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Superstitions, magic and mantic practices in the Heian period - part two

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Jolanta Tubielewicz

SUPERSTITIONS, MAGIC AND MANTIC PRACTICES IN THE HEIAN PERIOD

– Part Two

CONTENTS

III. MAGIC.....	89
1. Magic: intended aims.....	90
1.1. Preventive practices.....	91
1.2. Evocative practices.....	110
1.3. Destructive magic.....	116
2. Magic: instruments.....	121
2.1. Liturgical objects.....	121
2.2. Military equipment.....	122
2.3. Plants.....	122
2.4. Specifically magic objects.....	123
2.5. Parts of the human body.....	124
2.6. Words.....	134
3. Magic: human agents.....	125
IV. M A N T I C PRACTICES.....	138
1. Divination proper.....	139
1.1. Clairvoyance.....	139
1.2. Physiognomy.....	141
1.3. Astrology and horoscopy.....	142
1.4. Divination by the Book of Change.....	144
1.5. Mixed and miscellaneous mantic practices.....	145
2. Interpretation of dreams and omens.....	148
2.1. Dreams.....	148
2.2. Omens.....	155
V. CONCLUSIONS.....	159

The bibliographic data of all primary sources are given in the Bibliography. In quotations within the text in case of diaries and chronicles only the dates of entries are given. In case of tales in such collections as the *Reiki* or *Konjaku monogatari*, the number of the scroll is given in Roman numerals followed by the number of the tale in Arabic numerals. It follows the custom prevailing in Japanese editions.

The names of the governmental organs are written with capital letters, whereas the titles of officials – with small letters. But whenever a title forms the second component of a cognomen (e.g. Sei Shōnagon, Izumi Shikibu), it is written with a capital letter.

If not stated otherwise, all translations within the text are by the present author.

III. MAGIC

All magic actions have as their purpose the desire to exert an influence on the course of events by occult control of spirits or of nature. They must be distinguished from actions of religious character, although they often show superficial similarities to each other. The basic difference lies in the rationale and the intention behind an act. If people make offerings and humbly pray for rain or to ward off pestilence, then they perform ritual religious acts. If people try to ward off the devil by chasing or destroying it, then they perform an act of magic. In the first instance people put themselves in the position of supplicants inferior to the powers they invoke. In the second case they believe in their ability to control supernatural powers and they act as masters of the situation.

All magic acts were based on pragmatic premises. They constituted primitive forms of human endeavour to control the world. The intention behind them could have been constructive, destructive or preventive, but their intended results were always useful from the point of view of the perpetrator. To ensure longevity, health and wealth for oneself or to kill an enemy – was useful and practical if it could have been obtained by simple acts of magic. At the basis of magic practices there were various mistaken ideas on relations between objects, human beings, and supernatural powers, and there was a strong belief that man could use these relations and turn them to his own benefit. Among the illusions and mistaken ideas was the conviction that human thoughts and intentions could have special power (creative or destructive). This conviction often decided whether some action was rational in itself or if it was an irrational, magic one. If a man washed his body with the simple intention of cleaning himself, then his bath was a rational action. But if the same man stood under the shower of a waterfall in order to take away spiritual dirt or a disease, then his action was irrational. If a lady rubbed herself with petals of a flower with the intention of saturating her body with a nice smell, then her action was completely rational. But if she rubbed herself with the same petals in order to ensure longevity or health, then she was acting magically.

Magic can be examined in various aspects and for different purposes. From our point of view the most important purpose is in finding the role that magic played in Heian society. It is not quite simple because many magic practices were kept secret and were not recorded, and even if they were, very often a detailed description is lacking. In some practices we can only guess their magic character as it was not explained in the sources what intention the practices had.

We would like to present magic of the Heian period in three aspects: 1) magic practices from the point of view of their intended aim; 2) instruments of magic practices; 3) people performing acts of magic. As there does not exist a generally accepted terminology we feel free to introduce such terms as seen most adequate.

1. Magic: intended aims

It has already been stated that every magic action has as its purpose some kind of profit from the point of view of the person employing it. The profit may be expected in the form of evoking some positive results, directly profitable for the person concerned and not overstepping the limits of common decency and moral code of the society. On the other hand, the profit may be expected in a form harmful or destructive for a personal or public enemy. In such a case the result of a magic action must be negative from the point of view of at least one person, the person who is not the agent but the object of a magic action. If the person is a public enemy, then destroying him (or her) may be even considered positive within the limits of the moral code. But then the intended aim is not constructive, in fact, it is clearly destructive although useful from the point of view of the society.

In Japan of the Heian period both kinds of magic – constructive and destructive – were employed in private as well as in public interest. But, quite obviously, destructive magic in private interest had a secret life, not easily revealed and rarely spoken about. Accordingly, there are not so many recorded incidents of this kind. Constructive magic, on the other hand, was employed openly and many of its forms were included into the annual calendar of the court or particular shrines. From those sources may arise the striking disparity between the documentation of both kinds. Another disproportion may be seen within the category of constructive magic where the group of evocative practices is incomparably smaller than the group of preventive practices. At first sight it may seem that the Japanese of the Heian period were much more concerned with avoiding evil than with creating good.

As may be evident from the above written remarks, we propose to divide magic practices into two categories, “constructive” and “destructive”, and further on, within the “constructive” category, to subdivide the practices into “evocative” and “preventive” groups. As the last group is the biggest one, we shall begin our review with it.

1.1. Preventive practices

Preventive practices have as their aim warding off or avoiding evil which revealed itself in the multifarious forms of demons, *mononoke*, malicious influence, diseases, etc. The practices were based on a belief that it was possible to: 1) exonerate evil spirits; 2) frighten them away; 3) deceive them; 4) bribe them; 5) bar the way to them; or 6) avoid any contact with them. These each have to be described separately.

1.1.1. Exoneration of evil spirits

The methods applied in purifying or exonerating people from evil belonged to the mixed tradition of Shintō, Buddhism and Ommyōdō. Some of the methods were purely Shintoist or purely Buddhist, while others were syncretic. The oldest Japanese ceremony called *ōharae* (great purification) was performed twice a year (on the last days of the 6th and of the 12th moons) and its purpose was to purify the whole nation of all impurities (*kegare*) and sins (*tsumi*). It was a very solemn ceremony performed by Shintoist priests over a river or a stream. The central ceremony was held in the capital on the shore of the Kamogawa. The impurities to be washed away were symbolized in shapes of paper human figures, which were called *hitokata* (human shape) or *katashiro* (shape substitute). The *hitokata* were rubbed over the body and then floated on the river. By this action, it was believed, all the impurities were transferred¹ to the *hitokata* and washed away. Much more elaborate figures called *agamono* – offerings of atonement were prepared for the imperial family. These were big dolls of exactly the size of the Emperor, the Empress and the Crown Prince. Taking measurements, making and dressing the dolls became known as *yoori* – “breaking between joints” because measuring the Emperor and his family was executed by breaking a bamboo stick to a suitable length. The ceremony of *ōharae* is well documented in the whole of Heian literature. The *yoori* is described by Sei Shōnagon².

Besides *ōharae*, which was held regularly in half-yearly intervals, there were other forms of preventive purification derived from Shintō ritual and connected with the dynastic cult. After coming to the throne every new Emperor had to perform a grand ceremony called *daijōe* or *daijōsai* (great festival of thanksgiving). For the duration of every reign two unmarried imperial princesses were chosen to the offices of high priestess of the Ise shrine (*saigū*), and high priestess of the Kamo shrine (*saiin*). Before the *daijōe* the Emperor and both priestesses were subjected

¹ Rubbed in, hence the name for this kind of *hitokata* was *nademono* – a thing for rubbing.

² *Makura no sōshi* 1958:209.

to prolonged ceremonies of purification (*ōharae*). Furthermore, the priestesses were purified for a year before taking their respective offices in Ise and Kamo. The *saigū* was fasting and praying in a special temporary palace (No no miya – Palace in the fields) at Sagano, the *saiin* at Murasakino.

Another kind of *harae* reserved for the aristocracy was called *nanasebarai* (purification of seven rapids). This was performed by means of *nademono* dolls with the Emperor represented by seven deputies. The *nanasebarai* is mentioned in the *Genji monogatari*, *Ochikubo monogatari* and *Kagerō nikki*.

There were also many other kinds of “syncretic” *harae/gejo* performed by *ommyōji*. Some of them were regular, others sporadic, performed in case of a special need. One of the regular *harae* was held on the first day of the snake in the 3rd moon. Sei Shōnagon classified this ceremony as “a thing with strong appeal” (*kokoro yuku mono*) if the officiating “*ommyōji* had a fluent tongue and going to the river beach performed the rite of exoneration from evil influence” (*mono yoku iu ommyōji shite, kawara ni idete, zuso no harae shitaru*³). This *zuso* (or *juso*, or *suso*) *no harae* was of a special kind. It was intended as a counteraction against any eventual damages ensuing from curses. It was performed on the river-bank and consisted of “washing away” evil influence (Shintoist element) and of reciting spells (*zuso* – Ommyōdō element). Such a kind of *harae* was very popular, it seems, as there are many mentions of it throughout the literature of the period. In the *Midō kampaku ki* there are scores of entries concerning *harae (gejo)*. Michinaga himself was possibly oversensitive, but whenever something out of the ordinary happened, he summoned *ommyōji* (Kamo Kōei, Abe Seimei, and others) and ordered rites of exoneration. He had many enemies and could easily suspect that they would wish him harm. In his opinion it was prudent to be on alert and he did not spare any expenses in order to defend himself – after the services he gave handsome allowances to the *ommyōji*.

To a different category of exoneration belonged various Buddhist rites. While religious, they were very important in the magic sense. There were also regular and sporadic ones. To the regular ceremonies belonged *mizuho (misuho)* performed from the 8th day of the 1st moon for seven days. The ceremony consisted of reading sacred scriptures at one, two, three, five, seven or more altars. Depending on the intention there were different kinds of scriptures to be read: *sokusai* – exonerating evil, *zōyaku* – bringing luck, *keiai* – evoking love⁴, *chōbuku (chōfu)* – expelling evil and others. According to the occasion the rites could be ordered in more or less elaborate forms, and depending on need, the choice of scriptures could differ. In any case, regular or sporadic reading of scriptures was based on a strong belief in the spiritual power of holy words, and treated, in fact, as magic spells.

³ Ibid., 73.

⁴ *Zōyaku* and *keiai* should be properly included into the evocative practices.

Another form of purifying oneself was executed by fasting (*sōjin*). For the Buddhist clergy there were designated six days in every month, but in the 1st, 5th and 9th moons the periods of fasting were longer. For laymen there were no obligatory periods of abstinence, but they could undertake fasting if they wished to do penance for some sins. During the period of abstinence the people had to avoid any contact with ritually impure objects or persons and had to avoid any actions which would defile them physically or ritually⁵.

1.1.2. Frightening away evil spirits

This group of practices is the biggest one. Here belong highly variegated methods ranging from the simplest acts of shouting to the most complicated ceremonies demanding services of trained specialists. The Japanese demons had their idiosyncrasies and people profited from the knowledge of those weak points in the demons' armour. The demons were supposed to be afraid of loud noise, weapons (swords, bows, spears), spells and incantations, of a Chinese deity called Shōki, and of some objects so repulsive to them, that they would escape from the vicinity of the repulsive things.

A regular annual ceremony was held at the court on the last day of a year. The ceremony was called *tsuina* (*nayarai*, *oniyarai*) – expelling demons. The first time it was performed successfully was during a pestilence in 706, and later on it became one of the regular court ceremonies (*nenjū gyōji*). The Emperor made his appearance in the Shishinden pavilion where all the ministers and other secular and priestly dignitaries were present. The chief of the Ōtoneri bureau acted as the *hōsōji* (or *hōsōshi*) – the master of ceremonies at this particular event. He donned an impressive costume of black and red, he wore on his head a quadrangular golden headdress, and in his right hand he brandished a spear (*hoko*), in his left – a shield (*tate*). Followed by twenty pages he strutted into the garden beating the shield with the spear. The pages made awesome noise hitting their drums. Other officials twanged bowstrings and shot arrows from special bows made of peach-wood and arrows made of rush. The *hōsōshi* drove away devils shouting with all his might. Meanwhile masters of Ommyōdō recited spells (*zumon* or *jumon*) against the demons.

In this very uproarious ceremony several methods hateful to demons were used: shouting, display of weapons, and spells. The peach-wood and rush were especially repulsive to demons on account of unpleasant associations. The Japanese participants probably did not know the source of the demons' abhorrence. The belief came to Japan from China at the time when even the Chinese themselves had already

⁵ The *sōjin* practices were also employed by ascetics as preparatory for achieving a supernatural power.

forgotten the original source of it. The legend explaining it was written down in the 1st century in the *Lunheng* (Doctrines Evaluated) by Wang Ch'ung. The pertinent part reads as follows: "In the midst of the eastern sea there is the Tu-so (Crossing the New Year) Mountain, on which there is an enormous peach tree, which twists and coils its way over a distance of three thousand *li*. Between its branches, on the north-east, there is what is called the Gate of Demons (*kuei men*), in and out of which pass myriad demons. Above, there are two divine beings, one called Shen Shu, the other Yü Lü. They watch and control the myriad demons, and those that are evil and harmful they seize with rush ropes and feed to tigers"⁶. The peach-wood and rush were used in Japan, as well as in China, for making objects of magic use (e.g. peach-wood bows and rush arrows, peach-wood talismans, rush brooms – for expelling demons). The same Chinese legend explains the Japanese custom of displaying a tiger's head (artificial, of course) during the ceremony of the first bath (*oyudono no gishiki*). There are detailed descriptions of the ceremony in the diary of lady Murasaki, in the *Eiga monogatari* and *Midō kampaku ki*. When the infant was put into the bathtub, one lady in attendance kept a sword in front of him, another – a tiger's head. They held the objects in such a way that they were reflected in the water. Meanwhile young lords scattered rice (which was also repulsive to demons) and twenty men of the imperial guard twanged the bowstrings. Buddhist monks recited *darani*. The recitation was accompanied by magic gestures (*in, inzō, inshō mudra*)⁷.

The pictures of the above mentioned Shōki were considered to be strong apotropaic means repulsive to demons. In the Emperor's living quarters, in the chamber called Oninoma (devil's chamber) of the Seiryōden pavilion there was a picture with an image of Shōki in the act of killing a demon. There are various versions of the Shōki legend (which is also of Chinese origin). We shall quote one of them after de Groot. "The Emperor Ming, while suffering from fever, was sleeping in the daytime, and dreamed that a tiny spectre snatched his gold embroidered smelling satchel and his flute of jade. The Emperor asked it who it was. 'I am Hi-hao', it said; 'I can ruin people, and convert their pleasures into sorrows'. The Emperor flew into a passion and was on the point of calling his warriors, when his eye fell upon a large spectre with a hat, a deep blue gown, a girdle and court boots, which seized the spectre, plucked out its eyes, tore it to pieces, and devoured it. 'Who are you?' asked the Emperor; and the answer was: 'I am a literary graduate of the highest rank from Tsung-nan, named Chung-khwei; in the Wu teh period (618–627) I was not promoted to the rank which I deserved, and therefore committed suicide by knocking my head against the stone steps; I then received from the emperor a green gown to wear in the grave, and therefore in gratitude swore that I would thenceforth

⁶ Quoted after Bodde 1975:128.

⁷ *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* 1958:452 and others.

remove from the emperors illness and evil caused by Hi-hao'. On these words the emperor awoke from his dream and his disease was cured"⁸.

De Groot states further on that "the greatness of his fame is displayed by the fact that it has found its way into Japan, where to this day he has, under the corrupted name of Shoki (Shōki), held a position in life and custom which perhaps exceeds in importance his role in China itself. In Japan his images are far from having lost in all respects the features of the Chinese prototype; they represent him, indeed, as kicking spectres with his foot, sabring them, dragging them by their hair, throttling or devouring them, or dealing with them in yet other cruel and pitiless fashions such as imagination may suggest"⁹.

Twanging the bow-strings (*tsuruuchi*, *meigen*, *yuminarashi*) served the purpose of frightening away demons. It was performed on special occasions (such as confinement, first bath, illness), but also daily in the palace. Every night at the hour of the boar (between ten and midnight) there was a roll call of courtiers and a parade of imperial guards. It was accompanied by twanging the bow-strings. The noise was believed to drive away all the devils that might have been lurking in the vicinity of the imperial private quarters. During a thunderstorm a similar parade of imperial guards called *kannari no jin* (guards of the thunder) was held in front of the Seiryōden and Shishinden pavilions.

Darani may be translated as recitations of sutras. They were recited in their original language – Sanskrit, which must have been especially moving to listeners who did not understand one word of the text. As the sutras were read not for the educational purposes but only as magic formulae, it did not matter whether anybody understood them. Sometimes translated fragments (*sōji*) were read, too. The *darani* and *sōji* recitations were treated very often also as curative spells. This practice was based on simple logic – if the mystic power of the recitation expels the evil spirit from the sick person then the person automatically will return to normal condition. Other kinds of curative spells were called *kaji* and *kitō*. The power of spells was reinforced by magic gestures called in (*inzō*, *inshō*, *mudras*). For the gestures both hands were used with fingers bent into various figures.

An episode in the *Genji monogatari* describes the treatment of Genji (for ague) by a holy man on the Kitayama mountain (the holy man held a rank of *daitoko*). He was famous for his proficiency in magic. His skill was not limited to curative spells only, but he also practiced the *gengata* (*gengata wo okonai...*) – a kind of sorcery intended for gaining wordly profits. At the beginning of Genji's treatment the *daitoko* wrote out talismans (*gofu*) and administered them (the text has the word *sukasu* to "cause drinking"; it seems that Genji had to swallow the *gofu*). Then

⁸ de Groot 1910:1176.

⁹ Ibid., 1180.

the *daitoko* read some spells (*kaji*)¹⁰. The next night the *daitoko* sent Genji off for a walk, staying himself in his hermitage in order to work quietly on more powerful spells because a *mononoke* had appeared in addition to Genji's ague¹¹. Few days later Genji was cured, but the *daitoko*, for a good measure, applied the guardian spell (*goshin*) which consisted of recitation of *darani* and making magic gestures. He also presented the patient with a mace (*toko*) as a talisman¹².

Arthur Waley in the excellent though fairly free translation of the *Genji monogatari* gives the following commentary on the guardian spell. "The ministrant holds the palms of his hands together with middle finger touching and extended, first fingers separated and bent, tips of thumbs bunched together, and third fingers in line with middle fingers so as to be invisible from in front. With hands in this sacred pose (*mudra*) he touches the worshipper on forehead, left and right shoulder, heart and throat. At each contact he utters the spell: ON BASARA GONJI HARAJUBATA SOHAKA which is corrupt Sanskrit and means: 'I invoke thee, thou diamond-fiery very majestic star'. The deity here invoked is Vairocana, favourite Buddha of the Mystic Sect"¹³. Waley does not, unfortunately, give the source of his explanation.

In the second chapter of this work (superstitions) there were given several examples of warding off evil with swords and bows. There was Tokihira frightening away Michizane's *mononoke* appearing in the form of thunder. There was Kaneie ordering "something invisible" to roll up the lattice on the window. There was unfortunate Narihira standing with his bow all night scaring away thunder. There was also Tadahira who stayed at night in the palace. All of a sudden he perceived the presence of an evil spirit behind the Emperor's seat in the Shōshinden pavilion. The spirit caught Tadahira's sword by the handle. Tadahira groped along the handle and his hand found another hand – hairy, with long sharp claws. He swiftly drew his sword and scared the devil away¹⁴.

There are many similar stories showing different sorts of demons in deadly fright of swords and bows. It seems that only the *ikisudama* of lady Rokujō was not frightened by Genji's performance with a sword. But perhaps she had already finished doing mischief when Genji tried to expel her with his weapon. Poor Yūgao had already been in agony.

The rite of scattering rice was already mentioned twice; on the occasion of the first bath ceremony, and in the story from *Konjaku monogatari* about the nurse expelling small riders from the haunted chamber. As the conclusion of the story it is told that with children around, it should be customary to perform *uchimaki* (rice scattering). That rice or other grain scattering (*mamemaki*) was thought a strong

¹⁰ *Genji monogatari* 1974–75:I,178.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹² *Ibid.*, 196.

¹³ Waley 1960:90, footnote 1.

¹⁴ *Ōkagami* 1967:84.

apotropaic measure is evident from many mentions of the custom in novels as well as in diaries. In the *Genji monogatari* there is the episode of Yūgiri returning home late at night and finding his wife in great agitation over their sick baby. He takes then a handful of rice and scatters it casually over the floor. Quoting this fragment Morris remarks: “Yūgiri scatters the rice to drive away evil spirits, much as we might spray a room with disinfectant”¹⁵.

The comparison of the role of magic apotropaion to the role of modern disinfectant seems to be very suitable. It should also be noted, however, that Yūgiri performing the customary action of rice scattering expressed his amusement at the wife’s exaggerated belief in devilish power. Here again we can see lady Murasaki’s quiet irony in regard to supernatural powers.

Sei Shōnagon sometimes had also lapses into irony. Her description of a woman working over a sick child is very ironical, indeed. The woman in question was a quack of native origin and tradition. She worked her “miracles” using Shintoist *gohei* (strips of paper serving as offerings) and mumbling spells¹⁶. Possibly Sei Shōnagon did not like the woman or believed shamanic practices of Shintoist tradition too naive in comparison to more intricate Buddhist services. Anyhow, she mentions several times, and even describes in detail, Buddhist practitioners at work, being then quite serious about them. There is, for example, a long description of expelling a *mononoke* from a sick person.

A monk gorgeously dressed brought with him a young girl serving as a medium (*yorimashi*). The monk started reciting *darani* and soon afterwards the girl began to tremble and lose consciousness. She sobbed and tossed around feverishly. To everybody present, it became obvious that her behaviour reflected the torment of the *mononoke* relentlessly driven away by the power of *darani*. At last the monk subdued the *mononoke* completely and forced it to humble apology. Then he stopped his ministrations. The *yorimashi* awoke from her trance. Her hair and dress were disheveled, her face red and tear stained. She felt ashamed of her appearance and wanted to escape, hiding her face in her long hair. But the monk stopped her and for some time recited *kaji*. Eventually, the sick person became a little better, but the monk stated that the *mononoke* belonged to a very obstinate kind and it would be necessary to be cautious for some time¹⁷.

In this case the *mononoke* was finally driven away. But it happened sometimes that all the ministrations were to no avail. In another fragment Sei Shōnagon gives a description of a monk’s failure. There came an exorcist (*genza, genja*) and very haughtily began his preparations. He also brought a *yorimashi* with him. He handed over his mace (*toko, tokko*) and rosary (*zuzu, juzu*) to the *yorimashi* and started

¹⁵ Morris 1964:135, footnote 3.

¹⁶ *Makura no sōshi* 1958:272.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 327–8.

summoning a guardian demon (*gohō*), who should enter the sick person's body and inform the monk about the reason of the illness. Then the monk would know what spells were the most proper. But in this case the demon refused to appear and the exorcism ended in failure¹⁸.

A ceremony of sacred readings to Five Great Venerable (*Go daisō no mizuhō*) was ordered during national calamities (such as flood, famine, pestilence) if considered to have been caused by vengeful spirits and also with the intention of expelling demons at such occasions as the Empress' confinement or installation of the Crown Prince. Five altars were made for the ceremony and on each of them was placed an image of one of the Five Great Venerables: in the centre Fudō myōō, with Gosanze myōō, Gunjari yasha, Daitoku myōō and Kongō yasha on the east, south, west and northern altars respectively. They were deities of the esoteric Shingon pantheon, and their function was to scare away all the enemies of Buddhism. Hence, their representations in painting and sculpture show them as very fierce figures, and hence their role in the rites intended for ejecting all possible demons.

There is a very impressive description of the Godaisō in the *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* on the occasion of Empress Akiko's confinement. The Empress was a daughter of Michinaga, the most powerful dignitary, then at the peak of his career. He did not spare any effort or expense in order to secure a safe child-birth for his daughter. The Godaisō ceremony was magnificent, but that was not all. There were also *fudan no midōkyō* performed. It was the constant reading of scriptures for day and night. Besides, many high dignitaries of Buddhist church were invited. They shouted and screamed till their voices grew hoarse, all in order to expel demons. Their voices – remarks the authoress – must have reached to all the Buddhas of past, present and future worlds. Side by side with the monks there prayed and recited spells various shamans and *ommyōji* who came in great crowds. Lady Murasaki again remarks ironically that it had been impossible for the eight millions of Shintoist deities not to hear their incantations. Messengers were running all night to temples with orders to read sutras. Rice in the Empress' chamber was scattered in such a quantity that it looked as if snow had fallen¹⁹.

In case of a confinement all actions were intended as preventives against eventual demons. In case of the *goryōe* in 863 the demons had already been very much in evidence. It was decided then that the vengeful spirits causing national calamities belonged to six persons: Sudō tennō (Sawara), Iyo shinnō, Fujiwara fujin, Fujiwara Nakatada, Tachibana Hayanari and Fumimuro Miyatamaro. As it has already been mentioned, after that first ceremony performed in the Shinsen'en, *goryōe* came to be celebrated annually in various shrines. The central ceremony sponsored by the imperial house was held on the 14th day of the 6th moon in the Yasaka jinja

¹⁸ Ibid., 66.

¹⁹ *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* 1958:447–51.

(Gion)²⁰. The annual ceremonies were of a preventive character, they were not addressed to any particular spirit, but were intended to pacify vengeful spirits in general. They became more and more elaborate. There were horse races and horse parades, sacred dances and processions with garlanded spears (*hoko*). In time, the ceremonies changed into occasions for merry-making and for display of magnificent decorations. They came to be considered festivities in honour of Susanoo, the deity enshrined at Yasaka, and the primary intention has been lost. But the initial offerings and display of the *hoko* and other military utensils point out to the intention of frightening off vengeful spirits. The spears were not offered to the spirits for their amusement²¹.

There were yet other simpler means of guarding oneself against bad influence. Various kinds of spells (*shu* or *ju*, *jumon*, etc.) were certainly effective, but they were reserved mostly for specialists. Ordinary people called experts in emergency only, while in everyday life they protected themselves with amulets. The amulets were of various kinds. There were, for example, *amagatsu* – little dolls made of paper in the shape of a child, and dressed in children's costumes. The *amagatsu* were put somewhere near to the baby soon after its birth, and later on were kept under the pillow, sometimes as long as 30 years. Other dolls (*hitokata*) were used also for various purposes, depending on the intention of the owner. The most popular were *gofu* distributed by Shingon priests. The *gofu* could be made of paper or strips of wood. Some spells were written on them against particular evils. They were carried on the body or swallowed (like in the case of Genji).

Still another kind of apotropaion was originally reserved for the Emperor and his family, but later on its popularity spread among the aristocracy. On the 1st day of the hare of the 1st moon the Emperor, his primary consort and the heir apparent were presented with sticks of seven trees cut to the length of 5 *shaku* 3 *sun* (*uzue* – hare sticks). The sticks (among them was that of peach tree) were believed to protect against demons. It seems that the ceremony was performed for the first time in 688²² when empress Jitō was presented with an *uzue* by the officials of Daigakuryō. Since then it became an annual event. On the same day as *uzue*, there were also given to the Emperor hare mallets (*uzuchi*) prepared by exorcists of the Tendai and Shingon sects. The wands were made of wood and ornamented with tassels. Similar sticks and mallets were obtained by courtiers, and their mansions were decorated with them.

²⁰ Out of these ancient *goryōe* ceremonies has developed the most gorgeous of Japanese festivals – the Gion *matsuri*.

²¹ It is a matter for discussion if spears and arrows used for such and similar occasions were treated simply as weapons able to kill demons. It does not seem impossible that they were used in their role of phallic symbols, and as such were believed to ward off all dark powers threatening life.

²² Cf. Kazumori 1935:232.

In today's Japan one may see crowds of people buying in every temple New Year's tasseled mallets (made of paper). Even now they are believed to keep away evil and bring good luck to Japanese homes.

1.1.3. Deceiving evil spirits

It was believed possible to deceive evil spirits with certain tricks. Let us return once more to the impressive description of Empress Akiko's confinement. Besides all the rites mentioned above, there was applied a trick for leading astray any likely *mononoke* or other demons who would wish to do harm to the Empress or the infant. On the west side of the Empress' courtains of state, ladies were placed who acted as "substitutes" (*omononoke utsuritaru hitobito* – "women for transmitting *mononoke* on"). They had to pretend that they were in child-birth. At the side of each of them there was an exorcist (*genza*) shouting as loudly as if he protected a woman truly giving birth to a baby. The ladies were expected to take on themselves every evil spirit who otherwise might endanger the Empress' confinement.

After the Empress happily gave birth to a boy it came out that, in fact, there had been a danger from a *mononoke*. One of the exorcists (*azari* Chisō) assigned to a lady substitute became possessed and it was necessary to take care of him. Another exorcist, *azari* Nenkaku, had to expel the *mononoke* from Chisō. But the ladies were unharmed and they felt disappointed.

Other specialists were also present: *yorimashi*, and *genza* called *ogihito*. They did not act as substitutes, but their function served the same ultimate purpose: to protect the Empress and the infant. They did it by inviting *mononoke* to enter into themselves. During the afterbirth lady Murasaki heard lamenting voices of *mononoke* uttered by possessed *yorimashi*.

In the case of the Empress or other lady of high rank it was usual to employ substitutes from among the ladies in attendance. But in the families of lower ranks it was impossible, even if the fear of *mononoke* was as strong as in the palace or aristocratic mansions. The poorer families had to take recourse in artificial substitutes, e.g., in the form of *hitokata* dolls.

1.1.4. Bribing evil spirits

The simplest forms of bribe were offerings to deities and demons. But it should be distinguished between an offering as a bribe and an offering as an expression of reverence or gratitude. The second category belongs to religion, while the first one to magic. Here the intention becomes the decisive factor.

In the story about two girls of the same name, Nunoshiki, there were mentioned offerings to a deity of disease, and an attempt at bribing the devil who came for the girl from Yamada. The devil was eager to be bribed, but, unfortunately for the girl, king Emma wrecked the devil's prospects. The story is summed up in two conclusions: it is better not to hurry with the cremation of a corpse; and second, it is useful to prepare offerings near an ill person as the devils might possibly be open to bribery.

In another story the devils were successfully bribed. A man from Nara, Tachibana Iwashima, borrowed some money from the Daianji temple. He went to Echizen where he made a good business. While returning back to Nara he fell ill. Feeling very poorly he hastened on his journey. One day he became aware that three unknown men were following him. After some time the men caught up with him and they introduced themselves as devils sent by Emma to arrest Iwashima's soul. As they had followed Iwashima over a big stretch of the country, they were tired and hungry. Iwashima gave them food from his travelling supplies and invited them to his home in Nara. There he made a feast and asked the devils to spare his life. "Nothing doing" – said the devils – "unless you find a substitute". Iwashima did find a substitute – an old man from the nearby shrine. The devils grabbed the man. Before parting with Iwashima they asked him for sutras to be read for their sake. Iwashima consented gladly and ordered the sutras in the Daianji temple. Three days later the devils came again, this time to express their gratitude. Iwashima lived to be ninety²³.

Offerings as a method of bribe were available for everybody. Other methods were at the Emperor's disposal only. As it has already been mentioned, vengeful spirits were pacified by means of *goryōe*, *harae*, etc. If the spirits were especially obstinate and malicious they were given ranks and even – like Michizane – deified, or – like prince Sawara – nominated posthumously to the highest dignity of Emperor. The deities were not always satisfied with their ranks. In the *Nihon kiryaku* there are many entries concerning an advancement in rank of one or another deity. There is, for example, an entry under the date of the 14th day of the 10th moon of 987 stating that the gods Sumifurigami and Hayabusagami of the Higashi Sanjō mansion were given the lower fourth rank of the second grade. This short entry may be associated with the story in the *Eiga monogatari* about the illness of ex-Empress Akiko (Senshi). She suffered because she had abscesses on her body which, at first, were thought a result of some *mononoke's* activity. The abscesses burst and everybody concerned felt relieved. But it soon appeared that the *mononoke* still exerted its malicious influence. Not only did not the ex-Empress return to her normal condition, but the *mononoke* got hold of four or five other people. It was decided then that perhaps the illness was caused by a curse (*tatari*) of domestic gods. Eventually the gods, Sumifuri and Hayabusa, were given ranks²⁴.

²³ *Nihon reiiki* 1975:II,24; *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XX,19.

²⁴ *Eiga monogatari* 1964:I,228.

The deities were probably very obstinate and exacting ones as there are other entries In the *Nihon kiriyaku*: on the 5th day of the 4th moon of 1006, the deities' rank was raised to the upper second, and on the 4th day of the 1st moon of 1150 it was raised again, this time to the highest first rank.

The reasons behind deities' demands could be of various kinds. It is difficult to ascertain what and to what kind of actions prompted Sumifuri and Hayabusa in 1006 and 1150. But in the case of another god, Munakata myōjin, the reason is clearly explained in the *Ōkagami*. The god's abode was at Kande kōji street, south of Kōichijō avenue. At Kōichijō was also the residence of Fujiwara Tadahira. Munakata myōjin was obviously jealous of his powerful neighbour and revealed his resentment at having a lower rank than Tadahira. The god's words were communicated to Tadahira who arranged the rank of Munakata to be raised²⁵.

The devils of hell were bribed with offerings of food, the deities of Japanese derivation were given ranks. It may strike one as being symptomatic of deeply rooted trends in Japanese society. Making *gochisō* ("entertainment") for somebody up to this day is an elegantly camouflaged bribe. Ranks in the rigidly stratified Heian society were most earnestly coveted symbols of social status, and this trend has not disappeared up to the present day, although the principle of stratification has changed.

1.1.5. Barring the way to evil spirits

Here we would like to recall the story of Suzaku tennō who had to stay in a closed room behind his curtains of state for three years. In this manner he was believed to be cut off from access of the Kitano deity (Michizane). In Sei Shōnagon's report on the demon appearing in the main room, it is said that the Empress changed her chamber and in the new one a screen was put along the southern verandah. In this case the screen was probably intended as a barrier against demons, as it was believed that the southeastern direction was the most dangerous. Demons often came from there.

In the story from *Konjaku monogatari* about the arrival of a demon foreseen by the *ommyōji*, the people concerned prepared themselves by closing all doors and windows. They protected their house like against a thief, which was a mistake on their part, as the demon entered through the chimney. It seems that in later times people became more careful and remembered about closing all openings like chimneys and even keyholes. In the Heian period the method of barring the way to evil spirits was the most primitive one and often depended simply on closing doors and windows, and exposing outside some object repulsive to demons (e.g. an object

²⁵ *Ōkagami* 1967:84.

made of peach-wood, a picture of Shōki, a picture of some terrible creatures, etc.). It concerns, certainly, mostly ordinary people, not skilled in magic of higher grade. The specialists from the *ommyōji* ranks (or other magicians) had at their disposal much more sophisticated methods. They could shut themselves off from demons by becoming invisible.

One day Abe Seimei followed the carriage of his master in magic, Kama Tadayuki. The latter, lulled by the monotonous rhythm of oxen's steps, dozed off sitting inside. All of a sudden, Seimei saw demons gathering in front with the intention of attacking sleeping Tadayuki. Seimei woke up his master, who at once recited proper spells and became invisible. The demons were bewildered, one may suppose²⁶.

The drawing of a “magic circle”, so popular among various Slavic tribes²⁷, can also be met in Japan. The circle shut off the person standing within it from any evil spirits. The “drawing” could be executed not necessarily by actually making a circle on the ground with some instrument. It was sufficient for preventive purposes to walk around a place holding something repulsive to evil spirits or reciting spells. The place in this manner encircled with spells formed a zone invisible to evil spirits. As a good illustration of the point may serve yet another story from the *Konjaku monogatari*.

After Montoku tennō's death a group of officials was delegated to find a proper place for the imperial mausoleum. As the chief of the expedition was chosen Abe Yasuhito, and as an adviser – a very learned *ommyōji*, Shigeoka Kawahito. On their way back from the country Kawahito, displaying signs of great anxiety, informed the chief that they had made a grave mistake and they encroached upon land of the *tsuchi no kami* god²⁸ (the god, called also Tokujin, led a quite nomadic kind of life; it stayed in spring inside a hearth, in summer – in the gate of a residence, in autumn – inside a well, and in winter – in a garden. It was a mischievous deity and did not like to be annoyed by people).

In order to sound the god's intentions both gentlemen stayed for the night in the fields. Kawahito made many rounds murmuring spells and thus encircled the place, where they were to sit. Deep at night the god came with great uproar, obviously in a very bad mood. He wanted to find the people but he could not, because they were invisible to him, thanks to the circle.

After the return to the capital, both gentlemen met in a temple, where Kawahito recited spells while Yasuhito performed the *sammitsu* (“three mysteries”: of the body, mouth and mind); with his hands he made *mudra* figures, with his mouth he invoked magic formulae, with his mind he venerated Buddha²⁹.

²⁶ *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XXIV,16.

²⁷ Moszyński 1934:II:1,322–4.

²⁸ The god of earth, or the god of the countryside.

²⁹ *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XXIV,13.

Barring the way to evil spirits by closing the house played an important role in practices connected with *monoimi*, but that will be dealt with in the paragraph on avoiding evil spirits, because in the *monoimi* practices, the emphasis was put more on passive avoidance than on the active fight against demons.

1.1.6. Avoiding evil spirits

Many stories in the *Konjaku monogatari* end with the warning against entering unknown places, or places known to be haunted. They mention favourite hovels of demons, such as: desolated houses, old chapels, places of cremation, crossroads, mountains, and houses with a corpse inside.

The majority of such places were comparatively easy to avoid. If the necessity arose to go into the mountains or to stay in a house with a dead body, then the proper preventive measures had to be taken. The situation was more complicated when evil spirits entered one's residence and caught its inhabitants unaware. There were, of course, *ommyōji* with their exoneration services, and other means of expelling the evil spirits. But sometimes all the measures appeared insufficient. People lost the battle and had to leave the battlefield. They moved from their house and went visiting somebody or, in the case of dignitaries with more than one mansion, changed one mansion for another. There were many instances of such escape from a haunted house. It was so with the ex-Empress Akiko during her illness in 987. Sumifurigami and Hayabusagami were bribed with ranks, but the ex-Empress, just in case, was transferred to another mansion designated by *ommyōji*. It was so with Kaneie, who insisted on living in his Nijō mansion although he knew it was haunted. His children begged him to leave the ill-famed house and go to a safer place, but he was obstinate. At last the *mononoke* got hold of him and he became very ill. Then he was forcibly moved to another of his residences³⁰.

There was also a superstition enforced by *ommyōji* causing people to leave their houses and seek some other place. The superstition was based on a belief in regular, cyclic movements of celestial and earthly deities (among them, the already mentioned Tokujin) who changed their abodes according to the year, season or day. It was very dangerous to stay or to move in the direction of a temporary lodging of the deities. From this belief grew out many prohibitive ritual regulations, such as e.g. a "directional taboo" (*kataimi*) and ensuing from it the necessity of changing direction (*katatagae*). If one's home was in a "bad direction" (*ashiki kata, kyōhō*) it became imperative to leave it and settle somewhere in "good direction" (*ehō, kippō, yoshiki kata*). The direction of a dangerous deity's temporary lodgings was called *katafusagari* (forbidden or blocked up direction). If one had some

³⁰ *Eiga monogatari* 1964:I,121.

important business in the *katafusagari* direction, then it was necessary to go at first in some other direction and stay at least until midnight. The place of such temporary sojourn was called *katatagaedokoro* or *tabisho*. In most cases after midnight it was possible to proceed to the required place. But there were some occasions when it was necessary to leave home even for 45 days (*yonjūgo katatagae*) because some of the deities liked to stay in one place for one full season (a year being divided into eight seasons, of 45 days each). Besides, every seasonal change was especially dangerous on account of migratory customs of the deities according to the calendar. Hence, a special density of directional taboo in those periods (*setsubun tagae, sechibun no katatagae* – seasonal change of direction). All these troublesome rules were to prevent people from encroachment upon the grounds of capricious deities. The deities did not like to be disturbed, but it seems, too, that they demanded showing them reverence above anything else, and it was possible to obtain their favour by paying respect to them in advance, i.e., by performing a *katatagae* some time before a deity's change of place³¹.

The Heian literature has plentiful mentions and descriptions concerning the custom of *katatagae*. There is no single document without it, while in some diaries the number of *katatagae* days looks strikingly numerous, for instance, in the *Kagerō nikki* there are 16 entries concerning it, and in the *Midō kampaku ki* more than 50 entries.

There were also “bad days” (*kyōjitsu*) designated by *ommyōji* when it was not necessary to leave home but, quite to the contrary, it was recommended to stay indoors and be very careful about one's behaviour. For example, a day called *kuen-ichi* was bad for meeting people and it was much better on such a day to remain home and not receive visitors. There were 3 to 14 days of that kind in every month. Another *kyōjitsu* were called *kannichi*. They were established in the consecutive moons for the days governed by the signs of following animals (Japanese Zodiac); starting from dragon in the 1st moon, through ox, dog, sheep, hare, rat, bird, horse, tiger, boar, monkey up to snake in the 12th moon. On these days *ommyōji* recommended staying at home and abstaining from various activities.

It is evident that it was just impossible to obey all such recommendations. The *kannichi* days were the same for all people, and life would have stopped if people did not leave their houses so often.

But these are not all the days of restricted activity. There were other “bad days” and also “bad months/moons” (*kyōgetsu* or *yakugetsu* – “dangerous moon”), and “bad years” (*kyōnen* or *yakunen, yakudoshi* – “dangerous years”). Among bad days were *imibi* (days of abstinence), both public and private. These were connected with

³¹ Bernard Frank in his detailed study of *kataimi* and *katatagae* puts a special emphasis on the “*katatagae* preventives”. Frank, Bernard 1958. *Kata imi et katatagae: Etude sur les Interdits de direction a l'époque Heian*. Tōkyō.

anniversaries of death. In the case of national mourning they were called *on imibi* and ought to have been observed by the whole nation. In case of the anniversary of death in a family, only the members of the family had to abstain on that day from some forbidden activities. Besides, there were strict rules concerning such simple acts as washing one's hair or cutting one's nails. It was necessary each time to consult a calendar in order to find a proper days for performing the acts. The rules were even stricter for such important occasions as marriage, the first visit of a prospective lover, the ceremony of coming of age, a journey, etc. At the court all important ceremonies were fixed long in advance after prolonged consultations with *ommyōji*. The enthronement ceremony, installation of the Crown Prince, introduction of a new consort to the Emperor, the first night, pilgrimages, etc. – everything had to be consulted with the Ommyōryō.

Judging by his diary, Michinaga kept many masters of Ommyōdō busy during his active service at the palace. There are scores of entries concerning consultations with Kamo Kōei, Abe Seimei, Abe Yoshihira, Abe Yoshimasa and others, on public as well as private matters. Other diaries (the *Shōyūki*, *Kagerō nikki*, etc.) also show how important role *ommyōji* played in everyday life.

One of the most dangerous days was considered the day of *kōshin*, i.e. the day of the sexagenary cycle which was under the Zodiac sign of the elder brother of metal (*kō*) and of the monkey (*shin*). The *kōshin* day fell on every sixtieth day. People had to stay awake all night in order to protect themselves from “three worms” (*sanshi*) which might leave their bodies and do them harm if they slept. To keep awake people arranged various entertainments and poetic contests. Thanks to that custom, many compilations of “*kōshin* poetry” and “*kōshin* stories” have survived.

There was also once in every sixty years the *kōshin* year. People had to be then very cautious all year round and not to undertake any important decisions, like marriage or journey. Besides, there were dangerous years connected with one's age. The most critical years were considered: 13, 25, 37, 49, 61, 85, and 99 years of age. In all those years it was recommended to be exceptionally cautious and to perform *harae* and order *kitō* to be recited.

When Empress Sadako was pregnant (in 1000) she felt very uneasy because she was then 25 years old, so it was her “dangerous year”. Her friends tried to console her by saying that the *yakudoshi* did not mean the danger of death. Nevertheless, everybody was troubled³². Eventually, it turned out that their anxiety was well founded because Sadako died in child-birth.

Still other prohibitive rules ensued from beliefs in inauspicious dreams and omens. Whenever one had a bad dream or something unusual happened, or if one defiled oneself by contact with something ritually impure, then it was necessary to

³² *Eiga monogatari* 1964:I,206,215.

perform abstinence called *monoimi* (abstaining from things). Bad dreams could have been warnings sent by deities and so, it was better to consult a dream-interpreter. Unusual happenings could have been signs of some *mononoke* (or other demons') activity, and it was better to consult an *ommyōji*. The most frequently employed preventive measure in such cases was *monoimi*. During a *monoimi* it was essential to stay indoors closing all the entrances and shutting lattice windows. Even the main gate was closed on such days and there was prominently displayed a *monoimi no fuda* (taboo-tag) made of willow or peach-wood with the inscription *monoimi* on it. It was forbidden to read or even receive letters and no visitor was allowed on such days. The people closed together inside a house had to refrain from eating, writing and sexual intercourse. If the time dragged on, they could read the holy scriptures and meditate. It was also advisable to have an *ommyōji* to perform rites of exoneration. The periods of abstinence and its intensity depended on the initial reason, and were determined by the consulted specialist. If one had to break a *monoimi* and ventured outdoors one was obliged to wear a *monoimi no fuda* on a head-dress or on a sleeve.

It is quite evident from the literature of the period that not everybody treated all those prohibitions seriously. Quite often *katatagae* or *monoimi* became pretexts only for avoiding unwanted contacts. For example, Kaneie many a time excused himself from visits to lady Kagerō on the pretext of *kataimi* or *monoimi*, and she did not believe his excuses. Very illuminating are also ironic remarks of Sei Shōnagon about gentlemen with *monoimi no fuda* displayed on their head-dresses and carriages, gentlemen who made pilgrimages to a temple, and then chatted merrily, laughed without restraint and stared at ladies.

Michinaga, on the other hand, seemed to treat omens very seriously. Some of the incidents causing him distress may look amusing to us, but he treated them quite in earnest and each time he consulted his occult advisers.

The abhorrence of defilement (*sokue* or *shokue*) was the Shintoist contribution to prohibitive regulations otherwise monopolized by Ommyōdō. Any contact with death or blood was causing defilement. After death or birth in the family it was necessary to perform ablutions and rites of purification. Even objects belonging to a dead person had to be purified after the period of mourning. Pregnancy was also thought about in terms of impurity, and pregnant women had to leave the palace in the fourth month of pregnancy. In case of a sudden death or somebody being injured within the palace grounds, it was obligatory to perform rites of exoneration. Sometimes it disturbed greatly the normal functioning of the court, and it excluded many courtiers from participation in their official duties. As the sample of the complexity and consequences of the problem we shall quote from the *Midō kampaku ki* some entries, taken at random, but very pertinent. The first sample comes from the first half of the year 1004 and the second from the later part of the year 1015.

The year 1004

The 27th day of the 1st moon. A dog died.

The 1st day of the 2nd moon. Michinaga did not send customary offerings to the Ōharano shrine because of defilement. (There are other entries between the two dates but no evidence of any other reason for defilement, hence, it seems, Michinaga could not send the offerings on account of the dog).

The 9th day of the 2nd moon. The ceremony of *rekken*³³ had to be postponed because one of the participants was in mourning, another one was defiled by a childbirth at home. (Here, again the defilement lasted several days at least, for the *rekken* ceremony was customarily performed on the 11th day of the 2nd moon, i.e., the ceremony was scheduled two days after the above entry).

The **15th** day of the 5th moon. The palace defiled by a child-birth.

The 18th day of the 6th moon. The day before a nurse of Michinaga's son had died in confinement. Michinaga summoned Kamo Kōei and Abe Seimei for consultation. They agreed that he must postpone his visit to the Kamo shrine. The visit was previously scheduled for the 20th day.

The 20th day of the 6th moon. Abe Seimei persuaded Michinaga not to worship a Buddhist image while in the state of defilement.

The 21st day of the 6th moon. At night Michinaga performed purification rites (*harae, gejo*).

The year 1015

The 27th day of the 7th moon. There was found in the palace grounds the severed head of a man (in Michinaga's diary the gruesome finding is located on the artificial mountain in the garden; in the *Shōyūki* it is under the bridge of the Shishinden *pavilion*). On account of that the palace became defiled. Michinaga was curious to see the head but refrained from it in fear or defiling himself³⁴.

The 28th day of the 7th moon. Because of defilement the sending of imperial envoy to the Ise shrine had to be postponed.

The 2nd day of the 8th moon. In the palace of the Empress Dowager there was found the head, one hand and one leg of a baby. It caused the state of defilement for 50 days. Again sending of the imperial envoy to Ise had to be postponed.

³³ The *rekken* ceremony, held every year, was a review of documents pertaining to officials of the Ministries of Ceremonies and of Military Affairs.

³⁴ According to the *Shōyūki*, the period of defilement was fixed for 7 days.

There are altogether more than 100 entries in the diary concerning defilement (of Michinaga personally, of other persons and within the palace). In majority of cases as the reason for it is death or confinement (of people or of dogs). Michinaga himself was in the habit of putting up a tag warning other people not to come near him, as it was considered possible “to catch” defilement like a flu or some other contagious disease. Other people put up similar tags as well. The function of the tags was limited to a warning only, while *monoimi no fuda* had an additional magic function of warding off evil (the material used points to that function, they were made of peach or willow-wood – materials repulsive to demons).

Quite a different category of methods aimed at avoiding evil included various word taboos. It was believed that some words were endowed with a supernatural power because of their meaning or because of associations they evoked. According to Kotański³⁵, the names of deities in the period of compiling *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* were so awe-inspiring that they were not used in writing, and all the names are descriptive only, while the true proper names have remained secret and not revealed. This thesis finds its corroboration in later times. In the *Kuge bunin* (the chronicle of ranks and offices at the highest level of hierarchy) the second part of Sugawara Michizane’s name has been erased. All entries concerning him between 893 and 901 read: Kan Michi. Writing only the first part of family name and pronouncing it according to the Sino-Japanese pronunciation was customary, but writing only the first part of personal name was extraordinary, and it was practiced in case of awe-inspiring names. Similar method was used by people who copied some scriptures (diaries, sutras, etc.) signed with their father’s name. The father’s name was also abbreviated to its first component³⁶.

The choice of the name for an imperial prince was a matter for grave consideration, and the name was decided upon after consultations with the Ommyōryō³⁷. The same procedure had to be followed in case of changing the name of an era (*nengo*). We mention it here, although it properly belongs to evocative magic, because the opposite was also important; by the opposite is meant giving auspicious names to children or to a year in order to invite good luck. There was also a belief that if an evil spirit possessing a person revealed its name to the *yorimashi*, then the spirit had to lose its power and was easily expelled³⁸.

³⁵ Kotański, Wiesław: *The Belief in Kotodama and Some Earlier Misinterpretations of the Kojiki*, a report prepared for the Meeting of the First International Conference of the European Association for Japanese Studies, Zurich 21–23th of Sept. 1976.

³⁶ For example, one of the copies of the *Midō kampaku ki* was signed “Michi-”, and because of that the copy has been believed to have been written by Michinaga’s son.

³⁷ In the present day Japan there still persists a strong belief in the supernatural power of personal names. It often happens that people change their names after a grave illness or some misfortune. There are diviners who make their living by advising people what names are the most proper for them or their children, and there are books published for the same purpose.

³⁸ Ikeda 1974:124. In China the same belief was strongly pronounced: “...the Chinese of ancient times were dominated by the notion that beings are intimately associated with their names, so that

The high priestess of Ise had to abstain from words connected with Buddhism, and of words associated with ritual impurity. In holy precincts of her temporary court (No no miya) and, of course, in Ise jingu many words were forbidden (*imikotoba*) and other words were used instead. For example the Buddha was called “the child of the centre” (*nakago*), sutras were called “coloured paper” (*somegami*), Buddhist monks and nuns, who were shaven, were called “long-haired” (*kaminaga*); instead of *shinu* – to die, the word *naoru* – recover, was used; instead of *chi* – blood, the word *ase* – sweat, was used, for *yami* – illness, the word *yasumi* – rest was substituted, and many similar changes were made. These and other *imikotoba* were established by the Engishiki regulations in the chapter on the bureau of *saigū*.

It was considered inauspicious to use during the connubial ceremonies such words as *saru* (go away) or *kaeru* (to return). Any other occasions which marked “beginning” also called for special prudence in one’s choice of words and actions.

On the day of Emperor Ichijō’s enthronement ceremony people working in the Daigokuden pavilion found a severed hairy head on the Emperor’s seat. They reported the matter to Kaneie who was then the highest dignitary of the government. Kaneie pretended not to hear the report. They repeated the news more loudly and Kaneie still pretended to be deaf. After the third attempt at getting Kaneie’s response they understood at last, that he did not wish to hear anything so inauspicious on such a happy occasion³⁹.

Various prohibitive rules observed on the New Year’s Day, or other occasions marking “beginning” (like e.g. enthronement, marriage, etc.) belong to the preventive magic. Parallel to them there were also observed various rules which intended to provoke good luck in the coming year (or during the new reign, or in marriage, etc.). These belong to the evocative magic. There were also performed some rites of mixed purposes, intended to ward off evil and to bring luck at the same time. These, too, we shall classify as evocative magic.

1.2. Evocative practices

Evocative practices were concerned mostly with ensuring health, longevity, prosperity, and other good things in everyday life. Many practices of this kind were connected with seasonal changes of the year, and at the court were observed as annual ceremonies (*nenjū gyōji*).

a man’s knowledge of the name of s spectre might enable him to exert power over the latter and bend it to his will” (de Groot 1910:1126).

³⁹ *Ōkagami* 1967:274–5.

The first day of the New Year (*chōga*) was especially important from the magical point of view, because the day marked “beginning”. It was necessary to pay attention to one’s smallest deeds as they could influence the course of events during the coming year. At the court the Emperor received congratulatory visits from the highest officials after he performed the ceremony of *shihōhai* (homage of four directions). Early in the morning (at the hour of the tiger, i.e., between 4 and 6 a.m.) the Emperor went out to the eastern garden of the Seiryōden pavilion and there he prayed turning into four directions towards imperial mausolea and he paid homage to the lodestar of the year. It became one of the annual events in 889. In the ceremony there are evident some elements of Shintoist rituals (homage to the imperial mausolea) and some of Ommyōdō (homage to the star). On that day a special sake (*toso*) was prepared, tested and offered by specially chosen virgins to the Emperor to ensure his health and longevity.

The period after the New Year was especially busy with various luck-bringing practices. On the 3rd day of the 1st moon there was a ceremony called “tooth-hardening” (*hagatame*) which was believed to promote health and long life. On that day special dishes were served (e.g., heavy rice cakes, melons, giant radishes, *ayu* fish and others) which were thought to be nutritious and good for “hardening” one’s teeth. Partaking of the dishes was not for dietic purpose but for magic ones, because the Chinese character for “tooth” was the same as for “age” (Chinese: *ch’i*)⁴⁰ and in magic thinking the transfer of desired properties was possible from one thing to another if even a formal association existed between them (in this case the properties of hard strong teeth were to be transferred to such an abstract idea as age⁴¹).

On the 1st day of the rat imperial cooks prepared a kind of soup made of seven young herbs (*nanakusa, wakana*). This was ceremonially presented to the Emperor in order to ensure his good health for the year. The young herbs full of vital juices, were to give their vitality to persons partaking of them. The ceremony was called *wakana no sekku* (the festival of young herbs). It was customary on that day to decorate the palace and private mansions with various ornaments made of the seven herbs. Besides, during the whole day there were excursions to the fields (mainly to Murasakino).

Another ceremony of the 1st moon was performed on the 7th day. It was called *aouma no sechie* (festival of blue horses). For the first time the ceremony was introduced by Emperor Shōmu⁴² and patterned after a similar Chinese ceremony. Up to

⁴⁰ Cf. Morris 1967:II,47, com. 220.

⁴¹ This is similar in principle to the previously mentioned serving of *toso* to the Emperor. Morris points out that testing the *toso* by virgins was “...to promote the Emperor’s longevity by transferring the long life expectancy of the girls by means of the wine”, *ibid.*, 130, com.729. The *wakana* ceremony and many others were based on the same principle of sympathetic magic.

⁴² Reigned 724–749.

the reign of Kōnin (770–781) it was held sporadically, later on it became annual. At first the horses used for the ceremony were grey but since Daigō tennō's times white horses came to be used, but the old name “festival of blue horses” was not changed (although the character for “blue” was supplanted by the character for “white”, the pronunciation remained still the same, *aouma no sechie*). The ceremony was based on the conviction that looking at white horses insured good health during the coming year. The festivities took place in front of the Burakuin or Shishinden pavilions. There were 21 horses parading in three columns. After the parade the Emperor held a banquet.

From the 8th day in the palace the Buddhist ceremony called *gosaie* (assembly of exoneration) was performed for seven consecutive days. It consisted of reading and expounding sutras intended as means of securing peace in the country. It was performed at the beginning of a year because there existed a strong belief in the magic power of the sutras and their reading in the 1st moon assured peace for the whole year. *Gosaie* was celebrated for the first time in the 10th moon of 729. It was held sporadically afterwards until 802 when it was established as an annual event of the 1st moon.

On the 15th day of the 1st moon it was customary to prepare gruel called *mochigayu* (full moon gruel), which was made of seven grains (rice beans, sesame seeds, chestnuts, millet, etc.). The intended offsets of eating *mochigayu* were the same as of eating the “seven herbs soup”. *Mochigayu* was believed to contain some magic creative powers as well. It may be surmised from the custom of hitting women with sticks used for stirring the gruel, as it was believed that the hit women would give birth to boys.

The 2nd moon was filled mostly with many events of purely Shintoist character. It was probably connected with the old traditions related to the beginning of agricultural cycle. Among others, there was on the 4th day a ceremony called *kinensai* (*toshigoi no matsuri*). It was initiated by officials of the Jingikan⁴³ and celebrated in all the shrines of the country. It consisted of prayers for good crop and peace in the country. The prayers were accompanied by magic rites inducing earth to fertility.

On the 3rd day of the 3rd moon a ceremony of *gokusui* was performed as a part of the festival called *momo no sekku* (or *jomi*, *joshi no sekku*). The *gokusui* (or *kyokusui*, *gokusui no en* – feast of winding water) had been intended primarily for prolonging life and promoting prosperity by purifying the body from evils. During the festivities cups with sake were floated down a stream or river, which symbolised floating away impurities and bad luck. There was a custom of picking up a passing cup from the water, drinking the contents and reciting a poem. The original magic intention had been lost under the cover of aesthetic forms of elegant entertainment.

⁴³ The office managing all matters connected with Shintō and supervising many court ceremonies.

The ceremony (established during the reign of Mommu⁴⁴) was practiced formerly at the court only. Later on the custom spread to the courtiers and officials and started to be observed at private mansions in more and more elaborate forms, without any religious connotations.

The 4th moon was full of activities in many shrines connected with the imperial family or the court. Among the festivals the most important and magnificent was Aoi matsuri at the Kamo shrines, as the deities of Kamo were considered to be guardian gods of Heian kyō. There were also seats important Buddhist events, and among them the most celebrated one was on the 8th day – the day of Buddha's birth anniversary.

A very colourful festival was observed on the 5th day of the 5th moon. It was called *ayame no sekku* (or *shōbu no koshi*) – the iris festival. On that day the palace and private residences were gorgeously decorated with irises. The Emperor wore a special head-dress made of the flowers, ladies wore the flowers in their hair and they also put on costumes made of materials resembling irises in colour or design. On that day, the Emperor distributed sake in which iris petals had been seeped. Iris petals were also put into bath-water, between clothes, and under pillows. Besides, there were prepared balls of medicine (*kusudama*) made of various herbs and decorated with irises. The balls were put into silk bags and hung in the houses in many places. They were believed to expel illness and prolong life.

The belief had already been well established in the Heian period. Sometimes the festival was suspended if there was a pestilence or, according to Ommyōryō, the day or moon was inauspicious. But if no ominous omen interfered, the day of *ayame* was full of colour, fragrance and joy. They held riding and archery contests, watched by the Emperor and the court. The festivities lasted three days and the 5th day of the 5th moon was the last one. At night the festival was closed with the *kan-nari no jin* scaring away all possible demons.

In the 6th moon there were various religious activities fully occupying the court: on the 1st day – the preparation of “pure fire” (*imibi*) for gods. It was kindled by rubbing sticks together. The “pure fire” was used for making “pure meal” (*imibi gohan*) as an offering for gods (a similar ceremony was performed on the 1st days of the 11th and 12th moons). On the 14th and 15th days the *goryōe* in the Yasaka jinja was celebrated. After that there were made preparations for the ceremony of great purification, and other concomitant ceremonies.

On the 7th day of the 7th moon the *tanabata* festival was observed. It was held in honour of a heavenly weaver and heavenly herdsman represented by two stars (Vega and Altair). According to the Chinese legend the weaver – a beautiful girl and the herdsman – a handsome young man, loved each other, and were so absorbed in their emotions that they neglected their work. As a punishment they were sent

⁴⁴ Reigned 697–707. The ceremony was brought to Japan from China, where it had been performed as a lustration festival during the Han dynasty (206 B.C.–220).

to heaven as two stars which could meet only once a year – on the 7th day of the 7th moon. In memory of the romantic lovers a festival was established in the Nara period. On that day offerings were made for the stars, and poems composed for them, while young girls prayed to the weaver for skill in weaving.

The 8th moon was not rich in court events. Perhaps it was simply too hot for extraordinary activities. There were only some ceremonies in honour of Confucius, and some Buddhist masses. After the ceremony of reading and expounding (*sekiten* or *shakuten*) Confucian scriptures by doctors of literature, the Emperor was presented with dishes called *sōmei* (offerings of wisdom) which were intended to symbolize and to promote sagacity.

On the 9th day of the 9th moon there was a festival of chrysanthemums (*kiku no sekku*) with a big feast given by the Emperor in the Shishinden pavilion. Chrysanthemums were believed, like irises, to have the power of expelling diseases and prolonging life. The festivities of the day were similar to those of the *ayame no sekku*. There were decorations everywhere made of chrysanthemums. The *kusudama* with irises were taken down and replaced by similar *kusudama* with chrysanthemums. On the eve of *kiku no sekku* the flowers in the gardens were covered with pieces of silk and on the day of the festival ladies rubbed their bodies with the silk, and used it for polishing their tables and shelves.

In the 10th moon the most important event fell on the 2nd day of the boar. The Emperor was then presented with the “long life *mochi*” (*inoko mochi* – *mochi* of the boar), made of seven kinds of flour. Similar *mochi* were distributed among the ladies in waiting, courtiers and officials. The *mochi* were to ensure long life without any illness. Besides, it was expected that people partaking of *inoko mochi* would have as many children as boars did.

The 11th moon was one of the most active seasons according to the court calendar. On the 1st day of the hare there was the *ainame no matsuri* (*ainie*, *ainube no matsuri*) – “the festival of facing harvest”. In the palace and in all the shrines there were prayers and offerings for good harvest.

On the 2nd day of the hare fell the beginning of the most important Shintoist ceremony called *niiname no matsuri*. It was the grand ceremony of thanksgiving. On the first day the gods were given offerings of the year’s first rice. The second day was devoted to thanksgiving for the cattle. A feast was given by the Emperor and the *gosechi* dances were performed. The dances were preceded by weeks of excitement and preparations. Their traditions went back to Temmu tennō’s days. On the day preceding the *gosechi* dances there was celebrated *matsuri* – the festival for soul pacifying. The purpose of the ceremony was to pacify the souls of the Emperor, the Empress and the crown Prince, to pacify and “bind” them inside the bodies, preventing the souls to wander outside.

Besides there were many other Shintoist and Buddhist ceremonies all through the 11th moon. The last moon was also fairly busy, as it was necessary to end the

year in ritual purity and in harmony with all the gods and Buddhas. The most important festival fell on the last day. It was the *tsuina* (described in the paragraph on “expelling evil”) and its accompanying rites.

All the annual court ceremonies are fully documented in the Heian literature, in diaries as well as in novels. As it may be seen from the above given short description, many festivals had strong religious flavour, but we chose only those Shintoist ones which had developed from primitive magic practices connected with the agricultural cycle (*ainame no matsuri*, *toshigo no matsuri*, etc.). There were many other festivals which have been omitted in our description. Not all the described practices can be classified as clearly evocative ones, as in many of them there are evident elements of preventive magic (expelling or purifying evil), while in others, the elements of religious reverence and supplication are predominant.

Reading scriptures over a newly born male child may be safely included in evocative practices. The texts chosen for the purpose were of educational character – the treatise on filial piety or excerpts from Chinese chronicles. But it is hard to suppose that anybody expected the infant to understand the texts. They were intended as magic formulae which were to stimulate inclination for learning in the child.

Another kind of evocative magic may be seen in the custom of changing the era names. This custom is related to the belief in the magic power of words. The names of eras were changed on account of some misfortunes (e.g., protracted illness of the Emperor) or calamities (e.g., pestilence). It was believed necessary to change the name for a more auspicious one. The change was also decided upon in case of good or bad portents. For example, in 848 Emperor Nimmyō⁴⁵ was informed that in the Bungo province a white turtle was found. The matter was discussed among learned officials of the Ommyōryō, and they decided that the finding was an excellent portent. The Emperor gave a big banquet in celebration of the event and the era name was changed to *kajō* (“good omen”).

Heian literature has such an aristocratic character that it deals almost exclusively with life at the highest level of society. That is why there are so many descriptions of court events, but so very few of popular practices in the countryside, or among labourers and artisans. We may only surmise that there existed various evocative practices. They had to exist because up to this day there are many magic acts of very primitive sort performed in every region of Japan. But in Heian literature there is no evidence of them. The reasons may be twofold: 1. some magic practices are possibly described but we cannot recognize them as such, because the intention behind them is not revealed. We can only guess and draw our conclusions based on later practices, or on practices (contemporary or later) in other countries, which is, to say the least, imprudent; 2. it seems that in the capital the older magic practices were superseded by the more sophisticated Buddhist practices of the *kaji kito* kind.

⁴⁵ Reigned 853–850.

There existed not only preventive *kaji* and *kitō* exorcisms but also evocative ones like, for example, *migatame* (“body hardening” incantations of *kaji kitō*) and *gengata* exercised by the holy man who cured Hikaru Genji of ague.

In the *Eiga monogatari* there is a longish fragment describing peasants planting rice⁴⁶. The planting was arranged for the amusement of aristocratic ladies and gentlemen, but according to strict instructions it was to be performed exactly like any other planting. There was an old man under an umbrella supervising the works. Ten men played on various musical instruments while fifty or sixty young women worked in the field. The peasants sang songs inviting plentiful crops. There were also performed dances called *dengaku* (music of the fields). The description in the *Eiga monogatari* is not very precise, but nevertheless it shows a ceremony accompanying the actual work. The ceremony, we may guess, was intended as stimulating the earth to bear plentiful crops.

Up to this day, all over Japan, there are performed ceremonies called *taasobi* (field games) in which the whole process of rice cultivation is carried out in pantomime. *Taasobi* are performed at the time of the full moon after the New Year. In summer another ceremony, called *taue* (rice transplantation) is celebrated when rice is planted on sacred paddies. Both ceremonies are accompanied by dances and drum beating. They are believed to stimulate the earth to fertility.

1.3. Destructive magic

The Heian literature does not provide too many instances of using destructive magic, although there existed a belief in possibly harming or destroying people by means of occult art. The belief is evident through various scattered remarks in novels and chronicles. It seems that the most popular method of cursing an enemy was simply by pronouncing a spell (*suso*, *shuso* or *zuso*, *jubaku*, *noroi*, *majinai*). Sometimes specialists were engaged for the purpose, but quite often it was not necessary (by “specialists” we mean here *ommyōji*, itinerant monks, and other sorcerers). It was believed that an intense bad will against a person could produce the desired effects if expressed in the proper form. There were also more complicated methods of cursing, methods demanding some elaborate preparations like making images of paper or wood and other *majimono* (magic contrivances). It is not quite clear what form such a *majimono* could have. For example, In the *Mizukagami*⁴⁷ there is a story of Empress Inoue employing black art in order to kill her husband,

⁴⁶ *Eiga monogatari* 1964:II,110–12.

⁴⁷ One of the historical tales (*rekishi monogatari*). It deals with the period from the time of Jimmu to that of Nimmyō (660 B.C. - 850 A.D.).

Emperor Kōnin⁴⁸. The evidence of her *majiwaza* (witchcraft) was found in a well. But it is not said what the evidence consisted of. It could have been a doll. During the excavations in the old palace grounds in Nara there was found a wooden doll with nails driven into the eyes and abdomen, which means that dolls were used for magic purposes. They were called *hitokata*.

It is very well known that images of persons to be killed (or otherwise harmed) were used in magic of many ethnic groups widely separated from one another in time and in space. Such magic images are perhaps one of the most commonly met features all round the world. Japan was not an exception. In the *Nihongi* there is a mention of preparing images for magic purposes (the second year of Emperor Yōmei's reign⁴⁹).

In the *Midō kampaku ki* under the date of 1012, the 10th day of the 4th moon, Michinaga wrote down that in one of his mansions (Higashi sanjō dono) a *majimono* was found in the well. He did not explain what it was, but his cousin Sanesuke was more explicit. In the *Shōyūki* it is stated that the *majimono* consisted of *mochi* with human hairs kneaded into the cake. Michinaga consulted Abe Yoshihira who decided that somebody had wished to get rid of Michinaga. The next day there were rites of exoneration performed in the Higashi sanjō mansion.

It is impossible to know exactly whose hairs were kneaded into the sinister *mochi*, but based on many analogies in other countries we may venture a guess that the hairs were Michinaga's own. It is again very well-known from other cultural circles that in sympathetic magic hairs, nails or sweat of the intended victim were popularly used in magic attempts at killing or harming. In the story there is another mildly intriguing element, namely the well. It is here the third instance of putting a *majimono* into a well. It is hard to tell if wells were used because they were considered good as hiding places, or if there was some deeper meaning in the choice. Perhaps it was believed that drinking water which was "poisoned" by the *majimono* strengthened its deadly power? Or perhaps the *majimono* were put into the well just at the time when the nomadic Tokujin was believed to stay there, and such an intrusion upon his grounds was sure to awake his wrath?

Michinaga was probably a record-holder of a very peculiar kind. He was cursed in his life at least five times, and possibly even more. But, on the other hand, perhaps too little is known about other persons. In the case of Michinaga there are many written documents describing his life and personality. He was watched by other people because his official career was very swift and still as a young man he reached prosperity unsurpassed by anybody else. Hate and unhealthy rivalry marked his career from the very beginning. At first he competed with his brothers, Michitaka and Michikane, but from them, their early born animosity spread to their children

⁴⁸ Reigned 770–781.

⁴⁹ According to the traditional chronology, Yōmei reigned 585–587.

and grandchildren. Michinaga's most bitter enemies came from these two branches of his own family and persons related to them by marriage. But besides, he had many other enemies, a lot more than friends. There were people wronged or insulted or even ruined by him. They could not gain any victory over him because he was too powerful politically and economically, and thus some of them tried at least to destroy him by magic. In 995 Takashina Naritada cast a curse on Michinaga because the latter was appointed to the most coveted office of *nairan* instead of Korechika, Naritada's grandson. Korechika was the strongest of Michinaga's rivals and in due time he was taken off the political scene and banished to Tsukushi. In the sentence it was said that Korechika cast a curse on the ex-Empress Higashi sanjō in (she was seriously ill in the period preceding the verdict). The ex-Empress was Michinaga's sister and Emperor Ichijō's mother.

The feud between Michinaga's and Korechika's factions did not stop at that. In 1009 it was revealed that Korechika and his relatives had put a curse on Michinaga, his daughter Akiko (consort of Ichijō) and Akiko's son, Prince Atuhira (Gonki, 50th day of the 1st moon). Although this time nothing bad happened to the intended victims, the perpetrators of magic acts were finished in the public opinion. Afterwards Michinaga had no more trouble from them, but soon he was engaged in other competitions and he was cursed again. The *mochi* with hairs we may safely assume as an attempt at harming him by magic. There was a further sequence to that. Being ill two months later he went to Kamo Kōei for consultation. Just as he was going to enter Kōei's residence, a dead rat fell under his feet. And then, the next day he went to the Hosshōji temple and at the entrance to the fane, a snake fell in front of him (*Shōyūki*). Michinaga was frightened and he became more ill than before⁵⁰. He was as superstitious as everybody else during the period, but he was not blind. He had to see that there was hatred in the air, that it was a human hand which put *mochi* into the wells he could not believe in dead rats and snakes falling like rain from high heaven. Dead bodies were considered impure in the ritual sense, but also they were frightening in themselves, by simple association with death. Throwing a dead animal at somebody was probably equal to inviting death itself.

At any rate, there had to be found at least a scapegoat because the situation was becoming quite dangerous to Michinaga's prestige, if not to him personally. And the scapegoat was found in the person of Fujiwara Tametō who was connected with the faction of Empress Shūshi, consort of Sanjō tennō, and a rival of Michinaga's daughter Yoshiko (Kenshi)⁵¹.

Another rivalry of Michinaga's daughter was already mentioned in the paragraph on vengeful spirits. Here we would like to mention briefly that in 1017

⁵⁰ Moszyński gives cases of people who, becoming aware that somebody had cast a curse on them, reacted violently, falling ill or even dying. Moszyński 1934:347.

⁵¹ *Shōyūki*, 1012, the 17th day of the 6th moon.

Akimitsu cursed Michinaga because the latter's daughter won the competition with Akimitsu's daughter over the favours of Kōichijō in⁵².

The rivalry among the ladies of the court for imperial favour was a frequent topic of conversation, and from time to time it took a more sinister turn. It was thus with Noriko (Tōshi). She was a sister of Yasuko (Anshi), a consort of Emperor Murakami. After Yasuko's death the Emperor became enamoured with Noriko and invited her to the palace. He had at the time many other concubines and they were not kind to the newcomer. Bad tongues began wagging and Noriko soon found herself isolated from the palace life. She was even suspected of killing her sister by magic⁵³. It should be added that Yasuko had died in child-birth, which was not such a rare occurrence in the Heian period. At first the death was ascribed to the activity of Motokata's and Motoko's vengeful spirits, but later on it was whispered that perhaps a living person – Noriko – had been instrumental in causing Yasuko's death.

Among the above described cases only Tametō was known (or rather suspected) of using an *ommyōji* for casting a curse on Michinaga. Other persons possibly used a specialist but it is not clearly told, and we may suppose that it was sufficient to express one's grudge against somebody else to be suspected of the active wish, to curse. There is in the *Ōkagami* a story of enmity between Fujiwara Koretada and his cousin Fujiwara Asanari. A misunderstanding between both gentlemen resulted in a hostility spreading to next generations. Asanari, frustrated in his ambitions, cursed Koretada's family in the following words: "This family will stand for a long time, but whether there were sons or daughters they would not prosper. If there are people who will think it merciless (on my part) I shall hold a grudge against them, too" (*Kono zō nagaku tatami. Moshi danshi mo joshi mo ari tomo hakabakashikute wa araseji. Aware to iu hito mo araba, sore wo mo uramin*⁵⁴). These words were considered a curse sufficiently powerful to strike terror into the hearts of Koretada's descendants. But it should be noted that even after his death Asanari was very active as a *shiryō*, too.

Lady Kagerō was tormented with jealousy when Kaneie frequented the house of a woman known as "the lady in the alley" (*machi no kōji no onna*). She wished every misfortune to the rival, and when she heard that the other woman had born a child and the child had died, she felt satisfied. She believed that the wishes had been realized⁵⁵.

Sei Shōnagon describes quite a different situation. She writes understandingly about a bitter disappointment felt by a family who cursed the unfaithful husband of a daughter and the husband looked immune to curses and prospered in the world⁵⁶.

⁵² Ibid., 1017, the 19th day of the 11th moon.

⁵³ *Eiga monogatari* 1964:1,47.

⁵⁴ *Ōkagami* 1967:142.

⁵⁵ *Kagerō nikki* 1966:128–9.

⁵⁶ *Makura no sōshi* 1958:275.

The last three cases (Asanari, lady Kagerō, and the disappointed family) at first sight do not even look like “cursing” in the magic sense. They seem to be “cursing” in the popular meaning of the word. It is only the intention behind the words or thoughts that turns a common expression of ill will into a magic act. People believed nevertheless in the magic power of such intentions. Any mysterious misfortune or death could be easily explained as the result of a curse. In order to ensure safety from unperceived curses people performed the rites of *zuso no harae*, and in the case of a discovered curse they asked specialists for the rites of exoneration (*harae, gejo*).

Probably lady Noriko was not on good terms with her sister Yasuko, and that fact alone was enough to raise suspicions towards Yasuko’s death being caused by Noriko’s active ill will. There was no actual evidence of magic discovered, but the lady’s reputation has been blackened forever. In the *Reiiki* there is also a different story about a false accusation.

In the Engōji temple there was a monk called Eshō. He stole some firewood and soon afterwards he died. At the time there was kept in the temple a cow which gave birth to a calf. When the calf became strong enough it was used for carrying wood. One day there came an unknown monk and said, looking at the calf: “Monk Eshō recited sutras so diligently and now he must draw a cart with wood”. On hearing that the calf wept bitterly and died. Then the mysterious monk was accused of “killing it with a curse” (*ushi o noroite koroseri*). He was arrested and put before an officer. But the officer soon understood that the accused monk was nobody else but Kannon bosatsu⁵⁷.

Another story from the *Reiiki* shows the belief in “binding people with a spell”. Once an itinerant monk came to a man begging for alms. The man not only refused but also chased the monk away. The monk took flight to the fields and was followed so closely by the bad man that he lost the hope of making good his escape. In desperation he uttered a spell (*jubaku*). At once the man began to behave crazily. He went here and there, turned round and round, but could not leave the field. The monk disappeared. The children of the spellbound man came but no matter how and what they tried, they were not able to take their father home. They went to another monk and asked his help. At first he refused, but the children were so earnest that at last he consented. Reciting a sutra he liberated the man from the magic spell (*gedachi suru koto etari*⁵⁸).

All the above described examples concerned individual problems and the magic acts were performed individually. But there was also magic employed in the case of a national emergency. “At the beginning of the year 940 elaborate services and prayers for divine help had been ordered by the Court in the principal religious establish-

⁵⁷ *Nihon reiiki* 1975:I,20; *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XX,20. The *Konjaku monogatari* version is essentially the same, but the name of Engoiji monk is given as Erai.

⁵⁸ *Nihon reiiki* 1975:I,15; *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XX,25.

ments, while throughout the country rituals of commutation were performed by adepts of the mystic cult in the hope of destroying Masakado by magic acts⁵⁹.

Taira Masakado was a rebel and for a very long time a very successful one. Acting in the eastern provinces of Japan he proclaimed himself the Emperor and began to appoint new provincial officials. His life and deeds are described in a chronicle called *Masakado ki* (or *Shōmonki*⁶⁰). Sansom's description is based on the chronicle; also Masakado's story in the *Konjaku monogatari* was derived from the same source. It is said there that prayers were ordered in all temples and shrines. The results were as desired; when Masakado was to fight in a decisive battle he was spell-bound and could not move his hands. His horse was also spell-bound and could not run and Masakado was killed. Some time after his death he appeared in somebody's dream and talked about his sufferings for his sins⁶¹.

2. Magic: instruments

The preceding chapters mentioned in various contexts many objects used as instruments for magical purposes. Here we would like to group them, adding some supplementary remarks. The objects may be divided into six groups: 1) liturgical objects; 2) military equipment; 3) plants; 4) specifically magical objects; 5) parts of human body; 6) words.

2.1. Liturgical objects

The first group covers utensils commonly used by priests for various religious rites in Shintoist shrines and in Buddhist temples. Some of the utensils could be used for magical purposes by persons of the laity, as well. For instance, in the description of treating a sick child there was a woman who made *gohei* and waved them over the patient. The woman was a traditional Shintoist shaman and *gohei* are typical Shintoist accessories. In another case we saw a Buddhist monk giving his patient a *toko* as a talisman.

Toko was a typical accessory of Buddhist monks. It was a wooden stick 7–8 *shaku* long, with metal spearheads at both ends. In ancient India it had been used as a kind of weapon, but it came to be used by Buddhist clergy as a magic weapon against carnal desires and all other evil passions, and also as a symbol of holy orders. Exorcists brandished *toko* while reciting their spells. Another accessory indispen-

⁵⁹ Sansom 1958:I,246.

⁶⁰ Written probably soon after the rebellion. The author is unknown.

⁶¹ *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XXV,1.

sable for exorcists' practices was *zuzu* – a rosary. Rosaries were made of wooden beads which number customarily was one hundred eight – the number of carnal desires according to the Buddhist teaching. Besides, in more elaborate rites of exoneration there were used *mandara* – sacred Buddhist pictures symbolizing the universe. They were especially popular among the followers of the Shingon sect.

It should be noted that the liturgical objects used for magic purposes were necessary as accessorial instruments, accompanying invocations and spells. That, at least, some of them could be used as instruments *sensu stricto*, shows the *toko* given to Genji as a talisman.

2.2. Military equipment

The second group of magic instruments includes different military equipment like swords and knives, bows and arrows, spears and halberds, and also drums. Their use is very well documented. They served for scaring away all kinds of demons by a display of military prowess or by making awesome noise.

2.3. Plants

In the third group we find various plants. Some of them were used for clearly apotropaic purposes. Such was the case with rice and other grains, with the willow and peach trees (or wood⁶²) and with flowers and herbs used for preparing *kusudama* or for preparing dishes meant as remedies or panacea. Their meaning was explained in some detail in the preceding chapters. Besides, there were probably some plants used for magic purposes but from the examined documents of the epoch, their role is not quite clear. For instance, some passages in the *Nihongi (Keikō den)* give evidence to the fact that garlic was used for apotropaic purposes. One may suppose (though it is pure guesswork) that the belief in this property of garlic did not disappear up to the Heian period. In the *Genji monogatari* there is a story about a lady who could not receive her lover and talked with him from behind a screen because

⁶² De Groot explains the devil-expelling power ascribed to the willow by the graphic form of the word *yang* and *liu* (both mean “willow”) “... which point to its (willow) relation with the universal light and the spring”, (de Groot 1910:999). It seems a rather far-fetched idea as the belief in the magic power of willow originated probably among the illiterate people, therefore the graphic form of the word is irrelevant. But the relation with the spring could have been an important factor in the belief. It might have been so with the peach, too. In Japan the peach has been a symbol of fertility. Up to this day there are festivals of fertility with representations of the peach displayed as a symbol of the female sex organ.

she had eaten a lot of garlic⁶³. Garlic was considered to be a strong remedy for a cold and fever. The same properties are ascribed to another plant, arrowroot. A common feature of both plants is their aggressive, unpleasant smell. Several instances of eating arrowroot as an antidote against fever may be found in diaries of the period (the *Shōyūki*, *Midō*). It seems not improbable that garlic and arrowroot found their way to quackery (meant at the time as medicine) as direct transpositions of the older forms of magic. Using bad-smelling things for scaring off demons is known from other cultures as well (e.g. *asa foetida* bags).

There are some faint traces of a belief in magic properties of bamboo. One may suppose that the use of bamboo sticks for the ceremony of *yoori* was not fortuitous. There had to be some reason for choosing this inconvenient method of measuring the Emperor. Perhaps it was a kind of translative magic (up to this day bamboo is considered a symbol of physical strength). The properties of bamboo, its strength and durability were to be transmitted to the measured person.

Another example of an unexplained application of bamboo may be seen in the custom of cutting the umbilical cord of a baby with a bamboo knife. In such a case the same magic principle could be involved: transmitting to the child all the properties of fast growing, and acquiring strength like a bamboo shoot.

2.4. Specifically magic objects

In the fourth group of magic instruments there were various objects made exclusively for magic purposes such as *uzue* and *uzuchi*, *kusudama*, all kinds of amulets (*gofu*), *monoimi no fuda*⁶⁴, the artificial tiger's head for the ceremony of the first bath, pictures depicting Shōki for warding off devils and also figures of *shishi* and *komainu* guarding imperial chambers from demons. These figures, made after the Korean fashion, represented animals which were believed to ward off evils. They had the shapes of two dogs, although one of them was called a "lion" (*shishi*) and another one was called a "Korean dog" (*komainu*). The lion was yellow and had its mouth open, while the dog was white and its mouth was closed.

All these objects were meant as instruments warding off demons, illness and other evil influences. For more variegated purposes paper and wooden dolls were made which were called *hitokata*, *katashiro*, *agamono*, *nademono* and *amagatsu*. They could be used as amulets (*hitokata*, *katashiro*, *amagatsu*), but they also could be used as instruments for casting a curse on somebody (*hitokata*, *katashiro*). Besides, the dolls of *agamono* and *nademono* kinds served as instruments of purification, while some *hitokata* served as substitutes of a woman in confinement.

⁶³ *Genji monogatari* 1974–75:I,83.

⁶⁴ The fact that they were made of willow or peach-wood points to their magic role.

It should be noted here, that the words *hitokata* and *katashiro* were used as generic names, while the words: *amagatsu*, *agamono* and *nademono* pointed to the specific purposes of the dolls.

2.5. Parts of the human body

There are not many examples of using parts of the human body as magic instruments, but it does not mean that they were not so employed. In sympathetic magic all round the world human hairs, nails, blood, sweat, particles of skin and so on were used for magic purposes. In Japan we can see at least some vague suggestions of the usage. The most obvious one is the *mochi* kneaded with human hairs found in Michinaga's well. The masters of Ommyōdō at once decided then that some unknown person had wished harm to Michinaga. One may suppose that the hairs helped them to reach the conclusion.

Other clues may be seen in the custom of burying in the garden the umbilical cord of a new-born child. It was buried there, one may suppose, as a precaution against using it for magic by a spiteful person. Cut hairs and nails were hidden, too, lest somebody might make use of them. There was also a ceremony called *kamisogi* (or *fukasogi*⁶⁵) after which the cut hair of a child was thrown into the Kamo River. It is obvious that carrying the hair all the way to the river had to have a special meaning. It might be similar to burying in the ground, but possibly another principle was in operation here and the role of water was a decisive one.

Another clue may be found in the story from the *Konjaku monogatari* about the fatal adventure of Ki no Tōsuke. The parts of human bodies such as those closed in the box were perhaps believed to be useful in witchcraft, and the story reflects this belief.

2.6. Words

By words as magic instruments we mean spells of various kinds. Throughout the text there were mentioned recitations and incantations of sacred scriptures in the forms of *kaji*, *kitō* and *darani*. These were fragments of sutras recited in Sanskrit or in Sino-Japanese translation. Their popularity was enormous and many variants of the rites were performed – from a very simple reading by one monk to the extremely elaborate ceremonies conducted by crowds of monks using rich and variegated accessories. As the accessories the liturgical objects were employed. Magic gestures (*in*, *inshō*) formed auxiliary rites meant for fortifying the power of

⁶⁵ The ceremony of cutting the hair of children (for 5 year old boys and 4 year old girls).

sacred words. The words in themselves were believed to have the power of warding off evil or evoking goodness.

The old Japanese belief in the *kotodama* (the spirit of the word) has become to some extent amalgamated with Buddhist belief in the power of sutras, which were professedly sermons of Buddha and as such, represented the Universal Light mighty enough to dispel darkness and all demons belonging to it. In Japan, like in China, there existed a strong conviction that “... words are no idle sounds, nor characters or pictures are merely ink or paint, but that they altogether constitute or produce the reality which they express or represent. And as any desired magical effect may be expressed in words or writing, it follows as matter of course that by means of charms and spells every imaginable thing may be effected”⁶⁶.

Independently of sacred texts recited mostly by the representatives of clergy (there were exceptions when the representatives of laity recited them as well), there were some spells in popular use like, for instance, the spell after sneezing. In the *Makura no sōshi* sneezing as a bad omen is mentioned three times, and at one point it is written that after a sneeze it was necessary to wish luck to the sneezing person in order to turn off a likely misfortune. Possibly in the Heian period there was already in use the *kusame* formula which is noted down by Kenkō hōshi in the *Tsurezuregusa* (*dan* 47)⁶⁷. The formula was a distorted form of the spell *kusoku mammyō* – “eternal life” (to you), usually recited after sneezing.

3. Magic: human agents

There were many magic acts which could be performed by everybody without any special preparations, and not demanding any specialized knowledge. Everybody could, and did, participate in the *kiku no sechie* or *ayame no sechie*. Everybody could say a spell after sneezing, everybody could make a *katashiro* for any of the four purposes, and everybody could avoid an unlucky direction or make preventive penances. In this sense everybody could, and did, act as the agent in a magic action.

It is not quite clear if all kinds of curses were possible to be proclaimed by everybody but some of them certainly were, while for the others the help of a specialist was necessary. Anyhow, it seems so, judging by the known acts of destructive magic.

Many magic actions had to be performed by the specialists of various kinds. The specialists belonged to several religious and non-religious groups. Some of

⁶⁶ De Groot 1910:1024.

⁶⁷ A collection of miscellany essays written about 1330–1331 by Yoshida Kaneyoshi (Kenkō). It consists of 243 paragraphs (*dan*).

them were employed at the court, while others – in fact, the majority of them – had their private practices outside any institutional bodies.

The specialists employed at the court may be divided into two groups: Buddhist monks and laymen.

The monks were chosen from amongst the most prominent representatives of the Shingon and Tendai sects. There were always up to ten monks called *gubu* (or *naigubu*) on duty in the Buddhist center inside the palace (Naidōjo). They performed normal religious services and, besides, they were obliged to ward off evil influences from the Emperor by reading *kaji* and *kito*. The monks on night duty (*yoi no sō*) were placed near the imperial bed-chamber in the Seiryōden pavilion. They stayed for the night in the Futama chamber and were always ready with their spells and incantations in case of a sudden illness or a bad dream of the Emperor. The first appointment of a monk with the title of *gojisō* (imperial guardian) was in 797. He was one of the most famous religious reformers of the Heian period, Saichō, better known under his posthumous appellation of Dengyō daishi (767–822), the founder of the Tendai sect.

The monks of *gubu* or *gojisō* ranks always belonged to the highest strata of Buddhist society, and thus there are many notes on them in the Heian literature. They are often praised for their holiness and their skill in mystic services. But, it seems, that sometimes even the most prominent ones were helpless when confronted with some particularly obstinate *mononoke*. For instance, Enchin (814–891), posthumously known as Chishō daishi, one of Saichō's famous disciples, was employed as the *gojisō* and strove hard to free Empress Samedono of a *mononoke*, but to no avail. She died as a person possessed⁶⁸ (*Ōkagami, Seiwa den*). Another *gojisō*, Meikai, employed at the court of Gosuzaku tennō⁶⁹ was not able to solve the Emperor's difficulties. In the *Eiga monogatari* it is written that Gosuzaku after a bad dream summoned Meikai and ordered him "to pray not for the matters of this world" (*ima wa kono yo no inori naseso*). Meikai prayed while ringing his bell, but there appeared some inauspicious omens and people watching the rites could not help to shed tears, for it was obvious to them that Meikai's prayers would not give the desired effects⁷⁰. The Emperor abdicated and soon after that he died without ensuring the highest position for his favourite concubine, who had been the subject of Meikai's prayers.

The most popular persons among the officially employed lay magicians were *ommyōji* and other functionaries of the Ommyōryō. But it should be noted that although the bureau was established in the Nara period, its functionaries did not gain a popular recognition for a long time. Even in the *Reiki* (which chronologically

⁶⁸ Cf. chapter on devils.

⁶⁹ Reigned 1056–1045.

⁷⁰ *Eiga monogatari* 1965:II,430–431.

belongs to the Heian period) there are no mentions of *ommyōji*. In the *Konjaku monogatari* in the stories derived from the *Reiki* there are *ommyōji* introduced in place of *kaminagi* of the earlier compilation. For example, the *Reiki* story II, 5 describes the case of a man suffering on account of a foreign god's *tatari*. As an offering for the god the man killed one cow every year. It was so for seven years and then the man all of a sudden became very ill. His family summoned a *kaminagi* who performed the purification services and other rites. The same story is repeated in the *Konjaku monogatari* (XX, 15) but there the *kaminagi* is replaced by an *ommyōji*. There are other instances of similar changes giving evidence to the growth of popularity of *ommyōji* between the 9th and 12th centuries. In all the novels and diaries after the period of *Reiki* many masters of Ommyōdō figure quite prominently in their official capacities as well as in their role of private advisers to important personages.

As has already been stated, Kamo Yasunori and Abe Seimei belonged to the most famous masters. There were many legends woven around their persons and their achievements. Seimei's fame is alive in Japan even to this day thanks to the kabuki play *Kusunoha*. Other great names have been preserved in the Heian novels and diaries. The beginning of Yasunori's brilliant career describes the *Konjaku monogatari* story (XXIV, 15).

One day Kamo Tadayuki, a master of Ommyōdō, was asked by somebody to perform the rites of exoneration. He went with his ten year old son Yasunori. When after acquitting himself of his duties he was on his way home, the boy told him that he, Yasunori, had seen about twenty or thirty creatures that had come and devoured offerings. The creatures had looked like people but yet they had not been human beings. Hearing this report Tadayuki was astounded at the boy's keen insight into the world of demons. From then on the father began to pour his secret knowledge into his son's ears, and soon was rewarded observing Yasunori's fast progress and surprising achievements.

There is a big difference between the entries concerning *ommyōji* in diaries and those found in literary fiction. In the diaries the masters of Ommyōdō are mentioned many times⁷¹ as specialists summoned or consulted (officially or privately) in the following cases: for preparing horoscopes, for interpreting dreams and omens, for deciding upon the site of a new house or temple, for divining on general or specific purpose, for performing the rites of exoneration, for fixing auspicious days (for the "first letter", "first night", journey, etc.), for fixing auspicious directions. This means that in real life they were mostly used as diviners and sometimes as exorcists.

In the literary fiction the masters of Ommyōdō were often gifted with supernatural powers, their achievements were greatly exaggerated, and their occult art

⁷¹ For instance, in the *Midō kampaku ki* there are well over hundred entries concerning *ommyōji* and their activities.

was many a time identified with magic of any other kind. There is, for instance, a story about a monk who practised the art of *ommyō* (*ommyō no zutsu* or *jutsu*). He lived in the province of Harima and was called Chitoku hōshi. One day he met at the seashore an owner of a ship taken away by pirates. Chitoku hōshi promised to get the ship back. He went in a small boat to the exact place on the sea where the ship had been overtaken by the pirates. He wrote some characters on the water and recited some spells (*umi no ue ni mono wo kakite, mono wo yomikakete...*) and then he calmly returned to the shore. After seven days the ship came to the spot with the pirates aboard and all the things that had been taken by them. The pirates looked dazed, and without a protest they handed over everything to the owner⁷².

The story is interesting as it shows a monk practising *ommyō no zutsu*, which means that such a secular kind of magic could also be associated with magicians of Buddhist ranks. One may venture an opinion that the story is of comparatively late origin, that it belongs to the period of far advanced syncretism in magic when some ideas were mixed together. Formerly, the *Ommyōdō* was recognized as the art practised by secular specialists, while Buddhist monks were popularly associated with the Shingon and Tendai mystic rites (which belonged to the orthodox magic practices) or with the *senjutsu*, *shungendō*, and other kinds of magic called collectively *gesu* (*gejutsu*), which means “unorthodox” or “outside the Way” magic art (see below). The *gesu* practitioners were sometimes frowned upon by the authorities, but sometimes they were summoned even to the court.

Another group of magicians employed by the court belonged to the Bureau of Medicine. The organization and staff of the bureau have already been mentioned. Here we would like to add that there was a close cooperation between the specialists of Ten'yakuryō and those of the Ommyōryō. As illustrations may serve the entries in the *Shōyūki* concerning the eye disease of Sanjō tennō, and the treatment of Sanesuke's daughter. Emperor Sanjō's illness was a very prolonged one and for many years it was treated by means of exorcisms and Buddhist masses. In 1015 there was brought from China a medicine called “red snow” (*kōsetsu*). On the 27th day of the 4th moon Abe Yoshihira, an *ommyōji*, was summoned to the palace and ordered to divine an auspicious day for the *mizuho*, and also to divine if the “red snow” would be good for the Emperor's eyes. Evidently, the divination gave a positive answer, for on the 28th day there were exorcisms (*kaji*) performed over the medicine and, subsequently, it was administered to the Emperor. It may be added that it was not very effective, and Sanjō tennō after the treatment was still as blind as before. On the 4th day of the 5th moon a lady in waiting possessed by a spirit proclaimed that the Emperor's illness was due to the possession by the *zake* (malicious spirit) of the late Emperor Beizei. Perhaps this announcement saved the reputation of the red snow and Abe Yoshihira.

⁷² *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XXIV,19.

In the 11th moon of 1025 Sanesuke's daughter had a finger bitten by a rat. The wound was bleeding alarmingly, and Sanesuke consulted Wake Sukenari, a physician, who ordered to make fomentations of brewed licorice (*kanzō*, *Glycyrrhiza glabra*), and next, to burn a cat's excrements and to put the ash on the wound. As there was some doubt if the accident had not been caused by a supernatural power, an *ommyōji* was summoned, too, and asked to make a horoscope. The results of divining pointed to a mild *tatari* of the Kitano deity.

Ash of various origin was often applied for stopping haemorrhage. In case of Sanesuke's daughter the cat's excrements were proposed because the lady was bitten by a rat. It is a pure example of application of sympathetic magic in medicine.

As an illustration of the medical proficiency may serve the story from the *Konjaku monogatari* which is included into the part devoted to prominent specialists in various branches of science and art.

A group of men from the imperial guards (*takiguchi*) enjoyed themselves in the palace gardens. They sent one of them to buy sake. Many hours passed, they waited and waited, but the man did not come back. The men were disappointed and suspicious, but at last they had to give up their hope for the dispatched *takiguchi*'s return with sake. The next day they went to his home to inquire. It turned out that he had returned home but collapsed on a mat and could not speak a word. He looked so strange that the friends went to the most famous physician, Tamba Tadaaki. The doctor ordered to prepare a lot of ash and put the patient into the pile. After two or three hours of this treatment the patient began to show signs of recovery. They gave him some water to drink, and then he could tell them what had happened to him. When he had been just leaving the palace grounds, all around him had suddenly darkened. He had heard a roar, he had seen a brilliant light, and he had lost consciousness. Tadaaki, to whom it was reported, gave his diagnosis: the *takiguchi*'s illness was caused by a dragon seen by him. The story ends in praise of Tadaaki as an incomparably wise physician⁷³.

This Tadaaki was, in fact, highly valued in the highest circles of society for his medical skill. He treated the most prominent personages – Michinaga among them. In the *Shōyūki* the last illness of Michinaga is described. He had (among other ailments) suppurating abscesses which Tadaaki probed with a needle. During the treatment Michinaga roared with pain. The next day he died⁷⁴.

There were many kinds of medicines in use but it seems that they were not believed as powerful as the *kaji kitō* ministrations, and other magic rites. Anyhow, in the *Shōyūki* and *Midō kampaku ki* there are many entries concerning illness of one or another Emperor, Empress or Crown Prince, and there are usually given many particulars of mystic rites, while mentions of medicines are very scarce. Some

⁷³ *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XXIV,11.

⁷⁴ *Shōyūki* 1027, the 2nd, 3rd and 4th days of the 12th moon.

ministrating monks were highly praised, while others were condemned for their lack of positive results. The human element in treating illness was considered the most important one. It was firmly believed that people – and especially monks – could accumulate a supernatural power (*ken*, *kenryoku*, *iryoku*) through prayers, special diet and austerities. The monks who were believed to possess a supernatural power were particularly called *genza* (mighty persons, persons of might). This appellation was closely associated with *shugenja*, or *shugyōsha* – persons following the *shugendō* (the “way of ascetic practices”) who mostly lived in mountain hermitages or in mountain temples and practised mystic arts.

The origin and history of the *shugendō* movement are not quite clear. In Japanese dictionaries and standard books on history there is usually mentioned En no Ozuno as the forerunner of the movement. There are several entries concerning him scattered in chronicles of the Nara period, but the longest description is to be found in the *Reiki* (I, 28). It gives the legend of Ozuno written down about a hundred years after the man’s demise, as he was supposed to live at the turn of the 7th and 8th centuries.

En no Ozuno of the *Reiki* was an *ubasoko* (or *ubasoku* – Buddhist who practised the religion outside any monasteries). He was very clever and diligent in pursuance of his studies. Gaining a supernatural power was his most ardent desire. He wanted to fly and reach the land of immortals (*senkyū*) and then to live there in the wonderful gardens (*okusai no niwa*, *zuigai no en*) inhaling the vapours of immortality (*yōshō no ki*). Having this aim in view he withdrew to the Katsuragi mountain where, while living in a cavern, he practised severe austerities and studied secret formulae of the Peacock sutra (*Kujaku no zuhō*). After some time he attained a miraculous power and could give commands to gods and demons. He ordered demons to construct a bridge between the Katsuragi and Kimpū mountains. The demons did not like the task and the deity Hitokotonushi falsely accused Ozuno of high treason. The Emperor sent a messenger with the order to arrest Ozuno but the latter could not be caught on account of his supernatural power. Then his mother was taken as a hostage and Ozuno, showing his filial piety, surrendered to the authorities. He was banished to Izu. In daytime he stayed on an island but every night he crossed the sea and climbed Mount Fuji and practised austerities. He could fly and he could walk over the surface of the sea. He was released from Izu after three years. As he finally became an immortal he soared into the sky (*tsui ni sen te narite ten ni tobiki*). Before leaving the earth he bound with a spell that treacherous deity, Hitokotonushi.

It is evident from this story that there are mixed elements of Taoism and Buddhism in the legend of Ozuno. He was an *ubasoko* and studied the *Kujaku* sutra, but at the same time he longed for immortality which stood in obvious opposition to the Buddhist teaching. He practised austerities that were similar in both religions, but he used spells for harmful purpose which was tolerated neither by Buddhism

nor by Taoism. And, for a good measure, there is the Confucian element of filial piety interwoven into the story, as well.

While reading this story we must not forget that it was written down by Keikai, a man with evangelic zeal, and it was written down about a hundred years after Ozuno. During one century many elements can be changed in any legend. In case of Ozuno the Buddhist elements could have been added at the time when the Buddhist Church began to claim the exclusive right to the supernatural power of its adepts. The esoteric sects (Shingon and Tendai) from the very beginning (i.e. from the first years of the 9th century) had the ambition of monopolizing the occult arts.

In the legend of Ozuno and his followers, who were numerous, one may see other than Buddhist or Taoist elements, too, namely, the old Shintoist necromantic practices connected with the cult of mountains. “The worship of sacred mountains is of prior date to the arrival of Buddhism in Japan. We can think that Buddhism made use of this in propagation of its faith. (...) There are many mountains where the dead are said to go...”⁷⁵. One of such sacred mountains was Katsuragi san where En no Ozuno lived in his cavern; another one was Kimpuzan which he wanted to unite with Katsuragi by means of a bridge. These two mountains became favourite places of ascetics practising magic arts. One may suppose that the dwellers of the mountains were recruited not necessarily from Buddhist ranks. There are documents preserved in court chronicles calling the ascetics sorcerers practising “unorthodox sorcery” (*iha no zujutsu, gejutsu*) and naming some of them shamans (*miko, kannagi*)⁷⁶. From time to time there were even imperial edicts issued forbidding magic and divination practised by the dwellers of the mountains. In 807 an edict was issued in the following terms: “Priests, diviners and the like take advantage of the common people by wantonly interpreting good and evil omens. The people in their ignorance put faith in their predictions, so that gradually false cults come to flourish and evil magic to prosper. They are henceforth strictly forbidden and all persons studying these arts, or continuing to practice them, will be banished”⁷⁷. The banishment of En no Ozuno to Izu may be an echo of this edict, which Keikai probably had fresh in mind while writing his *Reiiki*.

From *Reiiki* up to the *Konjaku monogatari* through all the novels and diaries of the period there are very many mentions of people practising sorcery. Most of them belonged to the Buddhist Church although their links with the church were often very lax. They were called variously: *genza, shugenja, shugyōsha, ubasoko, biku, ubai, bikuni* (the last two appellations were for women), and *yamabushi*⁷⁸. They dressed

⁷⁵ Kunio 1970:148,149. Cf. also Yi, Ki Yong 1974. *The Buddhist Land ideology of Silla and Japan Prevalent in the 7th and 8th Centuries as Viewed from the Viewpoint of Their Symbolic Expression*. In: *Kannichi kodai bunka kūshōshi kenkyū*, Soul.

⁷⁶ Cf. Tarō 1975:35–54.

⁷⁷ Quoted after Sansom 1973:191.

⁷⁸ This appellation became popular after the Heian period.

in monkish garb and carried Buddhist accessories with them. They were believed to know powerful spells and, at least some of them, to possess a supernatural power. There were even contests among them (*ken kurabe* – “comparison of powers”). For example, the ex-Emperor Kazan, after he became a monk, studied mystic arts and accumulated a great spiritual power. He challenged another monk of the *shugenja* ranks and he succeeded in drawing the monk to a folding screen. He kept the monk fastened there and not able to move for some time, and at last released him⁷⁹. Wakamori Taro quotes after *Shoku nihon kōki* that in 848, on the 18th day of the 2nd moon, there was in the Seiryōden pavilion performed a sutra reading. After the reading few hundred monks were subjected to an examination of their powers⁸⁰.

The comparison of powers was one of not unpopular topics in the Heian literature. One of the typical stories is in the *Konjaku monogatari* about a *shugyōsha* from Toshino who practised austerities at the Kiyotaki River. He gained a great spiritual power but at last he became too sure of himself. It was his custom to send his bowl for water whenever he felt thirsty. The bowl flew to the river empty and returned full. One day the monk saw that another bowl flew to the river, too, and after filling itself with water it went away. Observing the phenomenon for a few consecutive days the monk decided to meet and put to trial the owner of the rival bowl. He went after the bowl into the mountains and after some wanderings he reached a small hermit's hut bidden among profusion of wild flowers. Inside the hut sat an old man peacefully sleeping. The monk of Kiyotaki “recited a spell lighting up the fire and made some magic gestures” (*kakai no shu wo yomite kaji suru ni ...*). The fire started in the hut but the old man, without opening his eyes, extinguished it with water from his censer. The water cascaded from the hut and reaching the monk of Kiyotaki put his clothes aflame. The monk burning and screaming fell on the ground. Just then the old man opened his eyes and again using the water from his censer he extinguished the flames. The monk of Kiyotaki recognized the old man's superiority. He apologized humbly and begged to be received as a pupil. The old man did not consent⁸¹.

Sending a bowl for water or for alms served as a favourite example demonstrating a spiritual power of a magician. This trick is described in many stories, but not all the persons who could do the trick were kept in high esteem by the authors. The monk of Kiyotaki is treated in the story with some contempt as a man who had not achieved illumination although he was clever in some tricks of a low grade. There are other tales in the *Konjaku monogatari* about people (not necessarily monks) who practised the *gesu* magic and could change sandals or clothes into small animals. They could enter a cow or a horse through its rectum and leave

⁷⁹ Ōkagami 1967:148–149.

⁸⁰ Tarō 1975:60.

⁸¹ *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XX,39.

through its mouth. They could emit strange sounds from their abdomens, and so on. Such tricks performed only for other people's amazement were considered sinful and, at least in some cases, were associated with *tengu*'s activities. In the story XX, 9 it is stated plainly that "people doing such tricks perpetrate acts which are extremely sinful" (*kono yō no waza suru mono kiwamete tsumi fukai koto domo wo zo su*). Similar conclusions may be found in other stories, too. Here we would like to recapitulate one more story which has the same special points of interest.

A young *takiguchi* – his name was Michinori – was sent north as an imperial messenger. On his way through the Shinano province he stopped for the night at the house of a county official. He was very hospitably received by the host and had the house left at his disposal. At night, walking through the house he encountered a sleeping beauty all alone in a room, and very encouragingly posed. He could not resist the temptation, and the lady to his amazement and delight did not protest when he entered her bed. But very soon his delight turned into an abject horror. He felt a terrible pain and jumping from the bed he discovered that he lost his penis. The lady seeing his predicament only smiled slightly. Michinori escaped to his chamber and wondering about the strange adventure he set his mind on solving the puzzle. Accordingly, he sent one of his servants to the lady. The servant returned somehow discomfited and queer but did not say anything. Michinori then sent one after another seven or eight men, and all returned with startled looks on their faces. The next day they left the house very early in the morning and were overtaken on the road by their former host's messenger with "parting gifts" in a package. Michinori unfolded white paper and found inside nine penes. They were returned to their owners. Michinori was deeply impressed by the county official's magic and resolved to become his pupil. After finishing his business in the north he went again to the house in Shinano and humbly asked to be received as a disciple. The host agreed to the request. He ordered Michinori to fast for seven days and to make ablutions every day. On the eighth day they went deep into the mountains. The master standing on a big river's bank expressed his renouncement of Buddhism and "made various things and uttered unspeakably sinful oaths" (*samazama no koto domo wo shite omoiwazu tsumi fukaki seigon wo namu tatekeri*). Next, turning toward Michinori he said: "I'll enter the river. You must embrace the thing that will come to you from the water, let it be a devil or a god". So saying he entered the river. At once the sky darkened, there was a roar of thunder and a terrible wind brought rain and stirred up the water. A moment later there appeared from the river a monstrous snake. Michinori took flight in panic and hid himself in the tall grass. The master returned soon and expressed his regret at Michinori's cowardice, but gave him one more chance. He again entered the river. This time, a monstrous boar appeared and charged at Michinori. The latter, determined to die rather than to lose his chance, caught the beast into his arms. The beast turned itself into a piece of decayed wood. The master returned again and said that because Michinori did

not stand the first test he would not be able to learn the trick with taking off penes. But because he passed agreeably the second test he would learn some other tricks. And, indeed, Michinori learned how to change sandals into puppies or into a big fish, and other harmless tricks. He became quite famous among his colleagues and his fame reached even the Emperor. The Emperor summoned him and wanted to learn the magic, too. The Emperor became so absorbed in this new amusement that he forgot about religion and, finally, he became insane⁸². There is also a similar conclusion as in the previous story: it is an awful sin to indulge in “unorthodox magic” (*sambō*⁸³ *ni tagau jutsu*).

The special points of interest in this story are: the magician of the story being a county official, which is rather unique in literary descriptions; a long account of instruction in black magic, which is rather rare; the trick with taking off penes as directly connected with the snake ordeal, which points to a phallic symbolism expressed by means of snakes⁸⁴; the formulated conviction that the Emperor’s insanity was caused by his overindulgence in magic. The Emperor in question was Yōzei⁸⁵ and he was, in fact, insane; then it is explicitly said that black magic demanded a renouncement of the Buddhist religion. The latter point may show the same influence of the Buddhist Church as could be seen behind the edict of 807, and thus, we would be inclined to treat the story as belonging to the same period, the period when the reformatory zeal of Saichō and Kukai was at its peak. In the 9th century there was yet a clear demarcation line between various kinds of magic – orthodox and unorthodox from the Buddhist point of view. Later on, all kinds tended to merge, and the Buddhist monks, *ommyōji* and Shintō priests performed the same religious services (e.g. *harae*), while the kinds of magic represented by them came to be mixed together, at least in the popular perception.

The process of merging began in the mountains where the first and most important point of contact between Shintō and Buddhism occurred, and where syncretic forms of both religions were born⁸⁶. It was also in the mountains that the movement known as *shugendō* developed, which at the beginning (in the period of En no Ozuno) was sometimes persecuted as unorthodox, but later on came to be treated tolerantly, and finally gained official acceptance. Also in the mountains some ascetics lived who did not belong to the *shugenja* ranks, but were also considered spiritual descendants of Ozuno.

As has already been mentioned, some Taoist elements are evident in the legend of Ozuno. Some principles of Taoism came to Japan probably long before Buddhism, but did not find a popular following. In the Heian period various Chinese legends

⁸² *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XX,10.

⁸³ *Sambō* – “three treasures”, i.e. Buddhism.

⁸⁴ This kind of symbolism is still evident in Japan.

⁸⁵ Reigned 876–884.

⁸⁶ Tendai Shintō (Sanno ichijitsu Shintō), Shingon Shintō and others.

circulated among the population about Taoist immortals (alluded to in the *Makura no sōshi* and *Genji monogatari*, among others), and also at the end of the 11th century Ōe Masafusa compiled the first Japanese collection of stories about *sennin* (immortals) called *Hon chō shinsen den*. There were originally 37 stories, but 7 have been lost. Most of the stories concern people who attained a supernatural power and immortality through a special training regiment, austerities and diet. Tale number 8 is the most famous one – about the fallen *sennin* of Kume. It is repeated in the *Konjaku monogatari* (XI, 24), and later on it appears in many versions and various literary allusions. The *sennin* of Kume lost his immortality and his supernatural power when, flying over a river, he saw a girl washing clothes and in that instant he became enamoured with the girl's white feet. He fell down, married the girl, and lived as an ordinary human being. According to the *Konjaku monogatari* version, after some time he was asked to help with the construction works in the capital. He fasted and prayed for seven days and some of his supernatural power came back to him. He caused the timber to fly over to the construction site, propelled by his will.

An earlier Japanese tale may be found in the *Reiiki* (I,13). It is repeated in the *Konjaku monogatari* (XX, 42) and it is of a special interest for us as it concerns a woman who gained a supernatural power and one day soared into the sky. Her name is given as Nuribe, a wife of Maro. It should be noted that Nuribe Maro in the *Taketori monogatari* was the bamboo-cutter who found Kaguyahime.

The *sennin* magic (*senjutsu*) was believed in, but it did not belong to those categories of magic that were considered useful in the everyday life of common people. The immortals lived somewhere in the background of the society. They were hermits without any social ambitions – neither fearful like *tengu* nor helpful like *shugyōsha* – and it was not practical to seek their advice in case of emergency. The stories about them formed colourful fairytales, pleasant topics of conversation, and as such entered literary fiction, but did not find their way into the diaries.

There was yet another group of magicians, perhaps the most numerous one, which exercised great influence upon people of non-aristocratic classes. It was the caste of shamans operating in the countryside or among the ignorant masses of town folk.

Shamanic practices are the oldest magic practices in Japan. They originated in times immemorial from animistic beliefs and necromantic rites. They are well documented in the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, but later on they show a tendency to disappear from written documents. As has already been remarked, after the period of *Reiiki* the mentions of *miko* or *kannagi* become very scarce, and native diviners, necromancers and healers are more and more often replaced by *shugenja* and *ommyōji*. It does not mean that they gradually disappeared from real life. Far from it. There are in the Heian literature (*Genji monogatari*, *Eiga monogatari*, *Makura no sōshi*, etc.) many fragmentary remarks showing various *miko* or *kannagi* as

forming an integral part of society. But they are treated with scorn by writers who thought Buddhist and Ommyōdō magic much superior to native practices. Native shamans simply fell out of favour, had gone out of fashion among members of the aristocratic society. Nevertheless, when other, more fashionable means of healing have failed, even at the highest level of society people would turn for help to those unpopular specialists. For example, when the “red snow” failed to cure Emperor Sanjō’s eye disease, there was on the 13th day of the 6th moon summoned a male shaman (*onoko kannagi*) to treat the Emperor in the old, traditional manner (*Midō kampaku ki*). Michinaga does not give any description of the treatment, but one may suppose that it was something similar to the treatment described by Sei Shōnagon but on a more grand scale.

Even if native practices have been pushed aside and, to some extent suppressed by the *kaji kito* rites, they have shown an astounding vitality. In present day Japan there are many still active female healers, sorcerers and diviners called *miko*, or *ichiko* or, in some regions, *monoshiribito*⁸⁷. The latter name is of ancient origin – it appears in old ritual prayers, *norito*⁸⁸ where it indicates “people who could understand spirits”⁸⁹. There have always been people credited popularly with the power of communicating with spirits and of influencing them in the interest of individuals or a community. In Japan this belief is of greatest antiquity, and it seems that mostly women have been cast for the role of intermediaries between this world and the world of spirits. It can be explained on the one hand by the tradition going back to the times of matriarchy when the female sovereigns had to combine their political authority with the sacerdotal one. On the other hand, women have always been more impressionable, physically and mentally weaker than men, and therefore more easily stirred to ecstatic states which have always been treated as signs of spirits’ descent into human beings.

It is generally asserted⁹⁰ that suggestion and autosuggestion have always been important elements in honestly practised shamanism and also in other than shamanic exorcising, divining or healing rites. By “honest shamanism” we mean here various divining, exorcising or healing practices performed by people who are deeply convinced that they can really see or hear or in any other way perceive spirits’ messages. The effects of suggestion or hypnosis may be recognized in the trances of *yorimashi*. Probably not everybody could have been chosen for the role. It was probably believed that the ability to become an animated medium for spirits was a supernatural gift manifesting itself spontaneously in some persons only. The *yorimashi* had to be persons prone to hypnotic influences. They were chosen mostly

⁸⁷ Ikeda 1974:208.

⁸⁸ The *norito* have been handed down in unchanged form from the past unknown. They were written down in 927 as a part of the *Engishiki* compilation (scroll 8).

⁸⁹ The component *mono* means, of course, “spirits”.

⁹⁰ Moszyński 1958:639–45.

from amongst young girls. In their trances they uttered oracles and revelations which they did not remember afterwards. The seance described by Sei Shōnagon is a very typical one. A similar description may be found in the *Genji monogatari*, but there a little boy is shown as a *yorimashi*.

An untypical example of self-suggestion may be brought up here, that of poor Chisō – the *azari* who became possessed by a *mononoke* during Empress Akiko's confinement. His case is quite an ironical one, for it was his role to control the traffic of spirits and to direct them into the bodies of substitutes. But evidently he was so overpowered by the noise and the general atmosphere of anxiety that he succumbed to hysterics interpreted by himself in terms of possession by a *mononoke*.

The self-conviction that they could communicate with various spirits was at the base of activity of shamans, *shugenja*, *ommyōji*, and other miracle-doers if they treated their vocations honestly and seriously. But certainly, there were also dishonest individuals occupying themselves with pretended magic arts, who consciously deceived ignorant people by means of ventriloquy, hypnosis, and tricks of legerdemain. Such individuals may be recognized in some magicians' descriptions and condemned by the author of the *Konjaku monogatari* in several tales.

IV. MANTIC PRACTICES

The wish to penetrate the darkness of the future or hidden things of the past and present has been common to all people in the world since times immemorial. In Japan, archeology reveals traces of practising scapulomancy (*futomani*) in the earliest neolithic period. All the written documents, beginning from the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, include numerous mentions of variegated mantic practices. The Taihō code established two important government offices concerned with divination: one of them was Ommyōryō under the Ministry of Central Affairs, the other belonged to the Jingikan and consisted of specialists called *urabe*.

Urabe was the general term for diviners. In ancient Japan in various localities several professional groups were called by that word (*ura* means “divination”, *be* – “professional group”). The most famous ones came from Izu, Iki and Tsushima, and amongst them, the most outstanding individuals were employed at the court. According to Wada Eishō⁹¹, the Jingikan customarily employed in the Heian period five *urabe* from Izu, five from Iki, and ten from Tsushima. The word, primarily denoting the professional function only, came to be used as the surname. The professional Urabe developed into clans in the capital as well as in the provinces. Their functions were hereditary and chiefly concerned with divination. Such ritual activities as casting the *nademono* into the river during the ceremony of *ōharae*, or pronouncing ritual prayers at the time of some other Shintoist ceremonies⁹² belonged to less frequently performed but also very important functions.

The *urabe* who continued the old tradition of mantic practices used quite a primitive method of divination by a tortoise shell, called *kame ura* (or *kame no uranai*, *kiboku*). In comparison with *ommyōji*, their activities were limited and they were not very popular among the common people. Probably the *kame ura* method was considered too troublesome and too old-fashioned. Nevertheless, the *urabe*

⁹¹ Eishō 1953:28.

⁹² E.g. *hishizume no matsuri*, *michiae no matsuri*, etc.

held firmly their position of official diviners in all matters pertaining to Shintō in those aspects which were sponsored by the ruling dynasty.

The official diviners of both governmental organs were continuously kept busy with many matters pertaining to the affairs of the state, and also with private matters of the imperial family. They received their ranks, offices and their salaries exclusively for such services. They could just as well be employed, as it has already been mentioned by private persons, and then were given additional allowances.

The official duties of diviners included activities for various purposes and were executed by various methods. At the court they had, if not a monopoly, then at least a predominance over other practitioners. Outside the court they had many competitors.

The results of divination (independently of the agent or method) have always had two aspects; some of them formed revelations of the future, while others were advisory, or both aspects could have been mixed. By revelations of the future we mean here horoscopes and foretelling future events or effects of some undertakings, and foretelling people's good or bad fortune. Such revelations concerned matters believed to have been determined and unchangeable and, consequently, demanded no overt action, but only a passive acknowledgement. By advisory results we mean those which led people to some action directed at avoiding evil or bringing out luck. Both aspects of divination – as a knowledge in itself and as an advice (often subsidiary or preparatory to magic) are evident in the main two branches of mantic practices (except prognostication) we would like to mention, namely: deliberate divination or divination proper, and interpretation of dreams and omens.

1. Divination proper

Into this category we include all mantic practices which were deliberately undertaken by people in order to obtain a forecast or advice by supernatural means. They ranged from very simple actions to elaborate services which employed many people. Some of them were based on intuitive methods, others demanded the use of sophisticated pseudo-scientific apparatus. Most of them have survived up to this day⁹³. In our review we shall limit ourselves to the most popular ones.

1.1. Clairvoyance

There have always been persons possessing, or claiming to possess, a supernatural power of seeing things unseen by other people or hearing things unheard

⁹³ Hearn 1960:151–152.

by others. It was believed that such a gift could have been developed by special austerities or could have been inborn. Some practitioners had to make prolonged preparations in order to achieve a proper psychomantic state of mind and body. In order to come into contact with spirits they had to abstain from food, sexual intercourse and other activities considered ritually impure. Such fasting often leads to abnormal psychical states – ecstasy, hypnosy, autohypnosy, hallucinations⁹⁴ which are interpreted as signs of having achieved contact with supernatural powers. There were also practitioners who could divine while refraining from any special preparation, with or without any particular inspiration. Theirs was an inborn talent. It could have been false or possibly real. About the latter kind Moszyński writes “it would be nonsense to eliminate *in limine* the possibility of its existence”⁹⁵.

In the *Ōkagami* (pp.168–169) and in the *Konjaku monogatari* (XXXI, 26) a lady appears who was known as Uchifushi no miko⁹⁶ (shamaness in the reclining position). She gained that cognomen because she divined reclining on her back. She was a well-bred lady. She claimed that a deity of the Kamo shrine spoke through her, and she could tell people’s past and future very accurately. According to the *Ōkagami*, Kaneie was under such a deep impression of her words that he engaged her on a permanent basis. Whenever he wanted a forecast or an advice, he would dress in his ceremonial garments and visit her. He let her put her head on his lap and divine in this position. Never once was he disappointed in her predictions.

In the *Konjaku monogatari* version it is said that Uchifushi was famous for her fortune-telling and people from all over the city gathered at her house. From time to time it happened that she was mistaken, but in a great majority of cases she was unflinchingly right.

It seems that the lady was an authentic person as there is in the *Makura no sōshi* a lady in waiting mentioned who was a “daughter of Uchifushi”⁹⁷.

In both texts concerning Uchifushi no miko it is not stated whether she heard the voice of the Kamo deity or if she saw some images which she interpreted. In case of a monk called Tōshō the *Konjaku monogatari* text is more explicit. He could tell the future by looking at people, observing their behaviour and listening to their voices. Besides, he also had premonitions.

One day passing the Suzakumon gate he saw a crowd of people resting under its roof. They looked to him as if they were to die soon. He wondered why it was so. Eliminating all possible reasons he reached the conclusion that the structure would fall down. He warned the people. There was panic, people began to run in

⁹⁴ Moszyński 1934:417.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 368, footnote 2.

⁹⁶ She is also called *kannagi* in the same paragraph.

⁹⁷ *Makura no sōshi* 1958:219–20.

all directions, and then the roof of the gate broke down and the whole structure collapsed to the ground. Those who were slow escaping died on the spot.

The same Tōshō stayed at his home on one rainy night. From the street the sound of flute music came to him. Listening to it for a moment Tōshō became sure that the flutist was destined to die very soon. He was greatly surprised the next day when he heard again the same sounds of the flute. He could not believe his ears and he invited the flutist home. It appeared then that the flutist had participated in a Buddhist ceremony at night. It had saved his life⁹⁸. And Tōshō's reputation or self-esteem, too.

1.2. Physiognomy

Tōshō was able to tell the future of people by looking at their faces, but we do not classify his method as physiognomy (*kansō*, *ninsō*) because he based his predictions on intuition, while physiognomy was considered to be a branch of science. There were various textbooks explaining how to interpret the most minute details of facial structure and expressions. There were specialists (*sōnin*) who practised the native physiognomy (*yamato sō*) and from time to time Korean physiognomists appeared in the capital, too. It seems that this kind of divination was very popular as there are many mentions concerning the subject in most of the novels and in some diaries.

There are some longish descriptions of physiognomists at work in the *Ōkagami*. At first there was a Buddhist monk called Jinzen (?–990). One day summoned to the palace he was engaged by several ladies in waiting. He was asked about the fortunes of Fujiwara Michitaka, the latter's brother Michikane, and his son Korechika. Jinzen foretold their particular fortunes but each time he ended his prophecy with a remark on the splendid future of Michinaga. His obstinate repetitions turned the attention of the listeners to the favoured man. "Why do you speak of him in this way?" they asked. The physiognomist explained that Michinaga's features are the most promising according to the rules of physiognomy. They are "like a tiger's cub crossing a peak of a steep mountain" (*tora no ko no kewashiki yama no mine wo wataru ga gotoshi*)⁹⁹, which are the most favourable among all possible features¹⁰⁰.

This fragment ends with a high praise of Jinzen's foresight. The next fragment shows a Korean to whom many people came to have their fortunes told. It seems that his customers came from every strata of the society. Among them, as seen by

⁹⁸ *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XXIV,21.

⁹⁹ It looks like a quotation from a textbook on physiognomy but the source is unknown. Cf. *Ōkagami* 1967:220, commentary 13.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 220–221.

Shigeki (one of the narrators in the *Ōkagami*) there were highest dignitaries of the state (brothers Tokihira, Nakahira and Tadahira) and many people of the commoners' class. Shigeki himself was of a humble origin. During his second visit to the Korean he saw Fujiwara Saneyori disguised as a commoner, too. The physiognomist recognized him at once as a nobleman¹⁰¹.

A remark of Shigeki is of some interest. When asked by somebody if he had been to a physiognomist (*sōnin*) he answered "I have not been to such a man, but went only to a Korean..." (*saru hito ni mo miehaberazariki. Tada Komabito no moto ni...*)¹⁰². It looks from it that by the word *sōnin* (without any qualifier) only a Japanese physiognomist was meant. The word *tada* "but only" in Shigeki's answer has perhaps a slight pejorative flavour.

The *Genji monogatari* also gives an interesting insight concerning a Korean physiognomist. At the time when the Emperor, Genji's father, was most troubled about the boy's prospects, a very clever Korean physiognomist came to the capital. In deepest secret the Emperor had the boy disguised as a child of a low rank retainer and sent to the Korean¹⁰³. The physiognomist was enchanted by the boy's noble aspect and unusual mental abilities, but he advised against promoting him to the highest dignity. The Emperor, much impressed, summoned the court astrologer and the latter's opinion did not differ from that of the Korean. Thus, Genji's destiny was sealed. The name Minamoto was bestowed on him and he was in this manner cut off from any aspirations to the throne¹⁰⁴.

1.3. Astrology and horoscopy

The astrologer who influenced Genji's destiny is called in the text *sukuyō no kashikoki michi no hito* which may be translated as "a clever man perusing the way of stars". The word *sukuyō* (or *sukuyōdō*) denoted an astrological system of Hindu origin which came to Japan via China together with Buddhism by which it had been adopted and codified in the form of the *Sukuyōkyō* sutra. The system was based on not very precise astronomical observations and on the belief that there existed a close correlation between the movements of celestial bodies and the human world. It was believed that by observing the way of the stars it was possible to predict people's future, to designate their auspicious or inauspicious days and directions. The system centered around seven stars which corresponded to seven days of the week, hence the second component *yō* (days) in the word *sukuyō*. The first com-

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 279–280.

¹⁰² Ibid., 279.

¹⁰³ It was impossible to summon him to the palace because of prohibitive regulations issued during Uta tennō's reign.

¹⁰⁴ *Genji monogatari* 1974–5:I,43–5.

ponent *suku* (lodging or station) indicated 28 points of intersection of the so called “white way” of the moon with the “yellow way” of the sun and with the “red way” of the central stars. It was believed that the celestial bodies repeated their respective rounds every day and night, and that they had their transitory lodgings on the points of intersection.

From the Heian literature the *sukuyōdō* does not emerge as a clearly defined system either scientific or mantic. According to the *Heian chō bungaku jiten*, it was even mixed in the popular imagination with the physiognomy¹⁰⁵. Such a conclusion seems to be rather exaggerated. It probably depended on the individual. Lady Murasaki never mixed such things, as it is evident from the above described fragment of the *Genji monogatari*. For her physiognomy was quite a different method of fortune-telling than astrology. But she was probably an exceptionally gifted person and, judging by her works, with a strong inclination for “pigeonholing” various problems. To other, less clever people, the ultimate purpose of fortune telling was the most important and they were not concerned with the methods, which they left to specialists.

Some confusion could have existed in case of astrology as all the matters connected with the celestial bodies were left to the Ommyōryō functionaries. They adopted the *sukuyō* system but, it seems, the system tended to be merged with the Chinese calendrical divination based on the *ommyō gogyō setsu*.

It should be repeated here that the *ommyō gogyō* theory was founded on the *on* and *yō* dichotomy expressing itself in five elements: fire, water, wood, metal and earth. The elements were not thought of in the terms of concrete embodiments of these substances but as abstract powers correlated to other abstract ideas such as: directions, colours, numbers, tastes, smells, human organs, etc.¹⁰⁶. For example, the element “fire” had its correlatives in: southern direction, red colour, number 7, bitter taste, burning smell, human lungs, etc. Such and other similar categories constituted “a network of relationships knitting the human and nonhuman parts of the cosmos into a single fabric. A pull on one thread in this fabric would inevitably produce effects elsewhere. Done in the wrong way, it might induce strains which could tear the fabric, but properly performed, it could relieve such strains and restore the fabric to its original equilibrium”¹⁰⁷. The art of divination called *shikisen* was based on such premises. The term may be translated as calendrical divination or, perhaps, horoscopy, though both English terms are not quite adequate. The *shikisen* divination was performed by means of the *shikiban* (divining board) on which various combinations of cosmic correlatives were graphically represented

¹⁰⁵ See *Heian chō bungaku jiten* 1972:376. This conclusion is based on a fragment in the *Hamamatsu chūnagon monogatari*, and other unspecified sources.

¹⁰⁶ Bodde 1975:37–8.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

and oriented according to the points of compass, according to the season, year and day, and according to the cyclic movements of divinities governing the respective points in time and space.

The system was a very complicated one and demanded high skill in mathematics. It was exclusively the domain of *ommyōji* whose one of the most important duties was the presentation of seasonal horoscopes to the Emperor and the Council of State, and also the preparation of the *guchūreki* calendars with the aim to designate all the inauspicious days (*kuenichi*, *kannichi*, *imibi* and *others*).

1.4. Divination by the Book of Change

While writing about divination in Japan at the close of the 19th century Chamberlain wrote: "... but the greatest favourite is divination by means of the Eight Diagrams of classical China. No careful observer can walk through the streets of any large city without noticing here and there a little stall where a fortune-teller sits with his divining rods in front of him, and small blocks inscribed with sets of horizontal lines, some whole, some cut in two. The manipulation of these paraphernalia embodies a highly complicated system of divination called *Eki*, literally "Changes", which is of immemorial antiquity..."¹⁰⁸. We can repeat it word for word after the distinguished Author even now, in the seventies of the 20th century.

That system of divination was very well known in the Heian period, although it was possibly not as popular as the *shikisen* system. *Eki* (or *ekizei*, *eki no ura*) was based on interpretation of a Chinese classic *I-ching* (*The Book of Change*)¹⁰⁹. "The original divination corpus probably dates from early Chou. The supplemental 10 'wings' or appendices – falsely attributed by some to Confucius – are probably of varying Chou or early Han date"¹¹⁰. The text expresses the ideas of pre-Confucian and pre-Taoist philosophy which was based on the dualistic theory of female and male principles producing all phenomena through their interaction. That unending process of interblending is symbolised in the *Book of Change* in the form of trigrams consisting of broken (female) and unbroken (male) lines. There are eight trigrams called: *ken*, *da*, *ri*, *shin*, *son*, *kan*, *gon*, *kon*. The combinations of every two trigrams give 64 hexagrams. All hexagrams are provided with explanations in the form of the main text, commentaries and additional information in regard to the so called moving or dynamic lines. On account of the appearance of dynamic lines there are possibly more than 4 thousand answers to every question.

¹⁰⁸ Chamberlain 1905:121.

¹⁰⁹ The singular form "Change" instead of "Changes" follows after Blofeld, John 1965. *The Book of Change*, London.

¹¹⁰ Quoted after Bodde 1975:408.

In order to determine the lines, the diviner needs fifty divining rods (*medoki*, *zeichiku*). By dividing them into groups containing from one to four rods, and then bunching them together eighteen times, the diviner establishes six lines forming one hexagram. Every line is established by three counting processes. If all six lines are static then the resulting hexagram contains the whole answer to the question. In case of dynamic lines in the hexagram, the answer becomes more detailed, as the interpreter must examine more data in three stages: 1) the initial hexagram; 2) each dynamic line separately (one to six possibilities); and 3) a new hexagram must be formed in which every dynamic line is converted into its opposite, and then, that new hexagram must be analysed. If some disparities occur between the answers found in the first hexagram as a whole and in its dynamic lines – then the meaning expressed by the lines must be given precedence over the main text. In case of contradictions between the initial hexagram and the second one, there is no need to give precedence because the contradictions express two stages of the same idea.

In the *eki* divination the advisory aspect was more pronounced. It gave answers to specific questions, mostly in the form of hints or vague pointers to the best course in a given situation.

One may suppose that the ladies of the Heian period had no questions to ask – the *eki ura* method does not appear in their diaries, while in the diaries of gentlemen (*Midō kampaku ki*, *Shōyūki*) it is mentioned several times.

1.5. Mixed and miscellaneous mantle practices

Astrology, horoscopy, physiognomy and divination by means of the *Book of Change* belonged to the sophisticated, pseudoscientific mantic methods, which demanded text books and a specialized knowledge on the part of diviners. The *kame no ura* divination formed also a hermetic, narrow specialization guarded closely by the *urabe* diviners. All these methods, except physiognomy, were reserved for the aristocracy on account of the agents employing them. Judging by the pertinent entries in the *Midō kampaku ki*, the private services of *ommyōji* were expensive. Besides, the specialists on the government payroll belonged to the privileged class and did not like imparting their knowledge to commoners. And conversely, the members of aristocracy did not seek revelations or advice on their future from the diviners of lower classes. Because of that rigid class distinction we know very little about other methods of divination which certainly must have existed among the common people.

Various practices of a very primitive kind have survived up to the present. Their origin may be found in the pre-Heian times, but they are either not documented or documented inadequately in the Heian literature. Here and there one may only get a glimpse of something like a divining method though insufficient for even the

scantiest description. Besides, as has been written above, the results of divination were over-important for most of the Heian authors and they did not trouble themselves with mentioning the method employed. Hence, there are abundant entries concerning divination in the whole Heian literature, but they are often limited to sentences like, “he ordered to cast a horoscope”, “in the result of divination”, “according to the forecast”, and similar.

The words used most often for divination were: *uranai*, *semboku*, *bokusen* as general terms, and for specialized methods, *senzei* or *zeisen*, *zeichiku*, *medogi*, *bokuzei*¹¹¹ – for divination by means of 50 divining rods; *hakke* or *hakka*, *sengi* – for divination by means of blocks with trigrams. The last two groups were connected with the *Book of Change* but could have been employed for divination independent of the text.

In case of an extraordinary occurrence or a national emergency several divining methods were used. For example, in 1006, on the 15th day of the 11th moon there was a fire in the palace, and the sacred mirror – one of the three imperial regalia – was partly destroyed. After the event a discussion developed whether it was proper to cast a new mirror or if it was better to repair the old one. On the 10th day of the 12th moon a messenger was dispatched to the Ise jingū with the intelligence of the misfortune. On the 3rd day of the 7th moon of 1007 the great council of state congregated in the presence of the Emperor, and opinions of specialists in the form of *kamon* documents were submitted. The *kamon* (or *kammon*, *kangaebumi*) were the written answers to queries put by the Emperor or the government on such unusual occasions. Depending on the occasion, opinions were required from the specialists on etiquette and precedents, or from various diviners. In the case of the sacred mirror all possible opinions were sought for. Michinaga (the chronicler of the event) mentions that at the meeting were read the *kamon* of specialists on Japanese classics (*kiden*), on Chinese classics (*myōkyō*), of lawyers (*myōhō*) and of *ommyōji*. Besides these, there were employed the *kame no ura* and *medogi* methods of divination¹¹².

A separate group of mantic practices constituted various *gyōji* (ceremonies) and *shinji* (sacred events) devoted to prognostication of the next season's harvest. To this group belonged contests and matches carried out at the court (*gyōji*) and in many Shintō shrines (*shinji*) during annual festivals. The most famous ones were horse races (*kurabeuma*) in the Kamo shrine during the great festival of the 4th moon. On New Year's Day other shrines held archery contests (*matoi*), and on yet other occasions there were contests called *yabusame* that combined both skills –

¹¹¹ *Zeichiku* and *bokuzei* were words denoting bamboo rods, *medogi* or *medohagi* were rods made of lespedeza. The words were used for the instruments themselves, and also as synonymous with divination.

¹¹² Finally it was decided that it was not proper to cast a new mirror, as the old one contained the soul (*tama*) preserved since the “period of gods”.

riding and shooting. Square wooden targets were set up in three places and the riders had to hit them from a running horse. Other contests – sumo (Japanese wrestling) were held in early autumn at the court and during some festivals in shrines. Two teams of wrestlers chosen from all regions of the country were used to divine whether the year's crops would be plentiful¹¹³.

No special knowledge was required from the diviners in that kind of prognostication. They were only supervising the event and formulating the questions. The contestants, however, had to be the best obtainable riders or marksmen or wrestlers, and it was their sacred duty to exert themselves to the utmost of their abilities.

Another kind of forecast was called *kayu ura no shinji* and was held at the court and in shrines on the 15th day of the 1st moon. Rice gruel (*kayu*) or gruel made of small beans was cooked. Hollow bamboo sticks were put into the pot with the gruel. By observing how much gruel or how many beans entered particular sticks it was predicted whether the harvest would be good or bad. That sacred event once had also had some magic connotations. It was believed that the sticks (*kayuzue*, *kayu no ki*) used for stirring the gruel had a procreative powers if a childless woman was hit with such a stick she would soon conceive a child. The belief developed into the custom of engaging women in a playful combat at the court and in private mansions (mentioned, inter alia, in the *Makura no sōshi*, *Kagerō nikki*, *Genji monogatari*). On that particular day the women tried to hit others while not being hit themselves. The jocular atmosphere surrounding the event points to its devaluation as a magic practice.

The simplest kind of fortune telling for private use was based on performing some action and according to its result to receive a “yes” or “no” answer to a problem. For example, during an archery contest held in front of Michitaka's mansion many courtiers were gathered. Suddenly Michinaga appeared and challenged the Fate: “If Emperors and Empresses are to be born to Michinaga's family, let the arrow hit the target!”, and then: “If I am destined to become *sesshō* and *kampaku*, let the arrow hit!”. His arrows, one after another, hit exactly the same spot¹¹⁴. As it turned out later, the answers thus received were quite correct. A similar kind of prognostication has already been described – the one concerning Morosuke throwing the dice. This kind of private divination was probably not limited to the aristocracy only. Everybody could make a similar plead and get an answer to a problem.

The *Ōkagami* mentions yet another divining method which seems to have been regarded as not very dignified. It was called *yuuke* (or *yuura*) – nocturnal divination. The prophecy was acquired by eavesdropping. It was necessary to go at night to

¹¹³ Similar contests were held in private mansions of the highest dignitaries, but without the aim of prognostication; e.g. in the diary of Michinaga there are mentioned horse races, archery contests and sumo matches in Michinaga's residences.

¹¹⁴ *Ōkagami* 1967:222–25.

some place at the cross-roads and hide oneself. Listening to the words of passers-by uttered while just passing the hide-out, one could divine one's future. The *Ōkagami* describes an incident with Tokihime, the primary consort of Kaneie. She went to Nijō Street at night with the purpose of obtaining *yuuke* and then she met an old lady who foretold her a splendid future¹¹⁵. The author of the *Ōkagami* tried to explain such an improper conduct of Tokihime by her very young age at the time.

2. Interpretation of dreams and omens

In the human endeavour to understand and utilize phenomena which were treated as signals prophesying the future, the mantle practices, which we call divination proper, demanded a deliberate action provoking the appearance of the signals. The action could take the form of a visit to a physiognomist, casting a horoscope, a seance with a clairvoyant, making a sumo match for prognostication, or asking a specific question and obtaining the answer by means of the *kame no ura* or *eki no ura*. By employing all these and similar methods people took upon themselves the role of active agents evoking desired reactions.

In the case of dreams considered prophetic, and of occurrences considered portentous, people were only passive receivers of the signals, and their activity, if they wished so, was limited to attempts at interpretation (with one exception, which will be explained below, in 2.1.). Certainly, not all dreams and all extraordinary occurrences were believed to be prophetic. Very often the decision was left to the specialists, and it happened that even the specialists were at a loss whether to treat some dream or event as prognostic or not.

2.1. Dreams

Dreams (*yume*, *musō*) as revelations from the world beyond appear in the literature of the Heian period from the *Reiiki* through diaries and fiction, up to the *Konjaku monogatari*. It is characteristic that in the *Reiiki* very few of them are described, and it seems that in later times the belief in dreams gradually grew in strength and popularity. To a certain extent, it was probably a result of a strong influence brought by the vast literary fiction. Dreams of a fearful or romantic kind became a favourite topic of various *monogatari*. They appealed strongly to the reading circles of society and helped to make people more aware of their own dreams. Not without meaning was also the growing efficiency of *ommyōji* who succeeded in elevating the art of dream interpretation to the rank of the highest and secret

¹¹⁵ *Ōkagami* 1967:170.

science. Their knowledge was based on learned Chinese books and they restricted their services to persons of wealth, which added to their own authority. Quite apart from them, professional interpreters of dreams called *yumetoki* were very active, too, continuing the native tradition of shamans. Their advice was often sought for and their words were taken seriously. Not consulting a *yumetoki* was sometimes considered as a grave negligence. For instance Akiko, a secondary wife of Michinaga, was crestfallen when her son Akinobu took the vows and became a monk in the Enryakuji. In her desperation she regretted deeply that she had not consulted a *yumetoki* after a dream in which she had seen herself with her hair cut. She believed that she could have changed the turn of events if she had her dream interpreted properly¹¹⁶.

In the *Ōkagami* there are several paragraphs concerning dreams and their interpretation (*yumeawase, yumeuranai*). In one of them it is stated that “at that time some of the dream interpreters and necromancers were, indeed, very clever” (*sono toki wa yumetoki mo kaminagi mo kashikoki mono domo no haberishi zo*). That statement was made on account of a dream concerning Kaneie. When his elder brother Kanemichi reached the peak of his prosperity and became the *sesshō*, Kaneie’s official career came to a standstill. He remained closed at his home at Higashi Sanjō and worried himself sick. Then somebody had a dream and reported it to Kaneie: a lot of arrows flew from the Horikawa residence of Kanemichi and were falling down on the Higashi Sanjō residence of Kaneie. The man reporting the dream was worried because the arrows flew from an unlucky direction. Kaneie consulted a *yumetoki* and was greatly relieved hearing that the dream had been, after all, a very good one. Its meaning foretold that the helm of the state would pass over from the Horikawa *sesshō* to Kaneie¹¹⁷.

The same source through the mouth of its narrator states that people were often mistaken in their interpretations of dreams and omens, and warns against a risk of changing an auspicious dream into a bad omen. Fujiwara Morosuke once had a very interesting dream but being young and inexperienced boasted of it in front of other people. He had dreamt that he had stood before the Suzakumon gate with his legs spread apart from Nishi Ōmiya to Higashi Ōmiya¹¹⁸ and facing north he kept the palace in his arms. It seemed to be a wonderful prophecy, but then a witty lady listening to the story exclaimed: “How painful it must have been to your crotch!” (*ika ni o mata itaku owashimashitsuran*) and by this untimely remark destroyed the prospects of Morosuke. The author of the *Ōkagami* goes as far as to say that, in fact, because of the lady’s indiscreet joke Morosuke did not succeed in gaining the office

¹¹⁶ *Ōkagami* 1967:221.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 168.

¹¹⁸ It was quite a distance! Between Nishi (Western) Ōmiya and Higashi (Eastern) Ōmiya avenues there were many other avenues of considerable width.

of *sesshō* and *kampaku*. “There was a saying from ancient times that even an extremely auspicious dream changes (its meaning) if it is improperly interpreted” (*imijiki kissō no yume mo ashizama ni awasetsureba tagau*) – says the narrator and warns his audience against talking about dreams in front of unwise people¹¹⁹.

This warning gives evidence to the belief in magic power ascribed to dreams. It means that for the mentality of the Heian people the dreams themselves were powerful enough to change for worse one’s fate if improperly treated. But one may suppose that it was possible also to change a bad dream into a good portent.

It is not explicitly told in any of our sources but such a conclusion may be drawn indirectly. In the Hōryūji monastery there is a statue of Yumetage Kannon (Dream-changing Kannon). The statue was made in the Nara period and since then it has been popularly believed that it might change bad dreams into good portents. The belief has not disappeared up to the present.

The lazy life of the Heian aristocracy probably made people very susceptible to dreams. It is especially true for the female part of the society. But, understandably, there were different personalities and proneness to having visions depended on the degree of personal inclinations. For example, in the *Makura no sōshi* there is only one note concerning dreams, under the heading of “Joyous things” (*Ureshiki mono*): “One had a strange dream and one’s breast is full of anxiety. Then it is explained that it was nothing special. What a joy!”¹²⁰. That one note means that Sei Shōnagon believed in prophecies expressed in dreams but she was not obsessed by them. In the *Murasaki Shikibu nikki* there is no single mention of a dream, while in the *Genji monogatari* there are many stories evolved around prophetic dreams. Again it may mean that though believing in dreams the lady herself was not prone to have them, or to treat them as prophetic. But it should be always remembered that not all dreams were recorded. Only such found their way to diaries which had been considered especially interesting, or which had made a particularly deep impression. In the *Kagerō nikki* (taking into account the authoress’ neurotic personality) the number of recorded dreams is not too high, as there are only ten dreams mentioned in twenty-two years. The authoress of the *Sarashina nikki* noted down nine dreams (and some additional divagations on them) in over thirty years, which also does not seem to be many, as the lady clearly belonged to the dreamy, visionary kind of persons. In the *Midō kampaku ki* Michinaga noted down sixteen dreams. Some of them were not his own but somebody else’s. The latter group seems to have been quite seriously treated and sometimes people went to great troubles to inform another person about the dream in which the person appeared.

For example, lady Kagerō received a letter from a monk who described his dream concerning her and insisted on submitting it to a professional *yumetoki*. In his dream

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 129–30.

¹²⁰ *Makura no sōshi* 1958:280.

the monk had seen the lady holding the sun and the moon in her hands. She had the moon crushed under her feet while the sun she had held tightly to her breast. The lady, on acquiring the letter, did not even want at first to consult a *yumetoki*, but it just happened that she met one and then she told him about the dream. On hearing it, the interpreter was quite excited and foretold a splendid future for the lady and her family. The lady, being a person of a very pessimistic turn of mind, thought sadly that the *yumetoki* was probably a good specialist but the monk who had sent the letter was a suspicious character¹²¹. Soon afterwards somebody else informed the lady about another dream. Her mansion appeared in it as having the gate especially ornate, which was interpreted as a sure sign that somebody in her immediate family would become a minister of state. And then she herself had a dream, too: a man wrote the word “gate” on her right foot. According to the interpretation, this dream indicated a wonderful future for her son. But the lady was not satisfied and nurtured grave doubts as for the truth of all the lucky prophecies¹²².

According to the *Ōkagami*, Fujiwara Yukinari lived in the constant fear of Fujiwara Asanari’s ghost. His fear was well known among the courtiers. One night Michinaga saw a dream in which Asanari stood in one of the palace pavilions, and said that he was waiting for Yukinari. Awaking from his dream Michinaga at once wrote a letter to Yukinari: “I had a dream. Excuse yourself on a pretext of illness or something, and remain indoors performing severe abstinence [*monoimi*]. I’ll explain personally”. Yukinari took the warning seriously and closed himself at home for a considerable period of abstinence¹²³.

The same Yukinari once had another information about somebody else’s dream concerning his family. The story is more interesting as it certainly does not belong to literary fiction. It is described in the *Sarashina nikki*. To the house of the authoress came a stray cat of distinguished manners and noble appearance. For some time it was kept in the same room as the authoress and her elder sister. But once, when the sister was ill, the cat was banished to the servants’ quarters where it protested loudly. And then the sister had a dream. The cat came to her and explained: “I am the [late] daughter of *dainagon* [Yukinari] in another form” and the cat demanded to be taken again to the sister’s room. The authoress afterwards took a special care of the cat and observing it closely concluded that “it was not an ordinary cat” (*rei no neko ni wa arazu*). Then it was decided to inform Yukinari about the revelation¹²⁴.

This Buddhist idea of metempsychosis is very well evidenced in literary fiction. Many such stories of animals revealing their identity in dreams (as some definite people in their former existence) appear in the *Reiki* and *Konjaku monogatari*.

¹²¹ *Kagerō nikki* 1966:260–1.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 261.

¹²³ *Ōkagami* 1967:141–2.

¹²⁴ *Sarashina nikki* 1966:494–6.

It seems that cows were the most popular in such stories¹²⁵. But sometimes other animals appear, too, like for example a fish in the *Konjaku monogatari* XX, 34, which revealed itself through a dream as the late father of a monk Jōkaku. The cat of the *Sarashina nikki* may be treated as evidence that the belief in this kind of revelations through dreams did not belong exclusively to literary fiction. Another convincing story is described in detail in the *Eiga monogatari*, and confirmed by other reliable sources. In the year 1025 a new pavilion was constructed in the Sekid-era temple of Ōmi. A black cow was used for transporting lumber. One day a man from the neighbourhood had a dream in which the cow appeared and declared that it was in fact an incarnation of Buddha Kasyapa (Kashō). This statement, when announced publicly, made quite a stir in the capital. Crowds of people (Michinaga and Yorimichi, among others) made pilgrimages to Ōmi in order to pay their respects to the cow. Some time afterwards the cow began to show symptoms of an illness. Then a monk in the capital had a dream. It was revealed to him that the time was coming for Kashō to enter Nirvana. And indeed, the cow died (of sheer exhaustion, one may suspect) on the day of consecration of the new pavilion¹²⁶. The cow's death in the popular opinion substantiated the monk's revelation – Kashō had finished his business in this world and left for Nirvana.

The dreams recorded in diaries or described in literary fiction can be generally classed into two large categories, dreams concerning purely religious matters and dreams concerning secular matters of personal interest. It should be born in mind, however, that both categories, being treated as revelations from the other world, belong to the same general category of hierophanie. There is a very thin demarcation line between sacrum and profanum, between religious and secular matters and thus the division refers not to the substance of a dream, but to its, so to speak, ultimate purpose. In this meaning the dreams in which gods or Buddhas appeared may be treated as “secular” ones if their interpretation concerned only some profane matters. And conversely, dreams of purely mundane substance may be treated as religious ones if they led to illumination, like for example the dream described in the *Konjaku monogatari*, XIX, 8: a man who made his living as a falconer one night had a dream in which he himself had the form and emotions of a pheasant. There came hunters and the man-pheasant suffered terribly looking at the death of his family and trying to escape death himself. After waking up he set all his dogs and falcons free, and became a monk. In that dream the substance was secular but its ultimate purpose was the spiritual awakening, the Buddhist illumination, and thus it may be regarded as a religious dream.

From the point of view of the subject matter, some of the dreams were self-explanatory or obvious in their film-like projection, while others were vague,

¹²⁵ E.g.: *Nihon reiki* 1975:II,9,15,32; *Konjaku monogatari* 1975:XX,21,22, and others.

¹²⁶ *Eiga monogatari* 1964:II,192–5.

distorted, and their meaning was hidden in symbols understandable only for specialists. The dreams of the first group belong mostly to literary fiction, although the Sarashina lady recorded some of her own dreams which look almost too orderly and film-like to be true. She clearly had a strong inclination for religious visions, especially in her more advanced years, but as a child she also had quite remarkable dreams. She remembered them all her life and drew her conclusions after many years. For instance after her husband's death (in 1058) she was in a state of deep depression and tried to find some reason for her unhappiness. She remembered then her childhood dreams and wrote in her diary: "The dreams of the past in which I was advised to pray to the goddess Amaterasu a *yumetoki* interpreted for me. They meant that I should have become a wet-nurse (*menoto*) at the imperial court and live peacefully in the shadows of the Emperor and his Empress. I had not understood it then. (...) How very sad for me"¹²⁷.

Quite often people felt that they could not understand the hidden message of their dreams. Lady Kagerō describing two of her dreams used the expression "I do not know if it is bad or good" (*ashi yoshi mo eshirazu* and *ashi yoshi mo shiranedo*) and she left it for her readers to draw the conclusions "Let the people who will know my fate decide if one should or should not believe in dreams and Buddhas" (*kakuru mi o hate o mikikan hito, yume o mo hotoke o mo mochiirubeshi ya to sad-ameyo te nari*)¹²⁸.

Both ladies (Sarashina and Kagerō) were easily given to pessimistic forebodings and lamentations but they had no active will of resisting their ill luck. Quite unlike Michinaga, who was not only very sensitive to bad omens but who often tried to anticipate all possible events. After a bad dream (his own or somebody else's but concerning him or his family) he called his favourite masters of divination and ordered them to explain the meaning of the dream, its ultimate purpose.

The ultimate purpose of any dream in the specialists' interpretation could have two aspects: prophetic and advisory. In case of a prophecy expressed through a dream there was no other reaction possible save the passive waiting for its realization. For example, lady Kagerō waited for her own death after a bad dream (not reported) interpreted by a *yumetoki*¹²⁹. In 1016, when Michinaga was ill for a long time, a monk called Shin'yo reported to Sanesuke a dream presaging Michinaga's death in the next year¹³⁰. In both cases the prophecies did not materialized. Generally speaking, there were very few realized prophecies in the diaries. It was only literary fiction that furnished many examples of dreams which came true.

¹²⁷ *Sarashina nikki* 1966:532–3.

¹²⁸ *Kagerō nikki* 1966:216.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 283 and 288.

¹³⁰ *Shōyūki*, the 8th day of the 5th moon.

The advisory aspect of dream interpretation could have been revealed in some constructive advice (e.g. to become a wet nurse) or in a preventive advice. This latter category seems to have been more frequent. Perhaps people were more sensitive to “bad dreams” (*ashiki yume, ashiki musō, akumu*). There are many instances of such notes in the diaries (*Midō kampaku ki, Shōyūki, Sarashina nikki, Kagerō nikki*) where it is written only “I had a bad dream” or something of a similar kind. We may assume that the dreams were interpreted as warnings from beyond because in most cases the person concerned stayed home afterwards and did not even accept letters, which was generally considered the proper procedure to avoid a bad influence. Sometimes the *yumetoki*’s or *ommyōji*’s advice was not limited to individual prayers and abstinence (*monoimi*). It could be more elaborate and demand costly prayers in shrines and temples or even the rites of exoneration (*gejo*) performed by specialists.

In the case of persons as prominent in society as Michinaga, their dreams could have far-reaching consequences. It happened many times that Michinaga did not attend some important court event and for two or three days following did not perform his official duties because the masters of divination recommended his staying at home. In 1004 a stately visit of the Empress Akiko to the family shrine at Ōharano was stopped because of a bad dream¹³¹.

As was written at the beginning of this chapter, people of the Heian period believed that the dreams were direct means of communication with the other world. People were mostly passive receivers of the signals from beyond, but sometimes they tried to cause receiving them, tried to force the invisible powers to send a message. Hence, the custom of “ordering” dreams. One instance illustrating the custom may be seen in the *Sarashina nikki*. When the authoress was a girl her mother ordered two bronze mirrors to be cast and offered them to the Hatsuse temple. She asked a monk for revelation in a dream concerning the daughter’s future. After three days the monk related his made-on-order dream¹³². As another example may serve the incident of Korechika who prayed to the spirit of his father and asked him to send a dream to the Empress Akiko. The dream was to persuade Akiko that Korechika had been innocent of any offence against her¹³³.

A belief existed that gods sometimes also had their private wishes and brutally exercised their power through various forms of *tatari*; if people could not comprehend the signals the gods might send a direct message in a dream. It was so with Fujiwara Sukemasa, a renowned calligrapher, who on crossing the sea on his return voyage from Kyūshū to the capital was stopped by a storm near the shore of the Iyo province. No matter how the crew worked, the ship could not progress for some

¹³¹ *Midō kampaku ki*, the 22nd day of the 7th moon.

¹³² *Sarashina nikki* 1966:508.

¹³³ *Eiga monogatari* 1964:I,165.

days. Sukemasa wondered about the reason and then somebody explained that it was some god's *tatari*. At night Sukemasa had a dream. A noble man came to him and introduced himself as the god residing in Mishima. He explained that he had stopped Sukemasa's ship because he had wanted to get a piece of calligraphy for his shrine. He had coerced many ordinary calligraphers to write for him but they drew so poorly that the god decided to take advantage of Sukemasa's voyage.

Awaking after his dream Sukemasa noticed that the weather has cleared and his ship safely reached the shore. He performed ritual ablutions and painted the inscription so much desired by the god¹³⁴.

It is hard to judge how many times bad dreams served only as pretexts but most probably there were cases when people deceived others in order to avoid some undesirable meeting or some tedious work. The belief in dreams was strong enough for even pure fabrications to be sufficient for excusing one from undesirable social contacts. Quite probably there were also people who invented dreams in order to draw attention to themselves and to become interesting to other people – one story of this kind is described in the *Ise monogatari*, *dan* 63. Dreams and their interpretations formed an important part of spiritual life of the Heian society. They were not reserved for the aristocracy only. But, unfortunately, it is not clear if the methods of interpretation were different for various classes.

2.2. Omens

Various kinds of inexplicable events treated as omens (*zenchō*, *shirushi*) appear throughout Heian literature. In literary fiction they mostly have their sequence in some forms of a presage coming true. Omens mentioned in the diaries of the period are not so colourful and very often leave us in doubt how they were interpreted and whether the authors considered their presages fulfilled or not. In many cases we may only assume that an author came across something believed to have been an omen as unexplained penances are sometimes noted down or some dark forebodings hinted. Many such hints are scattered all over the diaries of both pessimistic ladies – Kagerō and Sarashina, whereas in the *Midō kampaku ki* a different approach is evident; Michinaga was never passively waiting for something to happen but tried to anticipate and be prepared for all possible events. Hence, whenever anything extraordinary came to his notice, he called masters of divination and ordered them to interpret the meaning of the incident. He was a very cautious man and for him even a cow entering his mansion was enough to order divination. In

¹³⁴ Ōkagami 1967:86. The inscription may still be seen in the Ōyamazumi jinja on the island Ōmishima (Ehime ken, Ochi gun) in the center of the Inner Sea. In the shrine there is enshrined the god Ōyamazumi – the noble, old man of Sukemasa's dream.

1005 and 1010 he summoned *ommyōji* on precisely such occasions. It is not clear what the verdict was in the first case, but the cow was probably considered inauspicious because for the next two or three days Michinaga performed *monoimi*¹³⁵. In 1010 the matter was evidently more complicated. On the 24th day of the 8th moon Michinaga noted down that a cow entered his mansion and he ordered divination. The results were not good and it was necessary to perform the rites of exoneration (*gejo*). In the same entry it is written that on the 9th day there had been some strange happenings (not specified) in Tōnomine and Michinaga called Abe Yoshihira and Kamo Kōei for interpretation. The opinions of both learned masters differed. Just in case, Michinaga proclaimed two days *monoimi*. But the matter weighed on his mind for he returned to it on the 26th day again and once more expressed his annoyance at the masters' difference of opinions.

At Tōnomine was the tomb and shrine of Fujiwara Kamatari, the ancestor of the clan. Because of that everything connected with the place was important for the Fujiwaras and especially for Michinaga who was the recognized head of the clan (*uji no chōja*). In 1004 the tomb also caused him some anxiety as it was reported that on the 23rd day of the 9th moon some strange sounds had been heard coming from it. Abe Seimei was summoned for interpretation¹³⁶. The result of divination is unknown, but probably Seimei did not treat the matter very seriously as there is nothing else about it in the diary.

The Fujiwara clan sponsored other shrines and temples. In the *Ōkagami* it is clearly stated that whenever "something out of ordinary" happened (*rei ni tagai ayashiki koto*) the priests of Kōfukuji, Tōnomine, Yoshida, Ōharano and Kasuga¹³⁷ informed the court about the event, and then the Fujiwara *uji no chōja* ordered divining and, if necessary, distributed *monoimi no fuda*¹³⁸. And, indeed, there are in the *Midō kampaku ki* some entries confirming the statement. For example, in 1015, on the 2nd day of the 3rd moon Michinaga got a letter from the Kōfukuji temple informing him that in the Nan'endo pavilion two wild ducks had settled. Michinaga summoned Abe Yoshihira and Kamo Kōei (Midō). The results are unknown.

It seems that any act of extraordinary behaviour of animals or birds was apt to be interpreted as an omen. Many such instances may be found in diaries, but unluckily, it is rarely explained what the conclusions were. But, for example, Sanesuke describes that on the 1st day of the 8th moon of 1015 a great many herons gathered on the roof of his newly constructed residence. Feeling uneasy about it, he consulted Abe Yoshihira and was told that he should be very cautious as the herons presaged

¹³⁵ *Midō kampaku ki*, the 21st and 24th days of the 7th moon.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, the 25th day of the 9th moon.

¹³⁷ Kōfukuji was the clan temple, in Tōnomine, Yoshida, Ōharano and Kasuga the family gods of the Fujiwaras were enshrined.

¹³⁸ *Ōkagami* 1967:234.

an illness¹³⁹. Lady Kagerō writes how people of her household were alarmed when on the day of *ayame no sekku* a lot of cuckoos appeared in front of the mansion. It was interpreted as a bad omen¹⁴⁰.

Another interesting omen and its interpretation are noted in *Kōdanshō* (scroll 2). When Akiko (Shōshi) served as a low rank concubine (*nyōgo*) of Ichijō tennō, one day a dog jumped in behind her curtains of state. Michinaga asked Oe Masahira whether the event had any special meaning. Masahira explained that it was a good omen presaging that Akiko would bear an heir to the throne. His interpretation was based on the graphic forms of the word “dog” (*inu*), the first component of the “crown prince” (*taishi*), and the first component of the “Emperor” (*tennō*). According to Masahira’s explanation, all three ideograms have three strokes identical and by moving the fourth stroke or dot one may form any of the three ideograms.

As has already been written, there was a special governmental office dealing with the interpretation of celestial and earthly portents. It was the Ommyōryō with its staff of trained specialists. The functionaries had to observe the colour of clouds, appearance of the sky, direction and volume of winds, and be on alert for all kinds of unusual phenomena. People reported to them many such things from all over the country and the masters drew their conclusions, like in the case of the white turtle from Bungo when the era name was changed in order to evoke good luck portended by the happy finding.

It seems that in most cases only the specialists could tell whether some strange event was an omen or not, and then only they could decide if it was good or bad. The *Ōkagami*, for example, describes an unusual event mistakenly interpreted by non-specialists. The Empress Akiko with her mother went for a pilgrimage to the Kasuga shrine and made offerings to the family gods. Then suddenly a strong gust of wind snatched the offerings and carried them some considerable distance and deposited at last in the Daibutsuden pavilion of the Tōdaiji temple. It was considered an inauspicious omen for the Fujiwaras because the Tōdaiji was a temple of the Minamoto clan. But it turned out to have been a good omen (*kissō*) after all, as the Fujiwaras prospered. The conclusion follows: people were often mistaken in their private interpretations¹⁴¹.

There were also some events popularly established as bad omens. To this category belonged sneezing which was associated with a lie on the part of a speaker or with something vaguely inauspicious. Therefore, in order to avoid bad luck it was recommended to recite a spell after a sneeze. Much more sinister and feared by everybody was the appearance of a *hitodama* (“human soul”) – a will-o’-the-wisp

¹³⁹ *Shōyūki*, the 2nd day of the 8th moon.

¹⁴⁰ *Kagerō nikki* 1966:313.

¹⁴¹ *Ōkagami* 1967:275–6.

which appeared in the form of a whitish ball hovering in the air. It portended misfortune or even death to the person over whom it appeared. As the word *hitodama* indicates, it was also believed to be the soul leaving a body.

In 1012, when so many bad things happened to Michinaga, a *hitodama* was seen over his residence on the 10th day of the 4th moon, and again on the 8th day of the 6th moon, which made the atmosphere surrounding him still more oppressive and worsened his physical condition¹⁴². He did not die then, but in 1027, when he was actually on his death bed, a *hitodama* was again seen on the 29th day of the 11th moon. He died four days later (*Shōyūki*), which was probably commented as the prediction of the *hitodama* coming true.

Another case of a fulfilled prediction is given in *Sarashina nikki*. In the 7th moon of 1057 the authoress' husband was leaving for his new post in Shinano. When his retinue left the city a very big *hitodama* (*imijiku ōkinaru hitodama*) appeared. The lady hearing about it hoped against hope that it concerned somebody else. The husband returned home in the 4th moon of 1058 and in the 10th moon he died. The lady had not the smallest doubt that the *hitodama* had been a warning¹⁴³.

In the case of a prophetic dream only one person could serve as the “chosen vessel”, the addressee of the message from beyond. In the case of events considered to be omens usually more than one person could receive the message, as the events always happened independently of individual subjective control and individual will. People could not manage the appearance of omens. They were only very sensitive to all unusual phenomena in their natural surroundings and were always ready to suspect a hidden meaning in them. But it also happened that an omen was sent in a dream. Lady Sarashina went in 1046 for a pilgrimage to the Hatsuse temple (Hasedera) wherein she dreamt that somebody threw into her room a cedar twig from the Fushimi Inari shrine¹⁴⁴. There was at Fushimi a big cedar tree that was believed to have the ability of portending good, or bad fortune. It was called *shirushi no sugi* – “the cedar of omens”. People broke off a twig and took it home; if the twig withered soon it was considered a bad omen, but if for a long time it looked fresh – the omen was good. The lady of the *Sarashina nikki* ignored her dream and afterwards she regretted it deeply. After her husband's death she came to believe that if she had taken the sign from Inari seriously and had visited the Fushimi shrine, her husband would not have died¹⁴⁵. We can see that the lady believed her dream of 1046 to be a sign from Inari sending her off on the next pilgrimage. But the *shirushi no sugi* in this case does not appear as an omen *sensu stricto* but rather as a symbol of the shrine.

¹⁴² *Shōyūki*, under the above given dates.

¹⁴³ *Sarashina nikki* 1966:531–2.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 525.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 532.

V. CONCLUSIONS

From our concise review of Japanese superstitions, magic and mantic practices in the Heian period it may be evident that there existed some ideas which were common for many people being on the same or similar stage of development, but also that Japan had its own genuine ideas, characteristic for that country only, on account of its natural background distinguishing it from other countries. Some of the peculiarities were closely connected with the geographical situation of the archipelago. The insular character of Japan has always formed a natural barrier for permanent foreign influences. In times when sailing was a hazardous business, all the contacts with the continent were sporadic and prevented Japan from a direct and constant radiation of continental culture. Even in the period of the most enthusiastic absorption of Buddhism and of Chinese fashions in many branches of public and private life, extensive regions were left in Japan almost untouched by all those novelties. The Buddhist religion and “things Chinesy” were sponsored and propagated by the Buddhist clergy, and by the court and aristocracy. Due to the strict class distinction playing a great role in the life of the Heian society, the process of assimilation of new doctrines outside the aristocracy was very slow. There was a chasm between the urban centres (Nara, Heian kyō) and the provinces. In the respective capital cities, too, there was no communication between the court aristocracy and the remaining part of the population. But a difference between the Nara and the Heian period should be noted; the character of the so-called “six Nara sects” of Buddhism was incomparably more hermetic and exclusive than the character of the leading schools of Heian (Shingon, Tendai), which were more elastic and eclectic in their approach and which prepared ground for the truly popular amidistic movement and for various syncretic schools with a strong appeal to all those who did not want to part with the old Shintoist divinities. But again, even these more acceptable forms of foreign religion had no chance to find a strong support among the inhabitants of remote provinces whose only point of contact with metropolitan culture took the shape of a tax collector. And the tax collectors were no evangelists.

In the metropolitan area (not only in the Heian kyō but also in the surrounding provinces) Buddhist monks of lower rank moved freely in all classes of the society and acted as intermediaries between the classes. Thanks to it, in that region the circulation of various ideas was more vigorous than in the other, more distant provinces. Between the capital and the rest of the country there were numerous natural obstacles discouraging people from undertaking travel.

Thus, the geographical conditions put brakes on permanent exchange of ideas in two spheres of human contact, between Japan and the continent, and between the metropolitan region and the rest of the country. The differences of life style within the urban societies were conditioned by the class distinctions.

There was another Japanese peculiarity connected with geography – a multitude and intensity of natural calamities. Typhoons, earthquakes, eruptions of volcanoes, *tsunami* waves have always been frequent in Japan. The frequency and intensity of such disasters had to leave its mark on the character of the much suffering inhabitants of the archipelago. Since the dawn of their history they have lived in perpetual fear of capricious elements. The ancient animistic beliefs ascribed the calamities not only to the activities of formless powers of nature but also to the displeasure of ancestors' spirits. The ancient Japanese revered but also feared their dead. It is amply evidenced by the burial customs prevailing up to the time of Buddhism. The dead were kept in a good mood by means of offerings, while their return to the world of the living was to be prevented by means of stones put on the corpses or by other heavy covers bounding them in their graves.

The fear of the dead, originating in ancestor worship, has survived up to the Heian period and has developed into the *goryō shinkō*. There were abundant reasons for perpetuance of the *goryō* faith, pestilence, drought, flood, and frequent fires in the capital. All these were explained as vengeful activities of one or another angry spirit. The spirits belonged to the category of public enemies because they wreaked their vengeance on big communities, sometimes even on a national scale. They may be said to constitute a personalized, modified projection of the older nameless fears coming to the surface of human cognition in cases of natural calamities. Thus the calamities formed a natural basis for the faith. But there was yet another matter, which had to be decided upon in case of a public disaster – it was the necessity of giving a name to the angry ghost causing the damage. The matter was settled by divination or oracles through dreams; the real sources of thus obtained understanding should be, however, sought in the uneasy conscience. All spirits recognised as *goryō* (called also *onryō* or *mononoke*) belonged to persons harmed publicly in their lifetime, mostly to famous exiles like prince Sawara, Sugawara Michizane, Ban no Yoshio, and others. They were all stripped of their ranks and banished, and on that account they suffered humiliation on a nationwide scale. For this they took revenge not on individuals but above all, on big communities. Moreover, they liked to haunt with a special cruelty these persons

who had been directly responsible for their misfortunes – the imperial family and other highest dignitaries of the court.

The Heian period, so peaceful on the surface, was not free from many dramatic conflicts. The most striking feature of Heian literature is its melancholy, its ever-pervading feeling of impermanence, an almost oppressive atmosphere of doom. It is, to a certain extent, obviously a reflection of Buddhist teaching with a particular emphasis on the *mappō* doctrine – that the world is about to enter an era of “the latter days of the Law” when all human virtues must collapse and disappear. But the doctrine itself would not have had the power to influence people’s way of thinking if there were no social conditions making it acceptable. And these were plentiful, at least for the writers who belonged to the aristocracy – a very narrow but over-important and rigidly stratified class.

The rivalry among various Fujiwara branches in the formative decades of the Heian period resulted in the creation of the *sekkan seiji*¹⁴⁶ type of rule. In that system the Emperors were practically shorn of any real power and the supreme authority shifted to the most prominent representatives of the Hokke branch of Fujiwara. Members of that family could reach the heights of prosperity thanks to the marriage policy, for since the second half of the 9th century it has become customary to appoint the maternal grandfathers of the Crown Prince or of the reigning Emperor to the offices of *sesshō* and *kampaku*, and they were invariably Fujiwaras of the Hokke branch. It was a very prolific family and there were always many competitors fighting among themselves with the sole purpose to gain as much as possible. While the country was in the direst need of economic reforms, all reforms were forgotten in the heat of family struggles at the highest level of official hierarchy. The imperial house was overgrown with the Fujiwara ladies, who were consorts, concubines, mothers and grandmothers of the Emperors. Their fathers, brothers and cousins sought their favours and protection at the court for perpetuating the glory of the Fujiwaras. Their interests came to be identified with the interests of the imperial family. The government looked more and more like a cosy family business. But because of the great number of the competitors not everything went smoothly for particular members of the much-favoured family. It was a constant struggle, and where there is a struggle there are victors on the one hand, and victims on the other.

With the Emperors stripped of their power, with the Fujiwara regents, great ministers and councilors absorbed in making feathered nests for their families, the administrative machinery worked mostly by its own impetus and thanks to the army of nameless petty clerks performing their duties independently of intrigues at the highest level. But here, too, the struggle was going on. There were always more candidates to every post than the posts themselves. When the time of new appointments was approaching there were crowds of supplicants besieging residences

¹⁴⁶ The rule by regents (*sesshō*) and chancellors (*kampaku*).

of powerful officials, slandering rivals and extolling their own virtues. Especially fierce battles were fought over the posts of provincial governors and the posts in the metropolitan police. Intrigue, bribery and slander were the most often used weapons. Here, too, victors and embittered victims left the battlefield.

Many people reduced to poverty lived in the capital. Probably they tried desperately to find means of survival, and when they exhausted all honest methods they had to turn to dishonest ones. Possibly the capital also became a favourite hiding-place for criminals from the country. In any case, in the chronicles and diaries of the period there are many notes concerning robbery, burglary and murder in the city. The roads leading to the capital were also very unsafe, to say the least. The atmosphere in the Heian kyō was so oppressive that there were many who escaped from it and sought peace in the mountain retreats.

It is one of the typical features of the Heian period that many important Buddhist monasteries were built in the mountains, while in the Nara period the main edifices of the “six sects” had been situated in the city itself. Certainly, big temples were also built in the Heian kyō, but the most important ones – Enryakuji of the Tendai sect and Kongōbuji of the Shingon sect (and their subordinate temples) – were flourishing in the mountains. They grew in strength, with their prelates who had growing ambitions in purely mundane matters, and they also constituted a growing economic and military power that sometimes threatened the civilian authority. Raids of militant monks from Mount Hiei added to the atmosphere of disquiet permeating the capital.

Many monks were greedy and corrupted and by their behaviour added strength to the *mappō* ideas. Their indecent conduct led to spreading the belief in *tengu*, especially in *tengu* impersonating monks. But on the other hand, there were numerous persons who abandoned all worldly hopes and desires, and lived quietly in the mountains in small chapels or hermitages. In such retreats many disappointed courtiers found consolation, as well as disillusioned and impoverished ladies of good birth, orphaned girls and other people who could not find other means for honest living because they had no powerful protectors in the capital and were the victims in the competitions.

These and other conditions formed the social background of the life in the capital and contributed to the feeling of pessimistic forebodings so strongly pronounced in Heian literature. And all of them created a fertile ground for various superstitions.

The most commonly met superstitious fear (side by side with *goryō* and *tengu*) was that of a *mononoke*. As it has already been written, most of personal misfortunes like illness, madness, sudden death, fire in the house, etc., were ascribed to the activity of a *mononoke*. Similarly to the manifestations of public enemies of the *goryō* kind, in the case of a private enemy of the *mononoke* kind two elements were necessary: its appearance as the objective factor, and giving a name to the dark

power as the subjective factor. Without the objective factor in the form of a misfortune there was no *mononoke*. But once something had happened to somebody, soon people began to guess and look into the past of the stricken person. With Emperors, Empresses, great ministers, and other dignitaries it was not too difficult to find more than one *mononoke* to haunt them. The imperial court was a stage of the most ruthless struggles, and many a victim turned after death into an avenging spirit directing its fury at the former victors. The higher one stood in the hierarchy, the more exposed one became to the *mononoke* activities; which does not mean that parallel to one's advancement in hierarchy rose the proneness to ailments or other misfortunes. It means only that powerful people had more chances to harm or to be suspected of harming others, and thus it was easy to give definite names to the *mononoke* that tormented them. Moreover, it is possible that there existed something like a "mononoke psychosis" similar to the *kitsune tsuki* of the 19th century in Shimane. Cases of neurotic conditions could have originated in frustration, bad conscience and fear of a particular spirit. Autosuggestion could have played a great role like, for example, in the case of Michinaga whose condition worsened on receiving information that somebody had wanted to hurt him by magic. Insignificant persons, who had not hurt anybody, were haunted only by nameless *mononoke* or simply had a cold.

The most famous *mononoke* of the Heian period were recruited from amongst gentlemen who had failed in their official careers, and from amongst ladies who had been defeated by rivals in their efforts to win the imperial favour. As the most classical examples may be reminded here two "father-daughter" teams, namely: Motokata - Motoko, and Akimitsu - Nobuko.

In the imperial family not uncommon were mental aberrations, ascribed, in the fashion of the day, to the *mononoke* activities. Yōzei, En'yū, and Kazan were not, mildly speaking, quite normal. Suzaku and Sanjō from early childhood showed signs of some serious illness. They all could have been victims of the marriage system enforced by the Fujiwara dictators. Since the *sekkan seiji* type of rule came into operation (and even earlier) it became customary to choose Crown Princes from amongst the imperial offspring born to the Fujiwara ladies, and it was not considered unusual if a Crown Prince or an Emperor was married to his own aunt. The system of marriages within the family had to produce many sickly, physically or/and mentally weak individuals.

Besides, the primitive level of sanitary conditions and prohibitive rules concerning personal hygiene imposed by the Ommyōryō formed a good background for external infections, and for spreading contagious diseases. According to the calendars prepared by *ommyōji*, one could take a bath not more frequently than once in five days, and even that was often not possible if various bad days, inauspicious omens or unlucky directions interfered. One may imagine what effects these prohibitions produced during the extremely hot and humid Japanese summer. No

wonder that the art of preparing perfumes and incense was so amazingly developed in the Heian period.

The abscesses of the Empress Akiko could have possibly been more easily cured if her personal hygiene had been better. But they were finally ascribed to the wrath of Sumifuri and Hayabusa and, obviously, for the gods it was a matter of no importance if the Empress washed herself or not.

One may suppose that the sanitary conditions were still worse outside the palace and aristocratic mansions. And medical science did not help matters greatly as it was based on metaphysical theories in diagnostics and on curative spells in treatment. The possession by a *mononoke* was one of the most often met causes of illness.

The poverty of lower classes on the one hand and the inefficiency of the metropolitan police on the other probably reinforced to a great extent the belief in demons. In the diaries of the period there are many mentions of theft and burglary in particular mansions, and even in the sacrosanct precincts of the palace. Murasaki Shikibu describes one of the most drastic cases – two sleeping ladies were robbed completely of their costumes in a chamber near to the Empress' bedroom¹⁴⁷. It was such a bizarre and preposterous event that it could have been misconstrued later and formed a background for a demon-thief story. In the *Konjaku monogatari* many tales may be found in which some ordinary thefts are ascribed to demons activities (e.g. XXVII, 10, 12, and others). Whenever the police could not find the real culprits it was possible to solve the mystery by attributing the foul deed to some supernatural power.

A similar situation was with the tales of killer demons and cannibal demons. There is a lot of solid evidence in the diaries to account for many gruesome details in literary fiction. For example, the hairy head with blood found in the Daigokuden on the day of Ichijō tennō's enthronement ceremony could have been a distorted literary version of the authentic head found in the palace garden in 1015. It should be noted that the versions of Michinaga and of Sanesuke were already different one day after the discovery. Therefore, it does not seem improbable that later versions were more and more distant from the original fact and, at last, by the time of writing the *Ōkagami*¹⁴⁸, only the head itself lingered in people's memory. The place and the time were changed, and the supernatural element was added. Also the pitiful remains of a baby found about two weeks later in the Empress Dowager's quarters were most certainly impressive enough to be talked about for a long time, and to form a thread of some later bizarre story. In the *Konjaku monogatari* there are several tales in which only a head, or only a finger, or legs and arms were left of a person devoured by demons.

¹⁴⁷ Murasaki Shikibu *nikki* 1958:484.

¹⁴⁸ The *Ōkagami* was written a few scores of years after Ichijō's enthronement and of finding the head in the palace grounds.

As it has never been explained to whom those dismembered bodies polluting the palace grounds belonged, one may only guess what had caused their appearance there. In the first case it had to be a murder with the malice afterthought, because severing the head was a dirty and not easy job. The act required patience and determination. The murderer was possibly a mentally unbalanced man or a very spiteful one for he brought the head from somewhere (the headless body being never found) and put it in such a place where it had to make a lot of embarrassment.

In the second case one may imagine that it could have been infanticide. Perhaps one of the maids had decided that she was unable to keep her baby and thus she killed it. It resembles the *Konjaku monogatari* story of the demon in the mountain shack. The mutilation of the body could have been caused by dogs. In the *Shōyūki* there is an entry describing a dog which paraded all over the palace grounds with a human hand in its mouth. But in case of the child it might not necessarily have been a crime. An accident is not impossible, too. But what a topic for conversation among the palace ladies!

Anyway, such incidents were probably more frequent in the city itself, and not being pursued by the police as crimes, they were distorted and exaggerated by gossip until, finally, they assumed the proportions of supernatural occurrences. It was so, for example, with the famous demon of Rashōmon. “In the year 974 several people in the capital have disappeared mysteriously. This is attributed to the maleficent powers of a ghost who has been haunting the region of the Rashō Gate at the southern extremity of the city”¹⁴⁹.

Mysterious disappearances were not always caused by criminal activities. One may suppose that the amorous exploits of the aristocratic gallants could have sometimes been misconstrued as demons’ deeds. There were instances of abducting ladies and hiding them at some unfrequented place. Such an adventure Izumi Shikibu had with prince Atsumichi, and also lady Kagerō with her own official husband Kaneie. Similar, but more dramatic illustration may be seen in that realistic novel, *Genji monogatari*. Young Genji abducted Yūgao and she died in the desolated cottage. Her body was taken surreptitiously to a mountain chapel and after the proper rites, buried secretly. Later on, Genji kidnapped the girl Murasaki from her father’s house and for a long time nobody except Genji and his servants knew what had happened to her. Here may be also reminded the *Ise monogatari* tale in which the young man eloped with Takaiko and she disappeared from the shack where they were waiting till the thunder stopped. In the *Ise monogatari* story the ending is a rational one, but the later versions proclaimed that the lady was devoured by demons.

It should be emphasized once again that in the diaries of the period there are no demons actually seen by the authors. Except that one demon at the Empress

¹⁴⁹ Morris 1964:131.

Sadako's court there are no demons at all. But there are many kinds of invisible malicious spirits demonstrating their power by means of possession and illness. They were sometime heard weeping or groaning through the mouth of a *yorimashi* (*Makura no sōshi*, *Murasaki Shikibu nikki*, and others).

One may suppose that such seances with *yorimashi* had to be very impressive for spectators. The hypnotic or auto hypnotic trances were explained in terms of a supernatural being having entered the body of the medium. There was no other explanation acceptable for such an unladylike behaviour of girls as that described by Sei Shōnagon.

Nevertheless, it should be remembered that everyday life was not overburdened with the presence of supernatural beings. *Goryō* and *mononoke* appeared only in extraordinary circumstances, while devils and other visible demons, although believed in, clearly belonged to literary fiction. Into the latter category we may include *tengu* and *tennin*, although there is some evidence pointing to a different approach in regard to both groups. The belief in *tengu* had its factual support in misbehaviour of monks and, subsequently, it found the way to the chronicles of the period (the story of the Somedono Empress may be recalled here). But there was no actual basis for the belief in heavenly maidens and thus they existed in literary fiction of fairytale type only.

Among the animals endowed with a supernatural power only foxes played some role in the superstitions of the capital aristocracy. But they were probably more feared by the lower classes and in the countryside, as many more foxes appear in folk-tales than in the diaries.

Besides, there were people of a superstitious turn of mind and others who were not so susceptible. For example, in the *Genji monogatari* there are many long chapters without anything that we would be inclined to call a superstition. The diary of Izumi Shikibu is conspicuous by the absence of any supernatural occurrences. It is so striking that one may even consider it an argument in the discussion on the authenticity of the *Izumi Shikibu nikki* as a diary¹⁵⁰. In the text, *kataimi* are only mentioned twice, *monoimi* of the prince twice, and also twice the religious austerities of the prince and the lady herself. Apart from those, there are no dreams, no divination, no *mononoke*, and no charms. The story is clearly focused on the romantic aspects only and nothing else. Even if it were a diary written in retrospect, it would still point to the authoress' insusceptibility to superstition. The diaries of lady Kagerō and of the Sarashina lady were written in retrospect and, nevertheless, they show many incidents closely connected with the current superstitions.

It seems that various superstitions of the Ommyōdō type have found a much stronger basis in Japanese mentality than imported superstitions connected with

¹⁵⁰ This argument was not used by Cranston in his summary of the discussion which has been going on for over 50 years; cf. Cranston 1969:44–90.

devils and other visible demons. As it has been mentioned several times, after the period of *Reiki* the *ommyōji* were gradually gaining a predominant position as occult advisers. There is not a single document without entries concerning *kataimi* and *katatagae*. But it should be kept in mind that the documents describe almost exclusively the life of the aristocracy. And the *ommyōji* influence was strong in that class only. It is hard to imagine a peasant abandoning his field for 45 days because he believed that Tokujin had chosen its abode there, or a fisherman not going to the seashore because of a directional taboo. All the irrational fears of the working classes were developing together with the classes and their particular crafts and could not have stood in opposition to them, could not put brakes on the labours which secured their existence.

The unproductive class, i.e., the aristocracy, was not confronted with these kinds of obstacles. Quite to the contrary, the directional taboos formed sometimes a gratifying diversion. For aristocratic ladies closed in the eternal twilight of their houses a change of the house was a rare opportunity to see other places and meet other people. For gentlemen, a *kataimi* very often formed an excellent excuse to avoid undesirable tasks. And it was a matter of small consequence whether an official went to his office or not. The best illustration of the tempo in the official life may provide the following fragment of the *Kagerō nikki*: Kaneie, freshly appointed to the post of vice-minister in the Ministry of War, leisurely spends many days in the mansion of lady Kagerō and there he receives a letter from his superior, the minister, with a mild question, why does he not show himself in the office. The letter is in the form of a poem, and Kaneie answers in the same manner. For the next few days both gentlemen are engaged in sending witty poems to each other without further allusions to the work in the Ministry¹⁵¹.

The easy acceptance by the aristocracy of the Ommyōdō type of various superstitions (inauspicious days and years, directional taboos, astrology, etc.) may be explained by the existence of four loosely connected but necessary conditions: 1. the easygoing, prosperous life of the upper strata of society; 2. the well-known Japanese weakness for imported ideas, the snobbish value of the then “things Chinese”; 3. the hermetic character of aristocratic society facilitating the flow of information within the class; 4. certain similarities of the popularly accepted *ommyō* ideas to the old native beliefs.

The last point demands a few words of elucidation because looking on the surface only it is not easy to see the similarities between the old animistic beliefs and the neat, symmetric system of calendrical calculations. But it should be noted that the calendrical calculations themselves were beyond the grasp of non-specialists, they were left exclusively to learned masters. And the masters, not showing their cards but enshrouded in the glory of high learning, imbued people with irra-

¹⁵¹ *Kagerō nikki* 1966:134.

tional fear of invisible powers; invisible and closely related to the unending rhythm of nature. Since remote antiquity the Japanese have been extremely sensitive to all natural phenomena. In the earliest chronicles, they scrupulously noted the seasons, in their poetry and literary prose they have responded to seasonal changes with surprising intensity in their moods and verbal expressions. They have always been aware of the majestic beauty of their landscape, but at the same time they have lived in fear of all those invisible, shapeless powers that were able at any moment to endanger their world by sending down an earthquake or a typhoon. The Japanese have stood in awe of numberless and nameless spirits governing winds, rain, thunder, rivers, trees etc., and all other natural phenomena. The fear of all those awesome spirits has become an integral part of the Japanese mentality.

The *ommyōji* utilised this strong, inborn inclination. The *ommyōji* themselves, nota bene, were Japanese enough to have this kind of predilections, too, even if they gave foreign names to the powers of nature which they evoked. They also incorporated into their system such old, native ideas as ritual purification (*harae*) and abstinence (*monoimi*) which undoubtedly helped to make the system still more acceptable in the popular mind. And the superiority of the system over the old straightforward Shintoist beliefs lay in its “scientific”, systematized character which strongly appealed to the aristocratic snobbery. Some individuals liked to turn their backs on Shintō (e.g. Murasaki Shikibu, or Sei Shōnagon) but, nevertheless, the Shintoist ceremonies constituted an inseparable part of the official court life, and the *nenjū gyōji* of purely Shintoist character were the most important in the court calendar (e.g. *chōga*, *daijōe*, *ōharae*, etc.). They belonged to the oldest tradition and coexisted peacefully with the ceremonies of Buddhist or Ommyōdō kinds.

Among the *nenjū gyōji*, some had purely religious character (e.g. Aoi matsuri, *kambutsue*, etc.), others magic (e.g. *nanasebarai*, *tsuina*, etc.) while still others had neither religious nor magic connotations (like, for example, *koromogae* – the seasonal change of costumes performed on the 1st days of the 4th and the 10th moon). The big number of ceremonies belonging to the second group points to the importance of magic on the highest level of society, but at the same time several of the ceremonies show clearly a devaluation of magic elements. Such festivals as *aouma no sechie*, *gokusui no en*¹⁵², *shōbu no koshi*, etc., have already in the middle Heian period lost much of their primary meaning and have become more ornamental and aesthetic than magical in their character. Besides, it should be always remembered that their range of influence was not very wide as they were performed at the court or in shrines and temples sponsored by the court, and were imitated privately in aristocratic mansions. They belonged to the institutionalized magic. Within this category,

¹⁵² It should be brought up here, that the *gokusui no en* was an imitation of a Chinese festival, and when it was transmitted to Japan, it had already lost its primary meaning in the country of its origin.

a gradual growth of the *ommyōji* predominance over the native ritualists was evident, and side-by-side with it, that of the Buddhist clergy belonging to the *mikkyō* sects. Nevertheless, the most important among the Shintoist ceremonies like *ōharae* or *daijōe* have not disappeared and have not lost their vitality.

The institutionalized syncretic magic is very well documented in Heian literature, but it concerns only the official part of social life. The materials on privately employed magic among the upper classes are sufficient enough to repeat the same conclusion as that on the institutionalized magic. After the period of *Reiki* a steadily growing influence of *ommyōji* and Buddhist monks who performed magic rites for their private rich patrons is evident. And the demand for their services was big enough to cause some important transmutations inside their ranks. For *ommyōji* there was no need to pursue their purely scientific vocations, and consequently astronomy was gradually losing all its scientific meaning, turning more and more firmly into astrology. Similarly, medicine, instead of being developed, was transformed into quackery, while calendar-making was utilized for magic and divination. The patrons of *ommyōji* were not interested in science, and without a proper stimulus the *ommyōji* did not lose their time and energy on such impractical considerations. The occult art was much more profitable, and they devoted all their efforts to it, especially as they had to strive hard not to be pushed aside by competitors from outside their ranks.

The strongest competitors were recruited from amongst the Buddhist monks who practised the so-called orthodox magic based on the *kaji kito* incantations. Their authority was very great and it also had been growing steadily since the period of activity of the eminent reformers, Saichō and Kūkai. Within the scope of the orthodox magic were rites performed for various purposes – from secret ones for spiritual salvation, through rites for public safety, up to variegated services for individuals. The first group of rites belonged to religion and did not play any big role in everyday life of the secular part of the society. The second category was partly institutionalized in the form of annual ceremonies, and partly appeared in case of national calamities like drought, famine or pestilence, and was then ordered by the government. The most popular category included all kinds of rites performed for private customers, and as the demand for such services was growing the number of practitioners and the variety of methods were increasing, too.

In the struggle with the secular competitors doctrinal purity was easily forgotten by many monks, and syncretic forms of magic were gaining ground. As it was pointed out in the chapter on “human agents”, the government sometimes tried to curtail the unorthodox activity of the Buddhist clergy, but after the period of Saichō’s reformist movement the Buddhist church itself gradually lost interest in evangelism and its prelates became more and more immersed in wordly matters. Thus ensuing laxity in enforcing the mother church by some monks and turning to a profitable business of sorcery. Such monks did not scoff at unorthodox magic and were not too proud to utilize the *ommyō* or shamanic methods.

In the *Konjaku monogatari* “holy men” are described many times, who turned out to have been *tengu* or other impersonators or hermits who practised magic but “were ignorant of the Law”. They were probably literary transfigurations of real practitioners belonging to that syncretic ecclesiastic group. And for the general public it was of no consequence whether a “mighty person” (*genza*) evoked a Buddha or a *shikigami*. The monkish garb was a sufficient recommendation for people to believe in the spiritual power of its wearer.

To the popularly employed forms of private magic belonged all preventive magic practices (e.g. *uchimaki*, avoiding evil spirits, etc.) and evocative ones (e.g. *hagatame*, preparing the *kusudama*, etc.) which were aimed at prolonging one’s life, ensuring health and prosperity. The specialists were called most often in the case of an illness or an appearance of some other evil influence. To the destructive magic people turned mostly when they could not cope with a situation in any other way. It was not often and it also depended on the personal inclinations of an individual. Noble ladies could turn into witches if their jealousy was raised, if they found themselves defeated by their rivals. Promising courtiers could also feel embittered if their names did not appear on the list of fresh nominations and could then curse rivals or officials whom they thought responsible for their humiliation. But such instances did not belong to everyday life, they were results of uncontrollable human passions not easily aroused and, above all, not openly revealed. Casting a curse on another human being was considered a grave offence against the society and was met with public condemnation. The “crime of making objects for witchcraft” (*majimono wo seru tsumi*)¹⁵³ is listed in the *norito* recited during the ceremony of *ōharae*. It means that the abhorrence of witchcraft had had a long tradition in the Heian period and still remained a vital force. The regular and extraordinary *zuso no harae*¹⁵⁴ give evidence to the fear of curses to be an important factor in the spiritual make-up of the people.

Some acts of destructive magic, however, had the popular approval like, for example, in the case of Masakado’s rebellion who, it may be brought up again here, was bound with a spell and killed¹⁵⁵. Masakado was a public enemy and thus it was profitable for the society to destroy him. In his case the social considerations overbalanced the usual Buddhist aversion to taking life (it was believed that his death was caused by prayers and magic rites performed in Buddhist temples by Buddhist monks). Bounding one’s enemy with a spell in self-defense was also considered proper within the moral code even if it was harmful for another person¹⁵⁶. People bound with spells do not appear in diaries, they belong to the literary fiction. The

¹⁵³ *Tsumi* may be translated variously, depending on the context, as “sin”, “offence”, “crime”, “impurity”. The above quoted phrase in Philippi’s translation is given as “the sin of witchcraft”; Philippi 1959:47.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. p. 4.

¹⁵⁵ See p. 34.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. *Nihon reiki* 1975:I,15; III,14, and others.

Reiki stories were, of course, mostly pious fabrications intended for educational purposes, but the author could not overstep the limits of popular comprehension if he wanted to make his point. Literary fiction in general reflects the current ideas even if there is room left for fantasy and the readers were aware of it. For example in the *Taketori monogatari* Mount Hōrai forms a necessary element of the narration of the fairy tale type, while in the realistic novel, the *Genji monogatari*, the same mount is mentioned as a figment of imagination¹⁵⁷. Literature of the *rekishi monogatari* type is more reliable in regard to the current beliefs because it was intended to pass for history and as such could not be offensive to the readers' credulity. The most reliable are, certainly, diaries, and there are not many examples of the destructive magic, and not in all of them. A few examples may be found in the *Midō kampaku ki* and *Kagerō nikki* only.

The *Midō kampaku ki* is remarkable in another respect – it shows how big a role in the official as well as in private life was played by all kinds of divination and omens. There are many entries concerning regular and extraordinary casting of horoscopes for the official purposes or privately for the Emperor, the Empress and other personages including Michinaga himself. In other diaries mantic practices are not so much in evidence but, as has already been mentioned, they were quite popular. Curiosity, uneasiness, the feeling of insecurity were the incentives pushing people to seek advice of professional dream-interpreters, physiognomists or astrologers. The belief in all kinds of oracles is best attested by the existence of two governmental offices – the Ommyōryō and the Jingikan with its *urabe* functionaries. But, judging by the contemporary sources, the influence of *ommyōji* as diviners was steadily increasing while the *urabe* suffered an eclipse. The *kame no ura* method which was a speciality of the *urabe* was still employed in the Heian period but later on it had disappeared, while almost all other kinds of divination have survived up to the present times.

It could be said that in the Heian period, thanks to the continental influence, the inner life of the Japanese became richer. The Buddhist imagery and many Chinese ideas penetrated into the people's mentality and helped to create new layers of spiritual life. The primitive Japanese of the pre-Buddhist times had no ideas of hell or paradise as punishment or the reward for one's deeds. The world was inhabited by myriads of spirits, good or bad, who constantly – visibly or invisibly – mixed with the living and exerted their influence on the lives of individuals and even of the nation as a whole. Under the impact of continental notions, the tangled mass of shapeless spirits began to be systematized and classified. Good spirits became benevolent divinities while bad ones assumed the shapes of various devils and demons. At the same time the methods of controlling the spirits became improved and fortified by the spells and incantations of Buddhist or *ommyō* origin, and new

¹⁵⁷ Cf. p. 56 (part I).

ways of communication between this world and the other one were opened by utilizing imported mantic practices. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that even with their wholehearted enthusiasm for foreign ideas and technology the Japanese have never completely lost their oldest, native conceptions deeply rooted in the Shintō beliefs.