

Percorsi in Civiltà dell'Asia e dell'Africa I

Quaderni di studi dottorali alla Sapienza

a cura di

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5. *Keikokushū* Reconsidered: The Negotiation of *Kidendō* Literary Culture in Early Heian Japan

Dario Minguzzi

5.1. Introduction

The end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth were particularly transformative for Japan. Historically, this period coincided with the transfer of the imperial court to the new capital of Heian 平安 in Enryaku 延暦 13 (794) and the subsequent stabilization of this new political asset under the reign of Emperor Kanmu 桓武 (737-806, r. 781-806) and his sons Heizei 平城 (774-824, r. 806-809), Saga 嵯峨 (786-842, r. 809-823), and Junna 淳和 (786-840, r. 823-833)¹. Culturally, too, the imperial court witnessed profound change. In particular, its ceremonies were codified, as reflected in the appearance of manuals for ritual procedures, including *Dairishiki* 内裏式 (Ritual procedures of the imperial court) and *Kōninshiki* 弘仁式 (Procedures of the Kōnin era)².

Central to this paper is the development and reorganization of two key institutions, the structure and functions of which were fixed precisely during the first three decades of the ninth century, that eventually became central to the literary field of the early Heian period (ca 800-950). Thus, the institution that prepared officials to serve in the various bureaucratic offices of the state, the Bureau of High Education (*daigakuryō* 大学寮), and, in particular, the *kidendō* 紀伝道 (literally “Way of annals and biographies”) curriculum, underwent a

¹ For an outline of the history of this period see McCullough (1999: 20-37) and, more recently, Souyri (2010: 161-170).

² For an overview of this process see Yamanaka (1972: 38-57).

series of significant changes. At the same time, the poetry banquets that the sovereign sponsored directly (*kōen* 公宴), at which Sinitic poetry (*shi* 詩) played a key role, were expanded and institutionalized. At the beginning of the ninth century, these institutions—the *kidendō* curriculum and sovereign-sponsored poetry banquets—gradually grew interdependent. In particular, the selection of the officials who provided poetry at the banquets, known as *monnin* 文人, became largely restricted to graduates of the *kidendō* curriculum. By the mid-Heian period in the tenth century, the *kidendō* and the banquets had become tightly intertwined cultural systems³.

The relationship between the institution of the *kidendō* and the composition of Sinitic poetry also crystallized in the compilation of poetic anthologies—three, in fact, that appeared in rapid succession—under the superintendence of the sovereign. The result of this developments was a mutually reinforcing relationship among the *kidendō*, the production of Sinitic poetry, and the imperial clan. The three collections—*Ryōunshū* 凌雲集 (Collection soaring above the clouds, 814), *Bunka shūreishū* 文華秀麗集 (Collection of masterpieces of literary talent, 818), and *Keikokushū* 經国集 (Collection for binding the realm, 827)—were primarily compiled by graduates of the *kidendō* and include (to varying degrees) poems by such graduates and members of the imperial clan. In fact, only a few of the texts relate to members of the aristocracy who were not trained in the *kidendō*. Thus, these three collections offer valuable insight into the negotiation of the relationship between the production of Sinitic poetry (as well as other types of literary texts) and the *kidendō* curriculum by means of strategic literary representations⁴.

My focus here is on the last of the three to be compiled, *Keikokushū*. Appearing in Tenchō 天長 4 (827), during the reign of Emperor Junna, the collection took shape at the peak of the cultural develop-

³ See, for example, Kudō (1993: 83-88) for an analysis of the relationship between advancement on the *kidendō* track and institutionalized poetry banquets in mid-Heian Japan. Students who sought a recommendation to sit for the first *kidendō* examination, the Ministry Test (*shōshi* 省試), were often first required to provide poetry for an official banquet.

⁴ Minguzzi (2021), for example, describes the strategies in the representation of the professional class of the *kidendō* graduates and the various contexts of their poetic output that are at play in the first of the three anthologies, *Ryōunshū*.

ments that simultaneously transformed the *kidendō* curriculum and the practice of sovereign-centered poetry banquets. Accordingly, I suggest, *Keikokushū* can be read as a literary representation of the relationship between these two cultural systems. More specifically, I argue that the collection was created, at least in part, for the purpose of negotiating this relationship, with the result of stabilizing the positions of various textual genres—poetry in particular—within the institutional purview of the *kidendō* curriculum. The expansion of both poetic literacy and institutional poetic practice at the beginning of the Heian period (the entire period is dated 794-1185) brought Sinitic poetry to the forefront of the culture of the early Heian period. Sinitic poetry became rapidly very central within the cultural practices of the Heian court, but its absorption into the institutional system seems to have been slower. The compilers of *Keikokushū* thus sought to position Sinitic poetry within the existing institutional system of training and education of the *kidendō* by producing a strategic representation that merged the two institutions in a consistent cultural environment. In what follows, I first sketch the contours of the development of the *kidendō* and the banquet culture at the beginning of the ninth century. I then explain the architecture of *Keikokushū* in terms of the negotiation between these institutions.

5.2. The Collection for binding the realm

Owing perhaps to the mutilated form in which *Keikokushū* has survived, with only six of its original twenty volumes extant, its structure has received relatively little scholarly attention⁵. Rather, discussion of the anthology has focused on its preface, which describes in ornate terms the qualities of the so-called “patterned writing” (*bunshō*, or *monjō* 文章) and further positions early Heian literary writing as the ideal continuation of the history of textuality in the continent through the display of intricate patterns of allusions and quotations from continental texts⁶.

⁵ A notable exception is Miki (2015), who elucidated the structure of the sequence of poems in the section “miscellaneous” (*zatsuei* 雜詠) in *Bunka shūreishū* and in *Keikokushū*.

⁶ In English, see Denecke (2004); in Japanese, see for example Hangai (1981) and

Significantly, the title of the collection alludes to a famous passage by the Wen 文 Emperor of Wei 魏, Cao Pi 曹丕 (187-226, r. 220-226) contained in the *Lunwen* 論文 (Discourse on *wen*) section of the essay titled *Dianlun* 典論 (On the standards [for literature]), which is, in turn, included in the collection *Wen Xuan* 文選 (Selections of *wen*) from the Liang 梁 dynasty (502-557), a standard text in the *kidendō* curriculum. The passage states: “Patterned writing [*bunshō*] is a great enterprise for binding the realm” (文章經國之大業). The notion of pattern as a form of social and political ordering was already inherent in the first instances of *wen* 文 on the continent, in which it possessed various meanings ranging from a refined personal appearance to military and ritual insignia, ritual forms, and to textile patterns. During the Eastern Han (25-220), a semantic shift occurred such that *wen* came to refer to the texts associated with ritual and public affairs and, by extension, Confucian scholars trained in traditional learning (Kern 2001). Ornate literary writing, therefore, possessed ritual and political significance and, as Steininger (2017) put it, was “contiguous with the wider organization of the state through laws, schools, ranks, offices, and other venues of writing” (82)⁷. The texts collected in *Keikokushū*, therefore, were thought to be active participants in the ritual governing of the realm, the cosmological order of which was supported by the texts’ formal literary qualities and practical performance in ceremonial contexts.

The six surviving volumes of the anthology include one volume of rhapsodies (*fu* 賦), four volumes of poems (*shi* 詩), and one volume of civil service examination essays (*taisaku* 对策). The latter were composed by students on the *kidendō* track who aspired to earn the title of

Hatooka (1989: 273-80). Other studies, like Satō (1993) and Li (2011) have scrutinized specific groups of poems in the collection. Recently, a volume with critical translations of the examination essays (*taisaku*) included in vol. 20 of *Keikokushū* was published; see Tsuda (2019).

⁷ The concept of *monjō keikoku* 文章經國 that has become the standard way to narrate the evolution of Sinitic writing (and poetry in particular) in early Heian Japan involved idealization of a “government of letters” during the court of Emperor Saga, when scholars trained in the *kidendō* supposedly had political influence. While Webb (2014) tried to redefine the *monjō keikoku* slogan on the basis of a thorough philological and literary analysis of its original source, Takigawa Kōji (2015) has taken a stance against this ideologically imbued imagination, arguing that the purpose of this slogan was to legitimize the compilation of literary anthologies such as *Keikokushū*.

Confucian scholars (*jusha* 儒者). The aforementioned preface states that the original collection included texts dating from Keiun 慶雲 4 (707) to Tenchō 4 (827) and goes on to discuss its overall structure:

作者百七十八人。賦十七首、詩九百十七首、序五十一首、對策三十八首、分為兩帙、編成廿卷。名曰經國集。

The authors number one hundred and seventy-eight; there are seventeen *fu* rhapsodies, nine hundred and seventeen *shi* poems, fifty-one prefaces (*jo*), and thirty-eight examination essays (*taisaku*) on two scrolls. The total consists of twenty scrolls. It has been titled “Collection for binding the realm.”⁸

One possible reconstruction of the structure of *Keikokushū* is that it consisted of one volume of rhapsodies, fifteen volumes of poetry, three volumes of prefaces, and two volumes of examination essays. The extant volumes would then be the first (rhapsodies), the tenth, eleventh, thirteenth, and fourteenth (poetry), and the twentieth (examination essays)⁹.

Originally, then, prefaces (*jo* 序) also featured prominently in the collection. However, no volume including prefaces has been transmitted, leaving scholars to speculate on their nature. The earliest extant prefaces are prose pieces attached to poems to which they add additional information. Gotō Akio 後藤昭雄 (2012) argued that, by the Heian period, nearly all of the prefaces were in ornate parallel prose and were attached to a group of poems composed at poetry banquets (3-16). In any case, by the mid-Heian period, banquet prefaces had become the most prestigious literary genre for Confucian scholars (Satō 2009). Following Gotō’s remark, it is possible to speculate that *Keikokushū* consisted mainly of banquet prefaces from the Nara (710-784) and early Heian period. Notably, the only preface that does survive from this period is attributed to the Confucian scholar Sugawara no Kiyotomo 菅原清公 (770-842), the grandfather of the re-

⁸ The translation is by Gustav Heldt (2008: 307), with minor adjustments. The original text is in Hanawa (1932: 490-91).

⁹ On the practice of *fu* rhapsodies in early Heian Japan, see Tasaka (1988); for an up-to-date overview of the production of *shi* poetry in the Heian period, see further Rabinovitch and Bradstock (2019: 1-117); and, for a discussion of Heian *taisaku* examination essays, see Ceugniet (2000).

nowned mid-ninth century scholar Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845-903). The passage, included in a fragmentary early Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185-1333) collection known today as *Heianchō itsumei shijoshū bassui* 平安朝佚名詩序集拔萃 (Refined excerpts from an anonymous poetic preface collection of the Heian court), reads as follows:

若夫蓬山迢遞、奏皇懷而不違。崑嶺嵯峨、周王遊以忘倦。豈如我聖朝。京城之內、探勝地 而作園。魏闕之前、道神泉以為流。

Dreaming from afar of Mount Peng, the Emperor of Qin incessantly pursued his quest; resting on the steep Kun Peak, the Duke of Zhou let go of his worries. Yet how could they match the wisdom of our sovereign? Within the borders of the capital, he finds a superb terrain and transforms it into a park; before the imperial gates, he traces the path of the sacred spring and generates a stream¹⁰.

This excerpt is connected in the collection to an early staging of the Blossom-viewing Banquet (*hana no en* 花宴) by Emperor Saga in the Shinsen'en 神泉苑 Park. The style is perfectly in line with the later mid-ninth and tenth-century prefaces such as those included in Fujiwara no Akihira's 藤原明衡 (989-1066) eleventh-century *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粹 (Literary essence of our court). If this was, in fact, the kind of material that *Keikokushū* originally included, then the collection would have a degree of continuity with later developments in Heian literary practice. While prefaces as a genre were closely associated with the culture of poetry banquets, examination essays were, naturally, associated with the educational career within the *kidendō* curriculum. The joint inclusion in the collection of two specific genres so closely associated with these distinct cultural environments, I suggest, reveals the strategies at play in the overall structure of *Keikokushū*.

5.3. The reorganization of the *Kidendō* track

By the time *Keikokushū* was being compiled in Tenchō 4 (827), the *kidendō* curriculum had undergone a series of transformations. During the Nara period, the Bureau of High Education had developed

¹⁰ The English translation is mine. The original text can be found in Makino (1989). For an overview of *Itsumei shijoshū bassui*, see Yamazaki (1993: 813-48).

from an undifferentiated curriculum at the end of which students could choose among six different examinations to an institution offering four-tracks: the *monjōdō* 文章道 (Way of patterned writing), the *myōgyōdō* 明経道 (Way of explicating the classic), the *myōbōdō* 明法道 (Way of explicating the law), and the *sandō* 算道 (Way of mathematics)¹¹. Each track had, by then, dedicated examinations. The students who studied the *monjōdō* curriculum (literature students, or *monjōshō* 文章生), which later developed into the *kidendō*, could choose to take either the *shinshi* 進士 (advanced scholar) or the *shūsai* 秀才 (flourishing talent) examination, passage of each of which was associated with different possibilities in terms of rank, promotion, and entry into the bureaucracy¹². Only students who had been selected as “scholarship students” (*monjō tokugōshō* 文章得業生), a position that was established in Tenpyō 天平 2 (730), were eligible to sit for these examinations¹³. Sometime in the late eighth century, the status of literature student began to be acquired through the so-called Ministry Test (*shōshi* 省試), a selection administered by the Ministry of Ceremonial Affairs which involved the composition of poetry on a selected topic¹⁴.

In Kōnin 弘仁 11 (820), during the reign of Emperor Saga, the Great Council (*dajōkan* 太政官) issued a document establishing a new path of education for the *kidendō*. Through internal nomination, certain sons of aristocratic families would be selected as literature students and, after their training, sit for a Ministry Test that would grant them the status of *shunshi* 俊士 (distinguished scholar). A further selection round would then identify the limited number of *shunshi* eligible to sit for the *shūsai* test. This reorganization suggests, first, that the early ninth-century *kidendō* education served the interests of the imperial family and the aristocracy in terms of maintaining a specific professional path for the scions of their clans (Kotō 2015) and, per-

¹¹ The six original examinations were the *shūsai* 秀才 (flourishing talent), *myōgyō* 明経 (explicating the classics), *shinshi* 進士 (advanced scholar), *myōbō* 明法 (explicating the law), *san* 算 (mathematics), and *sho* 書 (calligraphy).

¹² At the beginning of the ninth century the *monjōdō* was merged with the newly established *kidendō*, which focused on the study of continental historical works, retaining, however, the emphasis on the production of literary writings.

¹³ See further Kotō (1991: 36-42).

¹⁴ Incidentally, the first examples of such test poems are included in the thirteenth and fourteenth volumes of *Keikokushū*. See further Li (2011).

haps more importantly, that the *shūsai* examination had become the *de facto* standard choice of *kidendō* students, overshadowing the less prestigious *shinshi* (Kotō 1991). Those who passed the *shūsai* examination were regarded as Confucian scholars (*jusha* 儒者) by the court and, therefore, were eligible to hold various offices in the Bureau of High Education or the bureaucracy. In Tenchō 4 (827), the year *Keikokushū* was compiled, a new document was issued that included the petition of the late Confucian scholar Miyako no Haraka 都腹赤 (789-825) asking that this new *shunshi* system be dismantled and the method for the selection of scholarship students (*monjō tokugōshō*) be restored to what it had been in Tenpyō 2 (730). Because this document was issued by the Great Council, Kotō Shinpei 古藤真平 argued, it reflects the historical moment at which the *de facto* stabilized path from literature student to scholarship student, followed by passage of the *shūsai* test to become a Confucian scholar, was institutionalized (Kotō 1991)¹⁵. *Keikokushū* appears to have participated in this process of institutionalization by selecting for inclusion only examination essays for the *shūsai* test from the Nara period to the early ninth century¹⁶.

5.4. The institutionalization of poetry banquets

The three decades before the compilation of *Keikokushū* witnessed a tremendous expansion in the practice of Sinitic poetry. During the reign of Emperor Saga, in particular, the occasions on which the sovereign promoted the composition of poetry increased significantly¹⁷. The reproduction and performance of Sinitic poetry, as one type of patterned writing, was tightly connected to the reproduction and per-

¹⁵ During the ninth century the *shinshi* examination apparently continued to be administered to some degree, as an assessment of a *shinshi* candidate issued by the Confucian scholar Miyako no Yoshika 都良香 (834-879) appears in his collection *Toshi bunshū* 都氏文集 (Collected works of the Miyako clan). The text is in Nakamura and Ōtsuka (1988: 211-13).

¹⁶ However, the scholar Kakimura Shigematsu 柿村重松 argued that at least one composition is an essay for the *shinshi* test; see Hisaki (1968: 38, n. 44). The earliest dated piece in *Keikokushū* is from Keiun 4 (707).

¹⁷ For an overview of the development of sovereign-sponsored banquet poetry in the first half of the ninth century, see Takigawa (2007: 3-28).

formance of cultural, political, and ritual power. Sovereign-sponsored banquets, in particular, served as venues for the performance and reaffirmation of imperial power¹⁸. By the reign of Emperor Saga, four different poetry banquets were being performed regularly as state rituals. The frequency at which these poetry banquets were held also led to a preoccupation with the government's expenditures on them. In a petition submitted to the throne in Kōnin 5 (814), for instance, Fujiwara no Sonohito 藤原園人 (756-819) voiced such financial concerns and requested that the poetry banquets be pared back, especially with regard to the number of poets who would receive emoluments, and better regulated (Webb 2014: 37-39). In Kōnin 12 (821), the *Dairishiki* (Procedures of the imperial court) appeared, which set the procedures for enacting the newly established banquet of the Double Nine (held on the ninth day of the ninth month and also called the Chrysanthemum Festival). Whereas sovereign-sponsored banquets began to be performed within the imperial palace from the reign of Emperor Ninmyō 仁明 (810-850, r. 833-850), during Saga's court they were normally held in the Shinsen'en Park to the south of the palace, reflecting their public and official nature¹⁹. The institutionalization of the Double Nine Banquet was, then, the first step in the systematization of ninth-century banquet culture²⁰.

This period of expanding literacy and practice was characterized by increasing interconnection between the institutionalized poetry banquets and the *kidendō* curriculum. In *Kōninshiki* (Procedures of the Kōnin era), compiled in Kōnin 11 (820), the entry pertaining to the providers of poetry (*monnin* 文人) at the Double Nine Banquet states that they should be selected primarily from the pool of literature students of the *kidendō*:

應召文人者、前一日省簡定文章生并學生、諸司官人堪屬文者、造簿。
As for the *monnin* to be summoned, one day prior to the event the

¹⁸ Webb (2005: 77-92) and Heldt (2008: 51-59) have analyzed poetry banquets and the composition of poetry therein as an effective form of political ritual.

¹⁹ On the association between the Shinsen'en park with the official venues of the imperial court see Yamada (2015).

²⁰ By the mid-ninth century, the Palace Banquet (*naien* 内宴) and the Double Nine Banquet (*chōyō no en* 重陽宴) were the poetry banquets held regularly (annually) as state rituals; see further Takigawa (2007: 165-242).

Ministry selects literature students (*monjōshō*) as well as regular students (*gakushō*) or officials serving in various bureaucratic posts who are adept at poetic composition. A list is thus compiled (Kuroita 2000: 2; the English translation is mine).

Two complementary processes were at play, therefore, at the beginning of the ninth century. On the one hand, Sinitic poetry had become part of *kidendō* education, having been established as a test subject for the selection of literature students by the late eighth century. On the other, these students began to perform Sinitic poetry at institutional banquets. *Keikokushū* thus created a strong connection to the *kidendō* track by including the *taisaku* examination essays while at the same time reinforcing a connection to the culture of poetry banquets by including (presumably) the banquet prefaces. The prefaces also underscore an implicit connection with the *kidendō* track, in that those for the institutionalized banquets were usually composed by scholarship students or Confucian scholars and only very rarely by *kidendō* graduates who had not advanced beyond the status of literature student. A glance at later anthologies—such as *Honchō monzui*, which collects some 139 banquet prefaces dating from mid-ninth to late tenth centuries—indicates that there were few exceptions to this implicit rule. *Keikokushū* thus collected genres that played roles in both the educational path of the *kidendō* curriculum and the poetry banquets that represented one practical application of such an education.

5.5. Negotiating two cultural systems

The textual genres appear in the following order in *Keikokushū*: first, the *fu* rhapsodies and *shi* poetry, next, the *jo* prefaces, and, lastly, the *taisaku* examination essays. This order, I suggest, reinforces a double-layered hierarchy of textual genres. The first layer is revealed in the path from the rhapsodies and poetry to the *taisaku* examination essays. As mentioned, from the late eighth century, the composition of poetry (and possibly rhapsodies) was a test subject on the Ministry Test for selection as a literature student²¹. Along the educational path

²¹ Tasaka (1988) argued that rhapsodies were also demanded of candidates as part of the Ministry Test.

of the *kidendō*, the steps would then include nomination as a scholarship student and sitting for the *shūsai* test, which involved the composition of two *taisaku* examination essays. In this way, *Keikokushū*'s path from rhapsodies and poetry to examination essays corresponds to the textual genres in which a literature student had to demonstrate his composition skills in order to advance to the status of Confucian scholar in the *kidendō* curriculum.

The second layer in the hierarchy of textual genres is revealed in the same path but from the perspective of *kidendō* graduates' participation in the institutionalized poetry banquets. As has been seen, literature students composed most of the poetry for the Double Nine Banquet at the court of Emperor Saga, to which they were summoned in the capacity of *monnin*. The prefaces for such banquets, however, were composed by scholarship students or Confucian scholars, limiting the access of literature students to this genre. *Keikokushū*'s progression from poetry—usually performed by literature students—to prefaces—usually performed by scholarship students and Confucian scholar—recreates the social hierarchy enacted at the banquets with respect to textual production.

Two hierarchies are therefore nested in *Keikokushū*: the textual hierarchy of the educational path in the *kidendō* and the textual hierarchy as performed at institutionalized poetry banquets. The presentation of rhapsodies, poetry, prefaces, and examination essays in this order reflects, I argue, a negotiation between the two discrete realms of literary production. Each of these genres therefore operated, again, within a hierarchy associated with the steps in the educational career of the *kidendō* curriculum: the rhapsodies and poetry were the domain of every *kidendō* graduate, but only those with at least the status of scholarship students were considered qualified to produce the prefaces. In like manner, the *taisaku* examination essays coincide with the last step in the *kidendō* track as the domain of Confucian scholars. In the remainder of the discussion, I make the case that this sort of negotiation took place mainly within the context of the literary activity of early ninth-century Confucian scholars and was intended to stabilize the position of Sinitic poetry therein.

5.6. Banquet culture and Confucian literacy

The strategic significance of the structure of *Keikokushū* resides in the fact that, in early ninth-century Japan, Sinitic poetry inhabited an ambiguous realm between institutional and non-institutional contexts of performance. To be sure, the production of poetry at court banquets took place within the quasi-institutional framework of the *monnin*, *kidendō* graduates who received a one-time stipend for this service, but poetry did not provide a stable occupation. The *Bunka shūreishū* (Collection of masterpieces of literary talent, 818) elucidates the environments for poetry outside the court's institutional framework: virtually all of the poems therein were composed for unofficial or private contexts. Thus, a sequence of poems such as the following takes on a double meaning from the perspective of the overall character of the collection (here I only quote the titles of the poems):

- 1) 冷然院各賦一物，得潤底松 一首
At Reizei-in, each composing on one object, obtaining “the pine in the stream bed”, one poem.

御製 (Emperor Saga)

- 2) 冷然院各賦一物，得瀑布水，應製 一首
At Reizei-in, each composing on one object, obtaining “the waterfall water”, one poem in response to a command by the sovereign.

桑腹赤 (Kuwahara no Haraka)

- 3) 冷然院各賦一物，得水中影，應製 一首
At Reizei-in, each composing on one object, obtaining “reflection in the water”, one poem composed in response to a command by the sovereign.

桑廣田 (Kuwahara no Hirota)²²

This group of poems appears in the third volume of *Bunka shūreishū*, which consists of “miscellaneous poems” (*zatsuei* 雜詠). The mention of Reizei-in, one of the personal residences of Emperor Saga, suggests that this site served as an unofficial context for poetic per-

²² The texts are in Kojima (1964: 294-97).

formance by the sovereign and two retainers²³. Their appearance in this context indicates not only that the scholars of the Kuwahara 桑原 clan presumably enjoyed a reputation for their poetic literacy and were valued for the poetic services that its members provided to the imperial family, but also that this renown involved practices associated with private patronage. These poems thus serve to map the uncertain terrain in which poets operated in early Heian Japan outside of institutional contexts.

The ambiguous position of poetry was even more pronounced in comparison with other literary genres in which Confucian scholars practiced their erudition for the court in a bureaucratic capacity. In contrast with poetry, the composition of which was never tied to stable occupation and status, texts such as edicts (*shō* 詔), decrees (*choku* 勅), and memorials (*hyō* 表) were normally crafted by “Inner Scribes” (*naiki* 内記) in their official capacity at the Ministry of Central Affairs (*nakatsukasa-shō* 中務省). Inner Scribe was a position that could be held for up to ten years; thus, for example, the Confucian scholar Miyako no Yoshika served as Inner Scribe from Jōgan 12 (870) until his death in Gangyō 3 (879). From the point of view of these Confucian scholars, poetry was probably not associated with a particular social status, for *kidendō* graduates who had not passed the *shūsai* examination also had opportunities to compose poems for various settings. Arguably, then, in the context of Confucian scholars’ literary activity, poetry was central in practical terms but marginal and unstable in ideological terms. I therefore conclude that, at a point in the early ninth century at which the *kidendō* curriculum was being reorganized with the *de facto* institutionalization of the *shūsai* trajectory, and at which institutionalized poetry banquets were beginning to occupy a central place within the cultural activities of the court, the compilers of *Keikokushū* sought to negotiate the unstable position of poetry—and related genres, such as prefaces—by merging these two cultural systems within the same structure.

5.7. Conclusions

At the time of compilation in 827, the early Heian anthology *Kei-*

²³ On the Reizei-in, see further Mezaki (1995: 10-19).

kokushū encompassed one hundred and twenty years of history of writing in Japan. Writing, broadly speaking, could include a wide range of texts. As a category of language separated from the realm of everyday speech and styles of inscription, “*bunshō*” was characterized by a high degree of formal constructedness and elaborate diction and was deemed suitable for political and ritualistic purposes. The texts selected for inclusion in *Keikokushū* all belong to the category of *bunshō* and are furthermore categorized in different genres. My analysis of the overall structure of *Keikokushū* suggests that the nature of the specific genres included in the collection and the order in which they appear—*fu* rhapsodies, *shi* poetry, *jo* prefaces, and *taisaku* examination—are not only purposeful but strategic. Specifically, I have argued that the order represents negotiation between the educational path in the *kidendō* curriculum and the system of poetry banquets, two interconnected cultural contexts that were undergoing transformation at the beginning of the ninth century. This negotiation involved, in particular, the textual hierarchies that each of these contexts reinforced. The strategy evident in *Keikokushū*, I argue, was intended to stabilize the position of poetry within the realm of *kidendō* literary production, in particular by framing the poetry and prefaces composed at banquets as the ideal outlets for the literary activity of *kidendō* graduates. To the extent that the composition of Sinitic poetry and prefaces became a recognized and self-sustaining activity for Confucian scholars by the mid-Heian period, *Keikokushū* thus stands at the threshold of Heian *kidendō* literary culture as a whole.

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