Keeping the classics alive: how karuta contributed to the contemporary popularity of the Hyakunin Isshu

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Introduction

Have you concerned yourself with Cædmon's Hymn lately? Or perhaps *hebban olla vogala*? How about something a few centuries newer, like the story of the Holy Grail? Though Chrétien de Troyes's story in *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal* could be considered rather inaccessible, you have probably heard of the Holy Grail. Perhaps you encountered it in the parody film, 'Monty Python and the Holy Grail'? In a similar manner, others are concerning themselves with classical Japanese poetry; not so much through calligraphed poetry sheets, but through a card game.

Compared to literary works of old that get little attention nowadays, there is a collection of Japanese poetry from some eight hundred years ago that many people in and outside of Japan, regardless of age or nationality, read, listen to and enjoy on an almost daily basis. This collection, the *Hyakunin Isshu*, or 'one hundred poets, one poem each', is perhaps the best-known anthology in Japanese history. As the title suggests, it contains one hundred *waka,* Japanese poems, that span approximately five and a half centuries, from the earliest poem by Emperor Tenji (626-671) through to the final poem by Juntoku-in (1197-1242), son of Emperor Go-Toba (1180-1239), at the start of the thirteenth century. The anthology is commonly assumed to have been compiled by Fujiwara no Sadaide, better known as Fujiwara no Teika (1162-1241), for personal reasons (Yoshino 2015, 256) around the year 1239 (Mostow 1996, 25). Its undeniable popularity cannot simply be attributed to one reason, as there are many aspects that make the anthology unique and interesting. Compiled into a digestible amount of one hundred poems, it raises all sorts of questions on their arrangement and whether it contains Teika's 'hidden poetic essence'. Teachers of *waka* poetry had come to regard the anthology as a fundamental guide for those who aspired to compose poetry themselves (Yoshino 2015, 257), leading to the production of commentaries that facilitated the spread of the anthology. By the

Edo period (roughly 1600-1868), it served as an inspiration for illustrations, clothing, parodies in books and in popular prints or *ukiyo-e*, 'pictures of the floating world' (Mostow 1996, 1). Most notably, it served as the basis for a card game that is traditionally played during the New Year and nowadays seems inextricably bound to any discourse surrounding the anthology: *Hyakunin Isshu karuta.* A chanter starts reading a poem out loud from a reading card, and it is up to the player to find the corresponding second half of the poem, written on one of the one hundred cards that lay before them, before their opponent does. While there are various game-modes that serve as entertainment or competition, being faster and collecting as many cards as possible are core objectives of the game.

In this thesis, I argue that, perhaps more than any other contributing factor, *Hyakunin Isshu karuta* (henceforth *karuta*) plays a major role in the popularity of the *Hyakunin Isshu* anthology today, and has done so ever since the conception of the game. Where the once-popular woodblock printed parodies and educational books inevitably fell out of fashion, *karuta* has seen attempts at modernization, standardization and national organization that secured not only its own survival into the twenty-first century, but that of the anthology as well. This begs the question: how has *karuta,* and the popularity thereof, concretely contributed to the popularity of the *Hyakunin Isshu* in the past 70 years?

To the best of my knowledge, there's no one source that explores contributions of *karuta* to the popularity of the *Hyakunin Isshu* in a contemporary context as its sole focus. Furthermore, information on *karuta* in relation to the anthology is scarce in English literature. A three-page chapter on the popularization of classical poetry in The Cambridge History of Japanese Literature (2015, 25) only briefly touches upon *karuta*, and a larger scholarly work on the anthology such as Joshua Mostow's 'Pictures of the Heart' (1996) does make mention of *karuta*, but barely touches upon its relation to the popularity of the anthology, and certainly not in a

modern context, which is what I want to explore in this thesis. Lindsey Stirek (2022) discusses afterlives of the *Hyakunin Isshu* in her dissertation, but with a focus on *karuta*-centered *manga*, not on the card game itself as an afterlife. Contrary to English literature, there are some Japanese sources that cover *karuta*, though very few of them cover correlations between *karuta* and popularity of the *Hyakunin Isshu,* if at all. I will especially discuss publications by Yoshikai Naoto, professor at Doshisha Women's University, as his publications, though not necessarily data-driven, are centered around *karuta* and the *Hyakunin Isshu* through various lenses. Alongside these, I will draw examples from Japanese publications on *karuta* and surrounding the *Hyakunin Isshu* from the Edo period till the twentieth century. Before I can talk about *karuta* in the modern world, it is more than necessary to analyze these Japanese materials in order to create a framework on which I can build my main argument. By combining critical reading of available literature and empirical analysis of certain Japanese materials, I will answer the aforementioned research question.

To understand and interpret evidence of how *karuta* influences the popularity of the *Hyakunin Isshu* in a contemporary setting, it is necessary to contextualize and historicize how the anthology was spread, received and popularized before the conception of the card game, as well as the development, standardization and organisation of *karuta* as a phenomenon through time. Therefore, I will start by contextualizing the reception and spread of the anthology in short, mainly focusing on the final days of the Edo period, with examples of popularization. From there on, I will summarize the first development and history of *karuta*, followed by its standardization and organization throughout Japan. I will then go on to further explore *karuta* from the 1950's onward to its current form, as well as the popularization and spread of the game that subsequently contributed to the popularity of the one hundred poems. Finally, I will look at other popularizing representations of the *Hyakunin Isshu* in literature and media while discussing the limitations of this thesis, before concluding my findings.

Chapter 1: Popularizing the anthology, a focus on Edo

Simultaneous to the conception, spread and popularization of *karuta*, the anthology was spread and popularized during the Edo period. Two developments in this stand out especially, being the creation of various commentaries on the anthology and the emergence of popular printed media, such as books and *ukiyo-e*, or 'Pictures of the Floating World'. As these two developments happen largely in chronological parallel to the spread and popularization of *karuta*, we must first contextualize the spread, reception and popularization of the anthology among a wide audience during this period to better understand the popularizing effect of *karuta*.

The Conventions of Written Commentaries

When it comes to the tradition of producing commentaries, we see a gradual shift from knowledge reserved for a cultural elite to a widespread and accessible way of reading the anthology for a wide audience. Initially, Teika compiled a collection referred to as *Hyakunin Shūka* ('Superior Poems of One Hundred Poets') for Utsunomiya no Yoritsuna, his son's father-in-law, which were then written on poetry paper and served as decoration on the sliding doors in Yoritsuna's residence (Mostow 1996, 25). This collection has ninety-seven poems in common with the *Hyakunin Isshu* and therefore likely served as a basis for Teika's own decorative cartouches in his residence at Ogura (ibid). After Teika's death, the anthology had become closely guarded by his children, who fought among themselves over matters such as real estate, but also ownership of important family documents, such as the anthologies (ibid). They considered it to be a codification of Teika's poetic essence, and thus kept it largely among themselves and their students, preventing circulation to the masses (Yoshino 2015, 257). However, Yoshino (2015, 257) notes that at the start of the fifteenth century, teachers of *waka*

produced many commentaries as they largely saw the *Hyakunin Isshu* as a fundamental guide for the composition of *waka*, producing commentaries that were passed down to their pupils, which in turn introduced the anthology to a wider audience. Mostow (1996, 28-39) discusses these annotated commentaries at length, with the earliest extant and perhaps most important example being the *Ōei* commentary (*Ōei Shō*) from the Ōei era (1406). The later *Sōgi* commentary shares many similarities with the *Ōei Shō* and forms the basis for many future commentaries. These commentaries were mostly in the form of transcribed lectures, handed down from poetry master to individual students in secret, forming the basis for the tradition of written commentaries (Herwig and Mostow 2007, 14). They were mainly explanatory, often repeating previous annotated works or commenting on them, offering readings and raising possible interpretations of the poems or evaluations regarding their origin, sometimes in excruciating detail.

Come Edo period, the anthology had gained popularity, not only among those who composed or frequently read *waka* poetry, but also among the common people. A major reason for this was new print culture, which enabled everyone to educate themselves regardless of social status, leading to an entirely new readership for the classics (Yoshino 2015, 257). While the then 'secret transmissions' had become available through print at the start of the seventeenth century (Herwig and Mostow 2007, 14), commentaries moved away from extremely detailed discussions and into more comprehensible explanations in response to this new readership, of which Ishihara Shōmei's 1804 'New Commentary' (*Shin Shō)* is a good example. It translated courtly language into the vernacular and contemporary, making it an accessible source for those who wanted to learn about the basics of the anthology (Mostow 1996, 37-38). In contrast to the earliest transmissions of commentary, there was no longer need for an instructor to explain the annotated works, as this shift towards more comprehensible

commentaries allowed the general populace of Edo to educate themselves. Mostow (ibid) also mentions that, besides *karuta*, Ozaki Masayoshi's *Hyakunin Isshu Hitoyo-gatari* ('One-Night Stories About the One Hundred Poets'), published in 1833, was the most widely distributed version of the *Hyakunin Isshu*. It is an illustrated work containing a biography on the poet and the poem itself, followed by some discussion on said poem. Alongside this, it contains elaborate stories surrounding the poets, and seems to have instigated the *Hyakunin Isshu* popularity boom of the nineteenth century (Herwig and Mostow 2007, 18). Aside from the attention for biographical stories, this format still lives on in commentaries of the anthology today.

Comparable to books nowadays, these printed books served an educational purpose and, especially for women, the *Hyakunin Isshu* were considered prime material. Concerning oneself with Chinese characters was for men, and writing in Japanese was considered inferior, for one could only obtain wisdom from reading Chinese texts (Dore 1992, 125-126). Women ought to focus on the Japanese classics in the *hiragana* syllabary, which would, aside from honing their literary skills, enhance their femininity. A woman had to be cultured to be desirable, and knowledge of poetry demonstrated that. Much like upper-class women received a set containing the *Genji Monogatari* (Tale of Genji) once they were wed, the *Hyakunin Isshu* too were often part of a woman's dowry (Herwig & Mostow 2007, 14). Familiarity with Japanese classics was supposed to teach women appreciations of the beauty of nature, refine their feelings and enhance their knowledge on *ninjō*; the intricacies of the human heart (Dore 1992, 66). What material better fits this description than poetry? An example of this is the *Onnayō Hinrui Ruiyō Hyakunin Isshū Kyōbunko*. Two near identical versions can be found in the Leiden Special Collections (Lindor Serrurier catalogue nos. 10 & 137), save for the cover and the latter containing the name 'J. J. Hoffman' (1805-1878), a German scholar who studied the Japanese and Chinese languages, on one of the blank pages. It entails a handbook specifically for the education of women that employs the *Hyakunin Isshu* as its basis. It shows images of

women in exemplary situations, teaches about instruments such as the *koto* in addition to many everyday items in the lives of women and their usage, and introduces the *kana* syllabary through illustrated *iroha*, all the while showing the poems of the *Hyakunin Isshu* and portraits of their respective poets (fig. 1). Though these books did not popularize the anthology like popular (visual) media did, they did spread knowledge of the poems from the *Hyakunin Isshu* and directly influenced the popularity of *Hyakunin Isshu karuta* among women (Yoshikai 2017, 42), which I will come back to later.

Fig. 1. Excerpts from *Onnayō Hinrui Ruiyō Hyakunin Isshū Kyōbunko* showing an explanation of the *koto* (left) and *iroha* cartouches (right), both accompanied by a poem and portrait of the corresponding poet, being Suō no Naishi (left) and Gon-Chūnagon Ōe no Masafusa (right) of the *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*, c.a. 1817. Via Leiden University Library, Special Collections. Lindor Serrurier catalogue, ser.10: *Verzameling Von Siebold.*

Popular Printed Media

What was undoubtably one of the largest contributors to popularizing the *Hyakunin Isshu* in the Edo period were *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵, or 'pictures of the floating world'. These single-sheet images were printed using woodblocks, which meant that they could be mass-produced rather inexpensively and were frequently updated with the latest trends in Edo, making them perfect for promoting newcomers in the Yoshiwara district or the latest *kabuki* plays. Now that printed books circulated among the common people, one could not only easily obtain knowledge on the *Hyakunin Isshu*, but all classics that were previously inaccessible, such as the *Genji Monogatari* and *Ise Monogatari* (Tale of Ise). Almost all major *ukiyo-e* artists have attempted to illustrate a complete set of the anthology (Mostow 1996, 1), including some of the biggest names, such as Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858), but rarely did they succeed. For example, Suzuki Harunobu (1724-1770) tried his hand at a full set of images, but never completed it, and of Hiroshige's *Hyakunin Isshu no Uchi* 'From One Hundred Poets, One Poem Each' series only fifty-eight prints are known, leaving it seemingly uncompleted (Herwig & Mostow 2007, 15-18). Though direct visualizations of the poems and other classics in popular prints exist, they were, more often than not, parodied, referenced or alluded to, rather than directly represented.

Something that made these prints appealing to the citizens of Edo were their hidden meanings; riddles to be uncovered by the viewer. This is often referred to as *mitate* 見立て, a debated term that lacks a clear and commonly accepted definition. I will define *mitate* here as a technique that employs wit and certain artistic devices in order to juxtapose seemingly unrelated elements to one another (Iwata 2002, 1) which can lead to "brain-teasing collisions" (Clarke 1997, 9), often resulting in humorous comparisons of a parodic nature. In a time where the Tokugawa shogunate enforced strict censorship, this technique was often employed and

appreciated by artist and consumer alike. For example, during the Tenpō era (1830-1844) there was a great famine, and the Tokugawa responded by forcing frugality upon the citizens of Edo, which included restrictions on luxury items, such as *ukiyo-e.* Among other things, the reforms forbade the depiction of *kabuki* actors and beautiful women, which was highly problematic for the popularist merchandise of print designers. Utagawa Kuniyoshi (1798-1861) responded to this by taking the faces of *kabuki* actors and disguising them as animals or objects, satirizing the reforms by going through extreme lengths to avoid censorship (Thompson et al. 1991, 82).

In a similar manner, the *Hyakunin Isshu* were alluded to by popular print artists throughout Edo and employed as an element of high culture, or *ga* 雅*,* to be juxtaposed with elements of the hedonistic everyday, or *zoku* 俗*,* such as *kabuki* and the Yoshiwara. A prime example is the series *Ogura Nazorae Hyakunin Isshu* or 'One Hundred Poets Compared' (Herwig & Mostow 2007), a collaborative effort between Utagawa Hiroshige, Utagawa Kuniyoshi and Utagawa Kunisada (1785-1865). This set of one hundred images was produced under the restrictions of the Tenpō reforms, but did not fail to produce images clearly referencing *kabuki* plays or including beautiful women. All prints are divided into two registers; a top register containing the name of the series, the name of the poet and the corresponding poem, and a bottom register containing the imagery. This image also contained the prose surrounding the poem, but about halfway through the series the design of the top register got revamped, now including a *kasen-e* portrait of the poet and the prose. Most notably, the reforms had lost much of their power around that same time, which is reflected in the fact that all the prints in the latter half of the series reference a *kabuki* play. For example, prints 49 and 68 of the series are clear references to two *kabuki* plays, in which the relation between the poem and the image is loosely based on one line of the poem and one element in the image, being the burning in the night (*yoru ha moete*), in this case a fire, and the moon (*yoha no tsuki*

kana), respectively (fig. 2) (Herwig & Mostow 2007, 132, 170). It is up to the consumer to look for the connection between the two unrelated spheres of court poetry and *kabuki* theater, as well as other hidden references to literary classics or Edo culture, which made for an entertaining pastime. Incorporating the *Hyakunin Isshu* and attributing the series to the anthology was apparently enough to avoid censorship, meaning government regulations could actively be undermined under the guise of court poetry as a central theme (Herwig & Mostow 2007, 32-34). This heavily influenced the popularity of the series, as popular depictions could continue to be sold in this manner. People might not have bought these prints for the *Hyakunin Isshu*, but it was nonetheless a way through which the anthology was spread and entered people's homes.

Fig. 2. *Ogura Nazorae Hyakunin Isshu* prints 49 and 68, with poems by lord Ōnakatomi no Yoshinobu and retired emperor Sanjō, respectively, both by Utagawa Kuniyoshi. Color woodblock print, 35.6 x 23.5 cm. Via the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Another example of the way parody and juxtaposition are employed is a printed book that combined visuals with poetry of the *Hyakunin Isshu* is the aptly named *Ehon Hyakunin Isshu* (Picture book One Hundred Poets), which too can be found in the Leiden University Special Collections. Even though, to my knowledge, nothing has been written on this particular work yet, its purpose is quite clear. Produced around the year 1825, the book consists of two parts, but strangely enough only depicts a handful of poems. The covers might fool one into thinking it is a fine work dedicated to the classics, showing things such as a *koto* and flower arrangements, but the inside reveals, as the French commentary on the back states, 'the poems in no particular order, accompanied by images that are sometimes burlesque'. The poems are yet again contrasted to the everyday, with the book showing samurai and courtesans, and even foreign or fantasy-like figures. The focus lies not on depicting the anthology accurately, but rather on the entertaining relationship between word and image.

Conversely, there were series which people probably did in fact buy for the poetic sensibilities of the anthology, such as Hokusai's *Hyakunin Isshu Uba ga Etoki* 'The One Hundred Poets as Explained by the Wetnurse'. This series was also produced during the Tenpō reforms, and probably left unfinished because of worsening circumstances (Herwig & Mostow 2007, 18). The images contain no prose, in contrast to the *Nazorae* series, and only the top right corner contains two registers that liken *shikishi*, or poem sheets, containing the poem and the name of the poet, as well as the name of the series. Bell (2015, 584) notes that the prints either depict one of two things: pastoral sceneries of the countryside, or depictions of the poets of the anthology. The image linked to Emperor Tenji's poem (fig. 3) shows a print of the first category. Far removed from the capital and lacking prose, a lot is left to the imagination of the consumer. Instead of a loose connection, the relation to the poem here is stronger, however, which goes:

aki no ta no	In the autumn fields
kari-ho no iho no	the hut, the temporary hut
toma wo arami	its thatch is rough
waga koromo-de ha	And so the sleeves of my robe
tsuyu ni nuretsutsu	are dampened night by night with dew

(Mostow 1996, 141)

A brocade of colored leaves indicates the seasons change to autumn, and with some imagination we can see a hut with a poorly thatched roof between the two travelers in the middle of the print. Bell (2015) argues that the aesthetic sensibilities of *mono no aware,* or 'the pathos of things', motivates Hokusai's choice in depicted scenes, as it once inspired the poets to compose the court poetry now in the *Hyakunin Isshu*. The depictions of the countryside are idyllic and riddled with aesthetic motifs, and given the dire circumstances of the Tenpō era, one might indeed purchase these prints to lament at what was or to reflect upon the poetry through their own experience and enjoy their poetic sensibilities from a new perspective. Mostow (2002, 44) notes that the title might allude to some humorous interpretations, yet he discovers no direct humor in the print employing Emperor Tenji's poem. Would it be justified to call a depiction of a bountiful harvest during a famine a form of crude, or perhaps dark, humor? Though hidden commentary might be discovered in the prints, it is certainly possible that the people of Edo bought these prints in line with Bell's argument, to enjoy them as poetically charged compositions through the aesthetic virtues of *mono no aware* (Bell 2015, 593). Machotka (2009) explores this series in relation to the formation of Japanese national identity, which I will not discuss, and notes that *Uba ga Etoki* can be considered a parody, but not as a ridiculing imitation (Machotka 2009, 176). She instead argues that these prints are highly invidiual interpretation of the poems, made possible by lack of established iconography to parody. Instead, previous commentaries, biographies or poem headnotes surrounding the anthology were considered valuable sources for interpreting a poem, which were also relied upon when artists made representations of poetry, such as in *Uba ga Etoki* (Machotka 2009,

Fig. 3. *Hyakunin Isshu Uba ga Etoki*, no. 1. By Katsushika Hokusai, ca. 1839. Color woodblock print, 36.4 × 25.2 cm. Via the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

171), which means the audience must have had an understanding of these resources as well to fully understand these picturizations and allusions. This shows that not all employment of the *Hyakunin Isshu* was to parody, but it is a case of allusion rather than direct representation through which we might interpret a somewhat satirical outlook on contemporary conditions.

While there are many more examples of commentaries, printed books and serialized *ukiyo-e* works to be discussed, the highlighted works demonstrate that the *Hyakunin Isshu* anthology went from leading a closely guarded, cloistered existence to being frequently featured in popular media. Two conclusions can be drawn from this analysis of popularization. Firstly, the convention of commentary on the anthology gradually shifted from secret transmissions that required guided reading to easy-to-understand publications, suitable for a

layman's audience. The innovations in print facilitated the spread of the anthology and thus made educating oneself on the poems possible for everyone, including the common people of Edo. Secondly, the fact that the anthology was heavily included in (serialized) *ukiyo-e* meant the public was familiar with the original materials to such a degree that parody and allusion sold well to a broad audience. In turn, all these renditions, whether they were intended for educational purposes or served as entertainment, furthered the spread of the one hundred poems tremendously.

Chapter 2:

Popularizing *Hyakunin Isshu karuta,* from conception to the 1950's

Unlike popular prints, *karuta* survived into the modern age in more or less the same form it had when it was conceptualized and popularized during the Edo period. Though it appears as if nothing changed, *karuta* has seen variations, standardization and attempts at reforms from its conception all the way till how we know it today. I will examine the developments in *karuta* from its earliest appearance to post-war Japan in three stages: the game's origin, its popularization and secured position during the Edo period, and finally the alterations and reformations from the Meiji period onward that made it into the game we know today.

The Origin of *Karuta*

Whenever I refer to *karuta* in this thesis, I refer to *Hyakunin Isshu karuta,* as highlighted in the introduction. It is good to know, however, that *karuta* in general comes (or rather, came) in many shapes and forms. Two forms of games have likely contributed to the creation of *Hyakunin Isshu karuta*, namely the indigenous game of *kai-awase* or 'shell-matching', and foreign, European playing cards.

Bull (1996, 68-74) argues there are three aspects that constitute the creation of *karuta*. The first is the anthology itself, and the second being the game of *kai-awase* that was a popular pastime during the Heian period (794-1185). The game was played by matching two images that were painted on the inside of a decorated clamshell half. These images could be motifs from nature that contained certain literary references to works such as the *Genji Monogatari*, but there are also examples in which they contained poetry instead of images. The hand-painted shells eventually made way for hand-painted paper cards in *e-awase*, 'picture matching games',

likening the modern game of Memory, which contained sets of images of almost anything imaginable. These could then later be easily mass produced because of woodblock printing (Bull 1996, 73). It is here, Bull argues, that we can best see the historical link between this shell matching game and *Hyakunin Isshu karuta.* The third aspect that constituted to the creation of *karuta* are foreign playing cards. The word *karuta* is most likely derived from the Portuguese word *carta,* meaning '(playing) card', and introduced around the mid-sixteenth century (Bull 1996, 73). Bull (ibid) says here that the word *karuta* is 'usually' written in the *katakana* syllabary, indicating its foreignness, but I have come to find during my research that there exist a great many examples, perhaps even the majority, of the word being written in *hiragana,* especially in relation to the *Hyakunin Isshu* variant. This can also be seen with other 'naturalized' loanwords, such as *tabako* (meaning tobacco), which is a Portuguese loanword that has been used for centuries and is thus seldom regarded foreign and often written in *hiragana* (Hosokawa 2015, 53). The writing of loanwords in *katakana* is a very modern development as well, dating back only to 1945 (Unger 2006, 96). Regardless of whether Bull is speaking of (pre-) Edo or modern appearances of the word *karuta* in Japanese writing, one is likely to find the word *karuta* 'usually' written in *hiragana.* Discussions on syllabary aside, the aforementioned Portuguese playing cards formed the basis for *Tenshō karuta,* named after the Tenshō period (1573-1592), which were nearly identical to the Portuguese playing cards. These were forcibly redesigned into the *Unsun karuta* that used Japanese motifs and later into the game of *hana fuda* that we still know today, because the Tokugawa shogunate had banned the Portuguese cards as a countermeasure to gambling in Edo.

Yoshikai Naoto (2022, 1-6), who has published a fair amount of research on *karuta*, would like for us to be cautious, for there is no such thing as 'Heian *karuta*'; there is a four-hundred-year gap between the playing of *kai-awase* and the development of *Hyakunin Isshu karuta.* He admits to being skeptical at first of the origin surrounding the shell matching game,

but upon inspecting remnants of shell collections containing poetry, finds evidence that the game in fact played a role in the evolution of *karuta* (Yoshikai 2022, 3-4). One of the mentioned developments in this evolution is the arrangement of shells containing the *kami no ku,* the upper part of the poem which, in the center, with the shells containing the *shimo no ku,* the latter half of the poem, surrounding it. It is after this that a chanter was introduced, meaning there was no longer a need to put both halves of the poem on the playing field. This can be regarded as the first big development of *karuta* becoming as we know it today (Yoshikai 2022, 6). He concludes that these are just theories, however, as there is no conclusive evidence for any of them. There is not enough documentation, as people apparently did not bother to write down how to play *karuta* (ibid).

Hyakunin Isshu karuta-boom in Edo

Contrary to the little amount of documentation before the seventeenth century, the *karuta*-boom of the Edo period is quite apparent. As mentioned previously, the anthology was spread among a wide audience, and *karuta* played a major role in this. Yoshikai (2017, 42) notes that the *Hyakunin Isshu* were at the core of women's education, as discussed in the previous chapter. There was also a form of *karuta* for men, but since they did not concern themselves with the *Hyakunin Isshu* too much, this was a game for gambling, not just for fun (Yoshikai 2022, 5). Since these women were familiar with the poems and could read *hiragana*, *karuta* suddenly became a very accessible game, leading it to become a popular game among women in the Edo period.

Most importantly, we start to see a strong identification with *karuta* in anything related to the poems of the *Hyakunin Isshu* as a result of this popularity, with an example being the previously discussed handbook for women, *Onnayō Hinrui Ruiyō Hyakunin Isshū Kyōbunko.*

Not only does it teach exemplary behavior for women, it also shows women in everyday situations, with half a page dedicated to an illustration of four women playing '*utagaruta kai awase*', 'the shell matching game, poetry *karuta*' (fig. 4). Though *utagaruta,* simply meaning 'poetry *karuta*', is a categorical term that includes more than just the *Hyakunin Isshu*, such as poems from the *Genji Monogatari* or the thirty-six immortal poets, it is safe to assume this is a game using poems from the *Hyakunin Isshu,* considering the book title and the number of cards visible in the image. Though *kai-awase* is mentioned, they are quite obviously playing with paper cards that are kept in a black lacquer box, visible in the bottom left corner. I count an estimated eighty *torifuda*, 'cards for taking' on the floor, and seeing the small stacks besides two of them, the game must just have begun. The woman in the top right has a large stack of presumably *yomifuda,* 'cards for reading' that contain the first half of the poem, leaving the other three to find the corresponding latter half.

A second example of the inextricable link between the *Hyakunin Isshu* and *karuta* can be found in another previously mentioned example, namely the *Ehon Hyakunin Isshu*. Whereas the book is riddled with parody images that seem to have no relation to the actual poetry, the frontispiece on the first page reveals something quite telling. It shows us a complete deck of *karuta* cards in a colorful wrapper, perhaps signaling the consumer that these booklets would make a great purchase if they are enjoyers of the card game (fig. 5). Looking at it this way, the well-understood link between the anthology and *karuta* could have served as a popularizing element for already popular printed wares. This could not only have directly influenced the popularity of these works, and in turn the popularity of the anthology, but certainly affirms the established associations between the anthology and *karuta* in Edo.

For a final example of the *Hyakunin Isshu* being identified with *karuta*, we go back to *ukiyo-e*. While, in contrast to many other attempts at a fully serialized work, the *Nazorae* series

Fig. 4. Excerpt from *Onnayō Hinrui Ruiyō Hyakunin Isshū Kyōbunko* showing four women playing '*utagaruta kai-awase*'「歌がるた貝あはせ」visible in sixth line of the text, c.a. 1817. Via Leiden University Library, Special Collections. Lindor Serrurier catalogue, ser.10: *Verzameling Von Siebold.*

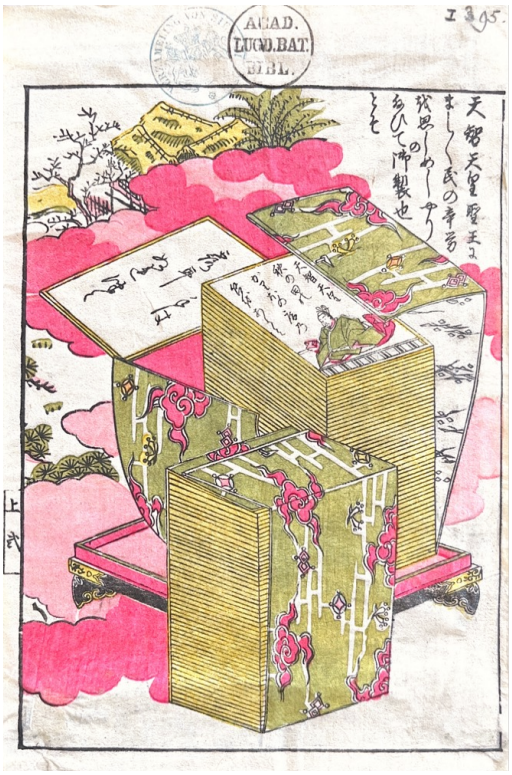

Fig. 5. Frontispiece on the first page in *Ehon Hyakunin Isshu,* first of two booklets, c.a. 1825. Via Leiden University Library, Special Collections. Lindor Serrurier catalogue, ser.719: *Verzameling Von Siebold.*

was completed, it was not the only one to be fully realized. A slightly earlier series titled *Hyakunin Isshu Eshō* 'Pictures and Commentaries on the One Hundred Poets", which started production around 1844 and was designed by Tokugawa Kunisada (Herwig and Mostow 2007, 18), also known as Toyokuni III, was the "largest set of beauty prints that Kunisada had designed to date" (Izzard 1993, 158). Herwig and Mostow (ibid) note that a portrait of the poet and prose surrounding the poetry was again brought in relation to figures of the everyday, namely *bijin,* or 'beautiful people', shown in different situations which vary from getting ready in front of a mirror to strolling with children, or certain poses, either standing or sitting down. What is most striking about the poet's portrait, however, is that it is situated on a *karuta* card, a *yomifuda,* as we can see in this example of Emperor Tenji's poem (fig. 6). Instead of presenting the poem on a separate cartouche that likens a *shikishi*, as we saw before with the *Nazorae* series and *Uba ga Etoki*, this time, the poem is presented entirely through *karuta* cards, which holds true throughout the entire series. The *kami no ku* is present on the *yomifuda*, the card used for reading, and the *shimo no ku* is situated on the *torifuda*, which contains only text and is devoid of imagery in order to make the game more challenging. This demonstrates that the people's familiarity with the poetry is tied to *karuta* in such a manner that the cards themselves seem to have been the most favorable vessel through which the poems were to be included in the print. This identification of *karuta* with the *Hyakunin Isshu* and vice versa is not limited to this series, as demonstrated using these three examples, meaning that the position of *Hyakunin Isshu karuta* as an established game in everyday life was quite secure. From late Edo onward, however, the card game gets approached from a new angle; *karuta* as a sport.

Fig. 6: Print no. 1 of the *Hyakuin Isshu Eshō* by Utagawa Kunisada, c.a. 1844. Color woodblock print. Via Ritsumeikan University database.

Developments from the Meiji period till the 1950's

It is from the late Edo period onward that we see developments in *karuta* surrounding it as a sport, as well as different manners of playing *karuta*. By the Meiji period (1868-1912), the game had reached such popularity that a deck of *Hyakunin Isshu karuta* cards could be found in virtually every household (Bull 1996, 74). Though *karuta* was predominantly played by women during the Edo period, we see a shift towards a more male-dominated scene within the world of the game (Yoshikai 2017, 42). Yoshikai (ibid) also notes that during the Meiji period, *karuta* was first made into a competition format. In 1900 the Ministry of Education in Japan issued reforms surrounding the writing system, including standardized *hiragana* and a certain number of kanji that was to be taught in schools, effectively doing away with *hentaigana,* or 'variable *kana*'. Because of these variable characters, *karuta* did not use the same typesetting everywhere, making it difficult to play the game with clubs across the country (Yoshikai 2016, 23-24). Clubs had started to form, most notably the *karuta* club of the Tokyo Imperial University, where students mainly enjoyed *karuta* as a competition instead of a leisurely game (Taniguchi 2004, 57). Though clubs and associations such as this had already formed across the country, there was little to no clear communication or shared basis between them. In order to fix this, a first attempt at a standard *karuta* of sorts for the purpose of national competition was enacted in 1902 by Kuroiwa Ruikō, owner of the newspaper *Yorozu Chōhō* 萬朝報, which was popular among students and had been in print for about a decade. As an excerpt from Shibata Shōkyoku's book *Meiji no Wadai* 'Topics from the Meiji Era' (1962) explains, he proposed a national tournament every New Year to determine the winner of that year, starting the tradition of *karuta* being played during the New Year's celebrations (Yoshikai, ibid) (Taniguchi 2004, 56-57). Despite the popular belief that this is tradition is centuries old, it is in fact a Meiji invention (Bull 1996, 76). Taniguchi (2004, 57) adds to this that the

tournaments were to be held under specific rules, creating equal conditions for everyone who wished to compete, effectively starting the nationwide standardization of *kyōgi karuta*, 'competitive *karuta*'. Another popularizing factor is the militaristic trend of the times, namely the start of the Russo-Japanese war, which national circumstances welcomed these competitive games with a sense of 'Japanese tradition' ('*nihon dentō no*') (ibid). Not long after these first tournaments, Kuroiwa went on to form the *Tōkyō karuta kai*, or 'Tokyo *karuta* association' in 1904. The influence *Yorozu Chōhō* had on the popularity of this first attempt at *kyōgi karuta* was tremendous, as advertising for and posting results of the tournament caused a boom, resulting in the establishment of thirty-five clubs of various sizes across Tokyo by 1904 (ibid). The very rules that were established and standardized by Kuroiwa are still being used today (All-Japan *Karuta* Association, n.d.).

From this standardization forward, national (that is to say, players throughout the nation were invited to join) *karuta* competitions were held all across Japan, such as the first major tournament in Osaka in 1911, followed by one in Tokyo in 1913, then one in Kyoto in 1917 and one in Kobe in 1919, with many more examples to follow (Taniguchi 2004, 58). These matches continued to be held yearly until the end of World War II (ibid). It is through this nationwide spread that we can trace a development in *karuta* as a sport, with Taniguchi (2004, 60-61) noting two major changes that occurred within the world of *karuta*. Firstly, whereas it was mainly a female-dominated scene during the Edo period, we now enter an age in which women are excluded from competitive *karuta*. In order to not make the men 'behave badly,' it was deemed necessary to exclude women from tournaments. As competitive *karuta* was started mainly among students, it was thought of as an intellectual activity that was to be regarded completely separate from 'simply *karuta*', referring to the game that is enjoyed by both men and women in private, casual settings during the New Year (ibid). This was not always the case,

however, as women could join tournaments exclusively for women and were sometimes allowed to participate in tournaments that were held in remote locations with slim player bases. Secondly, aside from standardization, there was an attempt at national organization, by way of creating the *dai-nihon karuta kyōkai*, or 'Great Japan *karuta* Association', in 1934 and a player-ranking system just two years later (ibid). According to Taniguchi (2004, 61) we see a change in discourse surrounding *karuta* due to the increasingly warlike climate of the times, changing from a game into a martial art that fits the ideology; 'the way of *karuta*'. Whether coincidental or intentional, such a rhetoric can still be found today, for example on the website of the Keio University *karuta* club, advertising *karuta* as 'martial arts on a mat' (Keio University, 2016).

From this organization onward it is not smooth sailing, however, as many matches were discontinued due to World War II, and the Japanese government told the association that it was probably better to not 'play a game of love poems' during a time of national crisis (Taniguchi 2004, 61). Instead, they played with *Ai Koku Hyakunin Isshu,* 'Patriotic One Hundred Poems', for about one year. After the war, in 1946, another attempt at national organization lead to the establishment of the *nihon karuta kyōkai*, the 'Japan *karuta* Association', which successfully kickstarted national matches across the country once more and held its first *Meijin* or 'master' tournament, deciding the best (male) player in all of Japan, in 1952, but was ultimately disbanded because of internal disagreement between the two sub-associations of East and West on which cards to use (ibid).

According to Yoshikai (2018, 2), we can see the development of competitive *karuta* cards in three stages: 'standard *karuta*', 'official *karuta*' and 'new system *karuta*'. Standard *karuta* is the *hiragana* version that was introduced by Kuroiwa in the 1902 newspaper, and official *karuta* seems to be a slightly revised version of this (Takozawa 2001). None of the sources I have examined explain these revisions, but only note the fact they happened, leading me to conclude they were minor. New system *karuta* on the other hand was proposed in 1953

(Takozawa 2001) by the *Tōkyō karuta kai*, and a document published in cooperation with the Tokyo based manufacturer of the cards (*tōkyō zuan-shikō kabushikigaisha*) reveals the main thought behind the idea (Yoshikai 2018, 3-4). As the Ministry of Education issued new regulations on the use of modern *kana* after the war, *karuta* was also in line for modernization. They thought it would be a shame if many people in the modern age would not be able to enjoy *karuta* because of its predisposition with the classics as it is not able to let go of historical *kana* use. *Karuta* should be freed from the 'sentimental advocates of the classics' ('*kanshōteki na kotenronsha'*) and devoted to modern sport (ibid). This new system *karuta* was never put to real use, however, and an argument over which cards to use divided the Japan *karuta* Association, resulting in the cancellation of the second *Meijin* tournament and, once again, the disbandment of the national organization. Even though the new system was never widely used and received with much controversy, it does demonstrate that avid players and producers of the game are actively working to ensure that the game, and subsequently the sport, has a future.

Shortly after these events, in 1954, there was yet another attempt at forming a national association for *karuta* (Taniguchi 2004, 61): the *zen-nihon karuta kyōkai*, or 'All-Japan *karuta* Association', which has been the organization to supervise clubs across the country and organize national tournaments till the moment of writing. From 1955 onward, the association has organized yearly *Meijin* tournaments for its male members, but in post-war *karuta* the number of female players had been steadily increasing, numbering around ten-thousand players in that same year (Takozawa 2001). Because of this, a separate tournament was to be held, deciding the best female player of Japan aside their male *Meijin* counterpart; the so-called Queen tournament, starting in 1957 and held each year during the New Year ever since.

When taking these developments in *karuta* of the past centuries into consideration, it becomes quite apparent why the *Hyakunin Isshu* survived into the modern age in the form of

karuta. Firstly, historical games of matching shells and foreign playing cards laid the foundations for the creation of the *karuta* cards as we know them today. Secondly, a strong identification of *karuta* with the *Hyakunin Isshu* makes the two synonymous in certain situations, with the cards becoming a favorable and familiar depiction of the poems in *ukiyo-e* and a stack of *karuta* cards greeting a possible buyer on the first page of a book that stands to parody a familiar anthology. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it is the standardization and organization of *karuta* not only as a game, but as a sport. It went from a game that was almost only accessible to and popular among women in the Edo period to a game that could be enjoyed at home by men and women alike and a sport for intellectuals that was likened to martial arts. This sport not only spread across the country like wildfire, but was constantly maintained by attempted nation-wide organization, implemented ranking systems and national tournaments for, eventually, both men and women in their own leagues. From its conception to the spread and popularization of the sport, elements such as the cards, the syllabary and player bases might have changed over time, yet one part has always remained undeniably central to *karuta*: the *Hyakunin Isshu*.

Chapter 3:

Popularizing *karuta* – and simultaneously the *Hyakunin Isshu* – today

As previously discussed, there is evidence of *karuta* being largely synonymous to imaginations of the anthology. In the twenty-first century, *karuta* is more popular than ever, a development that can be largely attributed to the competitive sports-side of the game, but also its well-established position as a traditional game typically played during the New Year. *Karuta* has seen popularization through popular imagination, from *ukiyo-e* in the Edo period to *manga*, *anime* and even feature films today, through which we can distill three major developments. Firstly, popularization of *karuta* as a sport and game in many shapes that utilizes the *Hyakunin Isshu*. Secondly, we see (worldwide) spread of the *Hyakunin Isshu* through *karuta* as a vessel for the anthology. And thirdly, we see that *karuta* and the *Hyakunin Isshu* are to a certain degree synonymous; mentions of the anthology rarely go without mentions of the card game.

Rules and game-modes

To understand the differences between ways in which *karuta* is most often played, I would like to discuss various game-modes, with the most obvious example being competitive *karuta*. Bull (1996, 74-76) explains the games workings in great detail, from which I will largely paraphrase. The rules for competitive *karuta,* as previously mentioned, were established by Kuroiwa at the start of the twentieth century (All-Japan *Karuta* Association, n.d.), though there seem to have been revisions throughout time, namely 'official *karuta*' as mentioned by both Yoshikai (2018, 2) and Takozawa (2001). None of the sources I have gathered give a clear explanation as to what this revision entailed, leading me to discuss the rules as they are played today (All-Japan *Karuta* Association, 2008). As holds true for all game modes in *Hyakunin*

Isshu karuta, the base materials of the game consist of two hundred pasteboard cards (7.4cm × 5.2cm). One hundred cards contain the whole poem, the name of the corresponding poet and often a portrait of said poet; these are the previously mentioned *yomifuda* or 'cards for reading', which are used by the chanter and read aloud during the match. *Waka* are generally composed in a rhythmic sequence of 5-7-5-7-7 morae, divided in a *kami no ku* (5-7-5) and *shimo no ku* (7-7). The other half of these two hundred cards contains but the *shimo no ku*, or latter half of the poem; these are the so-called *torifuda*, used by the players and lay out before them on the floor.

A competitive *karuta* match is played between two people. Half the *torifuda* deck is generally used during a match, with the other fifty cards becoming *karafuda*, 'empty cards' or 'dead cards.' The fifty cards are divided equally among the two players, leaving each to place their twenty-five cards in an order they prefer. Each half of the field consists of three rows, starting both left and right with cards being placed towards the middle, that are to be occupied by at least one card at the start of the game. The game is traditionally played on tatami, on which the weft forms clear lines, along which the cards can be easily laid out. Since not everyone has tatami flooring, however, the rows of cards on regular flooring are to be separated by a one-centimeter gap instead of one line in the weft. The field spans an approximate 87 centimeters, with the rule being that the cards are lined up adjoining one another, with one line in the weft of the tatami (or without tatami, approximately 1 centimeter) between the rows on each side and three lines in the weft, or three centimeters, dividing both halves (fig. 7) (All-Japan *Karuta* Association, 2008). A keen observer might have noticed that each player ought to read their opponents cards upside down, which adds an extra layer of challenge.

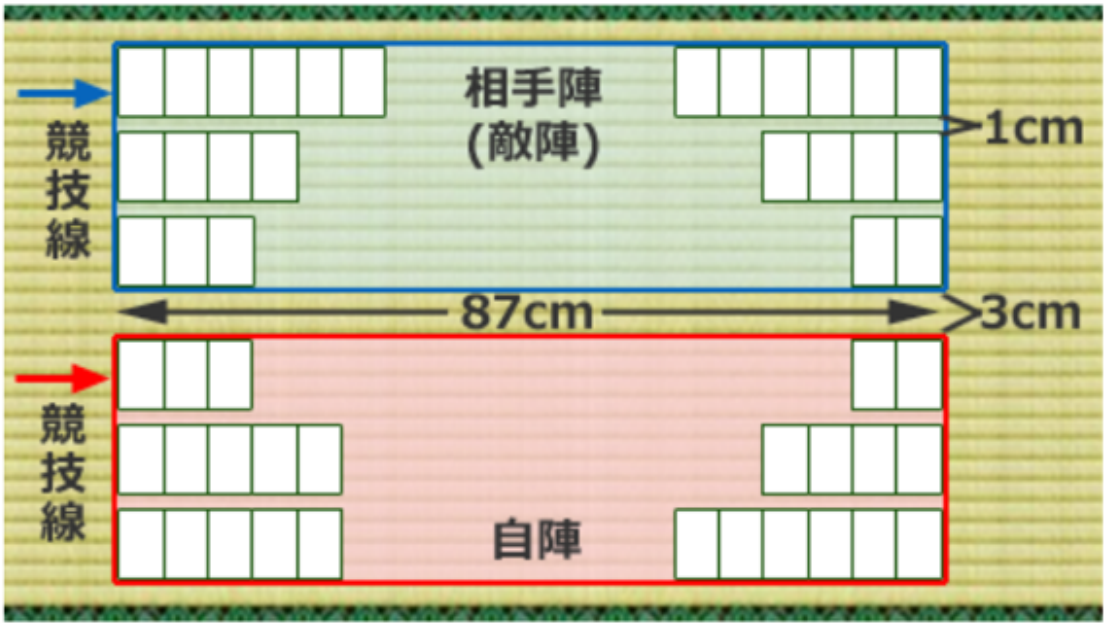

Fig. 7: A typical layout of a competitive *karuta* playfield. Borders (*kyōgi-sen* 競技線) of your 'own' side from the players point of view (*jijin* 自陣) highlighted in red, and those of the enemy side (*aitejin* 相手陣 or *tekijin* 敵陣) highlighted in blue, alongside measures between cards and playfields in centimeters. Via the website of the All-Japan *Karuta* Association; '*rūru shōsai*' [A close-up of the rules], accessed on May 4, 2023.

Now that everything is set up, let us discuss the aim of the game. After fifteen minutes of memorizing the positions of the cards on the playing field, the chanter starts by reading a poem that is not in the *Hyakunin Isshu*, most commonly *naniwa-zu ni / saku ya kono hana / fuyu go mori / ima wo harubeto / saku ya kono hana*. This poem is most likely not a coincidental choice, as it is the first poem one encounters in the preface of the *Kokin Wakashū* (Rodd et al. 1996, 37), an early *waka* compilation with attention to form of poetry, pioneering the division of poems in seasonal and love categories, which was ultimately completed around the start of the tenth century (Rodd et al. 1996, 11). After repeating the *shimo no ku* of the Naniwa poem one more time, the game is afoot. A new poem will be read, this time one that is in the anthology. The objective of the game is to grab the card that contains the corresponding *shimo no ku* to

the poem that is being read, before your opponent does. You then get to put this card on a stack to your left, now leaving twenty-four cards on your side. The one who has no cards left on their side is the eventual winner. Should you take the card from your opponent's side, it would not be fair that their number of cards is hereby reduced. For this reason, you get to take a card from your own side and hand it to your opponent. They may then freely place it on their half. Even though the placement of the cards is decided before memorization, cards are moved around in this manner. It is also possible to lower a card into a row closer to you, bettering your reach, if the field is sufficiently empty. This is only allowed if you verbally let your opponent know. After you (or your opponent) have grabbed a card, the chanter finishes by reading the poem's *shimo no ku*, confirming whether you took the right card and preparing you for the next poem, as it is read directly afterwards. The previously mentioned *karafuda* may not be on the field, but are still being read, which might mislead you into grabbing the wrong card in case the first few morae are identical. A move such as this is called *otetsuki* or 'foul' and is penalized immediately. Your opponent gets to give you a card from their side if you make a foul move and vice versa. Should you, in a worst-case scenario, grab the wrong card while your opponent grabs the correct one on your side, you receive two cards from your opponent; one for the foul and one to keep your number of cards unchanged.

With the sport gaining popularity, we also see different ways of playing with these same cards. Around the same time competitive *karuta* was standardized, books started appearing about strategy in competition, such as *Hyakunin Isshu Karuta Hisshōhō,* 'Surefire Ways to Win at *Hyakunin Isshu karuta*', which was published in 1903 (Yoshikai 2016, 14) and alludes to another popular way of playing *karuta* to this day; *genpei gassen* or 'Genpei battle', referring to the famous war between the Minamoto and the Taira at the end of the Heian period. In this game-mode, all one hundred *torifuda* are spread amongst two teams, in which people

cooperate to gets as many cards together, or in a relay of team members taking cards individually across separate turns (Bull 1996, 75).

Among families and in casual settings, the game-mode of *ozashiki karuta,* commonly referred to as *chirashidori,* or 'scatter and take', is perhaps the most commonly played form. As the name suggests, all 100 cards are scattered across the floor, and any number of participants competes with one another to take the most cards (Bull 1996, 75). One final, and perhaps most accessible form of playing *karuta*, is *bōzu-mekuri,* in which the players use only the portraits on the *yomifuda* instead of the *torifuda* and divide them into three groups: *hime* or 'princess cards', *bōzu* or 'priest cards', and *wotoko*, or 'man cards', the latter of which includes both men at the court and emperors, with some discussion in regards to which category some poets belong, such as Semimaru (Yoshikai 2016, 15). In addition to discussion such as this, classification depends on what kind of set you are using, as the portraits can vary among them, meaning the rules will vary locally (ibid). In general, this game-mode is often a first introduction to *Hyakunin Isshu karuta* for children, as it is luck-based and has nothing to do with the poetry (Bull 1996, 75).

The popularity of *karuta* as game and sport

Since the establishment of the All-Japan Karuta Association in 1954, the amount of *karuta* players has been steadily growing, though concrete data on members of the association and the growing player-base seem hard to find, as I have yet to discover a trustworthy and complete source that covers the entire growth up till today. Taniguchi (2004, 63) gives a detailed overview of the steadily growing number of participants in student tournaments organized by the All-Japan *Karuta* Association, of which records were kept from 1978 onward. Starting with just one hundred participants from both high schools and universities in 1978, the counter stood

at 450 participants in 2002. While the amount of highschoolers and university students fluctuates over time, the records show an overall increase in participants.

On the number of members of the All-Japan *Karuta* Association is very little to no information available. Taniguchi (2004, 55) names a number of 2153 members by 2002, an increase of 29 members over the previous year (Taniguchi 2004, 56), but with no clear indication of their age or gender, as it was sourced from a list of names and contact details. While Taniguchi (ibid) got this number from a register of names, these are not, to my knowledge, publicly available (online), presumably for privacy reasons, obstructing my search for an exact number. At this moment of writing, the All-Japan *Karuta* Association states no clear number of members on their website or any other readily available document, but instead gives an estimate of approximately one million players nation-wide, including school clubs and children's associations (All-Japan *Karuta* Association, n.d.). While this is the association one would presume to make a trustworthy estimation, there is no information present on the association's website or elsewhere that supports this claim.

That *karuta* as a sport had taken off was no secret, considering the amount of effort that went into standardizing, spreading and maintaining the game nationwide. Much like the previously mentioned 1903 publication *Hyakunin Isshu Karuta Hisshōhō*, 'Surefire Ways to Win at *Hyakunin Isshu karuta*', certain books were published specifically for those who aimed to get better at *karuta*, featuring tips and tricks on the sport itself, as well as publications that presented methods of improvement while simultaneously educating the player on the poetic materials the game employs. I will discuss two publications post- nationwide organization that cater to players of competitive *karuta*, yet seem to have two completely different approaches – a competitive and a cultural one.

The first of the two is *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu Hayatorihō: Kyōgi Karuta Hiketsu* '*Ogura Hyakunin Isshu* "quick guide": the secrets of competitive *karuta*,' by Natsume Nobuo, director of the All-Japan *Karuta* Association and chanter at the Meijin tournaments, published in 1959. It is entirely focused on competitive *karuta* as a sport, introducing strategies on how to take cards fast, cover cards defensively, how to sit best (fig. 8) and dedicates a large part on how to memorize the cards faster, using the so called *kimari-ji* or 'decisive characters.' Utilizing this technique, one does not have to learn the entire poem, but merely the characters of both halves of the poem that are unique. For example, two poems start with *hito*, but become unique at the third character, dividing them into *hito ha* and *hito mo*. It is not until this character is read that you can confidently take a card without risking a mistake. Additionally, once it is read, hearing the rest of the poem's *kami no ku* is no longer necessary, which is why you will hear hands slamming on the tatami after only the first syllables have left the chanters mouth (Bull 1996, 75). For seven of the poems, one can jump into action after only hearing the first mora, being those that start with *mu, su, me, fu, sa, ho* and *se.* These *kimari-ji* also apply to the *shimo no ku*, the part on the cards, meaning that sometimes learning a combination can be as easy as *mu – ki*, with *mu* being the *kimari-ji* on the poems *kami no ku*, and *ki* being the first unique character on its respective *shimo no ku*. Natsume deems learning these *kimari-ji* necessary, for you will not be able to take cards fast at all if you do not study them (Natsume 1959, 69).

The second publication I would like to closely examine is Fujinawa Keigo and Sakurai Norihiko's *Zenshaku Ogura Hyakunin Isshu: tsuketari karuta kyōgihō* or '*Ogura Hyakunin Isshu*, a complete explanation: including methods for competitive *karuta*', published in 1972. Its goal is quite clear; give a comprehensive and accessible overview of the poems that can be read by everyone, with colloquial translations and information on the poet, while at the same time catering to those who enjoy *karuta* (Fujinawa and Sakurai 1972, 1). Each poem gets one

姿勢（座り方）と手の位置

姿勢即ち座わり方は実戦に於ける基礎となるものです。要は自分の持札、敵の札を問わず隅から隅まで如何なる位置の札にも、取る手が一直線、最短距離にとどくように坐わることが大切です。

あぐら（胡座）、立膝などでは持札全体に一様に手が行くものではありません。又御座敷かるたでよく見受ける形ですが、素人は大概の人が、札から遠ざかって坐わっているようですが、これでは敵の中、下段には手がとどきません、それで自分の持札二十五枚を縦三段横三尺の範囲に列べるのですから自分の札の下段から二寸程後に下り、中央に坐わります。膝

Fig. 8: Illustrated example of how to sit properly for a *karuta* match, ‘posture as seen from behind’ (*ushiro kara mita kamae*). Introduction to a chapter on posture on page 83 of *Ogura Hyakunin Isshu Hayatorihō: Kyōgi Karuta Hiketsu* by Natsume Nobuo, 1959.

page, in which the aforementioned translation and information are present, as well as a small image of the *torifuda* and the *kimari-ji* in the poem highlighted by way of a bold *hiragana* character. At the back of the book, an appendix explaining different ways of playing *karuta*, as well as technical aspects such as *kimari-ji* and card placement, much like Natsume's book. The difference here, however, is that there seems to be a bridge between the sports aspect of *karuta* and the cultural, as the authors educate their audience on the anthology while incorporating competitive *karuta* as a means of broadening the readers horizon beyond mere sport. This sets it aside from other modern translations of the poems, for example a 1969 contemporary publication titled *Hyakunin Isshu* by Shimazu Tadao, which was later revised in 1999; a book that gives detailed information and explanations on the poems and their respective poems, but on the surface does not seem to include anything *karuta* related. A small chapter on *karuta* and a register of *kimari-ji* in the back seems to be the only quietly added part in relation to the sport. Curiously, a paper slip added to the cover of the revision caters to *karuta* players to lure in a wider audience, which I will touch upon later. Different publications such as this demonstrate that there are multiple approaches to *karuta*, and by extension the anthology, both as a sport and a part of Japanese classical literature, but that one does not necessarily exclude the other. Natsume's accessible, educational and informative publication strikes a balance between these approaches in that it calls for appreciation of the poetry and serves as a guidebook for those interested in the competitive elements of *Hyakunin Isshu karuta*.

Popularizing *karuta* and the anthology in Japan

Having discussed the establishment of *karuta* and its competitive game-mode in Japanese society from Edo to the 1950's, as well its spread and increased number of participants since the nation-wide organization of 1954 up till 2002, we will here further explore how of *karuta,*

and in turn the *Hyakunin Isshu* anthology, has been popularized these past two decades. In an effort to get an insight in this time period, I turned to the statistics of Google trends. Though these numbers are normalized between a range of 0 to 100 over a certain period of time in a specific region, thus not reflecting the absolute number of searches for this particular query, they do illustrate a certain pattern from which a conclusion can be drawn surrounding the correlation between the popularity of *karuta* and the *Hyakunin Isshu* anthology. When looking at the results between 2004 and 2023 for '百人一首' (*Hyakunin Isshu*) in Japan, we see a clear rhythmic pattern of peak relative popularity in January of each year (fig. 9), with a value of 100 being peak-popularity for this term, a value of 50 being half that popularity and a value of 0 being insufficient data (see appendix 1 for all monthly relative values). This demonstrates a correlation between the popularity of *karuta* and interest in the anthology itself, as the *Meijin* and Queen competitive *karuta* tournaments are held around the New Year, likely enticing and enthusing people to look up information on the anthology.

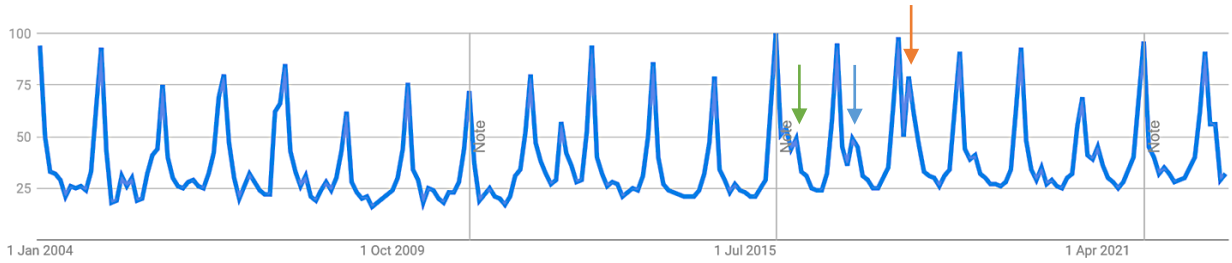

Fig. 9: Results in Google Trends showing relative interest over time (line in blue), for the search query '百人一首' (*Hyakunin Isshu*) in Japan from January 1, 2004 till May 4, 2023. Releases of the first, second and third *Chihayafuru* films pointed out by a green, blue and orange arrow, respectively. Via Google Trends, accessed on May 4, 2023 via https://trends.google.nl/trends/explore?date=all&geo=JP&q=百人一首

Another possibility is that people look up the anthology in relation to playing *karuta* themselves at home, which would further cement the position of the game as a yearly tradition in the homes of Japanese citizens. However, seeing as one needs cards to play the game, which in most cases also include *yomifuda* and thus not require one to Google the poems in full, I deem the first correlation of national tournament and peaked interest more likely.

The statistics show another peak of interest on March 2018, highlighted with the orange arrow (fig. 9), which correlates to the release of the third film of the series *Chihayafuru*, leading me to introduce a major popularizing factor to *karuta* and the anthology. Additionally, the first and second films in the series were released in March of 2016 (green arrow) and April of 2017 (blue arrow), respectively, visible in two smaller spikes in fig. 9 next to the January peaks of their corresponding years.

Though *karuta* makes an occasional appearance in popular media such as *manga*, *anime,* and film, with some works completely dedicated to *karuta*, the foremost example in spreading and popularizing both the sport and the anthology is *Chihayafuru*. Starting out as a manga written by Suetsugu Yuki, with its first volume published in 2007, the story follows the highschooler Ayase Chihaya in her journey to become the *karuta* Queen, along with her friends and fellow members of her *karuta* club. The story even draws inspiration from real life, as Kusuonki Saki, who became an 'eternal queen' by winning ten consecutive Queen tournaments, became the direct inspiration for Chihaya's rival in the show (Toma 2020, 3). Stirek (2022) discusses the series in great detail as a *manga* afterlife of the *Hyakunin Isshu* in her dissertation, and highlights its incredible popularity in Japan. As of February 2022, it ranked in the top 15 best-selling *manga* ever in the categories *shōjo* (girls) and *josei* (women), with 27 million total volumes having been sold at that time (Stirek 2022, 72-73). It is not only *manga*, however, as the franchise has expanded into light novels, live-action films and *anime*, further underlining its popularity and appeal (Stirek 2022, 137). The series has contributed greatly to the popularity

of *karuta*, as the number of participants in tournaments has increased each year since first publication (Stirek 2022, 141). There are, and have been, various tournaments in cooperation with Suetsugu, her *Chihayafuru* fund, the publisher Kodansha and the All-Japan *Karuta* Association, such as the *Ogura-yama* cup (Chihayafund.com, 2023) and even tournaments sponsored by the publisher during publication of the *manga* (Stirek 2022, 95), encouraging readers to participate in *karuta* matches themselves and engage with the sport, as well as with the anthology itself. The message to not forget the poetry runs clear through the series, as the poems and their meanings get plenty of attention (Stirek 2022, 67), making it so that the two spheres of sports and culture are not separated in a purely sports-oriented *manga*, but rather regarded as one. With this attention for the poems alongside a *karuta*-centered narrative, one can easily imagine why Stirek argues this series is an exemplary afterlife of the *Hyakunin Isshu*. In this case, *manga, anime*, and film popularize *karuta* and the anthology simultaneously.

Popularizing *karuta* and the anthology overseas

Yoshikai (2017, 43) explains that the start of internationalization in regards to *karuta* can be traced back to when the All-Japan *Karuta* Association became a corporation in 1996, as the spreading of *karuta* became obligatory. In addition to this, more and more Japanese students started studying abroad, further spreading knowledge of *karuta* outside of Japan (ibid). He argues that *karuta* has certain advantages that make it more accessible to a foreign audience. In particular, the game is played untranslated and in *hiragana*, the script most often taught first to new learners of Japanese, meaning that even beginning students of Japanese can have a go at the game (Yoshikai 2017, 44). Another big reason for the internationalization of the *Hyakunin Isshu,* not as an anthology but as *karuta,* is the tailwind of the popularity of the *Chihayafuru manga* and *anime*, which creates more exposure for *karuta* and the *Hyakunin*

Isshu abroad (ibid). Yoshikai (ibid) states that *Chihayafuru* is more popular overseas than Japanese people might initially think, but does not concretely state what this is based on. By way of conclusion, Yoshikai (ibid) notes that thanks to *Chihayafuru,* internationalization of competitive *karuta* and in turn the anthology is progressing rapidly, with translation of the game being the next step. Ōishi Tengudō, a company producing traditional Japanese games since 1800 and the sole producer of official competitive *karuta* cards recognized by the All-Japan *Karuta* Association, has a translated version of *Hyakunin Isshu karuta* in circulation, named 'Whack a waka' (Ōishi Tengudō, n.d.). Sporting English translations by Peter McMillan and illustrations by Yokoiyama Yasushi, it is a hybrid version of *karuta* that includes the original Japanese on one side of the card and a translation on the other (fig. 10), making the game further accessible to people who do not read Japanese and enabling them to familiarize themselves with the anthology through *karuta*.

Fig. 10: 'Whack a waka', a Japanese poem card game with translations by Peter McMillan, produced by Ōishi Tengudō. Via Ōishi Tengudō, accessed on May 5, 2023 via https://www.tengudo.jp/100poems/karuta/2885.html

There are a number of *karuta* clubs in other countries that are recognized by the All-Japan *karuta* Association, with an overview of these clubs presented on the website of the *Ogura Hyakuin Isshu* Festival 2020 in Tokyo, hosted by the Association and supported by the Arts Coucil Tokyo (karuta.or.jp). This list is not conclusive, as it does not contain unofficial clubs, such as those in Brittany (*L'Association Karuta Bretagne*, n.d.) and Munich (*Karuta* Club München, n.d.), which I have found using the social media platform Instagram, but does demonstrate that *karuta* is gaining in popularity outside of Japan as well, further spreading interest in the game and ultimately the anthology.

The 'unavoidability' of *karuta* in relation to the anthology

We have already established that conceptualizations of *karuta* and the anthology are closely related, but I would argue there is a certain 'unavoidability' of *karuta* when it comes to mentions of the anthology; one cannot seem to be named without the other. I find examples of this in works that are dedicated to the *Hyakunin Isshu*, by way of commentary, translation or colloquialized explanation. This includes English translations by Mostow (1996), McMillan (2008) and Porter (1909), vernacular translations in Japanese like those by Ōoka (1980) and the previously discussed *Zenshaku Hyakunin Isshu* by Fujinawa and Sakurai (1972), as well as publications related to the compilation of the anthology, such as Kobayashi's *Hyakunin Isshu Himitsu no Kashū* '*Hyakunin Isshu*, anthology of secrets' from 1991, which all mention *karuta* in their introduction, sometimes even on the first page. A previously mentioned publication, Shimazu's 1972 *Hyakunin Isshu*, does not make mention of *karuta* in its introduction, but does include a small chapter on *karuta* and a *hyakushū ichi-ran* or 'one hundred poems at a glance' register with *kimari-ji* for those interested in *karuta*. Interestingly, aside from numerous revisions made in the 1999 edition, the inclusion of this register is stated on a bright yellow

slip, or '*obi*', added to the cover of the book to increase the books appeal as an eye-catching highlight of the book's contents (fig. 11). One might conclude from this that the increased popularity of *karuta* over the years has led to the decision by the publishers to now boldly promote the specific *karuta* related content in this book to up sales, even though it focusses almost solely on the anthology, with the *karuta* portion being but a minor part in the back of the book, further cementing the strong association between the poems and the card game. Admittedly, a similar slip might have been present on the 1972 version, but the copy I have from the library does unfortunately not have a paper sleeve or cover, and I cannot find any reference to a similar slip advertising the inclusion of a *karuta*-related index online.

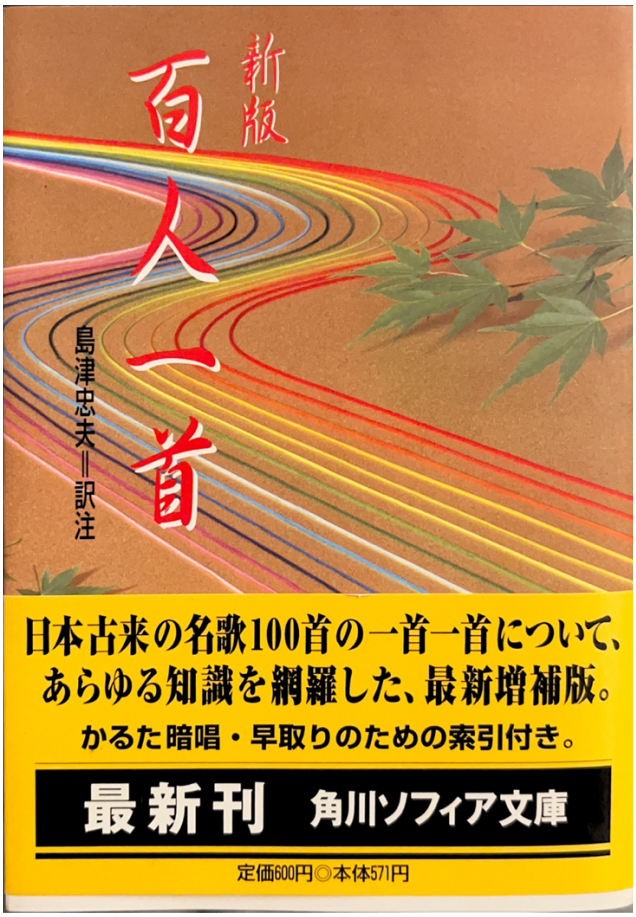

Fig. 11. Cover of Shimazu Tadao's 1999 *Shinpan Hyakunin Isshu,* with an additional yellow slip, stating on the third line: 'including an index for *karuta* recitation and fast taking (of cards)' (*karuta onshō ・hayatori no tame no sakuin dzuki*).

Yoshikai (2017, 43) notes that people are more likely to come into contact with the *Hyakunin Isshu* through *karuta* than vice versa. *Hyakunin Isshu karuta* is unique in that it encapsulates the entire classic in a gamified embodiment of the anthology, of which there is no other example (ibid). Granted, there are *karuta* of other classics, for example utilizing poetry from the *Genji Monogatari*, but when solely playing this as a game, there is no way you would grasp the entire context of all 54 chapters of the *Genji*, whereas with the *Hyakunin Isshu*, there is no difference whether you read or memorize the poems from a poetry bundle, on a website or the *yomifuda*; you are in touch with the anthology in its entirety, regardless of form. In this sense, *karuta* is the *Hyakunin Isshu*, meaning that any popularity the game enjoys automatically applies to the anthology as well. It is in the form of *karuta* that we find the *Hyakunin Isshu* are internationalized, not as a collection of poems per se, but as a sport and a game that fully utilizes the anthology (Yoshikai 2017, 44).

Whether it is to play it as a family friendly game, go all-in and approach it from a sports-angle or utilize it as a gateway to learning about the *Hyakunin Isshu, karuta* seems to have something for everyone these days. All developments throughout the Edo and Meiji periods have led up to the point where *karuta* was standardized, saw national organization and eventually became an established sport. Increasing interest in this sport has led to popularization of *karuta,* both nationally and internationally. A large portion of this popularization can be accredited to influences of popular media such as *manga* and *anime,* particularly the *Chihayafuru* franchise, which has motivated more people to take up the game and has had a major influence on the competitive *karuta* scene, both in Japan and overseas. Translations of the poems, for those who do not read Japanese, can now also be found on cards that are produced by renowned manufacturers, instead of in dedicated translations in book form. Most importantly, we see that the *Hyakunin Isshu* and *karuta* have become largely synonymous,

as the cards help spread the anthology in its entirety, further enticing people to search information on the anthology. Examples from literature demonstrate that a reference to *karuta* can be expected in any introduction to the anthology, making the two terms seemingly inseparable. The anthology has remained a constant factor in all these developments, which ensured its survival into the twenty-first century through a time-tested competitive formula that uniquely combines sport and classical literature. *Karuta* is spreading, evolving and more popular than ever before, paving the way for future appreciations of the *Hyakunin Isshu*.

Discussion

As is often the case in research, this thesis too is not without its limitations. For starters, I learned research on this topic to be quite inaccessible to those who do not read Japanese, as there are few notable sources in English that cover *Hyakunin Isshu karuta*. Additionally, accessibility to certain sources was restricted due to me writing this thesis in the Netherlands and a lot of potentially valuable sources being available only in Japan, be it in archives or libraries. Even though the sources that were available to me through the Leiden University library, the internet and my supervisor's personal collection proved sufficient, I would have liked to discuss works such as Ebasi Takashi's "*karuta*", published in 2015, and a few other publications that are only physically available through the National Diet Library in Tokyo. Furthermore, various data that I would deem crucial for a thesis with this subject are not available to the public, such as a concrete list or overview of the All-Japan *Karuta* Association's member count or a list of all *karuta* clubs in Japan and their number of active members. Though growth in the sport is apparent in sources provided by Taniguchi (2004), Yoshikai and Stirek (2022), having access to more recent raw data such as this could help further illustrate the gained insights. The data provided by Google trends shows a correlation between the search query for *Hyakunin Isshu* and the *Meijin* and Queen matches in a temporal sense, but might be biased towards younger people who use the internet more as opposed to older generations, and might not give a complete overview of all searches as Yahoo! is also frequently used in Japan. Even though Yahoo! search results are powered by Google, having more insight into the data would lead to more concrete conclusions. Furthermore, should this research have been conducted in Japan, interviews at *karuta* clubs and with the general public would give insight in associations or identification between *Hyakunin Isshu* and *karuta*, further exploring the manner in which the two terms can be regarded synonymous.

Though I have been focusing on *karuta* as a main contributor to the contemporary popularity of the *Hyakunin Isshu* as an anthology, saying it is the only factor would not be academically valid. Though far beyond the scope of this research, to get a full understanding of the popularity of the *Hyakunin Isshu* in the twenty-first century, one must look at all contributing factors to said popularity, of which I would like to mention a few. There is a broad scholarly approach to the *Hyakunin Isshu* that includes modern Japanese translations and informative resources like Ōoka (1980) and Shimazu (1999), which explore the poetry beyond the surface by giving explanations on interpretation and information on their respective poets, contextualizing and historicizing the anthology in its own right. Translations into English by Porter (1909), Mostow (1996) and McMillan (2008) keep the anthology alive overseas as well, providing information comparable to their Japanese counterparts. Mostow (1996) views the *Hyakunin Isshu* in relation to imagery and poetic references in patterns on *kimono*, aside from giving his own translations and information on the poet, demonstrating that not every scholarly approach is solely a modern translation. Aside from poetic focus, there are also works that concern themselves with 'unraveling the mysteries' surrounding the compilation of the anthology. Publications such as the aforementioned *Hyakunin Isshu Himitsu no Kashū* by Kobayashi (1991) and *Hyakunin Isshu no Nazo* 'the mystery of the One Hundred Poems' by Oda from 1989 explore the reasons Teika could have had for compiling the anthology as he did, trying to decipher the secrets behind the anthology, if any. All the aforementioned publications stand in no direct relation to *karuta*, but do often, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, make mention of it. Aside from the examples in art discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, there are popular modern works with the *Hyakunin Isshu* at their core without concentrating on *karuta* as well. Stirek (2022, 67-72) gives a few examples of these, such as *Chōyaku Hyakunin Isshu Uta Koi*, 'Super-liberal translation of the One Hundred Poets: Poetry love', which is both a *manga* and a one-season *anime* with a focus on the romantic relationships

of the poets, explaining the meanings of the love poetry in the circumstances of their composition, all the while being narrated by Teika. It is in these works that we do not find *karuta* to be the main focus, but rather the anthology and the poets, which might not contribute to the overall popularity and exposure of the *Hyakunin Isshu* as much as *karuta*, but are media that help the spread of the poems and keep the anthology alive nonetheless.

Taking the limitations and scope of this thesis in mind, however, this project provides evidence that *karuta* plays (and has played) a major part in popularizing the *Hyakunin Isshu*, which finds evidence in a strong identification between the game and the anthology and *karuta* being a vessel for the anthology through which the poetry and the sport get popularized and spread with the help of popular media like *manga* and *anime,* not only in Japan but in other parts of the world as well. A holistic approach to popularizing factors of the *Hyakunin Isshu* could further improve and build upon this thesis in future research or larger dissertation projects, ideally in Japan.

Conclusion

Simultaneous to the *Hyakunin Isshu* becoming widespread knowledge in the Edo period, *karuta* evolved from simple shell-matching games and foreign playing cards into the card game that utilizes and contains the entire anthology. While only played among women at first, a competitive version was standardized and wildly played from the start of the twentieth century onward, leading to a yearly tradition, numerous organization attempts, tournaments, publications and eventually adaptations into popular media, entering a global stage. Coming back to the research question, I draw four conclusions that concretely demonstrate how *karuta* has been a major contributing factor to the popularity of the *Hyakunin Isshu* in the past 70 years.

Firstly, *karuta* became a nationally standardized and organized sport, leading to many people throughout the nation joining tournaments of unprecedented scale, the formation of an increasing number of clubs and an increase in the number of people that became familiar with the anthology. Secondly, *karuta* as a sport took off in such a manner that publications solely dedicated to the card game started to appear and it reached such popularity that it became adapted into popular media such as *manga* and *anime,* further enthusing people and inspiring them to both try their hand at the sport and engage with the poems of the anthology. Thirdly, *karuta* is a phenomenon that, largely due to its representation in popular media, is gaining in popularity both in Japan and abroad, further spreading knowledge of the anthology in both the original Japanese and recently also in more accessible, translated versions. Lastly and most importantly, *karuta* contains the entirety of the anthology within its cards, meaning there is no difference between reading the anthology from a book or from the cards; *karuta* simply *is* the *Hyakunin Isshu*. This means that any popularity *karuta* enjoys will directly affect the popularity of the anthology and that *karuta* is a vessel for the poems through which they are ensured a future and an afterlife, not only in Japan, but worldwide. It is therefore paramount that *karuta* be taken into account when researching the popularity of the anthology and its survival into the

modern age. As such a popular vessel for the poems, it is therefore not strange that when mentioning the anthology, one almost has to mention *karuta*; it is evidence for a strong identification between the card game and the anthology that goes back to the first printed books and *ukiyo-e*. The *Hyakunin Isshu* are being spread abroad not as an anthology of old, but as a game that fully utilizes all the poems in said anthology, as a sport that has its own competitive world, discourse, publications and popular media adaptations, carrying the *Hyakunin Isshu* into the future and keeping the classical anthology alive for, hopefully, many centuries to come.

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Appendix 1:

Raw data from Google Trends. Relative popularity of search query "百人一首" "*Hyakunin Isshu*" in Japan from January 2004 till May 2023, with a value of 100 being the highest popularity, 50 being half that popularity and 0 begin the lowest or no data. Highest value of each year in red text. *Chihayafuru* film release months highlighted in yellow. Read in order: Year-Month, Value. Ex: 2004-01,82. = January of 2004, value of 82.

2004-01,82
2004-02,39
2004-03,31
2004-04,26
2004-05,27
2004-06,26
2004-07,22
2004-08,24
2004-09,25
2004-10,26
2004-11,36
2004-12,60
2005-01,86
2005-02,36
2005-03,14
2005-04,15
2005-05,26
2005-06,21
2005-07,28
2005-08,20
2005-09,20
2005-10,29
2005-11,36
2005-12,36
2006-01,72
2006-02,40
2006-03,30
2006-04,22
2006-05,23
2006-06,27
2006-07,28
2006-08,26
2006-09,21
2006-10,28
2006-11,43
2006-12,62
2007-01,73
2007-02,45
2007-03,27
2007-04,22
2007-05,24
2007-06,27
2007-07,29
2007-08,21
2007-09,21
2007-10,23
2007-11,58
2007-12,64
2008-01,80
2008-02,39
2008-03,29
2008-04,26
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2008-09,27
2008-10,23
2008-11,30
2008-12,40
2009-01,57
2009-02,24
2009-03,22
2009-04,17
2009-05,21
2009-06,16
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2009-09,20
2009-10,22
2009-11,26
2009-12,39
2010-01,71
2010-02,31
2010-03,25
2010-04,19
2010-05,21
2010-06,22
2010-07,20
2010-08,17
2010-09,20
2010-10,21
2010-11,26
2010-12,42
2011-01,68
2011-02,36
2011-03,17
2011-04,21
2011-05,23
2011-06,19
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