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Speech, Text, and Reality

Kokugaku and the Buddhist Roots of Japanese Philology

This article aims to overcome the longstanding dichotomy between religion and philology in scholarly discourse on *kokugaku*. Specifically, it argues that philology as it was practiced by the paradigmatic figure of the *kokugaku* movement, Motoori Norinaga, not only borrowed certain philological methods of analysis from the Shingon Buddhist cleric Keichū but also took for granted the esoteric Buddhist understanding of language that formed the context for the practice of those methods. Keichū, in turn, borrowed these from his fellow Shingon cleric Jōgon, a groundbreaking scholar of Sanskrit and leading figure in the early modern Japanese precepts reform movement. Already in his studies of Sanskrit, Jōgon formulated the basic principles and methods of Japanese philology as it came to be practiced first by Keichū and subsequently by scholars of *kokugaku*: a concern for recovering the sound of written graphs and a belief that the recovery of those sounds would restore a salvific use of language that had been lost to humanity. The motivation shared by Jōgon and Keichū to retrieve and revive a lost salvific language practice took shape in the context of their involvement in the early modern Buddhist precepts reform movement.

KEYWORDS: *kokugaku*—philology—precepts reform—Jōgon—Keichū—Motoori Norinaga

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The early modern Japanese intellectual movement known as *kokugaku* 国学, or national studies, has long been traced to the Shingon Buddhist cleric Keichū 契沖 (1640–1701). In a 1799 treatise on his scholarly method, *Uiyamabumi*, the paradigmatic figure of *kokugaku*, Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), describes his field of inquiry as "ancient studies" (*inishie manabi* 古学) and, in defining it, locates its origins in the works of Keichū:

> "Ancient studies" refers to a mode of scholarship that does not base anything on the theories of later ages but rather carefully casts light on the events (*koto* 事) of antiquity using only ancient texts and that which is found within them. This type of scholarship was invented in recent times. Although Dharma Master Keichū limited himself to poetic texts, it was he who opened this [scholarly] way and thus he who should be called the forefather of this field of study.
>
> (MNZ 1: 15)[1]

Norinaga thus praised Keichū for what we would today consider his philology. At the same time, however, he refused to attribute Keichū's philological excellence to his mastery of Buddhist theory and practice, preferring instead to understand it as a product of his "Yamato spirit" (*Yamato damashii* やまとだましひ) and what he saw as its corollary, a commitment to an ethic of "sincerity" (*makoto* まこと) (MNZ 1: 170).

The implicit dichotomy between philology and Buddhism that frames Norinaga's evaluation of Keichū's work has had an enduring legacy in the study of *kokugaku*. Even today, scholars tend to take for granted an opposition between the science of philology and the religion of Buddhism on the assumption that religion and science are mutually exclusive domains. Take, for example, the evaluation of Keichū in the work of Haga Yaichi 芳賀矢一 (1867–1922) and Muraoka Tsunetsugu 村岡典嗣 (1884–1946), founding figures in the disciplines of *kokubungaku* 国文学 (national literature) and *Nihon shisōshi* 日本思想史 (history of Japanese thought), respectively, as well as pioneers in the academic study of *kokugaku*. Both Haga and Muraoka (1975, 98) explicitly characterize Keichū as, to quote Haga, "the individual who established the scholarly method of phi-

1. "Ancient studies" was Norinaga's preferred term for his mode of scholarship. Although *kokugaku* was, of course, the term that ultimately gained traction, Norinaga himself believed it provincialized research into the Japanese past by unnecessarily qualifying it and implicitly favoring Chinese forms of thought, which by contrast were simply referred to as "scholarship" (*gakumon* 学問). As he writes in *Tamakatsuma:* "When we say *kokugaku* there may be some who think this is reverential, but the character *koku* is restrictive and not a term we should use" (MNZ 1: 48).

lology" in Japan (HYS 1: 171). Yet, like Norinaga before them, Haga and Muraoka divorced Keichū's religious commitments from his philological pursuits in no uncertain terms. MURAOKA (1975, 99) is representative when he writes of Keichū, "His education and tastes as a Buddhist in no way influenced his scholarship. As a scholar, he was able to distance himself from both Chinese thought and Buddhism and remain extremely pure" (*junsui* 純粋). To be philological, for Muraoka, meant also a rejection of ideology and religion—as represented by both Chinese thought and Buddhism—and the preservation of a kind of intellectual objectivity, or "purity." By thus opposing Buddhism to philology, Muraoka and Haga neglected the religious framework that formed the background for the emergence of what we might consider scientific inquiry in Japan.

This article seeks to overcome the longstanding dichotomy between religion and philology in modern scholarly discourse on *kokugaku*. As I demonstrate in what follows, Norinaga not only borrowed Keichū's philological methods of analysis but also adopted the esoteric Buddhist understanding of language that informed the practice of those methods. This understanding was "religious" insofar as it distinguished between profane and sacred uses of language and conceptualized the latter as a means for gaining insight into a transcendent reality—that is, a world that lies beyond what can be known in ordinary experience. It was through this insight, significantly, that one could attain liberation from a state of ignorance, or what in a Buddhist context is called enlightenment.

I begin the article with a brief overview of the dichotomy between religion and philology as it has been elaborated in modern scholarship on *kokugaku*, starting with Haga and Muraoka and continuing with more recent thinkers. I then turn to an examination of the genesis of Keichū's analytical methods and the understanding of language that underpinned them, calling special attention to the research of Keichū's close collaborator and fellow Shingon cleric, Jōgon 浄厳 (1639–1702). A groundbreaking scholar of Sanskrit and leading figure in the early modern Japanese precepts reform movement, Jōgon formulated the basic principles and methods of Japanese philology as it came to be practiced first by Keichū and subsequently by scholars of *kokugaku* after him: a concern for recovering the sound of written graphs and a belief that the recovery of those sounds would illuminate a salvific use of language that had been lost to humanity. For Jōgon, that language practice was Shingon mantra; for Keichū and Norinaga, it was *waka* poetry. Keichū and Norinaga's substitution of mantra for *waka*, I argue, does not represent a secularization of linguistic theory, at least not in the sense of an elimination of religion. To the contrary, I suggest that it marks its very opposite, the expansion and further elaboration of premises that were initially articulated and developed within the Buddhist tradition. For Keichū, who explicitly understood *waka* as a form of Shingon mantra, this expansion is clear. While Norinaga rejected his Shingon predecessors' commitment to mantra,

he nonetheless conceptualized the object of his philology as a sacred language practice: whereas mantra liberated its practitioners from cravings and accordingly revealed to them an enlightened realm of buddhas and bodhisattvas, *waka* redeemed those who uttered them from the "Chinese mind" (*karagokoro* 漢意) and restored for them the ancient Japanese way of the kami. As we will see, the motivation shared by Jōgon, Keichū, and Norinaga to retrieve and revive a lost sacred language practice originally took shape in the context of the former two men's involvement in the early modern Buddhist precepts reform movement. This article thus traces the roots of Japanese philology back to a broader milieu of religious reform.

The Religion/Philology Dichotomy

The question of philology and its relationship, if any, to native Japanese forms of thought first emerged in the late nineteenth century, as Meiji-period scholars endeavored to construct Japanese academic institutions modeled after their Western counterparts. Perhaps the earliest proponent of "philology" in Japan was Ueda Kazutoshi 上田万年 (1867–1937), a close contemporary of Haga's and the founding figure of *kokugogaku* 国語学 (national language studies) at Tokyo Imperial University. Writing in 1890, Ueda used the English word "philology" to gloss the neologism *hakugengaku* 博言学 (a precursor term to *gengogaku* 言語学, or linguistics), emphasizing that discipline's scientific linguistic underpinnings and placing it in explicit contrast to what he considered the hopelessly backward treatment of language by the older *kokugaku* tradition (Lee 2009, 73–74). It was not until Haga, who joined the faculty of Tokyo Imperial University in 1898 and was sent to Berlin to study German philology the following year, that philology—which Haga translated as *bunkengaku* 文献学—was placed in positive relationship to the scholarship of Keichū and Norinaga, as well as *kokugaku* more broadly. In Haga's hands, *kokugaku*'s academic legacy shifted from national embarrassment to a point of national pride, evidence of Japan's vibrant intellectual past and a tantalizing glimmer of an incipient modernization free from Western influence.

It was Keichū, Haga claimed, who had first laid the foundation for the philological study of the Japanese nation; and he had done so not only independently from his counterparts in Germany but decades before them (HYS 1: 153). While Haga did not consider Keichū as a scholar of *kokugaku* in the strict sense,[2] his heirs in the *kokugaku* tradition had taken Keichū's work and developed from

2. According to Haga, Keichū was not technically a *kokugaku* scholar because he did not foreground the "way of the nation" (*kuni no michi* 国の道). Haga pointed instead to Kada no Azumamaro 荷田春満 (1669–1736), a scholar working several decades after Keichū, as the founding figure of *kokugaku* (HYS 1: 168).

them a "science of nationality" (*Wissenschaft der Nationalität* ウイツセンシヤフト・デア・ナチヨナリテエート) (HYS 1: 159), a kind of philology that took an objective approach to the study of Japan's language and texts in order to explain the specific characteristics of the Japanese people (HYS 1: 149–153). As Haga put it succinctly at the end of his 1900 essay, "Kokugakushi gairon":

> What Western scholars call philology (*firorogī* フイロロギー) is research of the nation taking literature and text as its foundation. To put it in Japanese terms, this is to research the nation taking national language and national texts as its foundation. What *kokugaku* scholars have been doing for some two hundred years is, in other words, Japanese philology. (HYS 1: 45)

Even as he searched for the Japanese origins of the philological method in early modern *kokugaku*, however, Haga was also careful to distinguish his own modern approach from it. Specifically, he directed critical attention to what he identified as the religious dimensions of *kokugaku*. In his 1908 lecture series, "Nihon bunkengaku," for example, Haga characterizes *kokugaku* scholars as "religionists" (*shūkyōka* 宗教家) who used the scientific method of philology to confirm the religious dogma that they already believed *a priori* to be true (HYS 1: 144). For Haga, "religion" is a pejorative, signifying nothing more than a kind of prejudice and, thus, the antithesis of empirical science. Importantly, for Haga, the religious prejudice that contaminates *kokugaku* philology and renders it unscientific is specifically of an ethnocentric variety. He elaborates that, through their blind commitment to ancient Japan, *kokugaku* scholars were enmeshed in a narrow-minded tautology wherein all ancient Japanese things were considered pure and good simply because they derived from ancient Japan; likewise, anything originating in later periods of Japanese history, or in China, were deemed unworthy of respect. Elsewhere, he similarly criticizes *kokugaku* scholars for being inadequately "scientific," dismissing as they did any hint of foreign cultural influence from their reconstructions of ancient Japan even when textual evidence proved otherwise (HYS 1: 162).

Hailing from the generation of scholars immediately succeeding Haga, Muraoka explicitly took Haga's lectures on *kokugaku* and philology as inspiration in his first major published work, *Motoori Norinaga*, including especially the perceived tension between "religion" and "science." Reflecting on the book decades later in 1942, Muraoka would characterize it as an extended meditation on "why such a scientist (*kagakusha* 科学者) [as Norinaga] also possessed that kind of faith" (*shinkō* 信仰) (MIZUNO 2018, 88). For MURAOKA (1975, 228), much like Haga, the confounding problem of Norinaga's thought—and hence of *kokugaku* scholarship more broadly, of which he considered Norinaga's thought representative—lay in Norinaga's unqualified belief in the "primitive" (*genshiteki* 原始的) and "irrational" (*fugōri* 不合理) kami narratives depicted in the *Kojiki* 古事記 and

other ancient texts, despite his very rational methods for philologically uncovering those same narratives. Unlike Haga, Muraoka (1975, 109) would ultimately conclude that Norinaga's belief in the ancient texts was borne of a commitment to "truth" (*shinri* 真理), as opposed to what he categorizes as "religion." Thus what initially appeared to be irrational faith was not, in Muraoka's final estimation, faith at all, but rather the logical end product of a rational philology: because Norinaga read his source material *as is*, with no religious presuppositions, he could immerse himself wholly in the ancient world described by the texts he studied. This was an evaluation Muraoka (1975, 398) also extended to Keichū, whom he considered more accurately described as a "cleric of truth" (*makoto no sōryo* 真の僧侶) than a cleric of Buddhism. Even as they evaluated *kokugaku* thought and methodology differently, then, the founding figures of national literature and the history of thought in Japan agreed that religion was antithetical to the important task of philological explanation, which they understood as a purely objective and rational endeavor.

The opposition between religion and philology continued to persist in scholarly discussions of *kokugaku* in the decades following Muraoka's death and indeed lingers into the present day. For instance, Maruyama Masao (1974, 165) frames *kokugaku* as a combination of a positivist philological methodology inherited from Ogyū Sorai's 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728) Confucian school of *kogaku* 古学 and an "antipositivist worship of the [Japanese] past." Maruyama, however, follows in Muraoka's footsteps in explaining Motoori Norinaga's belief in the divine age, in contrast to his contemporaries in the *kokugaku* movement, as borne from an absolute commitment to the text, that is, to philology. Critiquing this general position, and Muraoka specifically, Koyasu Nobukuni (2000, 45–46) has argued that to describe *kokugaku* as a form of Japanese philology is to obfuscate its essential characteristic—namely, its ethnocentric nativism—and, in doing so, leave largely intact the nativist premises that continue to underpin the modern study of national literature. While Koyasu avoids the explicit dichotomy between science and religion laid out by Haga and Muraoka, he nevertheless reproduces its basic underlying assumption that the practice of philology is incompatible with nativist articles of religious faith.[3]

Much scholarship on *kokugaku* in English has also taken for granted this assumption even as its focus lies elsewhere.[4] In evaluating Keichū's philological investigation of the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集, for example, Peter Nosco (1990, 59–60) notes Keichū's "impressive ability" to distance himself from the "assumptions of his own Shingon Buddhist background," bringing instead an empirical eye to the

3. Hatanaka (1998) critiques Koyasu as fundamentally misunderstanding how philology was conceived, both by Muraoka and the German Romantics.

4. Murphy (2009) is a notable exception.

parsing of the text. Mark McNally (2005, 143, 146) likewise emphasizes Keichū's "methodological rather than ideological" contribution to *kokugaku*, invoking the nineteenth-century *kokugaku* scholar Hirata Atsutane's 平田篤胤 (1776–1843) appraisal that Keichū's philology lacked "greater purpose." Indeed, the standard scholarly characterization of Atsutane's own brand of *kokugaku* as an intensification of religious faith at the expense of philological rigor (for example, Bowring 2017, 283; Fujiwara 2021, 76; Harootunian 1988, 26) itself gestures toward the same dichotomy. In perhaps one of the most perplexing examples, Jason Ānanda Josephson (2012, 97–110) translates *kokugaku* as "National Science" and characterizes philology as a "specifically National Science scientific method" derived from the dual inheritance of Chinese evidential learning and "philological tools" original to Keichū.[5] According to Josephson, it was *kokugaku* scholars' scientific, as opposed to "Buddhist-Shinto," rhetoric that later enabled the Meiji state to plausibly present State Shinto as existing outside the category of religion. The religion/philology dichotomy is again tacitly reproduced here, even as Josephson takes the position that there was no such thing as religion in premodern Japan.

Keichū, Jōgon, and Precepts Reform

But was Keichū's philology really so ideologically empty, so distant from his Shingon Buddhist background, so "non-religious," as it were? In addressing this question, I find it instructive to consider Keichū's relationship with the Shingon reformer Jōgon, who, as I describe below, played an instrumental role in the development of Keichū's philology. Both men's philological work, I argue, is more properly understood when situated within the larger context of the early modern Japanese precepts reform movement.

The early modern Japanese precepts reform movement is often considered by historians to have been initiated by the Shingon cleric Myōnin 明忍 (1576–1610), when he, along with four other clerics, self-ordained at Kōzanji 高山寺 in Kyoto in 1602, claiming to have received the precepts directly from the buddhas (for example, Bowring 2017, 184; Deal and Ruppert 2015, 199; Nishimura 2018, 59). Myōnin and his companions subsequently reestablished the nearby Makino'osan Saimyōji 槙尾山西明寺 as a precepts temple. In doing so, they were consciously following in the footsteps of the medieval Shingon reformer and founder of the Shingon Risshū, Eison 叡尊 (1201–1290), who championed as a basis for ordination the code of conduct for ordained clerics, or *vinaya,* as formulated in the *Four Part Vinaya*. Understood to represent the *vinaya* as taught by Śākyamuni himself, the *Four Part Vinaya* contains numerous regulations

5. Contradictorily, Josephson (2012, 97, 110) at once places "the philological study of the Japanese language" under the rubric of "Western science" and indicates Keichū, who is not known to have had any exposure to Western science, as its pioneering figure.

and prohibitions regarding clerical life and behavior but was largely disregarded in Japan as unnecessarily prescriptive from the time of Saichō 最澄 (766–822) onward (Bowring 2017, 183–184; Groner 2000, 303). Precepts reform efforts, both in the Kamakura and Tokugawa periods, were thus conceived as a return to the correct practices of a pure, now bygone, Buddhism, which had since been corrupted by the worldly extravagances of latter-day clerics. While Myōnin died at a young age attempting to travel to Ming China to further research the *vinaya*, his disciples went on to establish precepts temples across Japan; by the eighteenth century these had spread to every province and to all schools of Japanese Buddhism. Precepts reform efforts were also supported by the shogunal promotion of doctrinal study and the publication and widespread dissemination of the Buddhist canon (*Daizōkyō* 大蔵経) by the Ōbaku Zen school in the mid-seventeenth century, both of which effectively promoted textual interrogation at the expense of medieval oral transmissions (Nishimura 2010, 207–211).

Neither Jōgon's nor Keichū's development as scholars and philologists can be adequately understood without consideration of this larger socio-intellectual context. Born one year apart in 1639 and 1640 in Amagasaki 尼崎, and Kawachi 河内, respectively, both men climbed Mt. Kōya 高野, the administrative headquarters of the Shingon school, at a young age—age ten for Jōgon and thirteen for Keichū—and spent their formative years there. Keichū's teacher during this time, Kaiken 快賢 (d.u.), is known to have had a close relationship with Jōgon through his teacher, Shinken 真賢 (d.u.), and may also have taught Jōgon himself (Hisamatsu 1976, 43). Keichū would remain on the mountain for a decade, descending in 1663 to take up a post as abbot of Mandarain 曼荼羅院 in Ikutama 生玉, Osaka. There, he would receive the rank of esoteric Buddhist master (*ajari* 阿闍梨) one year later. Three years into his appointment at Mandarain, at the age of twenty-seven, Keichū resigned and, after spending several months traveling to visit major centers of mountain ascetic practice in Japan, returned to Mt. Kōya. He would remain on the mountain for the following three years, descending for good in 1669, at the age of thirty. Jōgon, who had resided on Mt. Kōya for over twenty years, likewise left the mountain permanently two years after Keichū in 1671, at the age of thirty-three (Hisamatsu 1976, 44–46; Ueda 2019, 6).

From what can be gathered from Keichū's and Jōgon's own accounts and records of their activities on the mountain, both men came to view the Kōya establishment with ambivalence in their final years there. In his collection of *waka* poems, the *Mangin shū* 漫吟集, Keichū expresses frustration with the lack of commitment to Buddhist practice displayed by his fellow Kōya clerics. The perceived sense of contemporary degeneration and decay vis-à-vis the time of Kūkai 空海 (774–835), the founder of both the Kōya complex and Shingon Buddhism in Japan, are clear in a number of Keichū's poems from this period, of which the following are representative:

How can people
Who reside here revere it?
Only upon leaving
Does it appear to be lofty,
Mountain of the High Plains (Kōya). (KZ 13: 371)

Snow falls
Atop the leaves of the trees
Of Mt. Kōya—
The way of antiquity,
How far separated have we become! (KZ 13: 380)

Jōgon, too, would write in a letter from this time of his disgust for the venality and corruption of the clerics on Mt. Kōya (*Jōgon Wajō denki shiryōshū*, 56). This disgust seems to have culminated in an altercation wherein Jōgon was wounded by sword, an event which Jōgon's primary biographer, UEDA Reijō (2019, 6), identifies as the immediate cause behind his departure from the mountain. Ueda also speculates that Jōgon was discouraged by the factionalism on Mt. Kōya, as well as the lack of broad support there for the study of Siddham, a Brahmi script used in East Asian esoteric Buddhism for the transcription of Sanskrit ritual texts.

Yet, Keichū and Jōgon also found kindred spirits on Mt. Kōya, who shared their sense that the Shingon school, as well as the Buddhist establishment more generally, had grown excessively worldly and corrupt. In the year he climbed the mountain for the second time, Keichū took the bodhisattva precepts under the supervision of Kaien 快円 (1623–1712), the third abbot of Entsūji Shin Bessho 円通寺真別処, a Shingon Risshū temple founded by Myōnin's disciple Ryōei 良永 (1585–1647). Shin Bessho was one of three major centers of precepts training in the early modern period, alongside Makino'o Saimyōji in Kyoto and Yachūji 野中寺 in Osaka. Kaien himself was associated, via a common teacher, with Jōgon, who, six years later in 1673, would also receive the bodhisattva precepts from him. It is thought, too, that Keichū studied Siddham with Jōgon during this time (HISAMATSU 1963, 51).

After Keichū descended Mt. Kōya for a second time, he returned to Osaka, where he would eventually come to reside at the home of his patron, Fuseya Shigekata 伏屋重賢 (d. 1693). Continuing his study of Siddham but also turning his attentions to ancient Japanese texts, Keichū worked relatively freely outside of the Shingon clerical establishment until his appointment as abbot of Myōhōji 妙法寺 in 1679 at the age of thirty-nine. Jōgon's trajectory after his descent from Mt. Kōya brought him to Kyoto, where he spent three years at Ninnaji 仁和寺, receiving there a transmission into the Nishinoinryū 西院流, one of the Hirosawa 廣澤 lineages that emphasized textual study, especially of the esoteric

ritual manuals known as *giki* 儀軌. In 1677, Jōgon left Kyoto to transform his father's residence in his hometown of Onizumi 鬼住, Kawachi Province, into a base for his precepts reform movement, a temple he named Enmeiji 延命寺. That same year, Keichū traveled to Enmeiji, where he would receive from Jōgon an initiation into his Shin Anshōji 新安祥寺 lineage of Shingon Risshū, copying by hand two-hundred fascicles of *giki* manuals, most of which were originally copied by Jōgon at Ninnaji. Keichū would remain with Jōgon at Enmeiji copying ritual manuals and sutras for the next two years, departing only to take up an appointment as abbot of Myōhōji. According to the *Myōhōjiki*, written by Keichū in 1684, Keichū had attempted to have the abbacy of Myōhōji transferred to Jōgon instead of to himself, though that did not materialize for reasons that remain obscure (KZ 16: 420; Okamura 1969, 245–246). Regardless, Keichū continued his practice of collating and copying sacred texts and *giki* with Jōgon through at least 1684, a year after he was brought onto Mito daimyo Tokugawa Mitsukuni's 徳川光国 (1628–1701) *Man'yōshū* 万葉集 commentarial project.

The study of *giki* was fundamental to Jōgon's precepts reform efforts. Prior to Jōgon, the early modern Japanese precepts reform movement was a trans-sectarian movement that called for the strict observance of the *vinaya* as formulated in the *Dharmaguptaka vinaya* (Nishimura 2008, 5). As Ueda Reijō (1967, 19) has argued, however, Jōgon "esotericized" (*mikkyōka* 密教化) the precepts reform movement. In a 1694 treatise written in response to queries from the bakufu, *Shingon ritsuben* 真言律弁, Jōgon argues that clerics of the Shingon school must observe not only the *vinaya* as laid out in the *Dharmaguptaka vinaya* but also what he, after Kūkai, calls the "esoteric precepts" (*mikkai* 密戒) and the "*samaya* precepts" (*samaya kai* 三摩耶戒) (Fujitani 2016, 28, 32). The esoteric precepts of the Shingon school are not merely add-ons to the precepts observed by lay householders and clerics of other schools, according to Jōgon, but rather their very basis. In his examination of Jōgon's precepts reforms efforts, Okamura Keishin (1969, 234) suggests Jōgon derived this interpretation of the precepts from the *Kōnin yuikai*, a text that Jōgon, in accordance with the Shingon tradition, would have understood to have been authored by Kūkai. According to the *Kōnin yuikai*, the esoteric precepts do not refer to a codified body of law or set of injunctions as do other precepts but are rather simply a way of abiding in one's own enlightened mind, or what the text calls the "unified mind" (*isshin* 一心). In abiding in the unified mind, the practitioner cultivates an attitude of non-discrimination (*mu shabetsu* 無差別) with regard to the relationship between one's own self and other unenlightened beings, on the one hand, and one's own self and the Buddha, on the other (TKZ 7: 392; Okamura 1969, 234).

In the Shingon school, the cleric learns to abide in the unified mind through the practice of esoteric rites (*shuhō* 修法), a kind of ritual practice that takes place at an altar arranged as a mandala and centers on the chanting of mantras in sync

with the binding of mudra, or hand gestures.[6] Because true observance of the precepts, in Jōgon's esoteric understanding, is nothing more than abiding in the unified mind, and because esoteric rites constitute the means by which the cleric abides in this unified state, Jōgon invested considerable energy in the renovation of Shingon ritual as part of his efforts to reform the precepts (Ueda 2019, 8–9). As Ueda (1975, 32–33) has observed, Jōgon's precepts reform efforts were thus predicated on a kind of revivalism, an attempt to revive and restore the ancient practices of the Shingon tradition.

Like Keichū and Norinaga after him, Jōgon endeavored to revive what he understood to be a lost salvific practice. For Jōgon, this practice was the ensemble of actions, including mantra, that formed what Shingon Buddhists called "esoteric ritual"; for Keichū and Norinaga, it was *waka* poetry. Yet, the philological strategy that Jōgon devised for transcending his own temporal location and retrieving this lost practice paved the way for Keichū's reconstruction of *waka* poetry. Rather than relying on medieval lineages of master-disciple transmissions, Jōgon conducted text-critical analysis of Shingon ritual manuals and engaged in systematic study of Sanskrit, the language of Shingon ritual, focusing particularly on its phonology and its phonetic writing system, Siddham. Moreover, he was instrumental in the public dissemination of hitherto esoteric knowledge—another quality often identified with *kokugaku*—publishing three-hundred and twenty-four volumes of *giki* with the Ōbakusan 黄檗山 imprint (Ueda 2019, 8).

Jōgon's Sanskrit Phonology and His Esoteric Buddhist Understanding of Language

In his 1682 treatise on Siddham, *Shittan sanmitsu shō*, Jōgon articulates the esoteric Buddhist understanding of language upon which Keichū would later predicate his study of ancient Japanese. As the title suggests, Jōgon argues that the three elements of Siddham—its phonemes (*shō* 声), graphs (*ji* 字), and referents, or what he calls the real aspect (*jissō* 実相) of reality—constitute the three mysteries—the chanting of mantra, the contemplation of mandala, and the binding of mudra—of Mahāvairocana Buddha, the central buddha of the Shingon tradition. In analyzing language in terms of its phonemes, graphs, and referents, Jōgon drew on the esoteric Buddhist theory of language elaborated by Kūkai in his doctrinal treatise *Shō ji jissō gi*.[7] He grounds his reading of Kūkai's treatise on a *gatha* from the second chapter of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* in which it is explained

6. See the entry for "shuhō" 修法 in the online version of *Kokushi daijiten* 国史大辞典 available through JapanKnowledge, https://japanknowledge.com.

7. My analysis of Kūkai's theory of language draws on a rich body of scholarship (Abé 1999, 275–304; Payne 2018, 86–90; Takemura 2021). For an excellent translation of *Shō ji jissō gi,* see Takagi and Dreitlen (2010, 79–126).

that Mahāvairocana Buddha sets forth his teachings through the "empowerment" (*kaji* 加持) of "various regional languages" (*zuihō gogen* 随方語言) (T 848, 18.10a16–17; Geibel 2005, 42; cited by Jōgon in T 2710, 84.716a9–10).

In laying out his analysis of this claim, Jōgon cites a commentary on this passage from the *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra*, the authoritative commentary within the Shingon tradition on the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* by Yixing 一行 (683–727), that further elaborates that the "written graphs of the world" (*seken moji* 世間文字) have "real meaning" (*jitsugi* 実義):

> World-Honored One, the faculties of living beings in the world to come will be dull and, for this reason, they will be deluded with regard to the two truths, not knowing that the ultimate [truth] lies within the worldly [conventional truth]. Therefore, let us adduce an example: "Lord of Mysteries, what is the mantra [literally 'true words'] path of the Tathāgatas? It is the empowering of these written words and letters."[8] Written graphs and speech of the world have real meaning; therefore, Tathāgatas use the real meaning inherent in mantra to empower them. If one supposes that, outside the Dharma-nature, there separately exist mundane words and letters, that is the perverse view of a deluded mind which thinks that, all in all, there is no real substance that can be sought but the Buddha [nevertheless] uses his divine power to empower it. That is a distorted view. It is not the [path of] true words.
>
> (T 1796, 39.650c; cited by Jōgon in T 2710, 84.716a)

The truth, in other words, can be found in the mundane languages of the world, for they do not depart from the Dharma-nature. "Real meaning," moreover, is here synonymous with "real aspect." Hence, Jōgon argues that the phonemes of the Sanskrit language, when represented graphically in writing, manifest the real aspect of reality. In *Shō ji jissō gi*, Kūkai makes precisely the same argument: a phoneme is "not empty," it "manifests the name of the thing," which is the graph itself; the graph—specifically, the kind of phonemic graph used in Siddham—refers to "the essence of the thing," which is its real aspect (TKZ 3: 36). Building on Kūkai's phonocentric understanding of language, Jōgon argues that a particular phoneme (he cites the example of the seed syllable of Mahāvairocana's mantra, the phoneme "A") is not just a sound but an "image-sound" (*gyōon* 形音), and the "image-sound" signifies reliably: it "always encompasses meaning" (*gishū* 義趣). "Sound," "image," and "meaning," Jōgon suggests, are "nondual and non-different." Accordingly, Jōgon concludes that the phoneme is none other than the graph, and the graph—or, more precisely, the phonemic graph—none other than the real aspect of reality: "The voice is itself the graph, the graph itself the real aspect [of reality]" (T 2710, 84.716a22–25).

8. The quoted line is from second chapter of the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra (*T 848, 18.10a).

Despite his interest in the claim made in the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* that Mahāvairocana "empowers" diverse "regional languages," Jōgon did not extend his esoteric Buddhist understanding of language to Japanese. His consideration of Siddham was rooted in his efforts to reform Shingon ritual and did not extend beyond that. In his work with Shingon ritual manuals, Jōgon encountered many descriptions and citations of mantras and a variety of mantra called *dhāraṇī*. Following Kūkai's emphasis on the importance of their sonic quality, the Japanese esoteric tradition never translated mantra into Japanese but instead cited them either in Siddham or represented their sound using Chinese characters phonetically. Because knowledge of Sanskrit in medieval Japan was limited, how certain mantra should be vocalized came to be a matter of inter-lineal contention within the Shingon school. For this reason, Jōgon's analysis of language focused exclusively on Sanskrit and the problem of how it should be pronounced.

Jōgon developed two philological methods of analysis that Keichū would later adopt in his study of the Japanese language. The first, which would not be picked up by *kokugaku* scholars after Keichū, was the analysis of the manifold meanings of each individual Siddham graph. The second, which would eventually make its way in a modified form into Norinaga's writings via Keichū, was the arrangement of the fifty phonemes of the Sanskrit language into a "fifty-sound chart" (*gojū on zu* 五十音図) that organized the initial vowel or consonant of all phonemes into ten vertical columns and the vowel ending of those phonemes into five rows. Jōgon presents the chart in his *Shittan sanmitsu shō* (T 2710, 84.728b1–30) and uses it as a basis to infer the proper pronunciation of the mantras that he encountered in his study of ritual manuals (T 2710, 84.739b–766b). While Jōgon was not the first to make use of such a chart, he was the first to arrange it in the order that most closely reflects the traditional Indian understanding of Sanskrit phonetics (*śikṣā*), which organizes the phonemes of the Sanskrit language according to an empirical analysis of the point of articulation in the human mouth, moving from back to front: throat, palate, palatal ridge, teeth, and lips.[9] He was also the first to posit a connection between the production of the sounds of the fifty-sound chart and the phoneme *A*, making the claim that because all phonemes derive from *A* all can be used for *dhāraṇī*. He writes:

9. The fifty-sound chart can be traced back to the Heian period (YAMADA 1951, 31). Jōgon was the first to arrange the order of the columns in the order in which it is arranged today: A-Ka-Sa-Ta-Na-Ha-Ma-Ya-Ra-Wa. The modern order approximates a back-to-front movement in the point of articulation of each sound in the mouth: A is open; Ka is velar (throat); Sa-Ta-Na is palatal (palate); Ha (originally, Fa)-Ma is labial (lips). Jōgon places Ya-Ra-Wa at the end of the chart because, in accordance with Sanskrit phonology, he understood these sounds to be semi-vowels, that is, something like y, r, l, and v in Sanskrit. In arranging these semi-vowels, he follows the same back-to-front principle.

> Moreover, the foregoing graphs [for example, phonemes, or sounds, of the fifty-sound chart] all may be interpreted as having the meaning of originally uncreated. That is because all graphs derive from the graph *A* and arise thereby. That they may be used for the purpose of upholding everything (*sōji* 惣持 [that is, *dhāraṇī*]) derives precisely from this graph A. (T 2710, 84.791b12–15)

Here, Jōgon interprets the fifty-sound chart through the lens of the Shingon discourse on the "originally uncreated graph A" (*aji honpushō* 阿字本不生) and, from that vantage point, claims that all sounds of the fifty-sound chart have ritual efficacy.[10] Keichū would subsequently borrow Jōgon's Shingon-derived fifty-sound chart, as well as his understanding of phonology, and apply it whole cloth to the Japanese language, maintaining Jōgon's implications for the ritual efficacy of language.

Keichū's Japanese Philology and His Esoteric Buddhist Understanding of Language

By 1687, when Keichū completed the first draft of the *Man'yō daishōki*, his now-famous commentary on the *Man'yōshū* poetry anthology compiled for Tokugawa Mitsukuni, he was already well versed in Jōgon's esoteric Buddhist understanding of language and the phonological chart he used to analyze Sanskrit phonology. In contrast to his friend and collaborator, however, Keichū was interested in Sanskrit only insofar as it shed light on the specific features of the Japanese language. Therefore, in borrowing from Jōgon's Sanskrit phonology, he adapted its principles and methods to the study of Japanese.

Before Keichū, the forty-seven phonemes of Japanese were analyzed according to a pangram called the *iroha*, a poem that uses every phonemic graph, or *kana*, of the Japanese syllabary once to reveal a Buddhist message about the impermanence of life and the necessity of seeking salvation from it. As a kind of Buddhist anagram of Japanese *kana*, it attracted the attention of numerous Buddhist commentators both within and outside the Shingon school (Abé 1999, 391–393; Komatsu 1979, 36, 144–145). It was not, however, designed to shed light on the phonological structure of the Japanese language. Just as Jōgon, in his study of Siddham, was interested in recovering the original pronunciation of Sanskrit mantra, Keichū sought to reconstruct the sounds of ancient Japanese poems in his study of the *Man'yōshū*. To that end, Keichū turned to Jōgon's chart of fifty sounds as a model. Already in the first edition of the *Man'yō daishōki*, the 1687 *Shokkōbon* 初稿本, Keichū discusses the fifty sounds and includes a chart but leaves it blank (KZ 1: 211). In the second and final edition, the 1690 *Seisenbon* 精選本, he includes a complete chart and offers a detailed discussion of its structure

10. For an authoritative and succinct overview of Shingon discourse on the "originally uncreated graph A," see Misaki (1988, 77–79).

(KZ 1: 184).[11] Adapting it to the study of Japanese, he was able to accurately identify the pronunciation of sounds that had been lost in the course of phonological change that took place in the nearly one thousand years that separated him from his object of study, the poems of the *Man'yōshū*. Thus Keichū discerned that two characters pronounced similarly in his day, *e* え and *we* ゑ, should be placed in the *a* あ and *wa* わ columns, respectively.

In laying out the theoretical framework for his study of Japanese, Keichū adopted the same phonocentric claims about language and the power of its sounds that we observed in Jōgon's treatise on Siddham. In the "General Introduction" to the *Man'yō daishōki*, Keichū reiterates Jōgon's interpretation of Kūkai's *Shō ji jissō gi*: "Beneath the phonemic graph (*shōji* 声字)," he contends, "always lies the real aspect." On the basis of this understanding of language, derived from Kūkai via Jōgon, Keichū makes the inference that "when we analyze and clarify the phonemic graph, the real aspect manifests" (*arawaru* 顕ハル) (KZ 1: 192). Careful phonological study of written texts, in other words, will yield the reality to which its graphs refer. Extrapolating from this line of reasoning, Keichū lays down the basic principle by which he conducted his study of poetry in the *Man'yōshū*: "Thus in *waka*, before examining the meaning of the text (*bungi* 文義), one must first be able to determine its *kana* orthography" (KZ 1: 192). In thus insisting on the importance of the accurate ascertainment of linguistic sound, Keichū took the same approach to *waka* poetry that Jōgon brought to mantra.

In transposing the methods and principles of Jōgon's Sanskrit phonology to his study of ancient Japanese, Keichū emphasized the inclusivist implications of the Shingon scriptural tradition. As we have observed, the scriptural texts upon which both Jōgon and Kūkai relied make the claim that all sounds made by the tongue—the phonemes of languages in the various regions of the world—are the product of Mahāvairocana's chanting of mantra. Even as they cited these claims and offered careful explanation of them, however, neither Kūkai nor Jōgon extended them to the Japanese language. Keichū was the first to do so.

In the general introduction to the *Man'yō daishōki*, Keichū affirms the universal, enlightened origin and function of the "written languages of the world" (*seken no moji gogen* 世間の文字語言) based on an existential analysis of the manifestation of truth in reality, citing the same passage from the *Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra* that Jōgon cited in the *Shittan sanmitsu shō*, reproduced above (KZ 1: 191, 214). From the perspective of the ultimate truth, Keichū argues, "phenomena as they appear" and "things as they are" are, respectively, "the way" (*dō* 道) and "the truth" (*shin* 真) (KZ 1: 214). To frame his argument

11. The *Seisenbon* is the official version presented by Keichū to Tokugawa Mitsukuni; it was the *Shokkōbon,* however, that was in circulation during the Tokugawa period.

in esoteric terms, Keichū cites a passage from the *Mahāvairocana Sūtra* (T 848, 18.30a), which argues that all movements made by the body are mudras and all utterances made by the tongue are mantras (KZ 1: 191, 214). Following Jōgon's analysis of the three mysteries of Siddham, Keichū thus invokes the thesis that the written form of a language, its graphs, are in their origins mudra, and the pronunciation of those graphs, mantra. He departs from Jōgon's analysis, however, by placing emphasis on a more inclusive understanding of the manifestation of truth in reality, or, at least, of phenomena as they appear to us. Toward the end of the general introduction, he draws the conclusion that all written languages manifest the truth, that "the written language of a particular region naturally encompasses the real aspect" (KZ 1: 215).

Having thus established this more inclusive interpretation of language, Keichū takes it one step further and applies it to the study of Japanese. In doing so, he turns to the writings of two medieval clerics who explored the relationship between esoteric Buddhism and *waka* poetry: Saigyō 西行 (1118–1190) and Mujū Ichien 無住一円 (1227–1312). Keichū's analysis centers on the striking claim made by Mujū in his *setsuwa* anthology, *Shasekishū* 沙石集, that *waka* is the *dhāraṇī* of Japan. Keichū writes:

> In the *Shasekishū,* Mujū writes that the way of *waka* reveals the deep principle (*fukaki kotowari* 深理) of things, encompassing worldly and other-worldly meaning (*seken shusse no kokoro* 世間出世ノ心), and thus can be said to be the *dhāraṇī* of this country. *Dhāraṇī* contains manifold meanings in a single graph and thus in China is called upholding everything (*sōji* 惣持). (KZ 1: 192, 215)

Thus Keichū cites two reasons given by Mujū in support of the claim that *waka* is a kind of *dhāraṇī*. First, that *waka*, like mantra, reveals the deep principle of reality, encompassing both "worldly and otherworldly meaning"; and second, that *waka* contains manifold meanings in a single graph. This second reason presupposes an understanding of mantra that Jōgon emphasizes in his study of Siddham and serves as a model for Keichū's own analysis of poetry in the *Man'yoshū*; the first reason is the corollary of the second. In order to lend further support for the claim that *waka* is a form of Japanese mantra, Keichū goes on to allude to a (likely apocryphal) tale told by Mujū about how Saigyō explained to the Tendai cleric Jien 慈円 (1155–1255), who would later become an esoteric master in his own right, that to gain command over the practice of mantra, one must first "penetrate the hidden depths of meaning" (*ōhi no gi* 奥秘の義) of *waka* poetry (KZ 1: 215).

Keichū understood mantra as not just a kind of language that manifests the true nature of reality, its real aspect, but, more fundamentally, as a consequence of its power to manifests the truth, an act by which one realizes one's original identity with the ultimate source of enlightenment in the cosmos, Mahāvairo-

cana Buddha. His claim that *waka* is a form of Japanese mantra thus implies that Japan is a land wherein buddhas dwell, albeit via their surrogates, or "flowing traces" (*suijaku* 垂迹), the kami of Japan. After presenting his theory of *waka* as Japanese mantra in the general introduction to the *Man'yō daishōki*, Keichū makes this claim explicit by citing a poem by Saigyō included in the 1187 imperial *waka* anthology, *Senzai wakashū* 千載和歌集. The headnote explains that after living on Mt. Kōya for many years, Saigyō moved to a mountain temple on Futaminoura 二見浦, a sacred mountain near the Ise Shrine dedicated to Amaterasu, the divine progenitor of the imperial line in Japan. This mountain, the headnote further specifies, had come to be known as Mt. Kamiji 神路, or "Kami Path." In the poem, Saigyō portrays it as none other than the abode of Mahāvairocana Buddha:

Entering deeply,
I seek the innermost region
Of the Kami Path—
On the peak above all else,
The wind through the pines. (KZ 1: 192, 215)

In the context of Keichū's discussion, the sound of the wind blowing through pines is a symbol for emptiness. Slightly earlier in the general introduction, Keichū cites a couplet from a Chinese poem by Southern Song poet Yang Wanli 楊 万里 (1127–1206) on the sound of the pine: "The sound comes fundamentally neither from the pine, nor the wind / the one encounters the other and to each other they call out" (KZ 1: 191). In light of the headnote, this symbol for emptiness—the mutual interaction between things—also suggests the chanting of mantra by Mahāvairocana. Thus, Saigyō evokes the Buddha's subtle, nonanthropomorphic presence in the most sacred of places in Japan, the Ise Shrine.

Keichū's Buddhist interpretation of *waka* as the manifestation of Mahāvairocana Buddha in Japan provides the conceptual framework for his philological study of the Japanese language. In framing his study in this way, he makes clear that his investigation of the Japanese language has implications that extend beyond mere linguistic issues to larger religious questions about the divine energies that constitute the Japanese nation and how they offer the promise of salvation for those humans who live in their presence. His Buddhist epistemic framework, in other words, opens his study up to larger speculations about the essence of Japan as a nation. By means of this framework, then, Keichū laid the groundwork for the characteristically nativist Japanese philology practiced by *kokugaku* scholars after him.

Keichū and Norinaga

In his master work of philological study, *Kojikiden*, a forty-four-volume exegesis of the *Kojiki*, Motoori Norinaga credits Keichū for having founded the "way of ancient studies" (*inishie manabi no michi* 古学の道), the field of inquiry in which he situates his own work.[12] In identifying Keichū as the founder of the way of ancient studies, Norinaga drew attention both to Keichū's phonological and orthographic research—which Norinaga collectively calls *kanazukai* 仮字づかひ—and what we would today recognize as his philological rigor: his reliance on the texts, rather than the authority of a particular tradition (MNZ 9: 27). As noted in the beginning of this article, Norinaga makes a similar pronouncement in *Uiyamabumi* crediting Keichū with the formation of an approach to scholarship that was based not on later theories—that is, secret transmissions handed down from master to disciple within esoteric lineages—but rather on the examination of ancient texts themselves (MNZ 1: 15). Keichū himself made this scholarly orientation explicit when he opined that "we should not use the past as an example for later ages. Let us describe it just as it is" (*ari no mama* ありのまゝ) (KZ 9: 101). Of course, Jōgon, as we have observed above, also shared this emphasis on the text as a means for retrieving the past.

Yet, Norinaga's Japanese philology—what he called the way of ancient studies—was more than just an illumination of the facts, or events, of antiquity based on careful study of ancient texts. Contrary to his own presentation of his scholarship, Norinaga's philology cannot be reduced to a value-free science; rather, it was a complex interpretive endeavor (BUSHELLE 2020). In making a careful study of Japan's ancient texts, Norinaga necessarily took for granted a particular understanding of the value and meaning of language—particularly the language of Japan's ancient texts—and formulated a view of the value and purpose of philological study based on that understanding. In both regards, Norinaga borrowed much from Keichū.

As we have observed above, Keichū adopted, via his collaborator Jōgon, an esoteric Buddhist understanding of language that affirmed the power of the phonemic graph to manifest the real aspect of reality. In the preface to his 1693 treatise on Japanese writing, *Waji shōranshō*, Keichū formulates this esoteric Buddhist understanding of language in terms that would have been more familiar to students of medieval *waka* poetics. The structure of the Japanese language, he explains, is characterized by the harmonious correspondence of three elements: speech (*monoii* 言), thing (*koto* 事), and meaning (*kokoro* 心). "Where there is a thing, there is always speech. Where there is speech, there is always a thing.… Speech itself is meaning" (KZ 10: 109). This less explicitly esoteric

12. Norinaga explicitly mentions Keichū as the founder of his school of studies on numerous occasions (MNZ 1: 257, 15; MNZ 9: 27).

Buddhist formulation of the structure of language would later provide the basic interpretive framework for Norinaga's study of the *Kojiki*. In his commentary, Norinaga contends that it is imperative for the reader to understand the "speech" (*monoii* 言語) represented by the "ancient words" of the text. Below is a representative passage:

> Because everything about people's sentiments and circumstances can be surmised via their speech, the myriad things of antiquity, too, can be known by clarifying and awakening to ancient speech….Thus by knowing the speech of the ancients, one comes to know truly the phenomena (*arisama* ありさま) of that age. (MNZ 9: 33)

Speech, in other words, is for Norinaga the expression of the feelings that stir the human heart when it encounters "phenomena" in the world. Therefore, by "clarifying and awakening to" the speech of ancient words, one comes to understand what was in the heart of the ancients, or, more precisely, the movements in the world inscribed in the hearts of the ancients and expressed in their speech, what Norinaga calls "the actions of ancient words" (*kogo no furi* 古語のふり) (MNZ 9: 33). Thus, Norinaga, like Keichū, affirmed the power of the ancient Japanese language to manifest reality, the phenomena that are impressed upon the human heart and then expressed in speech. Based on this understanding of language, Norinaga, like Keichū, adopted a phonocentric approach to the study of ancient texts. For Norinaga, the ancient words of the *Kojiki* were sounds before they were inscriptions. To read the inscriptions without knowing the sounds thus resulted in a failure to grasp the "action of ancient words." He writes:

> Now, as for the words of the imperial edicts of the *Shoku Nihongi* 続日本紀 and other texts and the various *norito* 祝詞 of the eight volumes of the *Engi shiki* 延喜式, their syntax and everything else reflects the speech just as it was at that time. One should first carefully learn the readings of these and come to know thereby the actions of ancient words. (MNZ 9: 33)

One could recover the sounds of the ancient language, and thus also their "actions," through the phonetic transcriptions found in Nara- and Heian-period imperial edicts (*senmyō* 宣命) and prayers to the kami (*norito*).

Keichū's esoteric Buddhist understanding of language not only shaped Norinaga's phonocentric approach to the study of ancient texts, but it also provided the framework for his formulation of its ultimate object. For Norinaga, the study of ancient texts was not just the analysis of ancient words, it was the restoration of the actions of those words. These actions, which can be known from the sounds of ancient words, revealed for Norinaga a way of being that was lost to the Japanese people in the course of their history. Norinaga often terms this way "the way of the kami" (*kami no michi* 神道; *kannagara no michi* 神ながらの道)

or just simply "the ancient way" (*inishie no michi* 古道). In his *Kojikiden*, for example, Norinaga argues: "If we examine closely this record [*Kojiki*] and other accounts of ancient matters, we may come to know well the significance of that [ancient] way" (MNZ 9: 58). Elsewhere, he claims: "Truly, the ears cannot travel back one thousand years to hear the sounds of the past, but fortunately we have *kana* and thus can achieve this with the eyes" (MNZ 8: 389). This retrieval of the "way of the kami," significantly, also implied the clearing away of the "dust of Chinese texts" (*Karabumi no chiri* からぶみのちり) that had "clouded the hearts of [Japanese] people through the ages" (MNZ 7: 485). It provided, in other words, salvation from the "Chinese mind" (*karagokoro* 漢意) that woefully gripped all but a small handful of contemporary Japanese, in Norinaga's estimation, and the restoration of one's "sincere mind" (*magokoro* 真心) (MNZ 1: 48–49).

Throughout his writings, Norinaga makes clear that he conceived the "ancient way" as the "way of the kami" and, moreover, that this way of the kami originated with the age of the kami and was transmitted only in the nation of Japan via the imperial family who descended from the kami (MNZ 9: 49). Based on his esoteric Buddhist understanding of the Japanese language, Keichū arrived at a fundamentally similar conception of the ultimate object of his philological study. In the *Man'yō daishōki*, Keichū writes, "As our realm is a nation of the kami (*shinkoku* 神国), even though the national histories were recorded during the age of humans, what is described therein is none other than the kami. Thus, in reverence, should we believe this" (KZ 1: 250). Later, he reiterates his claim that the national histories describe a "way of the kami" and that this way of the kami is peculiar to Japan: "When we open up and examine the *Nihon shoki* 日本書紀 and other [national histories], we come to understand that the way of the kami differs from both the Dharma of the Buddha and the way of Confucius" (KZ 1: 196). Thus, like Norinaga, Keichū explains that what he aims to apprehend by means of his investigation of ancient Japanese texts is a "way" native to Japan.

For both Keichū and Norinaga, the recovery of this lost way served a religious purpose: transcendence and salvation. Viewing the present realm of ordinary experience as profane, they saw hidden in the ancient speech of the Japanese people a way of being grounded on insight into the ultimate truth of reality. Philology, the reconstruction of the meaning of ancient Japanese speech, was nothing less than a technique for transcending the profane present and merging with a sacred, more true, past. While both Keichū and Norinaga engaged in philology as a religious practice, each traced the truth that it revealed and that, for them, was redemptive of life in the present back to a different source: for Keichū, Mahāvairocana's enlightened mind; for Norinaga, the kami of Japan. Though significant, this difference is not absolute. The notion that human speech need be anchored in a truth-source is itself a Buddhist assumption, one Norinaga inherited from Keichū, and via Keichū, the broader Shingon tradition.

Conclusion

Despite Norinaga's high praise for Keichū, modern scholars have tended to overlook his role as a founding figure in the ideological development of *kokugaku*, focusing instead on two scholars who lived and wrote more than a generation after him, Kada no Azumamaro 荷田春満 (1668–1736) and Kamo no Mabuchi 賀茂真淵 (1697–1769). In his 1904 lecture "Kokugaku to wa nan zo ya" 国学とは何ぞや, for example, Haga assigns only a minor role to Keichū. While he acknowledges Keichū was skilled in "scholarship" and even "laid the groundwork for what Norinaga did" after him, he contends that Keichū devoted most of his attention to classical literature (*koten bungaku* 古典文学)—*waka* poetry and vernacular prose fiction, or *monogatari*, of the Nara and Heian periods—and so never developed a true science of the nation (HYS 1: 149). Building on Norinaga's own understanding of his scholarly tradition, this article has argued, contrary to Haga and many modern scholars after him, that Keichū laid the groundwork for the development of Japanese philology by not only introducing a rigorous method of philological analysis but also formulating the basic understanding of language taken for granted by *kokugaku* scholars in their practice of Japanese philology—an understanding that was based on the religious practices of esoteric Buddhism as they had come to be reinterpreted during a time of intense religious reform.

It has been my contention that, contrary to being antithetical to scientific inquiry, as Haga, Muraoka, and others have claimed, religion was integral to the early modern development of Japanese philology. This is not to say that Keichū was not familiar with his contemporary Itō Jinsai's 伊藤仁斎 (1627–1705) Confucian school of *kogigaku* 古義学 (study of ancient meanings), to which *kokugaku*'s philological method is often traced via Ogyū Sorai; indeed, Jinsai was likely one of Keichū's intellectual influences, though the extent of said influence remains unclear.[13] However, Keichū's connections to Jōgon and his Buddhist philology are significantly more robust.

Taking Jōgon's analyses of Sanskrit as a model, Keichū revolutionized the methods and frameworks for the study of the Japanese language. Even as Norinaga rejected Keichū's attempts to anchor ancient Japanese language in avatars of Buddhist enlightenment, he left mostly unaltered the methods and frame-

13. Itō Jinsai's work was not well known outside of his Kogidō 古義堂 academy in Kyoto until 1683, when he wrote the *Gomō jigi* 語孟字義. This was the same year Keichū accepted Tokugawa Mitsukuni's invitation to take over the ailing Shimokōbe Chōryū's 下河辺長流 (1627–1686) commentary on the *Man'yōshū,* which resulted in the *Man'yō daishōki.* As Motoori Norinaga remarked when claiming his school of ancient studies had its origins with Keichū's scholarship, Sorai postdated Keichū and thus is difficult to posit as an influence. Norinaga claims that Jinsai worked around the same time and thus likewise cannot be considered a forerunner of Keichū (MNZ 1: 257). HISAMATSU (1976, 408–409), however, considers Jinsai a tertiary influence.

works that Keichū, via Jōgon, introduced. Two centuries later, when modern scholars attempted to devise a genealogy for their own practice of philology that was independent of their European counterparts, they rightly identified Norinaga as one of their intellectual forebears. But, under the influence of modern European secularist notions that insisted on the opposition between science and religion, they were incapable of countenancing the Buddhist origins of their own practice. Religion, for them, was nothing more than superstition and prejudice. That it could provide the epistemic conditions for the emergence of science in Japan simply did not make sense to them.

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ABBREVIATIONS

HYS *Haga Yaichi senshū* 芳賀矢一選集. 7 vols. Ed. Haga Yaiichi Senshū Henshū Iinkai 芳賀矢一選集編集委員会. Kokugakuin Daigaku, 1982–1992.

KZ *Keichū zenshū* 契沖全集. 16 vols. Hisamatsu Sen'ichi 久松潜一 et. al., eds. Iwanami Shoten, 1973–1976.

MNZ *Motoori Norinaga zenshū* 本居宣長全集. 23 vols. Ōno Susumu 大野 晋 and Ōkubo Tadashi 大久保正, eds. Chikuma Shobō, 1968–1993.

T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵経. 85 vols. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡辺海旭, eds. Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–1932.

TKZ *Teihon Kōbō daishi zenshū* 定本弘法大師全集. 10 vols. Ed. Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo Kōbō Daishi Chosaku Kenkyūkai 密教文化研究所弘法大師著作研究会. Koyasan Daigaku Mikkyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, 1991–1997.

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Kamiyo no masakoto 神代正語. Motoori Norinaga. MNZ 7: 483–542.
Kojikiden 古事記伝. Motoori Norinaga. MNZ 9–12.
Kokugaku to wa nan zo ya 国学とは何ぞや. Haga Yaichi. HYS 1: 147–164.
"Kokugakushi gairon" 国学史概論. Haga Yaichi 芳賀矢一 (1867–1927). HYS 1: 5–46.
Kōnin yuikai 弘仁遺誡. Kūkai 空海 (774–835). TKZ 7: 392–393.
Mahāvairocana Sūtra. T 848, 18.
Mangin shū 漫吟集. Keichū 契沖 (1640–1701). KZ 13: 1–461.
Manyō daishōki 万葉代匠記. Keichū. KZ 1–7.
Myōhōji ki 妙法寺記. Keichū. KZ 16: 419–421.
Nihon bunkengaku 日本文献学. Haga Yaichi. HYS 1: 62–144.

Shittan sanmitsu shō 悉曇三密鈔. Jōgon 浄厳 (1639–1702). T 2710, 84.715–810.
Shō ji jissō gi 声字実相義. Kūkai. TKZ 3: 33_50.
Tamakatsuma 玉勝間. Motoori Norinaga. MNZ 1: 33–517.
Tokugawa jidai ni okeru kokugaku no hensen 徳川時代の於ける国学の変遷. Haga Yaichi. HYS 1: 165–193.
Uiyamabumi 宇比山踏. Motoori Norinaga. MNZ 1: 1–30.
Waji shōranshō 和字正濫鈔. Keichū. KZ 10: 103–180.

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