“What Master Masafusa Said: An Analysis of the Content and Rhetoric of the Gōdanshō”

THESIS

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Abstract

Though the Gōdanshō is traditionally considered a member of the setsuwa genre, a type of text that mostly contains short and sometimes didactic stories, this classification fails to account for both the text’s content, which more closely resembles a reference work on aristocratic Heian (794-1185) history, and its rhetoric, which seems to be taken from the mold of the Analects and other such examples of masters literature, with roots in ancient China. The text’s content and rhetoric will be examined from this potential viewpoint, showing that the text attempts to present itself as a sort of historical reference on upper-class Heian society, particularly focusing on the emperors and the Fujiwara regents, using a framework also derived from continental culture. Finally, the thesis will show how the text’s rhetoric derived from masters literature, including detailed depiction and praise of the scholarly class, particularly the family and person of the text’s supposed originator, Ōe no Masafusa (1041-1111), and also the use of dialogue and rhetoric typical in oral storytelling, portrays a work well aware of its own intentions and purpose.
Dedication

To my family, especially my parents and brother, for so much support and so many kind words over the past two years.
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There are so many people whose guidance and support I would like to mention here. My parents and brother have given me much-needed moral support over the course of this project, and I thank them. Ryan Smith has given me advice and friendship as only someone who has been through these challenges can. All of the faculty here at DEALL with whom I have had the pleasure to take classes have been wonderful. I would especially like to thank my committee members, the Professors Quinn, for their patience, support, and guidance. My advisor, Naomi Fukumori, has given me more encouragement, kind words, and sound scholarly advice than I could possibly make amends for.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

*Gōdanshō* is an early twelfth century compilation of Ōe no Masafusa’s (1041-1111) sayings and conversations, as its name, *The Ōe Conversations*, following Marian Ury’s translation, might suggest. Supposedly Masafusa’s own words, taken down by his loyal students, the work is full of anecdotes and pithy musings, lists of musical instruments and famous persons. It seems a veritable encyclopedia of courtly life and history.¹

This thesis will examine the text’s portrayal of the Heian period (794-1185) cultural and historical past, focusing on its stories about individual emperors and the Fujiwara family and how the text lends authority to itself by consciously alerting the reader that it is working within a tradition of historical writing about this era. It will next explore how the *Gōdanshō* attempts to legitimize its own view of these figures and events through its supposed format of directly recorded sayings and conversations. However, before doing so, it seems best to address two issues that complicate study of the text: its genre and the various textual lineages of the work, as well as provide a brief introduction to Masafusa himself.

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¹ The text’s great variety of material and anecdotes, and its presentation of it in the format of dialogues was the primary impetus of this study, which began as a fairly broad analysis of cultural memory within Masafusa’s works as a whole. Also influential was an interest in folklore and transmission, which has particularly inspired the final chapter.
The text is supposedly a compendium of anecdotes and tidbits of information passed down orally by Masafusa and recorded dutifully by his students, especially one Fujiwara no Sanekane (1085-1112). This man was a disciple of sorts to Masafusa, and he is traditionally credited as the amanuensis responsible for the work’s compilation. The assumption is first discussed in the *Imakagami* (ca. 1170), a historical chronicle, which notes in passing that Sanekane took down Masafusa’s words to form the *Gōdanshō*.2 Their relationship was supposedly a close one, with Sanekane possibly taking the place of Masafusa’s eldest son, who had recently passed away around the time of the work’s compilation. The respect Masafusa may have felt towards his new protégé can be seen in a passage where he confides his reasons for lecturing the younger man so often. It is also one reason for the work’s being considered the result of their discussions, of which this forms a part3:

[From 5:74 Miscellaneous Matters: Masafusa Praises Himself4]’You know, the only thing I regret is that none of my own children were able to rise above the rank of Chamberlain. If only I had sons who were like you! Then I would be so relieved. But as it stands, the works of my house and our family’s hidden teachings seem to be about to pass away like smoke…and so I would very much like to pass at least a little of them on to you. What do you think?’ I answered, ‘My joy could not possibly be any greater, sir!’5

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3 Quotes from the text will contain book and passage number, as well as the category to which the entry belongs.
4 Entries from the text include book and entry number, with the text’s categorization of the entry, and entry’s title.
5 Ōe no Masafusa, *Gōdanshō*, in Gotō Akio, ed. *Gōdanshō, Chūgaishō, Fukego*. Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei 32 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2001), 211. Notes from the *Gōdanshō* include notes taken from the annotations provided to the text itself, which will be marked with the page number on which the story is found. There are also notes that use material from the supplementary list of brief biographies in the back of the volume. This material uses a different pagination from the text itself, and will be marked as such.
This exchange, aside from being a touching portrait of how much Masafusa had supposedly come to rely upon his student, has formed one of the loci around which stories of the *Gōdanshō*’s origin have surfaced. Another anecdote has the two conversing about the relative ages of reigning sovereigns. At the end, Masafusa remarks:

[From 2:8 Miscellaneous Matters: How the Death of Emperor Horikawa\(^6\) was Due to Fate]These things are secret. There’s no reason to make them public knowledge. But I think I am going to retire soon. Since you are going to serve at Court, you are a person to whom I can entrust these matters of ceremony. You need to understand all of this well!\(^7\)

Again, Masafusa voices concern about his duty to pass on this knowledge of court matters. It should be noted, however, that it is not possible for the work to have been composed wholly by Sanekane with Masafusa’s cooperation: there are references to events that occurred after their deaths in at least one anecdote.\(^8\)

Another problem to tackle is that of genre. What exactly is this text? Convention labels it a *setsuwa* collection. *Setsuwa* are a genre of short story or tale told, at least originally, for didactic purposes, usually to explain Buddhist concepts to the non-literate. Many of them\(^9\) were used by priests in their sermons and are filled with occurrences supernatural and, sometimes, miraculous. Many of them incorporate elements of popular Japanese folklore. As time went on, however, and particularly in the late Heian period when Masafusa was alive, *setsuwa* began to become markedly more secular in content

\(^6\) 1079-1107; reigned from 1086-1107.
\(^7\) Ibid, 39.
\(^8\) See *Gōdanshō*, 598-599.
\(^9\) Examples include the *Nihon ryōiki* (late eighth/early ninth century) and *Konjaku monogatari* (early twelfth century).
and outlook, dealing with historical figures or events rather than Buddhist ones. So varied did the genre become that it is difficult to define them solely as ‘Buddhist stories’. Helen Crag McCullough offers a very serviceable definition in her introduction to her translation of the Ōkagami, a late Heian historical tale:

Setsuwa is a modern term embracing a number of sub-literary\(^{10}\) prose narrative forms—the anecdote, the legend, the folk tale, etc.—which have in common brevity, simple language, presumed factuality, emphasis on a single narrative motif, absence of description and psychological analysis, a tendency to move the action along by means of dialogue, subject-matter of an amazing, sad, frightening, humorous, or queer nature, and ultimately oral origins. Like the exemplum, the setsuwa frequently conveys a religious message, and the narrator often stresses the factuality of his account by providing concrete details about time and place…\(^{11}\)

These stories, then, are not now considered to be limited to the religious realm, but may, and do, deal with secular topics as well.

At first glance, the Gōdanshō does indeed seem to fill most of the requirements of setsuwa collections. A large part of it consists of stories, and Buddhism forms one of the themes commonly found among them. Several of the more well-known stories actually found their way into later collections of setsuwa tales, and this likely had a large part to play in its classification. Indeed, McCullough, in tracing the history of setsuwa in the same introduction to the Ōkagami, classifies Gōdanshō as the first ‘secular’ collection of setsuwa. As accurate as this classification is in many respects, as seen above, scrutiny

\(^{10}\) McCullough’s designation is rather a harsh one. A focus on plot does not necessarily mean a lack of literary merit.

reveals a few discrepancies. Most importantly, there are many entries that cannot be classified as ‘stories’ at all. There are several entries that are actually lists, in the manner of Sei Shōnagon’s (fl. late tenth century) *Makura no sōshi*, of various musical instruments, and there are also discourses on the finer points of ritual, an Ōe family specialty. In any case, the range and type of material covered in this work seems sometimes too broad to have it designated as a *setsuwa* collection. In addition, it is worth noting that the text’s genre has begun to be questioned or problematized by other scholars since McCullough’s thoughts on the subject were published in the nineteen eighties. Particularly significant is the editor of the SNKBT version calling it instead an ‘oral transmission’ of various kinds of cultural material, not just the short stories one expects from a *setsuwa* collection.\(^\text{12}\)

If we are not entirely comfortable with the text’s designation as a *setsuwa* collection, is there any genre to which it might belong instead? I believe a case can be made for the text’s induction into a lineage of works that can be traced back to pre-Qin (before the fourth century BCE) China. This is the famed tradition of master-disciple dialogues, which began with the *Analects* of Confucius and had a tremendous influence on the whole of East Asia. These texts are typically seen as the first and primary examples of various Chinese traditions of thought, including Confucianism, Daoism and Legalism, all of which began to crystalize just before the Qin and Han dynasties (third century BCE-third century AD), when these texts began to coalesce into their present shapes.

\(^{12}\) See Ōe, 2.
One of the most striking features of these master’s texts is their heavily oral emphasis. Many of them are understood to be set in situations where the ‘master’ instructs the student or delivers some pithy observation. These entries are almost always preceded by an equivalent of ‘He said…’ or ‘The Master said…’ What this rhetorical device does for the texts is give them an air of immediacy and truth, as if they had just been taken down by admiring disciples. Wiebke Denecke, in a discussion of this technique in the *Analects*, the prototypical and most important of these works, says that framing Confucius in brief ‘scenes of instruction’ was a bold rhetorical move, not the result of more scribal record-keeping. It consciously presented Confucius as a master of oral dialogue…the authors of the scenes of instruction in the *Analects* boldly cast their master into the powerful role of an accomplished speaker and wise teacher…The subsequent history of Masters Literature was to be a sequence of variations on the seminal scene of instruction that first appears in the materials preserved in the *Analects*.¹³

This powerful image of a wise teacher and his loyal students resonated throughout East Asian culture, including Japan.

The Japanese adaptation of Chinese culture and civilization was a process that began several centuries before Masafusa’s time. Beginning before the establishment of a fixed capital at Nara (the capital from 710-784), Japanese selective borrowing from China included a heavy emphasis on literary culture and models of government, especially Confucianism. In this environment, which strongly supported Confucianism’s

use by the state, the texts of that tradition, particularly the Analects, became powerful models. Marian Ury summarizes:

Chinese provided the medium for the memorials, decrees, codes, administrative regulation, ordinances, commands, communications, and certificates by which the government functioned. Chinese exempla and ethical teachings were invoked to justify decisions of state. Above all, the ritual persona of the ruler, whether emperor or regent, was fashioned according to Confucian patterns.  

Given these realities, it is not far-fetched to claim that the Gōdanshō, with its singular format of supposed sayings and dialogues of ‘Master Masafusa’, deliberately invokes the culturally puissant genre of master’s literature. Regarding this text as heavily indebted to this genre opens up new possibilities when evaluating its aims: this didactic format increases its potential as cultural capital by appealing to the Confucian tradition and, more importantly, casts ‘Masafusa’\textsuperscript{15} in a positive light as an inspired scholar and teacher. In addition, the work’s comprehensive coverage of aristocratic life during Heian Japan, with a particular focus on the powerful individuals involved, befits the status of its supposed composer and compiler, Masafusa and Sanekane, as learned Confucian scholars. Its concerns with these figures may be directly related to a Confucian worldview centered around the august personage of the sovereign and his capable officials of state. It is the duty of loyal scholarly bureaucrats such as Masafusa to


\textsuperscript{15}I am referring to the Masafusa constructed by the text as it exists today, not necessarily to the historical Masafusa. To maintain this distinction, the persona invoked by the text will always be accompanied by quotation marks.
carefully record the words and deeds of such men. The considerable patronage and help Masafusa received over the course of his life from both the imperial family and the Fujiwara also likely influences Gōdanshō’s marked interest in these historical personages. Considering that the text takes great pains to emphasize certain aspects of aristocratic Heian life and historical figures, linking itself to texts within the genre of masters literature works very much in the Gōdanshō’s favor. It is precisely through its rhetoric derived from masters texts that it is able to articulate and achieve its goals, especially through its portrayal of the scholarly class from which it supposedly originated, particularly the Ōe clan and Masafusa himself.

Who exactly was Masafusa? Sources for his life include the work itself, as well as a brief autobiographical essay he wrote during his final years, as well as official documents charting his political and academic career. He was born in 1041 into the Ōe house, known for its Confucian scholarship and with strong ties to the Confucian academy that trained officials for government positions. Masafusa himself was something of a prodigy, learning to read at an early age and composing his first Chinese poem at only eleven years old.

He entered the Academy and had success there as a student. Masafusa’s posts included influential appointments to several Crown Princes, starting when he was twenty-six. His involvement with the imperial family remained strong throughout his career, as he became particularly close to Emperor Go-Sanjō(1034-1073, r. 1068-1073). He is said

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to have influenced the ruler’s reforms of aristocratic *shōen* estates. In addition, he had strong ties to the Fujiwara family, becoming acquainted with the elderly former Regent, Yorimichi, at an early age, and receiving support from various members of the clan throughout his life. He spent his last years as a Provincial Governor of Dazaifu, attaining the Second Rank, an unusually high one for someone of his background, as scholars were usually offered only middling posts. He died in 1111 at the age of seventy.

Masafusa left several texts behind that can be attributed to him. There is the *Gōke shidai*, a large manual of court ceremony. Shorter works include the above-mentioned autobiography, “Bonen no ki”, and treatises on puppeteers (“Kugutsu”) and fox spirits (“Kobiki”). He also wrote several memorials for funerary services on behalf of aristocratic families. In addition, he wrote accounts of Japanese versions of Daoist immortals and Buddhist miracles, having a keen interests in the supernatural. These texts are all attributed to him fairly firmly.

The *Gōdanshō* itself, however, is another matter. This text is rife with problems of its own that make it difficult to guess what the original, now lost, may have been like. As it exists, it is a *kanbun* text, written in the classical Chinese that was used by male court functionaries. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the yomikudashi (*kanbun* transliterated into classical Japanese) text provided by the Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei series, which employs the Ruijūbon textual lineage. There are two main textual lineages of the *Gōdanshō*. The Kohonkei, the older of the two, has as its main manuscript a work called the *Suigenshō*, named for the two parts of the character ‘gō’ in Ōe, Masafusa’s family name. The manuscript in the Daigoji temple bears a colophon by
a descendant of Fujiwara no Sanekane, the purported compiler of the work who recorded
the conversations he had with Masafusa. The Maedabon and Kandabon are also
important manuscripts within this textual lineage. Probably the most noticeable thing
about them is their organization: the entries really resemble long, detailed conversations
when strung together, flowing from one topic to the next. The Suigenshô is the longest of
the main manuscripts in this lineage, with a little over two hundred entries.

The Kohonkei is the only textual lineage which has been translated into English to
any extent. Marian Ury’s partial translation includes some of the first entries in the text.
Ury is interested in the text as a means of throwing light upon what interested Masafusa.
Her choice of the Kohonkei line is motivated by the flow of conversation that the text
seemingly presents, with one story or comment linked to the ones before and after it
through similarities in content, especially the people involved, going so far as to note how
the topic of the ‘conversation’ changes in between entries. While it is instructive and
interesting to view the work as a possible reflection of Masafusa as Ury does, and the
Kohonkei’s format is unique, the Gôdanshô’s motives and purpose as a text are also
worthy of investigation, and it is these issues that will be discussed here.

The Ruijûbon lineage is much larger than the Kohonkei, and became the preferred
line of the text throughout subsequent centuries. The earliest manuscripts in it date from
the Kamakura (1185-1333) period, and most modern editions of the text use it in printed
copies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Several features stand out clearly.
For one, the text has been organized by topic; the original ‘flow’ of conversation, if there
was one, is broken. The topics under which the text has been organized are: Official
Matters (公の事), Matters of the [Fujiwara] Regent House (摂関家のこと), Matters of Gods and Buddhas (仏神の事), Miscellaneous Subjects (雑事), Matters of [Chinese] Poetry (詩の事), and Long [Chinese] Couplets (長句の事). The length of the text is the other defining feature. Consisting of over four hundred entries, it is about twice as long as the Kohonkei recensions. This length is mostly due to the contents of the fourth and sixth scrolls, mainly devoted to explanations of Chinese verse couplets in a format strikingly different from the rest of the work. It is on the basis of the obvious discrepancies between these portions of the text and the rest that scholars have come to the conclusion that these entries may represent a selection of notes Masafusa was known to have made about the poetry anthology Wakan rōeishū, which somehow became embedded in the Ruijūbon texts.

In summary, the differences between these texts can be treated as follows: the most obvious is length, with Ruijūbon having around twice as many entries. The breaking up of the Kohonkei’s original flow of conversation has also been mentioned. This bears explaining in more detail, as it strongly affects readings of the textual lineage. Reading through the Kohonkei is very much like witnessing an actual conversation; it has more dialogic markers than the Ruijūbon, and its shifts in topics over the course of entries provides an almost organic feel. This format gives the Kohonkei an interesting array of textual issues for consideration.

For this thesis, however, I have decided to use the edition of the Ruijūbon text presented in the Iwanami koten bungaku taikei. This is for reasons of accessibility and the quality and quantity of notation found in this edition, both of which are necessary at
this stage in my academic career. Stories from several sections of the text have been chosen, with the exception of any entries from the fourth and sixth scrolls, which may be corrupt additions, as noted above. In this way, I hope to walk a middle path, availing myself of the expanded resources of the Ruijūbon text without using material that is highly suspect. Most of the entries used here are actually in both textual lineages, with no major differences in the entries themselves. Those exclusively in the Ruijūbon text will be declared such. In addition, I have chosen the Ruijūbon lineage because of its status as the vulgate text for the Gōdanshō: many of the stories therein have been used by scholars in examining Masafusa’s life and times (notably his twentieth century biographer, Kawaguchi Hisao), as well as the few analyses of his texts, which have not received much scholarly attention in their own right, published to date. These include, for example, a comparison by Satō Michio between the Ruijūbon text and the Kojidan, a setsuwa collection of the early Kamakura period, as well as an article using some of the poetic materials found in the text to explore the supposed animosity between Fujiwara no Sukeyo (847-897) and the famous Sugawara no Michizane (845-903), which is written by the editor of the SNKBT text. Meanwhile, in English, Robert Borgen has used it to explore Masafusa’s relationship to the deified Michizane during his tenure in Kyushu as governor of the Dazaifu. Thomas Howell has used the text in his analysis of setsuwa

17 For the textual comparison, see Satō Michio, “Kojidan to Gōdanshō,” in Kojidan o yomitoku, ed. Asami Kazuhiko (Tokyo: Chikuma shoin, 1008): 20-37. For the Sukeyo study, see Gotō Akio, “Fujiwara Sukeyo—Sugawara Michizane no shūi,” Kodai bunka, 31.5 (1979), 277-289. Also, SNKBT will be used from here onwards, for the sake of convenience, for any mention of the Shin nihon koten bungaku taikei series.

18 Robert Borgen, “Oe no Masafusa and the Spirit of Michizane,” Monumenta Nipponica 50.5 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 357-384. This article discusses Masafusa’s interest in the famous Michizane, who had been
texts as a genre devoted to transmitting knowledge, focusing heavily on the shorter length and plot-driven nature of many stories in the genre; however, as we have seen, assigning the Gōdanshō to the setsuwa genre is potentially problematic.19

In addition, the Ruijūbon presents the most intriguing possibilities for analysis of the Gōdanshō’s purposes as a text. Its categorization, referred to above, forces an interpretation upon the reader that it is a reference work of sorts. Closely related to this new format is the question of why someone would take the trouble to edit the earlier text in the first place. The categorization itself and the new stories (possibly) added may be important clues. What kinds of stories and information do the reorganized and possibly interpolated stories add? The fact that the Fujiwara, for instance, receive a titled section of the work dedicated to them is telling. Although emperors, the other politically powerful group within the aristocracy, do not receive their own section, many stories about them appear in the first half of the work, making them among the first anecdotes presented to the reader. In addition, one trend of many stories exclusively in this text is their preoccupation with the Ōe family’s scholarly pursuits. These textual differences are striking, and seem to indicate that the Ruijūbon is compensating for breaking up an ‘original’ flow of conversation by reorganizing the stories into an easily referenced format and highlighting the achievements of these groups of people, in addition to all of the other material the work presents, such as poetry and religious matters. Helpful here is McCullough’s situating this text, along with others like it such as the Chūgaishō and deified after his death in exile. Masafusa was the governor of Dazaifu, where Michizane was sent after his banishment, and built a shrine to him there, also composing Chinese verse about the deceased scholar.19 See Thomas R. Howell, “Setsuwa, Knowledge, and the Culture of Reading and Writing in Medieval Japan,” PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2002.
Fukego, also compendia of court stories and customs supposedly taken down from an elderly courtier. She sees them as products of the gradually weakening status of the civil aristocracy during the twelfth century, when the aristocrats were beginning to lose their grip on the country’s politics and economy. Coexistent with this waning in political fortunes was a desire to preserve as much of the glorious past as possible.20

I believe that, taken together, all of the different stories in the Gōdanshō, and especially the Ruijūbon textual line, have a function. They form a sort of cultural and historical map of aristocratic society in the Heian capital, documenting especially networks of power among the civil aristocracy and the imperial line. These ‘networks of power’ are basically families, the main political unit of power at the time. The stories depict how members of these groups have interacted with each other over the centuries. The main networks shown the reader in the work, going by the number of anecdotes that treat of them, are the imperial family, the Fujiwara house, and the class to which Masafusa belonged, the middling scholar-bureaucrats, especially his own family.21 The depictions of these various individuals and, by extension, their familial institutions, roughly parallel historical trends throughout the Heian period, especially the delicate power balance between the imperial family and the Fujiwara regents, who gradually eroded the former’s grip on political power. Taken together, these anecdotes produce a vivid image of the early and mid-Heian period that focuses upon those directly involved

20 See McCullough, 13-14.
21 The text’s treatment of the Fujiwara and emperors will form the basis for the first chapter of this work, while the Ōe family’s status will be discussed in the second. The section devoted exclusively to the Fujiwara contains six stories, and altogether, according to my count in the supplementary materials provided, there are one hundred and four Fujiwara individuals mentioned in the text. There are twenty-two emperors mentioned (by the work’s likely composition date, there had been seventy four on the throne). Finally, as for the Ōe themselves, fourteen individuals appear.
in the political realm. Meanwhile, the work preserves its supposed original purpose as a collection of various snippets and lore that ‘Masafusa’ wished to pass down. The Ruijūbon line, with its categorized entries, highlights its potential as a reference work, emphasizing its accounts of famous individuals from the past along with the work’s other kinds of information.

In order to bolster its claims about the earlier Heian period, the text establishes itself as very clearly working within a tradition when transmitting these anecdotes. That this is so can be seen in several ways. Often, ‘Masafusa’ will mention that he heard his story from someone else, usually a fellow official, often someone who has been deceased for some time, giving the story increased credibility. He will also analyze these sources at times, giving key differences between the version he is telling and others he has heard, in order to establish his own version as the legitimate one.

Perhaps the most important way to show how the Gōdanshō is interpreting cultural history, though, is to compare its accounts with others that survive. Therefore, when analyzing individual stories, comparisons will be made between how ‘Masafusa’ portrays certain historical figures, and how other sources do so. Among the texts used for comparison are the Ōkagami, written roughly around Masafusa’s own time and an account of the rise of the Fujiwara family and their relationships with the imperial line, and the Eiga monogatari, written in the eleventh century. This work, the first half of which was written by Masafusa’s own great-grandmother, Akazome Emon (?-c. 1041), a gentlewoman turned nun, also deals with the Fujiwara clan, and in particular with Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1027), often seen as the most powerful of the Fujiwara
regents. It is important to remember that the Ōkagami, an anonymous work, was written in praise of the Fujiwara as a whole, and that Eiga monogatari was as well, though its authorship by Masafusa’s great grandmother is also important. Both of these texts are linear narratives in the vernacular aristocratic Japanese of the period. Ōkagami is written as an historical narrative being told by an amazingly aged man, Yotsugi, whose name actually means ‘chronicle’ and who supposedly lived through all of the events he describes, while Eiga is a more soberly related account without such flights of fancy. Just as the ‘Masafusa’ of Gōdanshō has an agenda, so do these texts. These texts were chosen because of their dedication to portraying the early and mid-Heian period, with a particular emphasis on the Fujiwara. They show that Gōdanshō is not alone in viewing these centuries as a period of intense political and cultural activity. Although most of the stories in Gōdanshō do not have exact counterparts in the other texts, they show marked similarities in their portrayal of most of these personages. Indeed, the fact that the text is so obviously part of a tradition in its views of aristocrats goes a long way toward its aims for establishing its authority on this same period of history. These two texts in particular have been chosen because, like Gōdanshō, they are examining the period of time concerned after the fact, rather than being contemporaneous records of events as they occurred like the kanbun diaries written by many men of Masafusa’s class. In other words, they, like Gōdanshō, are also engaged in selecting and highlighting certain people and occurrences.

That Gōdanshō agrees with or mimics details in historical records is still not enough to get at what the text is really trying to do. In its organization into thematic
chapters on such a large number of disparate topics and its distinctive use of the format of masters literature, the Ruijūbon text of the Gōdanshō is trying to present itself as a definitive and reliable reference on the world of the Heian aristocracy. In doing so, it pays special attention to several powerful figures such as emperors and members of the Fujiwara. It is also concerned with the portrayal of the scholar-bureaucrats that made up Masafusa’s own coterie. This tendency owes itself both to Confucian ideas, heavily centered around potentates and their deeds, as well as to more worldly connections between these scholarly literati and the men with the most power at the time, who patronized and aided them in their careers. Thinking of the text in this way helps to explain its similarities and differences with the Eiga and Ōkagami. It draws on a stock of cultural knowledge similar to these two works in its depictions of various persons, but its goals are more far-reaching: its subject seems to be not only the Fujiwara family but a cross-section of the upper classes and their lives as a whole.

However, it is not enough for the text to merely state its own viewpoint. It must also convince the reader of its reliability, persuading him or her that the Gōdanshō’s version is the version to trust and refer to. This is its purpose for borrowing its rhetoric from masters texts: it uses this format to push its version of events. Exploring how it does so will form the last chapter. In order to do so, I will use a framework established in recent folklore studies to analyze the truth claims of oral stories. Since the text is so eager to assert itself as a meticulously organized reference collection of recorded sayings and stories straight from the lips of the master, I believe that analyzing it as an oral document, as it presents itself to be an example of masters literature, is the best way to
explore how it explicitly and implicitly justifies and validates its claims about the aristocratic Heian world. This analysis will show in the end how the text is able to produce such a powerful and singular view of aristocratic society, which remains of no small interest today. It extensively uses the masters literature tradition and yet manages to maintain its own agenda as a reservoir of cultural knowledge.
Chapter 2: “The Cultural and Historical Past in the Gōdanshō”

I. Introduction

The Ruijūbon text of the Gōdanshō is organized into several thematic divisions, and the great variety of content explored in it may seem overwhelming. However, when closely examined, it seems that the text is trying to portray itself as a reference work on aristocratic Japanese society of the Heian period. The text invests itself heavily in portraying figures from the aristocracy. This chapter will analyze several stories found in the Gōdanshō to examine the view the text presents of famous individuals from the highest echelons of the upper classes, one of its main concerns. It will pay particular attention to the portrayal of individuals within two major groups: the imperial family and the Fujiwara clan, the two most politically and culturally prestigious familial institutions of the period.

In order to establish the text’s view of these figures, comparisons will be made between it and two other texts that give historical accounts of what are now called the late Nara and Heian periods: the Eiga monogatari and the Ōkagami. Both of these texts present a view of many of these historical figures in much the same light as Gōdanshō.
In the span of time covered by these narratives, the Emperors manage to keep some of their inherent dignity even though one in particular, Kazan, is unstable. Meanwhile the Fujiwara steadily grow in power and ambition thanks to the efforts of several individual family members. The aristocrats pictured in these texts come through as clearly unique individuals, not some homogenous crowd.

In its close approximation of other material, the text’s arguments about the characters concerned (Emperors and high-ranking bureaucrats) are not strikingly new. However, the motivation of the text as a well-organized and concise reference of the history and culture of Heian-kyō and its aristocratic citizens, as well as its debt to masters literature for its dialogic format, make the Gōdanshō’s account of these historical figures unique. Particularly relevant here is the supposition that the work was authored (or spoken) by a scholar from a well-reputed Confucian family. The great amount of attention paid to the political and cultural power structures and their inhabitants by Gōdanshō is likely rooted in the background of speaker (‘Masafusa’), compiler (Sanekane) and the work’s audience (likely other Confucian scholars). Within a Confucian framework, society as a whole was centered around the person of the ruler, who, through the auspices of Heaven, governed the realm with benevolence. The Gōdanshō reflects this concept in its portrayal of Emperors of outstanding virtue. Just as important as the sovereign are his able ministers of state, and this is where the text’s emphasis on the Fujiwara likely comes from. Gōdanshō’s aim seems to be fitting the world of aristocratic Heian-kyō into a framework inspired by Confucian ideals. Its various stories about political figures support this scenario. The other group that the text
examines in detail, the scholars for whom it was likely written, will form a large part of
the final chapter of this thesis.

II. Emperors in the *Gōdanshō*

The first network of power to examine within the *Gōdanshō* is the imperial
family. The Japanese imperial line had, by Masafusa’s time, become a much less
powerful institution than it had once been. During the Heian period, the imperial line
gradually began to lose political and economic power to factions of court nobles,
especially the Fujiwara clan, who began marrying their daughters into the royal family to
secure power as regents over the imperial children born of these unions. From the ninth
century on, the imperial family started losing its political clout to these nobles. Indeed,
the late tenth and early eleventh centuries were in a way a nadir for the emperors as far as
their own political interests were concerned, for they found themselves in the grip of
Fujiwara no Michinaga, probably the most powerful and ruthless of the Fujiwara regents.

Despite this real decline in its political fortunes, however, the imperial family
remained at the center of the aristocratic world. Though reduced in political might, they
were still the nominal sovereigns of Japan. What is more, their descent from the sun
goddess Amaterasu and position as divinely sanctioned rulers gave them considerable
cultural and religious power. This double-sided image of the emperors as a group comes
through clearly in several anecdotes. On the one hand, certain sovereigns do seem all-
powerful, able to command obedience from even natural forces with their divine descent
and puissance. At the same time, an emperor might prove himself something of a dunce.
‘Masafusa’s’ stories about the emperors and their doings establish them as a network of power whose features closely tally with traditional Heian political and cultural history while emphasizing the inherent strength of character and benevolence of the sovereigns in question.

Emperors appear frequently in the work. All in all, twenty-two separate sovereigns are mentioned in the text, some of who figure more prominently in stories than others. This section will examine three: Uda (867-931), Daigo (885-930) and Kazan (968-1008). These three rulers play important parts in the stories in which they appear, in contrast to several Emperors, who are merely mentioned in passing. This section will show how the anecdotes present a picture of an imperial house with its fair share of glory and power, even supernatural power. The *Eiga monogatari* and the *Ōkagami* depict all three sovereigns in a manner similar to the *Gōdanshō*, showing how prevalent Masafusa’s view of Heian history is. What emerges most clearly from these stories is a sense of great strength of will and virtue on the part of the rulers, even though they may not have been politically powerful or even wholly sane, as the case of Kazan shows. This force of character is stressed as being inherent in the imperial line.

One story in which the might of the Japanese sovereign plays an important role shows an emperor directly invoking his royal prerogative to vanquish a supernatural foe. The sovereign presented here is Uda, referred to within the tale by the name he took after he abdicated the throne, Kanhyō. The story is one of the longer ones in the collection and concerns the exorcism of a troublesome spirit:
The Minister Sukenaka said ‘The Cloistered Emperor Kanhyō once went with the Kyōgoku Haven by carriage to the Kawara-no-In, and viewed the scenery there. Night fell, and the moon was very bright. His Eminence spread out a tatami mat from the carriage and took his pleasure with the Haven. But there was someone in the house’s alcove, and this person opened the door and emerged. The Cloistered Emperor asked who he was. The man answered ‘I’m Tōru. I’d like Your Eminence to give me that Haven!’ His Eminence retorted ‘When you were alive, you were a subject. I am the sovereign! What on earth are these crazy things you’re saying!? Leave now and go back where you came from!’ When he said this, the spirit became enraged and grabbed him by the waist. The Haven, half-dead from fright, turned pale and fainted away. The runners were all outside the gates, and could not hear the Emperor’s cries. Only the carriage driver was nearby. His Eminence summoned him and had him call the other servants, fit out the carriage and put the Haven inside. Her face had lost all color and she would not awaken. When the carriage returned to the palace, His Eminence summoned a priest and had him pray for her. They say she finally came to. His Eminence ruled Japan and attained the bejeweled rank of Emperor through karma of his previous lives, and though he had already left this position the gods protected him and drove the spirit of Tōru away. On the face of the door to the alcove, there are some marks. I hear they are traces of a weapon from when the guardian spirit shoved Tōru’s ghost back into the alcove.’ Someone also said ‘His Eminence was behind the blinds, and Tōru’s ghost was seated in the area of the veranda railing.’

22 Fujiwara no Sukenaka (1046-1119) was a high-ranking member of the Fujiwara clan. Gōdanshō suppl., 9.
24 The original owner of the Kawara-no-in (meaning ‘riverbank villa’), Minamoto no Tōru (822-895) was a son of Emperor Saga (786-842). He lavishly decorated the Kawara-no-in, and it became so well-known that he was known as the Riverbank Minister of the Left (Kawara-no-in no Sadaijin). Gōdanshō suppl. 13.
25 Ōe, 83-84.
There are several features of this tale that warrant analysis in regards to portrayal of Emperors. First is Uda’s angry reaction to Tōru’s impertinent request. The former minister was, after all, merely a commoner, as the enraged retired sovereign says. Asking for Uda’s consort in such a manner causes the former ruler to invoke the power of the societal status quo. Through bluntly stating that social hierarchy forbids him to grant the minister’s request, Uda is asserting his rights as sovereign and heir of the imperial line. Even when Tōru, furious, latches onto the retired emperor, Uda is able to vanquish him through the aid of the gods. The deities specifically react to the rituals and prayers because of Uda’s exalted position as (former) ruler of Japan. In doing so, the gods sanction his status as sovereign and enforce the status quo by driving away the spirit of Tōru, an unruly subject. This divine intervention confirms the position of Japan’s royal line. It is not surprising that the Gōdanshō would explicitly endorse the system in this manner. The Confucian rhetoric under which the government of the time operated, and within which scholars like Masafusa situated themselves, was centered around the position of the ruler as supreme lawgiver and potentate. A loyal subject, especially a Confucian scholar such as Masafusa, was expected to duly revere the position of ruler. The text’s stance on this issue, as it purportedly comes from just such a scholar, is an appropriate one by the standards of the time period, and shows Gōdanshō at work portraying the emperors as Confucian rulers.

26 A possible reason for his appearance and subsequent anger is because he still feels the house is his own: it had been bequeathed to Uda himself. Its former resident is unaware of the change in ownership and behaves accordingly.
Uda’s contact with the supernatural is not limited to his encounter with Tōru’s angry ghost. He also was reported to have been visited by the Kamo Deity, the god of the Kamo Shrine just outside modern Kyoto. Already the site for the Kamo Festival, one of the court’s most important rituals, it was under Uda that the Provisional Kamo Festival began at the shrine. According to the Ōkagami, it was at the behest of the Kamo Deity himself that Uda inaugurated the festival. The narrator, the unbelievably aged Yotsugi, was supposedly present at this event, and recounts his amazement:

In the second year of the Gengyō period or so, the future Emperor Uda, who was then known as the Prince Minister of Ceremonial and was very fond of hunting, went on a typical hawking excursion around the twentieth or so of the Eleventh month. I ran behind His Highness. Around a place called Kamo Hill, or something like that anyway, His Highness released his hawk, and while he was hunting most skillfully, a great mist rose up all of a sudden and darkened everything around us. I couldn’t tell east from west and, thinking the sun must have set, tumbled down into a thicket where I lay quaking with fear. This lasted for about half an hour or so. I later learned that the Kamo Deity appeared to His Highness and spoke with him. However, this story is widely known throughout the land, and so I shan’t speak of it in any great detail. Besides, it is nothing to speak lightly of. It was, I believe, about six years later that the Kamo Provisional Festival was first held. I’m pretty sure that it was the year Emperor Uda ascended the throne, in any case…Even now, his descendants are still alive and flourishing. Though all Emperors are splendid, has there ever been another like he was?

This highly positive portrayal of Uda is by no means out of character for texts of the period. It was under Uda’s reign, for instance, that the great minister, Confucian scholar

27 878 in the Gregorian calendar. Matsumura, Hiroji, Ōkagami, Nihon koten bungaku taikei 21 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1964) 484, n. 4. Matsumura notes that this may have been a mistake of the copyist, as other texts of Ōkagami use ‘six’, not ‘two.’ According to the age of Yotsugi given in the text, he would have been three at the time (seven if it was actually the sixth year of Gangyō). Why a three or seven-year old would be taking place in a hunt is explained neither by the text nor its editor.

28 Matsumura, 252-253. Book 6, ‘mukashi monogatari’
and poet Sugawara no Michizane first became prominent. In addition, Uda tried, unlike some of his predecessors and successors, to govern in his own right instead of opting for manipulation by the Fujiwara regents. A driven and self-motivated ruler such as this is a prime candidate for showcasing the powerful sage-king figure so endorsed by Confucian scholars such as the producers of this text.

Emperors, through their inherent virtues and the power invested in them by their divinely appointed office, act decisively and obtain results, or are simply so august that the whole world order naturally proceeds as it should. An example is the story of how the Emperor Daigo, here called the Engi Sovereign, altered the weather:

[1:19] The Appearance of the Engi Sovereign at the Paper Offering of the Rinji Festival

Someone related: “On the day of the Rinji Festival29, the Engi Sovereign watched from the Southern Palace Garden.30 (From this point on, there was a strong wind.)31 While he was taking up his shaku32 and putting on his shoes, the wind was especially fierce, nearly knocking down the folding screens. His Majesty said ‘What a troublesome wind! Why is there such a wind blowing when I am trying to worship the gods?’ The wind immediately ceased. When His Majesty stood up or sat down, his beard trailed the ground; one could see it even from behind His Majesty. It must have been quite long!”33

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29 This was a festival held outside the normally scheduled calendar of celebrations and rituals. It was held in response to particularly auspicious or ill-omened events and consisted of shrine officials making offerings of sacred paper at various shrines around the country. See Ōe, 13, n.16.
30 Next to the Shishinden, the ‘official’ palace compound. Used for particularly important events such as this. See Ōe, 13, n. 17.
31 This bracketed material is an editorial comment found in the base text from which the SNKBT derives its version of Gōdanshō, the Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan text.
32 A sort of wooden baton that was part of official regalia for courtiers and functionaries. Worn on all formal occasions.
33 Ōe, 13.
The story showcases the power latent within Emperor Daigo. He compels the wind to stop solely through voicing his royal displeasure. In doing so he displays a power over natural forces that one would expect in the descendant of a nature deity, as the imperial line was seen at the time. Even his beard is unique, with its extreme length. Through this short story, the Gōdanshō gives Daigo, and therefore the imperial family, due reverence and respect, portraying them as all-powerful and able to control even the wind at will.

Other sources largely confirm this positive depiction of Daigo and his reign. Later generations seem to have seen his time as a sort of golden age, and ‘Masafusa’ does not deviate from this perspective. Daigo succeeded his father Uda in 897 and reigned until his death in 930, one year before Uda himself passed away. The Kokinshū, the first imperially sponsored anthology of Japanese poetry, was presented to the throne during his reign, and this doubtless contributed to later views of this period as a high point for Heian society. In addition, Daigo attempted to exercise a fair amount of control over the government, with two able ministers, Sugawara no Michizane and Fujiwara no Tokihira (871-909), at his side. His political power and contribution to court culture in sponsoring the Kokinshū ensured his fame as one of the period’s most able sovereigns, as other texts show.

Though the Eiga monogatari’s mention of Daigo is brief, perhaps due to the fact that the period under discussion is too early to have much effect on the book’s main subject, Michinaga, what it has to say is laudatory: “There was once a sovereign named Uda. Of the many sons that Emperor had, the oldest was Crown Prince Atsuhito, who ascended the throne and became known as the Sagely Emperor Daigo and whose reign is
still seen as a resplendent model for all”. The Ōkagami has several anecdotes about Daigo’s kindness, taking time to flesh out the man behind the reputation:

Now an Emperor is an Emperor, after all, but those of us who were born in Emperor Daigo’s time, even down to the most humble commoner, were especially fortunate and blessed. Around the time of the Great and Small Colds, when the snow was falling and the cold pierced one to the bone, he would throw some of his robes outside the Imperial Bedchamber, remarking ‘How cold the people in all of the provinces must be!’ All of us, even myself, felt truly moved by His Majesty’s magnanimity.

The Gōdanshō is not the only text that testifies to Daigo’s strength of personality. The aged narrator of the Ōkagami, an old man who has lived to the extraordinary age of 190 and whose name, Yotsugi, means ‘chronicle’ or ‘chronicler’, recounts this story from personal experience over a century after the events described. His anecdote starring Daigo rests firmly within a tradition of portraying that sovereign in the most positive light. Both texts display Daigo’s ability to perform ably as inspire awe in his subjects, whether through snapping at the breeze or with his displays of magnanimity and sympathy for commoners. Like his father Uda, Daigo presided over a reign that many looked back upon with reverence: the Kokinshū anthology was compiled during his reign, and he continued his father’s tradition of attempting to run political affairs himself. In choosing sovereigns to represent the majesty and moral fiber of the imperial line, the

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35 A period of approximately one month during the first month of the lunar calendar. See Matsumura, Ōkagami, 55, n. 28.
36 Matsumura, 254-255. (Book Six: Mukashi monogatari)
Gōdanshō gains much by selecting Daigo, who is supposed to have exemplified these qualities.

Virtue and goodness inherent within the royal family manifest themselves in a similar way in a short anecdote about Kazan, who reigned in the late tenth century:

[1:20]How, After Kazan’s Accession, Weapons were No Longer Worn in the Dazaifu

He also said “For ten days after the succession of Kazan, not a single person in Kyushu wore any weapons. This was a sign of just how far His Majesty’s Imperial virtue extended.”

So strong is the (super?) natural virtue inherently possessed by the ruling family that the event of Kazan’s ascending the throne provokes repercussions in the behavior and conduct of his people. It should be noted that the Dazaifu corresponds to modern Kyūshū and was at the time considered one of the least civilized parts of the country, its inhabitants boorish at best by the standards of the urbanized Heian elite. In addition, Kyushu was the part of the country with the greatest risk of attack from Korea and China. For people such as these to discard their weapons shows the great benevolence that is literally radiated from the imperial personage and displays the text again extolling the imperial family as paragons of Confucian virtue.

Kazan’s portrayal in historical sources is a thorny issue due to several factors. His reign was a short one, lasting only two years, from 984 to 986, after which he became a monk. Unlike Daigo and Uda, the other two rulers covered here, Kazan reigned during the time of the powerful Fujiwara regents, who were the true force behind the throne. 

37 Ōe, 13.
fact, he was all but forced to abdicate by the Fujiwara regent Michitaka (953-995). There is the additional question of his mental stability, which will be dealt with below. Despite the ebb in the imperial family’s political fortunes and his own mental problems, texts such as the *Eiga monogatari* and *Ōkagami* give him some sense of agency due to his great Buddhist devotion. In this manner the texts maintain their overall positive vision of the imperial family in spite of Kazan’s individual weaknesses.

In remarking upon Kazan’s virtue, the *Gōdanshō* is similar to a tradition inclined to view Kazan’s Buddhist devotion as exemplary. After taking the tonsure, the Retired Emperor makes a point of going to as many temples and holy sites as possible. The *Ōkagami* remarks: “After taking the tonsure, Retired Emperor Kazan practiced religion assiduously, and there was no holy place where he did not visit on pilgrimage.”³⁸ So strong is his faith that he eventually acquires mysterious powers:

> Eventually, His Retired Majesty became endowed with great power due to his devotions…Such a thing is only a matter of course. As devotion is something based upon one’s rank in life, how could even a great ascetic even dream of competing with a Retired Emperor?³⁹

The parallels with ‘Masafusa’s’ depiction of Kazan are striking. Merely because he is an Emperor, Kazan is endowed with great powers. Though the *Ōkagami* mentions this only within the context of Kazan’s life after ceding the throne, both works show the imperial

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³⁸ Matsumura, *Ōkagami*, 148. (Book Three: Korechika)
³⁹ Ibid, 148-149.
line as possessing supernatural puissance. The *Gōdanshō* is not alone in his recognition of this idea.

However, all three works agree in depicting Emperor Kazan in a very ambiguous light. Virtuous paragon and Buddhist miracle worker he may have been, but he was also rather unbalanced mentally. Is it possible to reconcile this less-than-flattering portrait of Kazan with the laudatory examples quoted earlier? I believe that by comparing all three texts on this point, a picture of Kazan as a flawed individual emerges, one that is still an Emperor and still invested with the great power inherent in the imperial line. The greatness of the imperial blood is so apparent that even an Emperor like Kazan, who is mentally unstable, is capable of great deeds, as seen above. The texts’ overall positive view of the imperial line is thus able to remain intact.

The portrayal of Emperor Kazan in the story quoted above seems to present a ruler so inherently good that his mere occupation of the throne compels peace and nonviolence throughout the land. However, the *Gōdanshō* has a much less flattering story to tell about Kazan, one that would have made the Roman historian Suetonius proud. On the day of his ascension to the throne, Kazan is found in *flagrante delicto* by an overzealous courtier:

[1:2, Official Matters]How Koreshige⁴⁰ was Promoted According to His Intent

On the day of his coronation, before the beginning of the ceremony was sounded, Emperor Kazan was on the throne in the Daigokuden violating the lady Uma no

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⁴⁰ Fujiwara no Koreshige (?-989) later took the tonsure along with Kazan when the latter retired. See Ōe, suppl. 7.
Naishi. Koreshige, hearing the bells on His Majesty’s belt and crown, cried out ‘It’s the procession bells!’, and presented a request for his promotion. His Majesty gave it back to him with his own hands and, during the appointment ceremony, promoted Koreshige as per his wishes.

The contrast between this story and the tale quoted earlier is striking. Kazan is so indiscreet that he is betrayed by his own ceremonial crown. Caught in the act of deflowering a woman, Kazan, doubtless quite embarrassed, has enough grace to at least proceed with the ceremony. Indeed, the only person who seems to emerge from the situation unscathed is Koreshige, who receives a promotion for his quick wits.

Meanwhile, Kazan has been seen in a potentially compromising situation. This is a far cry from the laudatory anecdote about him examined earlier.

This story complicates the highly positive outlook on the imperial family noted above. Kazan’s eccentricities are not only seen in the Gōdanshō, but in the Ōkagami as well. Both texts show him as prone to strange behavior. In the Ōkagami, the narrator remarks: “His Majesty’s madness showed itself not on the surface, but within his inner nature, and so it was all the more of a problem, prompting the Minamoto Minister of Civil Affairs to say ‘Emperor Kazan’s insanity was even more of a nuisance than Emperor Reizei’s!’”

What are we to make of this within the broader context of the Gōdanshō? It is here that the text can be seen subverting the framework from which it borrows from masters literature and Confucian morality. It includes not just stories that portray the emperors in the best possible manner, but also shows them behaving

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41 Koreshige is letting the Emperor’s indiscretion pass (mostly) unnoticed by pretending to hear the bells that would have signaled the Emperor’s departure from the Daigokuden, or Hall of State. Kazan is thus warned of the possibility of discovery just in time. See Ōe, 6, n. 9.
42 Ōe, 6.
43 Minamoto no Toshikata (960-1027). See Kokushi daijiten and Matsumura, 147.
44 Matsumura, 147. (Book Three: Korechika)
dubiously, to say the least. It maintains the trappings of its portrayal of itself as a work 
organized according to Confucian principles, but is able to reveal itself as a text with a 
broader interest in collecting various types of material.

All in all, stories about the Emperors in the *Gōdanshō* portray them in a mostly 
positive light. On the one hand, they are seen as suzerains of considerable power and 
virtue, able to command the actions of others and even forces both natural and 
supernatural. Uda and Daigo are men of decisive character who are able to use the 
inherent power of the imperial line with great effect, even quelling supernatural forces. 
Kazan’s portrayal is more complicated. He is seen as an individual of exemplary virtue 
whose Buddhist devotion grants him magical powers. However, his mental instability 
presents problems that may at first glance seem irreconcilable with the overall laudatory 
image of emperors in the work. Looking at other texts such as the *Eiga monogatari* and 
Ōkagami, though, proves helpful. These texts show that the *Gōdanshō* is working within 
an established tradition in presenting these emperors as it does. Both Daigo and Uda are 
seen in all three texts as paragons of imperial power, and even Kazan’s insanity is made 
to serve the text’s portrayal of the imperial family, as it is seen in the *Eiga monogatari* as 
an important inspiration for his later religious devotion.

The *Gōdanshō*, along with other texts, is committed to portraying the imperial 
family as a political and cultural network with considerable power. Individual emperors 
may, as in the case of Kazan, be lacking, but the overarching strength of the imperial 
family as an institution cannot be denied and forms a key part in the view of the 
aristocratic world the *Gōdanshō* depicts. It is in the text’s best interests as a reference by
and for scholars motivated by Confucian doctrine to take this positive view of the emperor’s role in society. Recall also Masafusa’s role as an adviser to the throne and tutor of several Crown Princes, as well as his family’s long-standing positions as court scholars. It only stands to reason that they would depict the various rulers in a fashion that tallies with their own socio-cultural expectations. Not only does the work strive for comprehensiveness in the sheer amount of material included, it is also able to organize this material according to a defined schema, that of Confucianism, with the rulers of the realm and the officials in the bureaucratic government occupying pride of place within its framework.

III. The Clinging Vine: The Fujiwara in the Gōdanshō

The politically influential Fujiwara family forms another power network within the Gōdanshō. Just as ‘Masafusa’s’ accounts of the imperial family portray their political and cultural position of ambiguity throughout Japanese history, his portrayal of the Fujiwara clan in his stories show them to be a family strongly committed to furthering their own political goals, even at the expense of the power hitherto enjoyed officially by the emperors.

Beginning in the early Heian period, the Fujiwara started to consolidate their political and economic power, eventually becoming able to marry their daughters to imperial princes, establishing a very strong system of marriage politics. The fathers-in-law of the sovereigns would become regents for their grandsons on the throne, gaining great power. Eventually, the Northern Branch (hokke) of the family became the most
prominent offshoot of the clan, maintaining strict hereditary control of the position of regent.

Just as its depiction of Emperors focuses heavily on their virtues as Confucian rulers, it is possible to read the work’s portrayal of the Fujiwara along Confucian lines, in tandem with its supposed background as a text authored by scholars of the period. Just as important as the ruler is his cadre of officials. The text’s focus on these men as powerful and canny figures in their own right, as well as their being allotted a section to themselves in the Ruijūbon text, bears out this Confucian framework.

‘Masafusa’s’ portrayal of the Fujiwara traces their ascent from aspiring potentates to full-blown kingmakers. Before their rise to the apex of the political pyramid, they were eager to usurp functions and prerogatives of other families. The text recounts a story concerning these other clans’ fears about the Fujiwara in no uncertain terms. Central to the plot is one Sukeyo (847-897)⁴⁵, a Confucian scholar who was the first of the Fujiwara clan to enter the higher ranks of academe, and who, as we shall see, played an important role in the family’s late ninth century struggle with other aristocratic clans for political power:


He said “Sukeyo was the first of the Fujiwara house to take the highest civil examination. He was a steward of Lord Shosen, and when he set up his own

⁴⁵ As the story makes clear, this man was a talented scholar. He studied under Sugawara no Koreyoshi (812-880), the father of Michizane. He married a daughter of Michizane’s. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 10.
household, though he had familial connections with Tenjin⁴⁶, the scholars of the era did not wish to make use of his talents. Lord Shosen⁴⁷ therefore asked that Sukeyo be given the examination.” I asked him “Why didn’t they let him take it?” He answered “There’s a reason for that. The Ki family, as well as Yoshika⁴⁸ and the like, said ‘Should we be trapped in the coils of the wisteria vine, our lines will come to nothing! Even so, the Fujiwara are such a great house that they will probably continue to ascend.’ In spite of this, Sukeyo finally took the examination. His proctor was Yoshika. On the day of the examination, Lord Shosen took a reed mat down to his garden and prayed to the gods in Heaven for Sukeyo’s success.”⁴⁹

Here, the Fujiwara show no qualms at usurping the privileges of other aristocratic families. The protesting clans use a very apt metaphor here, as ‘Fujiwara’ does indeed contain ‘fuji’ or, ‘wisteria’. The Ki and others are protective of their own prerogatives, but sheer clout on the part of the ascending Fujiwara foils them. Their fears would come to be proven only too true in the coming centuries.

This story about Sukeyo’s rise in the ranks of academe foretells his later career as an important instrument of the Fujiwara house’s rise to the height of the aristocracy. He played an important role in what came to be known as the Akō Controversy.⁵⁰ After the accession of Emperor Uda in 887, the Emperor issued a letter appointing the powerful Fujiwara no Mototsune as Regent, or ‘Akō.’ Given Uda’s strengths as a ruler and desire to govern the realm himself, as discussed above, it should perhaps come as no surprise that the term ‘Akō’ itself was determined to refer to a post that, while high-ranking,

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⁴⁶ The name assigned to Sugawara no Michizane after he became officially deified.
⁴⁷ Fujiwara no Mototsune (836-891). One of the Fujiwara regents. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 19.
⁴⁸ Miyako no Yoshika (834-879), was a famous scholar. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 21.
⁴⁹ Ōe, 24.
⁵⁰ This summary of the incident comes from supplementary material in McCullough’s Ōkagami translation dealing with the role of the Fujiwara in court politics. See McCullough, 340-341.
possessed little to no real political power. The scholar who alerted Mototsune to this affront was none other than Sukeyo.

Understandably enraged, Mototsune retired from government and retreated to his home, letting government activity grind to a halt. Meanwhile, scholars such as Sukeyo debated on the origin and use of the term ‘akō’, some of them even resorting to fistfights. Eventually, the fracas reached such heights that the Emperor was forced to write a conciliatory letter to Mototsune, asking him humbly to return and be ‘kanpaku’, a title for Regent that implied much more political clout. Mototsune graciously accepted, ending the great akō debate and firmly placing the Regency in Fujiwara hands. Sukeyo’s part in this incident was important in securing the power of the Fujiwara clan and testifies to his intelligence and high status as a scholar as portrayed in the Gōdanshō.

So great is the Fujiwara drive for power and influence that they think nothing of going after their own, either. The question of inheritance always brings out the worst in people, and the Regent’s family was certainly no exception. The impending death of the Regent Kaneie\(^{51}\) triggers a scramble for power, with his son Michitaka\(^{52}\) eventually succeeding him. Michitaka shows no mercy for the advisor who tried to influence his father to give the Regency to someone else:


\(^{51}\) Fujiwara no Kaneie (929-990) was the father of two other Regents, Michitaka and Michinaga, as well as the husband of the author of the Kagerō nikki, a diary that details their relationship. See Gōdanshō suppl. 4.

\(^{52}\) Kaneie’s son Michitaka (953-995). His early death from illness allowed his younger brother Michikane to become regent. However, Michikane died almost immediately after taking office. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 18.
“As his death approached, the Grand Novice summoned Arikuni and said ‘To whom among my sons should I give my position as Regent?’ Arikuni said ‘The one you should give it to is the lord of Machijiri’, I believe.’ They say he was speaking of Michikane when he said this. Next the Novice asked Korenaka. Korenaka said ‘In matters such as this one should favor the eldest son.’ Next the Novice asked Kunihira, the Recordkeeper, who said the same thing. Yielding to the advice of these two, the Novice gave his position to the Inner Regent Michitaka. After his succession, Michitaka said ‘It is due to my position as eldest son that I have attained this fortune. This is a matter of fate that was only natural. How could I possibly be lacking in contentment? All I have left to do now is to ruin Arikuni utterly; only then will I be truly happy!’ And so, in no time at all, Arikuni was demoted and his children stripped of their ranks.”

Michitaka proves himself vindictive in the extreme here. Content with nothing less than the utter humiliation of his rival Arikuni, himself a Fujiwara, he displays a vengefulness that shows clearly just how far the Fujiwara are prepared to go to achieve their goals.

The characters presented in this anecdote are pivotal players in the mid-Heian age. Kaneie, the dying Regent, was one of the most powerful of the Fujiwara at court, and is remembered as the father of Regents Michitaka and Michinaga, whose term as Regent is usually regarded as the apogee of Heian civilization. Arikuni was a member of a lesser branch of the clan, known as a scholar and poet.

The grudge borne by Michitaka towards Arikuni is attested in the *Eiga monogatari* as well. After the death of Kaneie, Arikuni frequently comes to call at the

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53 The proof that this was Michikane might come from an *Eiga* passage in which he is said to have lived around the area of Machijiri for some time. If this is so, it is interesting and telling that Masafusa would be referencing a text supposedly written by his great-grandmother. See Ōe, 23, n. 13.
54 Taira no Korenaka (944-1005) was a trusted confidante of Kaneie’s. See *Gōdanshō*, suppl. 7.
55 Birth and death unknown. Later became Michinaga’s steward. See *Gōdanshō*, suppl. 6.
56 Ōe, 22-23.
house of Michikane, Kaneie’s son, angering Michitaka: “As he had always been very fond of Michikane, Arikuni would regularly go to visit him at his Awata mansion, which Michitaka resented. It is really a shame that this should have been so, considering that the late Grand Novice always said ‘I think of Arikuni and Korenaka as my left and right eyes!’” Later, when Arikuni is fortunate enough to receive a lucrative position in Kyushu, people remark on his good fortune, despite Michitaka’s hatred for him:

Arikuni, who had been confined to his household and stripped of his offices by Michitaka, was given the title of Consultant around this time. He was overjoyed. While people were still thinking that this was a wonderful stroke of luck for him, there was a vacancy created by the resignation of the Senior Assistant Governor General of the Dazaifu in Kyushu, and Arikuni was named to fill it. Society saw this as only fitting. With an Imperial wet nurse as his principal wife, he went down to Kyushu in style. “This is just as it should be! For someone so well thought of by the late Chancellor Kaneie, he was really treated poorly by the late Regent Michitaka, so this is a great opportunity for him!”

The *Eiga monogatari* here shows how widely known Michitaka’s dislike for Arikuni had become, and offers another instance of the *Gōdanshō* clearly working within an historical tradition to present its view of the Heian past.

As stated earlier, the Fujiwara obtained their great power through dominating the imperial family using marriage politics. Masafusa demonstrates in several stories how strong the Fujiwara hold on the imperial family became. Coupled, then, with the

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57 Matsumura and Yamanaka, vol. 1, 123. (Book 3: Samazama no yorokobi: Michitaka, Arikuni wo uramu)  
58 Ibid., 154.
Fujiwara ascendancy is the imperial family’s decline in power and prestige, and both can be seen in the following story:

[2:3: Miscellaneous Matters]How Emperor Reizei Tried to Undo the Strings to the Box of the Imperial Jewel

The late Ononomiya Minister of the Right\(^{59}\) related: ‘During the reign of Emperor Reizei, the Grand Novice suddenly desired to go to Court. He immediately set out on horseback. Upon arriving, he asked a lady-in-waiting where His Majesty was. “His Majesty is in his sleeping apartments, but he is trying to undo the strings of the Jewel’s box!” Shocked, the Grand Novice threw open the gate and rushed in. As the lady-in-waiting said, His Majesty was trying to untie the strings! The Grand Novice snatched the box from His Majesty and returned it to its normal state’.\(^{60}\)

A parable can be found here. When even the sovereign oversteps his bounds and is about to commit the blunder of opening the box of one of the three sacred regalia of the imperial line, who should stop him but a Fujiwara regent? The regent in this case, Kaneie, happens to be the uncle of Reizei, and his blood relationship to the sovereign allows him to make this decisive move. The emperor, divine heir of the sun goddess though he be, commits a great blunder and becomes in danger of ritually polluting the Imperial Jewel. When even the emperor cannot abide by the rules, it falls to the Fujiwara regent, the real power behind the throne, to set things right.

The above story contains two characters we have met before, at least in passing. Emperor Reizei is the mad sovereign referenced in one of the Ōkagami passages, when

\(^{59}\) Fujiwara no Sanesuke (957-1046). A diary of his survives. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 8.

\(^{60}\) Ōe, 34.
his madness is compared to Kazan’s. Kaneie figured briefly in a story about his
descendants. The oddities of some of the members of the imperial line have already been
discussed: what about Kaneie? The father of three regents, Michitaka, Michikane, and
Michinaga, he was one of the most powerful of his line.

Kaneie’s personal force and drive are prominent in this story, as well as the
liberties he takes when interacting with the Emperor. His many political machinations
are well-documented, and his brother, Kanemichi, with whom he shared a relationship
fraught with strife and rivalry, resented him for them. Kanemichi looks on his brother’s
rising political fortunes with almost pathological anger, and tries to hinder him at every
turn. The *Eiga monogatari* brings up their rivalry on several occasions. Kaneie is
terribly jealous of his brother’s high position at court and constantly schemes to bring
him down, his anxiety to do so almost amounting to paranoia. Kaneie’s political
scheming to place his own daughter in the palace does not go unnoticed by his brother.
Their intense rivalry speaks to the high stakes of Fujiwara marriage politics, as well as
Kaneie’s force and drive.

The clout of the Fujiwara, especially when compared to the imperial family, is
displayed in another story where a member of the Fujiwara clan usurps the usually
imperial prerogative of controlling the forces of nature:

[1:16: Official Matters]Why the Assistant Equerry and Above Should Always
Attend the Viewing of the Horses

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During the Viewing of the Horses, the Assistant Equerry and above are to be in attendance,” he said. He also said ‘When the Minister Tadafumi was Assistant Equerry, on the day of the Viewing, during the reign of the Engi Sovereign, the nobles entered from the direction of the Takiguchi into the eastern garden. (At the time, this was lower). Suddenly, two of the horses started galloping out of control, but no one could come near them. Tadafumi went out to them all alone and separated them. When the ceremony was over and everyone was leaving, an old man who worked at the stables was heard to say to himself ‘What an awful reign this is! If only it were the former Emperor’s time!’ Upon hearing this, His Majesty was very ashamed.

The only person able to tame the prancing horses is Tadafumi, one of the Fujiwara, and a lowly placed one at that. Interestingly enough, the sovereign during the timeframe of this story was Daigo, who we saw earlier placating the wind with a terse command. His Majesty’s powers have failed him here, however. It falls naturally to a Fujiwara to rectify the situation. In addition, the reader does not have to infer the declining power of the imperial family himself here: a character in the tale does so first. Even the poor old stablehand has noticed how pretty a pass the emperors and their kin have come to, and Daigo, far from flying into an imperious rage, is meek and ashamed. His clear-sightedness cannot avail him in halting the rising power of the Fujiwara, however.

All in all, ‘Masafusa’’s stories in the Gōdanshō portray the Fujiwara as powerful members of society, able to hold their own in government. The text depicts two sides of the clan: their ambition and drive for power and their capability as officials of state,

62 Imperial viewings of the palace horses could happen at several festivals over the course of the year. The most famous one was the Viewing of the Blue Horses, imported from Tang China. See Ōe, 11, n. 17.
63 Fujiwara no Tadafumi (873-947) later became the first Shogun. See Gōdanshō suppl., 12.
64 The Takiguchi was a guardhouse near the eastern palace garden, which was in turn near the Seiryōden palace. See Ōe, 11, n. 21.
65 Ōe, 11-12.
particularly in relation to the emperors. When the imperial dignity is imperiled, either by an emperor’s own conduct or other forces, the Fujiwara are the ones who come to the rescue. Even though this can be seen as usurping royal prerogative, it is also possible to view it as the family fulfilling their role as ministers under the imperial government.

IV. Conclusion

The *Gōdanshō*, with its broad collection of anecdotes, may seem to lack a unified voice or purpose. With its portrayal of various emperors, the work shows the imperial family as a complex, somewhat ambiguous entity. While some emperors are truly worthy of the royal dignity, displaying power and drive, others are not such shining exemplars. The Fujiwara family, meanwhile, are truly movers and shakers of the realm, usurping power from other families to further their own ends and exerting control over the government. At the same time, they aid and assist the rulers when they require it.

The text’s broad assessment of emperors and other political figures can be seen as a nod toward its roots as a Confucian scholarly text, however, in addition to its other interests as a broader compilation of important or interesting anecdotes and cultural capital. The thorough organization of the Ruijūbon text, where the Fujiwara receive their own section and stories of emperors and official matters tend to present themselves early in the collection, shows a drive to present a paradigm of history and culture that adheres to the framework of Confucian culture so important to scholars like Masafusa. Meanwhile, its emphasis on these figures also points to the patronage and political relationships between Masafusa and these two factions. Both of these factors play a role
in this text’s determination of how it portrays the aristocratic Japanese world of the Heian period.

Chapter 3: “Rhetoric of Truth and the Gōdanshō’s Relationship to Masters Literature”

I. Introduction

We have seen how the Gōdanshō takes great pains to depict earlier Japanese history and culture in a certain way, with emphasis on the power of social networks such as the imperial family and Fujiwara clan. The work portrays the imperial family as rightful sovereigns of Japan, yet also as very fallible individuals, while the Fujiwara are predicted as power-hungry and near ruthless politicians. The text situates itself within a broader tradition of depicting the cultural memory of the aristocracy of Heian Japan, as seen when comparing it to other accounts of the period. Its uniqueness comes from its influences drawn from masters texts, and from positing itself as a reference work, both in organization and stated intent.66

However, it is not enough for the text merely to offer a view of upper-class Heian. It must also convince the reader that what it claims is true. I argue that the Gōdanshō takes advantage of its presentation as a collection of oral transmissions, or masters text, to accomplish this goal. In order to analyze the texts’ methods of doing so, I will be using the ideas of Elliot Orring, a folklore scholar, concerning truth-claims in oral storytelling.

Orring calls them the ‘rhetoric of truth’. His article, “Legendry and the Rhetoric of Truth”, published in the *Journal of American Folklore*, is a summation of the techniques used by oral storytellers to give their tales credibility, which have been observed by scholars but not fully listed and discussed in their own right before Orring. It is organized according to Aristotle’s *Poetics*. It can be argued that the *Gōdanshō*, in using the format of a collection of stories orally passed down by ‘Masafusa’, solidifies its claims as a legitimate and correct source of information using methods discussed in Orring’s rhetoric of truth.

This chapter will first cover Orring’s ideas in some detail, laying down a framework within which several stories and themes in the *Gōdanshō* will be analyzed later. Particular attention will be paid to those methods of truth-claiming that can still be seen in writing, as the text, of course, does not record such elements as vocal pitch and talking speed. After discussing Orring’s methodology, I will then use it to analyze several methods used in the *Gōdanshō* to validate the text’s claims about history and culture. These can be seen both in individual stories and in general themes that run throughout the text itself.

The methods used by the text to promote its historical claims are those commonly found within contexts of oral storytelling. These include the narrator impressing his or her credibility on the audience, which the text does through portraying itself as the ‘voice’ of ‘Masafusa’ in several ways. Several stories in the text speak directly about Masafusa’s scholarly background and his family’s academic ability, and one even has
Masafusa explaining how he is an incarnation of a supernatural being, namely the spirit of the planet Mars. It is worth noting that these stories, with the exception of Masafusa’s discussion of his status as a reincarnation of Mars, are exclusive to the Ruijūbon text. Although conclusive evidence that they were added to this textual lineage as forgeries is not available, given the incomplete state of the Kohonkei manuscripts, it is certainly interesting to discover that one of this text’s primary means of self-justification is only apparent in the later line. Meanwhile, certain stories contain other techniques for justification, including appeals to outside authorities, usually senior courtiers, as well as establishing sources for the stories. All of these elements combine to create a text that, both explicitly and implicitly, makes its claim as a legitimate and trustworthy source.

II. Legends and Truth-Claims

It is necessary to define a few concepts before proceeding with the analysis of the text. I will be discussing Orring’s theories of truth-claims in oral storytelling, which he articulates within a framework derived from Aristotle’s Poetics, as well as affixing a genre to most of the Gōdanshō’s individual stories. I believe they constitute legends, which is a notoriously thorny term, but whose general definition will serve our purposes well enough.

What is a ‘legend’? Folklorists have argued almost endlessly over this simple word, and the debate is not likely to die out any time soon. However, Orring advocates a definition that he believes is generally acceptable, and this is the one used here. It revolves mainly around the concept of a story that is told as true to an audience:
I prefer the notion that legend is concerned with matters of truth. First and foremost, a legend makes a claim about the truth of an event. For me, a legend is, or approximates, a narrative…For the whole, I would employ the term ‘legendry,’ an imprecise term to suggest a range of expressions that gravitate around such narratives.”

I believe that, as seen in the last chapter, Gōdanshō, or a large part of it, consists of narratives or stories that the text is careful to situate within a larger tradition. This tradition is largely of a piece in its depiction of earlier Japanese history and culture, especially in its stories about historical individuals, when compared with other texts within the Japanese literary tradition such as the Eiga monogatari and Ōkagami, both of which depict approximately the same period covered by the Gōdanshō. I believe this overall coherency of the historical tradition justifies the text’s individual stories being called ‘legends’ using Orring’s rubric.

Legends these stories may be, but as they are being told as true, they must find ways to stake their claim as legitimate. The main thrust of Orring’s article on the subject involves examining these various methods of justification. Although methods of storytelling, and of course languages themselves, differ across time and place, Orring argues that there are various truth-affirming features in oral storytelling that are fairly constant. He writes: “…what frequently seems to be shared in the enactment of legendry are the means of making claims for the truth, plausibility, and untruth of an account….But these strategies-these ‘authenticating devices (G. Bennett 1988:1:2)-have generally been identified piecemeal in the process of discussing particular

legends... These devices, however, would seem to coalesce in what might legitimately be described as a rhetoric-a *rhetoric of truth*.

It is this rhetoric that Orring explains in detail throughout the rest of the article.

Orring discusses this rhetoric using a threefold rubric drawn from Aristotle’s *Poetics*. They are grouped under the categories of ethos, logos, and pathos. Orring explains their basic features thus:

Ethos is concerned with the character of the speaker, or in the case of legends, the speaker and the purported legend source. In ethos, I refer to matters concerning the narrator that bear upon the credulity of the account. Logos is concerned with the argument of the narratives and their attendant commentaries. Pathos focuses on the dispositions of the audience.

Because all we have of *Gōdanshō* is written accounts of supposedly oral narratives, it is difficult to apply everything categorized under logos and pathos to stories in the text, but there are still some methods that will be effective. For the most part, however, ethos, or the justification of the truth-claims of a legend by legitimizing the teller, will be examined.

Ethos is broadly concerned with the narrator’s qualifications to tell truthful accounts, or, in other words, the narrator’s ability to make his or her audience trust the stories he or she tells. Stressing the authenticity of the story’s source is one method used. This can refer to either the narrator or the original source of the story.

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68 Ibid, 129.
69 Ibid, 130.
important for our purposes is the stress placed upon the character of the narrator: “The authority of the source may rest less on social status than on attributes of character. The character of the source…often becomes critical in producing a credible account…Such attestations of character and sobriety are frequent.”70 There are many stories in the Gōdanshō that concern Masafusa himself and his family, the Ōe. The text makes a great effort to legitimize the clan’s scholarly capabilities and intelligence, making them the perfect custodians for a historical tradition such as the one preserved in these ‘oral’ stories.

Closely related to this issue is the relationship of the narrator to the source of the story. Orring notes:

The more unambiguous the source of a narrative, the more believable the narrative is likely to be. Likewise, the closer the connection of a narrator to his or her source, the more credible the account is likely to be. Thus, it is often in the interest of the narrator in establishing the credibility of a narrative to identify a source and to specify his or her relationship to that source.71

We will see several stories that use their sources as a method of justification. There are some that are touted as Ōe ‘secret traditions’, and others that are portrayed as originating with high-ranking courtiers, contributing to their believability.

It is also necessary to offer a brief introduction to logos and pathos, both of which will be utilized in this treatment of the text, though not perhaps to the extent that

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70 Ibid, 132.
71 Ibid, 133.
ethos will. Logos concerns itself with the way the story itself is told. As mentioned earlier, the nature of the text in question precludes the inclusion of some of the subtypes of logos, such as intonation of the narrator’s voice, laughter, and so on. However, there are still a few applicable categories of logos that can be explored when dealing with the *Gōdenshō*. These include narrative framing (regarding which my view is somewhat different from Orring’s), the naming of witnesses or experts, presenting of physical evidence in favor of the truth of the narrative, and theories as to how or why the occurrence took place.

Narrative framing consists of somewhat formulaic openings or closings to narratives. Familiar to many readers in such phrases as ‘Once upon a time…’, this device is most notable for stories that do not actually make truth claims, such as fairy tales. Orring uses this tendency to claim that for many societies framing serves to weaken any claims to truth that the story might otherwise have: “In legend, the degree to which the narrative is foregrounded generally reduces its claim to truth. The narrative is characterized as a story rather than as a transparent representation of events.”\(^{72}\) This may be so, but he later goes on to say that whether or not framing works as a device for truth claiming may be culturally dependent:

…the extent to which the mantle of tradition is likely to enhance believability would depend on the extent to which tradition is revered in a particular society. There are societies in which the invocation of tradition would in itself prove suasive.\(^{73}\)

\(^{72}\) Ibid, 140.
\(^{73}\) Ibid, 141.
To make such an overarching claim for aristocratic Heian society would be difficult, if not dangerous, and certainly beyond the present scope. However, I do believe that the device of framing in the *Gōdanshō* has a positive effect on the text’s truth claims, not a negative one. Recall the supposed makeup of this text: it is presented to us as the recorded sayings of a master scholar. It is the framing of most of the entries in the collection with conversational devices such as ‘He said…’（命云）that gives the entire work its conversational and didactic flavor. These stories are presented to readers as coming straight from ‘Masafusa’s’ mouth, and the constant framing that surrounds them is of great help to this characteristic of the text.

Two more facets of logos with which we are concerned are narrative detail and presentation of physical evidence. They may be summarized briefly, for though they are certainly present in the *Gōdanshō*, neither can be said to be constant throughout the text: some stories are so short as to be no more than sketches, and only one presents any kind of physical proof as support for its claims of truth. Be that as it may, they both have parts to play in the text’s methodology of truth-claims.

Orring frames his discussion of narrative detail on a lighter note, stressing the importance of added detail as an aid to truth claims: “If dates are the buttons on the fly of history, as a history professor once informed me, then details are the anchors of narrative veracity. A narrative without specificity as to character, locale, or time is of diminished
plausibility.” Even the shortest of the text’s many stories takes pains to mention the characters (usually historical) by name. Since this text is so concerned with presenting a certain view of history, it is only natural that the most important details, such as time period, occasion and characters should be fleshed out, and in nearly every case, they are.

Physical evidence is also an extremely powerful way to support a story. Needless to say, if a narrator can produce, or refer his or her listeners to, some tangible proof of the actuality of the occurrence, it would be a great help to any claim to truth presented within the narrative. There is such evidence presented within the story of Emperor Uda, which will be analyzed for its truth claims below.

One more logos-related phenomenon will be examined. This is the practice of a narrator offering a theory to explain the narrative. Orring notes:

> While this does not seem to be a frequent strategy, it does exist…A theory need not be framed in scientific or quasi-scientific terms. A theory appeals to a general principle by which the world is presumed to work—even a religious one.

As one might expect, positing of a theory by the ‘narrator’ of the text is not common here, either, but the story about Uda and the angry minister’s ghost does provide one for examination. Just as Orring claims, it appeals to the status quo of Heian society (the great importance of the position of Emperor).

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74 Ibid, 147.
75 Ibid, 151.
76 Ibid, 152.
The last broad category within Orring’s rhetoric of truth is pathos, which deals with the audience. The premise behind this category is that if a story fits the cognitive and emotional expectations of its audience, it is more likely to be considered true by that audience. In Orring’s words:

A legend is more likely to be regarded as true if it conforms to the cognitive, emotional, and moral expectations of its audience…What does it mean to say that a legend is more persuasive if it meets cognitive expectations? It means that it is more persuasive if it conforms to the ideology and belief language of the listeners.77

It is difficult to apply this portion of Orring’s schemata to our text, however, without having to rely solely on assumptions or educated guesses about the intended audience of the text. We can make a few deductions based on the nature of the text itself, always keeping in mind that we are playing a very dangerous game: it is written in kanbun, the adaptation of literary Chinese in use in Japan from the introduction of the Chinese writing system into the country. As such, it can probably only have been meant for the literate upper strata of late Heian society, of whom literacy beyond the most basic level was probably the exclusive property. Another point must be considered: the possible gender implications of a text written in kanbun. It is a widely held general assumption that kanbun texts were mostly intended for men during the Heian period and earlier, and this social norm was usually loosely adhered to at the time. This is not to say that women never learned kanbun, but it was a typical polite fiction of the time that only men read

and composed kanbun texts. An additional possible deduction is that it was intended for use by scholars of the period, given its supposed authorship and the role of Fujiwara no Sanekane as compiler. Helen Craig McCullough, in her brief discussion of Gōdanshō contained within her introduction to her translation of the Ōkagami, comes to much the same conclusion when she posits that the text may have been conceived of as a reference work.  

Let us very tentatively assume, then, that the audience for Gōdanshō was the male scholars of the late Heian period. What could this tell us about their expectations as an audience? It is certain that they would have known of the famous figures presented in many of the stories, the Emperors and Fujiwara regents alike. Many of the events mentioned in the stories were likely known to these scholars as well. It just may be safe to assume that the text, especially considering the similarities of its portrayals of historical figures to other texts of the period. If this is so, it is possible to say that the text would broadly conform with the cognitive expectations of its audience. By this point, though, it is obvious that any speculation on the expectations of the audience of this text must remain just that. Given the difficulties inherent in tackling this issue in detail, aside from the very sketchy generalizations hazarded above, the following analysis will restrict itself to those parts of Orring’s rhetoric that can be more reliably located in our text, all of which can be found within the categories of ethos and logos.

III. Ethos and Truth-Claims in the Gōdanshō

78 See McCullough, 13.
Several techniques listed under Orring’s broader category of ethos are important methods of truth-claiming for the Gōdanshō. All designed to bolster the credibility of the narrator, these techniques prove to be a cornerstone of the text’s strategy to legitimize itself. Chief among them are its many references to the scholarly attributes and abilities of various members of Masafusa’s family, as well as a monologue by the scholar himself. Other issues covered by ethos will also be addressed.

One of the more interesting stories in the collection is ‘Masafusa’s’ account of himself as a supernatural being, a reincarnation of the planet Mars. Though quite a grandiose claim, it does show the text hard at work lionizing its supposed narrator:

[3:40: Miscellaneous Matters] How Masafusa was the Spirit of Mars

‘I hear that people are saying things about old Masafusa these days! There's something you should hear, too. Last year, the Bishop Kyōzō, who was a yin-yang diviner, came to see me and said ‘My dear sir, people are calling you The Spirit of Mars, and so I've come hoping you would petition to Enma-O's court!’ Ever since hearing this, I’ve come to think of myself as a rather special person, if I do say so myself! You know, it was in the reign of Taizong in China that the Spirit of Mars descended and was reincarnated in the mountains between En and Cho. A fellow called Li Chunfeng said 'The Spirit of Mars has descended among us!' and the Emperor Taizong sent out some messengers to see if it was so. They found that the Spirit was a white-haired old gentleman. Li Chunfeng himself was a reincarnation of the Spirit of Mars; all of us were, in fact,’ he said. 

79 (1017-1107). A monk at Enryakuji on Mt. Hiei. As the text itself notes, he was skilled in yin-yang divining. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 5.
80 The overseer of the realm of the dead was thought to preside over a bureaucracy much like that of the surface world. People born under Mars were thought to have special powers enabling them to intercede on others’ behalf with Enma-O. See Ōe, 88, n. 7.
81 (589-649). Second emperor of the Tang dynasty. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 11.
82 Ōe, 88.
Masafusa is making quite the claim for himself. Not only does he claim to be an incarnation of a powerful spirit, he places himself as only the newest of several of these incarnations. It is also of interest that the narrator projects this chain of figures back into Tang China, a crucial cultural touchstone for Japan at the time. Even more telling is the fact that this figure, Ri Junfu, or Li Chunfeng (602-670), was himself a famous scholar, particularly adept in Daoist rites.83 It seems appropriate for the narrator in this story to associate himself with (one might even say ‘portray himself as’) this figure. This story shows the Gōdanshō attempting to legitimize its claims of legitimacy by elevating the text’s supposed narrator, Masafusa, to supernatural status.

This text is also very concerned with elevating the status of the Ōe family, with many stories detailing their virtues. Most frequently, these anecdotes will concern the scholarly prowess of members of the clan. This seems intended to inspire respect and trust for the supposed narrator, Masafusa, on the part of the reader (or the hypothetical original ‘listeners’), and is an effective means of self-justification for the Gōdanshō.

One of these stories provides an origin for the clan’s present lofty status among scholars. The text has Masafusa narrating the good deeds and efficient governmental career of his progenitor, Otondo, who lived in the late Nara and early Heian periods. Not only does ‘Masafusa’ lionize his ancestor, he also comments on his accomplishments as a motivating factor for his own service to the government:

83 See Gōdanshō, suppl. 21.
[2:17 Miscellaneous Matters] Otondo, During his Time as Betto, Moves the Prison at Nagaoka to the Capital

He said ‘The reason why I, Masafusa, have come so far as to serve the Emperor as Counsellor is because my ancestor Otondo as head of the Imperial Police, served the State loyally, and so I serve the Emperor without fail.’ I asked ‘How did that come about?’ and he answered ‘Before Otondo became Head of the Imperial Police, the prison was at the former Capital of Nagaoka. The prison there was terribly run down and so prisoners were always escaping, so Otondo rebuilt the walls and gates and no more criminals escaped. As a result of his service he received great imperial favor. Those who did good deeds and were given boons for their actions were called sekyō, and appeared around this time. Otondo finally said ‘My descendants will feel great loyalty towards the State and attain high ranks. But, those criminals who have committed the worst crimes cannot now escape prison, as I have rebuilt the gates and walls. Also, according to another law, those who travel the roads of the country, giving food to criminals, will not be able to easily enter the prison. As karmic retribution for this, I believe that the descendants of criminals will be few.’ This only stands to reason! And so, when I, Masafusa, was Acting Secretary of the Gate Guards, I decided to follow his example and heavily restricted curfews at night. This was all done out of loyalty to the nation. And so, throughout Go-Sanjō’s reign, there were no reports of theft…

This story posits that the reason for Masafusa’s own greatness is that of his capable ancestor. It addresses the importance of the narrator on two fronts. First, ‘Masafusa’ assures the reader/listener that his family has a long and outstanding history of good service to the bureaucratic government. Also, ‘Masafusa’s’ own strength of character is attested. The text is strongly implying that such conscientious and highly regarded members of the government would prove to be safe guardians of the historical and cultural tradition.

84 The founder of Masafusa’s line (811-877). See Gōdanshō suppl. 4.
85 The capital before Heian.
86 He reigned from 1068 until his death in 1073. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 6.
87 Ibid, 43-44.
As a sort of postscript to the above tale, ‘Masafusa’ appends an account of his father’s (and his own) impressive scholarly acumen. This story also contains an affirmation of the family’s hereditary vocation and responsibility as custodians of old texts and traditions:

Also, as for why my own learning is so special, it is thanks to my father\(^88\), for, though he had no talent, he would always copy out the books passed down through our family. He would set up four shoji screens, rid the books of insects, and recopy them. As for places that were missing, he would always seek out the original text and paste it inside the book. He would always say ‘To me has fallen the duty of our house of Ōe, to take care of the works of old!’ He would place four servants within the shoji screens with him, and have one hold his glue, another open the books, another paste the paper into them and another would be amanuensis. In this way he passed his life. This has become a tale the whole of society knows! Shouldn’t it be told to all?\(^89\)

Though not very modest, this tale is important in establishing the credibility of ‘Masafusa’ as a truthful narrator. The scholar’s talents are not unique to him, but are long-running in his family. Most importantly, it is the responsibility of his clan to safeguard and cherish older texts. This would by implication make ‘Masafusa’ very reliable, as he is the natural heir to this scholarly tradition. In addition, everyone throughout society is aware of the family’s abilities. Any pronouncement on matters of knowledge made by an Ōe would therefore carry great weight. This enthusiastic endorsement of both his own and his family’s intellectual capabilities is a fitting example of Orring’s idea of ethos in practice.

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\(^88\) Masafusa’s father, Shigehira (dates unknown), was also a scholar, becoming the head of the University. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 8.

\(^89\) Ōe, 44.
Another important figure in Masafusa’s family to appear is his great-grandfather, Masahira (952-1012). He was well known for his Confucian scholarship and is somewhat idolized by the text. One story involving him portrays him advising none other than Kaneie, the powerful Fujiwara potentate discussed earlier:


‘When the Grand Novice (Kaneie) was still a Counsellor, he had a dream that he was crossing Ōsaka Barrier during a snowfall. Seeing that the path had become white from the snow, he was astonished, thinking the snow a bad omen. He summoned a dream reader and consulted him, hoping to offset the ill effects of the dream. The dream reader said ‘This dream is a very lucky one! You’ve absolutely nothing to be afraid of, because someone is going to give you a piebald ox.’ Afterward, someone indeed did give the Novice one. The dream reader received great praise. However, when Ōe no Masahira came to Court, the Grand Novice told him about the matter, and he was shocked and said ‘Give that ox back! Ōsaka Barrier has the ‘kan’ in ‘kanpaku’ [Regent], and snow is white [it has the ‘haku’ in ‘kanpaku’]. You will certainly become Regent!’ The Grand Novice was delighted, and became Regent the following year.’

Again, this story takes pains to place the Ōe family in a good light, with one of their most celebrated members advising the Fujiwara Regent. Masahira’s prediction is proved right, while that of the official dream reader is incorrect. Moreover, this story portrays the scholar Masahira in close contact with one of the text’s other principal figures; if this illustrious ancestor of Masafusa was indeed so great a scholar and so highly valued by the court, surely the supposed accounts of his grandson can also be trusted.

All of these stories about Masafusa’s family are implicitly strong arguments for the truth of the accounts presented in this text. The Ōe family members who are

90 Ibid, 22.
examined in these stories are all capable officials, intelligent scholars, dutiful custodians of ancient texts, and members of court highly valued by those in power. With such a shining record of scholarship and public service, the knowledge possessed and passed on by ‘Masafusa’ would by extension be held trustworthy and correct. These stories about Masafusa’s family thus play an important role in supporting the truth-claims of the Gōdanshō, and serve as examples of ethos.

Stating a source for a story, as Orring says, can also go a long way towards convincing others that it is true. The Gōdanshō does so on several occasions. For instance, recall the stories of Otondo and Masafusa’s father, which are supposed to be very well-known by everyone: “This is a tale that the whole of society knows! Shouldn’t it be told to all?” The implication, of course, is that it certainly should, and if “the whole of society” is already aware of the stupendous academic exploits of Masafusa’s father, there must be a good deal of truth in the story.

The text also names sources for several of its anecdotes. The story about Emperor Uda (3:32), for example, reportedly comes from another source: “The Minister Sukenaka told me…” It is worth noting here that the individual in question, Fujiwara no Sukenaka (1021-1087), was a high-ranking member of the aristocracy (an Acting Middle Counsellor), and reached the Second Rank of the imperial rankings system. For the likely aristocratic audience of this text, these factors would have been significant:

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91 Ibid, 43-44.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid, 83.
94 See Gōdanshō, suppl. 10.
someone so highly placed and esteemed within society would have a more valid claim to truth than others might.

Established texts also serve as sources for some stories or comments. One of ‘Masafusa’s’ many explanations of minute ritual detail (which was the specialty of his family) cites a ritual text as its authority: “He also said ‘In the Chamberlains’ Ceremonies it says…’”, going on to give an account of the first celebration of a festival. The text in question, though no longer extant, was a handbook of ceremonial supposedly commissioned in the late ninth century by none other than Emperor Uda. Not only does this source deal with the matter under discussion, but the fact that Masafusa, heir to a long familial preoccupation and vocation of ritual matters, endorses it makes it all the more credible.

One more kind of source that turns up in this text is a sort of secret familial tradition or story. The examples in the Gōdanshō are all supposed to be Ōe secret anecdotes. This air of secrecy might be considered as contributing to their truth claims: they are forbidden knowledge that must be kept from others. One example is another story involving the prophetic powers of Masahira, the grandfather of Masafusa, and the famous Empress Akiko(988-1074), patroness of Masafusa’s great-grandmother Akazome Emon95:


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95 See Gōdanshō suppl. 17.
When Jōtōmon’in was a Consort of Emperor Ichijō, a puppy suddenly went behind her blinds without any warning. Greatly alarmed and distressed, people called the Grand Novice (this was Michinaga). He summoned Masahira and told him secretly about the situation. Masahira said ‘This is a wonderful omen!’ Michinaga said ‘What on earth do you mean?’, and Masahira said ‘It is a sign that a Crown Prince is to be born! When you take the character for ‘dog’ and place the dot under it, you get the character ‘great’, and if you place the dot above the character, it results in ‘heaven’. When you think about it this way, it is a sure sign that there will be a Crown Prince! He will surely be Crown Prince, and then ascend to the position of Emperor, will he not?’ The Grand Novice was thrilled, and meanwhile Jōtōmon’in became pregnant. And so Emperor Go-Suzaku was born. This matter is a secret. After he retired from his post, Masahira passed this matter of the characters down through the family.

This story claims to be a secret passed down over generations. Its status as privileged material or knowledge adds to its potential credibility. Also of interest is the fact that it is another tale that glorifies the intelligence of Masahira, which in turn reflects well upon his grandson Masafusa and his stories.

The burden of establishing the truth-claims present in the Gōdanshō rests heavily on the narrative practices found in Orring’s category of ethos. Especially prominent are stories that stress the extraordinary character and abilities of Masafusa, the supposed narrator, and his family. These tales contribute to the credibility of the text by painting ‘Masafusa’ in a favorable light. Stories that emphasize the achievements of his family in scholastic matters contribute to the overall truth-claims of the text, by implying that his views and narratives are accurate ones. Meanwhile, the text is also concerned with providing sources for many of its stories: these can be credible individuals placed highly

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96 Akiko’s name after she took holy vows in 1026. She became Empress in 1000. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 9.
97 1009-1045. Son of Emperor Ichijō. See Gōdanshō suppl. 6.
98 Ibid, 37-38.
in Heian society. Texts and family traditions are also included. By taking the time to identify potential credible sources, the text uses another method of establishing its stories and view of history as true.

IV. Logos in Gōdanshō

There are several aspects of Orring’s logos category that may be applied to Gōdanshō. These are matters concentrating on the narrative itself, encompassing several storytelling techniques. These include narrative framing, presentation of physical evidence to support the story, and putting forth theories to explain events narrated. In contrast to ethos, which concentrates its efforts on making the story’s narrator as credible as possible, these techniques work on the level of the individual narrative itself.

Narrative framing is one of the most visible narrative techniques in the entire Gōdanshō. Virtually every entry in the long catalogue of short pieces begins with quotative structures, most commonly “He also said…” or “He told me…” . These linguistic features place the reader directly into the context of a conversation or monologue. In the original kanbun of the text, this introductory phrase is usually made up of the two characters 又云, or variations thereof. Since the text is supposed to be a collection of these same monologues or dialogues, this practice is thoroughly in keeping with its purpose. Even though Orring believes that the advantages of narrative framing for stories that want to set themselves up as ‘true’ are few, I believe that the text benefits from this strategy. Each entry becomes a transcription, as it were, of an orally transmitted anecdote. This works to the text’s advantage, as it gives the impression that
the reader is getting a faithful recording of an actual storytelling event, not merely an account that is half-remembered or, worse, falsified.

When we consider this text’s possible inclusion within the broader genre of masters literature popular throughout the East Asian cultural sphere, the text’s strategy of narrative framing in quotes becomes even more persuasive. It is precisely this kind of ‘direct quotation’ motif that gives the genre its form and rhetorical power. Especially the more simple scenes, with only the narrator ‘Masafusa’ speaking, echo Denecke’s statement about Confucius: “Although there is no one but the master in the scene, which ends when he has pronounced his utterance, the most basic ingredient that shapes the rhetorical logic of the scene of instruction is there: the voice of the master.”\footnote{Denecke, 94.} There is even more similarity between the texts when we consider that the \textit{Analects} also begin many entries with variations of ‘The Master said…’. The two characters used, 子曰, are very close to the \textit{Gōdanshō}’s format, suggesting an intentional borrowing on the part of the Japanese text. The \textit{Gōdanshō} follows this example: even though ‘Masafusa’ is alone in many of his pronouncements, save those in which the listeners converse with him, they still retain their power to convince the reader.

Another logos strategy is the presentation of physical evidence. This only occurs in one of the stories sampled, the tale of Uda and the ghost (3:32), but it does count as an attempt to find irrevocable evidence for the truth of the account. The mention of physical traces of the encounter with the ghost occurs towards the end of the story: “There are
marks of weapons on the door. They are where the god chased Tōru inside.” The occasion is thus given credibility by the presence of these marks. Should the reader or listener doubt the veracity of the account, then, the door is there to set those doubts at ease. The story is submitting another claim to truth.

Finally, theories about the events or background of a story are another category of logos that appears in the Gōdanshō. We are told that his rescue by the benevolent spirits is due to his former imperial rank, which in turn was thanks to good karma from Uda’s previous existences: “His Eminence ruled Japan and attained the bejeweled rank of Emperor through karma of his previous lives, and though he had already left this position the gods protected him and drove the spirit of Tōru away.” This theory subscribes to the basic laws of karmic retribution, which among the Heian aristocrats of the time was one of the most important guiding principles of religious life, forming a basic moral tenet under which the entire universe was supposedly governed. This explanation of Uda’s fortune and timely rescue in terms of karma confirms Orring’s statement that theories tend to rely upon socially accepted norms in order to ‘work’ and help establish a story’s truth claims.

Logos plays an important role in establishing the truth claims of individual stories within the Gōdanshō. Most stories are framed in such a way as to invite the reader to be a participant in the supposed ‘conversation’ that the text depicts. They also stress that these are supposed to be recorded directly from the source, ‘Masafusa’. Meanwhile,

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100 Ōe, 84.
101 Ibid.
physical evidence also appears as a technique for truth-claiming. In the same story, the narrator theorizes as to how the events came about as they did. These several methods of establishing the truth of a story also help the text in its assertions about Japanese cultural history.

V. Conclusion

Even if the Gōdanshō has specific claims to make in its portrayal of historic figures and their exploits, how does it enforce or legitimize these claims? The text uses the premise that it is a collection of oral stories written in the style of masters literature to achieve this end. By employing Orring’s ideas about the rhetoric of truth in oral storytelling, we can discover some of the ways in which this text substantiates or stresses the truth-claims of its stories.

Several techniques used in the Gōdanshō correspond to Orring’s idea of ethos, or strategies that increase the credibility of the narrator. These include a laudatory story about Masafusa himself and several tales about his family, who are praised for their scholarly efforts and knowledge. Many stories also give their sources in order to bolster their credibility.

Orring’s schemata of logos provides a framework for individual stories. Many of the anecdotes are framed in such a way as to submerge the reader in the conversation that supposedly took place as the story was recounted, emphasizing the idea that these are faithful transcriptions. Presentation of physical evidence and theorizing about a story’s
events are also methods employed by the text. All of these strategies come together to create a text that is very aware of itself and its portrayal of aristocratic Heian culture.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

At first glance, the Gōdanshō may seem like a morass of randomly collected stories and tidbits of information. One is even hesitant to assign a genre to it. However, the work does possibly contain the seed of its own genesis as a collection of important and interesting cultural knowledge that the scholar Ōe no Masafusa desired to transmit in his old age. The material presented is vast in scope, ranging from stories about celebrated figures from history to lists of musical instruments. The work’s constant usage of the rhetoric of a teacher addressing his students shows a text that presents itself as being influenced by the masters literature that carried such great weight throughout East Asian culture. In addition, the content of the work can be said to have been influenced by the genre and its accompanying philosophy, Confucianism, imported from China centuries before Masafusa’s time, which exerted a profound influence on Japanese culture and politics.

The Ruijūbon textual lineage of the work shows a careful attempt to organize and categorize this seemingly random knowledge into an encyclopedic framework. This textual line is especially concerned with telling anecdotes about historical individuals from the past, such as emperors and the powerful Fujiwara family, as well as scholars
from Masafusa’s own class. The Ruijūbon displays a marked preference for stories that depict the emperors in a way that showcases their goodness, and the Fujiwara as able assistants to the throne. The work’s choice to concentrate on these figures also reflects their importance to scholars like Masafusa as patrons and political backers. However, the work is not exclusively concerned with presenting all of these figures in a wholly positive light: many of the individuals concerned emerge as rather less than ideal. This shows, on the one hand, a commitment to Confucian ideals that nods to masters literature in inspiration, but also an attempt to preserve anecdotes that do not conform to these ideals.

The text also takes pains to legitimize and justify its view of the world through its presentation of itself as masters literature. This is done in several ways. The text endorses itself by portraying its progenitors, the Ōe family, as trustworthy and able guardians of scholarly tradition: any account by them, especially Masafusa, the master the text invokes. Meanwhile, the Gōdanshō employs other rhetorical devices in its role as masters text through presenting evidence for its claims and theorizing about them; its use of dialogue not only echoes Confucian texts, it also heightens its own appeal through the appearance of the text as being taken down straight from Masafusa’s own words. Its attempts to justify itself reveal a text that is afraid neither to make its own claims nor endorse them. The text is able to take advantage of the rhetoric of masters literature while retaining its own aim of supposedly presenting, as per Masafusa’s wishes, stories and matters of great interest and importance.
References


[1:2, Official Matters] How Koreshige\textsuperscript{103} was Promoted According to His Intent

On the day of his coronation, before the beginning of the ceremony was sounded, Emperor Kazan was on the throne in the Daigokuden violating the lady Uma no Naishi. Koreshige, hearing the bells on His Majesty’s belt and crown, cried out ‘It’s the procession bells!’, and presented a request for his promotion.\textsuperscript{104} His Majesty gave it back to him with his own hands and, during the appointment ceremony, promoted Koreshige as per his wishes.\textsuperscript{105}

[1:16: Official Matters] Why the Assistant Equerry and Above Should Always Attend the Viewing of the Horses

‘During the Viewing of the Horses\textsuperscript{106}, the Assistant Equerry and above are to be in attendance”, he said. He also said ‘When the Minister Tadafumi\textsuperscript{107} was Assistant Equerry, on the day of the Viewing, during the reign of the Engi Sovereign, the nobles entered from the direction of the Takiguchi into the eastern garden.\textsuperscript{108} (At the time, this was lower). Suddenly, two of the horses started galloping out of control, but no one could come near them. Tadafumi went out to them all alone and separated them. When the ceremony was over and everyone was leaving, an old man who worked at the stables

\textsuperscript{102} As noted above in the Introduction, these notes contain material taken from the notes in the annotated text itself, which is cited with the page number of the entry in the text, and the supplementary material, which uses a different system of pagination. It will be marked as such.

\textsuperscript{103} Fujiwara no Koreshige (799–989) later took the tonsure along with Kazan when the latter retired. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 7.

\textsuperscript{104} Koreshige is letting the Emperor’s indiscretion pass (mostly) unnoticed by pretending to hear the bells that would have signaled the Emperor’s departure from the Daigokuden, or Hall of State. Kazan is thus warned of the possibility of discovery just in time. See Ōe, 6, n. 9.

\textsuperscript{105} Ōe, 6.

\textsuperscript{106} Imperial viewings of the palace horses could happen at several festivals over the course of the year. The most famous one was the Viewing of the Blue Horses, imported from Tang China. See Ōe, 11, n. 17.

\textsuperscript{107} Fujiwara no Tadafumi (873–947) later became the first Shogun. See Gōdanshō suppl., 12.

\textsuperscript{108} The Takiguchi was a guardhouse near the eastern palace garden, which was in turn near the Seiryōden palace. See Ōe, 11, n. 21.
was heard to say to himself ‘What an awful reign this is! If only it were the former Emperor’s time!’ Upon hearing this, His Majesty was very ashamed.’

[1:19] The Appearance of the Engi Sovereign at the Paper Offering of the Rinji Festival

Someone related: “On the day of the Rinji Festival, the Engi Sovereign watched from the Southern Palace Garden. (From this point on, there was a strong wind.) While he was taking up his shaku and putting on his shoes, the wind was especially fierce, nearly knocking down the folding screens. His Majesty said ‘What a troublesome wind! Why is there such a wind blowing when I am trying to worship the gods?’ The wind immediately ceased. When His Majesty stood up or sat down, his beard trailed the ground; one could see it even from behind His Majesty. It must have been quite long!”

[1:20] How, After Kazan’s Accession, Weapons were No Longer Worn in the Dazaifu

He also said “For ten days after the succession of Kazan, not a single person in Kyushu wore any weapons. This was a sign of just how far His Majesty’s Imperial virtue extended.”


‘When the Grand Novice (Kaneie) was still a Counsellor, he had a dream that he was crossing Ōsaka Barrier during a snowfall. Seeing that the path had become white from the snow, he was astonished, thinking the snow a bad omen. He summoned a dream reader and consulted him, hoping to offset the ill effects of the dream. The dream reader

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109 Ōe, 11-12.
110 This was a festival held outside the normally scheduled calendar of celebrations and rituals. It was held in response to particularly auspicious or ill-omened events and consisted of shrine officials making offerings of sacred paper at various shrines around the country. See Ōe, 13, n.16.
111 Next to the Shishinden, the ‘official’ palace compound. Used for particularly important events such as this. See Ōe, 13, n. 17.
112 This bracketed material is an editorial comment found in the base text from which the SNKBT derives its version of Gōdanshō, the Kokubungaku kenkyū shiryōkan text.
113 A sort of wooden baton that was part of official regalia for courtiers and functionaries. Worn on all formal occasions.
114 Ōe, 13.
115 Ōe, 13.
said ‘This dream is a very lucky one! You’ve absolutely nothing to be afraid of, because someone is going to give you a piebald ox.’ Afterward, someone indeed did give the Novice one. The dream reader received great praise. However, when Ōe no Masahira came to Court, the Grand Novice told him about the matter, and he was shocked and said ‘Give that ox back! Ōsaka Barrier has the ‘kan’ in ‘kanpaku’ [Regent], and snow is white [it has the ‘haku’ in ‘kanpaku’]. You will certainly become Regent!’ The Grand Novice was delighted, and became Regent the following year.’

[1:32 Matters of the Regents’ House] How the Grand Novice Yielded the Regency to the Inner Regent

“As his death approached, the Grand Novice summoned Arikuni and said ‘To whom among my sons should I give my position as Regent?’ Arikuni said ‘The one you should give it to is the lord of Machijiri,’ I believe.’ They say he was speaking of Michikane when he said this. Next the Novice asked Korenaka. Korenaka said ‘In matters such as this one should favor the eldest son.’ Next the Novice asked Kunihira, the Recordkeeper, who said the same thing. Yielding to the advice of these two, the Novice gave his position to the Inner Regent Michitaka. After his succession, Michitaka said “It is due to my position as eldest son that I have attained this fortune. This is a matter of fate that was only natural. How could I possibly be lacking in contentment? All I have left to do now is to ruin Arikuni utterly; only then will I be truly happy!’ And so, in no time at all, Arikuni was demoted and his children stripped of their ranks.”


He said “Sukeyo was the first of the Fujiwara house to take a civil examination. He was a steward of Lord Shosen, and when he set up his own household, though he had familial connections with Tenjin, the scholars of the era did not wish to make use of his talents. Lord Shosen therefore asked that Sukeyo be given the examination.” I asked him “Why didn’t they let him take it?” He answered “There’s a reason for that. The Ki

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116 Ibid, 22.
117 The proof that this was Michikane might come from an Eiga passage in which he is said to have lived around the area of Machijiri for some time. If this is so, it is interesting and telling that Masafusa would be referencing a text supposedly written by his great-grandmother. See Ōe, 23, n. 13.
118 Taira no Korenaka (944-1005) was a trusted confidante of Kaneie’s. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 7.
119 Birth and death unknown. Later became Michinaga’s steward. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 6.
120 Ōe, 22-23.
121 The name assigned to Sugawara no Michizane after he became officially deified.
122 Fujiwara no Mototsune (836-891). One of the Fujiwara regents. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 19.
family, as well as Yoshika¹²³ and the like, said ‘Should we be trapped in the coils of the wisteria vine, our lines will come to nothing! Even so, the Fujiwara are such a great house that they will probably continue to ascend.’ In spite of this, Sukeyo finally took the examination. His proctor was Yoshika. On the day of the examination, Lord Shosen took a reed mat down to his garden and prayed to the gods in Heaven for Sukeyo’s success.”¹²⁴

[2:3: Miscellaneous Matters] How Emperor Reizei Tried to Undo the Strings to the Box of the Imperial Jewel

The late Ononomiya Minister of the Right¹²⁵ related: ‘During the reign of Emperor Reizei, the Grand Novice suddenly desired to go to Court. He immediately set out on horseback. Upon arriving, he asked a lady-in-waiting where His Majesty was. “His Majesty is in his sleeping apartments, but he is trying to undo the strings of the Jewel’s box!” Shocked, the Grand Novice threw open the gate and rushed in. As the lady-in-waiting said, His Majesty was trying to untie the strings! The Grand Novice snatched the box from His Majesty and returned it to its normal state’.¹²⁶

[2:8 Miscellaneous Matters: How the Death of Emperor Horikawa¹²⁷ was Due to Fate] These things are secret. There’s no reason to make them public knowledge. But I think I am going to retire soon. Since you are going to serve at Court, you are a person to whom I can entrust these matters of ceremony. You need to understand all of this well!¹²⁸


When Jōtōmon’in was a Consort of Emperor Ichijō, a puppy suddenly went behind her blinds without any warning. Greatly alarmed and distressed, people called the Grand Novice (this was Michinaga). He summoned Masahira and told him secretly about the situation. Masahira said ‘This is a wonderful omen!’ Michinaga said ‘What on earth do you mean?’, and Masahira said ‘It is a sign that a Crown Prince is to be born! When you take the character for ‘dog’ and place the dot under it, you get the character ‘great’, and if you place the dot above the character, it results in ‘heaven’. When you think about it this way, it is a sure sign that there will be a Crown Prince! He will surely be Crown Prince, and then ascend to the position of Emperor, will he not?’ The Grand Novice was thrilled,

¹²³ Miyako no Yoshika (834-879), was a famous scholar. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 21.
¹²⁴ Ōe, 24.
¹²⁶ Ōe, 34.
¹²⁷ 1079-1107. Reigned 1086-1107.
¹²⁸ Ibid, 39.
and meanwhile Jōtōmon’in became pregnant. And so Emperor Go-Suzaku\(^{129}\) was born. This matter is a secret. After he retired from his post, Masahira passed this matter of the characters down through the family.\(^{130}\)

[2:17 Miscellaneous Matters]Otondo, During his Time as Betto, Moves the Prison at Nagaoka to the Capital

He said ‘The reason why I, Masafusa, have come so far as to serve the Emperor as Counsellor is because my ancestor Otondo\(^{131}\), as head of the Imperial Police, served the State loyally, and so I serve the Emperor without fail.’ I asked ‘How did that come about?’ and he answered ‘Before Otondo became Head of the Imperial Police, the prison was at the former Capital of Nagaoka\(^{132}\). The prison there was terribly run down and so prisoners were always escaping, so Otondo rebuilt the walls and gates and no more criminals escaped. As a result of his service he received great imperial favor. Those who did good deeds and were given boons for their actions were called sekyō, and appeared around this time. Otondo finally said ‘My descendants will feel great loyalty towards the State and attain high ranks. But, those criminals who have committed the worst crimes cannot now escape prison, as I have rebuilt the gates and walls. Also, according to another law, those who travel the roads of the country, giving food to criminals, will not be able to easily enter the prison. As karmic retribution for this, I believe that the descendants of criminals will be few.’ This only stands to reason! And so, when I, Masafusa, was Acting Secretary of the Gate Guards, I decided to follow his example and heavily restricted curfews at night. This was all done out of loyalty to the nation. And so, throughout Go-Sanjō’s reign\(^{133}\), there were no reports of theft…\(^{134}\)

Also, as for why my own learning is so special, it is thanks to my father, for, though he had no talent, he would always copy out the books passed down through our family. He would set up four shoji screens, rid the books of insects, and recopy them. As for places that were missing, he would always seek out the original text and paste it inside the book. He would always say ‘To me has fallen the duty of our house of Oe, to take care of the works of old!’ He would place four servants within the shoji screens with him, and have one hold his glue, another open the books, another paste the paper into them and another

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\(^{129}\) 1009-1045. Son of Emperor Ichijō. See Gōdanshō suppl. 6.

\(^{130}\) Ibid, 37-38.

\(^{131}\) The founder of Masafusa’s line (811-877). See Gōdanshō suppl. 4.

\(^{132}\) The capital before Heian.

\(^{133}\) He reigned from 1068 until his death in 1073. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 6.

\(^{134}\) Ibid, 43-44.
would be ameneusis. In this way he passed his life. This has become a tale the whole of society knows! Shouldn’t it be told to all?\footnote{Ibid.}

\[3:32\,\text{Miscellaneous Subjects}\footnote{These citations include book number and subject under which the entry is categorized in the text.}\] ‘How the Ghost of the Minister Tōru Seized the Cloistered Emperor Kanhyō by the Waist’

The Minister Sukenaka\footnote{Fujiwara no Sukenaka (1046-1119) was a high-ranking member of the Fujiwara clan. \textit{Gōdanshō} suppl., 9.} said ‘The Cloistered Emperor Kanhyō once went with the Kyōgoku Haven\footnote{Fujiwara no Hōshi (birth and death unknown). A daughter of the minister Fujiwara no Tokihira. \textit{Gōdanshō}, suppl., 17.} by carriage to the Kawara-no-In, and viewed the scenery there. Night fell, and the moon was very bright. His Eminence spread out a tatami mat from the carriage and took his pleasure with the Haven. But there was someone in the house’s alcove, and this person opened the door and emerged. The Cloistered Emperor asked who he was. The man answered ‘I’m Tōru.\footnote{The original owner of the Kawara-no-in (meaning ‘riverbank villa’), Minamoto no Tōru (822-895) was a son of Emperor Saga (786-842). He lavishly decorated the Kawara-no-in, and it became so well-known that he was known as the Riverbank Minister of the Left (Kawara-no-in no Sadaijin). \textit{Gōdanshō} suppl. 13.} I’d like Your Eminence to give me that Haven!’ His Eminence retorted ‘When you were alive, you were a subject. I am the sovereign! What on earth are these crazy things you’re saying!? Leave now and go back where you came from!’ When he said this, the spirit became enraged and grabbed him by the waist. The Haven, half-dead from fright, turned pale and fainted away. The runners were all outside the gates, and could not hear the Emperor’s cries. Only the carriage driver was nearby. His Eminence summoned him and had him call the other servants, fit out the carriage and put the Haven inside. Her face had lost all color and she would not awaken. When the carriage returned to the palace, His Eminence summoned a priest and had him pray for her. They say she finally came to. His Eminence ruled Japan and attained the bejeweled rank of Emperor through karma of his previous lives, and though he had already left this position the gods protected him and drove the spirit of Tōru away. On the face of the door to the alcove, there are some marks. I hear they are traces of a weapon from when the guardian spirit shoved Tōru’s ghost back into the
alcove.’ Someone also said ‘His Eminence was behind the blinds, and Tōru’s ghost was seated in the area of the veranda railing.’

[3:40: Miscellaneous Matters] How Masafusa was the Spirit of Mars

‘I hear that people are saying things about old Masafusa these days! There’s something you should hear, too. Last year, the Bishop Kyōzō\footnote{Ōe, 88.} who was a yin-yang diviner, came to see me and said ‘My dear sir, people are calling you The Spirit of Mars, and so I’ve come hoping you would petition to Enma-O’s court!’\footnote{The overseer of the realm of the dead was thought to preside over a bureaucracy much like that of the surface world. People born under Mars were thought to have special powers enabling them to intercede on others’ behalf with Enma-O. See Ōe, 88, n. 7.} Ever since hearing this, I’ve come to think of myself as a rather special person, if I do say so myself! You know, it was in the reign of Taizong\footnote{(589-649). Second emperor of the Tang dynasty. See Gōdanshō, suppl. 11.} in China that the Spirit of Mars descended and was reincarnated in the mountains between En and Cho. A fellow called Li Chunfeng said ‘The Spirit of Mars has descended among us!’ and the Emperor Taizong sent out some messengers to see if it was so. They found that the Spirit was a white-haired old gentleman. Li Chunfeng himself was a reincarnation of the Spirit of Mars; all of us were, in fact,’ he said:\footnote{Ōe, 88.}

[From 5:74 Miscellaneous Matters: Masafusa Praises Himself]’You know, the only thing I regret is that none of my own children were able to rise above the rank of Chamberlain. If only I had sons who were like you! Then I would be so relieved. But as it stands, the works of my house and our family’s hidden teachings seem to be about to pass away like smoke…and so I would very much like to pass at least a little of them on to you. What do you think?’ I answered, ‘My joy could not possibly be any greater, sir!’\footnote{Ōe no Masafusa, Gōdanshō, in Gōdanshō, Chūgaishō, Fukego, ed. Gotō et.al, Shinpen nihon koten bungaku taikei 32 (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2005), 211.}