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Principles of Poem Arrangement in the *Gosen wakashū*

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Introduction

Gosen wakashū 後撰和歌集 ("Later Selection of *Waka*," often abbreviated *Gosenshū*) is the second *chokusenshū* 勅撰集 (a *waka* poetry collection selected by Imperial order), compiled sometime in the 950s. The compilers were five men assigned by Emperor Murakami 村上天皇 (924-967) to a new *waka* bureau established in the *nashitsubo* 梨壺 ("pear pavilion") wing of the palace. By the twelfth century the collection was canonized as one of the *Sandaishū* 三代集 ("Collections of Three Reigns") which provided the foundation for later poetic expression. However, it has never been accorded the same level of respect as its predecessor *Kokin wakashū* 古今和歌集 (or *Kokinshū*, "Collection of poems ancient and modern," compiled c. 905). *Kokinshū* itself was marginalized in the twentieth century, criticized for being artificial, trite, and restricted in expression compared to the earlier *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 (7th-8th c.). Helen McCullough's monograph on *Kokinshū* notes the tendency "in Japanese academic and literary circles to treat the once sacrosanct anthology as a negligible work of purely historical importance – a mere way station between *Man'yōshū* and *Shinkokinshū* 新古今集."[1] Gustav Heldt echoes McCullough in his book on early Heian poetry, noting the comparatively small amount of twentieth century scholarship on *Kokinshū* as well as a focus on the collection's "concern with artifice."[2] Takeoka Masao also blamed the lack of accurate interpretation of the *Kokinshū* poetry on the collection's poor reputation.[3] And if *Kokinshū* was regarded as a "way station," the other six anthologies between it and *Shinkokinshū* were mere bumps on the road.

None of those six anthologies has received as much opprobrium as *Gosenshū*. The pathbreaking history of Japanese poetry by Brower and

Miner describes the collection disparagingly: "As its name suggests, this anthology presents the leftovers of the *Kokinshū*. As such, it is inferior in quality, and its interest lies in its lengthy headnotes."[4] This judgment also finds its way into the widely used *Princeton Companion to Japanese Literature*.[5] Donald Keene echoes this negative judgment in *Seeds in the Heart*, writing that the compilers "displayed little aptitude for their task" and echoing Brower and Miner's opinion that the collection is worthwhile largely due to the poetic prefaces which provide insight into the cultural history of the tenth century.[6]

The criticisms of Keene, Brower, and Miner are long-standing ones. The first mentions of *Gosenshū* are neutral, and it is usually placed alongside *Kokinshū*.[7] Fujiwara no Shunzei 藤原俊成 in the treatise *Korai futeishō* 古来風体抄 (1197) also describes the collection neutrally.[8] Other sources are generally more critical: the late twelfth century poetic treatise *Fukurozōshi* 袋草子 by Fujiwara no Kiyosuke 藤原清輔 (1104-1177) claims that the collection was never finished and is chaotic (*shidokenashi*), and the nun Abutsu 阿仏尼 (1222-1283) wrote in *Yoru no tsuru* 夜の鶴 ("Crane at Night") that "there are many graceful (*yasashiki*) poems but also many disordered (*midarigawashiki*) poems."[9] However, not all the criticisms of *Gosenshū* are purely based on the aesthetic value of the poems. Kiyosuke's brief comment that *Gosenshū* was unfinished was taken up and expanded into a standard view of the collection that continues to this day. Reasons for this opinion include the lack of a preface to the whole collection, the lack of any poems by the compilers themselves, the presence of love poems in the seasonal volumes, the inclusion of poems that had already appeared in *Kokinshū*, the repetition of poems within *Gosenshū* itself, the style of the prose prefaces to the poems, and the lack of a coherent arrangement of poems within the volumes.

These claims have been extensively discussed in a long monograph by Satō Kōmei, who attempts to refute every one of them and champion *Gosenshū* as a completed work that is simply built on different principles from *Kokinshū* and later collections.[10] More recent editions of *Gosenshū* have backed away from the highly critical view of earlier editions, and the general picture of the collection in Japanese research is no longer as negative as it once was. Edwin Cranston, in the second volume of his *waka* poetry anthology, mentions the theory that the collection was "abandoned unfinished" but then writes "I think the most interesting approach is to take [the collection] on its own terms," despite its "Later collection" name.[11] This is an encouraging trend, because there is much to be gained by study

of this collection. Allowing *Gosenshū* to speak for itself, rather than using it solely as a source of cultural history or judging it for how closely it follows the *Kokinshū* precedent, reveals an anthology that is rich with poetry representing a wider stock of poetic imagery, more variety in the setting of the poems, and a more complex ordering of poems within the volumes. Furthermore, the collection provides a valuable source of earlier precedents for the type of love exchange poetry found in later works such as *Kagerō nikki* (蜻蛉日記 *Kagerō diary*) and *Genji monogatari* (源氏物語 *Tale of Genji*).

The ordering of the poems in the collection in particular has received insufficient attention. Scholars of Japanese poetry have long recognized the crucial role that the arrangement of the poems plays in Imperial collections, although the focus of this scholarship is mostly *Kokinshū* and *Shinkokinshū*. Konishi Jin'ichi's research on "association and progression," first published in English in 1958, has been especially influential on English-language scholarship. The bedrock of this approach focuses on the seasonal and love volumes—the seasonal volumes "progress" through the year while the love volumes "progress" through the stages of a love affair. The "association" aspect deals with connections between adjacent poems in the anthologies, and *Shinkokinshū* in particular has been regarded as this practice's zenith, with Konishi writing that "it represents the culmination of earlier integrating techniques, a development of them to new heights, and an influence upon later methods of integration."[12] Konishi traces this association principle back to *Kokinshū*, although he notes that it is not as well developed as the later collection.

Association and progression is not the sole analytical tool for making sense of *Kokinshū*—Arai Eizō analyzed the collection in terms of "complementary pairs" ranging from the large scale organization of the division into books, down to the smallest level of individual words in adjacent poems.[13] Joshua Mostow's preface to his *Pictures of the Heart* also contains a discussion of the potential application of this "pairs" strategy to the *Hyakunin isshu* collection.[14] Mostow includes an important reminder that "once we posit some kind of association between individual poems in the *One Hundred Poets,* we will inevitably find it."[15] Scholars have tended to assume logic and meaning in the way the *Kokinshū* poems are ordered in the collection, and frame their analyses accordingly. By contrast, the dominant approach to the *Gosenshū* looks for ways to accentuate the supposed chaos and disorganization of the collection. It may be that the distance between the two collections is more in the eyes

of the beholder than any inherent qualities of the collections themselves.

The original 1958 "Association and Progression" article by Konishi contains only two passing references to *Gosenshū*, but in his later book on the history of Japanese literature, he criticizes the collection more directly:

> Waka in the *Gosenshū* do not follow a systematic arrangement. The method of arranging waka according to the principle of progression is erratically applied. A configurational analysis like that attempted for the *Kokinshū* cannot, regrettably, be performed successfully with the *Gosenshū*…There is a recognizable configuration based on the principle of progression. Only, it is not fully realized.[16]

There has only been a small amount of research to oppose this dominant view, or even address the issue at all. A significant part of Satō's book is devoted to a detailed analysis of the ordering of the love volumes. He is especially concerned with identifying small groups of poems within the larger volumes, as well as showing that nearby poems are related to each other through shared imagery or contexts. While this is similar to the "association" element of "association and progression," the analysis recognizes that "progression" is not necessary. Konishi does acknowledge Satō's work in a footnote. However, he maintains that "insofar as the *Kokinshū* configurational style serves as a criterion, then, the arrangement of waka in the *Gosenshū* is sketchily done." This may be true, but it seems to assume that the compilers set out to follow the *Kokinshū* precedent as closely as they could.

One flaw of many of the analyses of *Gosenshū*, including that of Satō's, is an overreliance on the backgrounds and motives of the compilers. Some features of the collection have been attributed to interference from the Emperor or the nobility, or Minamoto no Shitagō's 源順 interest in poem-tales. Some writers attempt to link certain features of *Gosenshū* with the compilers' work on deciphering the text of *Man'yōshū*.[17] Such attempts fall short for two reasons. The first is that there are only scattered bits of information about the collection's compilation, mostly appearing in sources 50-100 years later than the collection itself.[18] The title of the collection is little help. It is unclear what the "later" of "later selection of *waka*" refers to – "later selection" could mean that the compilers selected poems from the same sources as *Kokinshū*, but it may also simply refer to the fact that it was compiled after *Kokinshū*. The *sen* element of the title refers to editorial selection, but there is no preface to tell us what criteria this selection was based on. Kiyosuke's claim that *Gosenshū* is an

unfinished draft dates from over 300 years after the collection was compiled, and it is uncertain whether this represents a trustworthy tradition or simply someone's guess based on their perceptions of the collection's quality. Even if all the traditional information is correct, there is still virtually no information about how the compilers went about their work.

The second problem in ascribing specific motives to the compilers is that the text of *Gosenshū* that has been standard for some 800 years is a late manuscript of Fujiwara no Teika 藤原定家 (1162-1241), written in 1234. There are at least four complete non-Teika texts as well as a number of textual fragments and collation notes for lost texts. These manuscripts show variations in the ordering of the poems, the wording of the prefaces, authorship attribution, and the language of the poems themselves.[19] When it comes to large scale features we can still make fairly firm conjectures – for instance, all of the existing texts have love poems integrated into the seasonal volumes, and this is very likely to be a deliberate choice of the compilers. However, when looking at the placement of individual poems, it becomes much more difficult to be sure that small-scale features (such as two poems having shared wording) are based on the compilers' explicit intent.

Therefore this study abandons any pretense of recovering the intentions of the compilers or saying anything about an "original" *Gosenshū*. The text Teika established in 1234 is essentially the text that has been the *Gosenshū* for some 800 years, and this study aims to show that what is known today as *Gosen wakashū* can be read as a coherent, well-ordered collection of poetry, and that its value goes beyond "what [the poems] reveal about the daily composition of waka during the Heian period."[20] Such an analysis also encourages looking at each Imperial anthology on its own merits, rather than simply comparing them to *Kokinshū.* Although it is important to put the Imperial anthologies in the context of the continuous production of *waka* in the Imperial court, the fact that *Gosenshū* was strongly influenced by *Kokinshū* does not mean its worth can only be judged from a direct comparison between the two works.

Gosenshū as a Whole

As described above, the base text for modern editions of *Gosenshū* is Fujiwara no Teika's 1234 manuscript (known as the *tenpuku ni-nenbon* 天福二年本). *Shinpen kokka taikan* (1983) and the edition of *Gosenshū* in the *Shin nihon bungaku taikei* (1990) rely on copies or tracings of the manuscript, but in 2004 a facsimile of the original text was finally made

available.[21] The manuscript contains 1,425 poems divided into twenty volumes.[22] The large-scale arrangement of the volumes is similar to *Kokin wakashū* but done on somewhat simpler lines. Eight volumes of seasonal poems are followed by six volumes of love poems, four volumes of miscellaneous poems, and then a final two volumes that take up four remaining topics (parting, travel, celebration, and sorrow). Each of these four large sections closes with a poem on the new year.

One of the most notable features of the collection is the large number of love (*koi*) poems—this label includes poems found in the love volumes, but also poems in other volumes whose prose prefaces provide a clear romantic context. *Kokinshū* allowed poems into the seasonal volumes that could be read with love subtexts, or that used love motifs. For instance, the poet of *Kokinshū* 35 worries that because his sleeves are suffused with the scent of the plum blossoms he went to see, people will assume it is perfume from a woman's clothing. But given this poem's placement in the seasonal volumes, and the lack of a prose preface, readers are encouraged to take the love theme as a posture highlighting the scent of the blossoms (and their association with perfume incense for clothing) and not read the poem as a true "love" poem.[23] *Gosenshū*'s seasonal volumes contain such subtextual poems, but also include poems whose prose prefaces provide an explicit love context, something that *Kokinshū* restricted to the love volumes. The eight seasonal volumes are followed by over 550 love poems in six volumes—one might think this would exhaust the stock, but the remaining six miscellaneous volumes also have a significant number of love poems in them.

The love poems also display a different tendency than those in *Kokinshū*. The *Kokinshū*'s love volumes are almost entirely expressions of feelings related to love, with only a handful composed in the context of an actual love affair. By contrast, the *Gosenshū* allows many more poems written in love affairs, often including the lover's response – while *Kokinshū* contains only fourteen poetic exchanges, *Gosenshū* has 180. These include not only love exchanges but exchanges between friends and family. Furthermore, sixty-one of these exchanges are anonymous, suggesting a fictional poem tale (*utamonogatari* 歌物語).

Gosenshū also expands the general poetic imagery, allowing many seasonal images that had not been included in *Kokinshū* (although many can be found in *Man'yōshū*). For instance, the summer volume of *Gosenshū* includes fireflies, summer rain, short summer nights, and hollyhock (*aoi* 葵), none of which were *Kokinshū* summer images. At the

same time, the sphere of poets is expanded as well – *Gosenshū* contains many more poems from Emperors and other high-ranking nobility than *Kokinshū* does, as well as more poems by women.

All of these overarching features of the collection show that the frequent claim that the *Gosenshū* contains the "leftovers" (per Brower and Miner) of *Kokinshū* is simply not true. Scholars have taken a strangely literal view of the title, with Konishi suggesting that it shows a "lack of editorial ambition."[24] It may be that the *Gosenshū* compilers chose some poems that the *Kokinshū* compilers had rejected due to quality. But many of the poems they selected would not have been included in *Kokinshū* for reasons other than inherent poetic value. Another point against the "*Kokinshū* leftovers" idea are poems that were composed after the *Kokinshū*'s compilation, as well as poems that seem to be based on *Kokinshū* poems. Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 (872–945) has seventy-five poems in *Gosenshū*, and while most of them cannot be securely dated, surely some of them were composed in the roughly forty years between *Kokinshū* and Tsurayuki's death.[25]

In looking at the type of poetry included in Imperial collections, it is common to divide poems into "public" (*haru*) and "private" (*ke*). This division is problematic and the exact definitions of the terms are not always completely clear. Gian Piero Persiani has shown how this division obscures the social functions of various types of *waka*, and McCullough also seems to reject or at least minimize this distinction in her study.[26] Nevertheless, it is important to highlight one of the distinctive features of *Gosenshū*: in comparison to *Kokinshū* and *Shuishū*, *Gosenshū* contains far fewer poems composed for official purposes such as poetry contests or screen paintings. On the other hand, *Gosenshū* has far more poems addressed to one person, or composed in informal, small gatherings. As mentioned above, this difference is especially stark in the case of the love poems.

This distinction between "public" and "private" poems creates further problems. Many of the poems in *Gosenshū* occur in other collections, such as *Kokin waka rokujō* 古今和歌六帖 or personal poetry collections. In some of these cases a "private" poem in *Gosenshū* is a "public" poem in another source, or vice versa. Scholars and commenters often try to intuit whether this is the result of alternate transmission patterns, or an intentional change (perhaps even by the *Gosenshū* compilers themselves). Since my interest here is to read *Gosenshū* itself, I ignore these concerns. The public/private division also ignores the large number of poems in

Gosenshū that are listed as *dai shirazu,* meaning that the topic or circumstance of composition is unknown. Commenters sometimes conjecture what the circumstance might have been for these poems (such as a screen painting), and in some cases they fill in the details with information from alternate sources. Again, for the purposes of this study I will not attempt to engage in such speculation. Ultimately, for this article's focus on the arrangement of the poems within books, I have found this public/private distinction of limited utility.

The Spring Volumes

Analyzing the entire *Gosenshū* would be beyond the scope of an article. Satō's monograph can be consulted for a detailed analysis of the six love volumes, but his treatment of the seasonal volumes is more cursory.[27] Any of the seasonal sections could be subjected to analysis, but the summer and winter volumes are comparatively short, and the autumn volumes are quite long (roughly 45% of the seasonal poems are in the autumn volumes). Therefore this paper will focus primarily on the moderate length spring volumes (146 poems in 3 volumes), with a few comments looking forward to the rest of the seasonal volumes.

Gosenshū follows *Kokinshū* (and all other Imperial collections) in beginning with spring poems. Editions of *Kokinshū* will often divide the poems into groups based on the primary image in the poem – for instance, "Start of Spring" (1–2), "Lingering snow" (3–9), "waiting for warblers" (10–11), and so on.[28] With *Kokinshū* (and most Imperial collections), this division works fairly well. Trying this with the *Gosenshū* spring poems results in the following table:

Poems	Main theme	Other notes
Spring 1 1–4	Start of spring (立春)	
5–10	Young shoots (若菜)	All on "Day of the Rat" except 8
11–21	Miscellaneous	
22–32	Plum (梅)	Except 30
33–36	Warbler (鶯)	
37–46	Miscellaneous	
Spring 2 47–48	Miscellaneous	
49–64	Cherry (桜)	Except 58 and 60
65–67	Miscellaneous	

68–71	Flowers (花)	
72–80	Miscellaneous	
Spring 3 81	Warbler	
82–123	Flowers	Except 94, 100, 111, 120. A mix of "scattering" blossoms and regular flower poems
124–131	Wisteria (藤)	
132–134	Scattering cherry blossoms	
135–146	End of spring	

TABLE 1: Arrangement of *Gosenshū* spring poems based on imagery

Clearly the division here is not as simple as *Kokinshū*. The impossibility of arranging all of the poems in separate groups based on imagery seems to be what caused Konishi and other researchers to suggest that there is no coherent ordering, or that the compilers were attempting to follow *Kokinshū*'s model but did not succeed. After defending the inclusion of love poems in the seasonal volumes, Katagiri writes that "in the spring and autumn volumes, the disordered arrangement of the poems within the volumes is certainly problematic." [29] Two questions then suggest themselves: how do we explain the groups of poems on a single image that have a few other poems scattered within (such as 30, 58, and 60), and do the "miscellaneous" sections have any coherence? These miscellaneous sections often return to imagery from earlier in the volume, or introduce new images that are used only for one poem.

One possible explanation is the theory that the compilation was never finished, and that these poems would have been rearranged into their "proper" places in the final edit. Another proposal was raised by Matsuda Takeo, which is quoted approvingly by Satō in his book. Matsuda posits that the poems were originally arranged exactly following the *Kokinshū* precedent but that when the love poems were added, the poems were intentionally rearranged into a more "chaotic" form.[30] Matsuda believes this was done as a deliberate rejection of the *Kokinshū* practice. A closer analysis will show that these compiler-focused interpretations are not necessary to explain the ordering of the spring poems, and the organization is not as chaotic as it seems on first approach.

One preliminary observation is that not every spring image is tied to a particular time in the season. It is fairly obvious that "lingering snow" poems should be near the beginning and "scattering cherry blossoms" in

the later part. But other images such as the willow tree, pine tree, and spring moon are not associated with any specific time. So if the primary concern is temporal progression, there is no reason why all the willow tree poems would have to appear in one place. The group of poems between 82 and 123 mixes both scattering cherry blossoms and poems appreciating the beauty of the blossoms that have yet to scatter. While this is "disordered" by the precedent of other collections, it highlights the ephemeral nature of the blossoms as well as the uncertainty of when they will scatter. Interrupting a group of poems on one topic with a poem on a general spring theme would fit with an analysis that does not require all poems on one theme to be placed in a continuous sequence. Especially in the third volume, the freer organization breaks the monotony of a single theme (falling flowers) with a few poems on general themes.

Looking at the imagery in the spring section as a whole, there are ten seasonal images that are concentrated in one particular area of the spring volumes. Four of these are explicitly marked for time (start of spring, end of spring, last day of the 3rd month, first Day of the Rat). Four are flowers that bloom at specific times (plum, cherry blossom, wisteria, and *yamabuki*). The other two are lingering snow, which would naturally be towards the beginning of the season, and "young shoots" which also must occur before the plants grow. Warblers are close to being an early spring image but they do have a few appearances in later volumes. Beyond that, there are images that occur throughout the season, and thus throughout the three spring volumes – most notably spring rain, spring wind, haze (*kasumi* 霞), and willows.

Other seemingly anomalous placements can be explained by linking principles other than the seasonal imagery. It seems odd that volume 3 should open with a "warbler" poem (poem 81); in all the Imperial collections (including *Gosenshū*), the warbler is an image of early spring. However, the theme of the poem is the sorrow of age (with a love subtext):

> After she had separated from the Posthumous Chancellor [Fujiwara no Tokihira 藤原時平 (871–909)], she heard his voice in a certain place and sent this.
> The Mother of Lord Fujiwara no Akitada 藤原顕忠母 (n.d.)
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Uguisu no* | The warbler's voice |
> | *Naku naru koe wa* | Which I hear crying out |
> | *Mukashi ni te* | Is just as of old |
> | *Waga mi hitotsu no* | My body is the one thing |
> | *Arazu mo aru kana* | That is no longer the same.[31] |

This still does not explain the poem's placement, but looking at the beginning of the first and second volume of spring poems, it turns out that all three begin with a poem on aging, and follow a progression from joy to sorrow. Poem 1 is celebratory, and is written by the author of the final poem of *Kokinshū*:[32]

> On the first day of the first month, he received a large robe at the Nijō Empress' 二条后(842–910) residence.
> Lord Fujiwara no Toshiyuki 藤原敏行 (?–901 or 907)
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Furu yuki no* | In the falling snow |
> | *Mino shirogoromo* | While I wear a white straw robe, |
> | *Uchi-ki-tsutsu* | On my aged body |
> | *Haru ki-ni-keri to* | The spring of your favor has come |
> | *Odoroka-re-nuru* | I see with great surprise![33] |

The beginning of the second volume (poem 47) is more ambiguous, and can perhaps be taken as celebration tinged with sorrow:

> After he had grown old, he planted red plums, and the next year he was thinking of things.
> Lord Fujiwara no Sukemoto 藤原扶幹 (869–938)
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Ue-shi toki* | When I planted them |
> | *Hana mi-mu to shi mo* | I did not think to ever |
> | *Omowa-nu ni* | Gaze upon the flowers |
> | *Saki chiru mire-ba* | When I see them bloom and fall |
> | *Yowai oi-ni-keri* | I realize I have grown old.[34] |

The sorrowful note of poem 81 thus continues the pattern established in the first two volumes, and also sounds the keynote for the third volume's focus on fading and scattering flowers. The final poem of each volume follows a similar trajectory from joy to sorrow. All three are by Ki no Tsurayuki and deal with the spring promotion announcements. In poem 47, Tsurayuki praises his patron Fujiwara no Kanesuke's 藤原兼輔 (877–933) promotion and looks forward to his greater glory. In poem 80, Tsurayuki consoles Mibu no Tadamine 壬生忠岑 (n.d.), who is sorrowing over his lack of success, and Tsurayuki promises that his fortunes will improve. In the final poem (146), written in the last year of Tsurayuki's life, he laments his own lack of success in the margins of a note written to someone who has not visited him.

This last poem comes in a group of twelve poems that are mostly by

Tsurayuki, Ōshikōchi no Mitsune 凡河内躬恒 (n.d.) (another *Kokinshū* compiler), and higher ranking men who acted as patrons to the lower-ranking poets. Six of the poems are poetic exchanges, and the whole set can be imagined as a gathering at the end of the year where the friends are drinking and composing poems. This pairing of Tsurayuki and his patrons or friends also shows up at the end of volume 1 (poems 41–46), and in poems 17–19, 107–108, and 125–130. In these groups, the linking of the authors was a more important concern than the seasonal imagery. Similar linking of authors occurs with the pairing of poem 49 by Bishop Henjō 遍昭 (816–890), and poem 50 by his son Sosei 素性 (c. 844–910).

Sometimes the grouping of poems can be explained by their shared styles—particularly whether they share a theme beyond the seasonal image, and the nature of their prose prefaces. Poems 13–15 do not share imagery, but they are all love poems with long prose prefaces that suggest poem tales. This can explain why poem 13, which contains "young shoots," is not placed with the rest of the "young shoot" poems (poems 5–10). In the third volume, poem 111 is a travel poem, which links it with 112 despite 111 not involving flower or cherry blossom imagery.

Katagiri singled out several poems in the spring volume for being out of place with the temporal progression.[35] Poem 36 says that the flowers have not yet bloomed, even though it comes after other poems about plum blossoms. However, the focus of the poem seems to be the warbler rather than the plums, and poems 33-36 are all about the idea of the warbler's cry marking the start of spring. Perhaps the poem could have been placed much earlier, but poem 35 is about the poet being invited to the bloomed flowers by the warbler, so either the warbler poems would have to be broken up, or one of the two poems would be out of place temporally.

Another seemingly misplaced poem Katagiri mentions is 112:

> Some women said "We will go see the flowers" and left for the field.
> Lady Handmaid Yoruka 典侍因香 (n.d.)
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Haru kure-ba* | When spring arrives |
> | *Hanami ni to omou* | Thinking "let's go see the flowers" |
> | *Kokoro koso* | It is the heart |
> | *Nobe no kasumi to* | That with the haze in the fields |
> | *Tomo ni tachi-kere* | Rises and goes forth travelling.[36] |

Although the poem starts with the "arrival" of spring, the poem was clearly composed during the flower viewing season, and the poem is more about the extended longing for the flowers rather than the start of spring itself.

The techniques I have suggested do not solve the arrangement of every poem in the volumes. However, the earlier table can be revised in the following way:

Poems	Main theme	Subthemes/Notes
Spring 1 1–4	Start of Spring (立春)	1 is celebratory, also uses old age imagery.
5–10	Young shoots (若菜)	All on "Day of the Rat" except 8
11–21	Miscellaneous	13–15 Extended prose preface love poems. 16 – Introduction of plum blossoms (love themed) 17–19 Poems by Tsurayuki, Kanesuke, and Mitsune 20–21 Love poems
22–32	Plum (梅)	22–36 anonymous except for 28 30–A love poem like 29, imagery is snow (which is poetically associated with plums).
33–36	Warbler (鶯)	
37–46	Miscellaneous	38–39 Exchanges among friends 41–46 KKS-era poets (Mitsune, Tsurayuki, and their patrons)
Spring 2 47–48	Miscellaneous	47 on aging
49–64	Cherry (桜)	58 and 60 excepted; 60 is a sorrow poem, as is 61.
65–67	Miscellaneous	65–78 all love poems on various mid-spring themes
68–71	Flowers (花)	
72–80	Miscellaneous	72–78 are love poems, 79 is friendship with common imagery to 78.
Spring 3 81	Warbler	On sorrow of aging

82–123	Flowers	Except 94, 100, 111, 120. A mix of "scattering" blossoms and regular flower poems. 95–98 suggest a flower viewing gathering. 111 is a travel poem (linking it to 112).
124–131	Wisteria (藤)	125–130 are read at a drinking party, 124's celebratory theme links it to 125.
132–134	Scattering cherry blossoms	
135–146	End of spring	All exchanges between Tsurayuki and other men except 141 and 144

TABLE 2: Revised analysis of the Spring volumes

The analysis here is by no means definitive, nor does it result in anything as tidy as the distinct groups of poetry found in most other collections. However, it shows that to simply label the volumes as chaotic, or to focus exclusively on the seasonal images in the poems, ignores alternative organizational principles that can be teased out with a more nuanced approach.

As the table indicates, this analysis can be extended beyond the miscellaneous sections to the arrangement of the poems within a particular group, along the lines of Konishi's "association" principle. Plum flowers first appear in poems 16 and 17 – the love theme of poem 16 links it to the previous poem, and poem 17 is specifically about slow-blooming plum trees. The major group of plum tree poems begins at poem 22. Poems 22-36 are almost all on plum trees, and are anonymous with a single exception. The plum poems by named authors are the aforementioned poems 16 and 17, as well as 38-39 and 44-46 at the end of the volume.

The anonymous group of poems begins with a love themed poem, which links it to poem 21 (which has an explicit love context).

Circumstance unknown[37]
Poet unknown

Waga seko ni	To him, my lover,
Mise-mu to omoi-shi	I had intended to show
Mume no hana	A plum flower
Sore to mo mie-zu	But I can't tell where they are
Yuki no fure-re-ba	Since the snow is still falling.[38]

Poems 23–25 also have love subtexts. Poem 23 could be read as a poem of general sorrow at a lack of visitors:

[Circumstance and poet unknown]

Kite mi-beki	There won't be anyone
Hito mo araji na	To come and see them here.
Waga yado no	The first plum blossoms
Mume no hatsuhana	In the garden of my house
Ori-tsukushi-temu	I should pluck them all myself![39]

However, the poem's placement after 21 and 22 invites reading the "anyone" of poem 23 as a lover rather than general visitors.

Poem 26 is on moonlight and plum trees, then 27-29 are on the scent of plums. Poem 30 is not a plum poem at all:

Over the years he had become interested in a woman, and she asked him to wait at least this year. The next year she was still cold to him.
Poet unknown

Hitogokoro	Your unfeeling heart
Usa koso masare	Makes me suffer all the more.
Haru tate-ba	When spring arrives
Tomara-zu kiyuru	None can stop the snow from melting
Yuki kakure-nan	I shall vanish from your sight.[40]

But as mentioned above, snow is commonly associated with plums, and the love theme links it to poem 29 and possibly 31.

Poem 32 hints at the warbler, by alluding to a well-known *saibara* song (and *Kokinshū* poem 1081) that mentions warblers making umbrellas out of plum blossoms. Poems 33-36 then explicitly involve warblers, with a clear sequence: in 33 the poet hears the small cry of the warbler in their garden announcing spring, although in 34 it seems that the poet is the only one who recognizes that sound. In poem 35 the poet has been drawn by the voice of the warbler to the flowers, and in poem 36 the poet sees that the flowers have not bloomed yet, but still knows it's spring based on the cry of the bird. These four poems create a push-and-pull effect where a "spring is here!" poem is paired with a "spring might not be here yet" poem, both relying on the same poetic conceit of the warbler's voice announcing the coming of spring.

Poem 37 does not mention plums, and its placement here is difficult to explain since it involves the plant called *wegu* – the exact definition of

this term is not certain, making it harder to judge this poem's placement. The long series of anonymous poems has now ended: Poems 38-39 are an exchange of friends, with the theme being fully bloomed plums. Poem 40 is on scattering plum blossoms. From here the first volume moves into its final group of poems, which are the Tsurayuki-and-friends poems I mentioned above.

The longest group of poems in the Spring volumes stretches from 82 to 134, a set of fifty-three poems that are nearly all on flowers. The ones that mention or imply scattering or fading flowers are 82–85, 88, 90–92, 95, 98, 101–102, 105–106, 109–110, 119, 121–122, and 132–134. The rest of the poems are on blooming flowers, flower-viewing ceremonies, and some miscellaneous topics. This would seem to be the most "disordered" of the groups, and is in stark contrast to *Kokinshū* which separates the cherry blossom poems almost entirely into "bloom" and "fall" sections. However, as mentioned earlier, cherry blossoms bloom and scatter very quickly, and do not always fall at the same time every year or in every place. This randomness is reflected in the poems. And again there are links between the poems that go beyond the imagery.

Poems 82–83 provide an appropriate beginning to the group: an exchange between Tsurayuki and Nakatsukasa 中務 (912–991) discussing the scattering of a single cherry blossom in a vase. This is followed by 84 which treats the scattering as something in potential, and finally 85 which is a comic poem:

> Lord Asatada 藤原朝忠 (910–966) lived next door, and when the cherry blossoms scattered profusely, she sent this.
> Ise 伊勢 (c. 875– c. 938)
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Kakikoshi ni* | Rather than seeing |
> | *Chiri kuru hana o* | Scattering petals coming |
> | *Miru yori wa* | Over the fence, |
> | *Negome ni kaze no* | I would have the tree, roots and all, |
> | *Fuki mo kosa-nan* | Blown over here by the wind.[41] |

Now that readers have been presented with the full range of experience, the rest of the poems go back and forth. Poems 86–89 are love poems, including one that does not involve flowers, and one on the s*umire* (violet). This flower had appeared in *Man'yōshū* but not *Kokinshū*.

Poems 95–98 are a group of poems that seem to be composed at a flower-viewing gathering that includes Tsurayuki and Mitsune. Poems 95, 96, and 98 are explicitly composed at such a gathering, and the witty nature

of poem 97 aligns it with the kind of occasional poem that would be read in such a setting. Although the prefaces indicate these poems were not all composed in the same gathering, their placement together allows them to be read with that fictional setting. Poem 95 is particularly notable:

> At the end of spring, when they were lamenting various flowers.
> Poet unknown
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Kaku nagara* | Just as things are now |
> | *Chira-de yo o ya wa* | Can the world possibly end |
> | *Tsukushi-te-nu* | Without them scattering? |
> | *Hana no tokiwa mo* | If only we could see the flowers |
> | *Ari to miru-beku* | Just like the evergreen pines![42] |

The setting of the poem, read "at the end of spring," would encourage its placement later in the volume, but the content of the poem itself indicates the flowers have not yet scattered. The suggestion of a poetic gathering associates it with the other four poems in this group. This group is followed by four love poems, but poem 99's preface links it with the previous group, suggesting the morning after the flower-viewing gathering.

> In spring, when he went to view the flowers, he sent a letter. There was no answer, and so the next morning, he visited and asked for a response to yesterday's letter, so she sent this.
> Poet unknown
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | *Harukasumi* | In the rising spring haze |
> | *Tachi-nagara mi-shi* | You briefly stood and watched |
> | *Hana yue ni* | The flowers, and so |
> | *Fumi tome-te-keru* | I feel this sense of regret |
> | *Ato no kuyashi-sa* | That you sent me this letter.[43] |

Even though poem 100 is on wisteria rather than falling flowers, the love theme aligns it with the other poems in the group.

Poems 113–117 are all privately addressed poems on flower viewing. Poems 113–114 are a love exchange, 115 and 116 are sent by women to friends, and 117 is a priest away from the capital. All five involve situations where the poet has not seen the other person in some time. By poem 120 the poems are moving away from cherry blossoms: 120 is on wisteria, 121–122 on *yamabuki*, 123 on general flowers, and 124–130 on wisteria.

Poem 131 seems to have no connection:

Circumstance unknown
Also the poet

Uguisu no	The jeweled willow
Ito ni yoru chō	Is said to be woven
Tamayanagi	From thread by the warblers
Fuki na midari so	Don't blow and ruin the weave,
Haru no yamakaze	O spring wind from the mountains![44]

There are two possible reasons for its placement: first, the wind "ruin[ing]" the weave of the willows suggests the same effect as the wind scattering the flower blossoms. Second, the use of multiple spring themes (warblers, willows, wind) provides a last opportunity to show these general spring themes before moving on to the final "end of spring" poems. Finally, 132–134 provides a fitting close to the flower poems by using the theme of sorrow over the falling blossoms. This sorrow theme provides a transition into the final sequence of Tsurayuki-related poems that end the spring volume on a note of gloom.

The preceding analysis does not precisely fit all 146 poems of the spring volumes into a seamless whole, and further research may reveal more links between the poems. One further analytical strategy used by both Satō and Kifune Shigeaki (in *Gosen wakashū zenshaku*) is to look at adjacent poems (or series of poems) as a poem-tale. Satō's specific examples are mostly from the love volumes, but Kifune offers several examples from the spring volume. One is the set of poems from 22 to 27, which are all "circumstance unknown" and "poet unknown." Kifune analyzes this as a series of love poems exchanged between a man and woman.[45] He does the same with poems from 31 to 37. Sometimes this analysis requires more work—poems 70–76 involve poems by three different authors plus some whose poets are unknown. Kifune's analysis begins "By suppressing the authorship and prefaces and reading only the poems, this can be interpreted as a sequence of love poems on sorrow at not being able to meet."[46] Satō explains this technique in connection with one of his main theories of the *Gosenshū*'s construction: that it was heavily influenced by the compilers' (and readers') interest in poem-tales.[47] This method of interpretation relies on a great deal of speculation, but it could be another way to account for seemingly incongruous placements of certain poems.

Conclusion

The overall arrangement of the spring volume is similar to other

collections: progressing through the season from the beginning to end. Seasonal imagery that is tied to a particular time is generally placed where it occurs in that season. However, images that are not tied to a specific point in time are allowed to occur anywhere in the seasonal volume. There are also other principles of arrangement beyond time and imagery:

- Placing similar types of poetry together, such as a small group of love poems, or a group of poetry exchanges
- Placing associated authors together, such as Tsurayuki, his patron Kanesuke, and other *Kokinshū* compilers
- Creating links between the beginning or ending poems of multiple volumes

These principles were also used to a certain extent in *Kokinshū* (the "association" of Konishi's analysis), but in *Gosenshū* they are allowed to override the temporal progression to the point where imagery from earlier in the volume can reoccur. There is a limit to this freedom: for instance, spring snow does not appear in the second or third spring volumes, and "end of spring" poems start at poem 135.

Space does not permit a detailed examination of the remaining seasonal volumes, but those volumes also contain evidence of these organizational strategies. For instance, the Autumn volumes contain a long series of Tanabata-themed poems (poems 225–249). Within the group, a series of love exchanges are collected in poems 227–232, and the whole section closes with occasional poems by Mitsune, Kanesuke, and Tsurayuki (similar to what was done to close the spring volumes).

On the whole, research on the Imperial poetry collections continues to be hampered by disparaging views of the quality of their poems and the abilities of the compilers. Enough scholarship has been done on *Kokinshū* that the modern negative view of the collection is no longer as widespread. However, much less has been done to analyze the other collections beyond *Kokinshū* and *Shinkokinshū* (to say nothing of the remaining thirteen Imperial anthologies). *Gosenshū* is still perceived as a largely failed and perhaps unfinished anthology – one that is worthwhile mostly for its contribution to the cultural history of the Heian period rather than its literary value. But if we consider each anthology on its own merits rather than taking *Kokinshū* as a fixed model, we can recover these poetry anthologies as works of literature in their own right.

NOTES

[1] Helen Craig McCullough, *Brocade by Night: "Kokin Wakashū" and the Court Style in Japanese Classical Poetry* (Stanford University Press, 1985), 5.

[2] Gustav Heldt, *The Pursuit of Harmony: Poetry and Power in Early Heian Japan* (Cornell University East Asia Program, 2008), 4. Heldt's comparison is with the large amount of scholarship on *Genji* and *Man'yōshū*. He also notes that scholars tend to focus on social and political aspects of the collection rather than the poetry itself.

[3] Takeoka Masao 竹岡正夫, *Kokin wakashū zenhyōshaku* 古今和歌集全評釈 (Yūbun shoin 右文書院, 1975), 2. There is continuing concern over the quality of the *Kokinshū* poetry, as shown by the volume in the *Waka bungaku taikei* 和歌文学大系 series, published in 2021. The *geppō* essay collection included with the volume contains an essay addressing the harsh criticism of Meiji-era critic Masaoka Shiki 正岡子規 (1867–1902). Shiki's critique is also mentioned by Takeoka, McCullough, Keene, and the editors of the 1989 *Kokinshū* volume included in the *Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei* 新日本古典文学大系 series.

[4] Robert Brower and Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford University Press, 1961), 482-83.

[5] Earl Miner et. al., eds., *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature* (Princeton, 1985), 31, 158.

[6] Donald Keene, *Seeds in the Heart* (Henry Holt and Co., 1993), 278.

[7] Tajima Ikudo 田島毓堂, ed., *Gosen wakashū kenkyūshi* 後撰和歌集研究史 (Tōkai Gakuen Joshi Tanki Daigaku Kokugo Kokubun Gakkai 東海学園女子短期大学国語国文学会, 1970), 205–207. The latter part of this book is a useful collection of comments on the *Gosenshū* from sources ranging from the Heian through the Edo periods.

[8] Sasaki Nobotsuna 佐佐木信綱 et al, ed., *Nihon kagaku taikei* 日本歌学大系 (Kazama shobo, 1972), v2, 312–313. This reference is to the "first draft" version; the language is essentially the same in the revision.

[9] Tajima, *Kenkyūshi*, 209, 219.

[10] Satō Kōmei 佐藤高明, *Gosen wakashū no kenkyū* 後撰和歌集の研究 (Nihon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai 日本学術振興会, 1970). Satō's book is the only monograph on the collection that is not primarily concerned with descriptions of manuscripts and textual analysis.

[11] Edwin Cranston, *A Waka Anthology Volume Two: Grasses of Remembrance* (Stanford University Press: 2006), 187. Cranston's practice of translating only selected poems from the anthologies means that he did not take up the question of organizational principles within each volume, although his comments on the

two love volumes he translated in their entirety do highlight the links between some of the poems.

[12] Konishi Jin'ichi (Robert H. Brower, and Earl Miner, trans.), "Association and Progression: Principles of Integration in Anthologies and Sequences of Japanese Court Poetry, A. D. 900-1350." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 21 (1958): 67–127, https://doi.org/10.2307/2718620 (accessed 1/29/2025), 69.

[13] See Heldt, *Pursuit of Harmony*, 151–156 for a detailed explanation in English.

[14] Joshua Mostow, *Pictures in the Heart* (University of Hawai'i Press, 1996), 48–57.

[15] Mostow, 51.

[16] Konishi Jin'ichi (Earl Miner trans.), *A History of Japanese Literature* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1984), v2, 232–3. The *Princeton Companion* also says that *Kokinshū* "set the organizational principles for the rest" (342).

[17] See Tajima, *Kenkyūshi,* 163–179 for an overview of the research on *Man'yoshū* activities of the compilers. Satō addresses some of the arguments in detail in 160–281.

[18] The *Eiga monogatari* 栄花物語 and the preface to *Goshūi wakashū* 後拾遺和歌集 are the most important early sources. A short Chinese text by Minamoto no Shitagō exists as well, but it does not give any real information about the *Gosenshū* other than agreeing with later texts on the names of the compilers. This is also true of the brief headnotes to certain poems in the collections of two of the compilers. The best source for early comments about the *Gosenshū* is Tajima (see note 7).

[19] The situation of the *Kokinshū* texts is similar, and Keene's claim that these textual discrepancies are a product of the compilers' haste or incompetence is unwarranted (see *Seeds in the Heart*, 278). Teika's earliest manuscripts are closer to the variant texts than his late efforts, raising the question of what sources Teika used to refine and update his later manuscripts. The manuscripts of *Gosenshū* have received exhaustive treatment in Sugitani Jurō 杉谷寿郎, *Gosen wakashū shohon no kenkyū* 後撰和歌集諸本の研究 (Kazama Shobō 笠間書院, 1970).

[20] Keene, *Seeds in the Heart,* 278.

[21] This did not add significantly to our understanding of Teika's text as it showed the copies were extremely exact, with only a tiny number of differences. The facsimile is *Gosen wakashū : Tenpuku ninenbon* 後撰和歌集：天福二年本, published as volume 3 of the *Reizeike shiguretei sōsho* 冷泉家時雨亭叢書, Asahi Shinbunsha 朝日新聞社 (2004).

[22] The *rufubon* (“popular” or “vulgate”) text that was used from the Edo period printed editions up to the 1980s contains one extra poem in the winter volume, between poems 450 and 451. This means that for citations of *Gosenshū* poems by number, you will sometimes have to subtract one to come up with the poem in the most recent editions. The *rufubon* text also differs from Teika’s original manuscript in a number of ways (more so than for *Kokin wakashū*), but the differences are mostly minor.

[23] I use the term “readers” several times in this essay, but since Heian poetry was frequently chanted or sung in various contexts, “hearers” may be implied as well.

[24] Konishi, *History of Japanese Literature*, v.2, 232. “Collection of poems selected later” does not have to mean “selected later from the same sources.”

[25] One of the compilers was a son of Tsurayuki’s, and presumably would have had access to his father’s poetic output.

[26] Gian Piero Persiani, “The Public, the Private, and the In-Between: Poetry Exchanges as Court Diplomacy in Mid-Heian Japan.” *Japan Review* 35 (2020): 7–30. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27008999, accessed 1/29/2025. McCullough, *Brocade by Night*, 3.

[27] Satō, 613–760.

[28] This division is from Katagiri Yōichi 片桐洋一, *Kokin wakashū zenhyōshaku* 古今和歌集全評釈 (Kōdansha 講談社, 2019), v1, 318.

[29] Katagiri Yōichi 片桐洋一, ed., *Gosen wakashū* 後撰和歌集 (*Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei* 新日本古典文学大系 6, Iwanami shoten 岩波書店, 1990), 482.

[30] Matsuda Takeo 松田武夫, “Gosenshū no soshiki ni okeru ‘konran’ ni tsuite 後撰集の組織における「混乱」について,” in *Kokugo to kokubungaku* 国語と国文学 1957:12, 38. Satō’s discussion of Matsuda’s article begins on page 169 of *Gosen wakashū no kenkyū*.

[31] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 28. This poem is presumably inspired by Ariwara no Narihira’s famous *Kokinshū* 747: “The moon isn’t the same, neither is the spring, only my body is the same as it was.” Akitada’s mother inverts the posture of Narihira’s poem, and uses the warbler’s voice as a symbol for Tokihira’s. The translations of the poems in this paper are made from Teika’s manuscript, although I have consulted the major pre-modern and modern commentaries for assistance. For convenience, I will give page references from the *Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei* edition. The translations generally follow Sonja Arntzen’s practice of lineation in her translations of the *Kagerō* and *Sarashina diaries*: they are based around a 5-7-5-7-7 rhythm, but shorter lines are sometimes used

to avoid padding just to fill the meter. See Arntzen and Itō, trans., *The Sarashina Diary* (Columbia: 2014), xiv.

[32] That is, poem 1100, not counting the 11 additional "marked for deletion" poems that Teika included at the end of his manuscripts.

[33] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 4. This poem has a dense tissue of wordplays. *Furu yuki* is "falling snow," leads into *furu yuki no mi* "my aging body" which in turn leads into *mino shirogoromo*. *Minoshiro* is a straw coat worn to protect against rain or snow, but also leads into *shirogoromo*, the white robe. *Uchi-ki-tsutsu* "while I wear" contains *uchiki* "robe." Finally *haru* "spring" is a common symbol of the favor of a ruler or patron.

[34] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 18.

[35] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 482.

[36] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 38. The poem here plays on *kasumi tatsu* "the haze rises" and *kokoro tatsu* "the heart rises." The latter is an unusual expression and is perhaps intended to metaphorically represent the thoughts or spirit of the poet "leaving" for the fields.

[37] The meaning of *dai* in *dai shirazu* is the subject of some disagreement; I have chosen to translate it as "circumstance" to reflect the preference of the *Gosenshū* for poems written in actual situations over those on set topics. However, it can also have the meaning of a poetic topic.

[38] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 10.

[39] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 11.

[40] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 13. *Yuki kakuru* here plays on "snow vanishing" and "go [away] and hide."

[41] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 29.

[42] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 32. Many editions emend the third line to *tsukushi-te-mu.* The base text can be understood as the completion suffix *nu*, although the most recent edition of the *Gosen wakashū* edited by Tokuhara Shigemi interprets this as vocative, leading to the translation "why don't you try not scattering?" See Tokuhara Shigemi 徳原茂実, *Gosen wakashū* 後撰和歌集, (Meiji Shoin 明治書院, 2022).

[43] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 34. The poem plays on two meanings of *tachi* ("rising" haze and the man "standing"), and *fumi* ("letter" and "tread"). The suggestion is that the man barely stopped to see the flowers and didn't pay any attention to her.

[44] Katagiri, *Gosenshū,* 43.

[45] Kifune Shigeaki, *Gosen wakashū zenshaku* (Kasama Shoin 1988), 20. He is not definitive about these analyses, prefacing each of them with a statement like "these can also be read as a love story."

[46] Kifune, 51.

[47] See Satō, 611 for his specific application of this principle to the seasonal volumes.

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