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How is one to learn in a time of globalization? And in particular, how is one to learn if the research "object" is a non-European culture, such as that of Japan? What are the methodologies appropriate for working in the field of "Nippon/Japan" in a bi-directional approach from West to East and from East to West? Based on an interdisciplinary and intercultural orientation, specialists from Europe and Japan analyze topics focusing on History, Philosophy, Aesthetics, Literature, Linguistics, Sociology, Economics and Religious Studies.

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## HOW TO LEARN?

学びの作法

## NIPPON/JAPAN AS OBJECT, NIPPON/JAPAN AS METHOD

対象としてのニッポン、方法  
としてのニッポン

EDITED BY CHRISTOPHER CRAIG, ENRICO FONGARO AND AKIHIRO OZAKI



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Edited by

Christopher Craig, Enrico Fongaro and Akihiro Ozaki



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## GREETING ADDRESS

We are proud to present this book as the inaugural volume in a new Japanese Studies series. It is a collection of the papers presented at the International Symposium "How to Learn: Nippon/Japan as Object, Nippon/Japan as Method," held on 29-30 October 2015 at the University of Florence. While offering a breathtaking array of scholarship on Japan and its connections with the world, the symposium also marked the formation of the Hasekura League for Japanese Studies. Reflecting the diversity of the League's membership and its goals, the works contained herein represent scholarship from a variety of disciplines and specialities united by a common concern with Japan and its place in global studies.

We envision this series as a forum to offer the latest and best research and scholarship on Japanese Studies from the Hasekura League and its affiliates. The League is at an exciting point in its development, with a series of meetings scheduled in 2017 and preparations underway for future publications in this series. Moving forward in pursuit of its goals of promoting integrated and interdisciplinary collaboration in pursuit of a new direction in Japanese Studies, we hope that the Hasekura League will become a leading force in international scholarship.

September, 2016

The Editors

EDOARDO GERLINI  
University of Florence

## BORDER-CROSSING METHODS

### A Tentative Linking of Italian Medieval Literature and Heian Literature

#### 1. *The Hasekura League and World Literature*

The theme “Japan as an object of study — Japan as a method of study” can be read in this way: how can Japan help the process of the internationalization of knowledge? How can it become a field in which scholars from different backgrounds cooperate and discuss the horizon of peaceful collaboration between countries? From the point of view of the Humanities, where the discourse about “utility” and “profitability” of academic knowledge has recently become a matter of survival for departments and faculties around the world, these questions seem urgent.

The aim declared in the founding manifesto of the “Hasekura League” by Tohoku University is “to rebuild Japanese Studies as a new interdisciplinary field of the Humanities rather than a branch of area studies, with the purpose of learning from each other, having lively discussions, and working together to cultivate the minds of young people who might help to respond to pressing global issues.” In the last two decades many attempts have been made to overpass the borders of “area studies.” Let us consider two recent works worthy of consideration.

The first one is *World Philology*, a collection of essays by philologists of very different geographical and historical areas: from ancient Greece to eighteenth-century China, from early Arabic philologists to Tokugawa Japan, and so on.<sup>1</sup> This is

1 Sheldon Pollock, Benjamin A. Elman, Ku-ming Kevin Chang (ed. by), *World Philology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015).

probably the most recent attempt to give philology, namely “the most unmodern of any of the branches of learning associated with humanism,”<sup>2</sup> a new and worldwide self-awareness. In the introduction, Sheldon Pollock suggests three requirements for the next generations of researchers, which seem to match perfectly the Hasekura League’s aims. 1) Historical self-awareness, namely a more flexible and self-critical view of disciplines and their genealogy; 2) Nonprovinciality, because these disciplines cannot continue to be just local, but must pursue a “global, and by preference globally comparative, knowledge;” 3) methodological and conceptual pluralism, meaning different people discussing and proposing different solutions to shared problems.<sup>3</sup>

The idea of mixing methods and approaches from different academic fields is also a central issue in the discourse about the so called World Literature. In 1952, Erich Auerbach observed how “foreign, nonphilological or scientific methods and concepts begin to be felt in philology: sociology, psychology, certain kinds of philosophy, and contemporary literary criticism.”<sup>4</sup> Statements like “our philological home is the earth: it can no longer be the nation” sound self-evident to us, but are still far from being realized.<sup>5</sup>

The second recent publication worthy of attention is *Classical World Literatures: Sino-Japanese and Greco-Roman comparisons* by Wiebke Denecke.<sup>6</sup> Also inspired by Auerbach’s *Weltliteratur*, Denecke’s work deals with classical literatures in a brand new way, opening the new subfield of “classical world literatures” (*sekai koten bungaku* 世界古典文学). Moreover, the volume’s main motivation is “a desire to reflect more methodically on the processes of Sino-Japanese reception,

2 Edward Said, *Humanism and democratic criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 57.

3 *World Philology*, p. 25.

4 Erich Auerbach, ‘Philology and Weltliteratur’, trans. by Maire and Edward Said, *The Centennial Review*, 8-1, (1969), 1-17 (p. 8).

5 Auerbach, p. 17.

6 Wiebke Denecke, *Classical World Literatures: Sino-Japanese and Greco-Roman comparisons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

taking inspiration from the far more developed and mature studies of reception in the Greco-Roman context.”<sup>7</sup> While responding (in advance) to Pollock’s request of “methodological and conceptual pluralism,” Denecke’s book realizes what is in the nature of World Literature studies: “to get indirectly in touch with foreign critical methodologies and problem solving proposed by those researchers.”<sup>8</sup>

These two examples demonstrate that the Hasekura League’s call for international cooperation between academies is not an isolated initiative, but focuses on urgent issues discussed worldwide.

The field of literature can be an appropriate test-ground for the renewal of theories and methodologies since literature, together with philology, is the most traditional discipline of what we call “area studies.” In both European and Japanese universities, curricula of literature are usually intended as the study of an almost monolithic body of texts (primary sources) and the modern editions of those texts (secondary sources). These sources are usually selected according to the language they are written in, and therefore included or excluded from the literary canon following the (mistaken) rule “one nation = one language.” The problem with this assumption becomes particularly clear in the case of Italian and Japanese Literature, for somewhat similar reasons. From the Middle Ages to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the Italian peninsula, lacking political unity, also lacked a real, shared national language. Even in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the literature produced in various Italian dialects was lively and recognized in such works as the anthology *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* edited by Pasolini.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, even if Japan has had a longer political unity, Japanese was not the only ‘national’ language in use: “premodern and early modern Japan was a bilingual country”

7 Denecke, 2014, p. 294.

8 Remo Ceserani, *Guida allo studio della letteratura* (Roma: Laterza, 1999), p. 319.

9 Mario dell’Arco, Pier Paolo Pasolini (ed. by), *Poesia dialettale del Novecento* (Parma: Guanda, 1952).

as kanbun (漢文, Chinese, or Sino-Japanese) was still used for writings at least until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, even if it thereafter became “the biggest and most important area of Japanese literary study that has been ignored in recent times.”<sup>10</sup>

On these premises I conducted my comparative study, taking as object of research the Japanese poetry of the early Heian court (8-9<sup>th</sup> centuries) and the Italian poetry at the Sicilian court of emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (13<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>11</sup> The comparison moves from the fact that both the courts represent important turning points in the consolidation of later literary canons.

A mutual reading of the results from both the fields (Japanese literature and Italian literature) could enrich the discourse about some shared issues in the respective literary contexts, giving each other new elements and points of view to verify, confute, or deepen hypotheses and conclusions. The first stage of this study was to make readable to Japanese researchers of Japanese Literature results and methodologies of Italian researchers who only publish in Italian, and vice-versa. As specialists know, works in a third language make a rare but important contribution; the greater part of the publications by Japanese researchers on Japanese Classical Literature and of Italian researchers on Italian medieval Literature will likely never see an English translation and will thus remain inaccessible to non-specialists.<sup>12</sup> The assembling of results of previous research in these two fields related to shared topics in order to gain a richer perspective is what I called the “border-crossing method”.

10 Ivo Smits, ‘The Way of the Literati: Chinese Learning and Literary Practice in Mid-Heian Japan’, in Mikael Adolphson, Edward Kamens, Stacie Matsumo (ed. by), *Heian Japan, Centers and Peripheries* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2007), 105-128 (p. 105); Timothy Wixted, ‘Kanbun, Histories of Japanese Literature, and Japanologists’, *Sino-Japanese Studies*, 10-2 (April 1998), 23-31 (p. 23).

11 Edoardo Gerlini, *Heian Court Poetry as World Literature — from the Point of View of Early Italian Poetry* (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2014).

12 i.e. Haruo Shirane (ed. by), *Waka Opening up to the World* (Tokyo: Bensei, 2012); Roberto Antonelli, Costanzo di Girolamo, Rosario Coluccia (ed. by), *I Poeti della Scuola Siciliana* (Milano: Mondadori, 2008) in three volumes.

Let us see how this method can be applied to a circumscribed theme like the political role of court poetry.

## 2. The political role of court poetry in 13<sup>th</sup> century Italy and early Heian Japan

In both early Heian Japan and the Sicilian court of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, emperors actively supported and sponsored the composition of poems, the foundation of academies, and the spread of culture as part of their political duties. Many texts, like the prefaces to imperial poetry collections in Japan or public letters by Frederick II, testify to this political will.

One of the Confucian theories introduced in Japan since the 7<sup>th</sup> century is that of ‘Heaven-man mutuality’ (天人相関 *tenjinsōkan*), elaborated by the Han dynasty scholar Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒, ca. 176-104 BCE). This theory explains the peaceful changing of the seasons and weather as a direct consequence of the emperor’s virtue and, by contrast, natural disasters and bad harvests with the loss of the ruler’s virtue. This theory is also tied to the quality of the literary production by officials and court members. In the preface to the oldest collection of Chinese poems composed in Japan, the *Kaifūsō* (『懷風藻』, 751), we read:

四海殷昌。旒紘無為。巖廊多暇。旋招文学之士。  
時開置醴之遊。当此之際。宸翰垂文。賢臣献頌。

The four seas [=all the Earth] flourish and prosper.  
The crown jewel [=the emperor] [has to] do nothing.  
In the high corridors, [=imperial palace] He has much spare time.  
Again and again He summons the Masters of Letters.  
Many times He holds banquets with sweet wines.  
It is during this occasions that the imperial brush drops writings  
[=the emperor composes poems].  
The good officials raise hymns.<sup>13</sup>

13 Noriyuki Kojima 小島憲之 (ed. by), *Kaifūsō*; Bunka Shūreishū; Honchō Monzui, [Fond Recollections of Poetry; Collection of Masterpieces of Literary Flowers; Literary Essence of Our Country], 懷風藻; 文華秀麗集; 本朝文粹, *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* 日本古典文学体系, 69 (Tokyo: Iwanami 岩波, 1964).



The expression *mui* 無為 (literally 'do nothing'), concisely expresses the belief that the emperor, without doing anything in particular but just because of his heavenly virtues, makes the country prosper. Since he doesn't need to actively govern the land, he has 'much spare time' to spend summoning his 'Masters of Letters,' and enjoying banquets where both the emperor and the courtiers harmonized their hearts composing refined poems such as the ones collected in *Kaifūsō*. As a logical consequence, the very existence of court poetry is the proof of emperor's virtue. This theory also provides the backbone for later imperial-ordered collections, both in Chinese and Japanese.

In Italy we find a very similar theory, especially in Latin writings like the famous *dictamen* (elaborated and artistic prose) by Pietro della Vigna (*Epistolario*, 3-XLIV), chief court official and chancellor of Frederick II. Reusing expressions from the Bible and from religious hymns by Venantius Fortunatus (6<sup>th</sup> century) and Boëthius (5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century) initially addressed to God, Pietro declares the divine nature of the Emperor Frederick II and explain his heavenly virtues.

Therefore land and sea worship Him, and the sky applauds with Him[...]  
 He rules the world with a perennial law[...]  
 in Him the idea of good is innate, free from any envy;  
 He ties generating elements with generated elements,  
 so that cold will harmonize with the flames,  
 the arid with the liquid, the rugged will adhere to the polished,  
 the curved will combine with the straight.<sup>14</sup>

Another poet, Marquard de Ried, on the day of Frederick's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem on March 17<sup>th</sup> of the year 1229, during the Sixth Crusade, declared that:

14 Fulvio Delle Donne, 'L'immagine di Federico II nella letteratura coeva. Riletture del mito', in Fulvio Delle Donne (ed. by), *L'eredità di Federico II. Dalla storia al mito, dalla Puglia al Tirolo* (Bari: Mario Adda Editore, 2010), p. 148.

When the great Frederick, servant of God, comes,  
 the sun shines, the air becomes warm, the water boils, the land  
 spreads green<sup>15</sup>

Many other writings about Frederick use the hyperbole of an emperor as "cosmic sovereign, Lord of the four elements."<sup>16</sup> Also the concept of refined literature as proof of imperial virtue is present at Frederick's court. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, Dante Alighieri, when discussing the supreme quality of Sicilian poetry, states that those literary examples are a direct result of the virtue of Frederick II and his son Manfred:

Those illustrious heroes, Emperor Frederick and his worthy son Manfred, knew how to reveal the nobility and integrity that were in their hearts; [...] On this account, all who were noble of heart and rich in graces strove to attach themselves to the majesty of such worthy princes, so that, in their day, all that the most gifted individuals in Italy brought forth first came to light in the court of these two great monarchs (*De Vulgari Eloquentia*, I-XII).

The effort to justify and elevate the role of poetry and literature through imperial legitimation is evident both in Japan and in Italy, but one of the issues pointed out by scholars is that the greater part of this poetry, like the poems of the Sicilian School at Frederick II's court and both *kanshi* (漢詩) and *waka* (和歌) in Heian Japan, doesn't deal with political or practical topics, being almost exclusively focused on love and seasons. So, how can this poetry be considered "political"?

A clear example of this 'incoherence' is Sugawara no Michizane (菅原道真, 845-903), one of the most influential poets and courtiers of late-9<sup>th</sup>-century Japan. In a rhapsody composed in 890 (*Kanke bunsō*, 菅家文草 VIII-516), Michizane claims the political value of poetry: "both for poems [*shi*] and for rhapsodies [*fu* 賦], each character of the composition should not to be a

15 Peter Dronke, 'La poesia', in Pierre Toubert, Angelo Paravicini Bagliani (ed. by), *Federico II e le scienze* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1994), p. 46.

16 Dronke, p. 44.

meaningless word detached from reality, and for example, also when we sing about natural elements like the late chrysanthemum and the cold frost, we should sing about the loyalty that doesn't tremble even under wind and frost."<sup>17</sup> But if we look at his poem titled *Poem of the frost-covered chrysanthemum* (*Kanke Bunsō*, IV-332), we find very few elements that can be connected to real political matters, apart perhaps from the metaphor of the chrysanthemum symbolizing the court official's loyalty to his emperor even in difficult (cold) times.

戴白知貞節  
深秋不畏涼

Covered in white [frost] you understand its loyalty.  
In deep autumn, it doesn't fear the cold.<sup>18</sup>

Many explanations have been proposed by Japanese scholars to solve this 'contradiction' in Heian poetry. That the theory of the political role of literature was merely a façade, an excuse for the huge expenses these banquets and pastimes entailed;<sup>19</sup> that the political value of these poems lies in public performances aimed to visually represent the rank and importance of the courtiers inside the court's hierarchy;<sup>20</sup> or again, that in poets like Michizane's there is an unsolvable and clear contradiction

- 17 Katsumi Fujiwara 藤原克己, *Sugawara no Michizane to Heianchō kanbungaku* [Sugawara no Michizane and the Sino-chinese Literature in the Heian Court] 『菅原道真と平安朝漢文学』 (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press 東京大学出版会, 2001), p. 254.
- 18 Hisao Kawaguchi 川口久雄 (ed. by), *Kanke bunsō Kanke kōshū* [Writings of the Sugawara Family; Later Collection of the Sugawara Family] 『菅家文章・菅家後集』, *Nihon koten bungaku taikai* 日本古典文学大系, 72 (Tokyo: Iwanami 岩波, 1966).
- 19 Tadashi Kinpara 金原理, 'Saga-chō bundan no kichō' [The Keynote of the Literary Circle of Saga's court] 『嵯峨朝文壇の基調』, in *Heian-chō kanshūbun no kenkyū* 『平安朝漢詩文の研究』 (Fukuoka: Kyushu University Press 九州大学出版会, 1981).
- 20 Kōji Takigawa 滝川幸司, 'Uda — Daigo no kadan to waka no dōkō' [The poetic Circles of Uda and Daigo, and the trend of *waka*] 『宇多・醍醐の歌壇と和歌の動向』, in Shigeo Masuda and others (ed. by), *Kokinwakashū kenkyū shūsei* 『古今和歌集研究集成』, 1, (Tokyo: Kazama 風間書房, 2004).

between the poet (*shijin* 詩人) and the poet committed to Confucian duties (*shishin* 詩臣);<sup>21</sup> and so on.<sup>22</sup>

The problem of the political meaning of court poetry has also been extensively discussed among Italian scholars, especially in the case of Frederick II's court. According to Alberto Várvaro, "poetry is functionalized to a political activity, not by managing political matters, nor supporting it, nor becoming its sounding board, [...] but just demonstrating that the ruler, and his court, are the center of the world."<sup>23</sup> For Edoardo d'Angelo, "in poetry, one of the cornerstones of Frederick's cultural project consisted in giving space — for anti-Papal reasons — to the use of national [vernacular] languages (the creation of the Sicilian School of poetry)."<sup>24</sup> For Fulvio Delle Donne, "all of these [literary works], in one way or another contribute to the spread of that halo of rarity and prestige around the figure of the greatest temporal ruler of that age."<sup>25</sup> Serge Lusignan states: "the mastery of letters contributes to the greatness of the kingdom."<sup>26</sup> Therefore, according to Italian scholars, the political importance of creating a highly refined style of writing lays in the process of legitimation of imperial power, against the traditional monopolist of Latin culture, namely the Church of Rome.

Some of these statements, like "the emperor is identified as an emperor because his court produces the highest and most refined

21 Fujiwara, 2001, p. 257.

22 For a recent comment see also Wiebke Denecke ヴィーブケ・デーネーケ, 'Sagachō ni okeru Monjōkeikoku sairon' [A New Theory of "Letters to Governing the State" at the Saga's Court] 『嵯峨朝における「文章経国」再論』, in Wiebke Denecke, Kimiko Kōno (ed. by), *Nihon ni okeru "bun" to "bungaku"* 『日本における「文」と「ブンガク」』 (Tokyo: Bensei 勉誠出版, 2013), 93-106, (pp. 96-98).

23 Alberto Várvaro, 'Potere politico e progettualità culturale nel medioevo e in Federico II', in Mario del Treppio (ed. by), *Nel segno di Federico II — Unità politica e pluralità culturale del mezzogiorno* (Napoli: Bibliopolis, 1989), (pp. 87-88).

24 Edoardo d'Angelo, 'Poesia latina', in *Enciclopedia Federiciana* (Milano: Treccani, 2005).

25 Delle Donne, 2010, p. 160.

26 Serge Lusignan, *Grammatica, lingua e società*, in Pierre Toubert, Angelo Paravicini Bagliani (ed. by), *Federico II e le scienze* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1994).

style of writing, which is also a proof of power,"<sup>27</sup> fit perfectly to the poetic production at the Heian court. Discussing the three imperial collections of Saga (嵯峨) and Junna (淳和)'s reign, Denecke states that "because at court we have refined writings and poetry, we understand we are living in a golden age under a virtuous ruler," and "the composition of Sino-Japanese poetry was not just a side effect of this explosion of literacy and the state's instrumentalization of textual production, but was a part and parcel of establishing imperial power."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Suzuki Hideo's explanation of poetic composition as something that contributes to create a "virtual community of poets holding the same heart [...]" through "a kind of cooperative rite aimed at harmonizing the various powers inside the court society" is surprisingly close to the idea of Frederic II's court notaries intended as an *ecclesia imperialis* (imperial Church) theorized by Delle Donne or a *fraternitas* (religious confraternity) by Kölzer.<sup>29</sup>

Let us just try to imagine how much both the fields of Japanese Literature and Italian Literature could enrich and positively affect each other through the exchange of conclusions and points of view about shared issues like the political role of poetry, the function of rhetoric, the consolidation of the vernacular canon, and the idealization of love. The analysis of these problems in a wider, shared horizon, could help to break the limits of 'area studies,' and the "provinciality" criticized by Pollock.

27 Alberto Várvaro, 1989.

28 Denecke, 2014, pp. 102-103, 66.

29 Hideo Suzuki 鈴木日出男, 'Saga bungakuken' [The Literary Sphere of Saga] 『嵯峨文学圏』, *Bungaku / gogaku* 『文学/語学』 68 (1973), pp. 1-12; Fulvio Delle Donne, 'Le parole del potere: l'epistolario di Pier della Vigna', in Graziano Tonelli (ed. by), *Pier delle Vigne in catene da Borgo San Donnino alla Lunigiana medievale* (Sarzana: Grafiche Lunensi, 2006), p. 122; Theo Kölzer, 'Magna imperialis curia', in Pierre Toubert, Angelo Paravicini Bagliani (ed. by), *Federico II e il mondo mediterraneo* (Palermo: Sellerio, 1994), p. 73.

### Conclusions

The question "Japan as a method — Japan as an object," while focusing the discourse on Japan also sets the point of view outside it, and therefore defines the identity of overseas academics as well. The problem should not be limited to how to analyze Japan as an object or method of research, but it should rather lead to the question "what can the world *and* Japan learn from each other?"

I think that the goal of making Japan an effective center of attraction for international attention can only be pursued by inserting Japanese academia itself into a wider frame of international exchange and cooperation. We should finally put aside the essentialist idea of "Japaneseness" and recognize that many features of Japanese culture and history have so much to share with other countries — both close like China, and far like European countries — and that problems could be solved by crossing the physical and ideological borders of present-day nations and academic fields.