various Buddhas and bodhisattvas, Buddhist doctrine, sūtra references, Buddhist occasions [*gyōji*], monks and nuns, temples and monasteries,

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38. Ishihara, *Shakkyō-ka no kenkyū*, 1980. All appearances of the term “Lotus Sutra,” as well as the names of all other Buddhist sūtras, will not be italicized in this study. The word “Sutra” without a long mark over the “u” refers only to the Lotus Sutra and the Heart Sutra. All other sūtra names have a long mark over the “u.”
Buddhist contemplation of nature, Buddhist sentiments, Buddhist morals derived from nature) can be found in modern dictionary and encyclopedia entries for the term “shakkyō-ka,” but Ishihara added one that is not: the category of Buddhist experience (Bukkyō taiken). Ishihara divided each chapter of his study (except for the sequences of Lotus Sutra chapter poems) into two principal kinds: “shakkyō-ka” that he called taiken-ka (“shakkyō-ka” based on personal experience) and those that he called daiei-ka (“shakkyō-ka” based on topics).39 Within this broad categorical division Ishihara also employed Okazaki’s original typology—kyōri-ka, kyōshi-ka, hōen-ka, and jukkai, but the larger distinction he drew was between topic and experience.

Ishihara is correct that we can detect a broad division of Buddhist waka or shakkyō-ka into two types—what he calls daiei-ka or taiken-ka (what I will call “scriptural” and “occasional”), but this sort of classification system is not entirely useful until after the Shūishū. What the dual classification system does provide, though, is an explanation for waka of sentiment that sometimes appear to have little or no connection to the actual teachings of Buddhism. To imply that there is no overlap between these two kinds of “shakkyō-ka” is also to overstate the importance of the categories: the words “occasional” and “scriptural” can describe one aspect of the poems’ projects, but many other factors must be taken into consideration to fully characterize those projects.

**Japanese Waka: Of Religious Roots?**

The problems of Buddhist waka must be considered in conjunction with the larger issue of religious—that is, kami-centered—waka in general. The ancient myths that account for waka’s first appearance, and the usages to which such poetry was put, were reiterated throughout Japanese history in various religious, literary, and historical

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39. In a footnote, Ishihara says his bipartite distinction was borrowed from Asaka Keiü, but this is a mistaken attribution. The correct attribution is Sekiguchi Sōnen in his “Shakkyō-ka ron,” 21.
documents, but during the Nara period, and perhaps much later, the myths themselves were believed to make up part of Japan’s national history.\footnote{Sakamoto Tarō, The Six National Histories of Japan, John S. Brownlee, trans. (Vancouver and Tokyo: UBC Press and the University of Tokyo Press, 1991), 51–56.}

The origins of \textit{waka} in the mytho-historical legends were first related in Chapter 20 of the \textit{Kojiki} (compiled in 712).\footnote{Donald L. Philippi, trans., \textit{Kojiki} (Princeton and Tokyo: Princeton University Press and the University of Tokyo Press, 1968), 91.} Here it was said that Susano-o no Mikoto, the unruly brother of the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu Ōmikami, composed a song (\textit{uta}), thought to be Japan’s oldest poem.\footnote{As one of the footnotes to this chapter says, “This song, the first in both the \textit{Kojiki} and the \textit{Nihon Shoki}, has traditionally been regarded as the oldest Japanese poem.” \textit{Ibid.}} In time, these songs \textit{generated from the kami} would become the \textit{waka} that were created as encomiums and supplications and \textit{presented to} the \textit{kami} during certain rituals. Examples of these Shintō \textit{waka} (later called \textit{jingi-ka}) can be found throughout the ancient, classical and medieval periods up to the final poem in the last imperial poetry anthology \textit{Shinzokukokinwakashū} (completed in 1439). These Shintō-themed poems preceded their Buddhist companions, eventually called \textit{shakkyō-ka}, by several hundred years, but together they express in poetic form the various “worlds” of Japanese religion.

\textbf{Religious Worlds and Cultural Porosity}

The concept of “worlds” in religious studies was most fully developed by William E. Paden in \textit{Religious Worlds: The Comparative Study of Religion}. While Paden uses the word “worlds” to refer to different religions in the world, this concept can be expanded to refer to the various “worlds” that exist within one religion, as he understands religion to be “aspectual or multidimensional.” He writes, “Religion can involve feeling and mystical experience, but also political, institutional structure. It may be about nature and it may be about self. It is expressed in symbols and ideas, but also in
acts and rites; in art, and also in philosophies.” This perspective takes into account both the dynamic and static aspects of a religion, and describes literary space—“in art”—in which religious worlds can also be identified.

In applying the word “worlds” to the realms of experience found not only in religion but also in religious literature, we must ask what these worlds are and how they function. Here Paden is quite specific:

The idea of world helps mediate the ideas of difference and commonality. In spite of their differences, religious worlds have in common certain general forms of mythic and ritual behavior. … Religious language and behavior are not just beliefs and acts about the world, but actual ways through which a world comes into being. So the idea of worlds deals with the realm of particular historical matrices, yet also allows us to see typical or analogous ways by which worlds are constructed.

The benefit of this characterization to the study of Buddhist *waka* is apparent in several ways. First, *waka* with Buddhist content are different in various ways and, therefore, not homogenous. One of the most obvious differences between individual Buddhist *waka* is the bipartite distinction created by Sekiguchi Sōnen between those that are based upon the sentiment of a religious occasion or experience and those that focus on a teaching (written, ritualistic, etc.) of Buddhism. This “world” may be referred to as a poem’s religious environment. Second, the use of both religious and/or poetic (secular) diction can bring forth a religious world because of the intrinsic power of words themselves. This aspect of a poem’s “world” is supported in Japan first by the concept of *kotodama* (word spirit) and then later the concept of *kyōgen kigo* (wild words and specious phrases), the latter formula drawn from an appeal that the Chinese poet Po Chü-i made.

44. Ibid., 54
to accompany a copy of his poems presented to a Buddhist temple and used frequently throughout Japan’s medieval period to justify the writing of secular verse. Third, *waka* with Buddhist content, poetic sequences in which they are found, and *shakkyō-ka* were composed and formulated at specific times in history. While it is not always possible to locate the origins (and thus the ultimate meaning, if such a thing is possible) of a Buddhist *waka*, it is possible to provide readings of the sequences in order to discover what sort of “world” the entire sequence is meant to convey, if any.

Helpful here also is the concept of porosity. One dictionary defines Japanese religion “as a coverall term to indicate the amorphous, shared elements of religious belief and practice … where the ‘walls’ between religions tend to be porous.”\(^{45}\) Porosity is a concept used primarily in the sciences, but which can be adapted here to refer not only to the porosity between religions (*kami* faith and Buddhism, for example), but also between Buddhism and Japanese culture and society. Since Buddhism was not a religion native to Japan, we can speak of “walls” between it and Japanese culture. A highly porous society allows more nonnative practices and beliefs to thrive among and synthesize with native culture, while a less porous society prevents those same practices and beliefs from gaining strength within the culture.

According to this analogy, the porosity of the wall between native Japanese culture and Buddhism is subject to political and social vicissitudes in different historical eras. The early poems of the *Man’yōshū*, for example, show a lesser degree of porosity (fewer Buddhist elements) than do its later poems. The same is true for the porosity in the Kana Preface (*Kanajo*) to the *Kokinshū*, the first imperial anthology of Japanese *waka*. There we find native beliefs—what today we call Shintō, “the way of the gods”—girding the foundations of *waka* poetry and the imperial anthology project, with no evidence that Buddhism existed in the world of the Japanese court at all. On the other hand, there is a much higher degree of porosity in the seventh imperial anthology, *Senzaishū*, in which there are numerous

references to Buddhism in its Preface and a new and independent book of Buddhist poetry for the first time.

**The Religious World of Ki no Tsurayuki’s *Kanajo***

The next five sections of this Introduction will theorize how Ki no Tsurayuki’s conception of *waka*, that it possessed the capacity to transform the affairs of the world, would later become a conception of *waka* that possessed the capacity to transform one’s desires (the cause of suffering) into a vehicle of salvation. For such a change to occur there had to be an understanding (realized or not, foregrounded or not) of the Buddhist conception of “no-self.” This change in perspective can be explained with reference to what Buddhists call the five *skandhas*. The teachings of the five *skandhas* themselves may not have been widely taught in Heian Japan, but such teachings did pervade the Mahāyāna. The eventual conflation of *waka* and Buddhist enlightenment that characterizes twelfth century poetics could only have occurred if poets actually began to believe before that time that the teachings of self (*waka* poet desiring personal expression) could be transformed into the teachings of no-self (what we might characterize as “poet-less *waka*”).

In the Preface (*Kanajo*) to the *Kokinshū*, its author Ki no Tsurayuki (884?–946?) wrote, “It is poetry which, without effort, moves heaven and earth, stirs the feelings of the invisible gods and spirits, smooths the relations of men and women, and calms the heart of fierce warriors.” If the words “God,” “Zeus,” or “Shiva” were substituted here for “poetry” (*uta*) no reader would mistake the religious nature of this statement. However, in this context the word *uta*—a word synonymous with *waka*—carries the same kind of spiritual power. From a Western point of view, one does not expect the kind of power

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that is usually reserved for religious texts like the Bible, the Buddhist sūtras, the Qur’an, and the Torah to be attributed to a literary form. But if we understand Tsurayuki correctly, Japanese poetry, short in form though it may be, has the awesome ability to regulate the existential conditions of life, maintain order in the physical world and affect the “gods and spirits” who, in turn, affect the lives of people. This assertion can be compared to the efficacy of a prayer, incantation, or mantra that mediates between the world of otherness and the world of “us-ness.”

In the next two sentences of the Kanajo, Tsurayuki provides some “historical” context for the origins of poetry: “Such songs came into being when heaven and earth first appeared. However, legend has it that in the broad heavens they began with Princess Shitateru, and on earth with the song [uta] of Susano-o no Mikoto.”47 Here we understand that Japanese poetry not only affects the “gods and spirits” but also originates from them. Japanese people can “stir[s] the feelings of the invisible gods and spirits” because they were granted that power when they received and began to write in the 31-syllable waka form.

Tsurayuki further claims that Susano-o no Mikoto standardized waka on earth by determining that it should be comprised of thirty-one syllables. At this point in the Preface, the link between deities and human/waka is complete, yet Tsurayuki further tightens the connection by claiming that in recent times—“since the Nara period”—poetry has spread throughout the land. How was this accomplished? “In that era [Nara] the sovereign must truly have appreciated poetry, and during his reign Kakinomoto no Hitomaro of the Senior Third Rank was a sage of poetry. Thus rulers and subjects must have been one.”48 This statement places waka firmly in the creative hands of humans, since the sovereign was regarded as a kami descendant of Susano-o no Mikoto and those deities who preceded him.

The reason for this extended foray into the origins of waka poetry

47. Ibid. Susano-o no Mikoto, brother of the Sun Goddess, was on earth as a human incarnation of the deities from whom he was descended.
48. Ibid., 42.
is not to claim that all Japanese poetry is religious; it is not. What may be asserted, however, is that according to this mythology all waka are felt to partake of their kami origins. This is perhaps the reason, one speculates, that when the kami-sovereign Daigo (r. 897–930) commanded Tsurayuki and three other men of the court to compile the first anthology of Japanese waka, Tsurayuki reached back into Japan’s early myths as told in Kojiki and Nihongi to provide the gravitas necessary for the task at hand.49

The final book of poems in the Kokinshū that Laurel Rodd translates as “Court Poetry” supports these statements of Tsurayuki. As Rodd writes, these poems “are a collection of poems and songs used in court rituals and religious ceremonies.”50 They are this, but there is also a short section of less courtly songs from the eastern provinces. Due to the presence of these eastern songs, it is difficult to argue for a thematic arc of religiosity that stretches from the Kanajo to the final poems in the book. However, the fact that most of the “court poems” are used in “court rituals and religious ceremonies” can be offered as further evidence of the relationship between waka and kami faith.

Finally, of crucial importance to the spiritual roots of Japanese poetry is the term kotodama, word spirit. Many literary scholars have pointed to kotodama as an example of the essential nondualistic nature of religion and literature in Japan. For example, Konishi Jin’ichi writes about the preclassical tradition: “There remained no distinction between literature and religion; both narratives and song drew on kotodama, the concept of words as incantatory and divine, so that poets not only transmitted meaning but imparted a sense of the supernatural.”51 Gary Ebersole supports this claim: “Song was sung and poetry recited not only for aesthetic pleasure but as a means of ordering and controlling potentially dangerous aspects of the world.

49. In addition to Ki no Tsurayuki, the other three compilers were Ki no Tomonori, Ōshikochi no Mitsune, and Mibu no Tadamine (all of the late ninth and early tenth centuries).
50. Ibid., 23.