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# Classical Japanese in Linguistic and Cross-Cultural Perspective<sup>1)</sup>

Charles De Wolf

In the preface to his famous *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Samuel Johnson notes:

“When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary nature, or clear the world at once from folly, vanity, and affectation.”

I cite this not only to show that, though no modern linguist, Johnson was quite aware that “mutability” applies to human language as well as all else that is “sublunary,” but also to note that, as learned as he was, Johnson knew far less about the history of the English language than anyone with curiosity and access to Wikipedia can learn, in a matter of minutes or at most hours.

Johnson was surely unable to read Anglo-Saxon, also known as Old

English. Johnson died in 1784, two years before the first transcription of the manuscript that includes *Beowulf*, the epic poem that, until recently, even American high-school students read, albeit in translation. Though he was aware of the English tongue's relationship to the Germanic languages (to which he refers as "Teutonical"), his knowledge was at best superficial.

By way of contrast, the linguistic discoveries regarding Old Japanese and Classical Japanese<sup>2)</sup> by the famous Edo-period philologist Motoori Norinaga (本居宣長), whose life overlaps with that of Johnson, had an enormous impact on the understanding of old texts, notably the *Kojiki* and *Genji Monogatari*. These are reflected in all linguistic descriptions even today.

It is obviously wrong to think that our interest in the past, specifically our linguistic past, is reliably ongoing—or that a decline thereof is predictable from an absorption in things modern. Here I should like to suggest two seemingly contradictory factors that make for serious study of old texts and old languages: (1) the appeal of academic convention and prestige, (2) the exercise of peculiar talents mixed with eccentricity.

Here two names from the past immediately come to mind: Arthur Waley and J.R.R. Tolkien, born just over two years from each other, both entered Oxford to study the classics, only to find themselves engaged in pursuits at the time considered to be hardly the done thing. Waley, having left university because of an eye ailment, taught himself Classical Chinese and Classical Japanese. Tolkien became enamored of old Germanic languages. Waley never learned any modern East Asian language, and while Tolkien is said to have been quite familiar with medieval Welsh, he apparently did not know its living descendant.

Linguists typically refer to the earliest forms of the English language as Old English, partly in order to emphasize continuity, whereas those who

study the literature of the time may prefer to go on calling it Anglo-Saxon. Whatever the purely linguistic arguments for the former label, the fact remains that it—along with the entire world of pre-Norman Conquest Britain—tends to be regarded as distinctly “other.” Whereas many a university student may learn enough Middle English to read Geoffrey Chaucer, as I did long ago, there are few who attempt to take on the strikingly more daunting challenge of four centuries before. (I was already in my twenties when I began to grapple with it.) Between the time of Edward the Confessor and Edward III, vast linguistic changes had taken place.

We might for a moment imagine Japanese language education with strong emphasis on Classical Chinese (漢文 *kanbun*) and the study of such works as *The Tale of Genji* and the major collections of Japanese poetry left to the eccentric likes of a Japanese Tolkien. Of course, such is not the case. *Kobun* (古文), lit. ‘old writings’, has long been a major part of the curriculum in Japanese secondary schools and is typically part of university entrance examinations. More importantly, I would say, the older linguistic forms continue to influence the modern language. Consider, for example, the following:

聖なるかな、聖なるかな、聖なるかな、万軍の神なる主。主の  
栄光は天地に満つ。天のいと高き所にホザンナ。褒むべきか  
な、主のなによりて来る者。天のいと高きところにホザンナ

SEI naru kana, SEI naru kana, SEI naru kana, BANGUN no kami naru  
SHU, SHU no EIKOU wa TENCHI ni mitsu. TEN no ito-takaki tokoro  
ni hozanna. Homu-beki kana, SHU no na ni yorite kitaru mono. TEN no  
ito takaki tokoro ni hozanna.

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

These words, the Sanctus sung during the consecration in Japanese Catholic churches (when operating), are of modern composition but of classical form, a variety of what is known as *gikobun* (擬古文), lit. ‘imitative old literary (style)’, the only difference being that whereas *gikobun* writers generally strive to use only native Japanese words, the hymn given here contains Sino-Japanese elements, which I have marked and shall mark in capital letters: SEI ‘holy’, BANGUN ‘hosts’, SHU ‘Lord’, EIKOU ‘glory’, TENCHI ‘heaven and earth’, TEN ‘heaven’.

*naru* is the classical copula, i.e. it means ‘is’ and not ‘become’. Preceding exclamative *kana*, it appears in the attributive form, cf. predicative *nari*. *Mitsu* is the predicative form of a verb that in the modern language is *michiru* ‘to be full’, which originates from a blend of the attributive *mitsuru* and the conjunctive *michi*. *ito* is an adverbial intensifier that is still found in archaic language, cf. *itomo*. (Attributive) *takaki* is in Modern Japanese (MJ) *takai*. *homu*-(*beki*) ‘praise(worthy)’ is in MJ *homeru*. *ni yorite* is the uncontracted form of *ni yotte*, expressing cause or reason. *Kitaru* is contracted from *ki-itaru* ‘come, arrive’.

Until the Year 2000, the Our Father was likewise recited or sung in the classical style. Here I should like to contrast it to its Anglo-Saxon counterpart:

天にましますわれらの父よ、願わくは御名の尊まれんことを、御国の来たらんことを、御旨の天に行わるる如く地にも行われんことを。

TEN ni mashimasu ware-ra no chichi yo, negawaku wa mi-na no toutomaren koto wo. Mi-kuni no kitaran koto wo. Mi-mune no TEN ni okonawaruru-gotoku CHI ni mo okonawaren koto wo.

Fæder ure þu þe eart on heofonum. Si þin nama gehalgod. Tobecume þin rice. Gewurþe þin willa on eorðan swa swa on heofonum.

Mashimasu is a high honorific, comparable to Modern Japanese irassharu, except that it refers almost exclusively to the gods and the Buddha. Ware-ra no ‘our’ can still be heard in MJ, but more colloquial is watashi-tachi. Negawaku derives from the imperfective stem negawa- ‘request, beseech’ + the now obsolete nominalizing suffix -ku, cf. iwaku, e.g. shi, iwaku ‘Confucius saith’. mi- in mi-na ‘your name’, mi-kuni ‘your kingdom’, and mi-mune ‘your will’ is one of several variants of the honorific prefix, ohomi, most commonly used in MJ as o-. Toutomaren derives from tafutoma-<sup>3)</sup> ‘revere’ + passive -re- + presumptive suffix -mu, contracted as syllabic nasal -n, cf. kitaran (<ki-itaru-mu) ‘may it come’. (toutomu is found in MJ, along with toutobu, though the more common variant is the contracted form tattobu.) Mi-mune okonawaruru is the attributive form of okonawaru. In MJ, this becomes okonawareru ‘occur, take place’, the final vowel of conjunctive okonoware- replacing u.

All of this, especially as I have rushed through it, may seem complicated or (worse) confusing, but my overall point is that for all of the differences between the classical and modern forms of Japanese, they are quite clearly the same language. Looking at the Anglo-Saxon version of the Our Father, we can likewise see that it does indeed represent a variety of English. Of the twenty-three words in the passage, only two are unlikely to be recognized: si, the third-person singular subjunctive form of the verb be,

and *gewurpe* ‘may (it) become’, the latter surviving in *worth* and *worthy*. Of course, unless one learns the language, one will not know that *heofonum* is the dative plural form of *heafon*, the dative being required by the preposition *on*. Anglo-Saxon is like German in having three grammatical genders, case-marking, a large set of verbal affixes, and an overwhelmingly Germanic lexicon, much of which has been lost in Modern English. All in all, learning it takes more time and effort than does Classical Japanese, i.e. for those who already know the modern language.

Here now, at last, to get to specifics, I should like to present a summary description of Classical Japanese (henceforth CJ) with a list of ten distinguishing characteristics:

1. CJ, like its modern counterpart (MJ), is an agglutinative language. That is, words and phrases are formed by connecting relatively transparent and unvarying lexical elements. The genitive particle *no*, for example, is invariable, whereas in inflecting languages such as Anglo-Saxon and, even more so, Latin, one must contend with varying noun declensions.

2. The sound system of CJ differs from that of MJ in the stricter canonical shape of words. Whereas MJ has vowel sequences, CJ does not, except in contracted forms and in Sinitic borrowings. The geminate obstruents of MJ, which result from contraction, are absent in CJ. Here are the first two sentences from the 26th chapter of the *Genji* (*Tokonatsu*):

いと暑き日、東の釣殿に出でたまひて涼みたまふ。中將の君もさぶらひたまふ。

Ito atuki hi, himugasi no turi-dono ni ide-tamahite suzumi-tamahu. tiuzyau-no-kimi mo saburahi-tamahu.

Himugasi ‘east’ (< hi-mukashi ‘towards the sun’) was probably contracted

as hingasi, with n representing a mora nasal. The vowel sequences in *tiuzyau* ‘captain’ clearly point to its Sino-Japanese origin.

‘On a very hot day, [Genji] made his way to cool himself in the East Fishing Pavilion. [His son] the captain was also in attendance.’<sup>74)</sup>

In MJ, the labial glide *w* occurs only before *a* (*wa*). In CJ, it appears before *i* (*wi*), *e* (*we*), and *o* (*wo*), e.g. *wiru* ‘be’, *kowe* ‘voice’, and *woka* ‘hill’. (The object particle in MJ is written as *wo* but is usually pronounced *o*.)

3. A major difference between CJ and MJ is that, as hinted above, CJ partially distinguishes between predicative and attributive verb and adjective forms. In MJ, for example, one can say *yama ga mieru* ‘the mountain is visible’ or *mieru yama* ‘the visible mountain’. In CL, this would be *yama miyu* vs. *miyuru yama*. But the morphological distinction is found only in what are called bigrade verbs. With so-called quadrigrade verbs, e.g. *nomu* ‘drink’, there is no difference: *hito nomu* ‘a person drinks’ and *nomu hito* ‘a person who drinks’. With adjectives, the predicative/attributive distinction is seen in, for example, *yama takasi* ‘the mountain is high’ vs. *but takaki yama* ‘high mountain’. In MJ, the attributive form, with *ki* becoming *i*, is also used predicatively.

4. Even in MJ, the verb system is quasi-inflectional rather than purely agglutinative. That is, there are verb classes, and although conjugation is much simpler than in Latin or the Romance languages, for example, we are nonetheless reminded of the verb “paradigms” some of us gazed at, perhaps a bit forlornly, in school. The conjunctive stem of *eru* ‘gain’ is *e-*, while the conjunctive stem of *teru* ‘shine’ is *teri*. In CJ, the system was considerably more complicated. The predicative form of the verb that corresponds to MJ *ochiru* ‘fall’ is, just to offer one example, *otu*. The conjunctive and



imperfective forms are *oti*; the attributive form is *oturu* and the perfective form *oture-*.

5. Use of case particles in CJ is largely the same as in MJ, with a notable difference: Topics and subjects are typically unmarked, whereas in MJ such are almost obligatorily followed by *wa* and *ga* respectively. Here is an example, which I have chosen at random, from the beginning of the 13th chapter of *Genji Monogatari (Akashi)*:

なほ雨風やまず、雷鳴り静まらで、日ごろになりぬ。

Naho ame-kaze yama-zu, kaminari sidukamara-de, hi-goro ni narinu.

‘Still the rain and wind did not abate, nor, day after day, did the thunder cease its roar.’

A MJ translation reads:

依然として雨風が止まず、雷も鳴り静まらないで、数日がたった。

IZEN toshite amekaze **ga** tomarazu, kaminari mo nari-sizumaranai de, SUUJITSU ga tatta.

*ga* is only rarely used as an (embedded) subject marker, its original function having been, like that of genitive/appositive particle *no*. (There are other particles, especially emphatics, that have entirely or largely been lost. I shall return to one in particular below.)

6. CJ has a rich set of auxiliary verb suffixes that are mostly lost in the modern language. The sentence with which the Akashi chapter begins ends in *narinu*, *-nu* being perfective in meaning. Another suffix of similar if not identical meaning is *-tu*, which like *-nu* is attached to the conjunctive form of the verb. From *-tu* was derived *te-ari*, the conjunctive form of *-tu* + *-ari* ‘be’, and this then became *-tari*, which in MJ yields *-ta*, the surviving past/perfective marker, so that *naritari* is reduced to *natta*. Another auxiliary is

-mu, which has a presumptive or conjectural meaning. It survives in somewhat disguised form in -ou [ō]. If the older form were still being used, we might say “asu, ame furamu instead of “asu, ame ga furou” or, more likely, “ashita, ame ga furu darō.” Here is a well-known waka, a variation of the verse by the 8th-century poet Mansei (満誓):

世の中を何に譬えむ朝ぼらけ漕ぎ行く舟の跡の白波

Yo no naka wo/nani ni tatohemu/asaborake/kogi-yuku fune no/ato no sira-nami

‘Ah, this fleeting world/To what shall it be likened/To the pale white wake  
Of a solitary boat/That has vanished in the dawn.

7. Among the auxiliaries are honorific and humble forms. The sentences from the Tokonatsu chapter cited above provide useful examples:

いと暑き日、東の釣殿に出でたまひて涼みたまふ。中将の君もさぶらひたまふ。

Ito atuki hi, himugasi no turi-dono ni ide-tamahite suzumi-tamahu. Tiuzyau-no-kimi mo saburahi-tamahu.

tamafu (> tamau > tamou) originally means ‘bestow’, i.e. from higher being to a lower being, cf. MJ kureru, kudasaru. It survives in archaic MJ. e.g. again from the Catholic mass:

世の罪を除きたもう主よ、われらを憐れみみたまえ。

Yo no tsumi wo nozoki-tamou shu yo, ware-ra wo awaremi-tamae.<sup>5)</sup>

‘Lord, thou who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.’

The author of the Genji clearly sees herself as looking up to all of the main characters in her work and thus, depending on other syntactic conditions, typically suffixes a form of -tamahu to verbs that refer to them. saburahi-tamahu, referring to Genji’s son, is also honorific, but also suggests subordination. Subtle gradations of verb form allow the teller of the tale to

avoid making overt nominal or pronominal reference to her characters. At the beginning of the second chapter of the *Genji* (*Hahakigi*), mention is made of Genji's brother-in-law and friend, himself the nephew of the emperor:

宮腹の中將は、なかに親しく馴れきこえたまひて、遊び戯れをも人よりは心やすく、なれなれしくふるまひたり

Miya-bara no tiuzyau wa, naka ni sitasiku nare-kikoye-tamahite, asobitahabure wo mo hito yori ha kokoro-yasuku, nare-naresiku hurumahi-tari.

‘A certain captain of the guard, the son of a Royal Princess, was the one with whom he was on the most intimate terms, playing music, enjoying other diversions, and behaving in quite an unrestrained manner.’

Here *-kikoye-* is a humble form, indicating Genji's loftier status. (To the original hearers, the references may have almost always been clear. Those of us who read it more than a millennium later must often rely on the expertise of scholars, who, of course, are not always in agreement.) A more distinctly humble form is *-haberi* ‘be’, which is thought to derive from *hafu* ‘crawl’. It functions both as an auxiliary and as an independent verb. In the same chapter, a guards officer, one of the four young men in the famous rainy night discussion about women, says:

はやう、まだいと下臈にはべりし時、あはれと思ふ人はべりき

Hayau, mada ito ge-rahū ni haberi-si toki, ahare to omohu hito haberi-ki.<sup>6)</sup>

‘Long ago, when I was still of lowly rank, there was a someone of whom I was fond.’

8. A peculiar feature of CJ is a rule traditionally known as *kakari-musubi* (sometimes translated as “focus construction”), whereby certain particles cause the following verb, if it is sentence-final, to be marked in the attributive or perfective form, depending on the particle. With emphatic *-zo*,

the attributive form is required. Here is an often-cited verse from the *Kokin-wakashū* (古今和歌集) (169):

秋来ぬと目にはさやかに見えねども風の音にぞおどろかれぬる

Aki kinu to/me ni wa sayaka ni/miye-nedo mo/kaze no oto ni zo/odorokare-nuru

‘That autumn had come/The eye could not clearly see/But now the whisper  
Of the season-changing wind/Has roused me from my slumber.

-nu in kinu to is the predicative form of the past/perfective auxiliary; -nuru is attributive form.

9. The native vocabulary (Yamato-kotoba) of Japanese has undergone substantial change, with many words becoming obsolete and others changing their meaning. In the above verse, odorokare- is derived from odoroku, which in MJ means ‘be surprised’. Here, however, it has both the current sense and that of ‘suddenly realize, ‘wake up’. Just as in English, Germanic words have, because of the influence of French, been replaced by Latinate words, e.g. mountain for beorg, massive borrowings from Chinese have led to replacements of native Japanese words by Sino-Japanese. When I was still teaching, I would ask students whether it was the importation of Chinese culture that brought earthquakes to Japan. After getting puzzled looks, I would ask how one says jishin (地震), a Sino-Japanese word, in Yamato-kotoba. There were again puzzled looks. In Kamo no Chōmei (鴨長明)’s *Hōjōki*, (方丈記 *An Account of My Hut*) an early 12th-century work that already contains numerous Sino-Japanese words, including jishin, there is nonetheless included nawi ‘great earth (being), earthquake’, na- having now long since been swallowed up by Sino-Japanese chi/ji.

10. Throughout most of the Heian period, there was a more or less clear

distinction between kanbun (Chinese writing) and wabun 和文 (Japanese writing). The relatively few Sino-Japanese words used by Murasaki Shikibu (who no doubt knew more Chinese than women were supposed to know) are written in kana. (The texts of today use Chinese characters even to represent Japanese words.) Here is the short opening sentence from the 20th chapter of the *Genji* (*Asagao*), in which Genji unsuccessfully attempts to win over his cousin, the one-time high priestess of the Kamo Shrine:

斎院は、御服にて下りゐたまひにきかし。

SAIWIN wa, ohon-BUKU nite ori-wi-tamahi-ni-ki-kasi.<sup>7)</sup>

The high priestess of the Kamo Shrine had relinquished her position, as she was in mourning.

In form, SAIWIN is Sino-Japanese, but it refers specifically in the Japanese cultural context to the imperial princess who serves in the above-mentioned shrine, located in what is now northwestern Kyoto. BUKU is the go-reading of the character 服 ‘clothing’, here referring to ‘mourning clothes’: The princess’s father has died.

Before offering a final example from the *Genji*, surely its most famous line, I should first like to return to the passage cited from the Hahakigi chapter for more grammatical and lexical analysis:

宮腹の中將は、なかに親しく馴れきこえたまひて、遊び戯れをも人よりは心やすく、なれなれしくふるまひたり

Miya-bara no tiuzyau wa, naka ni sitasiku nare-kikoye-tamahite, asobitahabure wo mo hito yori ha kokoro-yasuku, nare-naresiku hurumahi-tari.

A certain captain of the guard, the son of a Royal Princess, was the one with whom he was on the most intimate terms, playing music, enjoying other diversions, and behaving in quite an unrestrained manner.

The auxiliary at the end is -tari, over whose meaning vis-à-vis other suffixes of seemingly similar meaning much ink has been spilled. According

to one argument, it is “resultative,” and that certainly seems plausible at least here.

Asobi-tahabure might be interpreted from the standpoint of MJ as ‘playing and fooling around’. The perhaps somewhat more dignified Sino-Japanese equivalent is *yūki*, which is the term to which Yosano Akiko (与謝野晶子) resorts in her translation (1938–39):

そのうちでも宮様腹の中將は最も源氏と親しくなっていて、遊戯をするにも何をするにも他の者の及ばない親交ぶりを見せた。

Sono uchi de mo miya-sama no hara no chūjō wa mottomo genji to shitashiku natte ite, *yūki* wo suru ni mo nani wo suru ni mo hoka no mono no oyorbanai shinkō-buri wo miseta.

The verb *asobu* has a remarkably broad meaning but most probably, in this context, refers to the playing of music, to which, as can be seen in subsequent chapters, both the men are devoted.<sup>8)</sup> Well over half a century after Yosano Akiko’s translation, the Buddhist nun Setouchi Jakuchō (瀬戸内寂聴) renders the same sentence with specific reference to music: 音楽やその他の遊びにも (*ongaku ya sono hoka no asobi ni mo*). Arthur Waley (1926–1933) speaks of “playtime.”

One might be tempted to think that developing trends in interpretation might be, so to speak, at play here, but it would seem that such is not the case. Oscar Benl’s German translation of 1966 gives us: “beim gemeinsamen Musizieren und auch sonst.” Here is Edward Seidensticker’s English translation of a decade later: “They enjoyed music together and more frivolous diversions as well.”

Jos Vos’s Dutch translation (1993), uninfluenced by Benl, refers specifically to music. In his French translation, René Sieffert (1988) offers a general interpretation, as does Maria Teresa Orsi in her (2012) Italian translation: “e divideva con lui ogni divertimento” (‘and shared with him

every amusement’). Royall Tyler (2002) refers to music; Dennis Washburn (2015) goes back to a general description. In the first volume of his series *Seiyaku Genji-Monogatari: Honbun-taishō* (源氏物語 本文対照) [Close Translation of The Tale of Genji, Juxtaposed to the Original] (2015), the Genji scholar Nakano Kōichi (中野幸一) renders the phrase as 遊びごとや戯れごと (asobi-goto ya tawabure-goto mo).

My last example from Murasaki Shikibu’s immense story is its first sentence:

いづれの御時にか、女御、更衣あまたさぶらひたまひけるなかに、  
いとやむごとなき際にはあらぬが、すぐれて時めきたまふありけり。  
Idure no ohon-toki ni ka, NYOUGO, KAUI amata saburahi-tamahi-keru  
naka ni, ito yangoto-naki kiha ni ha aranu ga sugurete tokimeki-tamahu ari-  
keri.

In a time and a reign now past there was among His Majesty’s many consorts and attendants one who, though hardly of high estate, was dearest to his heart.

Ohon-toki, lit. ‘august time’ refers to an imperial reign. Sino-Japanese NYOUGO and KAUI are the higher and lower ranks of court ladies serving the sovereign. We have already encountered saburahi-tamahi, saburafu ‘serve’ + the honorific suffix. Again, the author is showing deference to her imaginary characters. yango-goto-naki is a contraction of yamu-goto-naki, lit. ‘something- not-be-neglected’, i.e. ‘noble’. In MJ, toki-meku means ‘feel one’s heart throb’, but here it refers to the pinnacle of passion.

Rather than further wax romantic, I shall merely note that the particle ga here does not function as the modern conjunction (‘but’) but is rather an appositive marker, like MJ no: moto-keisatsukan no Yamamoto-san ‘the former police officer, Mr. Yamamoto’. The final auxiliary verb -keri, cf. the attributive form saburahi-tamahi-keru, marks the retrospective attitude of the

speaker/ narrator—or so goes one theory. As Karen E. Sandness notes in her most interesting book *The Evolution of the Japanese Past and Perfective Suffixes* (1999):

The suffix *-keri* was in common use throughout the Nara and Heian periods, but despite the abundance of attestations, scholars have been unable to agree about its meaning.

Part of the problem, she explains, is that the continued use of *-keri*, long after it had ceased to be part of the living language, has muddied the linguistic waters.

I began this essay with Samuel Johnson, whose mid-18th century English is still readily comprehensible for literate English speakers. The passage consists of a single sentence, of a length, ninety-eight words, that is surely unacceptable for most modern editors. Yet the only word here that can be considered archaic is *sublunary*, meaning ‘earthly, not celestial’.

As a reminder that language change is uneven, over time and across languages, we might compare Johnson’s English to a variety of written Japanese of the same period. Here is the beginning of a story by Ueda Akinari (上田秋成), who in 1776 published his famous work *Ugetsu Monogatari* (雨月物語), *Tales of Rain and the Moon*. The story here, 浅茅が宿 (*Asadji ga Yado*) *The House in the Thicket*,<sup>9)</sup> is one of two that formed the basis for Mizoguchi Kenji (溝口健二)’s renowned film *Ugetsu Monogatari*.

下総の国葛飾郡真間の郷に、勝四郎といふ男ありけり。祖父より舊しくこゝに住、田畠あまた主づきて家豊に暮らしけるが、生長て物にかゝはらぬ性より、農作をうたてき物に厭ひけるま



ゝに、はた家貧しくなりにけり。

Shimousa no kuni,<sup>10)</sup> katsushika-kohori, mama no sato ni, katsushirou to ifu otoko ari-keri. Ohoji yori hisa-shiku koko ni sumi, tabata amata nushi-dzukite ihe-yutaka ni kurashi-keru ga, hito to narite mono ni kakawaranu saga yori nari-wahi utateki-mono ni itohi-keru mama ni hata ihe-madzushiku nari-ni-keri.

In the village of Mama in the province of Shimōsa, there was a man named Katsushirō. This had been the family home since his grandfather's time, and they lived well, owning fields both wet and dry. But Katsushirō was not of an assiduous nature and, as he came of age, found that he disliked farming, and so it was that he fell into poverty.

Grammatically, the language is scarcely different from that of the Genji, though it must be noted that Ueda, an associate of Motoori Norinaga, is quite conscious of writing in traditional Japanese, eschewing, for example, Chinese vocabulary. The use of *ga* is interesting, as here it functions as a conjunction, a late Heian-period development, though it should also be noted that ...*kurashi-keru* is nominal in form, *-keru* being in the attributive.

Again we encounter *-keri*, perhaps with a more generalized function.

I close with a more modern example, in which, some fifty years ago, I first encountered the auxiliary myself. It is a haiku by Masaoka Shiki (正岡子規):

我が声の風になりけり茸狩り

Waga koe no/kaze ni nari-keri/kinoko-gari

Calling out—my voice/Carried away by the wind—/While mushroom hunting.

Thank for your patience, as I too have gone off looking for mushrooms, though not, I am sorry to say, in the *Tale of Genji*, in which they do not appear.

## Notes

- 1) This essay is an expanded version of a talk given to the first ZOOM meeting of Informasia, 15 June 2020. I thank the participants for their questions and comments.
- 2) Old Japanese refers to the language of the Nara period. A striking difference between Old Japanese and Classical Japanese is the more complex vowel system of the former.
- 3) Japanese vocabulary, tafutomu (尊む) derives from taka-futo-mu ‘see as high and thick’, cf. Latinate reverent, whose etymology suggests ‘beholding with awe’. The opening sentence of the 53rd chapter of the *Genji* (Tenarai) contains an adjective related the tafutomu: そのころ、横川に、なにかし僧都とか言ひて、いと尊き人住みけり。(Sono koro, yokawa ni, nanigasi soudo to ka ihite, ito tofutoki hito sumi-keri.) ‘At the time there was living on the Yokawa a certain prelate, a most holy man.’
- 4) All of the translations from CJ in this paper are those of the author.
- 5) Note the use of postwar orthography even when the older language is used.
- 6) -ki is a perfective auxiliary, which in attributive form becomes -si.
- 7) Note that the verb ori- ‘step down’ is followed by no fewer than five suffixes: -wi- ‘be’, -tamahi- (honorific), -ni- (PERFECTIVE) -ki- (PAST-RECOLLECTIVE), -kasi (EMPHATIC).
- 8) As an abbreviation of asobi-me, asobi can refer to itinerant female music performers who may also serve as prostitutes, cf. Sino-Japanese yūjo (遊女), a term that in the Edo period came to refer primarily to the latter endeavor.
- 9) Lit. ‘abode amidst the cogon grass’. The image of a neglected, desolate, weed-choked habitat harkens back to classical literature, including the *Genji*. In the first chapter of the work (Kiritsubo), Genji’s father, the emperor, yearning for his infant son, in the care of his maternal grandmother, composes a verse: 雲の上も涙にくるる秋の月いかですむらむ浅茅生の宿 (Kumo no uhe mo/namida ni kururu/aki

no tuki/ikade sumu-ramu/asadihu no yado (With the autumn moon/Covered in a veil of tears/Here above the clouds,/ How then can there still be light/In yonder reed-choked hovel?)

- 10) Shimōsa was one of three provinces that have come to comprise Chiba Prefecture. Mama is located in Ichikawa, across the Edogawa from Tokyo. In Ueda's tale, Katsushirō sells his land to buy silk with which he hopes to make a fortune. In the Mizoguchi film, the protagonist goes off from the Province of Ōmi to sell pottery. In both cases, they leave their wives behind and later meet them only as ghosts.

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