

Three Major Poem Anthologies of Premodern Japan

Man'yô shû / 万葉集

Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves

first major poem anthology of the country; massive and various

◇◇◇ **basics:** 4,536 poems; compiled by Ôtomo no Yakamochi; after 759 ◇◇◇ **poem types:** *chôka* (“long poems” 長歌), *tanka* (“short poems” 短歌), *sedôka* (a early, six-line poem in a 5-7-7-5-7-7 cadence, 旋頭歌), *butsusokuseki ka* (Buddhist poems, 仏足石歌), *kanshi* (“Chinese poems” 漢詩), others ◇◇◇ **script:** vernacular Japanese written with *man'yôgana* (“Man'yô script” 万葉仮名) ◇◇◇ **major technique:** *makura kotoba* (枕詞) “pillowing words” (also called: pillow words) ◇◇◇ **aesthetic values:** *makoto* (“sincerity” 誠); *masurao* (“manliness” 益荒男); emotionally moving ◇◇◇ **important individuals:** first “professional” poet Princess Nukata (634?–690?); great lyricist and one of the greatest of Japanese poets *Kakinomoto no Hitomaro* (fl. late 7th – early 8th c.); expert at scenic beauty Yamabe no Akahito (early 8th c.); well-versed in the Chinese classics and social critic Yamanoue no Okura (660?–733?); courtly Ôtomo no Tabito (665–731); compiler and individual with greatest number of poems Ôtomo no Yakamochi (718?–785)



Hitomaro
(7th c.)

Kokin waka shû (Kokin shû) / 古今和歌集

Compilation of Japanese Poems Ancient and Modern

first imperial collection; hugely influential

◇◇◇ **basics:** 1,100 poems; compiled by *Ki no Tsurayuki*; 905? ◇◇◇ **poem types:** *tanka* (“short poems” 短歌) ◇◇◇ **script:** vernacular Japanese written with *hiragana* (“smoothed-out script” 平仮名) also called *onnade* (“woman’s script” 女手) ◇◇◇ **major technique:** *kakekotoba* (“pivoting words” 懸詞) (also called: pivot words; puns) ◇◇◇ **aesthetic values:** *miyabi* (“courtliness” 雅); sentiment but with strong artistic sensibility ◇◇◇ **important individuals:** restored Japanese poetry (not Chinese poetry) to prominence, helped establish *hiragana* as the only acceptable script for literature, compiled anthology *Ki no Tsurayuki* (866?–945?), early irogonomi man (man of amorous elegance), precursor to Genji *Ariwara no Narihira*, poetess famous for love poems *Ono no Komachi*



Tsurayuki
(866?–945?)

Shin-Kokin waka shû (Shin-Kokin shû) / 新古今和歌集

New Compilation of Japanese Poems Ancient and Modern

brilliant medieval advances in poetic expression; perhaps best traditional poem collection ever

◇◇◇ **basics:** 1,978 poems; compiled by *Fujiwara no Teika* and others; 1205 ◇◇◇ **poem types:** *tanka* (“short poems” 短歌) ◇◇◇ **script:** same as *Kokin shû* ◇◇◇ **major technique:** *honkadori* (“taking up a prior poem” 本歌取) (also called: poetic allusion; allusive variation) ◇◇◇ **aesthetic terms:** *ushin* (“with heart” 有心), *yûgen* (“mysterious, sublime beauty” 幽玄), *enrei* (“voluptuousness” 艶麗) ◇◇◇ **important individuals:** compiler of the collection, innovator, literary scholar *Fujiwara no Teika* (Sadaie) (1162–1241); leading poet, critic and Teika’s father *Fujiwara no Shunzei* (1114–1204); important patron of the arts, poet and musician Emperor Go-Toba (1180–1239); traveling poet still widely loved in Japan, poet with largest number of poems in *Shin-Kokin shû* *Saigyô* (1118–1190)



Teika
(1162–1241)