Heidi Buck-Albulet

From ‘Task’ to ‘Title’? Japanese Linked Poetry and the Fushimono

Abstract: This paper examines how titles in renga (‘linked verse’) poetry, the so-called fushimono, interact with the texts they precede, or with parts of them, particularly the first verse or hokku. Renga is poetry jointly created by a group. Of the rules necessary for this, fushimono originally represented a significant part. While in the course of history the scope of the fushimono became more and more limited, it remained as an indispensable paratext. This paper also shows how historical changes to the renga rules and to the function of the fushimono were inextricably linked to the structure and layout of the manuscripts that emerged from the renga sessions. Finally, the paper will introduce the features of fushimono as a paratext in written artefacts, both in manuscripts and prints.

1 Introduction

In classical renga 連歌 poetry, there is a peculiar kind of paratext that cannot easily be understood by its readers: fushimono 賦物 titles. Their peculiarity lies in the fact that they are also a type of directive. Fushimono tend to be overlooked, as research is usually more concerned with poetological and aesthetic issues of the genre, i.e. the text. However, renga also includes a performative aspect (the practice of composing) and a material aspect as well (the written artefacts that emerge from this practice), and once the focus is shifted there, fushimono, like other paratexts, can no longer be ignored.

The meaning of fushimono is only revealed to those who take the trouble to understand its history. Starting off as a kind of directive, it became a mere convention in the fifteenth century and has remained so ever since. The following example from 2018 indicates how this latter form works:

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1 A broader term called ‘paracontent’ has been developed at CSMC, which includes non-verbal elements. See Ciotti et al. 2018. Since I am mainly concerned with text elements in this paper, I will continue to use the term ‘paratext’.

2 On the history of fushimono in Western languages, see Keene 1977; Horton 1993; Naumann 1967 among others.

3 The first sheet recto and verso of the respective manuscript are depicted in Fig. 2.
A peculiar kind of game is at work here: in the example above, the title could be read in such a way that it requires the hokku 発句 (‘first verse’) to include a word that can be combined with on 御, meaning ‘honourable’ (the solution in this case is niwa 庭, yielding on niwa, or ‘honourable garden’). The task (i.e. to find a corresponding part) is indicated by the character fu 賦. However, as we shall see, the hokku was actually written before the title, so the task works the other way round: on was chosen because of the word niwa in the hokku.

A second example, dated to 1688 (see Fig. 1), shows that the principle was the same in pre-modern renga:

The hokku contains the word yama. When nani (‘what’) is replaced by yama in this renga’s fushimono title, the result is the compound yamabito (lit. ‘mountain man’, i.e. ‘mountain dweller’).

Fushimono titles figure prominently in renga manuscripts as they are written in a bigger font size on the right-hand side of the text on the first sheet recto. Titles of this kind emerged in pre-modern Japan in the course of the formation of the genre itself and are still employed in contemporary poetic practice.

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4 The renga was composed in Gujō Hachiman (Gifu Prefecture). The author of the hokku is Tsurusaki Hiroo 鶴崎裕雄, who also acted as the renga master (sōshō 宗匠). The above translation of the title (lit. ‘distribute “honourable” something renga’) was inspired by the way Earl Miner (1979) translated renga titles.

5 Yamaguchi Prefectural Library (no. 1085). A transcription of it can be found in Ozaki 2005, 81–83.
After a brief introduction to the genre of renga, I aim to show where the roots of fushimono lie, how its function changed over time and how it ‘works’ in written artefacts. Tracing the development of fushimono titles also sheds light on the development of renga itself.

2 What is renga?

Renga 連歌 (‘linked verse’) is Japanese poetry jointly composed by a group of authors. The group is guided by a master (sōshō 宗匠), an official record of the poem is made by a scribe (shuhitsu 執筆), and the participants (renjū 連衆) add verses to the poem either one after the other or competitively. In pre-modern renga, the scribe was the only one to take any notes. The manuscripts that emerged from the gatherings are called renga kaishi 連歌懐紙 (literally, ‘renga chest paper’).

A more recent form of classical renga is still being practised in contemporary Japan, but kaishi and a brush are not usually used any more to record verses during a renga session; a newly invented form sheet developed by Mitsuta.

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6 ‘Chest’ refers to the chest part of the author’s clothing where such papers may have been kept.
7 Classical renga had nearly died out at by the beginning of the twentieth century, but it was revived again in the 1980s. See Buck-Albulet 2020 for details.
Kazunobu 光田和伸 is used by all the participants instead (including the sōshō and scribe) and the brush has been replaced by a pencil and biro. On formal occasions, however, especially in religious votive renga, a calligrapher may be commissioned with producing a clean copy of the poem on kaishi in the traditional format and layout.

Preliminary forms of renga already existed in the Heian period (794–1185). In the course of its long history, the genre has naturally gone through various changes and it has also developed many variants. The length of the poems can vary from thirty-six or forty-four verses to a hundred, a thousand or even ten thousand, but a hundred verses – or hyakuin 百韻 (literally, ‘a hundred rhymes’) – became the pre-modern standard and forty-four verses, or yoyoshi 世吉, the modern norm. One important feature of the genre – since the late fourteenth century, at least – is that a host of poetic rules apply that define which semantic category or motif can be used in which part of the poem. Moreover, in the course of time, the process of composing verses in a group became highly ritualised and was consequently codified in rulebooks; the scribe in particular had to follow detailed instructions (shuhitsu sahō 職筆作法) on how to handle the paper, brush and inkstone, for instance, and on the way he had to write fushimono titles. The vast majority of these procedural rules have now been abandoned in contemporary renga. What has remained, though, is the practice of allocating the traditional roles of the master, scribe and other members of the group.

The parameters of the genre that have remained constant are particularly noteworthy: apart from the metre, the internal structure of a renga text and its representation in kaishi have also remained stable after reaching a certain point in the development of renga (see below), even since the invention of new media in the twentieth century. The structure of renga developed in close connection with the layout of the traditional kaishi and now consists of eight verses on the first sheet recto and last sheet verso and fourteen on all the other pages. This

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8 In votive renga, sessions are conducted to honour a deity. The composing session is followed by a dedication ceremony at which the renga poem is recited to the deities and a calligraphic copy of the text is presented to the respective shrine or temple.
9 The term hyakuin indicates the influence of Chinese poetry as Chinese verses had rhymes.
10 During my research trip in 2018, I also witnessed the practice of composing twelve and twenty-two verses.
allows for fixed caesuras in the manuscript such as the end of a page, which adds to the text’s organisation.\(^\text{12}\)

3 The formal development of renga

Two ‘starting points’ are essential for the development of renga: Chinese linked verse (lianju 聯句, Jap. rengu)\(^\text{13}\) and Japanese waka 和歌 poetry.

In China, forms of linked poetry were practised from the Six Dynasties (222–589) to the Tang period (617–907) in particular. They also became known in Japan, and Japanese poets began to practise lianju themselves as early as the Heian period. We can already find the Chinese term fu 賦 in lianju, employed in a way that contributed significantly to how the term fushimono was later used in renga. Only a few of all the meanings the Chinese term and its character can represent will be mentioned here. First of all, it is the name of a genre of Chinese ‘prose-poems’ and it is a form of literary expression at the same time.\(^\text{14}\) Fu 賦 may also be translated as ‘to compose a poem’.\(^\text{15}\) As for Chinese linked poetry, David Pollack’s mention of a fu technique is noteworthy; he describes this as a ‘‘spectacular agglomeration’’ of things in neat categories’.\(^\text{16}\) As will be elaborated shortly, Japanese linked poetry is also about arranging things in categories, although it is precisely the ‘agglomeration’ that should be avoided.\(^\text{17}\)

In Chinese linked poetry, there was a practice to allot rhymes to the poets and distribute them within a poem. Topics came to be allotted as well, and this

\(^\text{12}\) See Buck-Albulet 2020 for details.
\(^\text{13}\) Besides discussing lianju 聯句, Pollack (1976, 19) also mentions a shorter Chinese form of linked poetry called lianju 連句. In Japan, there were also mixed forms with alternating Chinese and Japanese verses (wakan rengu 和漢聯句). Incidentally, rengu should not be confused with renku 連句, the term for haikai no renga (a variant of renga that developed from the sixteenth century onwards). See Ogata 2008, 992.
\(^\text{14}\) One of the ‘six styles’ of classical Chinese poetry mentioned in the ‘Great Preface’ Da xu 大序 of the Shijing 詩經 (Book of Odes). On the Chinese fu see Ho 1986, among others. Fu is also mentioned in the Chinese preface (manajo 真名序) of the Kokin wakashū 古今和歌集 (Collection from Ancient and Modern Times, 905) and is rendered as kazoe uta 数え歌 in the Japanese preface (kanajo 仮名序) and subsequently as one of the six waka styles as well. SNKBT 5, 7–8 and 339. Kazoe uta is translated as ‘description’ by Rodd and Henkenius 1996, 38.
\(^\text{15}\) Tanaka 1969, 431. The sinologist Okamura Shigeru says its basic meaning is ‘to spread’ (see Nihon hyakka daijiten, lemma fu, Japan Knowledge).
\(^\text{16}\) Pollack 1976, viii.
\(^\text{17}\) Pollack 1976, viii.
was indicated in the titles, such as *fu te* x (賦得 x, ‘writing a poem on the subject of x’) or *fu x te* y (賦 x 得 y, ‘writing a poem on the general subject of x, I got the sub-topic y’),

18 patterns that were adopted in Japanese anthologies of Chinese poetry.  

19 In this case, *fu* either means ‘to compose’ or ‘to allot a topic for a poem’.

One fundamental difference between Chinese and Japanese linked poetry is that the latter does not make any use of rhyme words (Jap. *inji* 韻字, Chin. *yunzi*) as a structural category. There is much to suggest that *fushimono* or ‘the distribution of names for things’ came to be introduced instead. Medieval Japanese poets were well aware of these Chinese roots. Some Japanese poetic treatises compared Japanese *fushimono* to the ‘distribution of topics’ (Jap. *dai* 題, Chin. *ti*) in Chinese poetry, while others compared it to rhyme (Jap. *in* 韻, Chin. *yun*) in Chinese *lianju*.

20 However, since *renge* developed in a different way than Chinese linked verse, the origin of the *fushimono* cannot be explained solely by the model of the *lianju*. Rather, the poetic rhetoric of the *waka* needs to be taken into account as well.

21 *Waka*, or ‘Japanese song’ consists of thirty-one syllables or ‘morae’ arranged in five units (or *ku*) of 5-7-5-7-7 morae. The first 5-7-5 form the upper part, the ‘long verse’ (*chôku* 長句), while the 7-7 form the ‘short verse’ (*tanku* 短句). *Renga* may also have found a model in the fact that *waka* were sometimes combined to form longer chains of verses, the standard length of which became a hundred poems (*hyakushu uta* 百首歌).  

22 A specific method of poetry composition from which *renge* could draw was ‘topic poetry’, the composing of verses according to previously set topics, which was practiced in China as well as in Japan. Finally, *waka* opened up the possibility of splitting a poem into two separate halves if a semantic and grammatical caesura is made after the ‘long verse’. A very simplified overview of the formal development of *renge* consists of five steps:

1 When some of the *waka* split up into two parts, the earliest form of ‘linked verse’, the short *renge* or *tanrenge* 短連歌 (or as it was called by that time, the *ikku renga* 一句連歌) emerged in the eleventh and twelfth century. It...
consisted of a ‘long verse’ and a ‘short verse’, with two people composing each part.

2 By repeating this pattern, the length of the renga gradually expanded to form longer ‘chains’ of verses (kusari renga 鎖連歌). This probably took place around the Insei period (1086–1221).

3 Towards the end of the Insei period, longer chains of verses formed ‘long renga’ (chō renga 長連歌) with a fixed number of verses (teisū renga 定数連歌).

4 A hundred verses (hyakuin) eventually became the most representative form (in the latter half of the Kamakura period, 1185–1333). A hyakuin was first mentioned in 1200.23

5 The standardising of the length was accompanied by the emergence of poetic rules and an internal text structure (‘parts of speech’, so to speak), which was also reflected in the layout of the written artefacts, as will be explained below.

Early renga, while adopting its metre from waka poetry, was practised as a kind of counterpart to it, especially to the ‘elegant’ (ga 雅) and aristocratic nature of court poetry: it was conducted as a verse-capping game, requiring skills from its participants such as the ability to make puns and play with words.

There are at least two parameters that are essential for every game. First of all, as Johan Huizinga noted, ‘all play has its rules’,24 and second, it is necessary for every play or game to maintain the initial suspense among the participants. Moreover, as renga is a game that results in a text being produced, this notion relates not only to the performative level, but to the text level as well (we might speak of ‘text coherence’) and even to the material level of the written artefact.

The fact that renga started as a competitive game was decisive for the success of the genre, and the early fushimono was absolutely necessary at this formative stage because it provided a challenge whose fulfilment could be judged.25

23 It is mentioned in the Meigetsuki 明月記 (‘Record of the Clear Moon’), a diary kept by Fujiwara Teika 藤原定家 (1162–1241). However, the distribution of verses in the kaishi was not formalised at that point, see Hiroki 2015, 96.
4 Renga and the fushimono

The short renga (tanrenga 短連歌) can be seen as an initial stage of the genre.26 It had a dialogic structure and depended on successfully creating a link between two parts, A and B. The point of contact consisted of two associated objects or concepts, often linked by way of a pun.27 This is the technique of mono no na 物の名 (‘names of things’) adopted from waka poetry. The tanrenga can be described as a short dialogue with only two contributions that are mutually related to each other and it demands esprit and quick-wittedness from the poets. As Hiroki Kazuhito has put it, it is basically a riddle-answer pattern.28 However, as soon as a third link is added, this changes the structure of the poem fundamentally.29 This is where fushimono literally came into play because other means to maintain suspense or text coherence became necessary.30

Fushimono may be described as ‘tasks to be fulfilled’ or ‘thematic directives’.31 These have changed fundamentally in the course of time, and in two ways: on one hand, in terms of how they worked as a structural principle, i.e. whether they affected the entire text/performance or only part of it, and on the other, in terms of the types of directives used.

4.1 Types of fushimono

Whilst different types of fushimono have been used at the same time for decades and even centuries, a certain historical development can still be seen. The first type of fushimono is mono no na (‘names of things’). With this directive, the renga went back to a principle that was already at work in waka poetry and in short renga as the ‘hidden topic’ (kakushidai 隠題) aka mono no na, a form of the

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26 Tanaka Yutaka (1960, 2) argued that the tanrenga is not just a preliminary form of renga, but a genre all of its own – a work that is self-contained.
27 Keene 1977, 248; Okuda 2017, 22.
28 Hiroki 2015, 30. Regarding the affinity between a riddle, renga and fushimono, see Schneider 1974 and 1989.
29 The performance changes, too, as there might be a third person, and a new place for the composing process may come into play. See Kishida 2015, 2–20.
30 The puns in short renga poems have been described by Okuda as an ‘original form’ of fushimono (‘fushimono no gensho keitai’ 賦物の原初形態), see Okuda 2017, 22; Carter 1987, 12.
aforementioned topic poetry. The task here is to ‘hide’ topics in semantically unrelated homonyms or to allude to them in the verses.

Topics of this type could be place names from the classical novel *Genji monogatari* (‘The Tale of Genji’), names of plants and animals or the names of poets of famous poetry collections, for example. Many of them were contrastive pairs; one had to refer to black and white alternately in *Fusu kuro shiro* 賦黒白, for example (the term itself means ‘distribute black and white’).33

The acrostic type of *fushimono* was another early form. Linked poetry composed this way was called *kanmuriji renga* 冠字連歌 or ‘crown- [or cap-] character renga’. Each verse had to begin with a certain character. As the writing alignment in a *renga* manuscript is always vertical, the first syllables or characters would be on the top, or ‘crown’ (or cap).

Two special forms of the acrostic type may be mentioned: first, the *iroha renga* (an ‘alphabet renga’, so to speak, which flourished around the twelfth and thirteenth century34), the verses of which began with the characters of the old ‘alphabet’-like *iroha* poem. The task or *fushimono* in this case would be *Fusu*35 *iroha* 賦伊呂波, or ‘Distribute i-ro-ha characters’. A hundred-verse *renga* following this principle would be a *Fu iroha hyakuin*. The *Myōgō renga* 名号連歌 was a second ‘crown-character renga’, the verses of which started with the syllables of the invocation *Namu Amida Butsu* 南無阿弥陀仏 (‘I take refuge in Amida Buddha’). It is interesting to note that ‘crown-character *renga*’ poems are related to the development of ‘fixed-number *renga*’ poems mentioned above. In manuscripts, the ‘crown-characters’ are often indicated by paratexts.36

The third type is what could be called ‘the *nani* (‘what’) type of *fushimono*’. The *nani* type can also be divided into two sub-types: a ‘simple’ (*tanshiki* 単式) and a ‘double’ or ‘combined’ (*fukushiki* 複式) *fushimono*. Analysing data from Fujiwara Teika’s diary *Meigetsuki*,37 Ishida sets the watershed that separates the ‘*nani*’ type from the earlier forms around the Jōkyū 承久 era (1219–1222). After

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32 The technique is employed, for instance, in Book 10 of the *Kokin wakashū*. The bird’s name *hototogisu* (‘lesser cuckoo’), for instance, appears in the words *hodo* ほど (‘about’) and *toki suginure ya* 時すぎぬれや (‘is it because the time has passed?’). SNKBT 5, 140, Tanaka 1969, 435–436.
33 Ishida 1959, 27; Okuda 1979, 33, n. 2.
35 The character 賦 may be read as *fu* or *fusu* (verbalised).
36 A beautiful example of a *kaishi* recording a ‘crown-character renga’ dating to 1548 is depicted in Tenri Daigaku fuzoku Tenri Daigaku toshokan (ed.) 2020, 83–102.
37 Entries on *fushimono* cover the years from 1200 to 1235. See Ishida 1959, 27–28 and n. 23 above.
this date, all the entries relate to the nani type. One of the reasons for moving to this rule might have been that the task is easier to achieve and gives one more artistic freedom, so the poetic results lead to greater thematic variety. As an example of a ‘simple’ one, if the fushimono is nani yama 何山, or ‘what [kind of] mountain’ (or ‘something with “mountain”’), then the task in the renga is to use binary words, the second part of which is ‘mountain’. If the fushimono is yama nani 山何, then ‘mountain’ is the first part of the compound and the second part has to be inserted. The first case is called uwabushi 上賦 (‘the fushi above’), while the second case is called shitabushi 下賦 (‘the fushi below’).

The second sub-type is a combination of two simple nani compounds, like nani hito kawa nani 何人河何 (‘what-person-river-what’) demanding from the poet that all long verses should have a compound term with hito (person) as its second part and all the short verses should have a compound term with kawa (river) as its first part. One might expect the ‘simple’ form to precede the double one, but in fact the opposite was true: the double form was the one that came first, while the ‘simple’ one only started to flourish in the second half of the thirteenth century. As it turns out, the nani-type fushimono mentioned in Meigetsuki are all of the ‘double’ type.

The simple fushimono has been in use ever since then. Its emergence and persistence should be seen in connection with another historical development: while the double fushimono with its alternating distribution was more an expression of renga as a game and was probably also inspired by Chinese models, the simple fushimono went hand in hand with increasing abstraction and, in parallel, the shift of weight in renga from ‘game’ to ‘art’, a process that included the development of poetic theory, the ritualisation of the performance, and acts of ‘nobilitation’ of the genre like its inclusion in poetry anthologies and later the editions of anthologies solely devoted to renga (see below). Renga also became regarded as worthy of being conducted as a votive gift (hōraku renga 法楽連歌 or hōnō renga 奉納連歌) to the deities. On a material level, it can be observed that some renga poems were written on lavishly decorated kaishi paper, which was precious, and that kaishi sheets were occasionally turned into scrolls, the book format with the highest prestige of all. Not only were the votive

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38 Ishida 1959, 29–30. As Ishida states, the sudden change to the nani type may also be related to a change in the practice and to the fact that this change occurred after ex-emperor Gotoba had been exiled to Oki island.

39 The Shūi wakashū 拾遺和歌集 (Collection of Gleanings, 1005) was the first anthology to include short renga.

40 See Buck-Albulet 2020.
poems dedicated to the deities through the acts of composing and reciting, but their material carriers (i.e. the manuscripts) were donated to the gods as well.

There is a fourth group of miscellaneous types of fushimono as well. I shall mention two of these here:

– **sanji chūryaku** 三字中略 (‘take the middle character of three characters out’). This refers to a task that requires the poet to use a three-syllable (or kana-character) word that still makes sense when the middle syllable has been taken out.\(^{41}\) For example, if you took out the middle character from *katsura* かつら (cassia tree), the result would be *kara* から (‘China’). I call this the ‘*ryaku*’ or ‘shortening’ principle.

– **niji hen’on** 二字反音 (‘two characters, reverse sound’), on the other hand, requires words consisting of two kana characters that have another meaning if read backwards, such as *hana* はな (‘flower’) and *naha* (= nawa) なは (‘rope’).\(^{42}\) I call this the ‘reverse’ principle. Both types are still in use today.\(^{43}\)

Collections of fushimono began to be compiled in the Kamakura period (1185–1333),\(^ {44}\) which not only indicates the importance of the technique, but that a process of canonisation was also taking place. One of the medieval collections is still used by contemporary sōshō, as they choose the fushimono from it:\(^ {45}\) the *Fushimonohen* 賦物篇 (*A Compilation of Fushimono*) by Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (1455–1537) and revised and enlarged by Botanka Shōhaku 牡丹花肖柏 (1443–1527).

### 4.2 Fushimono as a structural principle

The development of the fushimono’s effect on a renga poem can be divided into four steps. First of all, in the Kamakura period (1185–1333), it was a principle that affected each link of the poem. In a second step, the scope of the rule was reduced, for example to the first eight verses (= the recto of the first sheet) or the first three. The third step was reducing the scope to just the *hokku*, and finally, the fourth step was the reversal of the principle: the fushimono was only provided


\(^{42}\) Hiroki (ed.) 2010, 228.

\(^{43}\) See Susa Jinja Renga no kai (ed.) 1997, 18 and 44, for example.

\(^{44}\) The oldest extant collection is the *Nosakabon Fushimono shū* 野坂本賦物集 (*Fushimono Collection*, manuscript owned by the Nosaka family, fourteenth century); see Ogata 2008, 660.

once the *hokku* had been composed, just like in a riddle where the answer is given first and the question leading to it then has to be found. In 1468, the practice of only picking the *fushimono* once the *hokku* was composed was criticised by the monk and eminent *renga* master Shinkei 心敬 (1406–1457).\(^{46}\) From the viewpoint of the performance, the scope of the *fushimono* also developed from affecting all the participants, then just some of them and finally – at least in contemporary Japan – only the *sōshō* who creates the *fushimono* from the *hokku*. The fourth step may be related to the fact that the first verse was often created prior to the gathering, usually by the guest of honour.\(^{47}\)

### 4.3 From *fushimono* to *shikimoku*

With the development towards the simple *fushimono* on the one hand and its ‘degeneration’ as a structural principle on the other – it was no longer something that determined every verse, and gradually became meaningless around the Nanboku era (1336–1392)\(^{48}\) – other measures to maintain text coherence became necessary. These were the rules (*shikimoku* 式目) of restriction on seriation (*kukazu* 句数, limitation of the ‘number of verses’ in which ‘thematic or lexical categories may appear in sequence’), rules on intermission (*sarikirai* 去嫌, where similar themes had to be separated by a certain number of verses), and rules on occurrence (rules that ‘limit the number of times certain words may appear in a full sequence of one-hundred verses’).\(^{49}\) In modern *renga*, for example, the subject of ‘famous places’ may be continued for two verses. Verses containing ‘love’ must be separated by five verses. Some of the restrictions also apply on the level of the manuscripts: *ori o kirau* 折を嫌ふ refers to expressions that should ‘not be repeated on the [same] folded sheet’, while *omote o kirau* 面を嫌ふ (‘avoid the page’) means a participant should not come up with the same category on the same page.\(^{50}\) These rules, known as *shikimoku*, came to be recorded in rulebooks, the prototype of which became *Renga shinshiki* 連歌新式 (1372, *New Rules on Renga*, later called *Ōan shinshiki* 応安新式 *New Rules of the Ōan era*), which is still the reference work upon which contemporary practice is based. As Okuda has remarked, its compilation ‘coincided almost exactly with

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\(^{46}\) Okuda 2017, 25. ZGR 17b, 1131.

\(^{47}\) Benl 1954, 438.

\(^{48}\) Okuda 2017, 22.

\(^{49}\) Okuda 1979, 38. The term in modern Japanese is *ku sari* 句去り (‘set verses apart’).

\(^{50}\) Carter 1983, 584. Hiroki (ed.) 2010, 120.

\(^{51}\) Mitsuta 1993, 148.
the period in which *fushimono* was on the decline*. It is also worth noting that the development from *fushimono* to *shikimoku* rules paralleled the development of *renga* from a game to an acknowledged art. This is also indicated by the compilation of the earliest semi-official anthology, *Tsukuba shū* 菟玖波集 (*Tsukuba Anthology*, 1356), and the *Shinsen Tsukubashū* 新撰菟玖波集 (*Newly Selected Tsukuba Anthology*, 1495).

So what happened to the *fushimono* after the invention of *shikimoku* rules? So far, we have seen that it changed in a four-step development from being a structural principle affecting each verse of a *renga* poem to being something that not only related exclusively to the *hokku*, but that was created once the *hokku* had been announced and had thus undergone a *reversal* of its initial principle. The remarkable thing here is that it was not entirely abandoned, but changed its function from being a ‘quiz question’ to the answer. In other words, the place of the question or task moved from the ‘title’ to the first verse. Or rather, the question in the ‘title’ came to be created after the ‘answer’ was given in the *hokku*.

### 4.4 *Fushimono* as a title?

As mentioned above, *fushimono* appear as titles or ‘headers’ written in a bigger font size than the verses themselves in manuscripts and other written artefacts. According to the definition produced by the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures in Hamburg, paratexts can have a structuring, commenting and/or regulating function. Two of the most important functions that a header has are naming a text or manuscript and giving a short summary or keyword that adequately describes the essence of the main text that follows. (A *fushimono* can only have such a function if it relates to the entire poem.) However, a title or header (or rather, a sub-title) may also have a regulating function, as in a maths test: ‘Multiply the following numbers: ...’. The main text in this case (the maths test) would be like a cloze exercise to be completed by the reader. ‘Topic poetry’ (Jap. *daiei* 預詠) as it was practised in China and Japan is a similar case: the titles had a regulatory function, at least in the performative process. In the early stage of *renga*, *fushimono* titles may have been where the directive that worked in the performance was recorded. *Fusu nani hito renga* would thus mean ‘find

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52 Okuda 1979, 38.
53 <https://www.manuscript-cultures.uni-hamburg.de/Projekte_e.html> (accessed on 3 Oct. 2020); Ciotti and Hang 2016, XI.
words (or ‘characters’; ji 字) that could replace nani to form a compound expression with hito (‘person’) as the second part and distribute them in every verse. This task was to be performed by the participants.

With the wording of the fushimono title being a result of what was written before in the hokku, its regulating function is somewhat defunct in the final stage of its development. To some degree, the riddle still works for the reader, but not for the poets. The hokku provides a task that is to be performed by the sōshō who creates the fushimono title. Apart from this, the function of fushimono titles in later renga poems tends to shift to naming or classifying the renga, thus a commenting function of the paratext. However, the naming function is also somewhat defunct as there is only a limited number of terms that may be used. In research and in catalogues of renga manuscripts, different devices like the initial words from a hokku and reference numbers may additionally be used to identify a specific renga manuscript.

The purpose of fushimono as a paratext may thus be described as assigning a kind of ‘genus’ or classification to the poem. It has also been said that fushimono is a ‘label’ (fuchō 符帳) rather than a title. Some outstanding poems have been given unique names like the Minase sangin hyakuin 水無瀬三吟百韻 (Hyakuin by three poets at Minase), for example, which is a Fusu nani hito renga.

5 Written artefacts and the fushimono

5.1 Renga kaishi

In contemporary Japan, traditional renga manuscripts are usually only written on special occasions. But when they are written, they employ a layout that has largely remained the same for centuries: four folded sheets (ori 折) around 36 × 52 cm in size when folded are necessary for a hundred verses and two

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54 Or the first eight verses or just the hokku, according to the era.
55 See Ozaki 2005, 81.
56 Tsurusaki 2010, 51. Hiroki states that a fushimono does not denote an individual work, see Hiroki 2017, 49.
57 See Yasuda (1956) for an English translation. A facsimile of a record of this renga, which is said to be in handwriting of the famous poet Sōchō 宗長 (1448–1532), has recently been published. See Tenri Daigaku fuzoku Tenri Daigaku toshokan (ed.) 2020, 41–59.
58 The handling of the layout in Fig. 2 is a little freer, but the basic scheme is still employed.
sheets are needed for forty-four verses (the standard in contemporary Japan). Both distribute the verses on the sheets in such a way that there are eight of them on the recto side of the first sheet, eight on the verso of the last one and fourteen on all the other pages. The title – one of the introductory paratexts – is placed to the right of the hokku and at the left margin of the blank space, which covers a little less than a third of the first sheet recto, and is written in a bigger font. In order to store them in boxes, many kaishi are folded twice to yield three parts (see Fig. 1), and the title is usually placed to the right or left of the fold or exactly where the fold is to be made. We do not know precisely when this layout emerged as no manuscripts have been found that date to the earliest stage of renga’s history. Ichiji reports the existence of kaishi from the early fourteenth century that already followed exactly this pattern. Initially, however, alternative patterns existed as well. The Meigetsuki mentions five and even six folded sheets (ori or origami), but we do not know if this refers to the record of a hundred verses. There was also a pattern using three ori for a hyakuin, although such copies are very rare. Among the kaishi consisting of four origami in the fourteenth century, there were a number that distributed the verses according to a different formula, such as ten for the first sheet recto and six for the last sheet verso, or a distribution of ten and fourteen for the first sheet, twelve and fourteen for the second and third sheet and fourteen and ten for the last sheet. The pattern as we know it today seems to have spread more and more in the course of the fourteenth century or towards the end of it.

How does the development of these formats relate to that of the fushimono? The existence of different layout patterns may indicate that they correlated with

59 The fold can be seen in Fig. 2. As this manuscript is not tied with thread, it was possible to unfold it for the photo.
60 Hashizukuri 端作 in the narrower sense is the date in the right-hand margin, following precedents of waka kaishi. Sometimes the fushimono title is included in the notion of hashizukuri. See Hiroki (ed.) 2010, 237.
61 According to Yamada 1980, 161, the fushimono title was to be placed to the right of the first vertical fold. I would like to thank Inoue Yukiko 井上由希子 for this information. A kaishi by Inoue which complies with Yamada’s instructions for writing the fushimono is depicted in Buck-Albulet 2020, 17.
62 Ichiji 1967, 137.
63 Ichiji 1967, 20 and 140.
64 Ogata 2008, 983; Ichiji 1967, 139. The distribution of verses this case is ten for the first sheet recto and the last sheet verso and twenty for all the other pages.
65 Ichiji 1967, 139.
different poetic rules, each developed by the great poets of the time.\textsuperscript{66} The earliest extant fragment of a *renge kaishi*, dating to 1241, already has the typical blank space on the first third of the page, like the first sheet recto of later *kaishi*. Moreover, it also has a title indicating that this is a *Fusu nani ya nani mizu renga* (‘Renga related to house and water’).\textsuperscript{67} The title is followed by nine verses, each written in two vertical lines, as in practically all *renge kaishi*.\textsuperscript{68} A remaining blank space on the left-hand side suggests that this page was initially meant to be filled with twelve or fourteen verses.\textsuperscript{69} As the title shows, this *renge* fragment is part of a *fushimono renga*, i.e. the rule expressed in the title applies to the whole text, with *nani ya* and *nani mizu* applying alternately to the verses. As mentioned above, in the history of *fushimono* there was a development from the *mono no na* type to the ‘double’ *nani* type. It was not until the second half of the thirteenth century that the ‘simple’ *nani*-type *fushimono* occurred.\textsuperscript{70} Initially, the simple *fushimono* was also maintained throughout the *renge*, as can be seen from extant *kaishi* from the fourteenth century, but since this is more difficult than with a ‘complex *fushimono*’, it became shortened to the first eight verses (i.e. the first sheet recto), the first three verses and finally just the *hokku*. In the preceding sections, we saw that *shikimoku* rules were on the rise just when the *fushimono* rules were being eroded, reduced to a mere fragment only visible in the title and, to the insider, in the *hokku*. This was also the time when poetic standards were set that applied to the layout of the *kaishi*, one of which has stood the test of time to this day. Finally, since we mentioned Chinese *lianju* above, the question that remains at the end of this chapter is whether or not the form of *renge kaishi* is actually based on Chinese models of manuscripts.\textsuperscript{71} Future research on this point should address questions such as whether Chinese manuscripts of linked poetry are extant or at least whether Chinese manuscripts of linked poetry are mentioned in source literature.

\textsuperscript{66} Ichiji 1967, 137.
\textsuperscript{67} This manuscript is written on the verso of a manuscript from *Tōdaiji yōroku* 東大寺要録 (*Essential Records on Tōdaiji Temple*), which is stored in the Archive of Daigoji Temple; Okuda 2017, 54–55 (a photo of the manuscript can be found there). A reprint of the text is in Ichiji 1967, 136–137.
\textsuperscript{68} There are manuscripts with verses written in one line, but it seems this is mainly the case with clean copies.
\textsuperscript{69} Ichiji 1967, 140.
\textsuperscript{70} Ichiji 1967, 144.
\textsuperscript{71} Tanaka 1969, 434; Ramirez-Christiansen 2008, 14.
starting point may be Chinese linked poetry as practised in Japan. Nose Asaji quotes several Japanese collections of Chinese poetry suggesting that kaishi were prepared for rengu sessions. These sources not only show that similar divisions of verses were used for the rengu kaishi, but the four-origami form is also mentioned in them.

### 5.2 Fushimono in the age of print

In contemporary renga, every member of the circle takes notes using a printed Mitsuta sheet, as mentioned above. This way, everybody writes his or her own manuscript, a hybrid of print and handwriting. There are some variants of the form sheet in circulation, which vary in detail. There are even more paratexts in the pre-printed parts, which cannot be described in this paper. Many of them refer to parts of the poetic rules of the renga and thus serve as a guideline for poets. The pre-printed part of the fushimono usually contains the words fusu ... renga 賦____連歌 with a blank space in the middle to be filled in by the participant as soon as the sōshō announces his decision on that.

Thus, fushimono has survived to this day, albeit as a kind of relict, and can be found as titles in modern print editions of renga poetry as well. What do these tell us about the use of fushimono in contemporary Japan? To examine a modern sample, I analysed the fushimono in two printed editions of modern-day renga. They showed a surprising degree of variety. In the collection called Heisei no renga (Renga of the Heisei era), which contains sixty-eight renga, thirty-three different fushimono were used, the most common ones (each mentioned four times) being nani ta 何田 ('something field'), on nani 御何 ('honourable something'), kara nani 唐何 ('China/Chinese something') and hatsu nani 初何 ('first something').

A collection of seventy renga composed at Kumata Shrine 杭全神社 in Osaka between 1987 and 1993 likewise has thirty-three different fushimono, the most common being nani hito 何人 ('something person', eight times), nani ki 何木 ('something tree', five times) and nani ro 何路 ('something path', six times). As there are forty-four different fushimono listed in the Fushimonohen, this means that most of them were used. Moreover, this result also suggests that

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72 When lianju or rengu 聯句 is mentioned in Japanese research literature, the authors often do not make it sufficiently clear whether they mean Chinese linked poetry or Japanese linked poetry composed in Chinese.

73 Nose 1950, 119–121.

there is a striving for balance that goes beyond the individual renga sessions, extending to the series of sessions that led to the printed anthology.\textsuperscript{75} Thus the fushimono is also a place of intertextual reference.

6 Conclusion

The early fushimono was a kind of rule that was initially inspired by techniques used in Chinese linked poetry. However, while lianju remained more of a game, ‘the Japanese raised the concept of “playing” in poetry to the level of high art’.\textsuperscript{76} Like the shikimoku employed later (and like rules in general), it was a device that limited players’ options and thus made it possible to play the game in a group. It can be said that the early fushimono rules had stabilising and stimulating functions, just as the shikimoku rules did that were introduced later. They contributed to the coherence of the text and of the process of its creation, and thus to the internal cohesion of the group itself. Competition governed by common rules encouraged the linking process and contributed significantly to the development of long renga poetry.\textsuperscript{77}

With the limitation of its scope to the hokku and then the reversal of the principle (i.e. the fushimono was decided on after the hokku had been composed), the fushimono became defunct as a task or ‘thematic directive’ and a structural principle and was replaced by other rules. At the same time, renga poetry underwent a process of aestheticisation and literarisation. A remnant of the riddle function can still be mentally reproduced when reading a fushimono title and looking for the ‘solution part’ (actually written before the title) in the hokku.

Thus, the fushimono title also takes on the function of a bearer of tradition, a lieu de mémoire that might call up memories of renga’s long history and of literary techniques used before in short renga, waka and even in Chinese poetry. Reminiscent of the heritage of Chinese culture is also the fact that the syntax of the fushimono title is basically a kanbun structure. Yamada Yoshio thus resolves the title 賦_何花_連歌 as Nani hana o fusu(ru) renga (‘Renga that distributes “flower” to something’).\textsuperscript{78} As a paratext in manuscripts and prints alike, fushimono also makes a renga poem recognisable as a renga as opposed to similar

\textsuperscript{75} Kumata Jinja (ed.) 1993, 155–159.
\textsuperscript{76} Pollack 1976, vii–viii.
\textsuperscript{77} Ogata 2008, 808.
\textsuperscript{78} Yamada 1980, 6.
genres like *haikai no renga* or *renku*. Because of its exposed position, a title is particularly suitable for such kinds of inter- and extra-textual references.

Apart from this visual feature, *fushimono* titles differ from what are usually considered to be functions of titles or headers, like naming the text or manuscript or referring to its content. Due to limited variety, the identifying function of *fushimono* titles is a weak one; like very common personal names, additional identifiers are needed in certain contexts. This paper has also shown that it is necessary to distinguish between the directive aspect of *fushimono* and its feature as a ‘title’, although both uses are inextricably linked. The development from ‘task’ to ‘title’ therefore means a shift in weighting between both aspects. In contemporary Japan, *fushimono* is still an indispensable part of *renga* poetry as a performative practice and a literary genre. While being a kind of title, *fushimono* has never entirely lost its nature as a task and a language riddle, just as *renga* has never ceased to be a game and yet serious poetry at the same time.

### 7 Epilogue

It was the last of fourteen circles composing *renga* linked poetry that I took part in during my six-week research trip in Japan in the hot summer of 2018. The group met up on 6 August at a mountain retreat next to Myōken Shrine in Gujō Hachiman, a beautiful place in Gifu prefecture in Central Japan. The aim of this gathering was to jointly compose a forty-four-verse linked poem79 that was to be recited the next day before the deity of Myōken Shrine at the annual Shrine festival.

The first verse, or *hokku*, had been composed by Professor Tsurusaki himself, who acted as the *sōshō* at the day’s *renga* session. It is the one quoted at the beginning: *Misotose o tsuzumi ni mau ya tsuyu no niwa* (‘Thirty years/ dancing to the drum/ in the garden of dew’).80 The *hokku* alludes to the thirtieth performance of the *takigi nō*81 *Kurusu sakura* くるす桜 (‘Kurusu cherry blossom’), which was to take place the next day during the annual festival at Myōken Shrine.82 Once the first half of the poem had been created, Professor Tsurusaki

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79 The whole poem can be found online at <http://www.kokindenju.com/column.html> (accessed on 16 July 2020).

80 The sound of the drum should be thought of as a kind of background music. My thanks to Yamamura Noriko 山村規子 for this information.

81 Nō theatre that is played outside in the evening by torchlight.

announced the *fushimono*, i.e. the ‘title’ of the day’s poem: *Fusu on nani renga* 賦御何連歌 (‘Renga related to ‘honourable’).

As mentioned previously, the *Fushimonohen* from the fifteenth century serves as a source of information regarding which words may be inserted for *nani*. However, when I consulted that work to find out which word in the *hokku* was meant to refer to *on*, it appeared that the only character that matched up with it was *toshi* 年 (‘year’), thus yielding the compound *mitoshi* 御年 (‘grain’). When we asked Professor Tsurusaki whether this was correct, he replied that he had another character in mind, viz. *niwa*. The solution was *on niwa* 御庭 (‘honourable garden’).\(^83\) As *niwa* is not listed in the *Fushimonohen* as a possible match for *on*, this indicates that the *sōshō*’s authority enables some allows for a degree of artistic freedom, and the authority of the old rulebook (which I actually wanted to demonstrate with this example) is not considered absolute in contemporary *renge* circles.

\(^83\) I would like to thank Tsurusaki Hiroo and Yamamura Noriko for their advice on this matter.
The solution on niwa is only virtually present in the renga kaishi. ‘The word written into the verse with black ink and the fushimono together form the compound word’.\textsuperscript{84} Moreover, there is no semantic relationship between the ‘hidden’ compound in the hokku and the content of the verse. In votive renga, however, it can be observed that the compound often reinforces the auspicious tone that the hokku sets, as this example shows.

On the evening of the day following the composing session, Professor Tsurusaki dedicated the kaishi to the deity of Myōken Shrine and solemnly recited the first eight verses of the renga in the light of burning torches. The fushimono in this oral presentation was a kind of ‘acoustic title’ marked by a short pause in speech before the first verse followed, and thus an indispensable part of the dedication ceremony. I left Japan two days later, deeply grateful for having been able to experience what it means to live the tradition of renga. My experiences there also made it clear to me that fushimono is part of this living tradition.

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Abbreviations
SNKBT Shin Nihon koten bungaku taikei
ZGR Zoku gunsho ruijū

\textsuperscript{84} Ichiji 1967, 141.
References


