

Sinitic Poetry in Early Heian Japan: Kidendō Literacy, Banquet Culture, and the Sugawara House

Dario Minguzzi
Sapienza Università di Roma, Italia

Abstract In this paper, I explore the intimate connection between the Sugawara House and the composition of Sinitic poetry for institutionalised poetry banquets in early Heian Japan. While poetry remained a marginal occupation for the Confucian scholars trained at the Bureau of Education, its performance at banquets constituted a prestigious niche that could be occupied by those who sought to exploit it as an autonomous form of cultural capital. Here I sketch the contours of this connection and analyse a number of anthologizing strategies at work in the personal collection of the renowned early Heian scholar and poet Sugawara no Michizane (845-903) known as *Kanke bunsō* (Literary Drafts of the Sugawara House).

Keywords Heian Japan. Sinitic Poetry. Poetry Banquet. Kidendō. Sugawara no Michizane. *Kanke bunsō*.

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1 Introduction

On the 21st day of the first month of 874 (Jōgan 貞觀16), the Confucian scholar and poet Sugawara no Michizane 菅原道真 (845-903) participated in the Palace Banquet (*naien* 内宴) at the presence of Emperor Seiwa 清和 (850-881, r. 858-876) and contributed with the following poem on the topic *Spring Snow Reflects the Early Plums* (春雪映早梅):¹

雪片花顏時一般	Snowflakes and flower petals: at times they are the same.
上番梅櫻待追歡	First-to-bloom plum branches await their pursuit of pleasure.
冰紉寸截輕粧混	Icy silk is cut in inches, lightly blending with their make-up.
玉屑添來軟色寬	Powdered jade settles on, gently softening their colour.
鷄舌纔因風力散	The 'cockerel-tongue' scent faintly scatters along the gusts of wind.
鶴毛獨向夕陽寒	The crane feathers shine cold as they lonely face the evening sun.
明王若可分真偽	If the wise ruler wants to distinguish between true and false.
願使宮人子細看	I suggest that he send the palace ladies to look more closely.

(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 66)

Poems composed for the Palace Banquet normally celebrated the beginning of the new year and the arrival of spring by comparing the germinating beauty of the natural scenery to the sovereign's virtuous supervision of the well-being of his realm. The image of plums amidst the snow, in particular, hints at the potential of the coming of spring. In this poem, Michizane begins by confusing snowflakes with white blossoms and, in the final couplet, suggests that the emperor's female attendants be sent to resolve this confusion. The progression of the thought carries bureaucratic undertones, inasmuch as it suggests playfully that the sovereign controls the natural order of the realm by dispatching emissaries to ascertain its true nature. As I will argue in this paper, banquet poems in literary Sinitic (*shi* 詩) such as the one quoted above were at the core of early Heian culture. This poetry was intimately tied to the representation of political and ritual authority, and its composition was commonly entrusted to individuals with literary training. In this paper, I explore the place of Sinitic poetry in the literary environment of early Heian Japan with particular attention to the figure of Sugawara no Michizane and the early involvement of the Sugawara House. I first trace the emergence of a class of specialized poets known as *monnin* in early ninth-century Japan. Next, I discuss the significance of poetry within the broader scope of Confucian scholarship as well as within the

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by the Author.

system of erudition of the Sugawara House. I conclude by considering the structure of Michizane's personal collection *Kanke bunsō* 菅家文章 (Literary Drafts of the Sugawara House, 900) and the prominence of banquet poetry therein.

The nexus of ritual, literary expertise, and performance seems to have been well-established in ninth-century Japan. By the early Nara period (710-784) and throughout the Heian period (794-1185) poetry in literary Sinitic was composed on the occasion of formal gatherings and outings sponsored by the sovereign and politically prominent members of aristocratic clans. The preface to *Kaifūsō* 懷風藻 (Verses Recollecting the Past, 751), the earliest surviving anthology of poetry in literary Sinitic, retrospectively credits Emperor Tenji 天智 (ca 626-672, r. 668-672) with the creation of a state academy and the dissemination of the technology of writing throughout the realm. The preface further describes that the resulting glory of his reign was celebrated with lavish banquets at which talented poets were summoned to compose exquisite poetry (*Kaifūsō*, 60). Moreover, the Bureau of Education (*daigakuryō* 大学寮) was already operating in the early eighth century, though its connection with skilled poets and sovereign-sponsored banquets was not fully institutionalised until much later.²

By the mid-ninth century, two poetry banquets were being held as state rituals, meaning that they were included on the calendar of the Heian court's annual ceremonies: the aforementioned 'Palace Banquet' (*naïen*), normally held on either the 20th, 21st, or 22nd day of the first month, and the 'Double Nine Banquet' (*chōyōen* 重陽宴), also known as the Chrysanthemum Festival, so called because it was held on the ninth day of the ninth month. Beginning with the *Kōnin shiki* 弘仁式 (Procedures of the Kōnin era, ca 820), the ceremonial procedures for these banquets included performances by specialized poets, called *monnin* 文人 (literally 'men of letters'), stipulating that they be selected from the graduates of the *kidendō* 紀伝道 (the Way of Annals and Biographies) – the *belles lettres* curriculum at the Bureau of Education. The participation of *kidendō* graduates in institutionalised banquets was therefore specifically contingent on their formal literary training. Further, the provision of an official stipend specifically to poets of *monnin* status in effect inscribed their performances within the bureaucracy of the state in a quasi-institutional manner.³ The Palace Banquet and the Double Nine Banquet were staged reg-

² On the formation of the Bureau of Education during the late seventh and early eighth centuries, see Momo 1947, 7-24; Hisaki 1990, 22-74.

³ In referring to those who received training at the Bureau of Education and passed the *kidendō* examinations as '*kidendō* graduates', I follow Steiningger 2010. Western scholarship tends to describe the recipients of this training as 'Confucian scholars' (*ju-sha* 儒者). Historically, this term was one way to refer to those *kidendō* graduates who

ularly as official annual state ceremonies from the beginning of the ninth century until the early tenth century and then they were held sporadically for a time before being discontinued entirely sometime after 950 (Takigawa 2007, 54-144). For roughly one-and-a-half centuries, then, this efficient poetic machinery produced and perpetuated an institutionally sanctioned socio-political configuration of literary activity. In this article, I explore the effects of this machinery on the specialized poets whose work was produced for the banquets at imperial command.

These poets' responses to and development along with the institutionalised configuration of poetic practice during the early Heian period paralleled the gradual conceptualization of poetry in literary Sinitic as a distinct form of cultural capital. Already in the late eighth century, the composition of poetry had been integrated into the Winding Stream Banquet (*kyokusui no en* 曲水宴), which Emperor Kanmu 桓武 (737-806, r. 781-806) held on the third day of the third month both before and after moving the capital to the new city of Heian in 794.⁴ Perhaps in response to the regularity with which poets were now being summoned to perform at state rituals, and following the precedents of the Tang civil service examinations, the Bureau of Education included poetic composition on assigned topics as a test subject for the selection of literature students (*monjōshō* 文章生) for the *kidendō* curriculum, thereby institutionalizing poetry within the array of literary skills that *kidendō* graduates were expected to master.⁵ As a matter of fact, a glimpse at the literary collections of the early Heian period reveals that poetry in literary Sinitic was mainly the domain of the *kidendō* elite. In contrast with other genres of Sinitic writings that *kidendō* graduates produced for administrative and bureaucratic purposes, however, the composition of poetry was never associated with a specific court office. The institutionalised banquets provided a venue in which the poetic ability of *kidendō*

had passed the highest-level test, the *taisaku* 对策 examination, for which candidates drafted a piece in parallel prose on a selected topic.

4 Due to temporal contiguity to the death of Emperor Kanmu, this banquet ceased to be held as a state ceremony soon after the latter's reign. On the Winding Stream Banquet as an institutionalised ritual at the early Heian court and its iterations in subsequent periods, see Takigawa 2007, 269-304.

5 The exact date for the introduction of poetry as a test subject is not known, but the first indication of the *monjōshō* examination is found in the biography of the *kidendō* graduate Sugawara no Kiyotomo 菅原清公 (770-842), who seems to have passed the selection in 789 (Enryaku 延暦 8). The entry is in *Shoku nihon kōki* 続日本後紀 (Later Annals of Japan Continued, 869) on 842 (Jōwa 承和 9 [842]/10/17). Following standard academic convention, dates are expressed in a hybrid system where years are given according to their equivalent in the Western calendar followed by the name of the era (*nengō*) while months and days are given according to the pre-modern lunar calendar. See Momo 1947, 86-7. Vedal (2015) provides an overview of the institution of poetry composition in the Tang civil service examination.

graduates was officially recognized and remunerated as a form of bureaucratic service, but this configuration of poetic activity was never a stable occupation. Outside the networks of private patronage, by the mid-ninth century, *kidendō* graduates were called on to present poetry in literary Sinitic only at the Palace Banquet, at the Double Nine Banquet, and in the case of extraordinary official banquets. A study of the configuration of the activity of these specialized poets in the early Heian period thus needs to take into account the inherently unstable and marginal position of poetry within the broader context of institutional *kidendō* literary production.

Efforts to establish poetry as a self-sustaining locus of *kidendō* literary activity and an eagerness to define the boundaries of poetic expertise in socio-political terms are prominent in Sugawara no Michizane's twelve-volume personal collection *Kanke bunsō*. *Kanke bunsō* is one of the few and best-preserved literary collections from the period, making it a precious source for the investigation of the early Heian literary field. A critical reading of a number of Michizane's pieces makes clear his view of poetry as a legitimate and independent domain of *kidendō* literary production. Further, an analysis of the carefully structured architecture of certain sections of the collection reveals his strategies for forging a connection between his poetic expertise and the performative arena that the institutionalised banquets provided. As will be seen, these banquets played a fundamental role in shaping the structure of the literary world revealed in Michizane's *Kanke bunsō*. Insofar as they placed the poetic activity of *kidendō* graduates in a quasi-institutionalised context, the banquets also constituted a source of legitimacy that could extend to other forms of literary production, such as the unofficial or private gatherings sponsored by private patronage networks to which *kidendō* graduates were summoned to compose poetry. For example, Michizane's strategies of representation are particularly at play in the fifth volume of the collection, in which he depicts the household banquets sponsored by Emperor Uda 宇多 (867-931, r. 887-897) – the modalities of which were in many ways distinct from those of the institutionalised banquet regime – as a natural extension of it.

The present paper, then, explores the dynamics of the intimate connection between institutionalised banquet poetry in literary Sinitic and the Sugawara House in the early Heian period through an analysis of the anthologizing strategies at work in Sugawara no Michizane's collection *Kanke bunsō*. In what follows, I first establish the relative position of poetic practice within the realm of *kidendō* literary expertise and the way in which it was regulated at the institutionalised banquets of the time. Next, I sketch the contours of the connection between banquet poetry and the Sugawara House. Lastly, I analyse in depth a number of passages in Michizane's collection that exemplify his strategies for aligning his poetic activity with the

institutionalised practices of the *monnin* and for establishing poetry as a self-sustaining occupation over which the Sugawara House could claim authority. These strategies that inform the compilation and structure of *Kanke bunsō*, I argue, together constitute Michizane's effort to fashion the Sugawara House into the site for a particular mode of literacy and performance and its members into reliable specialized providers of poetry whose activity was predicated on, and coincidental with, their quasi-bureaucratic service as *monnin* at institutionalised banquets.

2 Sinitic Poetry, Social Status, and Expertise

Because of its connection to other forms of literary writings, the composition of poetry in literary Sinitic in early Heian Japan was fundamentally tied to literary expertise and to a particular professional class, namely the graduates of the *kidendō* curriculum of the Bureau of Education. The promulgation of a set of administrative and legal codes (*ritsuryō* 律令) at the beginning of the eighth century ushered in an era that was characterised by the spread of literacy and the performance of various genres of Sinitic writings. For the most part possessed by a group of specialized, low-ranking bureaucrats, literary skills were crucial for the production and circulation of the written documents that sustained the state machinery of the Nara and Heian periods.⁶ The Bureau of Education generally functioned as a training institution that produced literate officials who could enter the bureaucracy of the centralized state.⁷ Among the Bureau's curricula, the *monjōdō* 文章道 (letters curriculum, which later merged with the newly established *kidendō*) specifically focused on belletristic writing.⁸ This curriculum produced individuals who were highly skilled in the composition of types of writings categorized as 'literary', that is, as a category of language separated and distinct from the realm of everyday speech and script. Writings composed, circulated, and performed in bureaucratic and ritual contexts, such as edicts, memorials, and petitions, were drafted in the formally codified style of parallel prose and typically referred to as 'patterned writing' (*bunshō*, or *monjō* 文章), an ornate language characterised

⁶ On the expansion of literacy in the late seventh and early eighth centuries see Lurie 2011, 115-66.

⁷ The earliest extant regulations concerning the Bureau of Education were recorded in the administrative codes compiled prior to the Nara period in 701 (Taihō 大宝 1).

⁸ In the early ninth century, this curriculum, originally named *monjōdō* (The Way of Patterned Writing), was merged with the *kidendō* track, which focused on the study of the continental histories, and retained the latter name along with the focus on writing proficiency. See Momo 1947, 132-52.

by a high degree of formal constructedness and elaborate vocabulary and diction deemed appropriate for political and ritualistic contexts (Steininger 2017, 79-83).⁹

Poetry, in particular, fell within the scope of *bunshō*. By the early Heian period, poetry in the Tang regulated-verse style (*lǜshi*, jp. *risshi* 律詩) was well-established as a domain of expertise for graduates of the *kidendō* track at the Bureau of Education, though the specific modalities of teaching and practice are often unclear.¹⁰ As mentioned, by the end of the eighth century, poetic composition had entered the bureau as a test subject for the *kidendō* curriculum. The Ministry of Ceremonial Affairs administered the test twice annually (*Engi shiki*, 487). Successful candidates advanced to the status of literature students (*monjōshō*) and usually obtained positions in the court bureaucracy within a few years.¹¹ *Kidendō* graduates thus filled the bureaucratic positions that required some level of literacy, including writing skills, working as clerks or scribes in the various governmental bureaus or at provincial headquarters. By the early Heian period, *kidendō* graduates could expect career advancement and, to some extent, a raise in court rank; originally, however, the function of the Bureau of Education was to provide human capital for the work required by the bureaucratic machine of the centralized state (Kishino 1998). The Inner Scribe Office (*naiki* 内記), which was attached to the Ministry of Central Affairs (*nakatsukasa-shō* 中務省), maintained this connection by employing *kidendō* graduates for the production of edicts, memorials, and other types of documents issued by the sovereign. The personal collection of the *kidendō* graduate Miyako no Yoshika 都良香 (834-879), *Toshi bunshū* 都氏文集 (Collected Works of the Miyako Clan), only part of which survives, contains a number of edicts, promulgations, and memorials – all in parallel prose – that dated to the period when he was serving in the capacity of Inner Scribe in the late Jōgan (859-877) and early Gangyō 元慶 (877-885) eras (*Toshi bunshū zenshaku*, 73-148).

While the ability to compose poetry was considered essential for *kidendō* students entering a bureaucratic career, again, in contrast

⁹ The formal qualities of Heian parallel prose are described in Ōsone 1994, 288-312. For a discussion on the category of ‘pattern’ (*wen* 文) in ancient China and the historical transfer of the meaning to ornate writing, see Kern 2001.

¹⁰ The poems written in preparation for the *monjōshō* examination by Sugawara no Michizane under the scrutiny of his father, Professor of Letters (*monjō hakase* 文章博士) Sugawara no Koreyoshi 菅原是善, which are recorded in Michizane’s personal collection *Kanke bunshō*, suggest that the transmission of poetic knowledge took place within relationships of private tutoring and apart from the formal lectures at the Bureau of Education.

¹¹ On the *monjōshō* examination, also known as ‘Ministry Test’ (*shōshi* 省試), see Moto 1947, 260-74; Steininger 2017, 134-5.

to other genres of Sinitic writings, there was no consistent performative environment for poetry at court, and poetry was never associated with a specific bureaucratic office. This fact explains in considerable part the unstable position of poetry in relation to *kidendō* literacy and performance in the early Heian period. To be sure, the inclusion of poetry as a test subject in the *kidendō* curriculum took place at a moment of tremendous expansion in sovereign-sponsored poetic activity, especially during the reign of Emperor Saga 嵯峨 (786-842, r. 809-823). After the Winding Stream Banquet ceased to be held owing to its temporal proximity to the date on which Emperor Kanmu died in 806, poetic events shifted to other auspicious dates on the Confucian lunar calendar, such as the Double Seven (the *tanabata* 七夕 festival) and the aforementioned Double Nine, as well as to dates associated with the progress of the seasons, such as the Blossom-viewing Banquet at the end of the second month (Takigawa 2007, 36-42). Though only the Double Nine Banquet was fully institutionalised as an annual state ceremony, all of these events were conducted as state rituals insofar as they were held in the Shinsen'en 神泉苑, an imperial park that functioned as a *de facto* extension of the official public spaces of the imperial court.¹²

As a type of court ritual, poetic banquets were an arena both for literary activity and for reaffirming symbolically the bureaucratic structure of the court assembled around its ruler. The spatial disposition of the participants and the sequences in which actions were performed thus served to reproduce and confirm social hierarchies.¹³ In this context, the composition of poetry on a topic chosen by the sovereign enacted socio-political harmony among the participants and echoed the daily scribal and bureaucratic activities of court officials over which the sovereign ostensibly presided (Heldt 2008, 55). Participation in such forms of ritual was strictly conditional on court office, with the fifth rank normally serving as the threshold. In early iterations of poetic banquets, participants with recognized literary skills would be asked to present a poem. Significantly, during the

12 The Shinsen'en park, which occupied a large space south-east of the Imperial Palace, was formally created by Emperor Kanmu at the time of the construction of the new capital city of Heian at the end of the eighth century. However, the park seems to have originated as a gradual reorganisation of a portion of the imperial palace where the quarters of the Crown Prince were located by the late Nara period, when this space was already used for banquets and public events. With the transfer of the capital city from Heijō to Nagaoka and then to Heian, this space was eventually detached from the palace and transformed into a park; see Yoshino 2005. The similarities in the architecture of the structures in Shinsen'en with those in the public spaces of the imperial court, such as the Buraku-in 豊楽院, a hall originally conceived to host entertainment, ceremonies, and banquets, further reinforce the connection between the park and the imperial palace; see Yamada 2015.

13 For an analysis of early Heian poetic banquets as state rituals, see Heldt 2008, 51-9.

early ninth century, in conjunction with the expansion of sovereign-sponsored poetic activity and the new position of poetry within the Bureau of Education, the summoning of *kidendō* graduates to participate began to be predicated on their assumed literary prowess and irrespective of their court rank. Historiographical works can offer a glimpse of this development, for example through a comparison of the following two passages from *Nihon kōki* 日本後紀 (Later Records of Japan, 840):

宴次侍從以上。命文人賦詩。賜物有差。

A banquet was offered for assistant chamberlains and those of higher rank. *Monnin* were commanded to compose poetry. Presents were bestowed on the attendants according to their rank. (*Nihon kōki*, Enryaku 23 [804]/3/3)

幸神泉苑宴侍從已上。奏妓樂。命文人賦詩。五位已上及文人賜祿有差。

Royal excursion to the Shinsen'en park. A banquet was offered for chamberlains and above. Music and dance were provided, and *monnin* were commanded to compose poetry. Stipends were distributed to those above the fifth rank and the *monnin* according to rank. (*Nihon kōki*, Kōnin 3 [812]/9/9)

The first passage describes the Winding Stream Banquet held in 804 (Enryaku 23) and it is representative of the description of poetic banquets in the late Nara period and the first decade of the Heian period. It is the source of the detail just cited that the banquets were open to courtiers above the fifth rank.¹⁴ The *monnin* who provided poetry are represented as belonging to this body of officialdom. The second entry exemplifies the descriptions of banquets during the early Heian period beginning with the reign of Emperor Saga in 809. Now, the *monnin* appear instead to constitute a distinct social class that is not explicitly connected to court office and rank and that receives emoluments specifically for literary service. Kudō Shigenori sees here a shift in the nuance of the meaning of *monnin*. As has been seen, this term, literally meaning 'men of letters', originally denoted individuals skilled in writing or, more broadly, Confucian scholars. With the rapid expansion of the culture of poetry banquets in the early ninth century and with the subsequent institutionalization of the Palace Banquet and the Double Nine Banquet, the meaning of *monnin* shift-

¹⁴ Chamberlains (*jijū* 侍從) and assistant chamberlains (*ji-jijū* 次侍從) were ancillary officials assigned to individuals of the fifth rank or above. According to the Taihō code, the duties of chamberlains involved assisting the sovereigns in a number of matters by 'compensating for deficiencies'. See the entry in *Kanshoku yōkai* (Wada 1983, 71-2).

ed to indicate the status – akin to court rank and office and therefore sufficient to guarantee a material stipend – that was assigned temporarily to those summoned for the specific service of providing poetry, as opposed to the attending officials who might have the option to offer a poem (and receive extra compensation) but whose access was based on status and bureaucratic office rather than credentials as a trained poet (Kudō 1993, 78-83). In other words, the two entries above document a shift in the conception of the social group that provided poetry at early Heian banquets from court official defined by rank to literary professionals defined by expertise.

The uneasy relationship between status and expertise and the tension brought about by the changes in it during the early Heian period among the elite of *kidendō* graduates is clearly visible in the literary works of the time. The significance of poetic composition during Emperor Saga's reign manifested in the appearance of two poetry anthologies compiled at royal behest: *Ryōunshū* 凌雲集 (Collection Soaring Above the Clouds, 814), and *Bunka shūreishū* 文華秀麗集 (Collection of Masterpieces of Literary Talent, 818). A third anthology, *Keikokushū* 經国集 (Collection for Binding the Realm), was compiled in 827 (Tenchō 天長 4) during the reign of Saga's successor, Emperor Junna 淳和 (786-840, r. 823-833). Notably, the compilers of all three collections were *kidendō* graduates, and, apart from the poetry composed by members of the imperial household, nearly all of the poems included in the collections were also composed by *kidendō* graduates, symbolizing the unmistakable connection between *kidendō* poetic practice and the imperial household from the early Heian period. The compilation of these literary anthologies has been interpreted as a symbolical means of naturalizing the socio-political order and affirming the sovereign's political and ritual authority through his oversight of literary activity (Webb 2005, 159-231). One aspect of the anthologies that has largely been overlooked, however, relates to the compilers' strategies for conceptualizing social differentiation within the community of *kidendō* graduates in the anthologies. *Ryōunshū*, for example, includes ninety-one poems by twenty-four authors ordered hierarchically by court rank with the works of the higher-ranking authors first. Poets of the fifth rank are the best represented in the collection, accounting for ten of the twenty-four, and their poems are positioned symbolically at the centre between the seven poets above the fifth rank and seven poets below that rank. The fifth rank is further distinguished in that poems from sovereign-sponsored official banquets are only represented by poets of that rank and above. Poets below the fifth rank, by contrast, are only represented by compositions performed outside the official spaces of the court, specifically, poems written at the sovereign's request for unofficial gatherings, poems exchanged among *kidendō* graduates, poems composed on continental historical subjects, poems written for

the envoys of the Korean kingdom of Balhae 渤海, and poems composed on personal matters.

In *Ryōunshū*, the differentiation between poets above and below the fifth rank mirrors the distribution of academic status among the members of the *kidendō* graduate community within the collection. As a matter of fact, those below the fifth rank are most closely associated with the Bureau of Education and bureaucratic posts traditionally requiring academic status and literary expertise, such as the Inner Scribe Office. Examples include the poets Ōtomo no Ujikami 大伴氏上 (dates unknown) and Shigeno no Sadanushi 滋野貞主 (785-852), who were respectively grand and junior inner scribe at the time *Ryōunshū* was compiled. Significantly, the last poet to appear in *Ryōunshū*, as well as the lowest-ranked, Kose no Shikihito 巨勢識人 (dates unknown), is also one of the few identifiable as *shūsai* 秀才 (Flourishing Talent) in the collection. This designation means that he had passed the highest *kidendō* examination – known as *shūsai* or, later, as the Policy Test (*hōryakushi* 方略試) – and was therefore considered a Confucian scholar.¹⁵ All in all, *kidendō* academic status (with its associated literary expertise and authority) seems to have been inversely proportional to court rank in *Ryōunshū*. By mirroring the early socio-political significance of the fifth rank for the participation in sovereign-sponsored banquets, the compilers of *Ryōunshū* – all of at least the fifth rank by the time the collection was completed (ca 814) – apparently sought to demarcate the socio-political possibilities and limitations of *kidendō* graduates strategically at a time when court rank was being replaced by recognition of expertise and academic status in coordinating the social determinants of poetic activity. In the conservative *Ryōunshū*, poetry in literary Sinitic is thus represented as an unbalanced and contested space within the realm of the officially recognized literary production of the early Heian *kidendō* graduates. Alongside the specific strategies that inform the structure of *Ryōunshū*, the marginalization of poetic practice within the literary activities of hyper-educated *kidendō* graduates (i.e., those who passed the *hōryaku* examination) appears to have been a constant feature of the early and mid-Heian period. In what follows, I explore the position of poetry within the broader scope of Confucian scholarship as one specific service among the many requested of the graduates of the *kidendō* curriculum as well as an acknowledged occupational niche.

15 I follow Steininger (2017, 136) for the translation of *hōryakushi* as ‘Policy Test.’

3 Sinitic Poetry and *kidendō* Literacy

The compilation of the *Kōnin shiki* (Procedures of the Kōnin era) in 820 (Kōnin 弘仁 11) strengthened the connections among institutionalised banquets, literary expertise, and *kidendō* graduates. According to these procedures, the Ministry of Ceremonial Affairs selected those who would serve as *monnin* and provide the poetry for the Double Nine Banquet or the extraordinary institutional events that were modelled on it by releasing, two days before the event, a list of individuals that might include “literature students (*monjōshō*) and regular students (*gakushō* 学生) as well as officials versed in poetic composition serving in various bureaucratic posts” (*Kōnin shiki*, 2). In principle, then, any regular student at the Bureau of Education who was sufficiently advanced to sit for the *monjōshō* examination, or any *monjōshō* graduate, was eligible for selection as *monnin*.¹⁶ In practice, it seems that established Confucian scholars were often selected.¹⁷ Academic status within the *kidendō* curriculum meant that any student and *kidendō* graduate was expected to be able to provide poetry upon request. However, later collections that include early Heian material tend to focus on a few *kidendō* graduates who are heavily anthologized while many others appear only in passing. A representative example is the section of *Ruijū kudaishō* 類聚句題抄 (Collection of Classified Verse-topic Poems, 11th century) in which are found four fragmentary poems on the topic “Cold geese are recognized in the autumn sky” (寒雁識秋天) performed at the Double Nine Banquet held on 916 (Engi 延喜 16).¹⁸ This section includes excerpts from the poems of the *kidendō* graduates Ōe no Asatsuna 大江朝綱 (886-958), Mononobe no Yasuoki 物部安興 (fl. 889-916), Ōe no Chifuru 大江千古 (?-924), and Mimune no Masahira 三統理平 (853-926). Asatsuna was a literature student (*monjōshō*) at the time of the banquet, and the other three were Confucian scholars, having passed the Policy Test (Masahira was likely a professor of literature at the Bureau of Education).¹⁹ These four poets thus represent a selection of *mon-*

¹⁶ In fact, it appears that selection to serve as *monnin* attracted the necessary attention to regular students who needed a recommendation from a Professor of Literature (*monjō hakase*) in order to take the *monjōshō* test, and, by the mid-Heian period, selection was apparently a necessary step in a student’s career. See Kudō 1993, 83-9.

¹⁷ Manuals such as *Gishiki* (Ritual Procedures, mid-9th century) prescribed that *monnin* above the fifth rank be summoned by default to provide topics for poetry composition (*Gishiki*, 231). Other manuals replace “*monnin* above the fifth rank” with “professors of literature”, the professorship having been a post at the Bureau of Education that was reserved for Confucian scholars of that rank; see Takigawa 2007 203.

¹⁸ It is not known who compiled *Ruijū kudaishō*, a collection of poetic excerpts (typically the central couplets from an eight-line regulated verse) arranged by topic.

¹⁹ I take as reference the biographies provided by the scholar Honma Yōichi in his critical edition of *Ruijū kudaishō*. See *Ruijū kudaishō zenchūshaku* (918-19, 920-1, 972-

nin for a Double Nine Banquet according to the procedures. There is, however, a fundamental difference among these poets. Ōe no Asatsuna's literary talent was widely recognized in his lifetime, and his work continued to be anthologized by later Confucian scholars who produced literary anthologies. As such, he is the second-best represented author in Fujiwara no Akihira's 藤原明衡 *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粹 (Literary Essence of Our Court, 11th century), which presents works showing the broad range of his literary activity.²⁰ By contrast, only a handful of excerpts remain for the other three. Thus, *Ruijū kudaishō* includes eleven fragments by Asatsuna, five by Masahira, and one each by Yasuoki and Chifuru.

The editorial standards of the anthologies aside, then, a broader trend is apparent in the Heian period: some *kidendō* graduates and Confucian scholars – such as Ōe no Asatsuna and Sugawara no Michizane – were widely referenced as experts of Sinitic poetry and prose, whereas other Confucian scholars of some distinction – such as Ōe no Koretoki 大江維時 (888-963) and Tachibana no Naomoto 橘直幹 (fl. 935-967) – left a surprisingly small impression on the literary record.²¹ The implication is that, at this time, the highest status within the field of *kidendō* education by no means rested on sustained literary performance. By the late Heian period, a persistent discourse differentiating literary talent (*bunshō*) from erudition (*saigaku* 才学) in *kidendō* graduates' expertise can be found in such textual sources as diaries and anecdotal literature (Satō 2013). In an anecdote in Ōe no Masafusa's 大江匡房 (1041-1111) *Gōdanshō* 江談抄 (The Ōe Conversations), for example, the *kidendō* graduates Ōe no Asatsuna and Ōe no Koretoki showcase their respective talents on the occasion of a palace poetry banquet, with the former crafting a difficult poem in order to challenge the latter's erudition and recitation ability (*Gōdanshō* 4, 68). The strategies that went into the compilation of mid- and late-Heian literary anthologies such as *Ruijū kudaishō* and *Honchō monzui* thus mirror and reinforce this discourse of differentiation, representing poetry in literary Sinitic as a service that might be demanded of any *kidendō* graduates but, in practice, was regular-

73, 975). There is virtually no historical information on Mononobe no Yasuoki, but the fact that he provided the preface for the Double Nine Banquet in 889 (Kanyō 寛平 1) suggests that he was already a Confucian scholar by that time. As a matter of fact, even a rapid skim of early Heian sources makes clear that the prefaces for institutionalised banquets were normally composed by either Confucian scholars or by candidates for the Policy Test; see further Steininger 2017, 65.

²⁰ For an overview of Ōe no Asatsuna's bureaucratic career and literary activity, see Ono 2008, 22-46.

²¹ In *Honchō monzui*, for example, both Koretoki and Naomoto are included, with two pieces each; by comparison, forty-five pieces by Asatsuna are included and thirty-six by Michizane.

ly associated with specific individuals who were in particular recognized for their compositional abilities.

Earlier in the Heian period, by contrast, poetry in literary Sinitic seems not yet to have a clearly identifiable place within *kidendō* literacy. As a matter of fact, at this time, the discourse about the distinction between Confucian erudition and compositional abilities appears only in texts connected with the Sugawara House. This connection is key evidence of this clan's early claim to this domain of *kidendō* activity. In the memorial (*hyō* 表) that he offered on the occasion of the presentation of his personal collection, for example, Sugawara no Michizane depicts his clan as being traditionally associated with both Confucian scholarship in the broadest sense and the art of literary composition specifically, thereby presenting the latter as an autonomous field of action upon which the clan could claim authority.²²

4 Sinitic Poetry and the Sugawara House

The strengthening of the connection between poetic composition and the *kidendō* curriculum following the inclusion of poetry as a test subject for the civil service examinations and the integration of poetry into the system of *kidendō* literary activity in the early Heian period created both tensions and possibilities. The anthologizing principles of *Ryōunshū* – which, as has been seen, reflected the social distribution of the performance of poetry in literary Sinitic among *kidendō* graduates (as did, later, such mid- and late-Heian collections as the above-mentioned *Ruijū kudaishō*) – suggest that poetry served as a form of cultural capital that had value in certain arenas, such as official poetry banquets, and could be appropriated strategically. Texts from late ninth and early tenth centuries provide evidence of banquet poetry as a terrain open for appropriation. Early Heian institutional banquets such as the Palace Banquet and the Double Nine Banquet represented a particularly prominent arena in which *kidendō* graduates who pursued poetry composition as a specific and self-sustaining form of cultural capital could achieve official recognition. In texts of the period associated with the Sugawara House, the interconnection of these two aspects of poetry – as an independent domain of activity and as a performance in the context of institutionalised poetry banquets – is explicit.

One such text is the preface to a collection of poetry no longer extant by the *kidendō* graduate and friend of Sugawara no Michizane

²² The passage reads as follows: “Prostrate on the ground, this subject recalls his house long dwelling in the garden of writing amid the Confucian forest” 臣伏惟臣家為儒林文苑尚矣 (*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 674).

named Ki no Haseo 紀長谷雄 (845-912), *Engi igo shijo* 延喜以後詩序 (Preface to the Poems Composed in the Engi Era). The preface begins,

予十有五始志学、十八頗知属文。時無援助、未遇提獎。先師都大夫、為當時秀才。予雖列門徒、未及知名。于時北堂諸生群飲、同賦幽人釣春水之詩。先師獨擢予詩曰、綴韻之間、甚得風骨。依此一言、漸增声価。其後信譖、遂被疎遠。淪翳積年、研精永倦。貞觀之末、纔登進士之科。故嘗丞相在儒官之日、復党同門、未有相許。適見予大極殿始成宴集詩云、不意伊人詞藻至此。自後属意、数相寄和。及予出仕、丞相執政。每有文会、必先視草。予昔侍内宴、賦草木共逢春詩曰、庭增気色晴沙緑、林変容輝宿雪紅。又九日賦菊散一叢金詩曰、廉士路中疑不捨、道家煙裏誤心燒。丞相常吟賞、以為口実。乘醉執予手曰、元白再生、何以加焉。予雖知過実、猶感一顧。

At the age of fifteen I set my heart to learning, and by the age of eighteen I was well-versed in composing [poetry]. At the time, however, I lacked proper support and guidance. My late teacher, Miyako [no Yoshika], was the flourishing talent [*shūsai*] of the time. Though I took my place in line among his disciples, my name remained unknown. One day a banquet was held at the Northern Hall for all of the students, and everyone composed a poem on the topic *The Hermit Fishes in the Spring Waters*. My late teacher selected my poem and said, "With these rhymes, you have achieved an exceptional mastery of style". Because of these words, my reputation gradually increased. After that, however, he believed slanders against me, and I was eventually estranged from him. I fell into obscurity for many years, but I continued to devote myself to learning so that, at the end of the Jōgan era [859-877], I finally rose to the status of advanced scholar [*shinshi*]. At the time when the former Minister Sugawara [no Michizane] held the office of professor of letters, I was affiliated with his school, but he did not yet acknowledge me. Once, he looked at my poem for the banquet held to inaugurate the Great Hall of State [Daigokuden] and said, "I did not expect this person to possess such literary talent!" From that moment he showed interest in me and we began to exchange a large number of poems. Eventually, I entered official service and the Minister [Sugawara] rose to a high governmental position. Every time a literary gathering was held, I always showed him my drafts. Once I attended the Palace Banquet and composed a poem on the topic *Plants and Trees Together Meet Spring*. Among the verses I recited were "The garden enhances its appearance as the bright sand shades green. The woods mold their radiance as the residual snow glows red". Again, at the banquet on the ninth day, I composed a poem on the topic *The Chrysanthemums Scatter One Bush of Gold* in which were the lines "The honest man, in the middle of the road, suspiciously refuses to grab it. The man

of the Way, amidst the smoke, would probably mistakenly burn it". The Minister [Sugawara] frequently recited them in admiration, to the point that they became a common expression. Riding the intoxication, he once grabbed my hand and said: "Even if Yuan [Zhen] and Bai [Juyi] were to live again, how could they possibly surpass this?" Although I knew this was an exaggeration, still I was moved by such esteem. (*Honchō monzui* 201)

Haseo's preface sheds light on the conceptualization of poetic skills as a legitimate and independent form of cultural capital for *kidendō* graduates. In the first place, he presents poetic composition as one category of 'learning' and, in the text, his educational trajectory involves primarily his poetic training. Second, he situates poetic training within the context of a process leading to participation in institutionalised banquets. Third, he emphasises private routes of knowledge transmission, making Sugawara no Michizane and the Sugawara House the primary locus of poetic legitimacy. By selecting moments from the institutional formation of *kidendō* graduates and their participation as *monnin* in the events and rituals of the court and framing them as consecutive steps in a teleological narrative, Haseo represents their poetic services as a self-sustaining and consistent career path over which he can claim legitimacy and authority. Thus, his choice to include the couplets from the Palace Banquet held in 898 and the Double Nine Banquet of 899 may itself be relevant.²³ As a matter of fact, Haseo served simultaneously as a professor of literature (*monjō hakase*) and Senior Assistant to the Minister of Ceremonial Affairs (*shikibu no taifu* 式部大輔) at that time.²⁴ On the one hand, the Ministry of Ceremonial Affairs was in charge of organising the Double Nine Banquet and compiling the list of *monnin* who would perform.²⁵ On the other hand, professors of letters were usually expected to appear at institutionalised banquets since they provided the topics for composition and one of them normally composed the banquet prefatory piece (*jo* 序).²⁶ The two couplets quoted in the text may thus point to a historical moment when Haseo was preeminent among the *kidendō* graduates who performed at institutionalised banquets.

23 *Nihon kiryaku*, Kanpyō 10 [898]/1/20; Shōtai 昌泰 2 [899]/9/9.

24 A chronology of Ki no Haseo's official posts is in Miki 1992, 5-12.

25 The Palace Banquet was instead administered by the sovereign's Chamberlain Office (*kurōdo-dokoro* 藏人所). See Takigawa 2007, 171-4.

26 In *Kyūreki* 九曆 (Calendrical Diary of the Ninth Avenue), the diary of courtier Fujiwara no Morosuke 藤原師輔 (908-960), there is a passage illustrating the norms pertaining to the selection of the banquet preface composer. For the Double Nine Banquet, it was normally the professor of letters who had first passed the Policy Test (*hōryakushi*). *Kyūreki*, Tenryaku 4 [950]/10/8. Quoted from Steininger 2017, 73.

At the same time, Haseo's ad hoc poetic career as a poet and its legitimacy were predicated on his connections with personal tutors such as Miyako no Yoshika and Sugawara no Michizane. The training of court poets, therefore, occupied an ambiguous position within the Bureau of Education, while poetic knowledge circulated mainly outside institutional lines of transmission. Particularly instructive in this regard is the importance in Haseo's preface of the intimate connection with Michizane for his recognition as a poet at the Palace Banquet and at the Double Nine Banquet, with Michizane both supervising his poetic production and legitimizing it by singling out the couplets quoted in the text. The preface to his collection thus illustrates the two major aspects of early Heian poetic activity that are the focus of the present study, the centrality of institutionalised poetry banquets and the role of the Sugawara House in training and legitimizing poets. The *Engi igo shijo* thus exemplifies one of the ways in which poetry in literary Sinitic could be configured as a field of action for *kidendō* graduates, namely as a practice that depended for its legitimacy on participation as one of the *monnin* at institutionalised banquets and on connections with the Sugawara House.

5 The Architecture of Sugawara no Michizane's *Kanke bunsō*

Sugawara no Michizane's support for Ki no Haseo and legitimation of his reputation in the composition of poetry at institutional banquets in *Engi igo shijo* goes in tandem with the depiction of banquet poetry as a form of cultural capital intimately associated with the Sugawara House in Michizane's own literary collection. In the remainder of the paper, I discuss the connection between poetry in literary Sinitic and the Sugawara House in greater depth by analysing passages in Michizane's *Kanke bunsō* (Literary Drafts of the Sugawara House) in which strategic associations with institutionalised poetry banquets and the paradigm of *monnin* served to lend legitimacy and authority for his poetic activity at large.

While the poetry in *Kanke bunsō* is organized in chronological order, its basic structure involves the distribution of the poetic material into six volumes. This segmentation ostensibly follows moments of Michizane's bureaucratic career. Michizane places descriptions of his career's shifts and advancement throughout the collection. Specifically, at the beginning of five of six volumes, he describes one of these moments. Schematically,

Vol. 1) "I was eleven at the time. The rigorous lord [i.e. Michizane's father Koreyoshi] ordered the advanced scholar Shimada to test

me. This was the first poem I ever composed: this is why I put it at the beginning of my collection”.

Vol. 2) “From here, the next 106 poems were written when I was holding the office of Assistant to the Ministry of Ceremonial Affairs”.

Vol. 3) “From here on are poems written when I was governor of Sanuki Province. The next five poems were written before I left the capital”.

Vol. 4) “While going back to Sanuki, I stopped at the Akashi post station in Harima. The next eighty poems were written after returning to the province”.

Vol. 5) [no annotation]

Vol. 6) “The next eleven poems were written when I was Middle Counselor (*chūnagon* 中納言)”.

Further, another kind of synchronisation seems to exist that runs parallel to the series of key moments and relates to the choice of poems with which each volume opens. Careful consideration of these poems, I argue, reveals the Palace Banquet as another of the collection’s fundamental organizing principles. Specifically, the second, third, and sixth volumes begin with a poem composed for the Palace Banquets held in 877 (Jōgan 19), 886 (Ninna 仁和 2) and 896 (Kanpyō 8), respectively, and the first and fourth volumes begin with poems that are strongly suggestive of that event, as I demonstrate in the following analysis. The topics of the opening poems of the six volumes are as follows:

Vol. 1 月夜見梅花
Moonlight night, looking at the plum flowers.
(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 1)

Vol. 2 早春、侍宴仁壽殿、同賦認春、應製
Early spring, attending a banquet at Jijūden, composing along on the topic “Recognizing spring” in response to a command by the sovereign.
(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 77)

Vol. 3 早春內宴、聽宮妓奏柳花怨曲、應製
Early spring, Palace Banquet. Listening to the palace entertainers performing the tune “The Garden of Willows and Flowers”. [A poem] composed in response to a command by the sovereign.
(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 183)

Vol. 4 題驛樓壁

[A poem] inscribed on the wall of the post station [in Harima].
(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 243)

Vol. 5 閏九月盡、燈下即事、應製

End of the intercalary ninth month, impromptu composition under the lanterns, [a poem] composed in response to a command by the sovereign.
(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 336)

Vol. 6 早春內宴、侍清涼殿同賦春先梅柳知、應製

Early spring, Palace Banquet, attending at Seiryōden, composing along on the topic
“Plums and willows know spring first” in response to a command by the sovereign.
(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 430)

The fifth volume is revealed as an exception to this organizing principle. As can be seen here, the poem that opens this volume differs from those that open the other volumes in that its context is a non-institutionalised banquet, specifically one put on by Emperor Uda late in the autumn of 890 (Kanpyō 2).²⁷ The remaining two poems, at first glance, seem disconnected from institutional poetic practice, but a closer look reveals connections with the Palace Banquet of a different sort. According to the annotation attached to it, the poem that opens the first volume was, appropriately, Michizane’s first poetic utterance, written when he was eleven under the supervision of his poetic tutor, Shimada no Tadaomi 島田忠臣 (828-892):

月夜見梅花

Moonlight night, looking at the plum flowers.

月耀如晴雪 The moon shines like snow under a clear sky;
梅花似照星 Plum flowers resemble gleaming stars.
可憐金鏡轉 How splendid! As the golden mirror moves,
庭上玉房馨 Upon the garden, the jade clusters spread their
fragrance.
(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 1)

²⁷ Emperor Uda established new poetic banquets that were held in addition to the institutionalised Palace Banquet and Double Nine Banquet. These new banquets, however, seem to have been more private in nature since the participants were members of Uda’s personal entourage together with recognised *kidendō* graduates in the capacity of poets; see Takigawa 2007, 65-82. On Uda’s late-autumn banquets see Kitayama 2003.

As a quatrain of five-character verses, this poem is Heian Sinitic poetry at its most basic in terms of form. Despite its simplicity, however, it engages with the broader practice of poetry in performance at institutionalised banquets. First, the topic of the poem, with the imagery of plum flowers, is similar to the topics that were regularly chosen for the Palace Banquet. The thematic development of the poem, for example, with the comparison of white plum blossoms in the moonlight to stars, anticipates the imagery of plums amidst the snow in the poem that Michizane composed for the Palace Banquet of 874 that was quoted at the beginning of this paper. Thematically and rhetorically, then, this poem shares much of the seasonal framework for Palace Banquet poems. Second, the poem opens a sequence of compositions written as practice for the *monjōshō* examination, a passage of which qualified an individual to be selected as a literature student in the *kidendō* curriculum. The topics of the poems thus mirrored those for the actual test, such as “composing on blue-green” (詠青) (*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 5), which usually entailed the exegetical practise of extrapolating from the continental classics a series of erudite allusions to the poetic subject in question.²⁸ By contrast, the poem that opens the collection is on the sort of topic selected for the banquet poems. The annotation to the poem states that Michizane’s father had instructed Michizane’s tutor, the literature student Shimada no Tadaomi, to test him on such a topic. Thus, this poem is embedded in a social hierarchy in a manner reminiscent of the institutionalised banquets at which the sovereign commanded Confucian scholars to choose the topic on which the summoned *monnin* would present their compositions. In general, this poem seems to have been conceived as a way to test the young Michizane’s ability in a specific aspect of poetic practice, namely banquet poetry. Accordingly, the poem connects directly with institutionalised banquet poetry – and with the Palace Banquet in particular – again evincing the tight connection between this domain of poetic activity and the Sugawara House.

The poem that opens the fourth volume was ostensibly composed by Michizane in 888 (Ninna 4) at a post station on his way back to Sanuki 讃岐 province from the capital midway through his four-year assignment as provincial governor:

題驛樓壁

[A poem] inscribed on the wall of a post station.

離家四日自傷春 Four days since I left home, and I am naturally moved by spring;

²⁸ On the examination poetry in early Heian Japan see Li 2011.

梅柳何因觸處新 As I gaze at them, plums and willows are, for
some reason, new to me.
爲問去來行客報 Therefore I ask to the passing travelers for a
response:
讚州刺史本詩人 “The Governor of Sanuki is, in fact, a poet”.
(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 243)

Much like the poem that opens the first volume, this poem is thematically related to the Palace Banquet through the imagery of plums and willows as emblems of spring. Owing to their association with the first lunar month and early spring, these trees featured prominently in the topics and poems for the Palace Banquet, individually and together. The topic of the poem opening the sixth volume, “Plums and willows know spring first,” is but one of many examples. Michizane’s invocation of these natural objects that elicit his poetic inspiration can be seen as a means to demonstrate spontaneously the kind of response that might have been requested from a poet at the Palace Banquet. The underlying connection between a seemingly spontaneous poetic act and a poetic performance at institutionalised banquets is revealed in the last verse. Rather than contrasting an innate poetic attitude with a bureaucratic service, the structure of the verse suggests that provincial governorship and poetic composition are in fact two equal but mutually exclusive offices. It is, therefore, preferable to understand ‘poet’ (*shijin* 詩人) here more as a literary equivalent of *monnin* (again, the specific term used to describe the trained poets summoned to perform at institutional banquets) than as an expression of one’s personal poetic disposition.²⁹ I suggest, accordingly, that Michizane’s poem accentuates his physical and bureaucratic distance from the Palace Banquet while at the same time claiming an inherent proximity to it, as well as to the bureaucratic position of *monnin*. Temporally, this poem is situated between the tenth day of the first month – a date that appears in the title of the second-to-last poem of the third volume – and the spring months in which are set the poems that follow it at the beginning of the fourth volume. The implication in the poem is that Michizane was travelling back to the province just at the same time when the Palace Banquet (held between the twentieth and twenty-second days of the first month) was about to take place.

²⁹ The term *monnin* appears in manual and procedures but never in actual compositions, where it is usually substituted by such words as *shikyaku* 詩客 (poetic guests), *bokkyaku* 墨客 (ink guests) and *shijin* (poets). On the use of the term *shijin* to refer to *monnin* in the context of early Heian Sinitic poetry, see Takigawa 1997. By contrast, other scholars have interpreted the term *shijin* as indicating a personal poetic disposition towards the natural environment surrounding the poet and an innate inclination to express one’s feelings; see for example Fujiwara 2001, 236-8.

This poem is thus not only a lamentation for Michizane's inability to attend the Palace Banquet, for, within the economy of *Kanke bunsō*, it joins the poem at the beginning of the first volume as substitutes of Palace Banquet poems that can parallel those that open the second, third, and sixth volumes, thereby balancing the temporal and cosmological structure of the entire collection. In this way, the overall structure of *Kanke bunsō* - and of Michizane's poetic activity as a whole - is governed by a complete synchronisation with the state-sponsored annual poetic annual regimen. This relationship serves as a kind of testimony to Michizane's broader claim about the poetic activity generated by institutionalised banquets. Thus, the fact that both the poems composed for the Palace Banquet and the poems composed for other contexts are integrated together to build such structure reinforces, I suggest, the inherent continuity between institutional poetic activity and the claim to poetic authority of Michizane and the Sugawara House.

The apparent disruption in the alignment of *Kanke bunsō* with the Palace Banquet and the institutional banquet regime of the Heian state that the late-autumn poem at the beginning of the fifth volume causes necessarily requires explanation. As a matter of fact, consideration of the position of this particular poem at the opening of the fifth volume can provide further insight into the literary activities sponsored by Emperor Uda and Michizane's role in them. As already discussed, Uda's household banquets constituted a regime separate from the institutionalised banquets in terms of both the place in which they were held and in terms of the social organization of the participants. In contrast with the Palace Banquet and the Double Nine Banquet, Uda's household banquets were held at his new private quarters in the Seiryōden 清涼殿 complex within the Imperial Palace.³⁰ Furthermore, members of Uda's personal entourage participated in his household banquets, thereby testifying to their non-institutional nature (Takigawa 2007, 80-2). As discussed presently, the fifth volume of Michizane's *Kanke bunsō* represents Uda's household banquets as the natural extension of the institutionalised poetic regime of the Palace Banquet and the Double Nine Banquet, thereby testifying to the gravitational pull of the institutionalised banquet system during the early Heian period. The poem in question, which is accompanied by a preface (*jo*) describing the context of the banquet, reads as follows:

30 Uda shifted the sovereign's residence from the traditional site of Jijūden 仁寿殿 to the Seiryōden in 891 (Kanpyō 3). Although the Palace Banquet was to be held at the sovereign's private quarters, Uda maintained Jijūden as the site for it, thereby keeping his household banquets and institutionalised banquets separate. See the entry in *Dai-go tennō gyōki* 醍醐天皇御記 on Engi 2 (902)/1/20.

閏九月盡、燈下即事、應製 並序。

End of the intercalary ninth month; a poem composed upon the scenery before us under the light of the lanterns, in response to a command by the Sovereign. With preface attached.

年有三秋、秋有九月。九月之有此閏、閏亦盡於今宵矣。夫得而易失者時也。感而難堪者情也。宜哉。瑞情、惜而又惜。于時蘭燈屢挑、桂醕頻酌。近習者侍臣五六、外來者詩人二三而已。請各即事著于形言云爾。謹序。

There are three autumn months in one year, among which is the ninth month. This year, an intercalary month was attached to the ninth month and this ends tonight. Now, time is something that is obtained and yet easily lost, and the heart feels emotions that it can hardly bear. Such is the way things are! The sovereign's splendid heart laments this time and again. At this time, the orchid lanterns blaze incessantly while fine cassia wine is repeatedly poured. Five or six attendants among the private courtiers together with two or three poets especially summoned from outside - each of them will compose extemporaneously, expressing the scenery before them into form and words. I humbly present this preface.

天惜凋年閏九月 Heaven laments this year's fading along with the intercalary ninth month;

今宵偏感急如流 This night one feels deeply that time is flowing as fast as a stream.

霜鞭近警衣寒冒 The whip of frost warns that it is drawing near, as the robes are threatened by the cold;

漏箭頻飛老暗投 The arrow of the water-clock flies fast announcing that old age inevitably comes.

菊為花芳衰又愛 Because of their fragrance, the chrysanthemums retain their beauty even while fading;

人因道貴去猶留 Thanks to his veneration of the Way, the man now attends although he was gone. (臣自外吏入侍重闈 From my position as provincial governor I was granted the permission to attend at the sovereign's quarters.)

明朝縱戴初冬日 Even if tomorrow I were to receive the first rays of winter's sun,

豈勝蕭蕭夢裡遊 It could hardly compare to such peaceful and quiet pleasures, as if within a dream.

(*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 336)

The fifth and sixth volumes collect the poems that Michizane composed after returning to the capital from Sanuki in the last decade of the ninth century. In particular, the first half of the fifth volume

includes almost exclusively poems for Uda's household banquets, to which, as discussed, Michizane was regularly summoned.³¹ Some poems for these banquets are already included at the end of the previous volume, reinforcing the impression that the choice of this particular poem to open the volume was not random. Regarding his motivation, on the one hand, Michizane may have chosen this poem for its closing couplet, which is clearly meant to celebrate his participation at Uda's poetic banquet rather than his return to his bureaucratic office.³² On the other hand, Michizane may have selected this poem to celebrate the newly established affiliation, founded on poetic activity, between Uda's household and the Sugawara House. Michizane began holding a late-autumn household banquet at the end of the ninth month (the last of the autumn months on the lunar calendar) as soon as he assumed leadership of the Sugawara House following the death of his father Koreyoshi in 880 (Gangyō 4).³³ Significantly, this specific banquet was then incorporated into Uda's household banquet regime shortly after the sovereign's coronation in 887 (Ninna 3).³⁴

Of particular interest is Michizane's description of the social space of Uda's banquet in the preface. By invoking a clear distinction between "five, six attendants among the retainers" and "two, three poets especially summoned", Michizane mimics the separation enforced at institutionalised banquets between *monnin*, as specialised poets normally selected from *kidendō* graduates, on the one hand, and, on the other, occasional poets who had the option of offering a poem but whose attendance at a banquet was not dependent on literary service. Michizane's way of defining Uda's poetic community, therefore, mirrors closely the social separation characteristic of the institutionalised banquets. Indeed, it might be said that Michizane produces *textually* a social separation that was likely not implemented in reality.³⁵ Thus, I argue, Michizane claims a kind of '*monnin*-based' position,

³¹ On the literary and political partnership between Michizane and Uda during the last decade of the ninth century, see Borgen 1994, 197-216; Taniguchi 2006, 153-62.

³² To "receive the rays of the winter's sun" meant being awarded an official bureaucratic appointment.

³³ Regrettably, there is only one example of a poem from such a banquet in *Kanke bunsō* (*Kanke bunsō*, *Kanke kōshū* 126)

³⁴ The first of such banquets is recorded in *Nihon kiryaku* in Kanpyō 1 (889)/9/25. The topic of composition was *Cherishing Autumn, We Admire the Lingering Chrysanthemums* (惜秋詠殘菊). On the transformation of Michizane's late-autumn household banquet into a court banquet, see Kitayama 2002.

³⁵ A rigid spatial separation was maintained at institutionalised banquets between *monnin* and high-ranking courtiers on the one hand and officials, even those who composed poetry, on the other. Thus, normally, *monnin* would be summoned only for the part of the banquet during which poetry was to be composed; moreover, they would sit in the courtyard, relatively distant from the sovereign and other dignitaries. For this reason, modern scholarship sometimes refers to the former as *jige monnin* 地下文

one modelled on the institutionalised banquets, within a poetic regime that did not specifically dictate such a position.

Michizane's casting of *kidendō* poets as *monnin* in the preface to Uda's late-autumn banquet at the beginning of the fifth volume of *Kanke bunsō* complements his depiction of Uda's household banquets as a natural extension of the institutionalised banquet system in the following sequence of poems. The first half of the fifth volume, then, can be considered as a condensed repository of poems from Uda's household banquets, in which every type of banquet established by Uda – the late-autumn banquet, the Double Third Banquet (on the third day of the third month), the cherry blossom banquet, the *tanabata* banquet (on the seventh day of the seventh month), and so on – appears only once. Together, these poems suggest a consistent annual sequence representing the ideal banquet calendar for Uda's literary regime. Tellingly, this sequence is inconsistent with the historical record in that Uda's household banquets were not necessarily held regularly every year and were not institutionalised.³⁶ *Nihon kiryaku* 日本紀略 (Abridged Chronicle of Japan, late 11th century), for example, records no one year in which all of Uda's household banquets were held. Instead, Michizane's *Kanke bunsō* represents Uda's banquets as if they formed part of a *de facto* institutionalised regime. His structuring of the collection in this respect reveals the influence of the institutionalised banquet system in conceptualising forms of literary activity, an influence that extended even to activity outside that system such as Uda's household banquets, depended as they were on the sovereign's patronage networks rather than institutionalised socio-political relationships. Michizane's strategies for legitimizing his position within such private networks of literary activity were predicated on associating the private banquets with the institutionalised banquets, which remained the official venue for the recognition of *kidendō* graduates' poetic activity.

Thus, from the synchronisation with the Palace Banquet to the organization of an ideal calendar of Emperor Uda's household banquets, Sugawara no Michizane seems to have organized his *Kanke bunsō* using the framework of institutionalised banquet practice. This structure, in turn, ensured that Michizane's literary activity was predicated within the same framework and on the same model. In this way, he testifies to the significance of such practices for the view of poetic composition and performance as a cultural asset for *kidendō* graduates in the early Heian period.

人 (lower-ground *monnin*) and to the courtiers who offered poems as *tenjō monnin* 殿上文人 (courtier *monnin*); see Kudō 1993, 81-3.

36 Recovering the dates of the assembled banquets from *Nihon kiryaku* reveals that these were held between 890 (Kanpyō 2) and 892 (Kanpyō 4). Significantly, in *Kanke bunsō*, a poem from the Palace Banquet of 893 (Kanpyō 5) comes after the sequence that comprises the ideal assemblage of Uda's household banquets.

6 Conclusions

In this paper, I have explored the dynamic practice of Sinitic poetry composition in early Heian Japan. From the expansion of poetic culture at the beginning of the ninth century to the presentation of Sugawara no Michizane's personal collection *Kanke bunsō*, sovereign-sponsored poetry banquets played a vital role in shaping the contours of literary activity. Sinitic poetry was primarily the domain of the social class of the graduates of the *kidendō* curriculum at the Bureau of Education, and literary collections of the time represent their poetry as part of the performative environment provided by institutionalised banquets. On one level, therefore, the significance of Sinitic poetry was dependent on the ritualistic efficacy of its banquet-based configuration: at sovereign-sponsored banquets, poetry was deployed as a symbolic good, the exchange of which negotiated and confirmed the socio-political relationship between the ruler and his assembled vassals. On another level, however, and conversely, the socio-political organization of institutionalised poetry banquet served as the arena within which poetry developed as a self-sustaining activity for *kidendō* graduates.

Ivo Smits (2007) has aptly suggested thinking of the *kidendō* curriculum at the Bureau of Education as the context in which the composition of Sinitic poetry gradually became a profession. Poetry was acknowledged as an autonomous sphere of action for *kidendō* graduates by the mid-Heian period, but during the early Heian period it was still one marginal activity among the many that members of this social class were obliged to perform in their bureaucratic capacity. It was at this time that Sinitic poetry assumed a prominent place in discourses associated with the Sugawara House. Thus, works such as Ki no Haseo's *Engi igo shijo* make clear the role of the Sugawara House in supplying poetic training and legitimacy. An appreciation of the relationship between poetry and the Sugawara House in the early Heian period, therefore, offers insights into the place of poetry in the *kidendō* literacy of the time. As Steininger (2017) observes, training at *daigakuryō* focused mainly on exegesis, memorization, and recitation of passages from the continental texts that formed the curriculum, even in the case of more literary oriented works such as *Wen Xuan* 文選 (Selections of *Wen*). In fact, the dynamics of the poetic teaching and training of *kidendō* students is still not well understood. The stance that Michizane assumes regarding poetic practice suggests that, during the early Heian period, poetry could be claimed as a cultural asset by a single household, and that poetic literacy was transmitted primarily outside the Bureau of Education. The complex relationship among the Sugawara House, the *kidendō* curriculum, and institutional practice thus appears to have influenced the articulation of the early Heian literary field. The association of Sinitic poet-

ry with the Sugawara House in the early Heian period remained tied to the cultural relevance of the institutionalised poetry banquets. So it was that the Sugawara House exploited the context of institutionalised poetry banquets to establish its position within the economy of *kidendō* cultural practices. The specific poetic authority claimed by Sugawara no Michizane was based on the model of *monnin*, the providers of poetry at official banquets. Perceiving the institutionalised banquets to be the primary source of poetic authority and legitimacy, Michizane sought during the early Heian period to articulate a direct connection with them.

Institutionalised poetry banquets constituted a major feature of the early Heian period. The rise and fall of the Palace Banquet and the Double Nine Banquet, then, help to define the temporal boundaries of the early Heian period (ca 800-950). This investigation of Sugawara no Michizane's claims to authority over and legitimacy within the field of poetry composition based on his proximity to the institutionalised banquets and the *monnin* model brings to light aspects of early Heian literary culture that are uniquely tied to the cultural paradigms of the period. At the same time, the centrality of institutionalised poetic practice at the early Heian court was inconsistent with the inherently peripheral position of poetry within the various forms of *kidendō* literacy. Michizane's *Kanke bunsō* can, therefore, be seen as, in part, a strategic means to smooth over this inconsistency by laying claim to a marginal field of action – poetry in literary Sinitic – that also lay within the *kidendō* graduates' sphere of official-ly recognized literary production.

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