Kotodama *and the* Kojiki*: The Japanese "Word Soul" between Mythology, Spiritual Magic, and Political Ideology*

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"The word, the ability to put the world into words – meaning language – gives us humans a magical power."[1]

0. Preface

The idea of the "word soul" is considered an important intellectual and spiritual concept of Japanese antiquity. Behind it lies a concept that has its origins in sympathetic magic, according to which there is essentially no difference between a thing and its name. Stated in the language of semiotics, the signifier and signified are identical. In Japan this idea is expressed in the compound term of *kotodama*, consisting of the two words *koto* and *tama*. *Tama* means "soul", while *koto* has the dual meaning of "word" and "thing". This term is usually translated as "word soul".

The earliest historical reference to this concept is found in songs of the *Man'yōshū* collection of verse from the eighth century, in which Japan is referred to as a country of *kotodama*. After this idea had nearly been forgotten during the Japanese middle ages and had been replaced with the word magic of Shingon Buddhism, it became a key concept in the national philology of the Edo period (1600-1868) and the *kokutai* nationalism of the modern age for the postulation of certain basic qualities of Japan and its language, supposedly originating in high antiquity and the Age of the Gods.

This text deals with the question of whether the concept of *kotodama* also applies explicitly to the *Kojiki*, the oldest Japanese work of historiography, which contains the most important set of Japanese myths and which was raised to the rank of a "Holy Book of Shintō" only in modern times.

Thus an attempt shall be undertaken to understand the concept of *kotodama* in its historical context as well as its function as a basic term of modern religious ideology.

1. *Kodai kayō* – the songs of Japanese antiquity

The oldest texts in Japan's literary history have their origins in the early eighth century. Written by imperial order, a number of important works were created at that time that continue to influence our view of ancient Japan even today. These texts convey a clear impression of the high level of state and social organization under this first Japanese central government, which falls under the present-day historical designation of the "Nara period" (710-784). By that time an apparently wholly sinicized Japanese state had emerged, based on ideas of religion and governmental theory that had been imported from the continent, especially in the form of Buddhism and Confucianism. But parallel to this an indigenous spiritual system had also emerged, which in spite of some problems with the details we can refer to under the

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[1] Dickerhoff (2004: 17).

generic term "Shintō". The center of this spiritual and religious world, which was formed analogously to Buddhism and Confucianism in Japan, was the Imperial Household and its claim to a divinely legitimated rule, which was thus metaphysically secured and genealogically reasoned. This claim still stands at its most basic level to this day.

Among the official texts and collections written at the Nara imperial court, the *Kojiki* (古事記, "Record of Ancient Things") from the year 712 CE is especially important. This work is considered to be Japan's oldest literary document. It covers the creation of the world and the country's legendary early history. In its mythological first chapter the work describes the cosmogony and creation of the world by deities of the Japanese pantheon, with Amaterasu, the Sun-Goddess and ancestral deity of the Imperial Household, at the top of the divine hierarchy. Without any existential break the time of the first human emperor develops out of the Age of the Gods (神代, *jindai*), with the legendary Jinmu-tennō 神武天皇 (Iwarebiko) as the supposed founder of the Japanese state and his eternally ruling dynasty. Subsequent sections of the work chronicle the first emperors up until the seventh century. Modern research has shown that the actual events of Japanese pre- and early history were entirely different from their mythical and legendary representation. But in the religious and ideological world-view these mythical images remain important to this day for the formulation of a Japanese national identity.

The recording of the *Kojiki* can be traced to an order by Tenmu-tennō (天武天皇; 40th emperor, ruled in 673-686) who, in order to avoid "false or deviant" histories, ordered all the material available at the time to be collected, sorted and recorded, including myths, genealogies, legends and historical reports, in order to compose an official history of antiquity that was continuous and "true" for his purposes. The language is not the pure Chinese of official written documents (漢文, *kanbun*), but the result of an archaic blend of Chinese and Japanese (非漢文, *hikanbun*).

While the *Kojiki* tells a continuous story whose whole purpose is to provide a religious and political legitimation of the Imperial rule, the nearly contemporaneous *Nihonshoki* (日本書紀, "The Chronicles of Japan") from the year 720 CE appears much more distanced and differentiated in this regard. This work, which was also composed at the imperial court but is written in Chinese, contains several variants of each of the mythical main episodes, which in some cases are strongly divergent, making clear that the construct of a continuous mythical narrative of early history as contained in the *Kojiki* is merely the result of the efforts of compilation by its author, Oho no Yasumaro 太安万侶.

The oldest linguistic elements of both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki* are a series of ancient songs that are loosely woven into the corresponding passages of the text. These songs, which in Japanese literary studies are classified under their own category called *kodai kayō* (古代歌謡, "songs of antiquity"), represent the earliest examples of Japanese *waka* verse. There are a total of 112 (113) such verses in the *Kojiki*. They are consistently written in phonetic Chinese characters and thus document the earliest recorded form of the Japanese language. Today these verses are the most important source for our knowledge of Old Japanese.

1.1 Sakahogai-uta

It may be surprising to those knowledgeable of more recent forms of Japanese verse that these earliest examples of an independent Japanese poetry appear so very different from what the cliché of "typically Japanese" verse might suggest, not only in their formal composition but even more so due to their subject material and outlook on the world. While today we associate the minimalist works of Japanese poetry, such as Haiku, with a spirit of (often conventional) suggestion, emotional under-statement and openness to interpretation, the ancient songs present an entirely different picture. In them we directly encounter the greatest human feelings, such as love and hate; their sensuality and emotional power still speak to the modern reader across the great temporal, cultural and geographical divide.

Especially the dialogically arranged songs between two lovers, large numbers of which can be found in the *Kojikii*, convey a striking impression of the timeless emotionality of many of these songs. Among them we find true competitions of poetic composition in courtship (歌垣, *utagaki*), but overall it is the quieter tones that prevail, as when the girl So-tōri-no-miko sighs in longing for her lover, the ruler Ingyō: "Since you have set out, / Many days have passed. / Like the Yamatazu tree, / I will go in search of you; / I can no longer wait." The text does not neglect to mention that "When she caught up with him, he had been waiting and yearning for her" (l.c.; Philippi 2002: 339). This contrasts starkly with the contrivance of the more conventional and formally stiff love songs we know from later times.

But among the songs of antiquity there are also those that initially resist direct interpretation due to the apparent mystery of the world they reveal. These are mostly songs dealing with magical and religious subjects that extend to the deepest levels of early Japanese religiosity.

Surely one of the most impressive examples of these is verse no. 39 (40) of the *Kojiki*, which is also contained in the *Nihonshoki*, and which is recited by legendary ruler Okinaga-tarashi-hime 息長帶比賣, alias Jingū Kōgō 神功皇后, upon the return of her son Homuda-wake, the later ruler Ōjin 応神天皇. The song deals with the production of holy Sake, the so-called *miki* 御酒 (or *miwa*), and also poses the question of the ontological relationship between deity and man:

> "Könö miki pa / Wa ga miki narazu / Kusi nö kami / Tökö-yö ni imasu / Ipa tatasu / Sukuna mi-kamï nö / Kamu-poki / Poki kuruposi / Töyö-poki / Poki mötöposi / Maturi kösi / Miki zö / Asazu wose / Sa sa"

> "This wine / Is not my wine. / The ruler of wine / He who dwells in Tökö-yö, / The rock-standing / Deity Sukuna / Divinely blessed, / Blessed with fury, / Abundantly blessed, / Blessed going around, / And presented / This wine: / Drink deeply! / Sa sa!"

1.2 The context

While the *Nihonshoki* gives the impression of a certain distance between the singer and the content, the *Kojiki* shows the complex relationship between the content of the song and the singer. Jingū Kōgō, the ruler, appears not merely as the reciter of a song, but rather it becomes apparent that this song is a necessary accompaniment to the production of the holy Sake. Although she prepares the drink herself, in the song the identity of the actual, divine creator is apparent. The singer appears as the medium between deity and man, and the brewing of the drink itself as a divine act.

As a detailed analysis of this song shows, which cannot be pursued further here but is contained elsewhere (Antoni 1988), this song points to the deepest levels of Japanese religious tradition. It deals with the sacred meaning of the Holy Drink and its function as a means of communion between man and god. The religious world behind this is the so-called Izumo mythology, with its main deities Ōkuninushi 大国主, Susanowo 須佐之男, and here Sukunabikona 少彦名神 who directly participates in the creation of the world from his aquatic netherworld, the world of Tokoyo 常世. Although in the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* this song is set in the early days of Japanese history, the time of Jingū Kōgō and Ōjin-tennō, its content leads us much farther back, to the oldest levels of Japanese religiosity.

A postscript in the *Kojiki* remarks that this song and its obligatory response are so-called *sakahogahi* (*sakakura*) *uta*, an expression that is only found in this context. The word-element *saka* means an alcoholic drink *(sake)*, while *hogafu* ほがふ refers to a magical practice (*hogafi*) of ancient Japan. According to the relevant dictionaries (*Kōjien*, among others) the term is identical to the term *iwai*, meaning "blessing" or "to bless". In his writings on *hogu* ほぐ Lämmerhirt (1956: 51-54) refers to Motoori Norinaga and other scholars who understand *hogu* to mean "to pray" and names the ancient religious festival of *Ōtonohogai* 大殿祭 in this context as well as the corresponding ritual prayer (祝詞, *norito*) (cf. Antoni 1988: 71, note 148).

1.3 The magical level

The writings of Hartmut Rotermund (1973) on the magical function of ancient songs lead us even deeper into the area of magic. According to him, there are a great variety of magical poems in ancient writings, not only the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*, but also in the *norito* and others, that can be classified into several groups (Rotermund 1973: 16ff.).

He differentiates between four areas of magical practice that show some overlap, but on their own are each clearly defined: 1. *Chinkon* 鎮魂, the "repose of the souls": The song of the god Ōkuninushi to his wife Suseri-hime, whose anger and jealousy "were quelled" by the song, is named as an example of this (Rotermund 1973: 17-21). 2. *Tamafuri* 魂振り, the "shaking of the souls": the addition of new energy results from the reciting of poems. 3. *Musubi* 結び, the "binding together of the souls": the poem functions as an offering, and its recitation frees the powers of the *tama*. 4. *Hogi* ほぎ, the "bringing of good fortune and blessing": the securing of blessings follows from

material and qualitative "transformation". The only example of the fourth category the author gives is our *sakahogahi-uta*, whose function he sees as "securing the aid of a deity for a certain process" (Rotermund 1973: 20). He writes that finally this refers to a transfer of power to an object; by speaking before the deity one secures its influence, by praising it one calls on its function. The function of language as an agent of magical deeds is clear in this case: by the incantation of the deity the reader is transformed into the deity itself. The transformation takes on the quality of an ontological exchange – man and god become identical through the power of the word. It is thus not surprising that Rotermund systematically orders these songs into an overarching complex of early-Japanese spiritual and religious history that deals with the magical function of language in general and is referred to in Japanese by the term *kotodama*, the "word soul".

2. Kotodama

2.1 Man'yōshū

Just as we have found an indirect reference to concepts of word magic in ancient Japan in the aforementioned songs of the *Kojiki*, the earliest collection of Japanese poetry, the *Man'yōshū* (万葉集; 759 CE), offers direct indications of this thought, which is explicitly mentioned there under the term *kotodama* 言霊, "word soul". A song of parting by Yamanoe no Okura from the year 733 (MY 894) states "that Japan is a land that is loved by the gods and blessed with the power of the word" (Lewin 1982: 13):

> "... Yamato no kuni wa / sumekami nö / itsukushiki kuni / kotodama nö / sakihafu kuni tö / kataritsugi ..."

> ".... The Land of Yamato / it is the wonderful Land / of the Divine Sovereign / the Land where the *kotodama* / brings luck / as it is related...."

In total, however, only a few other verses in the collection (MY 2506, 3253 and 3254) explicitly mention the term *kotodama*. But these verses alone prove the existence of a certain conception of word magic in ancient Japan, centered around the auspicious effect of the "word soul". This concept is based on the homonymy of the terms for "word" and "thing" in Old Japanese: *koto* [*kötö*]. No linguistic difference is recognizable here between the signifier and the signified; both merge ontologically into each other. The term *koto* equally means "word" and the corresponding "thing". And both possess a *tama*, a "soul". The word soul is also the soul of the thing referred to, and the conception of the *kotodama* represents the belief "that a word not only represents something, but is ontologically identical with (...) the object it refers to," as Herbert Plutschow (1988: 93) writes. In terms of religious history this concept is close to the concept of *mana*, the power that is brought into being and transferred by a divine soul. The *tama* of the deity is the "soul" both of the word and the thing itself. Clearly we were able to recognize this concept in the aforementioned

sakahogai song of Okinaga-tarashi-hime, in which a transfer of power and being from the deity Sukunabikona to the reader took place.

As we have seen, the elements of the concept of word magic in Japan can be found foremost in the area of poetry and song, as Plutschow (1990: 10) makes clear: "... In Japan dialogue between man and deity would only proceed through the ritual means of song." For it is in the linked language of poetry in that the magical power of the divine words is made visible.

2.2 Kotodama *in the* Kojiki

Unlike the *Man'yōshū* neither the *Kojiki* nor the *Nihonshoki* contain the explicit term *kotodama*. The thing itself however is not difficult to recognize in the texts. Besides the aforementioned songs it is especially the dialogues that the deities of mythology conduct with each other that are relevant here. The function of the divine words becomes clear here in the sense of a "sympathetic magic", in the form of "incantations" or "oaths" (宇氣比, *ukehi*). When at the very beginning Izanagi and Izanami hold a failed dialogue about correct behavior in marriage, it is the wrong words that are their main obstacle. Izanagi's visit to the underworld ends with a magic phrase that separates the world of the living from the world of the dead for all time. The oath (*ukehi*) between Amaterasu and her impetuous brother Susanowo determines the distribution of the magically conceived children, just as it is certain special words that later keep the mythical Sun-Goddess out of her cave. Susanowo gives an oath, or rather words of wisdom, to his offspring Ōkuninushi as he transfers the rule of the world to him. And Amaterasu also presents her offspring, Ninigi no mikoto, with a divine order (詔 or 勅, *mikotonori*) in the duty of eternal rule. Finally with the myths about Konohana-sakuya-hime and Toyotama-hime the creation of the world is brought to a close, and divine words forever bring the sworn thing into reality.

In the *Kojiki* the divine incantations are explicitly mentioned as *ukehi*, in the sense of *seiyaku* (誓約, "vow"), and take on the character of a divination (cf. Naumann 1988: 82). In semiotic terms they are "signs" (cf. Lämmerhirt 1956: 387). What we experience in the verses of the *Man'yōshū* merely as an emblem comes immediately into action here: the magical power of words that bring about a result first evoked, that is (offered up as) an incantation, by divine speech.

2.3 Further history

However essential this concept of *kotodama* appears to have been in ancient Japan, most traces of it were lost in later times. Already in the Heian period the term itself was no longer used. Nonetheless concepts of word magic continued to be found in Japanese religious thought in other forms.

Now it is Shingon Buddhism that postulates a magical connection between the word, or syllable, and divine power based on esoteric concepts. Especially the Japanese syllabary, which goes back to the monk Kūkai (空海, 774-835), becomes the basis of

comprehensive speculations about sound and word magic that extend to the present day. This concept was taken up in modern times by new religious movements like Ōmoto 大本, which developed its own syllable magic from the table of 50 *kana* (五十音図, *gojūonzu*) and continues to this day under the term *kototama* 言霊;コトタマ, as opposed to the *kotodama* of antiquity. From here the *kototama* speculations of sound magic also migrated to the area of modern Japanese martial arts. It was Ueshiba Morihei (植芝盛平, 1883-1969), a follower of Ōmoto's co-founder Deguchi Onisaburō (出口王仁三郎, 1871-1948), who adapted these teachings and anchored them in the context of Aikidō, which he founded. Based on the teachings of Ogasawara Kōji (小笠原孝次, 1903-1979), who founded the so-called "Dai San Bummei Kai" (第三文明会, official English translation: "The Third Civilization Association") in the late 1940s in Tōkyō, an institute for "Kototama Inochi Medicine" was even established in the United States by Thomas E. Duckworth, who is by his own account a "Doctor of Kototama Life Medicine". In his work Duckworth refers directly to the esoteric writings of Ogasawara, especially a monograph from 1964 that was also translated into English in 1973, with a title that is especially interesting in the present context: *Kototama hyaku shin: Kojiki kōgi* (言霊百神; 古事記解義, English: *Kototama*: *The Principle of One Hundred Deities of the Kojiki*; Ogasawara 1964/1973).

At this point it is unfortunately not possible to go into detail about this Ogasawara's highly mystical and esoteric work, which formulates an extremely complex, syncretistic world of Shintō word and name magic with selected names of gods from the *Kojiki*; this will be investigated at a later date. But it is remarkable that with this work we have returned to our original text, the *Kojiki*, which in this case however functions more as a sounding board for recent speculations about *kototama*. The author Ogasawara writes about the general meaning of his approach at the beginning of the preface to the first edition from 1964: "One cannot talk about Japan and Shintoism without a true appreciation of Kototama (Word Soul)."

3. The ideological level: from the magic of the word to the magic of language

Beyond these mystical and esoteric offshoots the idea of the "word soul" also plays an important role in modern religious nationalism in Japan, whether in the ideological constructs of the so-called "Old Shintō" (古神道, *koshintō*) schools, or in reference to the Japanese language itself. The topic of *kotodama* was first brought under the complete focus of Western Japanese studies in an essay by Roy Andrew Miller, "The 'Spirit' of the Japanese Language" (1977), followed by a few other interesting contributions by other authors (Plutschow 1990, Lewin 1982, Naumann 1988). Miller postulates current developments within Japanese self-interpretation (日本人論, *Nihonjin-ron*, "discourse about the Japanese"), in which self-mystification and autoexotic models of perception of the Japanese language play a crucial role. According to this thinking, Japanese as a language allegedly differs from all other languages of the world in that it possesses a "linguistic spirit", that is *kotodama*. Miller draws clear parallels here to the ideological system of the pre-war and war era and sees a "contemporary surrogate for the unlamented *kokutai* concept of the recent past" in this conception of *kotodama* (Miller 1977: 257). Bruno Lewin also deals

intensively with this subject matter and describes the functionalization of the concept of *kotodama* for the ideological proof of a "superiority of the Japanese people and language" (Lewin 1982: 14).

3.1 Kokugaku *and language*

This modern, ideologically and politically motivated interpretation of the concept of *kotodama* has its origins in the linguistic postulates of the Japanese national philosophy of the Edo period. Already Kamo Mabuchi (賀茂真淵, 1697-1769) addresses the concept of *kotodama* in his essay *Goikō* (語意考, "Considering the Meaning [of Words]"; 1769) – apparently for the first time since its appearance in the *Man'yōshū* – by stating with implicit reference to the above-mentioned verse no. 894 that Japan is a land of the "flowering word soul" (... kotodama nö / sakihafu kuni.., cf. above). This would later become an essential axiom of the *Kokugaku*. Mabuchi places the soul, the *tama*, of the words in the age of the gods, and the origin of the country itself is shown to lie in the immutable words of the honorable heavenly grandchild, that is Ninigi no mikoto, the ancestral ruler of the Imperial House (Dumoulin 1955: 58/278). This aspect also cannot be discussed in further detail here.

But as a short aside, the term for deities and rulers in the ancient writings shows an existential reference to the *kotodama* problem: the term *mi-koto*, meaning "honorable *koto*", is consistently used as a suffix to the names of deities in mythology as well as for the rulers of post-mythical times, and their proclamations, decrees and speeches are called *mi-koto-nori*. Here the inseparable connection between the "thing" referred to by the "word" and the corresponding "rule" becomes apparent.

3.2 *Motoori Norinaga on the language of the* Kojiki

Under Mabuchi's successor Motoori Norinaga (本居宣長, 1730-1801) the ancient view of the Japanese language experienced further amplification. In Norinaga's view the reconstruction of the spoken language of antiquity represents the most important, even the only authentic, means of access to the thought of those earlier times. In the *Kojiki*, which had originally been based on the oral report of a certain Hieda no Are 稗田阿礼, he saw a means for direct access to the authentic language of antiquity. This also included the hope of bringing back the spirit of ancient times itself through the words of the old language. This is a concept that influenced the entire movement of romanticism in Europe too, although no connection between the Japanese and European spheres has been proven.

To Norinaga the story of creation and the myths of the *Kojiki* were the expression of an inner connection between the ancient Japanese people and the deities of indigenous mythology, of which they could intuitively become aware with a "pure" and "true heart" (真心, *magokoro*), and which still resonated deeply. In the language of antiquity he saw the direct and concrete expression of this specifically Japanese spirit. As Noriniga stated, in the *Kojiki* the Chinese "characters themselves are makeshift items which were simply attached to the text" (cf. Antoni 2012: 421). For

him, as well as for other leaders of the *Kokugaku*, the reconstruction of the old Japanese language of the ancient sources, including especially the *Man'yōshū* in addition to the *Kojiki*, offered a direct means of accessing the language and "soul" of ancient times, that is the Age of the Gods itself.

3.3 The Kojiki *as* kotodama*?*

Norinaga's understanding of the ancient Japanese language anticipated all aspects of the later ideological use of the concept of *kotodama*, even if the term itself seems to be rarely mentioned in his writings. But like his teacher Mabuchi, Norinaga, too, refers directly to the *kotodama* or *kotoage* verses of the *Man'yōshū* in his work, namely in his introductory essay to the *Kojikiden* entitled "Naobi no Mitama" (直毘霊, "The Rectifying Spirit"; cf. Stolte 1939: 195, note 8). This shows the importance of this aspect for Norinaga's understanding of the *Kojiki*. David Pollack (1986: 49) emphasizes the general importance of the concept of *kotodama* in Motoori Norinaga's work. Mark Morris remarks: "Hence the centrality of kotodama, 'word power', to Norinaga's utopic rewriting-in-unwriting of the *Kojiki*: 'because there was no separation between the words (koto) and the things (koto) they named, to utter the word was to give rise to the reality itself' [Pollack 1986: 49]." (Morris 1989: 283).

In Norinaga's lengthy commentary of the *Kojiki* (古事記伝, *Kojikiden;* completetd in 1798, printed in 1822) the language of the Age of the Gods itself appears as the mystical core of Japanese identity. Without going into detail on this topic here, the following thought is worth considering: In light of Norinaga's linguistic and mystical tendencies, that are evident throughout the *Kojikiden*, is it possible that his obsessive involvement with the *Kojiki* and its language can be understood and explained by the concept of *kotodama* itself? Norinaga's stated goal was to use the linguistic reconstruction of the *Kojiki* to reawaken the ancient divine spirit contained in it. Thus, it does not appear out of line to me to see this as the actual motivation of his work. After Norinaga's philological work had stripped the *Kojiki* of its "foreign" Chinese aspects contained in the Kanji the original, that is Japanese, words could be "set free". These words of the Age of the Gods, however, were thought to contain magical powers, as we now know from the teachings of *kotodama*, based on an ontological and semiotic identity of the signifier and signified. With the ancient language the corresponding reality could also be brought back into being.

Against this background Norinaga's academic duality as philologist and Shintō theologian, which is otherwise often surprising, becomes surprisingly understandable in my view: the reconstruction of the ancient "words" (*koto*) would lead to an evocation of the corresponding identical "thing" (*koto*), that is the conditions of antiquity. This means that a historical text such as the *Kojiki* could become a direct religious "holy text" through the linguistic 'archeological' work of philologists. The qualitative transformation of the text from a profane document into a sacred, even magical, reality would be perfect. These interpretations cannot yet be proven beyond doubt, since clear textual references remain to be seen in Norinaga's work. But the *kotodama* approach appears to offer a plausible hypothesis in every way as to why Norinaga sought to reconstruct the authentic Japanese language of the work with

such obsession over decades of work. In this way the ancient deities would directly come back into the world, as the word and the thing are identical. And this was without a doubt the intention of Norinaga's theological program. The *Kojiki*, as the supposedly authentic history of the gods and ancient emperors, would be a medium for the evocation of these higher beings of antiquity, and thus a true "holy work" for the national religion of Shintō propagated by Norinaga. In this way the linguistic reconstruction of the *Kojiki* could truly be understood as a kind of magical act, which could be used to transfer not only the words, but also the entire reality of ancient times to the present.

This marks the end of my hypothetical thought, but this area will be pursued further in the future.

4. Conclusion

The Japanese linguistic philosopher Izutsu Toshihiko – who astonishingly does not mention the Japanese case of *kotodama* in his writings on linguistic magic – remarks on the function of language for the evocation of the divine: "... In the belief of early man the word itself is (...) an independent, personal agent of the holy will" (Izutsu 1956: 18); and further: "Nothing is so wide-spread than the feeling that word and thing are identical, or that there exists some mysterious natural correspondence between the two." (Ibid: 20). Finally Izutsu speaks of a "certain power of making the 'things meant' real and alive once again at the level of linguistic expression" (ibid: 76). The evocation of the sacred can hardly be described more clearly.

Another theorist of linguistic magic, Klaus E. Müller, writes in his monograph *Wortzauber* ("Word magic"; 2001) about the textual form of myths and the divine inspiration of those who record them: "Not the textual form itself, but the divine spirit contained in it is the source of power, the elixir of the community. 'For the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life,' as Paul says (2 Cor 3:6)." (Müller 2001: 113).

In ancient Japan this thought, which expresses the magical identity of word (signifier) and the thing referred to (signified), is found in the ancient concept of the "word soul". Clear echos of this can be heard in the song of Jingū Kōgō (*sakahogai*) examined above. Historically subject to a clear change, this concept later appears in modern Japan, on the one hand as mystical word magic (*kototama*) and on the other as an ideological term for the mystification of the Japanese language as a whole. In the case of Motoori Norinaga it appears justifiable to interpret his intensive involvement with the language of the *Kojiki* as an attempt to transport the conditions of ancient Japan into his time using the belief in *kotodama*. From whatever angle we view the topic of Japanese word magic, it offers fascinating new insights into the relationship between language and reality, sign and signified, deity and man.

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