

THE MANYŌSHŪ

The Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai Translation of

ONE THOUSAND POEMS

With a Foreword by Donald Keene

Columbia University Press New York

NIPPON GAKUJUTSU SHINKŌKAI

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This work has been accepted in the Japanese Translation Series of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

ISNB 0-231-08620-2

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FIRST PUBLISHED 1940 BY THE IWANAMI SHOTEN FOR
THE NIPPON GAKUJUTSU SHINKŌKAI
REISSUED 1965 BY COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS

EDITION OF ENGLISH VERSION, WITHOUT THE TEXTS IN ROMAJI, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS 1969

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3

FOREWORD

The first translations from the Manyoshū into a European language date back more than a century, well before Japan was opened to the West. One "envoy" (hanka) to a long poem was translated as early as 1834 by the celebrated German orientalist Heinrich Julius Klaproth (1783-1835). Klaproth, having journeyed to Siberia in pursuit of strange languages, encountered some illiterate Japanese castaways, fishermen, hardly ideal mentors for the study of eighth-century poetry. Not surprisingly, his translation was anything but accurate. Other translations appeared from time to time, particularly after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, and in 1872 a fair-sized selection of Manyoshū poetry, some 200 poems in all, was published by the Austrian scholar August Pfizmaier (1808-87). Pfizmaier's absorption with Manyōshū studies may account for his reputation as a more than usually absent-minded professor: it is reported that he learned of the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War by reading of the event, one year after it occurred, in a Japanese newspaper which had been slow in reaching Vienna. His versions, for all the singular devotion to scholarship they demonstrated, unfortunately were soon superseded by the work of the great generation of English Japanologists, notably that of Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935). From the late nineteenth century onwards translations into English, German, French, or Italian frequently appeared, sometimes the work of a European scholar, sometimes that of a Japanese translating his country's literature into a foreign tongue.

The most satisfactory $Many\bar{o}sh\bar{u}$ translations are those of the present volume. Originally prepared by a committee of Japanese, scholars of both English and Japanese

literatures, they were subsequently revised by the English poet Ralph Hodgson, a resident of Japan at the time. Collaboration between Japanese and Western scholars has often been urged as the best solution to the eternal problem of how to produce translations of difficult works which are at once accurate and of literary distinction but, as far as I know, The Manyoshu is the only successful example of such collaboration. Generally, the Western member of the team unconsciously seeks to recast the literal translations from the Japanese prepared by his colleagues into an idiom which he himself favors, though it may be inappropriate, or else he intrudes foreign imagery and thoughts in an attempt to make the poetry more appealing to a Western audience. His Japanese collaborators in such cases tend to refrain politely from expressing any objections. Here, however, the combination worked exceptionally well, a tribute equally to the Englishman and the Japanese.

The original edition of this translation was published in 1940. Since then Manyoshū studies have been extremely active in Japan, and new discoveries have repeatedly affected our understanding of different poems. To cite a very simple example: the poem by the Emperor Tenji on the three hills Kagu, Miminashi, and Unebi (p. 5) was long considered to refer to two male hills (Kagu and Miminashi) quarreling over a female hill (Unebi), but scholars have recently suggested that Kagu and Miminashi were two female hills in love with the same male hill, Unebi. Other discoveries have a broader application; the most important, probably, being that the Japanese language in the Manyoshu period had eight vowels instead of the present five, a fact of enormous linguistic significance though it does not affect the translations of the poems.

Not only has Japanese scholarship continued to advance and refine previous knowledge of the $Many\bar{o}sh\bar{u}$, but Western scholarship, inspired in large part by Japanese achievements, has developed apace. The most

impressive critical study to appear in a Western language to date, Japanese Court Poetry by Robert Brower and Earl Miner (Stanford University Press, 1961), treats the Manyōshū in considerable detail and also gives a general background to the themes and methods of Japanese poetry. Translations continue to appear, some profiting by the new interpretations of the texts, others representing little more than reworkings in somewhat more poetic language of existing versions.

Interpretations of the Manyōshū have inevitably re-

flected the outlook of the modern critic almost as much as they conveyed the intent of the original poets. Reading the Introduction to this edition of the Manyoshu, we cannot help but be struck by the repeated allusions to a philosophy of the Japanese state which, though normal in 1940, has largely been discredited since. Not only is the imperial authorship of many poems stressed (though more recent scholars cast doubt on these attributions, aware that anonymous poems were often dignified by associations—however unlikely—with rulers of the distant past), but the glory of the Imperial House itself is proclaimed in a manner as foreign to the Japanese of today as to ourselves: "Turning to human relations, Japanese clan morality in its purified form—namely, that which is based upon the consciousness of the Imperial House as the supreme head of all clans-manifests itself in the $Many\bar{o}sh\bar{u}$ in spontaneous sentiments of the loveliest kind, giving the Anthology its chief distinction." During the war years of 1941-45, the "spirit of the Manyoshu" was constantly invoked by literary men. They meant by the phrase worship of the Emperor and an insistence on "pure Japanese" virtues untainted by foreign influence or by the over-refined, effeminate sentiments displayed in later poetry. As a result of the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Manyoshū acquired still another meaning: this time it was acclaimed as a "democratic" anthology that was given its chief distinction by the poetry of the common people (or of the humbler ranks of the nobility), unlike subsequent anthologies filled with jejune compositions by the decadent courtiers.

The poetry of the Manyoshū is sufficiently varied and abundant to afford corroborative evidence for all these theses, but though each is tenable as an interpretation of part of the work, it cannot be accepted as a judgment of the whole. The compilers of this edition, emphasizing the "cheerfulness" of an age when the Imperial family ruled without interference, declared that "the prevailing atmosphere is happy, bright and peaceful." Yet surely the "Dialogue on Poverty" by Yamanoe Okura (p. 205) offers unmistakable evidence that, whatever conditions may have prevailed at the court, all was not joy and light in the villages. The Introduction does not dwell on the darker aspect of the Manyoshū any more than postwar interpreters of its "democratic" character choose to examine, say, Hitomaro's profound devotion to the Imperial House. Again, such an assertion as "But filial piety, so sincere, intense and instinctive as shown in the Manyo poems is not likely to be duplicated by any other people and under any other social order" is certainly open to challenge, if not to being dismissed outright as absurd. But this nostalgic view of a distant golden age deserves our attention still, if only as a traditional, persistent Japanese interpretation of the ultimate meaning of the Manyoshū. Even with respect to poetics a preconception that the Manyoshū, in contrast to the artificial elegance of later Japanese poetry, is marked by a "genuineness of thought" unmarred by vanity or frivolity led the authors of the Introduction to discount technique as a major criterion of poetic excellence, and to dismiss as "a simple form of word-play" the highly complicated kakekotoba (pivot-words), which resemble less an ordinary pun than the portmanteau language of Finnegans Wake. 1

It might seem, in the light of the shortcomings of this Introduction, at least from a contemporary point of

¹ For a discussion of kakekotoba, see Keene, Japanese Literature (New York, Grove Press, 1955), pp. 4-5.

view, that an entirely new one is desirable. Certainly recent theories which trace the origin of the choka (long poem) to religious observances that were intended to quiet the souls of the dead by reciting their deeds on earth, or which suggest what the original functions of the "envoy" may have been, deserve attention. But although it is of urgent importance that the fruits of modern Japanese scholarship be introduced to Western readers, it clearly would be unfair to the translators of this edition to change arbitrarily the introduction which they deemed appropriate to their splendid translations. It has seemed preferable, both out of respect for the book as originally conceived, and for the sake of the valuable information presented, to reproduce the Introduction unaltered.

The great merit of The Manyoshu, it goes without saying, is the excellence of the translations. Surely no one could read these versions of the great choka by Hitomaro or Okura and remain unmoved. They make superb poems in English, and are worthy of the originals. Even some of the lesser works are so beautifully rendered as to acquire an importance in translation not often accorded them in Japan—for example, the poem from the "Tanabe Sakimaro Collection' (pp. 233-34). The selection too is exceptionally intelligent, offering not only such poems of an immediate emotional or aesthetic appeal as we might expect in a volume intended for Western readers, but others which, viewed against the subsequent course of Japanese poetry, seem atypical, and even un-Japanese. These include narratives (e.g., pp. 190, 216, 224), 'beggar songs" (p. 275), admonitory poems (pp. 154, 178), commemorative odes (pp. 83, 150, 220), and poems prefaced by extended prose explanations (pp. 74, 272). These poems suggest possibilities of poetic development which either never materialized at all in Japan, or else were directed (as in the case of the poems with prose prefaces) into the domain of prose rather than poetry. Another feature of the selection is the inclusion of various poems

on the same themes by men of different times; those which echo the themes and language of Hitomaro (e.g., pp. 42, 125, 313; 46, 227, 233) bear witness not only to his enormous influence on later poets but to the inimitable nature of his manner, no matter how slavishly the externals were followed.

The original texts were recorded in a script which used Chinese characters in an almost perversely difficult manner: sometimes for meaning, sometimes for sound when read as Chinese, sometimes for sound when read as Japanese. Many problems of decipherment remain to be solved, but for the general reader the pronunciations favored by Japanese philologists when The Manyōshū first appeared in 1940 are still acceptable, though it should be borne in mind that some vowel sounds had unfamiliar pronunciations in the eighth century, and many reconstructions are still tentative. The reader who wishes to follow the Japanese texts will find the Romaji versions in the edition of The Manyōshū issued earlier by the Columbia University Press.

For years The Manyōshū was out of print and virtually unobtainable. Its importance and excellence were widely recognized, but the difficulties of making arrangements with the various parties involved in the publication made it seem dubious that a reprinting would ever appear. Mr. Kensuke Tamai of the Iwanami Publishing Company proved especially helpful during the long negotiations. UNESCO sponsorship also encouraged us to persevere despite repeated frustrations. Now that at last this fine translation of the greatest of Japanese anthologies has been published, it is hoped that The Manyōshū will be accorded by the reading public its rightful place of distinction among the poetic masterpieces of the world.

DONALD KEENE

PREFACE

The importance of rendering Japanese classics into foreign languages as a means of acquainting the world with the cultural and spiritual background of Japan cannot be over-emphasized. Few Japanese, however, have ventured into this field, the work so far having been largely undertaken by foreigners. It is in view of this regrettable fact that the Japanese Classics Translation Committee was appointed in 1934 by the Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, and the present English version of Manyō poems represents the first enterprise of the Committee.

The Manyōshū has long attracted the attention of foreign translators, and there exist several versions of its poems in English, French and German, which deserve high commendation. But the work is unwieldy material to deal with, abounding as it does in obscure and difficult passages, and the collaboration of a number of scholars and specialists is required in order to produce an adequate and authoritative translation. For this reason a Special Committee, consisting of eminent authorities on the subject, was formed.

The selection of the poems for translation was based upon: 1) their poetic excellence, 2) their rôle in revealing the Japanese national spirit and character, and 3) their cultural and historical significance. The selected poems were first paraphrased by the Special Committee into plain Japanese, and the paraphrases drafted by each member were submitted to joint sessions of the two Committees for criticism and correction. It was with the help of these paraphrases that tentative translations were made. These were then revised by an eminent English poet, and submitted to the Committees in full session for examination and final revision. Altogether it has taken four years

since the work of paraphrasing was begun until the Eng-

lish version of the last poem was approved.

The Committee desire to acknowledge the important contributions of Messrs. Haxon Ishii and Shigeyoshi Obata, who made the tentative translations, Mr. Ralph Hodgson who revised them, and Dr. Sanki Ichikawa who supervised all matters relating to the English. Their thanks are due also to Assistant Professor Yoshimoto Endō, of the Kyoto Imperial University, and Assistant Professor Fumio Tada of the Tokyo Imperial University.

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Tokyo
December, 1939

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INTRODUCTION

PART I

GENERAL REMARKS

The Manyōshū is the oldest of the early Japanese anthologies, and by far the greatest both in quantity and quality. It consists of 20 books and contains more than 4,000 poems, written for the most part by the poets who flourished in the Fujiwara and Nara Periods, which coincide with the Golden Age of Chinese poetry—the eras of Kaiyuan and Tienpao under the T'ang dynasty, when Li Po and Tu Fu lived and sang. In England it was the Anglo-Saxon period of Beowulf, Cædmon and Cynewulf. The Anthology reflects Japanese life and civilization of the 7th and 8th centuries, and not only does it record the indigenous thoughts and beliefs, but also touches, even if only casually, upon Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism imported from the continent.

The Manyōshū, unlike the Kokin Wakashū (generally known as Kokinshū), and other 'imperial' anthologies later compiled by the sovereign's command, is rich in the poems of the people as well as in those of the court. It embraces and harmonizes both patrician and plebeian elements, and reveals the brilliance of city life side by side with the charm of the country-side. It forms a happy contrast that many sovereigns and members of the imperial family are represented in the Anthology, together with a great number of excellent works by humble and nameless poets. That no less than 300 poems in the rude dialect of eastern Japan should be grouped together at two different places, is an unparalleled phenomenon in the ancient anthologies of the Orient. These provincial poems consist not only of occasional and extempore pieces, but of what appear to be the then cur-

rent folk-songs, altered or recast in the course of transmission from place to place; and there may also well be a few by city poets who composed them in imitation of the rustic style. It is to be noted that the strain of folk-song is also frequently encountered in the works, especially in the amatory verse, of some urban singers. In addition there are some ballad-like poems dealing with legendary stories, and a small number of humorous pieces, which will not escape the reader's notice. It should be added that the *Manyōshā* boasts a number of women poets representing various strata of society from the highest to the humblest.

Genuineness of thought and feeling pervades all the Manyō poems, with scarcely any trace of vanity or frivolity. The prevailing atmosphere is happy, bright and peaceful. Frontier-guards departing for distant shores pledge their loyalty to the Throne and frankly record their personal loves and the sorrows of separation, but never a murmur of grudge or resentment. A sanguinary and martial spirit is conspicuous by its absence: not a single war-song is to be found in the whole collection, there being only one poem which contains a passage describing a battle. Those who compare the Manyōshū with the Shi King ('Book of Songs'), supposed to have been compiled by Confucius, generally begin with the first poems of the respective anthologies—the one by the Emperor Yūryaku and the other regarding the consort of a Chinese king of the Chou dynasty. No matter what may be the alleged allegorical virtue of the Chinese poem, no one will fail to discover in the Japanese piece an artistic masterpiece, combining sincerity with dignity, and elegance with pastoral simplicity—a charming revelation of the close intimacy and friendliness that characterized the relationship between sovereign and subject in ancient Japan. It is scarcely necessary to say that the pervading spirit of the Manyōshū is the Japanese spirit of genuine simplicity and sincerity.

The Manyōshū with its infinite variety and the intrinsic

value of its superb poetry occupies a foremost place in the history of Oriental literature. In quality it stands inferior to none of the numerous Chinese collections of verse. In quantity it can compare with the Greek Anthology, surpassing the latter in pure lyricism, and in its ardour and vigour of spirit, probably due to the fact that the Greek epigrams are the products of a decadent civilization, while the Manyō poems are the flower of a culture at its zenith. Thus the importance of the Manyōshū in world literature cannot be gainsaid.

The name 'Man-yō-shū,' though often translated as 'Collection of a Myriad Leaves,' is authoritatively interpreted to mean 'Collection for a Myriad Ages.' No name more fitting could have been chosen to indicate the faith and the blessing with which the Anthology was bequeathed to posterity and to the world.

The fact that the Manyōshū consists of 20 books has set a precedent for the majority of later imperial anthologies. In its manner of classification and arrangement also it has provided, to a certain extent, a model for later collections which followed the method used in some books of the Manyōshū. In the number of its poems, however, the Manyōshū exceeds all the imperial anthologies of later periods. According to the Kokka Taikan (1st edition, 1901-2), the popular reprint of all the old anthologies, in which the poems are numbered in the order they appear in each original collection, the Manyōshū contains 4,516 poems. This figure can be reduced slightly if the duplications and variants are subtracted, so that 4,500 is commonly given as the actual number of the poems in the Manyōshū, while the poets whose names are either mentioned or ascertainable, are about 450 in all.

COMPILATION

It is impossible to ascertain how and when the compilation of the Manyoshū was completed in the form in which it has

been handed down to this day. It may, however, be safely said that the collection came into being some time during the late Nara Period—the latter half of the 8th century. Of course the entire 20 books were not compiled systematically, nor at the same time. Most likely a few of them were compiled early in the century, which served as a nucleus to which were added later—at least on two different occasions—the remaining books, while the entire collection was subjected to revision at frequent intervals before the Anthology assumed its present form. That is to say, it required a rather complicated process extending over half a century to compile the Manyōshū in 20 books as we now have it.

There existed no definite principle of compilation. The standard of selection varied according to individual compilers; nor was the manner of classification and arrangement uniform. The great poet Yakamochi, of the illustrious clan of Ōtomo, is generally regarded as the last man who had a hand in the compilation of the entire collection. Yakamochi, who was involved in various political incidents after reaching middle age, died in 785 in adverse circumstances, and his clan itself declined steadily down to the end of the 9th century. In the meantime, the vogue for Chinese prose and poetry took possession of court circles for over 100 years from the late Nara Period to the early Heian Period, during which Japanese poetry was more or less neglected. It is probably owing to these circumstances that the Manyōshū, still lacking the intended final touch, was handed down in an unfinished form.

Of the sources of the *Manyōshū*, historical works such as the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki* are mentioned in the book itself. In addition, collections of the works of individual poets, miscellaneous papers, memoirs and diaries were drawn upon, as well as poems preserved only through oral transmission. Evidence is scattered throughout the Anthology of the efforts of the compilers to gather material from books and fragmentary documents, and other available

sources, both public and private, old and new. In some cases the compiler gives, together with a poem, its original source, reference matter, or even his personal opinion of the poem itself. Because the task of compilation was not completed, the Anthology contains here and there indications of the process of selection and the traces of the conscientious labours of the compilers, which constitute a unique and interesting feature not found in the later anthologies. Repetition of the same poems and inclusion of slightly varied versions in different parts of the book are also another characteristic quality of the Manyōshā.

One of the most important source books is the Ruiju-Karin (Forest of Classified Verses), mentioned elsewhere, which was compiled by Yamanoé Okura-a pioneer of Manyō poetry as well as a profound student of Chinese literature. This book having long since been lost, nothing is known as to its form or the number of books into which it was divided, but from its title we may suppose the poems to have had some sort of classification. There are reasons to conjecture that this anthology may have served as a model for at least the first two books of the Manyōshū. The name 'Karin' (Forest of Verses) appears in an Imperial Household document dated 751, a quarter of a century after the death of Okura, though it remains a question whether or not the book is to be identified with the Ruiju-Karin. Another anthology on which the Manyoshū draws heavily is Kokashū (Collection of Ancient Poems), which was in all likelihood an anthology of a general character. Besides these, the Manyoshū mentions four individual anthologies, known respectively as the Hitomaro, Kanamura, Mushimaro and Sakimaro Collection, but it is impossible to ascertain whether each was the collected work of the poet whose name it bears, or included poems by others; or whether it was simply a collection of poems compiled by the poet.

As a general rule, an individual poem or a group of poems in the Manyōshū is preceded by the name of the author

and a preface, and is frequently followed by a note. In these prefaces and notes are given the occasion, the date and place of composition, the source book or the manner of transmission, or anecdotes or legends concerning the authors or the poems. Occasionally in the notes the compilers' comments and criticisms are given. All the prefaces and notes and dates are written in Chinese. In some of the books the letters and introductions in Chinese prose, sometimes quite lengthy, which were sent together with the poems, are included. Even Chinese poems, though this is rare, find their way into these pages.

The texts of the poems are transcribed in Chinese characters. The syllabaries called kana which came into being a century or so later, were still at an incipient stage in their development. Accordingly, in writing Japanese poems, Chinese characters were borrowed for their phonetic values, or they were used ideographically in their original sense. Sometimes the first method was employed exclusively in copying a poem, but more often the two methods were used simultaneously. The so-called 'Manyō-gana' are the Chinese characters which were commonly used as phonograms in the Manyoshū, from which the present system of kana was evolved. Besides the above two methods, Chinese characters were frequently used in playful and fantastic combinations like puzzles, to denote syllables or words. The problems arising from the difficulty of deciphering them in the last-mentioned instances, and more often from uncertainty as to the exact reading of the characters used ideographically, have been gradually solved in subsequent ages, but there remain certain words and passages of which the reading is still disputed among specialists.

In this connection it may be pointed out that while the Manyōshā had necessarily to be clothed in a Chinese garb, so to speak, in the absence of any other system of writing, the very idea of making such a collection of poems was in all probability inspired by the examples imported from China, where the work of compiling anthologies had early