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Essay cluster: Medieval forgeries /  
Forging the medieval

# Harkening to the 'voice' of Teika: Authors and readers of poetry treatise forgeries in medieval Japan

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**Abstract** This essay takes up the *Maigetsushō*, a forged text on theories of *waka* poetry attributed to Fujiwara no Teika (1162–1241), a poet regarded as representative of medieval Japan. A number of factors can be considered evidence that this text was a forgery. The text emerged during a time of fierce quarrelling amongst Teika's descendants who had divided themselves into various factions. What was a matter of extraordinary importance for these factions was claim of ownership of Teika's actual writings on *waka* poetics. Despite the competing factions' desires to keep secret from each other the precious teachings gained from this text, the *Maigetsushō* transcended the circumstances of its creation and went on to become widely circulated. That it was composed in an epistolary style can be understood as the reason for its survival. I posit that the epistolary form effected in the reader a sense that they were listening to Teika's 'voice.' Furthermore, I argue that the text's author had no intentions to craft a forgery per se; rather, the forger believed with conviction that Teika would have spoken these words had he still been alive in their time.

**要旨** 本稿では、中世日本を代表する歌人である藤原定家に仮託された歌論書『毎月抄』を取り上げる。従来、『毎月抄』は定家真作とみられる傾向にあったが、偽書の根拠を複数示ことができ、偽書であることは確実だろう。このような偽書が成立した時代背景として、定家の子孫が分裂して、歌



道家としての地位をめぐる争っていたことが考えられる。当時、定家の歌論書を所持していることが、非常に重要な意味を持った。ただし、『毎月抄』は時代を超えて、定家の重要な歌論書として広く享受され続ける。それには、この書が書簡体であることが大きく関わっていると考えられる。書簡体は読者に定家の「声」を聞いていると思わせる効果があったと推測される。この偽書の作者も、また、偽物を作ったつもりはなく、定家が生きていたら、そう語ったに違いないと信じ、定家の「声」を聞いたのだと思われる。

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## Introduction

The poet Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241) has long been regarded as a figure whose life and works are representative of Japan’s medieval period (1185–1600).<sup>1</sup> In addition to the innovations he achieved in his poetry, Teika left behind a prolific legacy of theoretical perspectives regarding the history of *waka* poetry, conceptualizations of the act of writing poetry, and concrete composition techniques. Although it is clear that a number of Teika’s poetic treatises were in fact forged by later writers, his works, forgeries included, continued to exert considerable influence across the medieval and early modern (1600–1868) periods.

As opposed to Teika’s better-known treatises, *Kindai shūka* 近代秀歌 (*Superior Poems of Our Time*, 1209) and *Eiga no taigai* 詠歌大概 (*Essentials of Poetic Composition*, ca. 1222), both of which have been accepted as being authored by Teika himself, this essay will address *Maigetsushō* 毎月抄 (*Monthly Notes*), a text that from the 1950s has undergone debates regarding its authenticity (Fujihira 1969; Fukuda 1972; Matsumura 1997; Tanaka 2008). Past disputes eventually resolved in a now more or less prevalent acceptance of Teika as the text’s author. Today dictionaries and encyclopaedias range from attributing authorship to Teika without elaboration, to noting the text is ‘conjectured to be a forgery, but more likely the authentic work of Teika.’<sup>2</sup>

However, as I have argued in previous publications (Watanabe 2012, 2013), *Maigetsushō*’s author was not Teika but a later author posing as him, and, in recent years, scholarship has started to treat the text as a forgery (Atkins 2017; Terashima 2020). This essay will first provide

1 I use ‘poetry’ to mean the traditional Japanese verse form *waka* and ‘poet’ to mean a composer of *waka*. *Waka* are short poems in 5 lines of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables; it was the preeminent literary form in premodern Japanese society.

2 *Nihon kokugo daijiten* 日本国語大辞典, s.v. 毎月抄 and *Nihon daihyakkazensho* 日本大百科全書, s.v. 毎月抄. *Sekai daihyakkajiten* 世界大百科事典, s.v. 毎月抄. To access these dictionaries online, see Japan Knowledge: [japanknowledge.com/library](http://japanknowledge.com/library).



evidence of *Maigetsushō* as a forgery. Then I will address the contextual basis of how and when this forgery came into being, emphasizing its epistolary form as an important characteristic. Finally, I will consider the significance of this style in making a forgery, as well as the dynamic between forger and reader.

## Evidence of forgery and period of formation

The four texts on *waka* poetic theory shown to have been written under the false pretence of Teika as their author are the *Gukenshō* 愚見抄, the *Guhishō* 愚秘抄, the *Sangoki* 三五記, and the *Kiribioko* 桐火桶—collectively referred to as the ‘Cormorant and Heron Forgeries’ (*Usagikei Gisho* 鶺鴒系偽書).<sup>3</sup> The creation of these four texts was spurred primarily by the existence of the *Maigetsushō* and consequently determined their reception as works believed to be authored by Teika. The influence of the *Maigetsushō* was not limited to theoretical writings on *waka*, for it extended to broader aesthetic debates within Noh theatre, linked verse poetry, and other arts in the late medieval period. Commenting on a recent research trend in Japan focusing on the concept of ‘forgery,’ Chimoto Hideshi 千本英史 states that rather than simply disavowing forgery, ‘we have come to recognize that the act of making a “forgery” constituted a dynamic enterprise that added further depth and stimulated advancements to the literary culture’ (2013, 5).

There are a number of issues surrounding the ‘Cormorant and Heron Forgeries,’ such as contradictions in stated dates or anachronisms in their contents, that complicate an attribution of authorship to Teika. At present, no doubt remains in scholarship that these works were indeed forged (Tanaka 1969; Fukuda 1972; Miwa 1994). Placed within the larger context of conflict among the various poetry houses, which I discuss later, the ‘Cormorant and Heron Forgeries’ manuscripts multiplied in number, each leaving behind their own variations—a set of manuscripts that were ‘mutually cooperative with and rebelling against each other,’ and continued to ‘introduce numerous contradictions into the mix’ (Miwa 1994, 320–22).

In light of all this, one can still rely on some pieces of evidence that effectively prove that they had been forged. Specifically, although all four works bear Teika’s signature, the signatures themselves were done in such a way that make it completely implausible for it to have been done by Teika himself. Kawahira Hitoshi 川平ひとし has indicated that by providing a signature in this way, the pseudo-Teika author figure attains ‘the authority and frame of reference of the writing subject’ and ‘acquires the autonomy of a narrating subject,’ thus ‘creating a narrative dimension’

3 *Translator’s note:* ‘Cormorant’ and ‘Heron’ are a reference to the two boxes that allegedly held these documents, each with a waterbird figure inlay on their covers.



(2008, 330). In forgeries, signatures become a critical opportunity to free the text to develop its own narrative.

However, *Maigetsushō* does not have a signature. Differing from the ‘Cormorant and Heron Forgeries,’ the *Maigetsushō* instead brings out a narrative voice as its method of forgery. In place of using Teika’s signature to execute the forgery, a number of manuscript lineages contain colophons inscribed by Teika’s son Fujiwara no Tameie 藤原為家 (1198–1275), such as the following (see Fig. 1):

承久元年七月二日或人返報云々、以被草本為備後生之用心、聊染筆了

藤原朝臣為家

[It is said that this is a correspondence sent to a certain person in the first of year Jōkyū (1219), on the second day of the Seventh Month. I have copied this for the sake of providing for posterity guidance in the way of poetry.]<sup>4</sup>

Fujiwara Ason Tameie<sup>5</sup>

4 *Translator’s note:* Watanabe provided a modern Japanese paraphrase in addition to the original text. Both were used to make the English translation.

5 ‘Ason’ or ‘Lord’ was a title that indicated court rank in premodern Japan, in this case for third rank and above.

6 The original text is taken from Hosokawa’s manuscript, published in *Karonshū, Hosokawake eisei bunko sōkan* (1984).

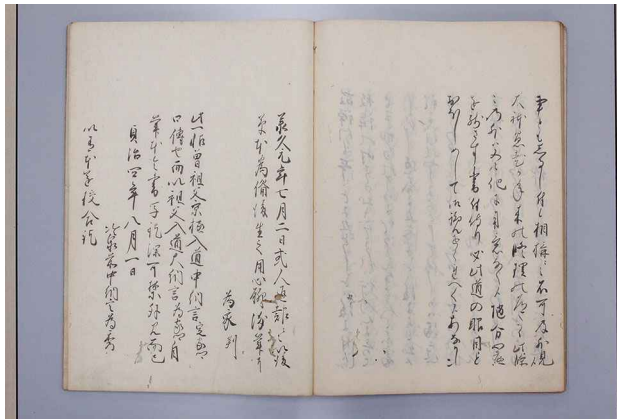
7 *Waka hishō burui*, in *Karonshū, Hosokawake eisei bunko sōkan*, 145.

Here, it is unclear whose correspondences have been recorded in the manuscript. However, if we presume that Tameie had copied them ‘for the sake of providing for posterity guidance in the way of poetry’ [*goshō no yōjin*], then this leads the reader to believe that a manuscript as important as this can only be something that once belonged to Teika. In other words, testimony by Teika’s own son Tameie provides assurance that the *Maigetsushō* is in fact a copying-down of his father’s letters. Of course, this line of thinking assumes that Tameie’s testimony itself is not a forgery.

*Maigetsushō* opens with the author addressing a disciple who has sent a hundred-poem sequence to Teika for evaluation (see Figs. 1 and 2)<sup>6</sup>:

毎月の御百首、能々拜見せしめ候ぬ。凡この度の御歌さま、まことにありがたふみ申候へば、をろかなる心に、かたじけなきおほせの、いなみがたさばかりを、かへりみさぶらふとて、わづかに先人の申置し庭訓のかたはしを申さぶらひき。さだめて後の世のわらはれ草もしげうぞ候らんけれども、さがにその跡やらと、御歌も事のほかによみつのらせおはしまし候へば、返々本意に覚させ給て候<sup>7</sup>

[I have done myself the honour of carefully studying your Lordship’s monthly set of one hundred poems. The verses you have sent this time are indeed admirable—so much so that I feel I can no longer refuse the gracious request that you have made to my unworthy self and have written down those few fragments of poetic instruction that my late father imparted to me. Assuredly I will be a laughing stock for future generations, but I shall persevere nonetheless, because, as befits the heir to such an illustrious line, you have written an



**Fig. 1:** End of the *Maigetsushō* and the colophon in *Tameie waka yōi* 為家歌要意, vol I, fols. 38r-39v (note: This book transcribes two poetry commentaries: the *Eiga no ittei* and *Maigetsushō*. *Eiga no ittei* is speculated to be based on Tameie's oral teaching. The title, *Tameie waka yōi*, implies that the copyist considered these two books to be oral poetry treatises authored by Tameie and thus copied them together.). Seventeenth-century manuscript. Collection of Yumiko Watanabe.

exceptionally large number of fine poems of late, and I am deeply gratified by your progress and achievement. (Brower 1985, 409)]<sup>8</sup>

The name of this disciple has not been revealed. However, given the contents of the letter and its polite register (Fig. 3), we can conjecture at the very least that this was a high-ranking individual who was as yet still a novice in writing poetry. Who this person was becomes a crucial point of discussion for those that attribute Teika as the author of *Maigetsushō*. Incidentally, the title *Monthly Notes* is derived from the opening passage's first words, 'every month' [*maigetsu*], and while the text has been referred to by various names, it was likely never given a title at the time of its writing.

If we were to believe the quoted opening passage along with the colophon provided by Tameie, then we would conclude that the *Maigetsushō* was in fact a draft of a letter written by Teika in response to a high-ranking disciple who requested his poetry drafts be evaluated, and the manuscript in turn must be a copy made by Tameie (Teika's son) of the contents of his epistolary essay. It is important to note here that the contents of this essay consisted of invaluable teachings (*teikin* 庭訓) on poetic practice passed on exclusively from father to son, Teika's father being the greatly honoured poet Fujiwara no Shunzei 藤原俊成 (1114–1204, and see Fig. 4).<sup>9</sup> However, it is more likely that the text was in fact forged by an author posing as Teika, in light of the following evidence.

Firstly, the author refers to a form of poetry gathering that likely never took place during Teika's lifetime. The *Maigetsushō* can be divided into

8 *Translator's note:*

Watanabe provides a modern Japanese paraphrase alongside the original. English translations of *Maigetsushō* are from Brower (1985). Minor adjustments have been made to match Watanabe's paraphrase. In the second sentence, 'repeatedly...over these last years' has been removed; the word *nenrai* is not in the manuscript that Watanabe cites.

9 The selected quotations of text from *Maigetsushō* below in fact frequently cite Shunzei's statements. However, it is likely that these were also transmitted by way of forgery.

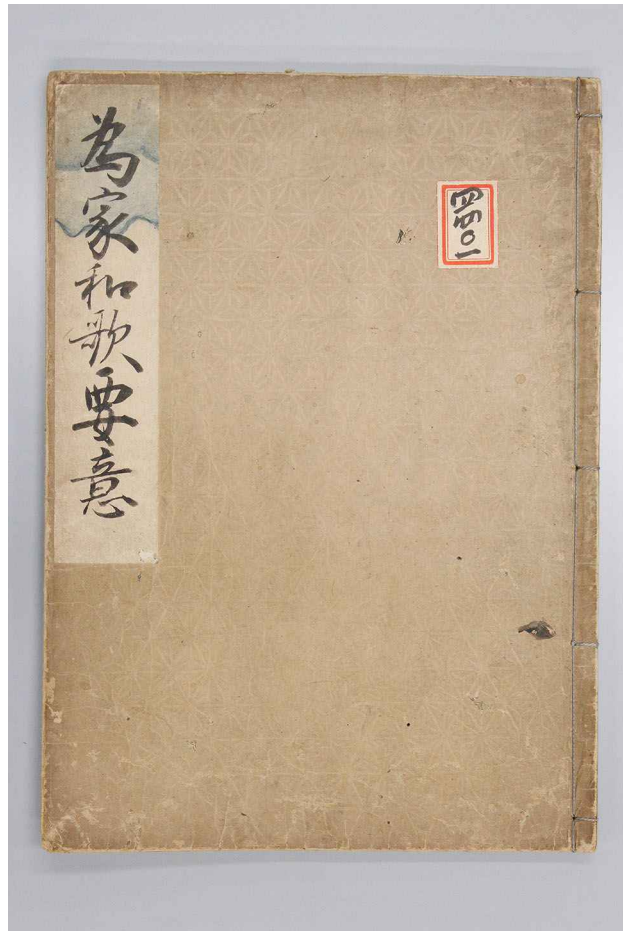


Fig. 2: Front cover of *Tameie waka yōi* 為家歌要意. Collection of Yumiko Watanabe.

two halves: the first half consists of theoretical abstractions of *waka* stylistics, while the second half deals with concrete, practical compositional strategies. Within the latter, the text describes in specific detail key points to consider when participating in a type of poetry-making occasion called *tsugiuta* 続歌 (‘sequential poems’), in which multiple poets contributed poems and combined them into a single sequence of a hundred or another fixed number. In fact, however, gatherings to form a sequence of *tsugiuta* had gained popularity only after Teika’s death in his son Tameie’s lifetime.

Secondly, the text often elaborates on the importance of *keiko* 稽古, or sustained practice.<sup>10</sup> *Keiko* refers to lessons in a given discipline by way of repetitive practice. A review of Teika’s other writings on poetics reveals that the *Maigetsushō*’s elaboration on this point is unique in this regard. It

10 See Watanabe (2013); Yamanishi (1990).



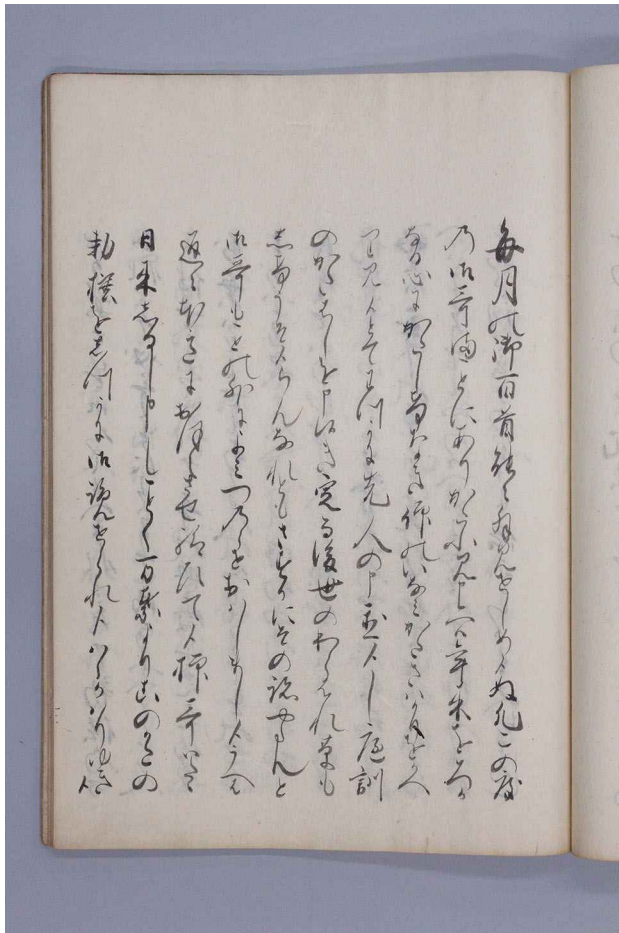


Fig. 3: Opening of *Maigetsushō* in *Tameie waka yōi*, fol. 23v. Collection of Yumiko Watanabe.

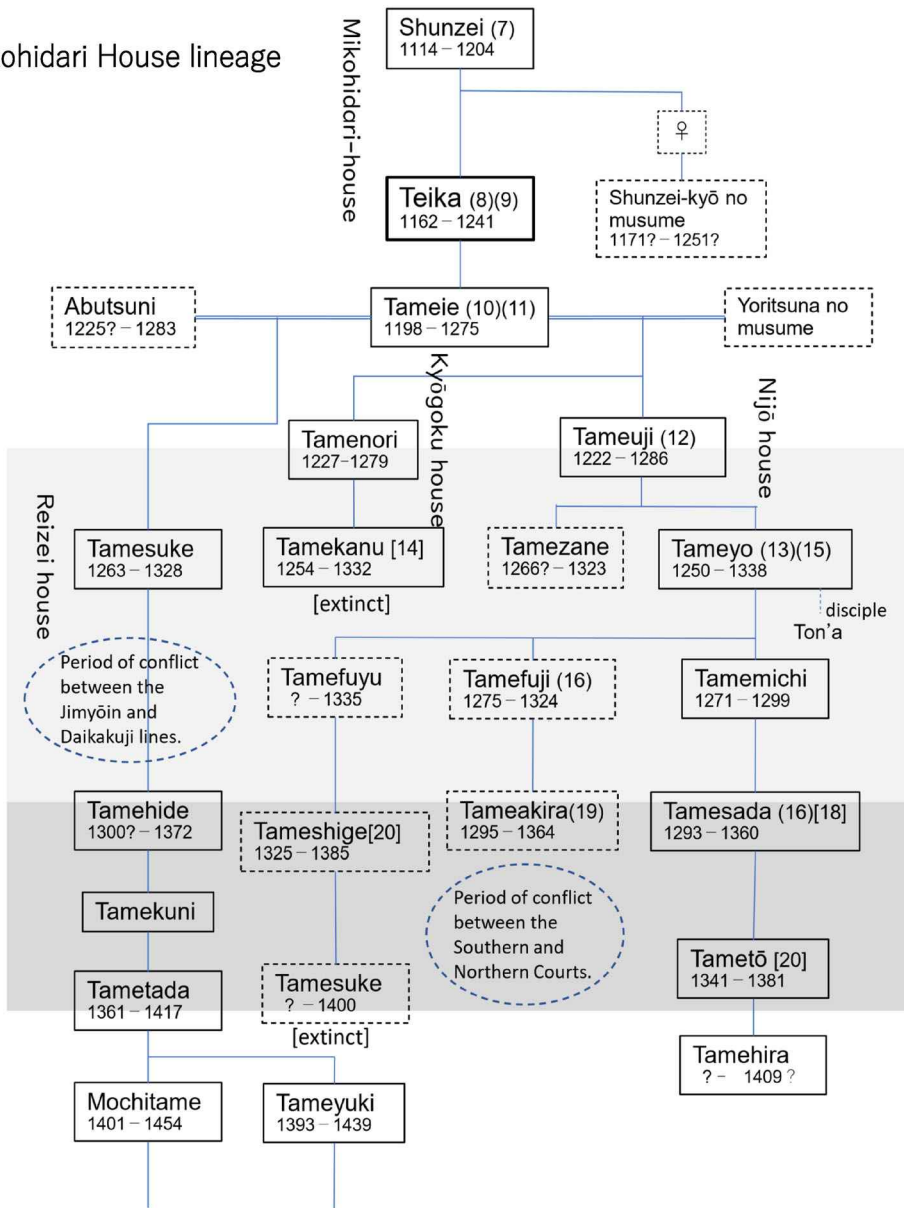
is likely instead that his son Tameie was the first to explicitly emphasise *keiko* in the context of *waka* composition. Even still, it would not be until much later that the concept of *keiko* became a key discursive term in traditional Japanese arts.

Thirdly, the diction of *Maigetsushō* differs from Teika's other writings in appreciable ways. For example, there are instances of Teika using the word *keiko* in his diary, but not in the way it is used in *Maigetsushō* in which the concept of repetitive practice applies for writing *waka*. There are further examples of terminology that either differ in usage in *Maigetsushō* compared to Teika's other writing or are otherwise not used in other texts at all.<sup>11</sup>

11 See Watanabe (2013). For more on Teika's language from a Japanese linguistic perspective, see Tanaka (2007, 2010).



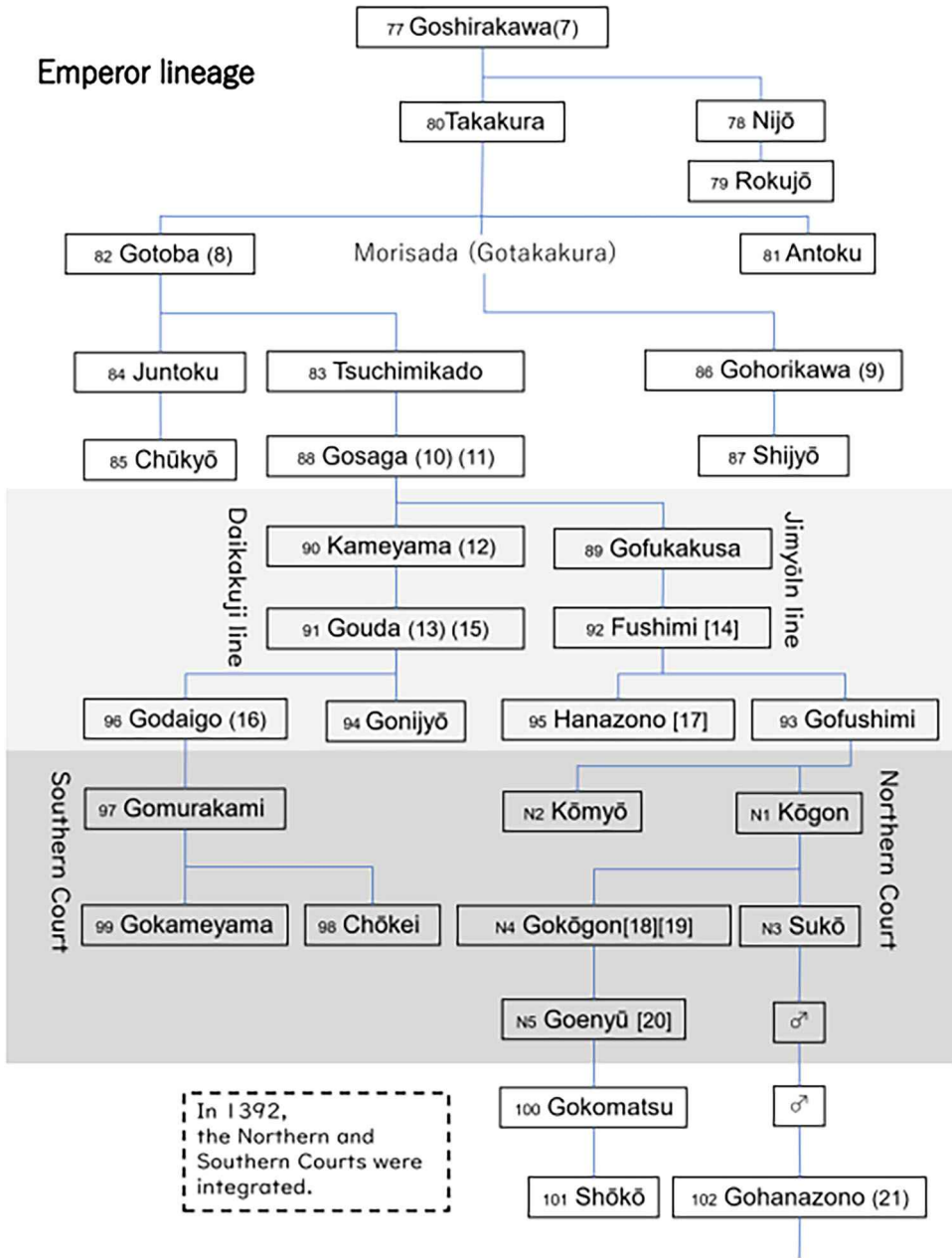
# Mikohidari House lineage



\* Bracketed number indicates the royal anthology for which they served as compiler. Compiler may be single or multiple.  
\* Solid lines represent designation of legitimate lineage.

Fig. 4: Mikohidari House lineage. Diagram by Yumiko Watanabe.







◀ Fig. 5: Emperor lineage. Diagram by Yumiko Watanabe.

Given the evidence, it is reasonable to conclude that *Maigetsushō* was a forgery. This also likely means that Tameie's colophon to the work—with its internal affirmation of Teika as its author—was a forged text as well.

When, then, did this text come into being? The earliest verifiable reference to *Maigetsushō* in another written work is in *Seishō* 井蛙抄 (*Notes of a Frog at the Bottom of the Well*, ca. 1360), written by Ton'a 頓阿 (1289–1372). Thus, there is no doubt that the text had been written before this time. In addition, if we ignore the date Jōkyū 承久1 (1219) as found in Tameie's colophon, then we can reliably trace the work back to a record of a copy being made around 1330.<sup>12</sup> We can therefore safely deduce that *Maigetsushō* was probably written sometime around 1300, placing it around half a century after Teika's death and quarter of a century after Tameie's death.

12 The earliest record has Reizei Tamehide (d. 1372) as the copyist, wherein he signed himself as 'chamberlain' (*jija* 侍従). Tamehide held the position of chamberlain sometime between 1330 and 1336.

### The forgery's historical context

Why was a forgery like this created? I would now like to explore further the historical context in which the text took shape.

Teika—a poet whose innovative perspective on composition yielded superior work—had most famously concentrated his literary efforts into the completion of the *Shinkokinshū* 新古今集 (*New Collection of Japanese Poetry from Ancient and Modern Times*, 1205), the eighth royal anthology. He was chosen, in recognition of his accomplishments, by Emperor Gotoba 後鳥羽院 (1180–1239, r. 1183–1198) to serve as one of the *Shinkokinshū* compilers. As a political enterprise, the royal anthologies were poetry collections promulgated by the decree of either the reigning emperor or a retired emperor. Their history spanned from the first collection, the *Kokinshū* 古今集 (*Collection of Japanese Poetry from Ancient and Modern Times*, ca. 905), to the *Shinshoku Kokinshū* 新続古今集 (*New Collection of Ancient and Modern Times Continued*, 1439), over a period of roughly 560 years. Shortly after the *Shinkokinshū* had been presented to the court, Emperor Gotoba—the sovereign who brought Teika on as a core member of his poetry salon—was sentenced to exile, forcing him to withdraw from the centre stage of politics at the palace. Gotoba, vying to overthrow the recently empowered military government, the Kamakura shogunate (1185–1333), had initiated the Jōkyū War (1221) but was soundly defeated. Despite the war, Teika himself managed to keep his position as leader of the poetry salon, taking on the editing of



**Fig. 6:** Fujiwara no Teika's writings. Important Cultural Property. One panel. Early thirteenth century. 31.0 cm x 91.6 cm. Collection of the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, reproduced with permission (Note: See Nakata (1976), held at the Idemitsu Museum of Arts, for a facsimile. See also Gomi (2000); Nakagawa (2021).).

the ninth royal anthology the *Shinchokusenshū* (*New Imperial Collection*, 1235) as its sole compiler, an honour that would then be passed on to his descendants. Following the tenth royal anthology, and save for only two exceptions, the descendants of Teika secured a monopoly on the role of chief compiler.

Nevertheless, such political authority was not to be secured by peaceful negotiations amongst the generations that followed him. Teika belonged to what was referred to as the Mikohidari House, properly established as a 'poetry house' or *kadō ke* 歌道家 during his father Shunzei's lifetime. A *kadō ke* served the royal court across generations as professional poets. The inheritance rights of the Mikohidari House passed from Shunzei to Teika and then Tameie, but in the next generation the household was divided into three: the Nijō House, the Reizei House, and the Kyōgoku House (see Fig. 4). The Reizei is the sole house that survives to the present day, preserving a wealth of invaluable canonical works concerning Japanese poetry, including Teika's diary. Around the time of the *kadō ke*'s division, the imperial household was also divided and split into two (see Fig. 5). Actual political power had been transferred to the military clans in the eastern provinces, but the authority to decree the compilation of a royal anthology stayed in the capital with the reigning or retired emperor. Each of the divided poetry houses allied themselves with one or the other imperial household factions, thus leading to fierce competition over the right to head the compilation of royal anthologies.



13 The suit concerns the selection of the compiler of the fourteenth royal anthology, the *Gyōkuyōshū*, Nijō Tameyo (1250–1338) had presented to the court in Engyō 3 (1310) as an objection to Emperor Fushimi's decision to name Kyōgoku Tamekane 京極為兼 (1254–1332) as compiler.

14 Collection of Hiroshima University Library, MSDaikoku 2182, *Maigetsushō*, fol. 21v. Accessed via <https://kokusho.nijl.ac.jp/biblio/100302223/1?ln=ja>.

15 *Translator's note*: The author provides modern Japanese paraphrases for these quotations as well, which I have used in making the English translation.

At the beginning of the fourteenth century, court trials were held to judge who was deserving of the role. The *Engyō ryōkyō sochinjō* 延慶兩卿訴陳狀 (*Legal Proceedings of Two Lords in the Engyō Era*) provides records of these adjudications.<sup>13</sup> As key points of contention in these trials, there were two kinds of qualifications that proved one's worthiness: possession of documents from the Mikohidari poetic archives, carefully passed down from generation to generation; or a claim that they—and they alone—received the authentic and proper training (*teikin*) in *waka* poetry from their forefathers. It was amidst these high stakes that the *Maigetsushō* had come into being. It was imperative for a descendant to claim possession of Teika's own writings, which served as authoritative records of his and his father's teachings in *waka* poetry.

Teika's great grandson Reizei Tamehide 冷泉為秀 (d. 1372) produced at least three copies of the *Maigetsushō*. The oldest of these copies states in its colophon, 'This copy has been made in haste upon opening the original manuscript in silent lamplight. As a result, characters are in disarray and lacking form. This must never be shown to anyone else.' However, within the third copy, the colophon dated Jōji 貞治 4 (1365) records the following (see Fig. 1 above):

此一帖、曾祖父京極入道中納言〈定家卿〉口伝也、而以祖父入道大納言〈為家卿〉自筆本令書写訖、深可禁外見而已<sup>14</sup>

[This is the oral transmission (*kuden*) of my great-grandfather the Kyōgoku Nyūdō Middle Counselor [Teika]. His teachings were copied down by my grandfather the Nyūdō Major Counselor [Tameie] himself, of which yet another copy was made. It is to be guarded and never shown to outsiders.]<sup>15</sup>

This colophon indicates that this *Maigetsushō* manuscript was produced by Tamehide, who had in turn made a copy of what Tameie had written down of Teika's oral teachings. Similar to Tamehide's oldest manuscript, it warns the reader not to show it to outsiders, but the reason for this prohibition differs. Tamehide's colophons had transformed over time, leading to a greater emphasis on the manuscript being the legitimate transmission of his forefather's writings as the basis for why the text must be kept locked away.

## Epistles and epistolary works in medieval Japan

As shown in this essay's Introduction, one of the defining characteristics of the *Maigetsushō* is its epistolary form. In this section, I would like to address in detail these characteristics in comparison to Teika's actual writings.



In terms of Teika's writings, a letter dated to Jō'ō 貞応2 (1223) addressed to the head priest of the Iwashimizu Hachimangū Shrine Tanaka Sōsei 田中宗清 (1190–1237) has survived to the present day (see Fig. 6).

The distinguishing features of this letter can be summarised as follows:

### Material form

An object intended for a particular recipient;

### Style and format

- (2) Sentences ending with conjugations of the copular *sōrō* □;
- (3) Idiomatic expressions conventional to letters;
- (4) Date and signature;

### Contents

- (5) A salutation that shows consideration of the recipient;
- (6) An abbreviation of matters mutually understood between sender and recipient;
- (7) Some statement regarding the conditions in which the letter was written, having little to do with the main message in the letter;
- (8) Expression of the sender's feelings.

Characteristic (7) refers specifically in this case to the sender's plans for recovery from a recent illness, hinting at the possibility that they will be unable to send a reply in turn should the recipient write back. Among the above characteristics of Teika's epistolary prose proven to be his, *Maigetsushō* does not contain (4), (6), or (7) but is otherwise in accordance. While on the one hand *Maigetsushō* is written in vernacular *kana* (in particular the letter's closing greeting is the conventional *anakashiko* あなかしこ ['sincerely']), Teika's letter to Sōsei uses for the most part Literary Sinitic as its base style (the closing greeting being instead *kyōkyō kingen* 恐々謹言 ('with deepest respect')). Although they differ in this respect, that they both use letter-closing greetings remains the same. While one may recognise that features such as (6) and (7), not found in *Maigetsushō*, are ill-suited for prose in a poetry treatise, it would be natural for a real letter to have them.

As another example, using a letter by his father Shunzei in *kana* for comparison, we can identify the same fundamental characteristics as Teika's authentic letter to Sōsei.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Shunzei's letters refer to himself as '*nyūdō*' 入道 (a title for lay monks) in a number of places: 'How blessed this *nyūdō* ("I") must feel in this joyous and rare moment to have turned ninety this year.' Typically in literary Japanese the subject is not marked, so to have this deliberate reference to himself as '*nyūdō*' imparts greater emphasis on his personal feelings. This echoes the closing passage

16 See a letter dated to Ken'nin 3 (1203) in Nakata (1976), held at the Atami Museum of Art, for a facsimile.



of *Maigetsushō* below, in which the author refers to himself as *gurō* 愚老 ('my foolish old self,' see wave underline below) when expressing personal sentiments (see also Fig. 1 above).

いま、にはかに勘申せば、さだめて髣髴きはまりなうぞ候ら  
と、あさましきまでに思給候ながら、ひとへに愚訓をのみまもる  
とぞのおほせ、かたじけなく候ままに、左道の事ども、しるしつ  
け候。相構々、不可有外見。大体、愚老が年来修理の道、ただ此  
条々の外は、全く他の用心なく候。随分、心底をのこさずかきつ  
づけ侍り。かならず此道の眼目とおぼしめして、御覽ぜられ候べ  
く候。あなかしこ<sup>17</sup>

17 *Waka hishō burui*, in  
*Karonshū, Hosokawake*  
*eisei bunko sōkan*,  
174-75.

[Having written about these sundry matters hastily and on the spur of the moment, I am appalled to think that the results are so deplorably vague and disorganised. However, feeling that I could not ignore your earnest desire to receive instruction from me, I have written down my various mistaken notions about the Art of Poetry. Please do not under any circumstances allow anyone else to see this. Indeed, concerning this Art in which I have disciplined my foolish old self these many years, I have no other instructions to give you apart from these. I have written down absolutely everything I know. In reading this over, please understand that it contains the basic essentials of this poetic Art.

Sincerely (Brower 1985, 424)]<sup>18</sup>

18 *Translator's note:*  
Emphasis by Watanabe.  
I have changed Brower's translation of the closing phrase "with deep respect" to "sincerely" to distinguish it from the closing phrase "with deepest respect" written in Literary Sinitic discussed earlier in this article.

One can surmise from this closing statement alone that the *Maigetsushō* was written under the pretence of being an intensely secretive correspondence between Teika and a pupil who earned his trust. In reading the lines, 'feeling that I could not ignore your earnest desire to receive instruction from me,' the figure of the epistle's recipient emerges as an individual who places their trust and education in the arts in their instructor. Similar language of familiarity can be seen in the previously cited opening passage of the letter. This suggests that the 'responsive gesture' (Ishihara 1995) of an epistle's recipient can already be embedded within the linguistic register of the text.

Furthermore, it is important to note here (in the emphasised lines) the explicit injunction against showing this to others under any circumstances. Private correspondences in general are written under the assumption that they remain private, so it is not necessarily unusual for the writer of a letter to express anxiousness about external perceptions. The text—a forgery made to be read—contradicts itself by commanding that it not be shared, yet in this contradiction exists an intent to emphasise its value, a tautology that tells the reader that it is valuable because it must be kept secret.

In contrast, *Kindai shūka*—a poetic treatise conclusively proven to have been written by Teika—was sent to the third shogun of the Kamakura





military government Minamoto no Sanetomo 源実朝 (1192–1219). Given that *Kindai shūka* has an identifiable addressee, it is categorically an epistle, and it has been suggested that *Maigetsushō* may in fact have been modeled after *Kindai shūka* (Tanaka 1969). However, *Kindai shūka* does not have certain elements of Teika's epistolary style including (3) and (5). Moreover, sentence predicates are not conjugated using *sōrō* □ (2), a linguistic feature observed in epistles written by Teika and Shunzei.<sup>19</sup> And although *Kindai shūka* does have on rare occasion passages where the sender expresses his personal feelings (such as '[...] since my ails have worsened and my woes deepened in my old age [...]'), it cannot be treated as a text generically similar to *Maigetsushō* as a work on poetic theory in epistolary form.

While these contexts may suggest that an epistolary essay such as this did not have any historical precedents, that would not be the case here. Researching the history of the Japanese epistolary novel, Teruoka Yasutaka 暉峻康隆 (1953) has postulated that the tradition of *ōraimono* 往来物 ('correspondences,' a kind of elementary educational text) set the stage for the emergence of the epistolary novel. The history of *ōraimono* can be traced back to the end of Heian period to the *Meigō ōrai* 明衡往来 (*Meigō's Correspondences*), a collection of actual letters assembled for the purpose of demonstrating model forms of writing to students. By the Kamakura period, these correspondence compilations, in addition to being used as writing models, were used for their content as well, becoming a kind of educational text intended to impart knowledge of societal norms. For the next five hundred years until the beginning of the Meiji period, textbooks for the people's education were entirely of this variety. *Maigetsushō* came into existence in the midst of when *ōraimono* were used as educational texts and therefore can be thought of as being supported by this pre-existing genre.

As for precedents of poetic treatises, we must also keep in mind that other epistolary essays on *waka* poetics were written prior to *Maigetsushō*; namely, the *Letter by the Koshibe Nun* 越部禅尼消息 (ca. 1251) and Nun Abutsu's (1225?–1283) *The Night Crane* 夜の鶴. The connection between these texts and those I have examined thus far is a topic for future scholarly inquiry.

## Reference to a spiritual dream

Another distinguishing characteristic of the *Maigetsushō*'s descriptive prose—one not present in *Kindai shūka* or *Eiga no taigai*—is the occasional interspersal of *setsuwa*-like episodes.<sup>20</sup> One incidence, in which Teika relays a divine message received in a dream, is shown here:

19 See Tanaka (2010). Generally speaking, medieval authors began using *sōrō* as a copula in their letters from the Kamakura period (1185–1333) onward.

20 *Translator's note:* Sometimes translated as 'folktales' or 'anecdotes,' *setsuwa* were a Japanese medieval form of storytelling often involving the supernatural and the divine.



去元久頃、住吉參籠の時、汝月あきらかなりと冥の靈夢を感じ侍しによりて、家風にそなへんために明月記を草し置て侍る事も、身には過分のわざとぞ思給る。<sup>21</sup>

- 21 *Waka hishō burui*, in *Karonsbū, Hosokawake eisei bunko sōkan*, 169-70.

[For some time ago, during the Genkyū era, when I made a retreat at Sumiyoshi, I had a wonderful dream inspired by the God, in which I was told, ‘For you the moon is radiant.’ Because of this I wrote my ‘Record of the Bright Moon,’ so as to contribute to the poetic traditions of my house—although it was, I realise, a far greater task than I was worthy to perform. (Brower 1985, 422)]<sup>22</sup>

- 22 *Translator’s note*: I have altered Brower’s translation of the text to ‘Record of the Bright Moon.’

It is well known that divine messages imparted in dreams were taken seriously not only in Japan, but in other premodern civilisations, such as in Greek mythology (in the figure of Morpheus, the god of dreams), or in the gospel of Matthew (where warnings were sent to Joseph through dreams). Sequestering oneself overnight in a sacred space has been a long established ‘method of praying for dreams’ in human civilisation since antiquity, and one can suspect that Teika had sequestered himself at the Sumiyoshi Shrine precisely in the hope of receiving a dream message from the deity (Sakai 2017).

A point of contention in the debate regarding *Maigetsushō*’s authenticity hinges on what one believes is being referred to in this passage as the *Meigetsuki* (*Record of the Bright Moon*) (Gomi 2000), a text Teika is alleged to have composed in response to a dream.

Confusingly, Teika’s extant diary is today also known as the *Meigetsuki*, making it appear as if it is possible that it was because of this very passage that his diary came to be known by that name. However, any reference to the diary as the *Meigetsuki* has only been attested as early as the Northern and Southern Courts period (1336-1392), after Teika’s death, making it difficult to prove that he himself had given his diary that name. This leaves us with the possibility that in this critical passage in the *Maigetsushō*, the author is referring not to his diary but to a completely different text. To accept then that the *Maigetsushō* was truly authored by Teika, one must also accept that the so-called *Meigetsuki* referenced in the text is in fact not the diary that we know today by that name but instead a non-extant poetics treatise. Still, even if we recognise that *Maigetsushō* had been forged, it is not entirely impossible for the forger to have been in possession and made use of an actual ‘*Meigetsuki*’ as a poetics essay. At this time, evidence that can prove the existence of such a treatise has yet to be found (Tanaka 1969).

What is more important to note here, however, is the author’s intention to create the impression that Teika’s decision to impart the way of poetry practiced by the Mikohidari house was willed by the Sumiyoshi Myōjin, the patron deity of poetry. Although the *Meigetsuki* has been established



as a text separate to the *Maigetsushō*, like the letter it is considered to be a written transmission of the way of poetry. In other words, the poetic theories laid out in the *Maigetsushō* are by extension enshrined as being the inner mysteries tied to the Sumiyoshi deity.

## The author and reader of a forged epistle

In addition to records of dream visions, the *Maigetsushō* offers impressionistic memories of how Shunzei and other court poets behaved in poem-making occasions. Such content is inextricably linked to the treatise's teachings on the art of poetry, with some anecdotes not to be found in Teika's diary or other writings on *waka* poetics. In other words, although we may recognise that these accounts have been fabricated by *Maigetsushō*'s author, we may still leave for consideration what it means when 'remembered' impressions are narrated by means of an epistle. Here I would like to turn to the epistolary style of writing found in the *Maigetsushō*.

As stated previously, *Maigetsushō* presents itself as closely-guarded and secret correspondence between Teika and a trusted pupil. Not only does the text itself clearly state that it must never be shown to others, but the copyist, Tamehide, treats it as such in his colophon. The performance of concealment engenders the belief that the reader is looking at an 'authentic' text, thereby increasing the forgery's value.

In fact, however, the text was likely not as locked away as its maker and copyists had instructed. It is clear from a colophon from an extant manuscript of *Maigetsushō* that the copy had been made by a monk named Gyōnen 凝然 in the year Kenmu 建武 4 (1337). Gyōnen was a monk of unknown lineage who likely existed on the fringes of poetry circles at the time. According to this colophon, even more copies of the text had been made after. One imagines that the pretentiousness of keepers of these manuscripts—an attitude in which they thought, 'This really should be kept secret, but as a favour I will share it with you and you alone,'—had ironically allowed more and more copies to be made. One might also say that the poetic treatise, posing as a genuine letter, conveys to the reader the feeling of having received special teachings directly from Teika as though one were a close disciple.

Here I would like to examine as a comparative example a letter written by Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), the founder of the True Pure Land sect of Buddhism and contemporary of Teika's. Following persecution at the capital in modern-day Kyoto, Shinran had for a time lived in the eastern provinces to proselytise. Upon his return to the capital, his disciples from his time away began writing letters to Shinran asking for his teachings.



According to Ōsumi Kazuo 大隅和雄, Shinran responded with letters ‘as if speaking to one with great familiarity’ (2017, 51) to his less cultivated disciples, preaching about Buddhist faith. The letters circulated amongst his disciples, who in turn made their own copies that were then compiled during Shinran’s lifetime. The most widely circulated of these epistolary compilations was the *Mattōshō* 末灯鈔, assembled in 1333 (71 years after Shinran’s death), overlapping with the time when *Maigetushō* had been created.

Each of Shinran’s letters were addressed to a singular disciple, ‘their questions carefully answered with simple language to maximize comprehension,’ leading to the letters’ wider circulation and becoming an ‘irreplaceable scripture’ that continued to be read even after Shinran’s death (Ōsumi 2017, 51). A disciple of Shinran may have understood that some of these letters were not addressed to them *per se*, but one can surmise that if their Buddhist faith had indeed been deepened and life enriched by these letters, then perhaps they had poured over these letters as if they themselves were being personally addressed all along.

*Maigetsushō*, too, contains passages suggestive of a caring teacher offering personal instruction to their pupil.

この御百首に多分古風のみえ侍から、かやうに申せば、又退屈や候はんずらんと存ずれども、しばしは構てあそばまじきにて候。今一兩年ばかりも、せめてもとの体をはたらかさで、御詠作あるべく候。<sup>23</sup>

23 *Waka hishō burui*, in *Karonshū, Hosokawake eisei bunko sōkan*, 147.

[Your most recent set of one hundred poems contains some poems in the archaic style. Having said that, I fear that you will feel discouraged from writing poetry at all. Nevertheless, you should restrain yourself for a little while longer from composing in this style—at least for another year or two, until you are able to compose without difficulty in the fundamental styles. (Brower 1985, 410)]<sup>24</sup>

24 *Translator’s note*: Slight adjustments were made to Brower’s translation in order to fit more closely to Watanabe’s interpretation of the text.

The reader of *Maigetushō* knows that, according to the letter’s opening passage, this correspondence is intended strictly for a well-regarded *waka* pupil of Teika’s. However, if the reader is also a *waka* poetry novice like the letter’s intended recipient, then can we not say that in the process of reading *Maigetsushō*, the reader may feel a sense that they, too, are receiving poetic teachings directly from Teika? Reading the letter perhaps also creates the expectation to follow his tailored instructions.

Furthermore, the issue of ‘voice’ must also be addressed as a critical component of writing in an epistolary style. Regarding Shinran’s letters, Ōsumi writes that when his disciples read his letters, ‘they would come to remember fondly their master’s image and ponder his words as if they were hearing his voice’ (2017, 51). Here, we can briefly turn to the medieval and Byzantine studies scholar Hashikawa Hiroyuki 橋川裕之



who has researched the source of the collected letters of Athanasius I of Constantinople (r. 1289–1293, 1303–1309) and offers an interesting comparative observation related to 'voice.' Hashikawa argues that Athanasius, motivated by political events in 1297, became 'self-aware of the power of one's voice conveyed in a letter, or rather the power of the written voice,' and, intent on 'leaving assurance that this was his actual voice,' began making copies of his letters (2009, 35). While in the case of Shinran's letters, his disciples had sought after Shinran's 'voice' in compiling his letters, in this example it was the letter writer himself who was aware of the 'power of the voice' present in the epistolary form and thus collated his own works.

Moreover, in stage performances and television dramas, when a character is reading a letter aloud, we often find a technique employed where the reading voice shifts midway from the person who had received the letter to the person who had sent the letter. Even if one had never met the letter writer or heard their voice, it may be that the very form of the epistolary text is what triggers in the reader's consciousness the 'voice' of the author.

It is important to remember that the *Maigetsushō* copyist, Tamehide, referred to the text as the *kuden* 口伝 ('oral tradition') passed from this great-grandfather. Oral traditions, by definition, are transmitted by the voice. Tamehide's acknowledgement of this speaks volumes of *Maigetsushō*'s reception as a text that triggers an awareness of Teika's 'voice' (see Fig. 2 above).

We can summarise characteristics of epistles in medieval Japan thus discussed as follows:

1. Epistles give the impression that the writer of the letter is **speaking intimately and exclusively** to its reader.
2. When an epistle is educating its reader, and in accordance with characteristic #1, it does so effectively because it is presented in a way **that the reader understands**, and it gives the reader **concrete instructions to follow**. This tends to be especially true when the writer of the letter is someone for whom the reader has deep respect and admiration.
3. Epistles **cause a strong awareness of the letter writer's voice**, thereby reinforcing the effects of characteristics #1 and #2.
4. The reader has a sense that they are being imparted **secrets of grave importance**, particularly in cases of closely-guarded, private letters.

In the case of *Maigetsushō*, perhaps the author was well aware of the 'power of the written voice,' and thus chose to adopt this particular form to make a convincing forgery. One may guess that the dream vision passage, an element that signals the text's value as a treatise on *waka* poetics, was



probably added to heighten the reader's sense that they were the only ones being shown the art's esoteric secrets. Additionally, the anecdotes in the text involving impressive poetry are not easily forgotten, thus further serving its expected purpose of imparting teachings on *waka* poetry.

## The author of *Maigetsushō* and its cultural context in medieval Japan

Who, then, could have written *Maigetsushō*? Currently there is no definitive answer, but the author can be conjectured to have been someone extremely close to the poetry houses with experience writing or teaching *waka*. Komine Kazuaki has argued that it is difficult to judge cases of authorship in forgeries like this based solely on our modern 'rational' logic (2021, 30–32), while in her analysis of forgeries of Latin classics, Irene Peirano Garrison has argued for the necessity of '[s]ituating fakes in their cultural contexts' (2012, 24), stating that 'fraud and deception are simply not apt paradigms when it comes to ancient fakes' (2012, 25). With this in mind, it is therefore necessary to situate *Maigetsushō* within the cultural context of medieval Japan.

We begin with esotericism. Komine Kazuaki has suggested the importance of the concept of spirit possession (*hyōi* 憑依) in historical cases of forgery (2021, 39). In addition, the religious studies scholar Iyanaga Nobumi 彌永信美, writing on the topic of expansive cases of forgery in esoteric Buddhist writings and translations, has pointed out that the apex of esoteric ritual is the possession that brings the enshrined deity into physical form (2020, 64). According to Iyanaga, the devotee in the ritual is said to 'become the Buddha' (2020, 65). The enshrined deity and devotee 'inhabit' each other and 'completely transform' (2020, 65). He explains that the many forgeries of esoteric sutras can be better understood if we see them as having been produced by practitioners who wrote them while their bodies were inhabited by the Buddha (2020, 64–65).

It is difficult to argue that the *Maigetsushō* is one such case of forgery by way of spirit possession. The author had understood well the expressive potential of the epistolary form to transmit Teika's voice, utilising a number of methods to impart to the reader the serious significance of its teachings. Furthermore, when compared to actual letters, the writer avoids epistolary conventions that have no bearing on its contents as a poetry treatise. One imagines the forger carefully planning out the overall effect of their written expressions, coldly removing epistolary niceties. Above all, they fully understood what it meant to be in possession of Teika's poetic treatises during a time when conflict among poetry houses was as ruthless





as coming to blades. It is hard to imagine then that *Maigetsushō*'s author had become one with Teika and authored the work in a fit of possession.

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the Japanese medieval period was one in which the cultural conditions allowed for the proliferation of forgeries by writers posing as deified beings or esteemed figures in the literary arts (Satō 2002; Komine 2021). Satō Hiro'o 佐藤弘夫 has written on a grouping of forgeries of religious texts based in a stream of medieval thought known as original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覚), stating 'people seeking salvation attempted to move beyond dogma and instead approach more directly the realm of the Buddhas [...] hearing the voices of the various Buddhas in their own hearts [...] transcribing and collecting them into written texts' (2002, 164–67). In premodern Japanese society, where individual ingenuity was not necessarily a principle value, a student would attribute and legitimise the logic they formulated for themselves by writing under the pretext of a master such as Saichō 最澄 (767–822) or other religious figures. These forgers were fully aware that the texts they fabricated were their own works, not that of the master. However, they sincerely believed that if this teacher were still alive, they would undoubtedly share those words from their own mouths. That is, they sincerely believed that their creative efforts—if the masters had known—would be deserving of praise, not admonition.

I would argue that the circumstances which lead to the creation of *Maigetsushō* are similar. It is impossible for Teika to have remarks on *tsugiuta* poetry, a poem-making occasion that did not gain popularity in his lifetime. Additionally, in terms of Teika's other treatises *Kindai shūka* and *Eiga no taigai*, the author thoroughly explicates on the compositional technique of *honkadori* 本歌取り (borrowing a phrase from an older poem, conventionally translated as 'allusive variation'), but he makes no reference to matters perhaps more pressing to an audience of court poets such as *daiei* 題詠 (composition based on predetermined topics) or *kabyō* 歌病 ('poetic diseases,' errors in poetry). Perhaps wishing to correct these shortcomings, the author of *Maigetsushō* offered readers Teika's alleged teachings that they so sought after in his work but could not find. While passages regarding *honkadori* on the one hand do make use of Teika's statements existing elsewhere, the forger had made subtle changes, having been influenced by other prevailing ideas about the topic at that time (Kimishima 2006). This slight variation from Teika's perspective on *honkadori* was probably not the author of the *Maigetsushō*'s intent but instead a consequence of the forger, in the process of rewriting what has been received as Teika's poetics, incorporating their own notions on the topic that were in accordance with their time, not Teika's. Overall then, the *Maigetsushō* offers the reader both intentional addenda to received knowledge of Teika's poetics as well as an overwriting of his ideas that,



although likely unintentional, would have corresponded with the concerns of the era. In either case, this process of forgery brings to mind Peirano Garrison's point that 'Fakes [...] can be thought of as "creative supplements," aimed at expanding canonical texts and filling in their gaps' (2012, 10).

I would argue that the forger sincerely believed that the kind of perspectives on *waka* poetics taken within the treatise would have been the same had Teika somehow lived long enough to express it to them directly. This closely resembles what Umberto Eco referred to as 'faith in fakes' (Eco 2018, 270). The author heard for themselves Teika's unmistakable voice and chose the epistolary treatise as an effective form to convey his voice, and regardless of their use of fabricated stories—including the mysterious dream vision—to legitimise the text, they surely did so bearing no ill intent to deceive.

## Conclusion

The *Maigetsushō* later became an instructional text aimed at novice poets after it entered the hands of military commander and respected poet, Hosokawa Yūsai 細川幽齋 (1534–1610). Yūsai had adopted the epistle as a primer as part of a larger educational program that would develop one's skill in *waka* poetry. This is perhaps because in contrast to the more abstract theories in *Kindai shūka* and *Eiga no taigai*, *Maigetsushō* provided concrete, practical advice useful to initiates in Japanese poetry, interspersing various intriguing vignettes, and thereby creating a kind of instruction that resembled conversation. From this, *Maigetsushō* gained greater status as an important work in the early modern period and was subsequently published and achieved wider circulation. The letter's readership continued to grow, transcending far beyond the scope of what the author had originally imagined. The text, assembled by its maker who had hearkened to the voice of the deceased author, overcame its original historical circumstances of divisive opposition between poetry houses, and invited a host of readers who need only the desire to listen for Teika to hear him.

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