

## THE GENEALOGY OF AVENGING SPIRITS

I have given this essay the title: "The Genealogy of Avenging Spirits" after Nietzsche's treatise: "The Genealogy of Morals" (*Zur Genealogie der Moral*). In this book Nietzsche clarifies the origins and essence of Christian morality which constitutes the basis of European civilization. In a similar fashion I shall endeavor to point out the origins and essence of the concept of avenging spirits which seems to me to form the basis of Japanese civilization.

It may seem strange to talk about a concept of avenging spirits. Nevertheless Norinaga Motoori considered *mono-no-awaré* (the melancholy quality of things) the essence of Japanese culture; Daisetsu Suzuki, who was influenced by Zen, related its essence to a conception of Nothingness; and Ruth Benedict related it to the concept of shame as opposed to that of crime. I do not feel that these different opinions which have preceded mine are erroneous, for they undoubtedly capture certain aspects of our culture; however I would venture to say that it is more profoundly influenced by the concept of avenging spirits.

What, then, are these spirits? They are souls possessed by resentment or the desire for revenge. For a very long time in Japan it has been thought that the soul of one whose death has been caused by some profound sorrow wanders eternally, unable to find a resting place, resentful of the world of the living.

Translated by Susanna Contini

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This idea already existed in ancient China and throughout the primitive world. Thus, in *The Golden Bough*, Frazer emphasizes the hold that the fear of spirits of the dead had on all primitive people and how this colored their vision of the world. However, it seems to me that both in Europe and in China, under the influence of Christianity or of Confucianism, this fear diminished or disappeared at a rather early date. In Japan, on the other hand, fear of the spirits of the dead lasted for a very long time, and dominated the country's culture at least until the end of the 11th century, the period in which new forms of Buddhism appeared, such as the sects "Pure Earth" or Zen. At that time appeasing spirits of the dead was the chief concern of these religions.

Let us take for example the *Genji-monogatari*, which I proudly feel is a historical landmark, considering that already in the 11th century Japan was able to produce a novel of such beauty and delicacy. I find it is characterized by an understanding of psychology which bears comparison with the best modern European novel. Although I am a modern Japanese I am nevertheless struck by the repeated "abstinence" observed by Prince Genji, the leading character of the novel. To "abstain" is to move to a different place in order to avoid an unlucky path. It is possible that hidden behind this custom is fear of the spirits of the dead. It was necessary to "abstain" and to remain at home on the days when one was tormented by them. The frivolous Prince Genji takes advantage of this custom to visit the women he was not generally able to see. The numerous examples of "abstinence" mentioned in the novel render it difficult for a contemporary Japanese to comprehend the world in which the heroes of *Genji-monogatari* lived.

During the time of Prince Genji, spirits of the dead were undoubtedly powerful, giving rise to the theory that the leit-motiv of the novel is the concept of vengeance. The author of this theory, Yasaburô Ikéda, eminent disciple of Shinobu Origuchi, emphatically states that the *Genji-monogatari* is none other than the recitation of a series of acts of vengeance performed by the spirit, first of the living, and then of the dead Rokujô-Miyasudokoro, Prince Genji's lover who eliminates all her rivals: first killing Yûgaô, then Aoï, causing Murasaki-no-ue to become seriously ill, and finally driving Josan-no-miya to

suicide. On the other hand Prince Genji adopts Tamakazura, Yûgaô's daughter, and Saïgû, Rokujô-Miyasudokoro's daughter, which according to Yasaburô Ikéda, was intended to appease the souls of the dead who otherwise would have avenged themselves on the prince.

This theory, which I find very plausible, not only shows to what extent the 11th century Japanese feared the spirits, but it also reveals the true aim of the *Genji-monogatari*—to appease the souls of those who fell victim to the prince's sensuality.

In Japanese culture, the *Genji-monogatari* is related to *Nô*. *Nô* is generally considered the theater of symbols, of *Yûgen* (subtle enchantment), of Nothingness. In my opinion it is instead the theater of avenging spirits, these being the most important characters. In the *Nô* theater of Zéami, great creator of this dramatic art form, the *shité* (protagonist) nearly always represents one of the spirits, and the *waki* (secondary character) is relatively unimportant. The *shité*, incarnation of an avenging spirit, appears before the *waki* in a form invisible to men, the *ai*. At the same time the spirits always appear in their normal human forms. In other words the spirits acquire a double dimension: they are themselves and at the same time those who hide from the sight of living men. As in Heidegger's analysis of Being, in which the average man unveils the existential man within, similarly in the first part of a *Nô* play the average man reveals himself through the answers he gives to the questions asked by the *waki*, thus gradually unfolding his true self. Jo-hakyû (introduction-development-conclusion), the three well-known elements, have a major role during which the *shité* unveils his true personality through increasingly rapid and staccato music and dance. When the *shité* reaches the peak of insanity and nears the culmination of his revelation the *waki* changes from spectator to exorciser. In order to appease the spirits he appeals to the inner power he possesses of Buddhist truth, and is thus able to dominate completely and disperse them.

Almost all of the numerous plays by Zéami follow the same pattern. In most of them the *shité* personifies the world of the spirits as it is represented in such ancient Japanese legends as Rokujô-Miyasudokoro, Ono-no-Komachi and Minamoto-no-Yoshitsuné. The spirits come on stage when Zéami summons them, they involve him in their sorrows, and then they disappear,

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appeased. In this sense Zéami is certainly the high priest of avenging spirits.

*Kabuki*, derived from *Nô*, seems to have inherited this trait of appeasing the spirits. Its public consists of city dwellers, while the *Nô* theater is restricted to nobles of the imperial court and to Samurai. It is interesting to note that such great characters as Sugawara-no-Michizané, Taïra-no-Masakado, Minamoto-no-Yoshitsuné and the forty-seven "rônins" of Ako had all been put to death, more or less directly, by those in power. At that time the public, which was so fond of these characters, believed that they could not attain the Buddhist state if they were not able to prove their innocence and free themselves from their desire for vengeance. The fact that the theme of the greatest Japanese novel and the most important dramatic works is the concept of avenging spirits shows what strong influence it had on the culture of the land.

Some people will point out that the novel and theater are only two aspects of a culture which also includes religion, fine arts, poetry, etc.

Let us therefore examine the poems written in the so-called Chinese style, in which the presence of three great avenging spirits is to be found. Included among these poems are those of Sugawara-no-Michizané, long considered by the Japanese as the greatest poet in the Chinese style and the country's greatest sage. He ranks among the gods of the sciences and there are temples consecrated to him everywhere. Still today, during school entrance examinations, candidates and their parents visit the Tenjin temple. I am not an exception: although I consider myself an atheist I nevertheless said a prayer at the Tenjin temple of Kitano when my son went to take the university entrance examination. Why is it that Sugawara-no-Michizané was venerated to the point of being elevated to the ranks of the gods? Could it be for the beauty of his poems, or the depth of his knowledge? Certainly his poems, more Japanese than Chinese, are universal, but this is not the reason he was venerated as a god. It is rather the fact that he was banished following intrigues concerning the Fujiwara-no-Tokihira, and that he died in exile. At the time it was said that the unlucky events which struck the country were caused by his unassuaged vengeance. Moreover, almost all of those responsible for his exile came to strange ends. By attri-

buting the disasters which fell on the land to his avenging spirit, the people were implicitly criticizing the authorities of the time. The scholar's desire for revenge was even used by people outside governmental circles, rivals of the Fujiwara-no-Tokihira. All of these circumstances contributed to his deification and to the proliferation of the beautiful Temmangû temples, both in the capital and in Danzaifu (seat of the Kyûshû military government) where he died. Since then the influence of his avenging "literary" spirit, absorbing some ancient divinities of a similar nature, spread to such an extent that wherever one goes it is impossible not to find temples consecrated to him.

This, then, is still another area of Japanese culture "tormented" by avenging spirits. There remain religion, fine arts and the *waka* (an authentic Japanese poetic form). One may agree with many contemporary thinkers in considering that purely Japanese architecture, sculpture, and such poems as *Manyôshû* and *Kokinshû* have no relation whatsoever to avenging spirits. Until about three years ago I felt the same way; however a series of studies which I undertook at the time caused me to change my opinion completely. I will not go into these studies at length here, which are being published in *Subaru*. Those readers who may be interested in the subject I refer to "The Hidden Cross—Treatise on the Hôryûji temple" (*Kakusarêta jûjika-Hôryûji-ron*) and to "Underwater songs—Treatise on Kakinomoto-no-Hitomaro" (*Minasoki no uta—Kakinomoto-no-Hitomaro ron*), limiting myself to a brief resumé of these two long treatises.

It is generally agreed that Buddhism was introduced into Japan by Prince Shôtoku, famous regent for Emperor Suiko at the beginning of the 7th century. In addition it was he who laid the foundations for the Japanese legal system and administrative structure. Throughout the Yamato region, then the seat of the capital, many temples were erected in recognition of his merits. One of these is the world famous Hôryûji temple. Taking into consideration its wooden structure, the oldest in the world, its sculptures, its paintings, in which one can discern Sui and early T'ang influence, this treasure of Oriental art to this day presents many mysteries. Let us begin with the date of its construction. There were long discussions to establish whether the present edifice is the original one dating from the early 7th century, or whether it was rebuilt between the second half of the 7th

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and the beginning of the 8th century. Finally the second version was accepted after the discovery of the remains of a more ancient temple within the enclosure of Hōryūji. When, by whom, and why these marvels had been built remained unknown. In addition, why is there a large column in the middle of the *chūmon* (central) doorway, seemingly to block the way, whereas usually a door is constructed to permit going in and out? To this day there are barriers in front of this door impeding entrance. There are also numerous mysteries in connection with the Golden Pagoda and the Tower, which make up the focal point of the temple's structure. The Yumidono pavilion, an octagonal building located in the center of the Eastern Monastery, as distinguished from the Western Monastery, is also enigmatic. This pavilion houses a statue which was not discovered until 1890, when Fenollosa, acting under orders from the Japanese government, broke the taboo and unveiled the "Guzé-Kannon." With a funerary urn in one hand and an ambiguous smile on its lips, the statue had been standing there for a thousand years. Fenollosa was struck by the smile, which he could not help but compare to that of the Mona Lisa, albeit a threatening Mona Lisa. The poet and sculptor, Kōtarō Takamura, considers that its facial expression places this statue among the greatest Buddhist works of art. When Fenollosa removed the dust gathered with age and unwrapped the white bandages which covered the statue to bring to light the hidden figure, the monks of the Hōryūji temple fled, afraid that it would collapse upon them for looking upon that which had been explicitly forbidden to contemplate. This leads me to believe that there was an unusual secret which had to be jealously guarded from all mortals.

The enigmas of the Hōryūji temple are truly unlimited! An art historian declared that coinciding with each discovery that was made, new mysteries were uncovered. One day, however, it seemed to me that the enigma of the Hōryūji temple became clear: did the rebuilt temple have an entirely different significance from the original one? For in the mean time the fortunes of the family of the prince who had built the first temple were profoundly shaken. In 643—the second year of the Kōgyoku era—a terrible misfortune struck the family: the twenty-five descendants of the prince were massacred by the government army under the command of Soga-no-Iruka. The "Nihon Shoki"

holds only Soga-no-Iruki responsible, but several other historical documents lead me to believe that the massacre was also instigated by the ruling powers, who, together with the Fujiwara clan, instituted the Taika reform.

Because of this tragedy, the Hôryûji temple was soaked with blood. It was destroyed by fire in the 8th year of Tenchi. The recollection of this crime remained deeply engraved in the memory of the rulers who followed, who regarded it as a very unlucky omen, since it was through this massacre that the new regime was established. As in the case of Sugawara-no-Michizané, each time misfortune struck the ruling families, it was attributed to the prince's spirit, fed by the esteem in which he was held by the people. At that time the prince was given the beautiful name Jôgû-Shôtoku-Hôô. In Japan, to have a beautiful name is considered dangerous; thus among the emperors of the "Heiké-monogatari" (History of the Heiké), who were usually given the name of their region, such as Shirakawa, Toba and Konoé, only two, the emperors Sutoku and Antoku, did not respect this custom. Both were given very beautiful names and both came to tragic ends. The first was dethroned and exiled to Sanuki Island where he died of despair, letting it be known that he would return transformed into a *tengu*<sup>1</sup> to avenge himself on all of Japan. The second emperor drowned at the age of seven in the waters of the bay of Dan-no-ura, with the warriors of the Heiké clan. These unlucky emperors were given the most beautiful names. In this way succeeding generations tried to appease their redoubtable avenging spirits. One can imagine that it was the same for Prince Shôtoku; giving him such a beautiful name was directly related to the massacre of his family.

I feel that the whole Hôryûji temple was permeated by fear inspired by the avenging spirit of this tragic prince, which was forever enclosed within and eternally appeased. Might that not explain the *chûmon* door? This door is opened only once every fifty years on the occasion of the Daï-shô-ryô feast, celebrating the appeasement of the prince's soul. Of course, before the Meiji era, the profane had never been authorized to enter the

<sup>1</sup> Mythical being with a red face and a long nose, supposedly living at the foot of mountains from where he can move in fantastic leaps propelled by the stiff short hairs on the surface of his hide. (G. Cesselin).

temple. In my opinion, the numerous statues located in the Golden Pagoda represent the members of the prince's family, and the Hôryûji temple was built to aid the souls of the twenty-five victims to attain the state of Buddha, in the faraway paradise of Tenjukoku. I feel that not only traces of Taoist influence come to light, but also those of a Christian schism—nestorianism.

In spite of their strict imprisonment it seems that these phantom souls occasionally reappeared to wreak their vengeance. In 737, (ninth year of Tempyô), the sons of Fuhito, the most powerful member of the Fujiwara clan, who was about to seize power, perished one after the other. Their younger sister, Empress Kômyô, and their nephew, Emperor Shômu, were exposed to grave dangers. Two years later the Eastern Monastery and the Yumédono Pavilion were built, designed to contain the avenging spirit of Prince Shôtoku more effectively. A *zushi* was erected on a double stone platform, similar to a tombstone, and on the *zushi* was placed the Kannon statue with the threatening smile, which we have already mentioned. The spirit of the prince was shut up in this statue, under many layers of white bandages. On the door were inscribed magic words implying that the slightest transgression of the taboos would provoke the immediate collapse of the temple. What we see at the Yumédono Pavilion bears witness to a profound terror.

There is still much to be said about the Hôryûji temple, however I feel that the simple hypothesis that it was built to appease the spirits of Prince Shôtoku's family offers a sufficient explanation of its many enigmas. Of course this thesis has not yet been accepted by all of the experts, but I am convinced that in time the truth will be recognized by everyone.

If this theory is true, then our interpretation of Japanese culture will have to be greatly modified, and in particular the idea we have of Buddhism. It is said that with Prince Shôtoku Buddhism entered Japan. This is correct, but we must also look at it from the viewpoint of the appeasement of the prince's spirit. In other words, Buddhism has become established in Japan, not because it teaches noble principles, nor because it brought goodness to the world, but because it fulfilled the role of peace-maker more effectively than had the Japanese rites of worshipping the gods since ancient times.

The sutras which were most often recited at the time were



the “Hannya” (Mahaprajñāparamitrasūtra) and the “Kongōmyō-kyō” (Sūvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra). In particular, the “Hannya” was invariably recited each time a misfortune befell the people. Only recently have we realized that it dealt with the exorcism of avenging spirits. The *waki* of the *Nō* theater, which we mentioned earlier, often appeases the spirits by reciting the “Hannya” sūtra. Through the *Kū* principle of knowledge, *prajña* advises against becoming too attached to material things; however we feel that at that time the monks advised one to be less attached to living men than to dead souls. Let them not return to this world because of too strong an attachment!

All of the above explains why esoteric Buddhism, introduced into Japan by Kūkai at the beginning of the ninth century, replaced Buddhism. By means of its magical powers it dominated living and dead spirits. After eliminating the Shingon (founded by Kūkai) and the Tendai (founded by Saichō) sects, it was able to give the Buddhism of the Heian period an esoteric character.

Criticisms of the Buddhist sects whose principle role was that of exorcising spirits can be noticed toward the end of the 12th century, as for example the Hōnen sect and its disciple Shinran (comparable to the Lutheran reform), who reject the Shintoist cult of the “true gods” if they are not incarnations of Buddha. The founders of these sects sustained that the cult of the Shintoist gods was no more than a cult of human and animal spirits, living or dead. Their new rationalist religious directive ordered the exclusive worship of Amida-butsu (Amitabha). They also rejected astrological divination, the death curse, and all manner of superstition. This was a cultural position, also held by Zen, although the latter opposed Hōnen and Nichiren. This religious reform freed the Japanese from the long reign of terror of avenging spirits. It was not, however, a complete success, because the fear and worship of spirits remained deeply engrained in the Japanese mentality, so that even these new Buddhist sects found themselves obliged to compromise with the ancient religion.

We must therefore admit that the concept of avenging spirits nevertheless exerted a great influence on Buddhism. It is natural to ask what influence did it have on Shintoism itself. Appeasing the spirits played an important part in the sect, as witnessed by “Kojiki,” the Shintō bible. I would even go so far as to say

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that the "Kojiki" was a religious book which ordered the adoration of those who rebelled against the state.

The divinity called Okuninushi has a very important role in this book. Descendant of a banished god, Susanoo, ancient ruler of the Land of the Rising Sun, he cedes the land to Niniginomikoto, grandson of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, who is the ancestor of the imperial family, after which he encloses himself within the Hisumi palace of Izumo which Motoori Norinaga, exegete of the "Kojiki" translated as "he perished in the sea," in other words he had received the order to kill himself for having rebelled against the state. It is strange that the great Izumo temple is even more imposing than the Isé temple, consecrated to Amaterasu.

I cannot help but see in the Shintô sect the essence of the Japanese cult of the gods. After the Meiji era, Shintoism became incorporated into "State Shintoism," without, however, losing its original aspect which lingered on in another form. In Japan, the temple where soldiers who have died in battle are venerated is called "Yasukuni-jinja." It used to be called "Shôkonsha," meaning "intended to receive the souls of men who have died on the battle field," souls which could have become harmful had they been abandoned.

Accordingly we find the concept of avenging spirits even in the religions. If the Hôryûji temple, with its imposing architecture, its sculptures and paintings, was built to appease spirits of the dead, it becomes necessary to examine the history of art in Japan from this standpoint. This is equally true in the case of the Takamatsu-zuka, a tumulus rich in stone paintings which was recently uncovered in the Asuka region, which may be strongly linked to the appeasement of spirits of the dead.

Let us now examine literature, and especially poetry. What can be said of the "Manyôshû" and "Kôkinshû" collections of poems? Following the *waka* reform movement launched by Masaoka Shiki in the 23rd year of the Meiji era, (1890), the "Manyôshû" replaced the "Kôkinshû," which for a thousand years had established the aesthetic canon. Shiki discarded the "Kôkinshû," considering it too affected and effeminate, in favor of the "Manyôshû," which he considered more realistic and virile. Consequently a new style of *waka* was developed, which remained closely associated with the compact style of the

“Manyôshû.” Does it have the slightest trace of avenging spirits?

Origuchi Shinobu found the answer: he decided that the poems of Hitomaro and Akahito, until then considered to be descriptions of countrysides, were actually designed to appease the spirits of the dead. While for a long time I did not understand this theory, recently, while I was studying the life of Kokinemoto-no-Hitomaro, the greatest poet of this book, I realized, as Origuchi had hoped, that it was tenable, but in a deeper sense. This is the reason: Hitomaro died in a faraway region, on the Isle of Kamoshima, near Kôzu of Iwami-no-Kumi. Soon after his death he was deified, and since then has always occupied a place in the ranks of such eminent people as Prince Shôtoku and Sugawara-no-Michizané, and some who apparently had been political exiles, for example Ariwara-no-Narihira, as well as Ono-no-Takamura. In this context I recall a temple located at Shinjô of Nara: the Kakinomoto-jinja temple, which contains an idol representing this poet. The statue’s head can be detached from its body. Of all the statues representing famous people this is the only one in Japan which has a detachable head; this applies not only to the one I saw, but also to all the statues created before the 18th century (about the middle of the Tokugawa period).

Since ancient times the following poem has been considered the most representative of this poet:

“Just as night withdraws  
From the Akashi Bay:  
Already, towards the fog bank,  
Behind the Isle disappears  
The boat carrying away my thoughts...”

This poem is however, to be found in the “Kôkinshû” and not in the “Manyôshû,” as a poem by an “unknown author”; a note mentions that it was sometimes attributed to Hitomaro. How is it that of all his masterpieces this one has always been considered his most representative?

According to the “Konkaju-monogatari,” this poem was written by Ono-no-Takamura. Even if this is true, the work still describes the destiny of an exile. At the time, Akashi was the point of departure for the ships which deported exiles; from there Sugawara-no-Michizané was sent to Dazaifu; there also the

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condemned Prince Genji went to await punishment for his crimes.

Imagine the bay of Akashi from which a boat loaded with exiles sails; what sorrow they must have felt as it departed into the morning fog! Elsewhere certain studies of the medieval *waka* affirm that the subject of the poem in question is the boat which travels from life to death. In addition, let us remember that it was invariably recited at the beginning of a *waka* gathering, as a prelude intended to appease the soul of its unfortunate author. In Japan since ancient times the boat has always symbolized the voyage of the dead to the land of death.

I must repeat: how has this poem, which does not seem to be an authentic work by Hitomaro, been for so long considered his most representative? The “Manyôshû” contains five poems devoted to the death of this poet. One is the “Farewell to Life,” written by the poet himself, in which it seems—to the extent that one can understand the exact meaning—that he foresees his tragic end in the land of Iwami, even depicting his body lost at sea. This is at any rate the interpretation given by many scholars up until the 18th century, at which time Keichû and Mabuchi began a new study of Japanese literature. Since then, unable to believe that the greatest Japanese poet had not drowned, scholars have insisted on giving this interpretation to the famous poem of the boat. Unfortunately I cannot dwell at length on these astonishing theories here, however it seems to me that Kakinomoto-no-Hitomaro’s death in exile is almost irrefutable.

What then can we say about the “Manyôshû”? Hitomaro’s poem is to be found among the funeral *waka*, that are devoted to the victims of the ruling powers. While they are a kind of requiem for those who had been struck down by a tragic demise, these *waka* are also an implied accusation against the authorities who tormented the innocent and sent them to their deaths. It is interesting to note that these poems are contained in volumes I and II, namely in the section which makes up the core of the collection (it is even called the “proto-Manyôshû”). I wonder why these poems describe in such an elevated and noble way the death of a man who does not even appear in the official history of Japan. Origuchi Shinbu was certainly a gifted observer not only of the “Manyôshû,” but of Japanese culture, however

much more through intuition than through knowledge. One can better understand his theory if one considers the work a sum of accusations against the administrative system of the time, rather than for the appeasement of victims of the system, among whom was included Otomo-no-Yakamochi in particular, chief of the Otomo (a powerful clan of ancient times).

By contrast, in the "Kôkinshû," compiled by the chief of the Ki, one does not sense any feeling of opposition to the Fujiwara comparable to that shown, even if only in literature, by Otomo. In the preface to the "Kôkinshû" it is said that politics are ephemeral, while literature is eternal. It is in this eternal literature that Hitomaro is placed among the gods, along side the "six divine poets" and many other famous people—political exiles such as Ariwara-no-Narihira, and people who perished in mysterious circumstances. The studies of medieval *waka* explain that the eulogistic poems of the "Kôkinshû" must be read during the course of a single day. Might it be because these poems, which correspond to those of the "Manyôshû," are to a great extent devoted to those who died in a tragic manner, which, were they read at night, would risk provoking the appearance of avenging spirits?

All of the above leads me to believe that these spirits were liable to haunt the most unexpected places. The reason for this is clear to me, it is what leads me to state that the essence of Japanese culture lies in the concept of avenging spirits. There remains the question of why the cult of these spirits has survived so long and is so deeply rooted in Japan, and what its significance is from a philosophical point of view.

The worship of avenging spirits reveals aspects of both religion and politics. Apropos of religion it is because one can find traces of the ancient cult of the dead. I wonder whether, for us who live in the midst of a humanist culture which above all respects human life, this cult might not have any special meaning beyond a simple critique of contemporary civilization; it deserves deeper study. The political aspect of the worship of avenging spirits is shown by the exploitation of bloodshed by the authorities. Whoever seized power either through revolution or war often condemned his defeated enemy to death, and then raised him to the ranks of the gods, thus permitting those who had been followers of the vanquished to save face by freely deciding to be-

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come his vassals. Some might consider it excessively Machiavelian; on the other hand might it not be a wise and astute political measure invented by an overpopulated Japanese nation eternally obliged to live within narrow boundaries? In this way the Japanese leaders who had been put to death were deified one after the other and worshipped throughout the country. For this reason today it is said that the aim of art and science in Japan is to console these unhappy divinities.

At the end of the 17th century Japan began to detach itself from the cult of avenging spirits, but not until the 18th century was it completely able to liberate itself. This does not prevent this tendency from remaining strongly rooted in the structure of the country even to this day.

How must we interpret this culture? This is the question which we, who have always lived in it, must not ask ourselves. To answer it we must re-discover a clear vision of our tradition, which was distorted by the "Japanology" of the 18th century and by the philosophy which followed the Meiji era, both of which were rationalist. During this tide of rationalism I must make an effort to throw a new light on the fundamental aspect of Japanese tradition. In order to accomplish this I have the double and difficult task of reviving and exorcising the avenging spirits Zéami and then Origuchi assumed before me. Now, at the end of the 20th century, on the eve of the collapse of the rationalist civilization that was developed by the modern West, it is my duty to reflect, in communion with my illustrious predecessors, on the significance of these spirits—the spirits of Prince Shôtoku and Kakinomoto-no-Hitomaro—which it has become my task to bring to life again.