

Religion or Magic?

Some Remarks Concerning Divinatory Practices Mentioned in the Oldest Japanese Literature

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One of the most important human concerns has always been to know beforehand what the future would bring, whether a certain project or scheme would prove successful or a failure. If the future was thought to lie in the hands of the gods, the gods had to be asked to reveal it. But there might be yet other mechanisms which – if they only were known and could be used – would necessarily lead to the revelation of events to come. The many methods which were (and are) devised and employed everywhere in this world and through all times show how much energy man has devoted to this task.

What are these methods? The *Encyclopdia of Religion and Ethics* (4: 776a, H.J. ROSE) states that divination »may be roughly divided into two kinds: (a) ‘automatic’ divination, in which an omen is looked for and interpreted, so to speak, in its own right, with no thought of appeal to any supernormal power, god, or spirit; and (b) divination proper, in the strict etymological sense of the word, which inquires of some sort of a deity, generally by means of signs conceived of as being sent by him.« But »of many cases it is hard to say which category they fall under«, so there are limitations in the use of this division.

The proposed dichotomy seems also to be valid for Japan. There are methods to call down the gods and have them speak through the mouth of a human being. Not everybody, however, is able to do this; it needs a professional mediator between the world of the gods and the world of men. It is also possible to ask for the revelation of the will of the gods by special dreams. Again we learn of omnia and their interpretation, and we hear of methods devised in order to know the future which cannot with certainty be incorporated into one of the two categories. To take a closer look at these special methods is the intention of this paper. This means, on the other hand, that practices clearly belonging to one of the two categories – e.g. revelation by dreams or the calling down of the gods by a shaman, as well as the interpretation of omnia taken over from China as we find it in the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* (var. *Nihon shoki*) – will be omitted.

Presumably the oldest attested practice, and with it the pertaining designation, are met with in one of the first paragraphs of the *Kojiki* of 712. When the deities Izanagi and Izanami, the First Parents of the Japanese myths, »commenced procreation«, the child born by Izanami did not comply with their

wishes. Thus »they ascended together and sought the will of the deities of heaven«. These deities »divined by means of *Futymani*« and made known the reason for the failure (KK = NKBT 1: 54/55; cf. PHILIPPI 1969: 52; FLORENZ 1919: 14). The same episode, using the same words »they divined by means of *Futymani*«, is also related in variant I of the *Nihongi* of 720, which is an imitation of the *Kojiki* version (NG = NKBT 67: 83; cf. ASTON 1956: I,15; FLORENZ 1919: 128).

Again the same expression, »to divine by *Futymani*«, is used in the *Kojiki* when the author of a certain dream-revelation had to be found out – he was, as it turned out, the Great God of Izumo (NKBT 1: 196/197; cf. PHILIPPI 1969: 220; FLORENZ 1919: 100).

The *Nihongi* too uses the expression »to divine by means of *Futymani*« a second time. When the Heavenly Grandson descends from heaven, variant II of the myth tells that Ame no Koyane, first ancestor of the Nakatomi clan (and therefore of the Fujiwara), »who had charge of divine matters, therefore was made to divine by means of *Futymani*, and thus to do his service« (NKBT 67: 152/153; cf. ASTON 1956: I,82f.; FLORENZ 1919:194f.).

In both instances mentioned the *Kojiki* uses Chinese characters as phonograms to write the word *Futymani*. The parallel variant I of the *Nihongi*, however, uses the semantograms 太 Chin. *t'ai* 'excessive, extreme' and 占 Chin. *chan* 'to divine', thus disclosing clearly the meaning of the corresponding word *Futymani* in the *Kojiki*. On the other hand it follows that the »reading« *Futymani* applies to this and also to the second passage in the *Nihongi* where the word is written with the same semantograms. From all this we know that *Futymani* means 'great divination'; but an etymology of the word *mani* has not yet been offered.

The connection of *Futymani* with the god Ame no Koyane in the above mentioned *Nihongi* variant of the descent-myth makes it possible to recognize in the description of a relevant scene in the *Kojiki* a direct reference to the practice of this kind of divination even though in this case no name is given. Among the many preparations by the assembled gods to lure the sun-goddess out of the rock-cave where she had hidden we see the gods Ame no Koyane and Futodama summoned »to draw out as a whole the shoulder-bone of a male deer of the heavenly mount Kagu and take the heavenly *FaFaka*-tree of the heavenly mount Kagu and perform the divination« (NKBT 67: 80/81; cf. PHILIPPI 1969: 82f.; FLORENZ 1919: 38). This shows beyond any doubt that the 'Great Divination' points to the scapulimancy widely used throughout Asia.

The practice is already mentioned in the *Wei-chih*, written towards the end of the third century, in describing the *wo-jen*, the inhabitants of Japan:

»Whenever they undertake an enterprise and discussion arises, they bake bones and divine in order to tell whether fortune will be good or bad. First they announce the object of divination, using the same manner of speech as in tortoise shell divination; then they examine the cracks made by the fire and tell what is come to pass.«

(*San-kuo-chih* 30, Ed. Chung-hua shu-chü, Peiching²1982, Vol. 3: 856; TSUNODA/GOODRICH 1951: 12.) Bones which had been used for scapulimancy have been found in several places together with other remains of the Yayoi period, e.g. in Miura (Kanagawa Pref.) and on Sado island (Niigata Pref.). These bones show bore-holes which presumably were of importance in regard to the interpretation of the cracks caused by the fire (illustrations in Saitô 1955: 68; MIZUNO/KOBAYASHI 1959: 92; *Kokushi daijiten* 6: 664c). If we follow the *Kokushi daijiten* (loc.cit. s.v. *shika'ura no shinji*) baked bones used in divination have also been discovered in remains of the Nara period. It seems that for official usage scapulimancy had been replaced by tortoise shell divination at an early date, but in accordance with the archaeological finds just mentioned, several poems of the *Man'yôshû* speak of *katayaki* 'baking of shoulder[-bones]' as a means for divination. Thus in the middle of the eighth century the method was still practiced. And while in mythology it is the god Ame no Koyane who as a cult official is entrusted with this method of divination, in the poems of the *Man'yôshû* (3374, 3694) it is the *urab*{ 'diviner' who performs the *katayaki*.

Apart from the purely technical proceedings, the boring or carving of the bones which then are exposed to fire and the following divinatory interpretation of the cracks, nothing is transmitted from those early times. Had it been the custom at the same time to invoke the gods to reveal their intentions? Was it customary to offer sacrifices? Was it the belief alone in the magical effect of the process itself that worked? We do not know. We can only try to get a lead from the little that is known.

Evidently the knowledge of the practice reached Japan during the later part of the Yayoi period, that is presumably shortly before or after Christ. The connection with the god Ame no Koyane, his role as diviner within the scene in front of the Heavenly Rock Cave and also in the service of the Heavenly Grandson on his descent from heaven lead to the conclusion that the divination method called *Futymani* was the method originally used by the Yamato court and practiced by members of the Nakatomi clan, itself a clan closely connected with the court. Another connection with the Yamato court is established by the passage reported both in the *Kojiki* as well as in the *Nihongi* although it is only the *Kojiki*-version of the creation myth which begins with the statement: »The names of the gods who came into existence at the time of the beginning of heaven and earth in the High Plain of Heaven were Ame no Minaka-nushi no kami, next Takamimusubi no kami, next Kamimusubi no kami« (NKBT 1: 50/51; cf. PHILIPPI 1969: 47). If we follow the *Kojiki*, it seems that these three deities were the most prominent gods of the Yamato court before the sun-goddess drove them out of their superior position. It is by order of these gods that Izanagi and Izanami start their procreation and to these gods they revert to ask for advice. These deities who are called deities of heaven »divine by means of *Futymani*«. They are the highest gods preceding everybody and everything else, hence it is impossible that their divination is addressed to any other superordinate deity. It is indeed the divinatory process itself out of which the an-

swer is delivered. These circumstances lead to the conclusion that, if conducted in the proper way, the divinatory method called *Futymani* will magically answer given questions. Comparison with the other versions of the procreation myth shows clearly that this episode has been grafted into this myth in order to attribute to these gods an essential role even in this instance, while mentioning of the *Futymani* allowed the author to connect this passage to the later episodes featuring this kind of divination.

Because scapulimancy is a procedure which presupposes the existence of certain knowledge inaccessible to the layman, it is reserved to the professional diviner, the *urab*}. In this word *urab*{} we meet with another essential term: *ura* means 'divination' in general. If the context does not point to another special kind of divination this word refers to either scapulimancy or tortoise shell divination, the divination *par excellence*. This applies also to the denominal verb *uranaFu* 'to divine'. In the *Man'yōshū* we shall find the noun *ura* as part of several compounds designating special divination methods. But before we turn to these we must mention another and presumably older term connected with divination.

The verb *ukëFu* and the deverbal noun *ukëFZ* derived from it lead us back into the realm of mythology, legend or pseudo-history. Both have been treated extensively in another connection (cf. MILLER/NAUMANN 1994, §3), thus I shall content myself with giving only the essential points.

Both *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* use *ukëFu* resp. *ukëFZ* in three meanings:

- 1) the swearing of an oath by which the choice between two given possibilities is bound up with an irreversible result;
- 2) the swearing of an oath which procures a sign by which a hidden truth is revealed;
- 3) the swearing of an oath which procures a sign announcing success or failure of an intended enterprise.

The first and second meanings are met with only in a mythical context; only the third meaning belongs to the human realm even though some of the examples given in the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* contain some supernatural feats. Here the *ukëFZ* is a means to penetrate into the future, if only in a limited way, because the answers will always be only positive or negative in regard to success or misfortune of the intended undertaking. Essentially, meaning 2) and 3) are in accordance, for in both cases the *ukëFZ* will reveal something hidden, whether a hidden truth or the hidden future.

As soon as the *ukëFZ* is set into motion by announcing the intention, the wished-for sign, it will work by itself. It appears to be a kind of magical practice, a procedure which exacts the appearance of the wished-for sign magically and therefore mechanistically, whether the sign is positive or negative. The *ukëFz* is indeed an adjuration. None of the extant examples points to an invocation of gods or to any kind of prayer. Insofar as the human side is concerned it might be possible to see in the result of the *ukëFZ* a kind of oracle dependent on the will of the gods, indeed to take it as a kind of divine revelation. Thus the

Jidai-betsu kokugo daijiten (p. 113c) writes in regard to *ukëFZ* that it is a kind of prayer to the gods which shall produce the wished-for result. But the texts do not substantiate this assumption. Such reflections and misconceptions could, however, have been the reason for the early loss of the original, archaic meaning of the verb *ukëFu* which has its roots in a shamanistic *milieu* (cf. MILLER/NAUMANN 1994: §§ 3.05–3.06), and it might also have been the reason for the sporadic use of the Chinese character 祈 *ch'i* ‘to pray, to beseech’ for writing the word, while another character-orthography for *ukëFu* was 誓 (約) Chin. *shih(-yüeh)* ‘to take an oath, to swear; to contract’. In the *Man'yôshû* the verb *ukëFu* has exclusively the meaning of »to pray for the realization of a wish«. To give only one example, M 767: »albeit I made an *ukëFZ* before going to sleep, I have not seen my beloved in my dream« (NKBT 4: 314/315).

A further shift of the meaning of *ukëFZ/ukëFu* shall be mentioned in passing only; it appears for the first time in a story in the *Nihon ryô'iki* (Fasz. 3, No. 38 = NKBT 70: 430/431) if we accept the reading tradition of the Chinese characters used. Emperor Shômu asks Fujiwara no Nakamaro for an *ukëFZ* which consists of an oath causing Nakamaro's own destruction should he not keep the promise given at the same time. The solemn oath is accompanied by the drinking of the *ukëFZ.nö mZkZ*, the sacred alcoholic beverage. The *ukëFZ* of Nakamaro as an imprecation towards himself leads to the later use of *ukefu* as attested in the *Ise-monogatari* (31, NKBT 9: 131) where it means ‘to curse’. But here too no gods are needed, *pace* the interpretation by the editors.

While the word *Futymani* is a relic even in Old Japanese, although the divination thus called is still practiced under the designation of *katayaki*, the verb *ukëFu* underwent a shift of meaning which left no trace of the original meaning before it became obsolete. Together with the original meaning of the word the divinatory practice designated by it had fallen out of use. It was replaced by several other methods that we meet with in the poems of the *Man'yôshû*.

In combination with the general term *ura*, which comprises every kind of divination, special compounds were also formed which seem easily to disclose their meaning: *asi-ura* or *a-ura*, ‘foot-divination’, *isi-ura* ‘stone-divination’, *mZna-ura* ‘water-divination’, *mZtiyukZ-ura* ‘way-going-divination’, *ya-ura* – an ambiguous expression, mostly interpreted as ‘8 divinations’, but it could also mean ‘arrow-divination’ – and *yuFu-ura* ‘evening-divination’. The last one is usually called *yuFu-kë*. Simple and easily understandable as these compound names seem to be, it is rather difficult to perceive what they really mean. Some information, however, the context of the poems might disclose.

Twenty poems in the *Man'yôshû* speak of divination. In contrast to the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi*, to mythology and pseudo-history – and in contrast to history proper, to be sure – where divination, oracles and omina appear in an official role, in the poems it is the private person, the single human being, who makes use of divination. When we read through these poems time and again we encounter the expression *ura tyFu* ‘to ask the oracle, the divination’, while its answer is expressed as *ura.ni nöru* ‘by the oracle, the divination it is an-

nounced'. The same may be said about the compounds of *ura* and also in regard to *yuFukë*, the 'evening-divination'. It is possible that something *ura.ni denikeri* 'came to light by the divination' (M 3374); one can *ura oku* 'put or set an oracle, a divination' (M 3333); or *a-ura su* 'make the foot-divination' (M 736, 3006). When M 2407 refers to *ya-ura sasū*, then the verb *sasū* 'to stick, pierce, stab, thrust, prick; to sting; to point' etc. (HEPBURN 1888: 534a) suggests that *ya-ura* means 'arrow-divination'.

Evidently lovers were those who made most use of divination. Ten out of the twenty poems are concerned with the anxious question, »will he come this night?«, or, from his side, »will I meet her?«. Another seven poems also touch love-affairs. The remaining three poems are elegies (*banka*).

When in the same poem, and parallel to *yuFukë*, the 'evening divination', either the foot-divination (M 736) or the stone-divination (M 420), or simply *ura* 'divination' alone (M 2613, 3811, 3812) are mentioned, this suggests that these are always different kinds of divination. In the latter case *ura* is supposed to mean the tortoise shell divination for which it was necessary to apply to a professional *urab*{. The same holds true for the *katayaki*, the shoulder-blade divination. Such *urab*{ were to be found in many shrines and could be consulted.

It is obvious that these poems present certain problems, both textually or linguistically. One of these problems is connected with just this *urab*{. The case is absolutely clear in M 3811 (NKBT 7: 134/135), the poem of a woman nearing death because of her longing for her absent husband. First she speaks of her longing, then the poem continues:

<i>tiFayabur/u/</i>	the wildly raving
<i>kami.ni.mo</i> na ôse	gods do not burden [with it],
<i>urabe mase/sue</i>	do not ask the <i>urab</i> {
<i>kame.mo</i> na yak/i/ <i>sö...¹</i>	to bake the tortoise [shell]...

Her heart is breaking, but by now it is of no use any more to call her name, yet

<i>taratine.nö</i>	when my dear
<i>haha /no/ mikoto.ka</i>	mother at the less than
<i>momotarazu</i>	hundred, at the
<i>yaso.nö chimata.ni</i>	eighty-branched road
<i>yûge.ni.mo</i>	asks the evening oracle
<i>ura.ni.mo.sö</i> to/u/	or the [tortoise shell] divination
<i>shinubeki waga yue</i>	it is for my cause, who must die.

The *hanka* (M 3812) takes over the topic we are interested in:

1 I use a somewhat simplified transcription: *italics* with vowel diacritics for phonograms in the original text, Hepburn romanization for semantograms, // to enclose »orthographic zeros«.

<i>urabe.wo.mo</i>	Even though you ask the <i>urab</i> {
<i>yaso.nö chimata.mo</i>	or the oracle at the
<i>ura toedo</i>	the eighty-branched road
<i>kimi.wo aimi/mu/</i>	to see you again
<i>tadoki shirazu.mo</i>	I know no means.

Both poems write the word *urab*{ with the usual semantogram orthography. Thus its meaning as well as its »reading« are established, and it is this *urab*{ who handles the tortoise shell divination. But there are two more poems where matters are more complicated.

These two poems are nearly completely written with Chinese characters used as phonograms, and here we find *uraF*{ where *urab*{ is expected. However, the context of poem M 3694 (NKBT 7: 88/89–90/91), an elegy, makes quite sure that it is speaking of an *urab*{:

<i>YukZ.nö ama.nö</i>	Among the fishermen of Iki
<i>Fotute.nö uraF</i> { <i>.wo</i>	the famous <i>urab</i> {
<i>kata yakite...</i>	bakes the shoulder[-blade]...

The *urab*{ of Iki as well as those of Tsushima were famous for their skill, and the *urab*{ of the *jingikan*, the Department of the Gods, came from these islands. There can be no doubt, in my opinion, that the identically written *uraF*{ in poem M 3374 (NKBT 6: 414/415) also stands for *urab*{. The relative commentary (p. 415) suggests that it should be a verbal form which, however, should be written *uraF*ë, using a phonogram of the *otsu-rui*, i.e. that the word had final -ë, not -{. Interestingly enough, the Chinese graph 肩 used in the usual semantogram orthography for writing *urab*{ is also used as a phonogram writing for *F*{. All this, as well as the context, make things clear enough:

<i>Muzasino.ni</i>	In Musashino
<i>uraF</i> { <i> katayaki</i>	the <i>urab</i> { baked the shoulder[-blade]
<i>masate.ni.mo</i>	and directly
<i>nöranu kzmZ.ga na</i>	your name, which had not been told,
<i>ura.ni denikeri</i>	came out by the divination.

Thus we see the *urab*{ in action, either »baking the shoulder[-blade]« or »the tortoise [shell]«.

The remaining specific methods of divination we meet with in the poems of the *Man'yôshû* all lie in the hands of the individual person who wants to know about the future. The evening-divination, already mentioned in the poems cited above, is by far the best known and most popular practice: within the poems of the *Man'yôshû* the *yuFukë* is mentioned ten times, *yuFu-ura* once.

To execute the evening divination Ôtomo no Yakamochi is waiting in front of the porch in a moonlit night (M 736, NKBT 4: 308/309), at the same time practicing also the foot-divination; far from home, he sees before his inner eyes his wife standing at the porch asking the evening divination (M 3978); well-

traveled roads are the place where others try to overhear the first chance words exchanged by passers-by, random utterances which are taken and interpreted as an oracle. But the best place for the evening oracle is the »eighty-branched road«, on the surface a poetical expression for a place where »many« roads branch or cross. The context of poem (M 2506, NKBT 6: 188/189) gives a further hint:

kotodama /no/	[where there is] <i>kötödama</i>
yaso /no/ chimata /ni/	at the eighty-branched road
yûge to/u/	I ask the evening divination...

This poem has been thoroughly investigated by MILLER (1977: 267ff.) to which the reader is referred. Thus here some brief remarks and some additions may suffice.

It is first necessary to elucidate what this *kötödama* belonging to the eighty-branched road means. That in this poem *kötö* is written with the semantogram 事 Chin. *shih* 'affair, matter' is not significant. The same graph could also stand for *kötö* 'words, speech'. »The Old Japanese scribes clearly believed that the two *kötö* forms were related to one another«, and »this very orthographic variation has its ultimate foundations in the *kotodama* concept itself, where the idea that the 'thing' referred to by a given word is coeval as well as coextensive with the 'word' that refers to it is at the heart of the whole matter« (MILLER 1977: 263, 264; for the whole concept of *kötödama* as it appears in the *Man'yôshû* see pp. 261ff.). The word *tama* may, again according to MILLER (1977: 265f.), »both simply and accurately be rendered as 'spirit' or 'soul'«, and this »spirit or soul known as *tama* was conceived of, in the Old Japanese period, as being a living entity identified as dwelling not only in men, but also in natural objects..., important *objets d'art* and other precious objects of the material culture... Especially important was the fact that the Old Japanese *tama* seems to have been distinguished by its innate ability to separate itself from the living person or material object in which it normally dwelt, and hence was able to exist quite independently, in a disembodied state.« This *tama* was also very clearly a vital force without which life must cease.

When we thus interpret Old Japanese *kötödama* as the »'spirit, soul' that was properly lodged in *kötö* 'words, language', a vehicle from which, however, it might be easily displaced or dislodged« (MILLER 1977: 267), not only did the ritualistic manipulation of the now-dislodged *tama* using the practice of Old Japanese *kötöagë* 'lifting up, invoking words' become possible, as MILLER points out, but it was also the means by which the evening divination worked. It was the dislodged 'spirit of the words' which conveyed a special meaning to the listener hidden in the evening dusk.

In this connection the 'eighty-branched road' gains a special meaning. There is, according to MILLER (1977: 268), a certain etymological pun »suggesting the word *yasirö* 'cult site,' and particularly to be understood here ... in terms of the ultimate Altaic etymology of Old Japanese *yasirö*, which is related to words in

other languages meaning 'secret, hidden from sight, shadowed'.« But there is more to be taken into consideration in regard to *yaso*, the number 'eighty'.

Eighty, mostly interpreted as meaning »many«, is, first of all, a multiple of 'eight', again interpreted as meaning »many«. But 'eight', a number frequently met with in Japanese mythology, by no means primarily designates »many«; it stands clearly for »a totality, all«. This holds true specifically for the whole cosmological concept. The Eight Directions are *all* directions, the whole world; the Eight Islands engendered and born by the First Parents again signify the whole earth (cf. NAUMANN 1971: 199ff.). As soon as the understanding of this basic idea was lost 'eight' was easily transformed into 'eighty' as shown in the prayer for the *hoshizume-matsuri* 'ceremony of pacifying the fire'. In this prayer the »eight islands« procreated by Izanagi and Izanami become »eighty islands and eighty countries« (for details see NAUMANN 1971: 202). We may, therefore, conclude that the eighty-branched road goes back to an eight-branched road, i.e. the branching point of eight roads leading into the Eight Directions. Taking this in a cosmological sense, this branching or crossing point is at the center of the world. It is the point where communication between the Middle Land, the world of men, and the Underworld is possible.

Symbolically, every crossing or branching of roads can stand for this center of the world, for the boundary between this world and the other world. To this point the beings of the Other World, be they the spirits of the departed or the demons of disease and pestilence might come, but no further. When Izanagi left the Other World called *yomi no kuni* 'Land of Darkness', he closed the entrance to it with a great boulder. This boulder is called »the Great God who blocks the gate of the Land of Darkness« or »who drives back on the way from it«. The boundary god called Sae no kami and represented by a boulder or stone is identical with this mythical god. To ward off all evil which might come from the Other World he is posted at the village boundary and at crossroads. But then these are also the places where the spirits of the dead can abide, they who have knowledge of the future. Chance words, scraps of conversation heard by the listener on such a place are therefore not accidental. Quite to the contrary, they are inspired albeit the speaker is not aware of it.

Of course we may not take details given in a text of the twelfth century as information about the Old Japanese period as the commentary to poem 420 (in the NKBT text, 4: 359) suggests. But the *Fukuro no sôshi* of Fujiwara no Kiyosuke († 1177) or the *Nichûreki*, an anonymous encyclopaedical text of about the same time, both show that the tradition of the evening divination, which certainly is much older than the *Man'yôshû*, was then still living. Of course we do not know whether at the time of the *Man'yôshû* the gods Sae no kami and the god Funato (who also possesses the qualities of Sae no kami) were invoked as »gods of the evening divination« in a spell recited three times, or whether the place used for the occasion was marked and rice scattered as an offering while the teeth of a comb were made to resound. All we know for the Old Japanese period is that chance words and utterances were taken as an oracle which had to be inter-

preted by the listener him- or herself. How this divination »functioned«, whether gods were involved or whether we should call it an »automatic« divination – I hesitate to determine.

Perhaps the *mZtiyukZ-ura* ‘way-going-divination’ was only a variant of the evening-divination – more, it is impossible to say. Little may be said also about the foot-divination apart from the fact that it took place on moonlit nights (M 736, 3006), and sometimes together with the evening-divination. Nobody knows for sure how it was executed; it is supposed, however, that it may have consisted in counting the steps, an entirely mechanical device.

Again together with the evening-divination the stone-divination is mentioned (M 420, NKBT 4: 200/201–202/203), and here too we cannot be certain what kind of a divination this was. Ban Nobutomo in his book on oracles, *Seiboku kô* (543b–544a), cites the presumably oldest notice concerning a certain kind of stone oracle. There it is asked what the round stone means which is deposited in the small shrine dedicated to Dôsojin, a god identical with Sae no kami. The answer is: »As it is Dôsojin, he is revered at the border of the road. When anybody asks this god whether a certain affair (*koto*) is true or not, this is destined by the stone being light or heavy.« The text asserts furthermore that this stone is not the god. This kind of divination is practiced even today in several shrines. But it is impossible to know whether the description might apply to the *isi-ura* of the *Man'yôshû* poems.

About the water-divination mentioned by Yakamochi in M 4028 (NKBT 7: 244/245) we are absolutely left in the dark. All we know is that it was executed in or at the »clean fords« of a river, but how it was done remains unexplained. Without any elucidating context remains also the *ya-ura*, and here we cannot even be sure if our interpretation as ‘arrow-divination’ is correct. The verb *sasu*, as the only hint within the context, may point to a kind of divination still in practice today, which consists in throwing an object – hook-like twig or coin – onto a certain tree, the *torii* of a Shintô-shrine, the thick straw rope of the Izumo shrine. If the object sticks or remains lying there, the answer is positive. Several people, blindfold, trying to throw something onto the tree standing in the courtyard behind the western *torii* of Shitennô-ji are depicted in the *Ippen hijiri e*, a picture scroll painted around 1300 (SHIBUZAWA 1984: 2, 233, No.315). This would be an »automatic divination« – but all this remains in the realm of sheer speculation.

A special linguistic problem awaits us in M 3418, a poem replete with allusions and confronting us with another special kind of divination:

- | | | | |
|---|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1 | <i>kamZtukëny</i> | 3 | By divining with |
| 2 | <i>sanyta.nö naFë.nö</i> | 2 | the rice-sprouts of Sanota |
| 3 | <i>muranaFë.ni</i> | 1 | in Kamitsukeno |
| 4 | <i>kötö.Fa sadamëtu</i> | 4 | the thing has been fixed; |
| 5 | <i>ima.Fa ika.ni se.mo</i> | 5 | now, how can we do it!? |

The commentary (NKBT 6: 424) explains *kötö* ‘the thing’ as meaning ‘marriage’; we could as well think of a love-match.

The allusion which gives the poem its special flavor and also makes it certain that *muranaFë.ni* stands for *uranaFë.ni* points to a scene in the *Nihongi* (var. III of the myth of Ninigi descending from Heaven, NKBT 67:156/157; cf. Aston 1956: I, 86): »Now Kamu-atakashitsu-hime by divination fixed upon a rice-field and named it Sanata.« The poem equates Sanata in the province of Kôzuke with the mythical Sanata: both names contain the word *ta* ‘rice field’, as well as the word *sa*, which can be taken as »expressing the meaning of *satsuki* ‘Fifth Month’« as the *Jidai betsu kokugo daijiten* (317a) remarks. Very probably it is the same *sa* as in *sanae* ‘rice sprouts, young rice-plants’ and other compounds connected with rice-planting, a theme taken up again by the mentioning of *naFë* ‘rice-sprouts’ in the poem. Again in both cases something is fixed, evidently in each case in the same way, namely by divination.

The linguistic problem consists in how to explain the initial *m-* of *muranaFë.ni* which thus clearly stands for *uranaFë.ni* ‘by divining’. But perhaps this is no *linguistic* problem at all but simply one to be solved by considering the allusions of the context.

There is first the divination itself, a divination using *naFë* ‘rice sprouts, young rice-plants’, i.e. plants grown in special seed-beds from where they are taken out in small bunches and replanted into the wet-fields. Again we cannot be certain of the method, but it seems that we get at least a hint, if we take *muranaFë* as a pivot-word, meaning a) *mura-naFë* ‘a cluster of rice-sprouts’, b) (*m-*)*uranaFë* ‘divining’. Thus we should interpret lines 2–3 as *sanyta.nö naFë.nö mura-naFë.ni* (= a)/ (*m-*)*uranaFë.ni* (= b) : »by divining (= b)/ with a cluster of rice-sprouts (= a) of the rice-sprouts of Sanata«. To pull out a small bunch of rice-plants and then count the number of plants would correspond to other widespread methods of divination in which counting an »odd« or »even« number provides the answer. In this case the initial *m-* of *muranaFë.ni* ‘by divining’ would be without any linguistic meaning; it serves for a play with words and as such has simply to be ignored. In the *Man’yôshû* word-plays and jokes of this kind may always be reckoned with. If our interpretation is correct, this would again be an »automatic divination«.

Two of the elegies already mentioned show us divination within a greater context. In an anonymous elegy (M 3333, NKBT 6: 394/395), dedicated to someone who died on the way to Korea, we find the following passage:

itsu kimas/amu/.tö	when you would come,
ura okite	I put the divination
iwaiwatar/u/.ni...	while constantly keeping the taboo...

Here the divination is incorporated into a greater religious scope where those remaining at home were under an obligation to keep certain taboos. Another elegy (M 420, NKBT 200/201–202/203) lamenting the death of a prince (Iwata no Ôkimi – dates unknown), brings this even clearer to the fore. The author

regrets his (or her) own misbehavior to which he or she ascribes the death of the prince – »Alas! Would I had asked the evening-divination, had used the stone-divination! Would I had put up a *mzmörö* near my house, set up benediction-pitchers near my pillow, hung bamboo-beads around my neck and kept back my sleeves by strings of mulberry bast! Would I had taken the seven *fu*-reeds of the Heavenly Sasara-field to the Dry Riverbed of Heaven and had undergone a lustration...« The word *mzmörö* designates a cult place, although we do not know what form it took. The setting up of benediction-pitchers together with all the other preparations is mentioned many times as a means for praying for the well-being of absent relatives. The seven *fu*-reeds remain as unknown to us as is the Sasara-field in Heaven; but reed has generally been used for ritual cleansing and the same holds true for *misogy*, the lustration.

Thus divination is here only one of several religious rites practiced on behalf of an absent relative or friend. This divination too is not directly addressed to the gods. It was thought to work by itself, as is the case with most of the methods of which we were talking; nevertheless it is placed outside the profane. The love poems, however, leave the impression of sheer routine far separated from any religious feeling, and even their magic seems to have been evoked at least half in jest.

Beginning with the archaic *Futymani* up to the various methods of which the *Man'yôshû* poems give evidence we perceive little of »divination proper«, in the strict etymological sense of the term. Apart from the more severe character of the *ukëFZ* as it appears in the mythical context and of the rather official character of scapulimancy and tortoise shell divination, even when practiced for a private client, it is by very simple magical means that the answers to mostly trivial questions are sought for, all figuring under »automatic divination«.

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