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Time in Ancient Japan—How Change Was Recognized

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Time which appeared in old Japanese literature was either an entity that moved linearly or a range of time. In the latter case, if a range of time was called spring, it was spring all the time as long as that range continued. In this sense, it was almost as if time was stationary. Despite that, spring was definitely a concept of time. It was because spring was followed by summer, fall and winter in sequence.

As a matter of fact, this concept of *range* could be applied to all categories of time which were perceived by human beings. All types of time could be recognized as a range. When we try to catch this very moment, the moment already belongs to the past. Furthermore, the elapse of time could be identified only through people's action, events or phenomena in the environment. Therefore, the passage of time existed not as a perception in human mind, but rather as something which transcended human beings.

This reasoning led people into considering time as an absolute entity which transcended mankind. At the same time, it was also defined as a social entity.

Nevertheless, man was still confined to the perception that time was a range. As a result, time was recognized as a range which moved on linearly. Time was a quite subtle and intriguing entity.

It seems that literature indeed manifested time as a demarcation between ranges. It identified changes which took place between the ranges. In other words, literature was a vehicle to represent such a demarcation or changes in time.

1. Seasonal Change

Firstly, I would like to discuss how *waka* poems in *Manyōshū* (the earliest extant collection of Japanese poetry, containing 4,516 numbered poems) recognized seasons.

- (1) *Fuyu Sugite Haru Kitarurashi Asahisasu Kasuga no Yama ni Kasumi
Tanabiku* (Manyōshū 10: 1844)

(It seems that winter has gone, while spring has come, because I can see a haze hanging over Mt. *Kasuga* when the morning sun shines.)

- (2) *Ughisu no Haru ni Narurashi Kasuga-Yama Kasumi Tanabiku Yome ni Miredomo* (Manyōshū 10: 1845)
 (It seems that spring has come for nightingales to sing, because I can see a haze hanging over Mt. *Kasuga* even in the night sky.)
- (3) *Kasugano ni Keburi Tatsu Miyu Wotomerashi Haruno no Uhagi Tsumite Nirashimo* (Manyōshū 10: 1879)
 (Yonder on the plain of *Kasuga*
 I see wreaths of smoke arise—
 Are the young girls
 Boiling the starworts,
 Plucked from the fields of spring?)
 [Tr. by Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, *Manyōshū*.
 New York: Columbia University Press, 1969, p. 268]
- (4) *Momoshiki no Oomiyabito ha Itoma Areya Ume wo Kazashite Koko ni Tsudoheru* (Manyōshū 10: 1883)
 (The lords and ladies
 Of the Great Palace
 Have leisure enough;
 Here they are out together
 Bedecked with plum-flowers.)
 [Tr. by Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, op. cit., p. 293]
- (5) *Shigure no Ame Manakushi Fureba Mikasayama Konure Amaneku Irozukinikeri* (Manyōshū 10: 1553)
 (Since it has been drizzling all the time, all the leaves on young branches at tree tops have turned yellow and red in Mt. *Mikasa*.)
- (6) *Kasugano ni Shigure Furu Miyu Asu yoriha Momiji Kazasamu Takamato no Yama* (Manyōshū 8: 1571)
 (I can see it drizzling in the field of *Kasuga*. Tomorrow, Mount *Takamato* will hold up pretty twigs of red leaves over her head, as I imagine.)

In the poem (1), it is presumed by the poet that winter has passed, while spring has come, based on the fact that a haze is lying over Mount *Kasuga*. In other words, if there were not for a haze, the poet would not notice the spring coming. He would have thought that it was still winter. This poem represents people's wonder about discovering seasonal change from winter to spring.

Likewise, the poem (2) expresses the awareness of seasonal change. Unlike the former, however, the awareness is triggered at night.

When people noticed the coming of spring, what did they do? It is described

in the poems (3) and (4). They went out into spring fields, where they picked the fresh green. They cooked and ate it, or they decorated the hair with spring flowers. Such a custom symbolized people's desire to assimilate the energy and power of spring into themselves. It symbolized the revitalization of human spirit.

Let us look into the temporal and spatial perception of the spring coming. First of all, the seasonal change was recognized when some natural phenomena loomed in the distant, over a high mountain, which the poet could barely see. Then spring reached nearby fields. This is how change in time is presented in these poems. In reality, however, it somehow contradicts with natural phenomena, because the higher the altitude of a place, the later the coming of spring. The realization of time here is, therefore, quite abstract. In this way of cognizance, time is not recognized as a stream or continuous flow, but rather as an *entity* which would come from a distant sphere, to go back there again, as if mythical deities.

Such an idea was consistent with the ancient custom that people cooked and ate the sprout of fresh green or decorated the hair with spring flowers. People in the Imperial Palace went out into spring fields for picnic, which aimed at assimilating the spiritual power of what was called 'spring deities' into themselves, thereby enhancing the resources of life.

Such an approach to season applied not only to spring but also to autumn. The poem (5) expresses the arrival of autumn, which is made clear by leaves in mountain trees turning yellow or red. In (6), Mount *Takamato* is personified to be a courtier in the Imperial Palace, who cherishes the custom to appreciate the beauty of autumn by holding up yellow leaves of trees over the head during the outing in the plain. The coming of autumn is identified by drizzle in the mountain (5), which induces people to go out into the field (6). The situation is the same as that in spring.

Most of the poems which focused on seasons expressed the seasonal changes, particularly describing changes in nature such as cherry blossom coming in bloom and withering later. Interestingly enough, poems on seasonal changes were mostly about spring and autumn, whereas not so many were created about summer and winter.

What was important was that, in a span of 1 year, the distinction between ranges was drawn by the arrival of spring and autumn, and not by summer or winter. Generally speaking, in a society based on an agricultural calendar, the centrepiece was spring with seed sowing as well as autumn with harvest. At the same time, in the world of poetry, spring and autumn represented a season for change around summer and winter. It sounded consistent, because both sowing and harvesting triggered a major change in the environment. Spiritual power could emerge most strongly at the point of change or along the line of demarcation between ranges.

2. Dawn of the Day

Here I would like to discuss how *time* in a day was perceived.

- (7) [When *Yachihoko-no-Kami* (= *Ōkuninushi-no-Kami*, a Shinto deity) went forth to woo *Nunakaha-Hime* of the land of *Koshi*, the Princess did not accept it. When he arrived at the house of *Nunakaha-Hime*, he sang:]

Aoyama ni Nue ha Nakinu. Sano tsu Dori Kigishi ha Toyomu. Niha tsu Dori Kake ha Naku. Uretakumo Nakunaru Tori ka... (*Kojiki*: Kamiyo)
(Then, on the verdant mountains,

The *nuye* bird sang.

The bird of the field,

The pheasant resounded.

The bird of the yard,

The cock crowed.

Ah how hateful

These birds for crying!)

[Tr. by Donald L. Philippi, *Kojiki*.

Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1968, p. 105]

- (8) *Akatoki to Yogarasu Nakedo Kono Mine no Konure no Uhe ha Imada Shizukeshi*
(*Manyōshū* 7: 1263)
(The night crow calls as if to tell of dawn, But, on this hill-side, Over the tree-tops all is still.) [Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, op. cit., p. 287]
- (9) *Asakarasu Hayakuna Nakiso Waga Seko ga Asake no Sugata Mireba Kanashimo*
(*Manyōshū* 12: 3095)
(Morning crows, please do not cry. It's still so early. How sad and lonely I shall be, when I see my love 'leaving this place in the morning'!)
- (10) *Asabiraki Kogidete Kureba Muko-no-Ura no Shiohi no Kata ni Tazu ga Koe Sumo*
(*Manyōshū* 15: 3595)
(The boat has 'sailed out of the harbour at the dawn'. I can hear cranes crying on a sandy beach of *Muko-no-Ura* at low tide.)
- (11) *Yo wo Samumi Asato wo Hiraki Ide Mireba Niha mo Hadarani Miyuki Furitari*
(*Manyōshū* 10: 2318)
(After a cold night, I 'opened the door' to go out in the morning. What a surprise! Snow flakes have been falling quietly on the ground in the garden.)

(12) *Koto Shigemi Kimi ha Kimasazu Hototogisu Nare dani Ki Nake Asato Hirakamu* (Manyōshū 8: 1499)

(Since the rumour had spread wide, my lover could not come to see me. I stayed up all night waiting for him. Little cuckoo, do come and make a cry. If at least you come and cry to herald the dawn, I will 'open the door' as if to do so for seeing him off.)

(13) *Asatode no Kimi ga Sugata wo Yoku Mizute Nagaki Haruhi wo Kohiya Kurasamu* (Manyōshū 10: 1925)

(I regret that, after spending the night with my lover last night, I failed to see him closely, when he 'opened the door' before leaving. Now, how could I bear a long spring day after he has gone?)

In the poem (7), *Yachihoko-no-Kami* is lamenting brokenhearted, standing outside the door to the house of *Nunakaha-Hime*. His grievance is that, while standing outside, the dawn has come, with the cries of thrushes in the mountains, pheasants in the plain and roosters in the yard. This makes clear that morning would come first in the mountain, then in the plain, before eventually coming in the garden. Since people stay indoors at night, they notice the dawn by bird cries outside. As was the case in the spring poems, the awareness is triggered in a certain sequence, that is to say, firstly in distant mountains, then to the plain and finally to the places where people live.

(8) was composed by a woman who, having spent a night with her lover, tried to persuade him to stay longer with her. She emphasizes that the cries of crows are in the distant, and that it has not dawned in the neighbourhood. This poem also presents a perception that morning would gradually come closer from mountains to towns, and that morning is heralded by birds.

(9) is about a crow cry as well, whereas, in this case, they are crying closer. The composer of this poem pleads with the birds for not crying loud. She is in sorrow, for her lover has to leave in the morning. *Asake* means the dawn.

(10) reveals that the dawn was called *Asabiraki*. The underlying meaning of this word is shown in (11). Here, the poet expresses the wonder that it was so cold at night that he (she) 'opened the door' to find snow falling on the ground in the garden. The act to 'open the door' brings in the morning to people's home.

In (12), the woman is begging the little cuckoo to cry, when people 'open the door' of the house. In other words, people believed that when birds cried, it dawned.

Asatode no Sugata in (13) is a phrase to express a scene where, after spending a night with his girl friend, a man in love 'opens the door' to leave the place. What is described here is that, by remembering the figure of her lover, the poet could withstand the long spring day, after he has gone.

In the above-mentioned examples, it is shown that morning as well as spring would come from somewhere distant and invisible. At the same time, it was

supposed that morning would come by people's action to 'open the door'.

The morning is part of a day, while a day comprises day and night. For example:

- (14) [While he (= *Yamato-Takeru-no-Mikoto*) was there at the palace of *Saka-Wori*, he sang this song:]

Nihibari Tsukuha wo Sugite Ikuyo ka Netsuru (*Kojiki*: Emperor *Keikō*)
 (How many nights have we slept
 Since passing *Nihibari*
 And *Tsukuha*?) [Philippi, op. cit., p. 242]

[Then the old man tending the fire sang this song to continue his song:]

Kaga Nabete Yo niha Kokonoyo Hi niha Tōka wo (*Kojiki*, loc.cit.)
 (The number of days is, altogether,
 Of nights, nine,
 And of days, ten.) [Philippi, loc.cit.]

The morning is a span of *time* to distinguish between night and day, whereas the evening is a demarcation during which day is replaced with night. This notion corresponds with the idea that spring and autumn represent the distinction between winter and summer.

It is clear in (14) that it is all daytime until the sunset, after which it is all night until the sunrise. In this sense, time is stationary. In a shorter span of time, for instance, *Ne-no-Koku* referred to the time from 1 hour before midnight till 1 hour after, during which it was always *Ne-no-Koku* and stationary.

3. Crevice of Time

In the first volume of *Fukuro Sōshi* (a book about *waka* poetry written by *Fujiwara-no-Kiyosuke* in the middle of the 12th century), under the title of *Jumonka* (poems of charm), the following is included:

[A poem about the sound of a bell to announce the hour, which happened to start when one was just about to have a bath]

Yohi no Kane Tsukazaru Mahe ni Yuamiyoto Mimi Tsumanakuni Ihiteshi Monowo
 (Alas, I have told you to finish a bath before the start of the bell in twilight. I was firm and clear, although I did not pinch you by the ear.)

The poem itself is considered a magic spell for escaping from danger, which is

associated with an act of having a bath while the bell is being tolled to announce the hour. The poem sounds as if somebody had been having a bath exactly when the bell was heard, which was not the case. By chanting the poem with such a disguise, people thought that they could be protected against the evil.

In fact, it is revealed by this poem that there was a taboo in the ancient Japanese society that people should not have a bath during the transition from 'one range of time' to another. The rationale behind the taboo was that people were supposed to be in an unstable condition, when not wearing a garment which manifested their status in this world. In addition, instability was augmented when time was shifting from one range to another, thus imposing extreme danger to people. Such circumstances required a magic spell for protection of people. It was evident that people in those days believed that things were extremely dangerous while the bell was tolling.

In old days, *Saru-no-Koku* meant the 2 hours from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m., *Tori-no-Koku* from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. and *Inu-no-Koku* from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.. For instance, during the bell tolling for *Tori*, one was existing in transition from *Saru* to *Tori*, or from *Tori* to *Inu*. No one could tell to exactly which range of time one belonged, during the bell tolling. The sound of bell symbolized the transition and demarcation between the ranges. It could happen that one strayed into the previous time range of *Saru*, while the bell announcing the hour *Tori*. It meant the extinction of that very person from the world. The toll symbolized the crevice of time, or the demarcation between ranges.

Probably, the best example of 'crevice of time' is *Tasogare*, which means 'twilight'. *Tasogare* derived from *Taso, Kare?* It is an interrogative sentence, 'Who is he?' At dusk there was somebody over there, but you could not tell who the person was because of the dim light. It was during this period of time when evil spirits and ghosts appeared. The world was at instability, whereas mysterious creatures from the other world were to sneak into the human world. In other words, it could happen that the world of mankind crept into the other world beyond reality. Here again is there the overlapping between temporal and spatial perceptions.

Although there was an overlap between *time* and *space* in the above-mentioned expressions, it did not mean that time could be manifested only in terms of space. In modern society, in particular, we are used to distinguishing time from space.

However, in ancient times, time and space were closely intermingled and integrated together. As I discuss in detail later, *Saki* means a time in the past and future as well as frontal space in Japanese. Today the expression is still used. *Sakki* means 'a short while ago', whereas *Saki* refers to a place forward. *Mae* is used in terms of both time and space. It would be too simplistic an approach if one would attempt to force a clear distinction between time and space.

Time could be visualized only as a *change* or *transition*. In order for us to visualize time, we need to translate it into shifts in space such as visual changes in the environment when seasons proceed. It applies to people as well. Man came

from somewhere distant, where there was the origin of life. In *Kojiki* (Japan's oldest extant chronicle, recording events from the mythical age of the gods up to the time of Empress *Suiko* (R. 593–628), there is a myth about *Izanagi-no-Mikoto* who visited the Underworld of Death. In fact, this is one of a few stories in Japanese myth in which death and birth were juxtaposed with each other, to be presented in pair. The outline of this part is as follows:

Izanagi and *Izanami* married and went on to bear the land and numerous deities. When *Izanami* gave birth to *Kagutsuchi* (a deity of fire), her genitals were burned and she died. In lamentation, *Izanagi* travelled down to the Underworld of Death called *Yomi-no-Kuni*, to find his wife. When he met her at the gate to *Yomi-no-Kuni*, he pleaded her to return to life. *Izanami* went inside to talk to the Lord of Underworld in order to ask for his permission. She asked her husband never to try to see her dead body while she was away. *Izanagi* was kept waiting for long in complete darkness after she had disappeared. Extremely frustrated and anxious about her absence, he finally broke the promise with his wife. He burned a magical comb in his hair, with which light he saw *Izanami*'s body. Squirring and roaring in the corpse of *Izanami* were tens of thousands of maggots and eight thunder-deities. *Izanagi* was scared to death and dashed to escape from the Underworld. His wife was infuriated and chased after him, yelling "He has shamed me!" When he arrived at the foot of *Yomotsu-Hirasaka* (a pass between this world and the Underworld), *Izanagi* closed the pass with a huge boulder, thereby preventing her from reaching him. At this time, *Izanami* said, "O my husband, if you do thus, I will each day strangle to death one thousand of the populace of your country." To this *Izanagi* said, "O my spouse, if you do thus, I will each day build one thousand five hundred populace in my country."

In this story, it is evident that death is identical to a trip down to *Yomi-no-Kuni*, which is, in fact, a transfer in space. Birth and death are symbolized by two deities who are the creators of the land. They were juxtaposed at the demarcation between the world for life and that for the dead, which was called *Yomotsu Hirasaka*. When *Izanagi* and *Izanami* confronted with each other, face to face, on both sides of the huge boulder at the pass, birth and death were presented in pair in a spatial representation. The goddess who entered the world of death took a pledge for death, whereas the god who ruled that of life prophesied for birth.

In death, the deities from the Underworld carried away living creatures beyond the demarcation between this world and the other. By the same token, in birth, the deities for life brought back the dead to resurgence over the demarcation. In this particular myth, the centrepiece is the death of *Izanami* and *Yomi-no-Kuni*. If we take it the world beyond the demarcation, life comes from and goes back to that

world. Thus birth is clearly defined.

This myth presents birth and death as a tug of war between the two deities along the line of demarcation between the two worlds. This tug of war is scary for human beings, because of its uncertainties. No one knows in which direction the life would be pulled or pushed. To tell the truth, this line is the 'crevice of time' and 'crevice of space'.

One's life can be roughly divided into three stages, that is to say, stages of the youth, adults and the old. *Ritsuryō* (comprehensive legal codes which prevailed in Japan from the late 7th century to the late 10th century) designated those who were from twenty to sixty years old as *Seitei* which meant adults. Those who were under twenty were children, whereas those who were above sixty were the old. As long as one fell within one of those three categories, the status remained stationary. Children were children, while adults were adults all the time, with no change. One had to acknowledge the existence of stationary time. The same concept applied to space as well.

In addition, children did not suddenly turn out to be adults. There was a transitional domain. Children who were in the state of transition were called *Waraha*. Let me take an example of *Chōka* (long poem) about *Taketori no Okina* (an old bamboo cutter) in *Manyōshū*:

(15) *Midoriko no Wakugo ga Mi niha Tarachishi Haha ni Udaekae Himutsuki no Hafu Ko ga Mi niha Yufu Kataginu Hitsurani Nuhiki Unatsuki no Waraha ga Mi niha Yuhihata no Sodetsukegoromo Kishi Ware wo Nihohi Yoru Kora ga Yochi niha Mina no Wata Kaguroshi Kami wo Makushi Mochi Koko ni Kakitare Tori Tsukane Agetemo Makimi Toki Midari Waraha ni Nashimi* (Manyōshū 16: 3791)

(When I was a new-born babe

My mother carried me in her arms;

When an infant still tied with a band

To the back of my nurse, I wore

A sleeveless gown with lining sewed in;

When a boy with hair trimmed at the neck

I was clad in a dappled robe with sleeves.

At the age of you dear maidens

My hair was black as the bowels of a mud-snail.

I would comb it down to the shoulders,

Or have it bound up in knots

Or sometimes let it hang loose like a boy.)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, op. cit., p. 74]

According to this poem, there are three stages in childhood. Firstly, the stage of new born babies, secondly babies who can crawl and thirdly little children whose hair is long enough to reach the neck. *Midoriko*, *Hafu Ko* and *Waraha* seem to

mean 'new born baby', 'infant' and 'young child', respectively.

In addition, it seems that there was another stage above *Waraha*, namely, similar ages to those girls whom *Taketori-no-Okina* came across. Around that age, young men sometimes bound up the hair in knots as if men, or on other occasions let the hair hang naturally like little children. It was the transitory age between childhood and adulthood. Since, in various stories during the *Heian* period (794–1185), youngsters at this stage were called *Waraha*, we understand that this word also applied to those who were in the transitory stage.

It seems that children in some communities had to undergo a severe training session for growing up to be adults. For example, the youth around that age were organized into a group called *Wakamono Gumi* (youth club), which was given a special status in towns and villages. The society acquiesced in delinquency of youngsters to some extent. Their wild behaviours sometimes imposed fear and threat to grown-ups. On the other hand, they were somehow exonerated from the discipline and order of normal society. If we consider the world within order as the sphere of man, the one without order should be that for deities. The youth half belonged to the divine. This particular age was a 'crevice of age'.

In some communities, young adults had to undergo very demanding rituals of hardships for coming-of-age. At stake in some cases was the life of the youth. This severity itself manifested how difficult the process was to cross over the 'crevice of time' in order to enter adulthood. Otherwise, how could we justify such a tradition which imposed a significant risk on young population, whereas it was definitely desired to maintain as many warriors and bread earners as possible in communities?

4. *Saki*: Time and Space, Past and Future

Here let us put aside the issue of 'crevice of time', and concentrate on the term of *Saki*.

In Japanese, *Saki* makes a reference to space, time, past and future. Firstly, I would like to introduce some examples from *Manyōshū* and other ancient Japanese literature. Most often *Saki* meant a promontory. The following are examples:

- (16) *Kamusaburu Aratsu-no-Saki ni Yosuru Nami Manakuya Imo ni Kohi*
Watarinamu (Manyōshū 15: 3660)

(As the waves in the sea would never stop coming to reach the shores of Foreland Aratsu, I would never stop longing for my love.)

- (17) *Arare Furi Kashima-no-Saki wo Nami Takami*
Sugiteya Ikamu Kohishiki Monowo (Manyōshū 7:1174)

(I wonder if we would have to sail the boat past Foreland Kashima, because waves are so high and rough today. I wish I could stop over there.)

Saki is always subjected to waves, and waves are high at *Saki*. There is a place called *Kannon-zaki* in Japan today. *Saki* means a cape and a point of land, which is an extension of land into the sea. *Misaki* is a compound of *Mi* which is an honorific and *Saki*, connoting the divine feature of such a place.

In the poem (16), there is an adjective *Kamisaburu*, meaning 'awesome'. *Saki* is a divine and awesome place. As is clear in both (16) and (17) with the reference to waves coming to *Saki*, it is always the first contact point between this world and the other world. When waves reach this side, they carry the spirits from eternity.

People in the distant past envisaged that there was a world of eternity beyond the sea, where deities lived. This notion appeared in *Ise-no-Kuni-Fudoki* (collection of 8th-century reports on the natural resources, geographical conditions and oral traditions of the land of *Ise*), in which we find the following phrases:

Kamikaze no Ise no Kuni ha, Tokoyo no Nami Yosuru Kuni

(The land of *Ise*, in which a divine wind keeps blowing, is a place where the shorelines are washed by waves coming from the world of eternity.)

In this phrase, a supreme tribute was paid to the land of *Ise*. The point is that *Ise* was not the only place in Japan where the shorelines were exposed to waves coming from the world of eternity. Whatever place faced the sea was subjected to the waves from eternity. Since *Saki* was the 1st interface between this world and the spirits of the everlasting world, it carried awesomeness in the atmosphere as was symbolized by the word *Mi Saki*.

Furthermore, *Saki* did not mean a simple geographical structure of headland which extended itself into the sea. Due to the geographical condition, *Saki* was exposed to the spiritual power of eternity more than any other location, because of which there was an accumulation of divinity in it. That is why a shrine was often constructed at *Saki*. As a matter of fact, the Japanese word meaning 'happiness' derived from an ancient form of *Saki Hahi*, which was a compound between *Saki* and *Hahi*.

(18) *Kamiyo yori Ihitsute Kuraku Soramitsu Yamato no Kuni ha Sumegami no Itsukushiki Kuni Kotodama no Sakihafu Kuni to Kataritsugi Ihitsugahikeri...* (Manyōshū 5: 894)

(Since the age of the gods it has always been said

That the Land of Yamato is

A land where sovereign-Gods hold solemn sway,

A land where the word-soul brings us weal;

Not only has it been so told from mouth to mouth,

But all of us see and know it now.)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, op. cit., p. 207]

In the original scripture, the word reads *Saki Hafu*, which refers to a situation

where *Saki* is universally distributed (*Hafu* or *Hahi*). It means that happiness is everywhere. This poem renders a tribute of praise to the land of *Yamato*, by describing it as a land of 'glory and divinity of *Amaterasu-Ōmikami*'. It is a country of happiness which is brought about by word-soul. It carries the message that *Yamato* is protected by blessings of gods. *Saki* does not simply mean a headland. It should be recognized that there is a hidden reference to divine power.

(19) *Inochi Sakiku Hisashiku Yokemu Ihabashiru Tarumi no Mizu wo
Musubite Nomitsu* (Manyōshū 7: 1142)

(I deeply wished life be blessed with happiness, when I scooped water
running over rocks at the waterfall and drank it.)

As for the phrase of *Inochi Sakiku*, the word *Sakiku* is found in another part of *Manyōshū* as well. It is the poem No. 894 of Book 5, which represents a prayer to wish that one's lover can come back home safe and sound from a journey. The phrase is as follows:

Tsutsuminaku Sakiku Imashite Haya Kaerimase (Manyōshū 5: 894)

(And stand there waiting for you;
Quickly come back home!)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, op. cit., p. 208]

Sakiku in the previous poems refers to a state where there are divine power and blessings all over. *Sakiku* is not totally identical to a modern Japanese word of *Saiwai* (happiness).

I would like to refer to the story of *Ōnamuchi-no-Kami* in the *Book of the Mythical Age of Nihon Shoki*, the oldest official history of Japan covering events from the mythical age of the gods up to the reign of the Empress *Jitō* (r. 686–697). The outline is as follows:

Ōnamuchi-no-Kami completed the creation of land. He was seeking another deity with whom he was to rule the nation, when he suddenly found something glorious coming toward him from the sea. *Ōnamuchi-no-Kami* addressed the mysterious figure surrounded by a halo, and asked who it was. The answer came, saying, *Ware ha Kore Nare no Saki Mitama Kushi Mitama nari*, 'I am your **ble**ssed spirit, and alien spirit.'

In *Saki Mitama* (= soul) *Kushi Mitama*, *Kushi* means extraordinary, alien and super-natural. We, therefore, conjecture that *Saki* ought to bear the implication of spirit, divinity and transcendence as well. *Sakiku* manifests a situation which is guarded by divine power.

Saki could be conjugated into *Saka*, *Saki*, *Saku* and so on. In this sense, *Saka* of *Sakae* (prosperity), *Saki* of *Sakiku* (happiness) and *Saku* (to bloom) are

considered to share the same origin. In fact, *Saki* could be *Saki* for a flower, 'blooming'. This *Saki* implies that a divine spirit, which has been hidden inside a plant, has emerged to the surface to present itself as a flower. *Sakae* is a situation where divinity is manifested everywhere.

Furthermore, it reminds us that *Saka* is related to *Sakai* (demarcation), and *Sakasama* (reversal, upside down). The former has been already discussed in this paper. As to the latter, it should be noted that, in rituals of Buddhism and Shintōism, the sequence of presentation has often been the reverse of what is normally followed in the secular society. (See Nobuyoshi Furuhashi, *Amayo no Aibiki* (A rendezvous on a rainy night), Taishūkan, 1996) In the above section, I touched upon the word *Saki* with a spatial reference. Now let me turn to the same word with a temporal reference.

(20) *Nani Semuni Inochi ha Tsugamu Wagimoko ni Kohizaru Saki ni
Shinamashi Mono wo* (Manyōshū 11: 2377)

(Why on earth did I not die before? How come I still continue to live? I wish I had died 'before' I fell in love with her!)

(21) *Haji wo Shinobi Haji wo Modashite Koto mo Naku Mono Ihanu Saki ni
Ware ha Yorinamu* (Manyōshū 16: 3795)

(My shame I will bear,
My shame I will ignore;
And 'before' he speaks another word,
To his counsel mutely will I yield.)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, op. cit., p. 77]

(22) *Yami no Yo no Yuku Saki Shirazu Yuku Ware wo Itsu Kimasamu to
Tohishi Korahamo* (Manyōshū 20: 4436)

(How sad I am when I think of my love, who asked me when I could come back, before my departure! Being conscripted as a soldier to work in a remote island, it is as if I would stray into the dark night, not knowing even 'where I was going in the future'.)

(23) *Wototoshi no Sakitsu Toshi yori Kotoshi made Kofuredo Nasomo Imo ni
Ahigataki* (Manyōshū 4: 783)

(Why, I wonder, is it that I still have not been able to be with the lady I love, although I have been desperately longing for her since 'two years ago'.)

It is evident that *Saki* in the poem (20) makes a temporal reference. It is the same as (21). In (22), *Saki* refers to a place to go, that is to say, future. *Saki* in (23) refers to the past.

As is shown above, both the past and future can be expressed by the same

word. How could it be possible? I would like to review what the past is, by examining the following poem:

(24) *Kaguyama ha Unebi Ooshito Miminashi to Ahi Arasohiki Kamiyo yori
Kakuni Arurashi Inishihe mo Shikani Arekoso Utsusemi mo Tsuma wo
Arasofu Rashiki* (Manyōshū 1: 13)

(Mount Kagu strove with Mount Miminashi

for the love of Mount Unebi.

Such is love since the age of the gods;

As it was thus in the early days,

So people strive for spouses even now.)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, op. cit., p. 5]

The poem (24) quotes a myth that Mount *Kagu* (female) and Mount *Miminashi* (female) fought with each other for the love of Mount *Unebi* (male). The message is that things still take place in the same manner as in the mythical age. The verse says, “love was always a fight among two parties to seek love of a spouse in the mythical age, so is it today in this world.” Events in this world can be justified by those in ancient days of gods and goddesses. The perception here is that the rational for today’s phenomena comes from the mythical age. This is a concept of an ancient origin.

We can construct a hypothesis that *Saki* did not simply refer to the ordinary past, but to *Kamiyo*, namely, the days of deities. At this point, we discover a fantastic agreement between *Saki* with a temporal reference and that with a spatial reference in (16) through (19).

What about the future? Naturally, the future is a divine domain. What is to take place in the future is sometimes revealed by prophecies from deities. When these prophecies were institutionalized, there came a calendar. The Japanese term for calendar is *Koyomi*, which derived from *Hiyomi*. *Hiyomi* was a compound of *Hi* (day) and *Yomi* (count). In *Koyomi* is elucidated what the future will be like.

In ancient Japan, the government had a special agency called *Onmyōryō*, which compiled the calendar each year to be presented to the Emperor. Later, this assignment was taken over by *Shintō* shrines such as *Ise Shrine*. What is important is that calendars were created by *Shintō* priests, administrators of magic rituals, and so forth. It seems that the reason for future to be called *Saki* in Japanese was that the future was always a domain of deities beyond the knowledge of human beings.

5. Reality, This World and Present

By way of simplification, we could consider that whatever time extends beyond the present, either into the future or the past, is called *Saki*. Here the present is in the centre. In the poem (24), there is a term *Utsusemi*, which means reality and this world. It is said that the origin of *Utsusemi* was *Utsushi-Omi*, which was

transformed into *Utsusomi*, before changing into *Utsusemi*. *Utsushi* was reality, whereas *Omi* was a servant to gods. In addition, reality was called *Utsutsu* as shown in the following poems of *Manyōshū*:

(25) *Utsutsu niha Afu Yoshi mo Nashi Ime nidani Ma Naku Mie Kimi Kohi ni
Shinubeshi* (Manyōshū 11: 2544)

(There is no way for me to see you 'in reality'. Please appear in my dream without fail, my love. Otherwise, I would die for love.)

(26) *Yume Nomi ni Miru sura Kokoda Kofuru A ha Utsutsu ni Mite ha
Mashite Ikani Aramu* (Manyōshū 11: 2553)

(I was so shaken, when I saw my love in my dream. What would become of me, therefore, if I could ever see my love 'in reality'?)

In both poems above, the presentation is to place reality on one hand, and dream on the other. They are correlated with each other. It is said that the origin of *Utsutsu* was *Utsu Utsu*, which was based on the word stem of *Utsu-shi*. (*Iwanami Kogo Jiten* = Iwanami Dictionary of Old Japanese)

Ancient Japanese people perceived that this world was *Utsushi*, which meant 'to emerge onto surface'. A Japanese term *Kensai* is a good representation of what *Utsushi* signified. This term appears in a chapter of *Nihon Shoki*, which is about the accession to the throne of the Emperor *Jinmu*.

When the Emperor *Jinmu* was to wage war with his enemies for the purpose of ruling the land of *Yamato*, he conducted a ceremony called *Kensai*, as a ritual to have his guardian, *Takamimusuhi-no-Mikoto* descend from the heaven. *Kensai* was a ceremony through which the divine power of deities came to emerge in this world. Another way of reading the Chinese characters for *Kensai* was *Utsushi Ihai*. *Ihai* was a festival, occult art or ceremony. *Kensai* was conducted with an aim of having deities descend to this world. Consequently, we can understand that *Utsushi* meant the advent in this world.

If *Utsusu* signifies the transfer from the other world to this world of reality, the centre is thought to exist in the former. At the same time, we cannot ignore that *Utsusu* can also mean 'to copy'. Instead of defining *Utsusu* as a simple transportation from the other world to this world, we can interpret that *Utsusu*, in fact, means the projection of the other world into reality. It is because the centre exists in the other world. The concept is that the world of deities is copied and projected in this world.

This world is a projection of the divine sphere. The main entity lies in the latter, which idea bears the influence of ancient myths. When one regrets and says "Everything in this world is in vain", it is supported by the idea that this world is only a projection of divinity.

I have discussed that both past and future can be represented by *Saki*, which is a domain of deities. Another point I have made is that this world is a copy of the

world of divinity. These notions lead us into thinking that this world is, as a matter of fact, a place of demarcation where divinity could emerge. We can presume that this was the most fundamental concept in ancient times. Further, if 'this world' could be translated in terms of temporal sphere, it is equal to the present.

In order to elaborate on this point, I would like to examine the following four poems in *Manyōshū*:

- (27) *Aki no No ni Yadoru Tabibito Uchi Nabiki Imo Nurame yamo Inishihe Omofuni* (Manyōshū 1: 46)

(The travellers taking shelter
On the plain of *Aki*,
Can they sleep at their ease,
Remembering the days gone by?)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, op. cit., p. 31]

- (28) *Makusa Karu Arano niha Aredo Momijiba no Suginishi Kimi ga Katami toso Koshi* (Manyōshū 1: 47)

(Though this is but a desolate plain
Where people mow the grass,
They journeyed all the way
To remember him, gone like the yellow leaf.)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, loc. cit.]

- (29) *Himukashi no No ni Kagirohi no Tatsu Miete Kaherimi Sureba Tsuki Katabukinu* (Manyōshū 1:48)

(On the eastern plain
The purple dawn is glowing,
While looking back I see
The moon declining to the west.)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, loc. cit.]

- (30) *Hinamishi-no-Miko-no-Mikoto no Uma Namete Mikari Tatashishi Toki ha Ki Mukafu* (Manyōshū 1: 49)

(That Prince of Hinamishi
Held here his royal hunt,
With horses bridle to bridle;
Again that time has come.)

[Tr. Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkōkai, loc. cit.]

These four poems are envoys in a series of long poems which were composed by *Kakinomoto-no-Hitomaro* on the occasion of the night-sojourn of Prince *Karu* on the plain of *Aki*.

What was described in the poems from (27) through (30) was a royal hunt in the

plain of *Aki*, where *Karu-no-Miko* (Prince *Karu*, later the Emperor *Monmu*) hosted a game party for the purpose of paying homage to the late *Hinamishi-no-Miko* (Crown Prince *Hinamishi* = *Kusakabe-no-Miko*), his father, who had died before the enthronement. Prince *Karu* organized the hunting as a ritual to succeed to the lordship over the country after his late father.

Inishihe in (27) refers to the past when the late Prince *Hinamishi* conducted the hunting some years before. While cherishing the memories of olden days with the late Crown Prince, the lords and soldiers who were accompanying young Prince *Karu* for the ritual could not go to sleep. The situation was haunted with the past.

The poem (28) chants that the hunting party visited the place as a sort of memento of the late Prince, despite the problem that it was almost a taboo for ordinary people to enter the location.

(29) signifies that it finally dawned to start the ritual, when the time was to proceed exactly in the same manner as it did in the previous royal hunt which had been hosted by the late Prince *Hinamashi*. This is what (30) expresses.

It can be said, therefore, that these four poems represent people's effort to try to reproduce the past events in the present time. By describing the events from the day before, they succeeded in creating a vivid picture where the tension was gradually intensifying. It was as if the whole environment had been going back to the past time when the late Prince *Hinamishi* had proceeded with the royal hunt. Thus the future was superimposed by the past.

It becomes evident that *Saki* was the past as well as the future. When the ritual commenced in the present time frame, the superimposition between the past and future was completed. On that very moment, Prince *Karu* was nothing but the resurgence, that is to say, *Utsushi*, of his late father.

At stake in this ceremony was the integrity of the state itself. It was essential for Prince *Karu* to be united with his late father before the accession to the throne. The Emperor carried the function to lead worships for deities, whereas he himself was to be deified by his subjects. It was the Emperor who was situated as an intermediary between deities and mankind, thereby anchoring this world to its ground. In this context, the time manifested in these scenes were reunited with the ancient communities. *Saki* was the time of communities.

What is interesting is that the present time is not explicitly referred to in the four poems. Instead, by detailing the processes of the ritual up to shortly before the commencement, they succeeded in providing a strikingly realistic impact.

Here comes the question, however, "Why did the poet not make a reference to the present?" The answer seems to lie in the nature of the present time: "Could it be really possible for young Prince *Karu* to get fully integrated with his late father?" His name was not the same as the father, nor his physical construction or personality. Whatever effort was made to get united with his father, he could never be completely identical to the late Prince. For this reason, the poems did not directly refer to how the ritual was carried out in the present time. This very fact symbolized people's understanding of fundamentals of time. They could never be

fully reunited with the past. That's how people perceived the present time in ancient Japan.

6. Now—Crevice of Time

Ima means present in Japanese. In the literature during the Heian period (794–1185), we often find a word *Imamekashi*, which was an expression of beauty in those days. Let me introduce some examples from the *Tale of Genji*.

- (31) [*Genji* went to the Northern Hills, where he happened to see a nun in a country lodge at her devotions through broken hedges around the yard.]

Shijū Yo Bakari nite, Ito Shirou Ateni Yasetaredo, Tsuratsuki Fukurakani, Mami no Hodo, Kami no Utsukushigeni Sogaretaru Sue mo, Nakanaka Nagaki yorimo Koyonau Imamekashiki Mono kana to Ahare ni Mitamafu. (Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji Monogatari*: Wakamurasaki)

(She seemed to be about forty; not a woman of the common people. Her skin was white and very fine, and though she was much emaciated, there was a certain roundness and fulness in her cheeks, and her hair, clipped short on a level with her eyes, hung in so delicate a fringe across her brow that she looked, thought *Genji*, 'more elegant and even fashionable' in this convent guise than if her hair had been long.)

[Arthur Waley, *The Tale of Genji*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1970, p. 81]

Although ladies usually had long hair, this nun had it fairly short, only down to the shoulder, which, *Genji* appreciated, was quite fashionable and elegant. Judging by the criteria of beauty in those days which placed the primary importance in long dark hair of women, the nun's hair ought to have been substandard. On the contrary, *Genji* was rather attracted to it, discovering certain charm in it. *Imamekashi* had a connotation of extraordinary or distant from norms.

- (32) [Gradually the servants from Murasaki's house assembled at her new home.]

On Asobi Gataki no Warahabe, Chigo domo, Ito Mezurakani Imamekashiki On Arisama domo nareba, Omofu Koto Nakute Asobi Aheri. (Murasaki Shikibu, op. cit.)

(The little boys who had been brought to play with her were delighted with their new companion and they were soon all playing together very happily.)

[Waley, op. cit., p. 108]

Those little girls were called upon to *Genji's* new residence at *Nijō*, to play with

young *Waka-Murasaki*. The above paragraph indicates that, since *Waka-Murasaki* was modern and fashionable, unlike other aristocratic ladies, they soon came to be on good terms with her. As was the case in (31), *Imamekashi* was a commendation for extraordinary values which fell outside the norms of the aristocracy.

- (33) [*Genji* went to the residence in *Katsura* to have a party, where many courtiers were invited.]

Nihakanaru On Arujishi Sawagite, Ukahi domo Meshitaru ni, Ama no Sahezuri Oboshiideraru. No ni Tomarinuru Kimudachi, Kotori Shirushi Bakari Hikitsukesasetaru Ogi no Eda nado Tsuto ni Shite Maireri. Ohomiki Amatatabi Zun Nagarete, Kaha no Watari Ayafuge nareba, Yohi ni Magirete Ohashimashi Kurashitsu. Onoono Zeku nado Tsukuri Watashite, Tsuki Hanayaka ni Sashi Izuru Hodoni, Oomiasobi Hajimarite, Ito Imamekashi. Hikimono, Biha, Wagon Bakari, Fue domo, Jyauzu no Kagiri Shite, Wori ni Ahitaru Chyaushi Fukitatsuru hodo, Kaha Kaze Fuki Ahasete Omoshiroki ni, Tsuki Takaku Sashiagari, Yorozu no Koto Sumeru Yo no Yaya Fukuru hodoni, Tenjyaubito Shi Go Nin Bakari Tsurete Mahireri.

(Murasaki Shikibu, *Genji Monogatari*: Matsukaze)

(It was no easy matter on the spur of the moment to provide entertainment for so large a number of persons. However, the cormorant-fishers who ply their trade on the *Katsura* river were hastily sent for, and promised to secure food enough for the whole party. Their strange, clipped talk reminded *Genji* of the fishermen at *Suma* and greatly diverted him. The falconers, who had decided to camp in the open country, sent a present of small snipe, each bird tied to a bunch of sedge-leaves. They played at the game of floating wine-cups down the stream. So many times were the cups set afloat and so steep were the banks of the stream that the game proved somewhat dangerous. But the wine made them reckless and they were still shouting out their couplets long after it grew dark. At last the moon rose and it was time for the music to begin. The most skillful performers on zithern, lute, Japanese lute, and various wind instruments were called upon and were soon playing such tunes as were best suited to the place and hour. A gentle breeze blew down the stream blending its whisperings with the music of pipe and string. Higher and higher the moon rose above them; never had night been so radiant and still. It was already very late when a band of four or five courtiers made their appearance.)

[Waley, op. cit., pp. 354 & 355]

The joyful atmosphere of this improvised party is described with the term *Imamekashi*. This word signifies not only the bright moon light and cheerful

courtiers, but also the breeze on the river, which blew through the skillful musicians who were competing with each other for the best performance to entertain *Genji* and his guests. It seems that *Gagaku*, traditional music of the Japanese Imperial court, was characterized that it did not aim at simple harmony, but rather that it created unique harmony by provoking a sort of competition among musicians and musical instruments. In this context, therefore, when the breeze sometimes carried musical notes into the far field, the final effect was extraordinary beauty of the music.

Imamekashi symbolized 'brilliance', 'joyfulness', 'delight', 'extraordinary value out of norms' and 'beauty which is provoked by competition'. There is consistency among these values. If things are normal, the value is fixed and inflexible. On the other hand, when things fall outside the normal standard, individualities are evaluated. There would be a competition among individualities, which would induce a joyful and delight atmosphere in the circumstances.

Aristocrats during the Heian period competed with each other in life style, such as attire, which is evidenced by the fact that in many books and stories were there detailed descriptions about garments of heroes and heroines. The beauty born from such a culture was described as *Imamekashi*. The Heian culture was steadily refined through the competition. In other words, there was always high potential for changes in society. What was alarming was that, when changes develop to the extreme, the aristocracy itself would be seriously jeopardized. Therefore, fundamental rules were set forth for security. One of them was embodied in the fixed style of *waka* poem based on the rhythm of 5-7-5-7-7 syllables. When mutually accepted doctrines were in place, there came the competition among individualities, which in turn promoted the furtherance of their culture.

Here is another interesting phenomenon with regard to the word *Ima*. Constructions which are built to enshrine the deities of epidemics were called *Imamiya*. The following are excerpts from *Nihon Kiryaku* (a history of Japan compiled late in the Heian period), and *Shunki*.

- (34) 長保三年 (1001) 五月九日 於紫野、祭疫神。号御靈会。依天下疫疾。是日以前、神殿三字、瑞垣等、木工寮修理職所造也。又神輿内匠寮造之。京中上下多以集会此社。号之今宮。(『日本紀略』)
- (35) 永承七年 (1052) 五月二十八日 天晴。近曾西京住人夢称神人之者来云、吾是唐朝神也。無住所流来此国、已無所抛、吾所到悉以疫疾病君 (若?) 祭吾称作住其所了者、可留病患也。但吾表瑞想示汝、以其所可為吾社也者、伴人又見西京並寺傍有光耀、其体如鉤、其光下居此所云々。此事普告郷里云々。東西京人々相拳乃向其作 (所?) 立社屋、又諸府人等□致祭礼、隣里郷党雲集響応云々。此夢不知誰人、為後記之、世号今宮云々。(『春記』)

As is shown in (34), there was an epidemic in 1001, when people constructed a shrine at the Plain of *Murasaki* in the north of *Kyoto*. They offered prayers to the deity of epidemic, presenting *Mikoshi*, a portable Shintō shrine, as well.

Thousands of citizens participated in the ritual. The shrine was called *Imamiya*. *Mikoshi* was a vehicle for the transport of deities. We can guess that the deity of epidemic was placed in *Mikoshi*, and then cordially deported outside the capital.

In another section of the same book, *Nihon Kiryaku*, there is an article about a ritual which was carried out on June 27 in 894, when people presented worships to a deity of epidemic at *Funaoka* in *Kitano*. Specialized carpenters constructed *Mikoshi*, which was released into the Sea of *Naniha*. It can be speculated, therefore, that the *Mikoshi* in (34) was also released offshore *Naniha*.

In the epidemic of 894, the name of the place was recorded as *Kitano*, which covered a wide area to the north of *Kyoto*. It would be fair to say that *Funaoka* was in fact located in the Plain of *Murasaki* (34), which was a hillside right to the north of the Imperial Palace. It was so situated as to guard the capital.

According to (35), a ritual was conducted at *Hanazono*, which was near the *Narabigaoka* Temple (*Nami-no-Tera*) in the west of *Kyoto*. On that occasion, a shrine was constructed and named *Imamiya* as well. *Shunki* was a diary written by *Fujiwara-no-Sukefusa*, an aristocrat and government official during the *Heian* era. This article detailed how *Imamiya* was built. In 1052, there was an epidemic in *Kyoto* which triggered turbulence and anxiety among citizens. One night, a citizen in the western part of *Kyoto* had a dream, in which a deity appeared and pointed to a place close to *Nami-no-Tera*, saying, "I am a god of Tang (China). I regret that I am not enshrined anywhere in this nation. If a shrine is dedicated to me, the epidemic would disappear." When awake, the citizen communicated the oracle as many people as possible. The oracle encouraged thousands of citizens to construct a shrine in the designated place.

The diary noted that the name of the citizen had been unknown. At any rate, somebody articulated such an oracle, which spread among residents of *Kyoto*. When time proceeded, there was no way of tracking the story to discover who it was. It is evident that the story was so striking that people accepted the anecdote as true. The story was innovative enough to alleviate fear and unrest in the society. Thus, *Imamiya* achieved a unique status in Japanese history.

According to those two records, *Imamiya* was built at two different locations, one at *Murasaki-No*, and the other at *Hanazono*. It corroborates the speculation that the shrine was indeed dedicated to *Ima*. The locations were selected according to the oracles which were given by deities of epidemics. Therefore, what was of utmost importance was *Ima* (now). *Ima* was the time when people were inflicted with the epidemic. Normally, shrines were named after locations or gods, as is exemplified in the cases of the Shrine of *Miwa-no-Kami* or the Shrine of *Ōmononushi*. Judging by this custom, we could conclude that, in the case of *Imamiya*, *Ima* was the name of the deity.

Based on the above discussion, we could argue that *Ima* connoted *Araburu* ('primitive', 'wild', 'violent', 'harmful' or 'detrimental'). This connotation is consistent with the meaning of *Imamekashi*, that is to say, 'competition among idiosyncrasies'. When things diverge from norms, there is no order in place yet.

Before the establishment of order, the situation would be inevitably wild and violent.

At the same time, we note that *Mekashi* in *Imamekashi* meant 'to become alike'. Since *Imamekashi* was an aesthetic value in an aristocratic society, it would not support crude violence. The ruling class during the Heian period added the term *Mekasu* to *Ima*, thereby transforming it into an acceptable value. It is clear that the standard of beauty in their perception was founded on *Ima*. During the *Heian* era, the ancient state was firmly established and the stability in society was anchored. In that particular context, it was required to pursue certain values in instability, negative attributes or idiosyncrasies. It would be fair to say that all these phenomena culminated in the coining of *Imamekashi*.

We can conclude that *Ima* means a crude state before the introduction of order or reasoning. We can never grasp *Ima* in our hands, because, as soon as we try to catch it, *Ima* slips through our fingers. It has already become the past. When trying to talk about *Ima*, all that we could do is identify part of *Ima* and reconstruct it. We can never tell about *Ima* in its entirety. Importantly, *Ima* exists in the course of time which falls before the process of reconstruction. *Ima* is always beyond 'order', 'reasoning' or 'control'.

Now how is *Ima* related to *Saki*, which means a point of time both in the future and past? *Ima* lies between *Saki*. Because *Saki* signifies the advent of divinity, *Ima* represents the demarcation between the two worlds and 'crevice of time'. It is an essential feature of *Ima*. 'Crevice' means a void in the sphere of order or reasoning. Because of that lack, *Ima* is extremely unstable and unrestful. In order to escape from that anxiety, people compose poems. That is why there have been so many poems which deal with *Ima* in Japanese literature. *Ima* is the time when one season is replaced with another. It represents the time for changes within a day.