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Shaping national consciousness: *utakai hajime*, imperial poems and the Russo-Japanese war

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Abstract

The Imperial Poetry Bureau (Outadokoro 御歌所) was a court ministry founded in 1869 as one of the Meiji-era institutions which served to legitimize the new government as the restoration of the imperial rule. In my paper I will discuss the endeavors of Outadokoro's leader, Takasaki Masakaze 高崎正風, and other members, to instrumentalize *waka* 和歌 poetry for purposes of nation-building. Whether as school songs, *shōka* 唱歌, imperial poems leaked to the press or poems submitted to the 1869 revived imperial poetry competition, *utakai hajime* 歌会始, *waka* poetry played a significant role in fostering national consciousness, particularly starting with the period of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). The first part of this essay provides a historical overview of Outadokoro and *utakai hajime*, while the second part discusses the role played by *waka* poetry in the exacerbation of national fervor leading up to and during the Russo-Japanese War. I will show how, through literary *topoi* and tropes, the political myth of an unbroken imperial line descendant of Amaterasu was emphasized, while the high emotional content of imperial poems leaked to the press portrayed the Emperor as a concerned, affectionate father of the nation-family.

1 Introduction

On the eve of Japan's plunge into World War II, in the final Imperial Conference which initiated preparations for the war with the United States, on September 6th 1941, Emperor Shōwa broke the characteristic silence expected of emperors and quoted a poem by Emperor Meiji. He recited: "*Where all within the four seas / should be as brothers / why is it that waves and wind / should rise and cause such tumult?*"[1] By means of this poem, the emperor was perhaps making a last, oblique appeal for a primacy of diplomacy and the avoidance of war, according to his tendency to understate his convictions through indirect gestures.[2] This event had a large resonance in the scholarship on Emperor Shōwa and World War II up until modern times.[3] But how did *waka* poetry come to play a role in

[1] 四方の海みなはらからとおもふ世になど波風の立さわぐらむ *Yomo no umi mina harakara to omou yo ni nado namikaze no tachisawagu ramu*, translation by Donald Keene in KEENE 2002: 645.
[2] LARGE 1992: 109.
[3] See for example HIRAYAMA 2014.

communicating the intentions of heads of state or in national debates on war culpability? This article explores the role of imperial poems, *gyosei* 御製, and the imperial poetry competitions, *utakai hajime* 歌会始, in Meiji era nation-building efforts of the Imperial Bureau of Poetry, Outadokoro 御歌所, particularly during the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905.

As is well-known, the Meiji revolution of 1868 consisted of a regime change under the pretext of a restoration of imperial rule. The winning factions of the Boshin War, Satsuma and Chōshū provinces, embarked upon a campaign of cultural hegemonizing by instituting court ministries, government forms, court ranks, political and religious rituals and symbols reminiscent of the Nara period imperial governance. They declared the emperor a descendant of Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大御神 (the central deity of the Shintō religion) and proceeded to make him known to the country through six imperial tours. After two decades of contradictory tendencies between fostering a Japanese national character and conducting a massive import of Western technology, culture and political systems, the 1880s saw the rise of nationalism, manifested in the early forms the *tennōsei* 天皇制 ideology.

Nation-building in the Meiji period relied heavily on the dissemination of political myths through political rituals, in order to legitimize the rule of the Meiji oligarchs. In Flood´s definition, a political myth is as an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or future political events, and which a social group accepts as valid in its essentials.[4] In the absence of formal political ideologies, like during the Meiji period, political myths and rituals guide the processes in which policies are made and public opinion is formed.

In the late Meiji period, the Japanese national character was essentially identified with *kokutai* 国体, the national polity, as the sum of characteristics that differentiated and elevated Japan above all countries. The *kokutai* was based on an amalgamation of myths such as the "allegedly unique fact of being a »divine country« (*shinkoku* 神国), founded by the Sun Goddess Amaterasu", and being ruled by her direct descendants – the human emperors. Thus, the "divine *tennō* became the personification of Japanese identity".[5] Moreover, the Meiji oligarchs ultimately postulated the idea of a homogeneous Japanese family-state through the concept of familism, *kazoku-shugi* 家族主義. At the head of this family, in the role of the father, stood the *tennō*. Remarkably, due to the myth of the unbroken line of emperors[6] as descendants of Amaterasu, the relationship between *tennō*

[4] FLOOD 2002: 42.
[5] ANTONI 2016b: 375.
[6] The myth of an unbroken imperial dynasty, traced by historians to the legendary first emperor Jinmu 神武天皇, 660 BC, was considered a historical fact until the end of World War II and is still present in some forms today, particularly at national monuments and touristic sites. For an interesting study of political mythology and the legitimization of imperial power in modern Japan, see ANTONI 2016a. For a discussion on the ceremony of the proclamation of the constitution made

and the people was not defined as family in a figurative sense, but more as a "real ethnical-genetically defined extended family whose members are connected with each other through their same origin in the divine ancestors".[7]

But how was an amalgamation of political myths such as the *kokutai* transmitted to the people? Bennett argues that myths are internalized not through a conscious learning process, but through cumulative exposure. Furthermore, myths are often manifested in fragmentary references, indirect allusions, slogans, visual symbols, echoes in literature, film, songs, public ceremonies, and other forms in everyday situations, often highly condensed and emotionally charged. This condensed symbolic representation also weighs against rational refutation by addressing the emotional reception of its audience.[8]

In my paper I analyze the role of *waka* poetry as an information medium and as a method of dissemination of political myths and imperial imagery. *Waka* poetry has long been the centerpiece of Japanese imperial court culture[9] and thus in the Meiji period it again came to be thought of as a tool of governance and for elevating the prestige of the imperial family. Rather than focusing on one author or publication, the examples presented are chosen because they originate in some form as a result of the nation-building campaigns of the *Outadokoro* members, more specifically, its leader Takasaki Masakaze[10].

In the following sections I offer an introduction to the Meiji era Outadokoro and the imperial poetry competition, *utakai hajime*, and a discussion of the role of school hymns – written also by Outadokoro members – in the nationalistic decade between Japan's successes in the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), which worked public opinion into an unprecedented frenzy, and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). I will introduce the context of the Russo-Japanese War as a war fought also about Japan's international and domestic image and then present what I termed Takasaki Masakaze's literary public relations campaign. By analyzing poems of Emperor Meiji, I will demonstrate how they reinforce the idea of Meiji era familism, portraying the emperor as the father of the nation, while at the same time humanizing him by means of the publication of poems which showed

to coincide with the mythical date of the ascendance of the mythical Emperor Jinmu, see ANTONI/ANTONI 2017.

[7] ANTONI 2016b: 376.

[8] BENNETT 1980: 169.

[9] It is thought that the *waka* poem has been able to maintain its vitality for more than 1,000 years since the *Man'yō* period not only because it existed as a literary expression in the narrow sense, but also because of its character as a "ritual" that could be linked to politics and religion (SUZUKI 2017: 12–13).

[10] My research in *waka* as dissemination tools of Meiji-era political mythology is much informed by Klaus Antoni's works quoted above. Prof. Antoni is also leading a newly started research project at Tübingen University, titled "Sacred Narrative – the Political Dimension of Japanese Mythology" as part of the DFG (German Research Foundation) research group "De/Sacralization of Texts", as of January 2022.

his concern and affection for the people. On the basis of poems selected for publication within the Meiji era *utakai hajime,* I will show how they emphasize the longevity of the imperial reign, thereby alluding to the political myth of the unbroken line of emperors.

2 The Imperial Bureau of Poetry (Outadokoro 御歌所)

The Imperial Bureau of Poetry (hereafter called Outadokoro) was a literary and political organization in Japan between 1869–1945 that enjoyed great influence in the literary circles until the 1880s. The Outadokoro was restored as a poetics bureau in 1869 in the Imperial Household Ministry as part of a tide of Meiji era institutions which looked to revive the Nara era prestige of the imperial court. In imitating not only its structure, but its rituals and functions as well, they sought to legitimize the political myth of the Meiji imperial restoration (*ōsei fukko* 王政復古).[11]

The Outadokoro's early forms of organization[12] underwent the frequent and ephemeral changes typical of the early Meiji government institutions, of which many did not survive to the end of the Meiji period. Thus, it was organized as an Official Poetics Department (Kadō goyō-gakari 歌道御用掛) in 1869, renamed with slight changes as an Official Literature Department (Bungaku goyō-gakari 文学御用掛) in 1876 (formed by uniting the Poetics Department with the Department of Ancient Studies, Kōgaku goyō-gakari 皇学御用掛), a Waka Department (Outa-gakari 御歌掛) in 1886 until finally coming to be called Outadokoro in 1888. It is said that the 1888 Outadokoro was established at the behest of Emperor Meiji in order to promote poetics (*kadō* 歌道).[13] Outadokoro was ultimately disbanded in 1945, in the aftermath of the end of World War II.

In the beginning, most of its members, like most of the newly established Meiji government, came from Satsuma and Chōshū. The poets of Outadokoro were of diverse backgrounds rooted in *kokugaku* national learning, Confucian and Shintō studies. Some of the members were disciples of notable Edo period *kokugaku* 国学 scholars, such as Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 and Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤. Most members of the Outadokoro were simultaneously part of or founded other organizations[14], patriotic, political – such as the Kokugaku society Ōyashima-gakkai 大八洲学会[15] – or were concerned with promoting *waka*

[11] MEHL 1998: 2; CRAIG 2014: 51.
[12] The discussion that follows is indebted to Miyamoto's analysis in MIYAMOTO 2010: 1–25 and 95–122.
[13] INOUE 1927: 4.
[14] Takasaki founded two organizations to help disseminate the imperial rescript on education: the Shōzenkai 彰善會, and the Ittokukai 一徳會 (MIYAMOTO 2010: 25).
[15] Of which Fukuba Bisei 福羽美静, Ban Masaomi 阪正臣 and Takasaki were members (WACHUTKA 2012: 1 and 80).

poetry, such as The Great Japan Society for the Promotion of Poetics, Dainihon kadō shōreikai 大日本歌道奨励會.

With regard to poetics, the dominant faction of Outadokoro was adhering to the school of poetics Keien-ha 桂園派, which followed the teachings of late Edo *waka* poet and *kokugaku* scholar Kagawa Kageki 香川景樹. They praised *Kokinshū* as the highest literary achievement, as opposed to the *Man'yōshū* school. Kagawa Kageki brought forth literary concepts of authenticity (the concept of *shirabe* 調[16] originally defined by Kamo no Mabuchi), of a poetic language that favored the emphasis on sincere emotions and relinquished artifice and clever wordplays. Interestingly, Kageki also argued for *waka* as an inclusive national-poetic community and claimed that *waka* composition should not discriminate in social class.[17] Many of the bureau's early members were disciples of Kageki,[18] thus establishing its reputation of being a continuation of Kageki´s school, the Keien-ha.

Takasaki Masakaze 高崎正風 was the first leader of Outadokoro from 1888 until his death in 1912. He was a disciple of Hatta Tomonori 八田智紀, and thus also following Kagawa Kageki's teachings, which he transmitted to the emperor as well. Takasaki was born during the Tenpō period into a family of the Satsuma clan. At the end of the Edo period, he was engaged in national affairs as a feudal retainer, and afterwards participated in the new Meiji government. In 1876, as he accompanied the Emperor on several imperial tours of Japan, he became the literature official, *bungaku goyō-gakari*. He became a councilor on the Privy Council in 1888 and was elevated into peerage in 1912. He reached the peak of his literary fame in May 1891 when he was elected as one of the "10 great masters of contemporary waka" of *Shikishima*, and in May 1899 he was chosen for first place of the "12 poetry masters" of the magazine *Taiyō* 太陽. According to Matsuzawa, as a result of the votes of these magazines readers, he also became known in the city as the most powerful person in poetics at the time.[19]

In later times, Takasaki disavowed his attachment to Kageki´s poetics, spurned by the vehement criticism of Outadokoro poets by the proclaimed "new school of poetry", the *haiku* and *shintaishi* poetry circles led by Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規 and Yosano Tekkan 与謝野鉄幹.[20] As many Outadokoro members also published poems in literary magazines of different schools of poetry, and their attachment to Kageki's ideals were far from unwavering, it would be right to say as Koizumi does, that the Outadokoro poets did not have the capacity to form a proper school of poetry, but were a vague group centered on

[16] Árokay 2004: 66.
[17] Árokay 2010: 166.
[18] Such as Hatta Tomonori 八田知紀, Watari Tadaaki 渡忠秋, Kuroda Kiyotsuna 黒田清綱 and Kagawa Kagetoshi 香川景敏 (Kageki's nephew).
[19] Matsuzawa 2012: 40.
[20] Tuck 2018: 180.

the Outadokoro bureau of the Imperial Household Agency.[21] Notable poets and scholars who occupied positions within Outadokoro also include Inoue Michiyasu 井上通泰, Ban Masaomi 晩正臣, Chiba Taneaki 千葉胤明, Motoori Toyokai 本居豊穎, and Sasaki Nobutsuna 佐佐木信綱.[22]

The members of Outadokoro provided literary criticism to poetical compositions by members of the imperial family and the court, compiled poetry anthologies and organized the yearly imperial poetry readings, *uta gokai hajime* 歌御会始 and the monthly poetry gatherings, *tsukinami utakai* 月並歌会. In addition, led by Takasaki, they fulfilled the role of custodians of the imperial image through publishing imperial poems in widely circulating newspapers, school textbooks and New Year's *karuta* card games. They also composed poems for national celebrations and political rituals introduced in 1871, such as the celebration of the Emperor´s birthday, *tenchōsetsu* 天長節, and the National Foundation Day, *kigensetsu* 紀元節, military poems *gunka* 軍歌 and school hymns *shōka* 唱歌. The wide-ranging influence of Outadokoro is reflected in their revival of the annual imperial poetry competition, *uta gokai hajime* which is still being held today. Under their tutelage, the event was gradually opened for participation to commoners, as the competition was used to bridge the distance between the mystical, secluded Emperor Meiji and his emerging unified people.

3 Utakai hajime

The imperial poetry competition, or "imperial poetry reading", dates back to the middle of the 13th century or earlier, according to most researchers and the official information of the Imperial Household Agency, *Kunaichō* 宮内庁.[23] The name *utakai* signifies a party dedicated to the composition of poetry on a given theme, and this kind of gatherings were often held on various occasions as early as the Heian period. The poetry gatherings hosted by the Emperor were called *uta-gokai* 歌御会.[24] Starting with 1502, it was established as a regular New Year's court event and continued intermittently until the modern period, with almost yearly occurrences in the Edo and Meiji periods. During the entire Edo period, there were

[21] KOIZUMI 1969: 168.
[22] For a succinct overview of Outadokoro members between 1877–1943 see UCHINO 1988: 179.
[23] The historical sources that are believed to reference the first *utagokai hajime* of the imperial palace are *Meigetsu-ki* 明月記, a diary written between 1180–1235 by Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家, *Geki nikki* 外記日記, a journal of one section of the court office, *Zoku-shigushō* 続史愚抄 of 1262 and *Kinhira kōki* 公衡公記, a diary of Kinhira. For a comprehensive discussion of the early history of *utakai hajime* in English, see TAGAYA 2017: 213–216. For succinct overviews in Japanese, see MIYAMOTO 2010: 187–200; AOYAGI 2002: 1–3, NAKAJIMA 2005: 17–20; SUZUKI 2017: 11–13.
[24] NAKAJIMA 2005: 17.

only ten instances the *utagokai hajime* was not held, mostly due to mourning for the Emperor's or the Empress's death.[25]

The Meiji era *utakai hajime*,[26] continued through the first years of the Meiji period, despite domestic and international disturbances. It was organized in 1869 ostensibly at the wish of the young Emperor Meiji. Initially, it stayed true to tradition and allowed only courtiers and those close to the Emperor to submit their verses. In 1872, however, participation was gradually opened to junior court officials, *hanninkan* 判任官, and in 1874 to all Japanese subjects, regardless of class, age or gender. The circumstances surrounding the transformation of *utakai hajime* into a national event are peculiar, in that the initiative did not come from a member of Outadokoro or the imperial court, but from Shimozawa Yasumi 下澤保射, a poet, Shintō priest and *kokugaku* scholar of Tsuwano province.[27] Advised by Fukuba Bisei, Shimozawa handed in a petition in December 1873 and subsequently the participation was extended to encompass the whole nation the next year.[28] In my opinion, Shimozawa´s action serves to illustrate the wide-reaching network of *kokugaku* and Outadokoro scholars in the Meiji government in different fields such as poetry, religion and political nation-building.

The Outadokoro gradually shaped the competition and its ceremony to fit their nation-building purposes and fashioned it into a political ritual far-removed from literary significance. Hence, I sustain that the Meiji era *utakai hajime* can be viewed as an invented tradition, in Eric Hobsbawm's terms, of which there was a staggering number created or repurposed during the Meiji period. Following their announcement of the pursuit of unity of politics and ritual, *saisei itchi* 祭政一致, the rulers made the performance of rituals an inextricable part of governance. According to Murakami Shigeyoshi, the great majority of even the archaic-looking rites performed within the palace were invented after the 1868 Restoration; moreover, eleven of the thirteen rites performed by the Emperor himself had no historical precedents.[29]

With its opening to all Japanese citizens in 1874, the *utakai hajime* joined the rank of these national and political rituals. Some of them were mandatorily celebrated as national holidays, instituted in the freight of intense nation-building activities in 1873: the National Foundation Day, the Emperor's birthday, Shinto harvest rites like the Rice Harvest Festival, *niiname-sai* 新嘗祭, and the Offering of the First Fruits Festival, *kanname-sai* 神嘗祭.[30] A common denominator in these invented traditions of the Japanese context of early Meiji

[25] AOYAGI 2002: 1.
[26] In 1926 the imperial poetry reading came to be called *utakai hajime*. For ease of reading, I will refer to it as such for the rest of the article.
[27] FUJIWARA 2021: 218.
[28] MIYAMOTO 2010: 189–196.
[29] FUJITANI 1996: 13.
[30] FUJITANI 1996: 12–13.

period is their deep-rootedness in previously existing rituals surrounding the Shintō religion and the imperial house, as well as their ability to disseminate political myths of the *kokutai* ideological complex, such as the "divine age narrative"[31] and the divine nature of Japan as "land of the gods".[32] Although existing scholarship does not place the *utakai hajime* within the context of newly created political rituals, in my view the competition represents in both form and poetical content a further aspect of the cultural hegemonizing and nation-building agenda of the Meiji oligarchs.

In terms of the form of the competition and content of the poems, the Meiji era *utakai hajime* combined aspects of *utakai* and *utaawase* 歌合, in that the themes (*chokudai* 勅題), selected by members of the Outadokoro and its earlier incarnations, were conforming to traditional aesthetic ideals of Japanese court poetry (*kachōfūgetsu* 花鳥風月) and continuing the tradition of *utakai* poetry gatherings, while the format also included a competition aspect and made recitation of the poems in a court ceremonial event an intrinsic part of its essence, thus reminiscent of the *utaawase* tradition.[33] The themes were announced in November of the previous year and comprised tropes like welcoming the New Year, and the heavy use of nature imagery with traditional motifs of court poetry: pines, mountains, cherry and plum trees, cranes.

In 1879, the most outstanding poems composed by the general public were selected and recited at the *utakai hajime* palace ceremony. This was an epoch-making reform in the history of the Imperial Court's poetry gatherings, and established the foundation of today's poetry gatherings in which the public participates. However, a truly general participation started feebly beginning with 1882 encouraged through the widespread, regular and detailed publication of selected poems of those submitted to the *utakai hajime* (called *eishinka* 詠進歌) in newspapers and most particularly in the government´s gazette, *kanpō* 官報. It was only in the big cities, and, considering the newspaper distribution at the time (20,000 copies of the *Asahi shinbun* in 1871), it mostly drew the interest of a limited number of intellectuals.[34] The number of submitted poems increased from 3,309 poems in 1875 to

[31] The "divine age" narrative, found in *Kojiki* 古事記 and *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀, records the appearance of deities and the creation of the Japanese islands up until the appearance of Jinmu, the first human ruler, descendant of Amaterasu's grandchild Ninigi (BURNS 2003: 39). It forms part of the political myths of the Meiji era, being the origin of the myth of the Japanese unbroken imperial line going back to Amaterasu Ōmikami.

[32] According to Lokowandt, the concept of *shinkoku* can be traced back to Japanese mythology and is based on the belief that the land, like its inhabitants, was born of the gods and that state power was established by divine command. All three elements of the classical doctrine of the state are therefore of divine origin. Furthermore, while the term "land of the gods" is old and subject to different interpretations, under the influence of Ryōbu Shintō, it later usually meant that Japan was a land protected by the gods (the incarnated Buddhas) (LOKOWANDT 2012: 67.)

[33] TAGAYA 2017: 214.

[34] MURAI 1999a: 249.

7,886 poems in 1885. Around the turn of the century newspapers such as *Yomiuri shinbun* 読売新聞 and *Kokumin shinbun* 国民新聞 started regularly publishing the number of poems by prefecture. Based on their yearly reports, it is clear that the number of poems submitted to the *utakai hajime* grew steadily and intensified along with the Meiji-era nationalistic trends: from 12,955 poems in 1900 to 14,450 poems in 1903, 17,565 poems in 1904, 16,232 poems in 1905 and reaching almost 30,000 poems in 1912 (29,353).[35]

4 Meiji era transitions: Japanese from commoners to citizens

In the first years after the Restoration, from 1868 to 1881, the new government invoked the imperial institution as the symbolic center of the unified nation. This led to a contradiction between the deification and politization of the *tennō*[36] and to an instability of government due to the inaccuracy of the already existing image and knowledge of the Emperor Meiji.[37] Scholars have shown how, from the 1880s onward the ideology crafting movements gained field, as the Japanese sought to conceive and inculcate an ideology suitable for modern Japan, which laid the groundwork for the ideology called *tennōsei,* the emperor system.

Particularly against the background of the various liberal ideas, disseminated most of all through The Freedom and People's Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō* 自由民権運動), there came an opportunity for conservative traditionalists – such as Motoda Eifu 元田永孚, the Emperor's tutor and Confucian scholar behind the school ethics textbooks reform – to unite and endeavor to preserve so-called national characteristics and create a new national morality based on an amalgamation of Shintō and Confucianist ideas.[38] This culminated in the well-known 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education, one of the most wide-spread, seminal indoctrination tools of late Meiji period up until World War II. The 1890s represent a turning point, given that the constitution and the emperor system resolved the institutional issues under debate since before the Restoration.[39] The sweeping victory in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-95 enabled Japan to gain the international respect of the great powers and to free itself from the yoke of the "unequal treatises" of 1853 and to pursue an alliance with Great Britain in 1902.

The ideology-disseminating institutions, both public and private, though unconnected in their activities in schools and newspapers, played a great role in building and cementing a feeling of national consciousness of a shared ideological universe. Poetry, as the literary

[35] *Kokumin shinbun*, 19th January 1900, page 3; *Kokumin shinbun* 20th January 1903, page 5; *Yomiuri shinbun* 10th January 1904, page 7. *Yomiuri shinbun* 22nd January 1905, page 2; *Yomiuri shinbun* 24th January 1912, page 3.
[36] LOKOWANDT 2012: 65.
[37] FUJITANI: 1996: 7.
[38] WACHUTKA 2012: 193–194.
[39] GLUCK 1997: 11.

medium most easily subverted to ideology, played a significant role. As early as 1878, the *bungaku goyō-gakari* at the time, Kondō Yoshiki 近藤芳樹, was ordered by the Imperial Household Agency to compose different types of *uta* 歌, *chōka* 長歌 and *tanka* 短歌, praising the achievements of the restoration and the glory of the Emperor starting with *kokutai* (national polity). Furthermore, in 1882, six members of the commission for writing school hymns, *shōka,* of the Tōkyō educational affairs division were members of Outadokoro.[40]

In his detailed work on Meiji era school songs (*shōka*) and military songs (*gunka*), Ury Eppstein traced their development and instrumentalization in the service of the nascent *tennōsei* ideology.[41] While at the beginning of the Meiji period, school songs dealt with natural phenomena, the cultivation of morals and patriotic messages – emperor worship, with values drawn from history and mythology –, around the political crisis of 1881 they started referencing national enemies (*teki* 敵). Military songs were incorporated into school education on the initiative of Inoue Kowashi 井上 毅, the Minister of Education.

As early as 1892, years before the Sino-Japanese War, the songs, some of them inspired by military poems of the *Man'yōshū*, advocated dying for the emperor as a sublime purpose of life. Eppstein points out that the indoctrination of school children into future soldiers was deliberate and well-planned and did not cease after the end of the Sino-Japanese war, even though no concrete enemy was identifiable in the poems. He posits that the songs may have played a great role in the determination and readiness of the soldiers of the Russo-Japanese war, many of whom would have grown up with them. In my opinion, the existence of such *shōka* and *gunka* in the decade spanning the two wars calls into question observations made by historians such as Marius Jansen on the Russo-Japanese war being an imperialist war of "reaction", not of strategic planning.[42]

In 1904, in the course of the Russo-Japanese war, the anthology *Sensō shōka* ("War School Songs") appeared. Its songs were written by anonymous officials of the ministry, but also by Sasaki Nobutsuna 佐佐木信綱, renowned literary scholar and future member of Outadokoro.[43] In the Shōwa period, the poems of Emperor Meiji would constitute the basis for school songs, as can be seen in the example of an anthology by the Japanese composer Narita Tamezō 成田為三.[44]

In the years after the Sino-Japanese War, imperialism came to occupy a central position within politics, economy, and the culture of the Japanese state. Concomitantly, Emperor Meiji, as the patriarch of the nation family and the descendant of Amaterasu and the metaphysical core of the *kokutai*, was ever more present in symbolic form, while he himself

[40] Takasaki Masakaze 高崎正風, Motoori Toyokai 本居豊穎, Ayanokōji Arikazu 綾小路有良, Iida Toshihira 飯田年平, Kurokawa Mayori 黒川真頼 and Ikehara Kawaka 池原香穉 (YASUDA 2006: 131).
[41] EPPSTEIN 2007.
[42] JANSEN 2010: 76.
[43] EPPSTEIN 2007: 192, 194–196.
[44] NARITA: 1928.

was made to retreat again into the privacy of the imperial palace. With the exception of the two wars, in which he was present at the military headquarters, he came to be replaced more and more by the imperial portrait hanging in schools and the message of the Imperial Rescript on Education. Poetry too, in the form of his entries to the *utakai hajime*, was a means of communication between the Emperor and the people, the only direct means through which the Japanese had a glimpse at his thoughts and feelings.[45] In the words of Murai Osamu:

> As the so-called "emperor in motion" became increasingly symbolic and deified as the "quiet emperor", the *utakai hajime* appeared in the newspaper media that imagined and created the people. The ceremony came to bear a new role in this process. Though they would no longer see the emperor, disparate individuals would be united as "subjects" through the newspapers, each knowing the imperial poems (*gyosei* 御製), offering their own interpretation to it, and composing poems on the imperial theme to submit to the *utakai hajime*.[46]

As mentioned above, the socio-political context is not reflected in the imperial themes of *utakai hajime*. The growing efforts of the ideologues are visible in the increase of nationalistic, militaristic vocabulary of the submitted and selected poems. Similar to the content of *shōka*, an element of emperor worship and praise of the glorious restoration had been present in the *utakai hajime* poems from the beginning of the Meiji period, but from the 1880s on, they start referring to military endeavors and employ signifiers of the *tennōsei* ideology such as *kokutai* or *kamikaze*.

In regards to the few poems of the Emperor published before 1904, they were found regularly in the publications of *utakai hajime* poems. Sasaki Nobutsuna, who compiled and edited the imperial poems after Emperor Meiji´s death, had categorized the emperor's poems into didactic, *kyōkunteki* 教訓的, and literary, *bungakuteki* 文学的, poems. The first were poems in which the Emperor thought of the nation, revered his ancestors, and was compassionate towards the people, while the second type was composed of nature imagery presented in a classical literary style.[47]

Until 1904, the only imperial poems the people had seen had been of an overwhelmingly literary nature, with a few exceptions of poems expressing the Emperor´s thoughts towards his people. Compare for example the following *waka* of 1885 with a rare example of the earlier *utakai hajime* 1870, in which the emperor addresses the people:[48]

[45] KEENE 2002: 98.
[46] MURAI 1999b: 80.
[47] UCHIKOSHI 1999: 90.
[48] The *tanka* quoted from those published as a part of the *utakai hajime* are found in the government gazette *Kanpō* 官報, which can be viewed online as part of digitized resources of the Tōkyō National Diet Library. *Tanka* from before 1882 are quoted from Tsunekawa Hei'ichi's 恒川平一 monography on

1885, theme: Early Plum Blossoms in the Snow, *setchūsōbai* 雪中早梅

降りつもる梢の雪を拂はせて今朝こそ見つれ栂のはつはな
Furitsumoru kozue no yuki o harawasete kesa koso mitsure ume no hatsu hana
Let the snow / piled on the treetops / melt away / as today I saw / the very first plum blossoms.[49]

1870, Theme: High-born and Low-born Greet the Spring, *kisengeishu* 貴賤迎春

治まれる世々のためしをみやこ人鄙もろともに祝ふ春かな
Osamareru yoyo no tameshi o miyakobito hina morotomo ni iwau haru kana
In this spring / the people from the capital / and those from the far away countryside / celebrate together / the good example of well-governed people.

Nevertheless, according to Sasaki Nobutsuna, there was always much more interest in the emperor's didactic poems. Due to the activity of Takasaki Masakaze on the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war, the people were able to read more imperial poems than ever before.

5 The Russo-Japanese War

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 represented a turning point for Japan as an emerging great world power. Fought over regional interests in Korea, it represented the pinnacle of Meiji era expansionism. Its direct causes are identified in Japan's emulation of the western-style imperialism of 19th century, its perception of a threatening geo-political situation by Russia's advancement in Port Arthur and in the Liaodong peninsula and its presence in Manchuria; the war can also be seen as a failure of diplomacy as the correspondence with Russian diplomats suffered from delays, indecisiveness and condescension on their part, which was perceived in Japan as a great offense unacceptable to a country increasingly pervaded by sentiments of national pride and a budding self-image as an Asian country with a leadership and civilizing role in the great Asian sphere. Even though the ideas of the Great East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere and of Eastern imperialism fighting off Western imperialism were not yet developed and instrumentalized in this period as during World War II, the rhetoric of the day contained their germinating seeds. As Akira Iriye points out, the war must be understood in its domestic context, through the national press reporting the Russian presence in Manchuria in a sensational manner, and by considering that the widespread majority of the people were clamoring for war. This was also manifested in a letter in 1903, submitted by seven Tōkyō University professors to Prime Minister Katsura Tarō 桂太郎,

Outadokoro, part of which also serves as an anthology of *tanka* of the *utakai hajime* until 1939 (TSUNEKAWA 1939: 85–95).

[49] Unless indicated otherwise, translations are by the author of this article.

demanding a decisive settlement of the Manchuria issue in order to secure the Japanese presence in Korea. A vague statement which nonetheless clearly transmits the demand for military action.[50]

Apart from the interest in the natural resources of Korea and Manchuria, the war was not fought with economic gain in mind, as Japan had to go into great debt internationally to finance it. Nor was the Meiji government confident in the possibility of a satisfactory victory. Rather the oligarchs were convinced that, without taking a military stance to perceived threats, they will themselves fall victim to Russian and Western expansionism later in the future. The acquiring of colonies in an emulation of western powers also served to construct the image and resources of a great political power.

Beyond the mere military campaigns, this was a pursuit of a better national image portrayal. Japan embarked upon a diplomatic campaign to gather support for the war and establish a favorable reputation while also combatting the spread of the "yellow peril" theory. The two diplomats dispatched for this purpose, Kaneko Kentarō 金子堅太郎 and Suematsu Kenchō 末松謙澄[51] were extremely successful in their efforts, writing regularly in international newspapers on Japan and the war. Remembering the less than flattering portrayal of its conduct in the Sino-Japanese war in the international press, Japan also grudgingly, but generously gave access to war correspondents of the great powers to the war front. As Japan was ardently trying to portray itself as a civilized country on equal footing with Western powers, the correspondents were able to observe and report on the "civilized" behavior of Japanese soldiers, strictly adhering to war codes of conduct, as well as the very good treatment of war prisoners. To the contemporary reader, this poses a stark contrast to Japan's atrocious actions during World War II.

A similar endeavor of image-building took place when the Meiji ideologues turned inwardly towards fostering and cementing the war-time national identity of the *kazoku kokka* 家族国家, the family-state, around the figure of the Meiji Emperor. Beyond diplomacy and outright propaganda in printed media, the day had come for *waka* poetry to play its role on the national stage.

[50] IRIYE 1989: 775.

[51] Suematsu published, among others, "The Heart of the Mikado" in the British magazine *The Ninth Century and After,* emphasizing Japan's desire for peace. He wrote: "At this most critical moment in Japanese history, no one can possibly know what the sovereign is thinking in his heart. But fortunately for the Japanese people, the emperor is a poet. There is nothing like poetic expression to vividly reveal one's innermost thoughts." After which he went on to present the emperor's *Yomo no umi* poem as evidence for the innate desire for peace in the hearts of all Japanese (SATŌ 2004: 75).

6 A literary public relations campaign

Moments of crisis are often moments of opportunity. As seen time and time again, and more recently in Ukraine, wars, particularly, make or break leaders. This is also true of the Russo-Japanese War, as it represented the peak of Emperor Meiji´s fame, and he emerged from it "a paragon of statecraft and solicitude".[52] Despite his presence in the military headquarters or at sporadic public events, and through imperial rescripts announcing victories and urging endurance, due to the absence of direct communication, poetry was the means through which the Emperor participated in public life. Therefore, poetry gained the role of an information medium. Although the Emperor supposedly wrote more than 90,000 poems, not many of them were made public until 1904.[53] During the year and a half of war, he (and perhaps the Imperial Poetry Bureau) composed 7,526 poems.[54] More poems were published in that time frame than during the rest of his lifetime. The war thus marked the start of his reputation as a poet saint,[55] upon which subsequent ideological and indoctrination efforts would build by incorporating his *tanka* into reading and ethics textbooks and daily school rituals.[56]

Up until 1904 the imperial poems read by the people were the emperor's submissions to the yearly *utakai hajime*. According to Outadokoro members, the emperor was modest about his literary proficiency and reluctant to share his poems with the public.[57] The imperial poems of *utakai hajime* were of a traditional literary nature and seemingly impersonal, compared to the poems that brought him acclaim after 1904. For comparison, see below his submissions to the *utakai hajime* of 1902, 1903, 1904.

> 1902, theme: New Year Plum Blossoms, *shinnen ume* 新年梅
>
> 立ちかへる年の朝日に梅の花かをりそめたり雪間ながらに
> *Tachikaeru toshi no asahi ni ume no hana kaorisometari yukima nagara ni*
> Blossoms of the plum / returning with the new year / in morning sunlight / have begun to be fragrant / in between breaks in the snow.[58]

[52] GLUCK 1985: 89.
[53] Only 8% of all poems by Emperor Meiji were made known to the world (TANAKA 2007: 20).
[54] TANAKA 2007: 20.
[55] UCHIKOSHI 1999: 86
[56] The poet Ishikawa Kyōko wrote in article for the *Tanka* 短歌 journal, April 1986, *Along with the Turmoil* (*Gekidō to tomo ni* 激動とともに), about how the emperor's poems were sung during rainy days instead of the morning assembly in the all-girls school she frequented during the Second World War (MATSUZAWA 2014: 92).
[57] CHIBA 1938: 38.
[58] Translation by Donald Keene, KEENE 2002: 577.

1903, theme: The Sea at New Year´s, *shinnen umi* 新年海

あづさゆみ[59]八嶋のほかも浪風のしづかなる世の年立ちにけり
Azusayumi Yashima no hoka mo namikaze no shizuka naru yo no toshi tachinikeri
Even in lands / other than Yashima (Japan), / the waves and winds / are quiet in the peaceful world: / the New Year has come

1904, theme: The Pine on the Rocks, *iwa no ue no matsu* 巌上松

苔むせる[60]岩根の松の萬代もうごきなき世は神ぞもるらむ
Koke museru iwane no matsu no yorozuyo mo ugokinaki yo wa kami zo moruramu
The pines stand / on the moss-covered rocks / eternally / in an unchanging world. / The gods must be watching over it

The nature and context of the poems' publication changed drastically in 1904. Many of the most famous poems that have been passed down to posterity as life lessons were composed during this period. During and after the Russo-Japanese war, there were two main parties involved in giving meaning to the imperial poems. On the one hand, the Ministry of Education, which was in charge of compiling national textbooks and supplementary readers, and on the other hand, the staff of the Imperial Household Ministry's Imperial Poetry Office,[61] who received *tanka* directly from the Emperor,[62] the imperial family and the rest of the court ladies. In this section I will address the latter aspect, focusing on the intervention of Takasaki Masakaze, the leader of Outadokoro between 1888–1912.

Knowingly acting against the Emperor's will, Takasaki divulged about 100 imperial poems to Tanaka Mitsuaki 田中光顕, Minister of the Imperial Household, to Tokudaiji Sanetsune 徳大寺実則, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal of Japan, and to Iwakura Tomosada 岩倉具定, councilor on the Privy Council.[63] The poems were circulated in newspapers and other media along with articles reporting on the war situation.

Starting with 1904, the imperial poems were published virtually in all major newspapers at sporadic intervals (such as in *Yomiuri shinbun* 1904 on 3rd November, 10th December, in 1905 on 12th March, 3rd November; in *Asahi shinbun* 1904 on 8th November and 8th December). However, the case of the *Kokumin shinbun* offers a glimpse into the interweaving of the publication of imperial poems with the government´s myth-making apparatus and the performative aspect of politics in national holidays. The *Kokumin shinbun* likely enjoyed a close relationship to the imperial household ministry and implicitly the

[59] *Azusa yumi* ("Japanese bow") is a *makura kotoba* for the first syllable *ya* (also meaning "arrow"), of *Yashima*.
[60] *Kokemuseru* is a *makura kotoba* to *yorozuyo*.
[61] TANAKA 2007: 21.
[62] As much as 40 *tanka* a day during the Russo-Japanese War (TANAKA 2007: 20).
[63] TANAKA 2007: 20.

Outadokoro and published *gyosei* with a high degree of frequency, on the occasion of political events or on dates carrying political significance. Thus, the *gyosei* were published in 1904 on 7th November, 9th December, and in 1905, on 1st January, 27th January (in an article on the imperial virtues, titled 御正徳, which described again the Emperor´s suffering from cold in unheated rooms out of solidarity with the soldiers), 4th and 5th May (on the occasion of the Grand Festival of the Yasukuni Shrine, titled *Yasukuni jinja rinji taisai shikkō* 靖国神社臨時大祭執行, honoring the war dead), 3rd November (Emperor´s birthday), 17th November (in an article on friendly Japanese-Chinese relations, *Nisshin ryōkoku shinkō no hyōshō* 日清両国親交の表彰). In 1906 the *Kokumin shinbun* even published an imperial poem in honor of the triumphant return of the soldiers, in an article titled *Gaikan taikan heishiki* 凱旋大観兵式.

From 1906, the *Kokumin shinbun* regularly published the imperial poems on national holidays such as 1st January, and on those centering on the imperial house, the Emperor´s Birthday, *tenchōsetsu* 天長節 (3rd November), the National Foundation Day, *kigensetsu* 紀元節 (11th February), and on the national holiday celebrating the anniversary of Japan's legendary first emperor, *Jinmu Tennō-sai* 神武天皇祭 (4th April), thus reinforcing the political myth of the unbroken imperial dynasty. On these dates the poems were placed in the center of the front page, in a square as large as about a fifth of the page, with an ornamental drawing highlighting the content, thus adding a festive, ornamental element to the newspaper's issue.

One of the first poems is also one of the most empathetic, showing the Emperor's concern about the fate of Japanese soldiers. It was published in the *Yomiuri shinbun* on November 3rd, 1904, on page three, at the beginning of the article in the first paragraph, titled: *Kyō no gojōba* 今日の御乗馬, next to the drawing of a soldier on a horse:[64]

> 寝覚にも思ひつるかな軍人むかひし方の便りいかにと
> *Nezame ni mo omoitsuru kana ikusabito mukaishi kata no tayori ika ni to*
> I wonder, / while awake or asleep, / if I'm hearing news / from where the soldiers have gone

As mentioned above, in another article of *Kokumin shinbun* (on 27th January, 1905) and as a general leitmotif portraying the Emperor's solicitude for the people, the accompanying editorial to the quoted poem also emphasized how the Emperor was suffering from cold in unheated rooms, wearing thin clothes out of solidarity with soldiers on the front. Three other poems, which became some of his most famous, were published on November 7th in

[64] The *Yomiuri shinbun* issue on the 3rd November 1904 was a special issue dedicated to the anniversary of the Emperor´s birthday, with an extraordinary length of 32 pages containing works composed in honor of the national holiday, *tenchōsetsu.* The newspaper had launched calls for contribution for weeks ahead of the event and the fervor of its organization reflects the nationalistic war-time tendencies.

the *Kokumin shinbun* 1904,[65] the influential newspaper under the chairmanship of Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰, which came to be considered a "government's mouthpiece".

> ちはやぶる[66]神のこころにかなふらむわがくに民のつくす誠は
> *Chihayaburu kami no kokoro ni kanauramu waga kunitami no tsukusu makoto wa*
> The people's heartfelt sincerity / of our country / surely fulfills the wishes / of the mighty gods' hearts

I think that this *tanka* represents a typical example of what Sasaki Nobutsuna termed a didactic poem. The image of people's hearts united through their sincerity create the impression of a united national consciousness, while at the same time this kind of poems serves to illustrate the emperor's preoccupation for his subjects and a degree of affection and praise. The idea of Japan as "land of the gods" (*shinkoku*) is furthermore illustrated through the frequent depiction of a relationship of identity between the hearts (or minds) of the *kami* and those of the people, with the emperor as a medium safeguarding the eternal link through the (supposedly) unbroken imperial line of divine descent. The word *makoto* can signify in this context the idea of sincerity, rather than truth, and it constitutes a frequent literary leitmotif. In the poetics of Kagawa Kageki the sincerity of the verses, in other words the concept of authenticity – *shirabe* –, was the poetic quality of highest merit. This was taught to the emperor by Takasaki Masakaze. Concomitantly, sincerity also counted among the paramount human virtues, expected of Meiji subjects, in the Confucian worldview of good society and governance. At the same time, it figures frequently in the lavish praise bestowed upon the emperor for his virtues.

What makes the following poem noteworthy is its degree of specificity regarding the socio-political context and the emotional content conveyed.

> こらはみないくさのにはに出ではてて翁やひとり山田もるらむ
> *Kora wa mina ikusa no niwa ni idehatete okina ya hitori yamada moruramu*
> All his sons have / quit their home, on their way to / the theater of war / only the old man is left / to guard the hillside paddies.[67]

This *tanka* also illustrates the Emperor Meiji's solicitude for his people, not only for soldiers, but also the elderly (and implicitly, the families) left behind and their overburdened life. The implication is that the Emperor identifies with them and shares their anxiety for the soldiers on the front, as the father of the nation. The poem became famous due to newspaper articles asserting that, under the influence of this and other poems, the morale of the population greatly improved. One reference is found in a newspaper article written by

[65] *Kokumin shinbun*, first page, within an article titled: *Goseitoku no ittan* 御正徳の一端.
[66] *Chihayaburu* is a *makura kotoba* to *kami*.
[67] Translation by Donald Keene, in KEENE 2002: 645.

professor Maruyama Masahiko 丸山正彦, in which he claimed to have witnessed soldiers on the battlefield encouraging each other by quoting imperial poems.[68] Another anecdote relates how an old man suffering from depression, who had stopped tending to his farm after his sons were gone, read this particular poem and felt soothed that the emperor also shared his pain. He also felt ashamed for his neglect and "laziness" and started working the land with even more ardor than before.[69] According to a later testimony by Chiba Taneaki 千葉胤明, a member of the Outadokoro, after the publication of this poem, the Outadokoro received countless pictures of old people in their farmlands, from people who identified with the *tanka*'s content.[70] Needless to say, the authenticity of these anecdotes and the claim of the poem's soothing, unifying role may never be satisfactorily verified, but their appearance in national newspapers and in poetry anthologies edited by Outadokoro members testifies to the significance attributed to the imperial poems in the myth-making machine of the state.

> 四方の海みなはらからとおもふ世になど波風の立さわぐらむ
> *Yomo no umi mina harakara to omou yo ni nado namikaze no tachisawaguramu*
> Where all within the four seas / should be as brothers / why is it that waves and wind / should rise and cause such tumult?[71]

Perhaps one of the most well-known *tanka* of Emperor Meiji, this poem – quoted also in the beginning of this article – has long been quoted as evidence of his pacifism.[72] Scholars believe it was written several days before the start of the Russo-Japanese War. The expression *yomo no umi* 四方の海 is a known poetic topos for the whole world, being widely used in *waka* poetic tradition since the Heian period. Emperor Meiji himself had composed eleven other *tanka* containing this trope before 1904.[73]

According to Outadokoro member Inoue Michiyasu, Arthur Lloyd, a clergyman and English professor at Waseda University, asked Takasaki Masakaze for copies of the Emperor's *tanka* for him to translate, after reading this particular poem in the newspaper.[74]

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[68] Published in *Yomiuri shinbun*, on 9th February 1906, page 3, the article was titled "The virtue and influence of the imperial poems" (*Gyosei no itoku* 御製の威徳).
[69] This episode is taken up again in a *Yomiuri shinbun* article, *Gyosei fukyū to kyōiku* 御製普及と教育 in the column *Kyōikukai* 教育界, on 8th February 1911, page 5, in which the author argues for the usage of the imperial poems in school curriculum for the dissemination of moral values.
[70] Both examples are portrayed in MATSUZAWA 2014: 89.
[71] Translation by Donald Keene, in KEENE 2002: 645.
[72] Contemporary scholars naturally dispute this interpretation. They point out that there are a number of poems by Emperor Meiji which celebrate military victories and the courage and valor of soldiers (HOMMA 2014; UCHIKOSHI 1999). There are though, still, analyses of the poems done in this vein, depending on the scholar's field of work, particularly in Shinto or nationalistic studies. See MURASE 1994 and MIWA 1987.
[73] HOMMA 2014: 138–139.
[74] UCHIKOSHI 1999: 94.

His bilingual edition of the poems appeared in 1904 as *Imperial Songs: Poems by T. M. the Emperor and Empress of Japan, and Other Imperial and Distinguished Personages*.[75] This was sent to several heads of state, among them President Roosevelt. An article in the *Tōkyō Asahi shinbun* on July 31st 1905 credited the poem as being the cause for President Roosevelt's agreement to mediate the peace negotiations between Russia and Japan, due to the deep impression the poem made on him regarding the emperor's philanthropy (博愛) and longing for peace (平和を熱望).[76] While it is a historical fact that Roosevelt agreed to mediate the peace negotiations, it remains doubtful that reading a poem played any role in matters of state diplomacy. Such a portrayal in national media nonetheless enhances the image of Emperor Meiji as a peace-loving leader whose extraordinary poetry has the power to influence international relations.

Several other "leaks" of poems occurred during the Russo-Japanese War. The most comprehensive one, including 34 poems by the Empress and other members of the imperial family and the court, occurred on March 28th 1905 in the *Tōkyō nichi nichi shinbun*.[77] Indeed, after Emperor Meiji's death, an abundance of anecdotes on his relationship with Takasaki saw the light of print, among them one portraying the aftermath of the first few of Takasaki's leaks. These testimonies of contemporaries are found foremost in the writings of two Outadokoro members, Inoue Michiyasu 井上通泰 and Chiba Taneaki 千葉胤明. Chiba's narration is interesting as it portrays the reasons Takasaki gives when asking the emperor to publish his poems: to show how the "brilliant and kindhearted" emperor reflects on how people on the front are faring, how lonely the people in empty houses are, about the hardships of the people in the army and how they are faring in the rain and the wind, in the heat and the cold, and his thoughts for the sick and the wounded. Takasaki insisted that, if the poems were conveyed to the "general public", they would greatly "lift the spirits of the people on the home front and raise the morale of the generals on the front lines".[78]

Inoue's article relates what was told to him by Tokudaiji Sanetsune 徳大寺 実則, that, feeling embarrassed by the frequent appearances of his works in the newspapers, the Emperor summoned Takasaki and lightly chastised him. While doing so,

> [Takasaki] said: "I have done this because I know that it would be a very good thing for the world and for humanity if I were to leak your imperial poems to the world. If

[75] Yamamoto Yoshitaka points out how Lloyd's translations went beyond the poems' content to favorably portray Japan's actions and motivations at that time (YAMAMOTO 2017: 23). See his translation of the *yomo no umi* poem: "My heart at peace with all, and fain would I / Live, as I love, in peace and brotherhood: / And yet the storm-clouds lower, the rising wind / Stirs up the waves, the elemental strife / Rages around. I do not understand / Why this should be. Tis plainly not our fault."

[76] UCHIKOSHI 1999: 94.

[77] One of the predecessors of today's *Mainichi shinbun*.

[78] CHIBA 1938: 38.

> there is any reproof for this, I, Masakaze will commit seppuku and make an apology." He then got carried away and made a hand gesture as if he were to commit *harakiri*. Lord Tokudaiji, watching from the side, was extremely amused, but he could not laugh and was at a loss. I'm sure that His Majesty probably found it funny as well, but there was no further criticism and Takasaki was allowed to go on his way.[79]

There were no further poems distributed in the press after Takasaki Masakaze's death in February 1905 until Emperor Meiji's death on 30th July 1905, when *gyosei* were published daily in great numbers for a long time between 8th August and 13th September in *Kokumin shinbun*. This suggests that, during his life, Takasaki, enjoyed a high degree of the Emperor's trust and was in a unique position to utilize the poems as he saw fit: towards strengthening the national unity in wartime and enhancing the emperor's political image. Comparing the *tanka* submitted by Emperor Meiji to the *utakai hajime* in the years before the war, and the *tanka* Takasaki chose to leak to the press through high-ranked politicians, one notices the latter's strong emphasis on the interconnection between the emperor and the people, and their high degree of emotional content. The feelings of anxiety and affection depicted further cement the idea of the emperor as the father of the family-state *kazoku kokka* 家族国家. Takasaki's endeavors so far show his image of a united nation through *waka* poetry composed on all societal levels, from emperor-to-commoners. In the following section, I will examine how Takasaki's organization and selection of *utakai hajime* poems fulfilled the other necessary half of the image-building pursuit: *waka* poetry from commoners to emperors.

7 War fervor and imperial praise in the 1905 *utakai hajime*

As leader of Outadokoro, Takasaki had overwhelming sway over the organization of the imperial poetry reading and in the selection of the poems submitted by commoners (*eishinka* 詠進歌). As early as 1881, Takasaki features in the publication of the *utakai hajime* records as *daisha tenja* 題者點者, an indication that he simultaneously fulfilled both roles as the selector of the poetic theme of the *utakai* and as a judge of the poems. A detail preserved in *Meiji tennō ki* 明治天皇紀 on the selection of the theme for 1905 confirms yet again the diverging intentions of Takasaki and the Emperor Meiji in regards to the use of poetry on a national platform.[80] Traditionally, none of the poetry themes ever referenced current political or social events. Takasaki had proposed two topics: "The Whole People Rejoice" and

[79] The article, titled *Meiji tennō gyoseishū ni tsuite* 明治天皇御集編纂に就いて, appeared in *Tanka kōza* 短歌講座, 1932. The quote is taken from TANAKA 2007: 20. As these events are well-known in Japanese scholarship, my discussion of these anecdotes is greatly informed by reading Uchikoshi Takaaki and Tanaka Aya.
[80] KUNAICHŌ 1975: 30.

"Rejoicing on the Way". The emperor rejected both, presumably because they were too indicative of the socio-political context: the nation truly had reason to rejoice as the *utakai hajime* of 19th January 1905 came shortly after the victory at Port Arthur, the longest and bloodiest battle of the Russo-Japanese War, previously thought unwinnable.

Fitting with the mild tenor of his wartime poems, which were not as militaristic as those of other monarchs in wartime, the topic the emperor finally chose was the innocuous "Mountains at New Year" 新年山.[81] As I will show below, this did not prevent the court nobles from sending poems imbued with war fervor, nor Takasaki from selecting among the submitted poems several which embodied the events of the day.

Starting in 1882, *utakai hajime* poems were published in the government's gazette. In my opinion, the fact that the display of the poems in the gazette and in the contemporary newspapers adhered to a strict division by the social rank of their authors reflects the political and cultural ideology behind the competition. The first group of poems included *gyosei* 御製 and *miuta* 御歌, poems of the emperor and the imperial family, followed by the second group consisting of poems by statesmen, nobles and members of the Outadokoro or notable persons fulfilling the different roles of the ceremony of the *utakai hajime* (*dokuji, kōji, kōshō,* and *hassei*).[82] Throughout the Meiji period, even when the number of the submitted poems increased, the "selected poems" of the Japanese "commoners" formed a separate category (called *senka* 選歌) within the publication of *utakai hajime* poems, and they only amounted to six or seven poems out of a total of around 25 poems. Even within this small number of poems the social rank was given prevalence in the poems' order and most of the chosen poets enjoyed a privileged status beforehand. This is reminiscent of other Meiji era attempts of projecting the image of a national Japanese literature as a manifestation of national unity, while the writers stemmed from mostly privileged classes.

Preceding the name of each poet was their social rank and place of residence. The hierarchical display reflected a Confucian, feudal worldview, a remnant of the Edo period, and reinforced the nature of the competition and the ceremony as political rituals,[83] with

[81] KEENE 2002: 645.

[82] Traditionally the recitation of poems within the ceremony of *utakai hajime* is accompanied by traditional, *waka* specific, musical intonations and is called *hikō* 披講. The several traditional performer roles are: a *dokuji* 読師 who silently presides at the ceremony, arranges *kaishi, tanzaku*, etc., and hands them to the lecturer, or corrects the lecturer's misreading; the *kōji* 講師 reads the poems aloud in poetry gatherings; the *hassei* 発声 recites the *shokku* 初句 of the poem accompanied by a traditional tune; the role of *kōshō* 講頌 is fulfilled by a group of individuals who join the *hassei* and recite the poem in unison from its second line (NAKAJIMA 2005: 39; TAGAYA 2017: 208).

[83] In David Kertzer's definition, a ritual is a symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive, often enacted in specific places endowed with symbolic meaning. The particularity of political rituals is their ability to disseminate political myths and help create political reality through powerful symbols (KERTZER 1988: 9–10). In this case, one of the main political myths is what Susan

little room for aesthetic criteria or artistic individuality. The geographical references served to draw a symbolic map of the magnitude of Japan as a country and later, an empire, by implying the cultural and political assimilation of regions such as Okinawa, Hokkaidō, Taiwan and Korea through the presence of *waka* poems originating from there. Highlighting the poets' residences served to create a geographical consciousness of the expanding nation as a component of an emerging national identity.

I will now analyze several poems of the 25 published in the government's gazette. Four poems constituted the first category, *gyosei* and *miuta*.[84] Fourteen poems were by government officials and court nobles, while seven poems constituted the so-called *senka* 選歌, selected poems. Half of the authors of the *senka* possessed court titles, however. In total, seven poems referenced the war (three of the *senka*) and six poems praised the imperial reign, thus around half of the works contained ideology-bearing tropes.

The poems of the imperial family mostly abound in nature imagery, but even seemingly innocuous scenery such as the sun rising over the Mount Fuji can actually incorporate elements of Meiji era nationalism, embodying the country´s character as "the land of the rising sun" and referencing Mount Fuji, which at the time was already a prestigious national symbol.[85] Consider Emperor Meiji's submission to the *utakai hajime*:

> 富士の嶺に匂ふ朝日もかすむまで年立つ空の長閑なるかな
> *Fuji no ne ni niou asahi mo kasumu made toshi tatsu sora no nodoka naru kana*
> The sky at the start / of the new year is so calm / that the morning sun / glowing over Mount Fuji / seems hazy[86]

Among the poems of the nobles and politicians, the war praise is not particularly subtle. A *tanka* by Admiral Prince (Arisugawa) Takehito (of the fourth class of the supreme order of the Chrysanthemum) 海軍大将大勲位功四級威仁親王, transmits pride in Japanese victories:

> もろこしの山てふ山に日のみはた立ててやいはふ年のはじめを
> *Morokoshi no yama to iu yama ni hi no mihata tatete ya iwau toshi no hajime o*
> On the mountain called Morokoshi (in China) / we fly a Japanese flag / and celebrate / the beginning of the New Year

Burns identifies as the "narrative of the divine age", through Emperor Meiji's portrayal as a living *kami* of the unbroken imperial dynasty safeguarding Japan as a land of the gods, *shinkoku*.

[84] I would like to thank Prof. Suzuki Ken´ichi for his invaluable commentary on the translations of these *tanka*, as well as Prof. Judit Árokay for her patience and corrections in *tanka* translations and interpretations, not only on this occasion.

[85] LINHART 2003: 648.

[86] Translation by Donald Keene in KEENE 2002: 620.

A *tanka* by Fujiwara[87] (Tanaka) Mitsuaki, Minister of the Imperial Household, *junii* (Junior second rank) in the Japanese hierarchy of the court and Shinto deities, the Order of the Rising Sun, first class 宮内大臣従二位勲一等子爵臣藤原朝臣光顯上 (and a former major general of the army), directly addresses the emperor in a congratulatory manner:

> 山の名の黄金白銀おほ君の御手に入りけり年の始に
> *Yama no na no kogane shirogane ōkimi no ote ni irikeri toshi no hajime ni*
> The mountains' famed gold and silver / are in your grasp, Your Majesty, / on this New Year's beginning

Takasaki Masakaze's poem is one of the most jubilant in tone:

> ももしきの大内山はとよむらむ年のほぎごとかちどきのこゑ
> *Momoshiki no ōuchi yama wa toyomuramu toshi no hogigoto kachidoki no koe*
> New Year's well wishes / and cries of triumph / echo in the hills / of the imperial palace

The poem by Ayanokōji[88] Arikazu 綾小路有良 is the first to praise soldiers' deeds and directly reference the Port Arthur victory.

> いさましくしめしとりでの山々にみいくさ人は年迎ふらむ
> *Isamashiku shimeshi toride no yamayama ni miikusabito wa toshi mukauramu*
> In the fort's mountains / they bravely took and occupied, / the honorable soldiers must be awaiting / the New Year to come

The authors of the selected poems, supposedly from commoners across the country, range from the governor of Okinawa, Narahara Shigeru 奈良源繁,[89] to Ogura Fumiko 小倉文子 (a *gon no tenji* 權典侍, or lady of the bedchamber[90]) and a decorated member of a *shizoku* family (the Order of the Rising Sun, eighth class) to the wife of a decorated infantry soldier and a lumberjack. The poets who can boast of no rank have their names written directly after their places of residence. Below for comparison, the *tanka* of the two ladies reflect different

[87] All court officials received aristocratic sounding names, such as Fujiwara, in the new Meiji government which tried to emulate the Nara period imperial court (Craig 2014: 51).
[88] The Ayanokōji house is one of the oldest noble houses, dating back to the 13th century, which came to serve the imperial court as masters of *gagaku* 雅楽 ancient court music. The poet is listed as a member of the Outadokoro with the role of *sankō* 参候, organizer of *utakai hajime*. He was also mentioned above as part of the commission in charge of introducing military school songs, *shōka*, in textbooks.
[89] His full rank is depicted as follows: Okinawa governor, *shoshii* rank in the Japanese hierarchy of rank and divinity, the Order of the Rising Sun, second class, baron 沖縄県知事正四位勳二等男爵.
[90] According to Keene, one of only two women who shared the emperor's bed until 1909 (Keene 2002: 777, footnote 12).

perspectives of the war. Ogura Fumiko's *tanka* also praises soldiers' deeds interwoven with the traditional nature imagery:

> 軍人いさををつみし山の上に年の初日やさしわたるらむ
> *Ikusabito isao o tsumishi yama no ue ni toshi no hatsuhi ya sashiwataruramu*
> The first rays of the New Year's sun, / will certainly spread their light / over the mountains where / the soldiers achieved so many valorous deeds

By contrast, a more humane rendering of the anxiety over soldiers' daily life comes from the soldier's wife:

> つはものに召し出されしわがせこはいづこの山に年迎ふらむ
> *Tsuwamono ni meshidasareshi wagaseko wa itsu kono yama ni toshi mukauramu*
> My beloved / who has been called out to fight, / On which mountain / does he greet the new year?

Seeing how the theme for the next year's *utakai hajime* was announced in November, and considering that Port Arthur fell to the Japanese on 2nd January, it is possible that Takasaki asked for poems to be resubmitted before the ceremony of the imperial poetry competition in the middle of January. Otherwise, the congratulatory tone of some of the poems is hard to understand, had their authors not known the outcome of the battles at Port Arthur.

When it comes to praising the imperial reign, *utakai hajime* poems make frequent use of the trope *kimi ga yo* 君がよ and of symbolic leitmotifs associated with the imperial house and longevity, such as pines.[91] The idea of a serene reign, which continues immutably (*ugokanu* うごかぬ), as a model of enduring prosperity, is pervasive in the poetical repertoire of the poetry reading. Praise is particularly abundant from members of Outadokoro. Consider this poem by Takeya Mitsuaki 竹屋光昭, which again emphasizes the idea of national unity and the enduring prosperous reign:

> 君がよをやちよとうたふ國民に山もこたへて年立ちにけり
> *Kimi ga yo o yachiyo to utau kunitami ni yama mo kotaete toshi tachinikeri*
> To the country's people singing, / "may Your reign continue for eight myriads", / the mountains, too, reply. / New Year has come

For a motif of the unchanging, glorious imperial reign see the courtier´s Ōhara Shigetomo´s contribution (here portrayed in the role of reciter, *kōshō* 講頌, in the *utakai hajime* ceremony):

[91] Pines feature prominently in the imperial poetry themes: about 20% of the time until 1912, not to mention the frequent appearance within the poems themselves. This surpasses by far the overall prominence of pines as literary motifs in many of the canonical and imperial anthologies of poetry, for example 1,7 % in *Man'yōshū*, 1,9 % in *Kokinshū* (NANAUMI/ŌZAWA 2017: 99).

大御代とともにうごかぬ不二のねをまつこそ仰げ年のはじめに
Ōmiyo to tomo ni ugokanu Fuji no ne o matsu koso aoge toshi no hajime ni
At the root of Mount Fuji, / immutable like the glorious imperial reign, / the pines upon it, / pine[92] reverently for the New Year's begin[93]

As the examples above have shown, more than half of the poems published within the framework of the imperial poetry competition engaged in a form of war glorification or laudatory address to the Emperor. Together, they constitute what Torquil Duthie termed about *Man'yōshū* Yoshino poems, a "collective first voice of praise".[94] Takasaki's selection and possible requesting of the poems, with an even distribution between the more literary, traditional themes and the ideologized tropes among the two categories of poems – nobles and officials versus "commoners" (*senka* poems) – unmasks his agenda of using the *utakai hajime* as a platform for strengthening national consciousness in wartime.

8 Conclusion

This article has shown how *waka* poetry, both by the Emperor and by people of various ranks, was instrumentalized by members of Outadokoro in order to promote a national identity permeated by the Meiji era notion of the nation-family. Through Emperor's Meiji's didactic poems, in which the relation of identity rooted in sincerity (*makoto*) between *kami* and the people was stressed, concomitantly the political myth of the Emperor as descendant of an unbroken line traced back to Amaterasu was emphasized. The poem awakened in the people's mind the idea of the head of state as a link to the *kami*, safeguarding Japan's nature as a divine land.

Only few of the imperial poems were made public, with the exception of those that were judged to be worthy of being made public by the Emperor himself, his attendants, members of the Imperial Family, and others in his private sphere, after passing through the hands of administrative officials such as the Ministry of the Imperial Household and Imperial Household Agency officials. Therefore, it can be said that the published *gyosei* itself is an

[92] Here the word *matsu* is a very traditional trope, a *kakekotoba* for the noun *matsu*, pine tree, and the verb *matsu*, to wait.

[93] As Sepp Linhart pointed out in his 2003 article, by 1910 Mount Fuji was a widely recognized national symbol, having been used as early as 1881 in *shōka*, in connection to the glorious imperial reign, in comparisons similar to that of this poem (LINHART: 2003: 653). In an anthology of *shōka* for primary schools in 1884, called *Shōgaku shōka shū*, the text of the *shōka* entitled *Fuji Tsukuba* 富士筑波 is as follows: *Suruga naru Fuji no takane o aogite mo ugokanu miyo wa shirarekeri* するがなる富士のたかねをあふぎてもうごかぬみよはしられけり (MONBUSHŌ ONGAKU TORISHIRABE-GAKARI HEN 1884: 20). In translation: "High peak of Fuji from Suruga, when one admires you, one glimpses the eternity (of the imperial reign)".

[94] DUTHIE 2014: 262.

"ambiguous" expression of the will of the nation.[95] In 1904, Takasaki, as a man of his time and of great devotion to the Emperor, chose to leak poems by the Emperor with a high emotional content, thus situating him via literary means and accompanying newspaper editorials as the affectionate, concerned father of the nation.

Takasaki's choice of poems selected from submissions to the *utakai hajime* reveals a preference, in the measures deemed tolerable by the emperor reluctant to approve of overly militaristic topics, for poems of a nationalistic nature. Either glorifying the war or addressing congratulations to the Emperor, they also included the symbolism of the unbroken, eternal imperial reign, emphasized by leitmotifs of pines (for longevity) or by the trope *ugokanu* (unchanging) and *kima ga yo* ("may your reign last eight myriads"). The hierarchical and geographical display of the poets' ranks and residences suggests the nature of the competition as a political ritual, in which the society of Meiji Japan is reflected as imagined poetic community. Thus, it can be said that *waka* and *tanka* did not appear to people as literature, but as instruments of nation-building, among others such as: mottos, vows, national language, arts and history compilation.[96] Building on Walter Bennet´s characterization of the dissemination of political myths through various media, I have shown how Japanese *waka* and *tanka* poetry also fulfilled the role of emphasizing the political myths propagated by the Meiji government, such as the "divine age narrative", the idea of Japan as the "land of the gods" and the portrayal of the community as a family-state, *kazoku kokka*.

In my view, the revival of the *utakai hajime* in the Meiji era – opened for participation of all Japanese subjects – also reflects a Confucian view of *waka*, through the idea dating back to the *Kokinshū* preface, that "all living things compose poetry" and the assumption that rulers could gauge the state of their realm through the songs sung by the people. Simultaneously, the pretense of the competition as truly open and representative of all citizens is in line with the Meiji era claim to possess a so-called national literature, whether in the reframing of *Man'yōshū* as a national anthology, in the attempted creation of a national *epos* in the *Teikoku bungaku* 帝国文学 journal[97] or in Takasaki's small-scale endeavors to create the semblance of a national poetry anthology while accompanying the Emperor Meiji on imperial tours.[98]

[95] HOMMA 2014: 170.
[96] MATSUZAWA 2014: 20.
[97] SHINADA 2001: 38–43.
[98] As Matsuzawa points out, of the over 3000 people who submitted their poems to Takasaki for his anthology *Umoregi no hana* 埋木廼花, one third of them were involved in the central government in some way, and many people in the countryside were already also involved with the government in one way or another. Therefore, it is misleading to present this book as a crystallization of love for the emperor (MATSUZAWA 2014: 43–45; also, MATSUZAWA 2008).

The continuing performance of the *utakai hajime*, in modern times broadcasted on radio and television, is perhaps the most remarkable and most enduring legacy of Outadokoro after its disbanding in 1945. Through yearly repetition, the ceremony creates expectations of stability and reemphasizes cultural and national identity on a synchronic and diachronic level, both in the present and connected to a mythic past. Such an intent was unwittingly revealed by a member of the Imperial Household Agency in an interview addressing the protest against the financing of the 1990 *Daijōsai* 大嘗祭 ceremony from taxpayers' money: "We want the Japanese people to watch these ceremonies and feel that the exact same ceremonies were conducted 1,000 years ago. (…) There is stability in this amid these uncertain, changing times".[99] In the words of Irokawa Daikichi on the Meiji period, *waka* poetry today continues to bring the emperor into the people's homes.[100]

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[99] STEPANEK 1990: A6.
[100] IROKAWA 1985: 283.

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