Heian and medieval Japan was full of movement: courtiers ventured forth on nocturnal amorous adventures and on imperial outings; official messengers and warriors were dispatched to missions afar; merchants transported their wares between provinces; and religious pilgrims, wandering poets, and traveling performers journeyed across a landscape bustling with traversings from place to place. Movement was not, however, restricted to the physical comings-and-goings of individuals from one geographic point to another. There was also motion at a more symbolic, abstract level, as texts from this period attest; such figures of literary motion include sudden transfers between textual registers and genres within a single piece of writing, and narrative trajectories that shift at a dizzying pace.

This book argues that tropes of movement are crucial in understanding how texts imagine structures of power. Reading through the lens of movement—from gender and political relations at the highest levels of society to the distribution of religious charisma—allows us to focus upon how texts construct complex and multilayered visions of struggle between individuals and groups. Each of the two types of movement I invoke above—that is, depictions of characters going from one place to another, and the mechanics of textual shifts and transfers—offers significant moments for reflection concerning the workings of power. However, when both types of movement coexist in a text, such tropic nodes are particularly potent as springboards for the exploration of what those movements might mean, and what they in turn give meaning to. Be it the
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depolitical significance of the points of departure and arrival, or a reconceptualization of exact methods through which power is constructed and disseminated across time, space, and stories, textual moments that feature the double presence of literal and literary movements say something particularly important about how a text articulates, promotes, or critiques specific paradigms through which authority is constructed, maintained, and distributed.

Scholars have studied tropes of movement from various angles for decades, if not centuries. In the field of critical theory, attention to figures such as exile, diaspora, and transnational migration in addition to tropes of travel, tourism, and the circulation of goods and people in a globalized economy has produced lively and engaging dialogues. Particularly since the 1990s, theorists have explored various rubrics of movement as moments that can destabilize and hybridize categories such as identity, nation, and imperialism; they have used these rubrics to highlight contestations and negotiations that occur in the process of subject formation under modern global conditions.¹

My approach in examining movement in premodern Japan is certainly influenced by this body of scholarship, as the chapters to follow should show. What distinguishes this project from much of the work in the categories mentioned above is twofold: first, I am as interested in movements across borders that are metaphorical (such as ones that differentiate between literary genres, or between levels of political power) as I am in those that are physical (characters said to be moving through bounded

¹. See, for example, Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture*, as well as his introduction to Naficy, *Home, Exile, Homeland*; Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism*, especially the chapter “Movements and Migrations”; Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large*; and James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, specifically, the idea of Zomia as a space that renders possible movements of peoples between the “hills” and dynastic centers that cross modern national boundaries. With reference to East Asia, Rey Chow’s numerous writings, such as the classic *Writing Diaspora*, rigorously theorize diaspora and the construct of “modern China”; Masao Miyoshi interrogates terminologies such as “globalization” and “transnationalism” in works such as “A Borderless World?: From Colonialism to Transnationalism and the Decline of the Nation-State” (reprinted in Cadzyn, *Trespasses*, 127–50); Aihwa Ong’s *Flexible Citizenship* pursues the relationship between transnational capitalism, migration, and logics of culture; more recently, Shih Shu-mei argues for a focus on the “scattering of capitalism” that allows for explorations—beyond the global-local dichotomy—of how visual images travel between places and differently signify (*Visuality and Identity*).
spaces); this book’s examination of movement as a literary technique adds a further dimension to the study of motion articulated in works that analyze movements of a range of material beings, from humans to inanimate objects. Second, when figures move across geographic spaces in the texts I am about to examine, the demarcations are not bound by the rules of and identities associated with modern nation-states.

Indeed, what I hope to explore is the workings of movement that are not limited to questions such as ethnicity and citizenship that we find in the modern period. Units of governance are a complex topic in premodern Japan: the Heian and medieval term *kuni* denotes both “country” and “province”; the line between hierarchies of rulership is thus linguistically blurred from the beginning. Take, for example, a fourteenth-century text I explore in detail in the fourth chapter of this book. In this narrative, entitled “Suwa engi” (The origins of Suwa), the term *kuni* is repeatedly attached to both Nihon (“Japan,” the larger unit of governance) and names of provinces (smaller units into which Nihon is divided). Furthermore, the protagonist finds himself traveling in a mysterious underground world, which is divided into many *kuni*; the peoples and practices of these underground *kuni* are consistently contrasted with those of Nihon, rather than opposed to particular provinces within Nihon—suggesting that at certain times, there is a strategic awareness of difference between the various types of *kuni*. Definitions of nationhood, divisions of governance, and community identities, therefore, are here slippery and relational. I would argue that such slipperiness is not necessarily an inalienable feature of a “premodern condition” that is radically different from a modern one (consider, for example, the complex relationships between states, territories, Native American nations, and the federal government in the contemporary American context); rather, the case of premodern Japan presents an opportunity to consider how tropes of movement symptomatically alert readers to various modes of power formation, regardless of how such powers are specifically configured and bounded at particular times.

Among scholars of premodern Japan, tropes of movement have received significant attention for many years. Scholars have developed ways to categorize and theorize types of movement, particularly in the field of *minzokugaku* (“folk” studies); two especially notable examples are *kisshu ryūritan* and *hyōhaku*. The former term, coined by Orikuchi...
Shinobu (1887–1953), refers to narratives that feature nobility in exile: famous cases include Ariwara no Narihira (825–80), whose trip eastward as related in *Ise monogatari* (Tales of Ise; dates and author unknown, ca. 9th–10th century) set a poetic precedent for centuries to follow, as I note in more detail in the third chapter of this book; the fictional Prince Genji of *Genji monogatari* (The tale of Genji; Murasaki Shikibu, ca. early 1000s), who wandered through Soma and Akashi before returning to the capital to climb his way back to prosperity; and mythical imperial ancestors such as Susano’o and Ōkuninushi, who suffered expulsion from divine realms according to texts such as *Kojiki* (Records of ancient matters, ca. 712) and *Nihon shoki* (Chronicles of Japan, ca. 720). The significance of such journeying nobles has been the topic of reflection for decades; Orikuchi was interested in potential resonances between the narrative contents of *kishu ryūritan* and the supposed lifestyles of wandering performers who popularized some of these tales. 2 Others, meanwhile, focused on the narrative of trials and tribulations, understanding *kishu ryūritan* as mostly temporary banishments and explaining the travels in economic terms, as repentant payments for past wrongdoings and/or the acquisition of greater charisma through suffering.3

*Hyōhaku*, on the other hand, tends to refer to more extended or even permanent states of motion on the part of less aristocratic members of society; examples range from traveling poets such as Saigyō (1118–90) and Bashō (1644–94) to groups and categories of peoples who are perceived as leading nomadic lifestyles, such as the wandering performers in Orikuchi’s theories. The subjects of the *hyōhaku* paradigm tend to be romanticized for their mobility: literary-minded wanderers have been heralded as jour-

2. Orikuchi sought to render analogous the fates of tragic exiles with those of wandering performers who may have had a role in propagating narratives about these figures. See Takahashi Tōru, “Kishu ryūritan no kōzō.” For further detailed discussions of Orikuchi’s notion of *kishu ryūritan*, see Stockdale, *Imagining Exile in Heian Japan*, chap. 1. Similarly, Hasegawa Masaharu reads Ariwara no Narihirà’s eastward journey as a sign of the protagonists’ liminal state, belonging neither to the capital nor to the east (*Kyokai kara no hassō*).

3. A classic example of this theory can be found in Mitani Eiichi’s *Monogatari shi no kenkyū*, 82–88 and 394–401. The trials-and-tribulations paradigm remains popular; for example, the most prevalent reading of the “Suwa engi,” the topic of the fourth chapter of this book, is that the hero undergoes extensive and difficult travels in order to qualify for divinity (see, for example, Henmi, “Kōga no Saburō no hyōhaku,” 452–55).
neymen in search of some goal, either philosophical or artistic, while traveling performers and other wanderers are often celebrated for their subversive possibilities due to their apparent social ostracization and/or divine associations.

All of these scholarly examinations suggest the extent to which specific types of motion have been recognized as significant features of the premodern literary landscape: when a person or people are in motion, we should pay attention to what such motion may mean. What I wish to do in this book is to show that movement is, in fact, a vital trope in an even wider sense, beyond what the specific paradigms of kishu ryūritan or hyōhaku imply. When we expand the definition of movement beyond mere varieties of travel—whether temporary or permanent, noble or base—to include more abstract forms of motion, particularly those pertaining to changes in literary techniques and shifting narrative arcs, we find evocative examples of movement in both expected and unexpected textual places. In fact, I will suggest that tropes of movement that belong to this broader category invariably point to struggles for authority and legitimacy beyond the most apparent; tropes of movement are signposts that invite investigations and reconsiderations of how power functioned during the periods in which the texts were produced.

Recent scholarship on Japan has seriously questioned the undisputed supremacy of the capital, which was established in the location of present-day Kyoto in 794 at the beginning of the Heian period (and thus called the Heiankyō) and remained there until the late nineteenth century; scholars have also reconsidered the effectiveness of centralized governance throughout the history of Japan. Amino Yoshihiko, one of the pioneering critics of the discourse of a unified premodern Japan under the

4. See, for example, Mezaki Tokue’s Hyōhaku, which positions the state of hyōhaku as something neither religious nor political, but “purely literary/artistic”; he argues that this artistic pursuit is a search for the “meaning of life” (24).

5. As noted above, Orikuchi’s work is the locus classicus for this stance. More recent examples include Hyōhaku to teichaku (vol. 6 of Nihon minzoku bunka taikei), which is edited by Amino Yoshihiko and contains numerous essays on transportation and other peoples who travel; Yamaori Tetsuo and Miyata Noboru’s edited volume, Hyōhaku no minzoku bunka (vol. 8 of Nihon rekishi minzoku ronshū), which emphasizes the connection between assignations of divinity and hyōhaku; and Akasaka Norio, Hyōhaku no seishinshi: Yanagita Kunio no hassei, which critically traces Yanagita’s Meiji-era explorations of the relationship between hyōhaku and otherness, leading up to the modern-day burakumin.
imperial court, has been instrumental in pointing out the extent to which various groups existed, interacted, and competed for power in and out of the Japanese archipelago according to norms and boundaries that are different from those traditionally conceived. In English-language scholarship, center-periphery relations have been a major focus in the past two decades: important studies, such as those by Bruce Batten, David Bialock, and the edited volume *Heian Japan: Centers and Peripheries* have effectively problematized past assumptions about the relative significance of centralized sources of authority and those that were considered politically, socially, economically, or religiously peripheral for one reason or another. Such timely reexaminations are part of a body of scholarship that has sought to dismantle the myth of a coherent entity called “Japan,” governed by a singular lineage of rulers since the dawn of time; by problematizing the premodern as always already contested and complex, these studies contribute to the broader project of imploding modern nationalist discourses that found their claims upon a unified vision of history.

This book seeks to participate in and augment this body of scholarship that reconceives the ways in which “Japan” has been interpreted and understood in the past. Tropes of movement, I will argue, are vital in showing the extent to which stability—both geographic and conceptual—is at once contingent and a manufactured effect; these tropes offer an angle of analysis that complements but is distinct from approaches that are grounded on a center-periphery paradigm. This binary, even in its critique of monolithic discourses, can itself create equivalences within each category (e.g., liminal spaces of the capital and traveling performers both become part of an undifferentiated “peripheral”). In reconsid-ering the implications of the center-periphery mode of analysis, Gayatri Spivak’s discussion of Marx’s “Asiatic Mode of Production” is useful by analogy. Spivak notes that Marx’s term is “the name and imaginary fleshing out of a difference in terms that are consonant with the development of capitalism and the resistance appropriate to it as ‘the same’”—that is, the Asiatic Mode of Production is an “other” that functions within the narrative of a dialectic transformation of capitalism into communism in

6. Amino’s prolific output includes seminal works such as *Muen, kugai, raku, Umi to rettō no chūsei*, and the above-mentioned *Hyōhaku to teichaku*, which he edited.
Marx’s worldview. Similarly, a problematization of power that begins with a center-periphery paradigm can remain tied to those fundamental terms and their relationships to each other, despite subsequent attempts to add nuance to that binary.

Tropes of movement offer an analytical point of entry that diminishes the effects of the potent center-periphery discourse by allowing us to focus on specific instances in which relations of power are established, without always assuming a preexisting set of power configurations that are only later subjected to scrutiny and critique. I treat movement not as a category of being—that is, as a mode of existence with a set of associated properties vis-à-vis authority—but rather as a tropic, textual marker that summons our analytic attention; as such, tropes of movement allow us to step away from predetermined structures of identities and equations (such as “those who move = necessarily subversive”).

Indeed, the studies of modern global traversals cited above have shown that movement is a multivalent trope that evade simple categorization or uniform theorization. Focusing on movements across boundaries calls our attention to different perceptions of how power is derived and maintained; for instance, governments in exile or migrant labor suggest that stationary states of being tend to be cast as desirable, empowered conditions, whereas in contrast, movement in the form of leisure sightseeing is enabled precisely because the tourist possesses at least some degree of economic and social advantage. Thus since movement can point to a range of conditions and relations of power, what is in order is less a single, blanket theory of movement than sustained examinations of how and what—in all of their varieties—individual instances of movement-as-trope signify.

It is from this standpoint that I identify specific nodes of motion in the texts that are explored in this book. These nodes range widely in concern and scope: from a poetic strategy based on movement as a premise that advances particular courtly agendas by masking internal conflict among elite groups vying for authority, to an envisioning of a national network of power based not on centralization but on notions of ubiquity and clout ascribed to presences that are from elsewhere, each case of tropic traversings can be approached productively by examining

in detail its particular significances and implications. Thus, moments of literary and physical movements in texts share vectors toward relations of power, even as the expressions of such vectors differ significantly from text to text.

The chapters of this book are arranged in broadly chronological fashion. The texts under discussion date to a span of over five centuries, beginning in the middle of the Heian period (794–1192), an era typically cast as the “golden age” of court rulership and court culture. The end of this period is marked by a large-scale civil war, and the usual story of the medieval period (late twelfth through sixteenth centuries) is dominated by warriors. The Kamakura period (1192–1333) begins with the establishment of a separate military government in the eastern part of Japan; this government eventually falls, followed by a period of divided imperial rule and the establishment of a new warrior dynasty in the Muromachi period (1336–1573). Against this sweeping, generalized narrative of history, the specific studies of this book seek to add nuance, provoke thought, and challenge conventional understandings. Many of the texts narrate events from previous generations, and the ways in which they imagine such events through tropes of movement are crucial in thinking about how and why the texts invoke networks of power both past and contemporary.

Chapter 1 examines *Yamato monogatari* (Tales of Yamato), a tenth-century collection of courtly tales, likely penned by a woman who served at the imperial court. These short narratives each focus on specific poems in the genre of *waka* (or *tanka*); *waka* usually consist of thirty-one syllables, and were commonly composed, recited, and appreciated among courtly circles. The *Yamato* stories provide contextual accounts for *waka* poems, such as how they came to be composed or what sort of impact they had upon specific individuals. *Yamato* is a text that clearly prioritizes court culture, with named aristocratic characters populating the major portion of its tales, and its obvious interest in the courtly poetic form of *waka*. However, *Yamato*’s narratives also render complex the exact nature of the culture that is being privileged. Tropes of movement are abundant in this work; they range from recently abdicated emperors wandering in desolation to multiple-register narratives that surf in and out of storylines and genres. Yet we also find female court attendants who appear to embrace
ensconcement as a positive and powerful state of being. By turning our attention to such tropes, we can begin to see how the figure of movement highlights the struggles and uncertainties that are involved in the attainment and attempted maintenance of power. Furthermore, I will argue that these tropes challenge some of the most enduring conceptualizations of gender relations in this era.

One of the more familiar characteristics attributed to aristocratic women in the Heian period is restricted physical mobility. The long-haired, multi-robed upper-class woman who is confined to her quarters while she waits for sporadic visits by her suitor is a canonical figure in texts from this period; even when employed at court as an attendant, her relative lack of mobility compared to her male counterparts is assumed to be obvious. We, as modern readers and scholars, tend to ascribe a negative quality to this static condition, and in contrast regard the less restricted movements of male aristocrats as a positive aspect of their daily lives. Indeed, it seems like common sense to understand the physical stasis of these women as a straightforward product of patriarchal oppression, and the lack of hindrance to men’s ability to roam freely as a performative proof of their gender’s privileged status. *Yamato*, however, dismantles these expectations by envisioning a radically alternative interpretation of this gender configuration: the narratives in this collection instead imagine male mobility as an undesirable state of instability, in which defeated aristocrats wander despondent, and emperors abdicate after brief reigns. In contrast, female stasis—both literal and figurative—is situated as a potentially powerful positionality from which one can critically observe and even ultimately triumph over the comings and goings of less fortunate male counterparts; that positionality becomes a metaphorical, meta-narrative space from which the women can consider and often critique the geopolitical ambitions of men in power, which were crucial to the project of nation building at this time.

The second chapter, too, is concerned with complex, fraught relations among those who vied for power within the central government. This time, the protagonist is a courtier named Fujiwara no Sanekata (958–98), who was born into one of the most powerful families in the capital but was suddenly sent away to serve at a surprisingly low-prestige post: the provincial governorship of the most remote northeastern province, Mutsu (also called Ōshū). Three years after arriving at his post,
he passed away. It is not difficult to imagine that Sanekata’s life came to be woven into textual tellings and retellings, given its curious contours; from his own poetry collection to prose works in later centuries, his figure becomes the subject of many interpretations, most of them casting him as a tragic noble who was forcibly sent away to wander in distant lands.

There is more to Sanekata, however, than this sad tale of misfortune: I will argue that his figure, too, represents a series of textual moments that involve double-layered tropes of movement. I begin with an examination of *waka* poems by Sanekata that are featured in the poetry collection *Sanekatashū* (Poetry collection of Sanekata), compiled during and after his lifetime. These poems appear to insist on solidifying the supremacy of courtly culture; one prime technique for this project is the poems’ abundant use of *utamakura*, or “poem pillows.” A literary flourish found across genres of court literature throughout the premodern era, *utamakura* are words—and consequently, imagery and emotions that come to be associated with these words—that are tropically tied to specific place-names. Such places are scattered across the country, and a large number of them are located a good distance away from the capital, including many in the northeastern region to which Sanekata was dispatched. In the context of this book, I choose to understand *utamakura* as a trope of movement: for courtly poets who dwell in the capital, *utamakura* allows them to bring imagined, faraway places into the playing field of aristocratic aesthetics. *Utamakura* is thus a strategy that transports visions of distant locales into the comfort of the courtiers’ residences and official spaces without the annoyances of travel; it is an effective, if illusory, method for integrating territories into the regime of *waka* signification. The poems of *Sanekatashū* take matters a step further in the project of *utamakura*, in that the tropic places are actual geographical locations that exist materially in front of his eyes, since he is sent away to those very lands. Sanekata’s poems faithfully replicate the wordplay and imagistic associations rendered familiar within the context of courtly aesthetics, appearing to prove the discursive veracity of the *utamakura* and reinforce the privileged status of court culture.

Here, I locate Sanekata as an exilic figure—that is, a character for whom travel symbolizes exclusion and a downturn in fortunes, regardless of the exact reasons for that fall. I situate this particular exilic figure, as portrayed in texts dominated by courtly aesthetics, as an important agent...
in the dynamics of the central government’s efforts at domination over the northeastern territories through the power of courtly cultural practices; in the narrative of Sanekatashū, this domination is a seamless and uncontested venture. However, other texts from and about the mid-Heian period portray rather different visions of the relationship between various areas of premodern Japan. What we find in these texts are narratives about raging battles between forces dispatched by the central government and the locals who attempt to resist the conquerors; stories about inept governors, of which Sanekata is said to be one; intense military conflicts between local strongmen; and rivalry among those representing the central government. It is within the context of this embattled landscape that we can resituate poetry by and about Sanekata; I will suggest that the poems are discursive strategies designed to highlight the primacy of a textual/cultural means of asserting power over a fraught region. That is, the poems are not simply dreamy denials of resistance from the subjugated residents of the northeast; rather, they represent an insistence on the power of court culture as the one and only necessary tool for territorial governance. What is denied, then, is less the fraught relationship between “center” and “periphery” than the power struggle between groups at the center: civilian courtiers and the rising military families. The mid-Heian period marked the beginning of the increase in power among those who were militarily capable; the northeastern theater was one major arena in which the civilian court officials clashed with newly powerful military commanders. Sanekatashū’s blatant disavowal of force and struggle in the northeast—that is, the complete suppression of any reference to armed expeditions—read together with the collection’s intense rhetoric of the supremacy of court culture, can be understood as a championing of elite aesthetics as the ultimate and most important weapon in the subjugation of a frontier territory. The legacy of the northeast as a symbolic venue in which conflicts between those who seek dominance within the national government are performed continues into the medieval period, albeit in different guises; the chapter closes with an examination of a medieval prose narrative in which the figure of Sanekata, pictured as a haughty aristocrat-in-exile, is pitted in conflict against a deity in Mutsu who is also an exile from the capital.

Chapter 3 examines a narrative of forced travel found in a particular version of Heike monogatari (The tale of Heike), the lengthy epic
dating from the fourteenth century about the civil wars that took place two centuries earlier. As one of the most famous texts of premodern Japan, *Heike* contains many renowned passages of intrigue, valor, and tragedy that have become legendary. One of the lesser-known moments, however, is the story of Taira no Shigehira (1157–85), a son of the supposedly nefarious Kiyomori, who is said to be responsible for both the rise and fall of his entire clan. Known as an elegant courtier and a skilled general, Shigehira nevertheless suffers capture in the hands of his enemy, the Minamoto; thus begins the tale of movement for this prisoner of war, who is first taken to the capital from the battlefields, then marched hundreds of miles eastward to Kamakura, the newly established center for warrior governance, in order to be questioned by Yoritomo, the leader of the Minamoto.

Shigehira’s journey as narrated in *Heike* is, again, a case of motion both physical and abstract. His figure is literally in motion as he is made to travel from place to place, uncertain about his destiny or the duration of his remaining days. At the same time, his story is cast into two distinct textual modes; the narrative makes a sudden leap from one to the other midway through. First, his trip from the capital to Kamakura is told along the familiar lines of a journey eastward as related in a Heian-era locus classicus: Shigehira is said to have composed *waka* poetry and made poetic allusions in a manner that echoes those of numerous others before him who undertook the same route. Once he reaches Kamakura, however, we are abruptly transported to a space in which all literary references are measured against the world of *kanshibun*, or Chinese poetry and prose.

This jump from one literary genre to another in the telling of Shigehira’s voyage, I will argue, is far from incidental or accidental. The two genres of *waka* and *kanshibun* represent the main pillars of courtly literature, and thus cover the range of textual genres that elites routinely commanded. It is thus striking that the story of Shigehira, an ideal of the courtier-warrior of the late twelfth century, is related in each of these genres in a manner that radically undercuts his powers. On his way east, the prisoner coerced into motion appears to pay proper tribute to the centuries of accumulated *waka* tropes associated with this itinerary—yet, when we examine that performance more closely, it turns out that the texts he produces are ones that continuously subvert and render awry the very tradition of courtliness. When he arrives in Kamakura, we suddenly
enter the world of *kanshibun* allusions, which once again work to disempower Shigehira’s figure: the captive in the story interprets famous *kanshibun* passages in ways that figuratively imprison him by encouraging him to accept his doomed fate.

Thus Shigehira is portrayed as virtually texting himself to death—that is, the narrative casts him as invoking past texts and understanding them in ways that seem to convince him of the inevitability of his own demise. The reason for the appearance of this striking twelfth-century figure in the best-known version of the *Heike*, I will argue, may lie in the late fourteenth-century context of the text. Produced in an era of upheaval in which the division within the imperial house remained unresolved, and a new shogunal dynasty was busily establishing itself, Shigehira’s acquiescence to his own destruction becomes proof of the obsolescence of the courtier-warrior ideal of the late Heian era. Being versed in and invoking past literary traditions, it seems, is not only inadequate for survival in the brave new medieval world, but potentially downright harmful; texts are powerful, and can directly affect the details of an elite aristocrat’s life, and catastrophically so, if the wrong interpretive and compositional buttons are pushed. Shigehira’s negative example thus serves as a call for the newly powerful to pay attention to the maintenance, propagation, and interpretation of texts as an important tool for the new rulers of the nation.

The final chapter turns to a text that perhaps best exemplifies the subject of this book. A series of three stories about the Suwa Shrine, a religious complex located in the middle of the present-day prefecture of Nagano, is included in *Shintōshū* (A Shinto collection), a compilation of narratives that purport to explain the origins of various shrines across Japan. Like the version of the *Heike* discussed in chapter 3, this collection was likely compiled in the fourteenth century; the origin tales are thought to have been told orally for advertisement and proselytizing purposes. The most striking feature of the three Suwa narratives is their extreme display of tropes of movement, which permeate each story throughout. The prominence of motion both at the diegetic level (that is, characters moving through identities, spaces, and time) and in the realm of narrative method (for example, seemingly random shifts in plot and setting that suggest a disregard for conventions of narrative focus; travels over great distances that are told and retold multiple times in different textual registers) makes the Suwa stories rather puzzling and difficult to read; I argue, however, that
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it is precisely this seeming opacity that is the key to understanding how the text envisions a new order for the dissemination of power.

Through tropes of movement, the Suwa narratives together paint a dynamic landscape both positive and negative. Emperors and those in the upper ranks of government become doubles of human rebels and disobedient demons, who are all in motion; identity turns out to be always fluid, frequently unexpected, and often subversive. At the pinnacle of movement in the Suwa stories is the tale of a man who travels through country after country in the underground world in search of his abducted wife. Perhaps this voyage sounds familiar, as it bears a certain similarity to other adventures such as the deity Izanagi’s travels to the netherworld in early Japanese mythology, or those of Orpheus in the Greek tradition. However, the most crucial and distinguishing feature of Suwa’s version is the incessant and insistent repetitiveness with which the hero’s journey is told: not only does he cover a vast amount of distance through his travels, but his trip is related over and over in various guises by different individuals. I will argue that the sheer number of times the travel is recounted is not a sign of confused storytelling, but rather a means to an effect: the hero achieves a kind of omnipresence in multiple spaces at once by passing through each space again, and again, and again.

The Suwa narratives together represent a blueprint for a new order of power that is delineated through striking tropes of movement. It is a paradigm that focuses not on a central authority that manages the regions, but rather on an even, ambient influence present in many places simultaneously; it is also a specific situating of a type of otherness—which I call “elsewhere” in the chapter—that assists in the implementation of this power derived from ambient ubiquity. If, as I will argue in the earlier chapters of this book, the very idea of a central government whose various arms operated in harmony with each other was, in many ways, anachronistic fiction that fit the vision of “history” in later generations, then the tremendous movements of the Suwa narratives provide an alternative mode for the operation of power that is less hierarchical and seemingly more organic, perhaps vaguely botanical. A new vision of governance and influence is, of course, nonetheless still a claim to power that is reorganized, reconsolidated, and repackaged into a different guise. In the final analysis, the Suwa narratives participate in their own consolidationist project analogous to a unified vision of national authority.
Through the meditations on these four case studies, I attempt not only to reframe discourses of power in Heian and medieval Japan, but also to reenvision the nature of power in a broader sense, as I will argue in the epilogue. This book is in no way a comprehensive examination of premodern Japanese textual examples of movement; given the abundance of instances in which tropes of movement play an important role in texts, it is simply not possible to be exhaustive. Thus I have chosen four distinct textual moments from a range of eras that I believe are particularly concerned with discourses of movement and power as case studies in the exploration of this trope. These moments represent instances in which the two types of movement outlined at the beginning of this introduction—the physical movement of characters from place to place, and shifts and changes at the level of genre and literary technique—are both crucial to the narratives and their implications. In this sense, the chosen texts are not necessarily representative of their respective genres, but rather, denote marked examples in which the serendipitous coexistence of movements points particularly strongly to discourses of power; my concern lies less in a generic overview based on potential typicality than in the study of tropes of movement as a potential tool for analysis. It is my hope that these studies might inspire future investigations of this trope in other texts as well—premodern or modern, Japanese or otherwise.