LIKE THEIR COUNTERPARTS ELSEWHERE IN THE SINOSPHERE, COMPOSERS OF SINITIC POETRY IN EARLY MODERN JAPAN WERE KEENLY ATTENTIVE TO PROSODIC RULES, TONALITY, RHYME AND OTHER FEATURES CONVENTIONALLY ASSOCIATED WITH AURALITY. YET SUCH ASPECTS OF A POEM WERE USUALLY INAUDIBLE IN THE DOMINANT FORM OF ORAL PERFORMANCE PRACTICED IN JAPAN AT THE TIME: INTERPRETIVE RECITATION ALOUD BY KUNDOKU. THIS TALK EXAMINES HOW JAPANESE THEORISTS AND PRACTITIONERS OF SINITIC POETRY GRAPPELED WITH THIS CENTRAL ISSUE. WHAT DO THEIR WRITINGS TELL US ABOUT HOW EARLY MODERN JAPANESE POETS CONCEIVED OF THE LINGUISTIC STATUS OF SINITIC TEXTS?

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