

A Short Commentary on *Yamaji no Tsuyu*, A Story included in the Set of *Genji Monogatari*
in the Library of Congress Collection

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The Pre-Meiji works in the Library of Congress contains two sets of complete volumes of the *Tale of Genji*. One is the 1654 printed edition of the illustrated *Genji Monogatari*, in 60 volumes, classified by the Library of Congress as one of its treasures, the other is a set in 30 volumes on handy printed edition, of which the publishing year is unknown, but it was presumably published in the 17th century. A brief investigation into these materials reveals several facts which deserve our attention.

Firstly, both of these two set contains a volume with the title, *Yamaji no Tsuyu, A Dew in the mountain path*. The short tale is not included in the 54 volumes of the *Tale of Genji*, as it is known nowadays, but it is usually regarded as a sequel to the work written by a later author. The story describes the re-encounter of Kaoru, the son of Hikaru Genji, and Ukifune, an Ophelia like tragic heroine. As you know, Kaoru, hero of the so-called *Ten Tales of Uji*, and Ukifune never meet again at the final chapter of the *Tale of Genji*, i.e. *Yume no Ukihashi*, or Floating Bridge of Dreams. It is supposed that *Yamaji no Tsuyu* was conceived by an author who wished to add a supplementary chapter, because the author (he|she) was not satisfied with the ending of *Yume no Ukihashi*. Although the author is not definitively identified, circumstances suggest that the tale was completed by the end of 12th Century (1188-89), at the very final years of the Heian period.

Secondly, a succinct textual investigation, which I made yesterday thanks to the assistance by Mr. Ohta, reveals that the 1654 edition, in the Library of Congress collection, is the re-impression of the 1650 edition of the Illustrated *Genji Monogatari* with the postface (batsubun) by Yoshida Harumasa. The comparison of *Yamaji no tsuyu* in 60 volume illustrated edition and the one included in the other small 30 volume edition in the Library of Congress shows little discrepancies, suggesting that both of them share the same textual characteristics with each other. The illustrated *Genji Monogatari* in 60 volumes, which contains a version of *Yamaji no Tsuyu*, seems to be quite widely diffused in the middle of the 17th Century. As is already indicated in the catalogue*, however, the complete set of 60 volumes of the printed edition is non existent in Japan as well as in any public collections outside Japan. Therefore the Library of Congress is legitimately entitled to be proud of the possession of this edition.

Thirdly, it must be pointed out that it was not until its publication through woodblock printing in 1650 and 1654 that *Yamaji no tsuyu* seems to have been almost completely forgotten for centuries. Despite the fact, however, the tale was included as a supplementary volume to the 54 books of the *Tale of Genji* and sold as a set. This fact suggests that the readership of the early Edo period appreciated this story as a possible development of the Uji tales, even if it was not necessarily taken for the definitive *denouement* of the *Tale of Genji*. In the pre-Meiji period, the idea of integrity of a literary work as well as the notion of the authenticity of an authorship were not yet established in the same fashion as today, and literary works were appreciated as a kind of *Opera aperta* to use the terminology by Umberto Eco. The genetic reading of manuscripts

which has been proposed in recent French literary studies on Gustave Flaubert or Marcel Proust, for example, seems to be creatively applicable to the study of pre-modern edition in Japan.

Fourthly, and here is the final point for this morning, the text of the printed editions of *Yamaji no Tsuyu* shows conspicuous divergences from the text of the hand copied versions, of which 8 specimens are surviving today. Japanese specialists still have difficulties in explaining these divergences. However, this specificity may cast an unexpected light on the nature of the story itself. In fact, it may be possible to suppose that *Yamaji no Tsuyu* preserves one of the versions of the sequel to the *Tale of Genji* as it was appreciated by the court ladies and their surroundings around the end of the 12th Century. As is well known, the establishment of the present form of the *Tale of Genji* in 54 volumes is mainly due to the effort of standardization of the text attempted by Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241). It was in 1225, according to his diary, that Teika completed a copy of the Tale consisting of 54 chapters as the definitive version. By so doing, he authoritatively excluded other chapters and variants which he found lacking in chronological integrity and narrative coherence. Among the relegated chapters or tales, there is the one called *Sumori* (*Looking after the Nestlings*). Though the title, summary and fragments of waka poems of the volume are known to this day, the integral text does not survive. Still the remaining traces permit us to suppose that the *Sumori* tale and the *Yamaji no Tsuyu* tale shared a common core story-plot and two titles were sometimes confounded each other by the contemporary readers. And it is this confusion that seems to be casting a shade on the divergence which exists between the printed version and hand copy manuscript versions of *Yamaji no Tsuyu*.

For lack of time, I refrain from making minute textual demonstration to support this hypothesis*. Let me just make two points in the guise of conclusion. First, the text of *Yamaji no Tsuyu* in the Library of Congress conceals, like a palimpsest, a key to the understanding of the way how the definitive and canonical version of the *Tale of Genji* was elaborated at the beginning of the 13th century. Second, and more importantly, the text allows us to have a glimpse at the amorphous and unstable state of “inter-textuality” at the end of the 12th Century, in which several variants of the *Tale of Genji* were not only still surviving, but also expanding and competing with each other as supplements or by-texts of the original version, written by Murasaki Shikibu. New chapters were added or adjusted, recreated and re-edited, incorporated or dismembered, according to the circumstances in which they were appreciated, criticized, contested and finally rejected. Looking through *Yamaji no Tsuyu*, we may therefore be able to detect the survival of the fragments of the *Tale of Genji* in its pre-standardized state. Further investigations will allow us to reconstruct, partly at least, the way how the posterity of Murasaki Shikibu were trying to appropriate the literary heritage of the *Tale of Genji* on their own account. The digitization of the entire text facilitates enormously this philological task of scrutiny which remains to be done in the future.

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* *Pre-Meiji Works in the Library of Congress, Japanese Literature, Performing Art and Reference Books, Bibliography* compiled by Shôji Honda, annotated by Konishi Jin'ichi, 2006.

**See the critical edition established and annotated by Keiji Inaga, *Yamaji no Tsuyu*, in the series, *Chûsei Ôchô Mongatari*, (Medieval Japanese Court Tales) vol.8, Tokyo: Kasamashoin, 2004, pp.323-354.