

**Images from the Past:
Intertextuality in Japanese Premodern Literature**

edited by Carolina Negri and Pier Carlo Tommasi

Foreword

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This volume includes fuller versions of ten papers presented during the international online symposium *Images from the Past: Intertextuality in Japanese Premodern Literature* hosted at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Department of Asian and North African Studies, from February 2-3, 2021 with the generous financial support of The Japan Foundation.

The symposium was originally scheduled to take place from March 9-10, 2020, but one week before this date we were forced to announce its postponement to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure and prevent any difficulties our international guests may have faced upon returning to their home country. In that period, Italy was experiencing the greatest outbreak of Coronavirus cases in Europe and our health-care system was dealing with the overwhelming burden of mass casualties. Among the measures for stopping the spread of the pandemic, Ca' Foscari University of Venice resolved to suspend all in-person classes as early as the end of February 2020 and cancel a series of public events. At first, only the Northern regions of Lombardy and Veneto were designated as 'affected areas' for the virus and placed under unprecedented restrictions. However, on March 9, the very same day originally planned for our conference, Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte took the extraordinary step of putting the entire

country on lockdown as the number of cases was rapidly increasing nationwide. After a few months of uncertainties, we decided to follow the advice of The Japan Foundation and reorganise the symposium as an online event. We are immensely grateful for this opportunity to share our expertise with esteemed colleagues around the globe despite the trying times of physical distancing we all had to endure.

The present volume aims to rethink the role, meaning, and scope of intertextuality as displayed in a variety of texts ascribed to different genres and historical periods. In the context of premodern Japan, originality was arguably not the primary goal of writing. Contrary to our post-Romantic expectations, the repetition – or rather the reenactment – of conventional tropes and motifs was the hallmark of the premodern literary discourse. Yet, far from being due to a lack of inventiveness, this act of alluding to and borrowing from canonical sources gave way to the seeming paradox of rule-bound creativity. Over the centuries, the redeployment of familiar textual fragments would serve multiple purposes, from aesthetic appeal to community building, at court and beyond. This collection of essays aims to reassess such politics of intertextuality from a cross-disciplinary perspective.

The conference that inspired this volume brought together early-career and senior scholars specialising in a range of fields to promote critical engagements with the Japanese past and foster a more nuanced understanding of cultural diversity by means of a theoretically-driven approach. To the informed reader, the methodological framework of intertextual studies may sound worn out after a decades-long debate. However, we contend it can still be a productive one if we use it to filter the interlacing networks of knowledge and practice in a situated context. Accordingly, the authors have brought the category of intertextuality in dialogue with primary sources to reassess its efficacy in capturing the complexity of the socio-literary phenomenon.

In his paper, Ivo Smits explores the formation of the lore surrounding the *locus classicus* of the ‘Riverside Mansion’ by tackling how this place was reimagined in later poetic commentaries. Giuseppe Giordano follows the traces of *Genji monogatari* (The Tale of Genji, early eleventh century) in the *Shinkokinshū* (New Collection of Poems Ancient and Modern, 1205), emphasising the artistic quality and the novelty achieved through intertextual means at the dawn of the thirteenth century. Along those lines, Itō Moriyuki looks at the unstable boundaries of life and literature in the pseudo-fictional genre of female autobiography, uncovering its connections to Murasaki’s masterpiece. Moving onto medieval narratives, Simone Müller’s chronotopic reading of Abutsu’s *Utatane* (Fitful Slumbers, ca. 1238) demonstrates how its intertextual layering encodes multiple temporal levels, with the protagonist stretching her emotional repertoire from nostalgic longing to impending anxieties, and all shades in between. Cristian Pal-

lone brings us forward in time with his analysis of *Tsubosumire* (The Violet in Pot, 1794), which not only complicates the conventional approaches to this text but also offers a glimpse into the shape intertextuality took during the Edo period. In a similar mode, Matthew Chudnow sheds light on the intersections of literature, religion, and performance as seen through the retelling of Yang Guifei's legend in Japan by casting the spotlight on Zeami's homonymous *nō* play. Similarly, Yamashita Noriko proposes an intermedial study of a kabuki *piece* by looking at the relationship between its script and a popular seventeenth-century Chinese novel, while also bringing the visual dimension to the fore with the aid of contemporaneous illustrations. Matilde Mastrangelo concludes this itinerary into the dramatic traditions of Japan by tracking the intertextual dynamics of a famous ghost story as it migrated from the puppet theatre to other forms of storytelling. The two closing papers deal with the Chinese classical corpus – either Confucian or Buddhist – and its Japanese localisation. More specifically, Kōno Kimiko unveils the intertextual potential embedded in the very materiality of the sinographs used by Monk Kyōkai when penning his parables; whereas Aldo Tollini demonstrates how the reference to foreign sources may reflect a domestic agenda, as it happened with Dōgen's (mis)quotations of scriptural pericopes.

The virtual platform of our symposium allowed for the fruitful – and safe – encounter of people, providing the occasion to build and reinforce professional ties within the Japan Studies community. During the conference, we were delighted by the attendance of almost a hundred participants, whose active engagement sparked lively discussions. We would like to express our deepest appreciation to all those who took time out of their busy schedules to join the conversations. A special thanks for their inspiring contributions goes to those speakers who are not represented in this volume: Robert Campbell (former Director of the National Institute of Japanese Literature), Christina Laffin (University of British Columbia), and Jeffrey Niedermaier (Brown University). We are equally indebted to the representatives of The Japan Foundation for their cooperation and flexibility. We would also like to express our gratitude to Professor Tiziana Lippiello, Rector of Ca' Foscari University of Venice; Professor Marco Ceresa, Chair of the Department of Asian and North African Studies; the Organising Committee, particularly Giuseppe Pappalardo and Pierantonio Zanotti for their help in arranging the Zoom sessions; Professor Bonaventura Ruperti for his constant advice and assistance; the office administrators for their dedication and hard work. Last but not least, our heartfelt gratitude goes to the members of the Student Association Gesshin for sharing their energy and enthusiasm; and to all our colleagues for their interest in this initiative. Your unfaltering support gave us the strength to make this possible against all odds.

