

Old Japanese in Action

Oxford Spires Academy

13 June 2014

Research Centre for Japanese Language and Linguistics
and
Creation Theatre

Who we are

Research Centre for Japanese Language and Linguistics

The Research Centre for Japanese Language and Linguistics was created in March 2009 within the Faculty of Oriental Studies to function as an umbrella for research activities related to Japanese language and linguistics through the University.

A major research project hosted within the Centre is the five-and-a-half year project, 'Verb semantics and argument realization in pre-modern Japanese' (VSARPJ), which is a collaborative effort involving researchers working in England, Japan, and the US. However, the research of the members of the Centre is wide-ranging, from acquisition of Japanese as a foreign language to reconstruction of proto-Japanese morphology.

Old Japanese in Action is an event organized to celebrate the success of the VSARPJ research project as it comes to a close.

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Creation Theatre

Think about those books, the ones that you'll always go back to, those moments in life where you think 'that's a bit like that chapter' or 'you're just like that character', those are the stories we love.

We don't just want to leave those books on the shelf though, we take them down, hand them around, share them out and bring them to life.

All over Oxford we find unusual spaces – these stories aren't set in theatres so we don't put them there. Castles, antique mirror tents, college gardens, bookshops and factories... we'll go wherever the stories take us, and so far we've taken over 500,000 people with us.

From the thousands of children who've told classic stories in new ways through our education programme, to our professional actors and directors, you're always most likely to find us lost in a good book.

18 years, 54 shows, half a million audience members aged 5-95...we are Oxford's own Creation Theatre Company.

Ms Katie Ell Mr Josh Ward
<http://www.creationtheatre.co.uk/>

The Texts

Man'yōshū

The *Man'yōshū* (万葉集 'Collection of myriad leaves') is the major source of the OJ language. It is a poetry anthology of more than 4,500 poems in 20 volumes. It was compiled in late Nara or early Heian. The latest poem is dated 759 and the earliest poem is usually said to date back to the middle of the fifth century. The poems are in Japanese, written both phonographically and logographically. Most poems present a mixture of phonographic and logographic writing, but the proportions differ enormously. The poems in the anthology are drawn from several sources, both older and contemporary. It is thus not a single text, but a collection of texts from different times, and consequently there is no overall orthographic consistency. There is, however, a substantial, identifiable portion representing early eighth-century OJ and another representing mid eighth-century OJ. Eastern OJ dialect is also represented in volumes 14 (*azuma uta* 'eastern songs') and 20 (*sakimori uta* 'border-guard songs').

You will find *An elegy on the death of Furuhi* (Book V: 904-906) and *Urashima of Mizunoe* (Book IX: 1740-1) in this packet. These translations are from: Japanese Classics Translation Committee. 2005. *1000 Poems from the Manyōshū: The Complete Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai Translation*. Dover Publications Inc.

Engishiki Norito

Norito (祝詞 'liturgies') comprise ritual prayers and blessings. 27 *Norito* are recorded in volume 8 of the *Engishiki* (延喜式 'Procedures of the Engi Era', completed 927) and are, despite the late date of compilation, thought to retain their OJ form and to reflect fairly accurately the OJ language and in particular some quite early features of the language. The *Norito* are written in *senmyō-gaki*.

You will find *Norito XXV. To Drive Away a Vengeful Deyty* in this packet. This translation is from: Donald L. Philippi. 1990. *Norito: A Translation of the Ancient Japanese Ritual Prayers*. Princeton University Press.

Shoku nihongi Senmyō

Senmyō (宣命) are imperial edicts. 62 edicts are recorded in the *Shoku nihongi* (続日本紀 797; a history covering 697-791). *Senmyō* are written in *senmyō-gaki* i.e. mainly logographically, but with grammatical items and some vocabulary noted phonographically.

From *Senmyō* we have selected *Senmyō 19. Tenpyō Hōji 17th Month (757), Empress Kōken* and *Senmyō 42. Jingo Keiun 18th Month (767), Empress Shōtoku*. These texts were translated by Mr Daniel Millichip as part of his BA Dissertation at Oxford.

WHAT worth to me the seven treasures,
 So prized and desired by all the world?
 Furuhi, born of us two,
 Our love, our dear white pearl,
 With dawn, with the morning-star,
 Frolicked about the bed with us, standing or sitting;
 When dusk came with the evening-star,
 He pulled our hands, urged us to bed,
 'Leave me not, father and mother,
 Let me sleep between you,
 Like *saki-kusa*,² the three-stalked plant.'
 So spoke that lovely mouth.
 Then we trusted, as one trusts in a great ship,
 That he would grow up as time passed by,
 And we should watch him, both in weal and woe.
 But, as of a sudden sweeps the storm,
 Illness caught our son.
 Helpless and in grief,
 I braced my sleeves with white cord,
 Grasped my shining mirror,
 And gazing up into the sky
 I appealed to the gods of heaven;
 Dropping my forehead to the ground
 Madly I prayed to the gods of earth:
 'It is yours to decide his fate,
 To cure him or to let him die.'
 Nothing availed my prayers,
 He languished day by day,
 His voice failed each morning,
 His mortal life ebbed out.
 Wildly I leapt and kicked the floor,
 Cried, stared up, stared down,

¹ Though this poem is of uncertain authorship, it is put here because it suggests Okura in style.—Original Note.

² Not identified.

And beat my breast in grief.
 But the child from my arms has flown;
 So goes the world . . .

Envoys

So young he will not know the way;
 Here is a fee for you,
 O courier from the Nether World,
 Bear him on your back.
 With offerings I beseech you,
 Be true and lead him up
 Straight along the road to heaven!

641

Composed on the occasion of his illness.

[vi: 978]

SHOULD I, a man, die in vain
 With no renown—no name
 Spoken of for ten thousand ages?

Once Yamanoé Okura fell gravely ill. Fujiwara Yatsuka sent a messenger to him to inquire after his condition. Okura, after making a reply, burst into tears, and recited the above poem.

642-4

A Seventh Night Poem.²

[viii: 1520-2]

THE Oxherd and the Weaver Maid standing
 Face to face across the River,

¹ The 7th night of the 7th month is the only night in the year on which the Oxherd (a star in Aquila) is allowed to visit his sweetheart, the Weaver Maid (the star Vega), living on the other side of the Heavenly River (the Milky Way). The legend, which is of Chinese origin, early found its way into Japan, where the celebration of the 'Seventh Night,' or *Tanabata Matsuri*, as it is called, became, and still remains, one of the most popular festivals throughout the country.

² Okura composed these poems on gazing up at the Heavenly River on the night of the 7th day of the 7th month in the 1st year of Tempyō (729).—Original Note.

So lofty and awful is the peak of Fuji,
The clouds of heaven dare not cross it,
But linger trailing near !

654-5 *Of the Maiden Tamana at Sué¹ of the* [ix : 1738-9]
 province of Kazusa.

THERE lived a maiden Tamana
At Sué that bordered on Awa.
Broad of breast was she,
Her waist slender like a wasp's,
And radiant her face.
When she stood smiling like a flower,
Wayfarers, breaking their journey,
Turned to her door, unbeckoned.
A neighbour, abandoning his wife,
Unasked, offered his precious keys to her.
Thus charmed were all men ;
And lithely she leaned upon them
With wanton airs and graces.

Envoy

When a man stood by her door,
Out she went and met him
Forgetting all,
Though in the dead of night.

656-7 *Urashima of Mizunoé* [ix : 1740-1]

WHEN, in spring, the sun is misted,
And going out on Suminoé's shore²
I see rocking fisher-boats,
They remind me of the things

¹ Now Kimitsu District in Chiba Prefecture.
² In Yosa District, Tango Province.

That happened long ago.
Urashima of Mizunoé
Went a-fishing to the sea ;
Proud of his plentiful catch
Of sea-bream and bonito,
He did not come back home
Though seven days came and went ;
But beyond the bounds of sea
He rowed out his little boat ;
Then it happened that he met
The Sea God's daughter.
They talked, agreed, pledged love,
And hand in hand they reached
The Land Everlasting.
There in the Sea God's palace,
In its sweet and inmost chamber,
They might have lived, both he and she,
Never growing old, nor dying,
Until the end of time.
How foolish of this worldly man :
He said to his beloved :
' Let me go home for a while
And take word to my father and mother ;
Then, again, as soon as it is morrow,
I shall come back to you.'
' If you will come again
To this Land of Happiness,
And meet me just as now,
Take this casket, but keep it closed.'
She said to him over and over.
Arriving at the shore of Suminoé
He sought his home, but could find none,
He sought his hamlet, which he could not see.
In wild wonderment he thought :
' In three years since I left,

How could my home be lost,
 No trace of fence remaining?
 If I open this casket,' he said,
 'My old house may appear to me.'
 Thereupon he opened it a little.
 A white cloud rose out of the casket,
 And drifted towards the Land Everlasting.
 He ran, shouted, waved his sleeves;
 He stamped and writhed upon the ground,
 Then swooned upon the beach.
 Wrinkles furrowed his youthful skin,
 His black hair turned white.
 His breath grew fainter and fainter,
 At last he died.
 That Urashima of Mizunôé,
 I see the site of his abode.

Envoy

When he might have lived for ever
 In the Land Everlasting,
 How foolish of that man,
 Though of his own choice!

658-9 *Of a maiden walking alone on the great [ix: 1742-3]
 bridge of Kawachi.*

A MAIDEN walks alone
 On the great vermilion bridge
 Across the Katashiwa.¹
 She trails her crimson skirt,
 Her cloak is dyed blue
 With the herbs of the mountain.²

¹ A river flowing through the present village of Katashita, and joining the River Yamato in Naka-Kawachi District in Osaka Prefecture.

² *Yama-ai*, i. e. 'mountain indigo-plant' (*Mercurialis leiocarpa*). The dye was obtained by boiling its leaves.

Has she a husband young as green grass?
 Does she sleep single like an acorn?
 I would ask her;
 But, oh, not to know her bower!

Envoy

Were my dwelling by the bridge,
 I would give her shelter,
 So wistful she looks, going alone!

660-1 *Composed when the courtiers started on a [ix: 1747-8]
 journey down to Nanima, in spring, in
 the third month.²*

ON the peak of Ogura above the rapids³
 In the mountains of Tatsuta
 Soaring in white clouds,
 The cherry-trees are in full bloom,
 Every branch bending with loaded blossoms.
 But the wind is ceaseless as the peak is lofty,
 And day after day falls the spring rain;
 The flowers have scattered from the upper sprays.
 May the blossoms on the lower branches
 Neither fall nor lose their beauty,
 Till you, who journey, grass for pillow,
 Come home again!

Envoy

Seven days will end our journey;
 O Tatsuta, God of the Wind,⁴
 Never scatter the blossoms
 Before thy breath!

¹ By Takahashi Mushimaro.

² Perhaps toward the end of the Jinki era.

³ The rapids are said to have been the *Kamé-no-sé* (the 'Tortoise Rapids').

⁴ The god enshrined in the mountains of Tatsuta.

XXV. TO DRIVE AWAY A VENGEFUL DEITY

(*Tataru Kami wo Utusi-yaru*)

By the command of the Ancestral Gods and Goddesses²⁷,
Who divinely remain in the High Heavenly Plain¹⁵,
And who began matters,

The eight myriad deities were convoked in a divine convocation
in the high meeting-place of Heaven,

And consulted in a divine consultation, [saying]:

'Our Sovereign Grandchild²⁹ is to rule

'The Land of the Plentiful Reed Plains and of
the Fresh Ears of Grain¹⁰

'Tranquilly as a peaceful land.'

Thus he left the heavenly rock-seat,

And descended from the heavens,

Pushing with an awesome pushing through the myriad layers
of heavenly clouds

And was entrusted [with the land]—

Then they consulted with a divine consultation, [saying]:

'Which deity should first be dispatched

'To expel with a divine expulsion and to pacify

'The unruly deities in the Land of the Fresh Ears of Grain¹⁰?

Then the numerous deities all consulted and said:

'Ame-no-ho-hi-no-mikoto should be sent to pacify them.'

Then when he was dispatched down from the heavens,

He did not return to report on his mission.

Next Take-mi-kuma-no-mikoto was also dispatched,

But he also, obeying his father's words, did not return
to report on his mission.

Again, Ame-waka-hiko was also dispatched,

But he did not return to report on his mission,

But because of woe from a bird of on high

Immediately lost his life.

Hereupon by the command of the Heavenly Deities

Another consultation was held,

And the two deities:

Futu-nusi-no-mikoto

And Take-mika-duti-no-mikoto

Were caused to descend from the heavens;

They expelled with a divine expulsion the unruly deities

And pacified with a divine pacification;

They silenced to the last leaf

The rocks and the stumps of the trees,

Which had been able to speak,

And when the Sovereign Grandchild²⁹ descended from the heavens,

Entrusted [the land to him].

The lands of the four quarters thus entrusted [to him when he]
descended from the heavens,

Great Yamato, the land of the Sun-Seen-on-High, was determined
as a peaceful land;

The palace posts were firmly rooted in the bed-rock below,

The cross-beams of the roof soaring high towards the

High Heavenly Plain¹⁵,

And [the palace of the Emperor] constructed as a heavenly
shelter, as a sun-shelter¹¹

In this land which he is to rule tranquilly as a peaceful land.

May the Sovereign Deities²⁸ dwelling within the heavenly palace

Not rage and not ravage,

Because as deities they are well acquainted

With the matters begun in the High Heavenly Plain¹⁵;

May they rectify [their hearts] in the manner of [the rectifying deities]

Kamu-naho-bi and Oho-naho-bi,

And may they go from this place

And move to another place of lovely mountains and rivers

Where they can look out over the four quarters,

And may they reign over that as their place.

With this prayer I present offerings,

Providing garments of colored cloth, radiant cloth, plain cloth,
and coarse cloth;

A mirror as something to see clearly with,
A jewel as something to play with,
A bow and arrow as something to shoot with,
A sword as something to cut with,
A horse as something to ride on;
Wine, raising high the soaring necks

Of the countless wine vessels, filled to the brim;
In rice and in stalks;

That which lives in the mountains—

The soft-furred and the coarse-furred animals—
That which grows in the vast fields and plains—

The sweet herbs and the bitter herbs—

As well as that which lives in the blue ocean—

The wide-finned and the narrow-finned fishes,

The sea-weeds of the deep and the sea-weeds of the shore—

I place these noble offerings in abundance upon tables

Like a long mountain range and present them

Praying that the Sovereign Deities²⁸

Will with a pure heart receive them tranquilly

As offerings of ease,

As offerings of abundance,

And will not seek vengeance and not ravage,

But will move to a place of wide and lovely mountains and rivers,

And will as deities dwell there pacified.

With this prayer, I fulfill your praises²⁴. Thus I humbly speak.

XXVI. PRESENTING OFFERINGS ON DISPATCHING AN ENVOY TO CHINA

By the solemn command of the Sovereign Grandchild²⁹,
I humbly speak before you,

The deities whose praises are fulfilled²⁴ in Sumi-no-ye:

Because there was no suitable port

For dispatching envoys to China,

[The Emperor] was considering

Having them board ship from the land of Harima.

Just then, a divine command came, instructing and teaching:

'I will build a port.'

Exactly in accordance with this instruction and teaching,

A port was built.

Whereupon [the Emperor] was glad and rejoiced

And as tokens of reverence

Had [me] (office, rank, surname, name) bring and present
to you these offerings. Thus I humbly speak.

Senmyō 19. Tenpyō Hōji 1 7th Month (757), Empress Kōken

I proclaim, Imperial children, Lords, nobles, officials and people of the world, all of you hear this edict I proclaim as the words of the Emperor, the Yamato ruler, who rules the eight-islands as a living God. I proclaim, all of you hear the Imperial edict that says: “The crazy and confused Naramaro and Komaro, evil and rebellious men, planned to do the following in order to steal the succession of the high throne of the heavenly line, which has been decided by the benevolent Imperial gods and goddesses who gather on the high plain. Naramaro and Komaro planned to incite and lead a rebellious group and, first, surround the house of the minister of the court and kill him then immediately surround the Imperial palace and force out the Imperial heir of the heavenly line and next disrupt the palace of my Great Parent, snatching the bell, seal and sign, summon the Minister of the Right and make him proclaim an order to the realm. They planned to, after this, expel the Emperor and select a Lord from four Princes. So, in the night of the twenty ninth day of the sixth month they joined the officials of the Chancellor of the Realm, drank salt soup and swore an oath and they worshipped the four directions of heaven and earth. They planned to stir up their armies on the second day of the seventh month and at the time of the Sheep on the second day they summoned Kamitsumichi-no-Asomi, Hidatsu, a person of the district of Kamitsumichi in Kibi-no-Michi-no-Kuchi province, a provincial official of the Naka-no-Mamori and Ono-no-Azuminohito and enticed them to take part in the plot. I pardon them for saying they would take part and they told me of the plan in detail at the time of the Boar that day. So, thinking and asking, [he] humbly said that all of this was truthful and I punished all of them. Thinking and asking about this, all they say is true and they all accepted their punishments. Examining the laws, they all correspond to death penalty. Although this is the case, I lighten their punishment, change their names and banish them to a distant land so that I may bless them. I

think, as a god, that surely these rebellious and evil men came forward and wholly accepted their punishments because of the gods of heaven and earth blessing and protecting the realm and the Spirits of the Emperors, too awesome to mention, who have ruled the realm here since the start of heaven and earth, expelling and discarding dirty men and because of the inconceivably awesome power of Rushana, the Buddha, the Kanzeon Boddhisatva, the followers of Buddhist law, Brahma, Sakra, and the Four Heavenly Kings. I proclaim, all of you hear the Imperial edict that also says: “The people, who were tricked by these crazy men, think them treading in the capital is dirty so I move them to a wooden house in Okachi village in Ideha province.”

Senmyō 42. Jingo Keiun 1 8th Month (767), Empress Shōtoku

I proclaim, all of you hear the edict I proclaim as the words of the emperor, the Yamato ruler, who shines light over the eight-island country in Yamato. I proclaim, all of you hear the imperial edict that says: “At the time of the monkey on the sixteenth day of the sixth month this year a most miraculous, rare and beautiful cloud, of seven colours mixed, rose up. While I was admiring it and looking at it with all the people who serve me in awe and joy, the people of the east and Abe-no-Asomi of the upper fifth rank lower grade said: ‘On the seventeenth day of the sixth month a five-coloured cloud, a sign, rose up above the Toyuke palace in Watarai district and covered it. So we drew how it looked and offer this up.’ Further, an official of the Department of Cosmology said a splendid and rare cloud has risen in the northwest on the tenth day of the seventh month and on the twenty-third of the same month, the cloud in the southeast turned to a faint five-colours, the base of the cloud red and its tips yellow. When I made the officials in the Ministry of Civil Services think about the reason for such miraculous and rare clouds appearing they said: ‘Thinking carefully about the Book of Signs, this is a Keiun. This truly is a Great Sign.’ I thought: ‘I have always heard that such a great, precious, miraculous and rare Great Sign is created by heaven and earth, impressed by incredible Blessings in the reign of a wise Emperor. This could by no means be my blessings moving heaven and earth.’ Thus the cloud appears above the palace of the Gods. Even still, this is because the great Gods blessing and creating it. Also, this is because the souls of the previous generations of emperors, too awesome to mention, assisting and blessing [me]. Further, I think that this cloud is a Great Sign, miraculous and precious, that the three treasures, myriad Gods, and the gods of heaven and earth created between the second and seventh days of the previous first month, due to all the Great Priests of the temples being diligent, according to morals, when I made them serve, read the Golden Light Sutra and pay

penance to Kichijōten, and due to the statesmen serving, performing governance morally.

With this, I cannot sit around in silence humbly receiving this miraculous and joyous Great Sign, so I shall summon the Lords and Statesmen to rejoice and revere with me and pay back for this Blessing of heaven and earth.”I proclaim, all of you hear the imperial edict that says: “In this way, heaven sends down myriad things and nurtures, blesses and cares for the realm. Also, I bestow the Negi, Ōmonoimi and Uchibito of the palace of the Great Gods with two ranks. However, I bestow the Mikamunagi and those lower with one rank. Also, I bestow my servants of the two Godly districts in Ise province and the priests, with and without rank, of the provinces with one rank. Also, I bestow one rank to those below the sixth rank and the men and women of the left and right capitals over sixty years old. However I bestow the upper great sixth rank upper grade to those of the great sixth rank upper grade who have been selected for merit three times or more. Also, I raise filial children, obedient grandchildren, loyal husbands, faithful wives and field workers by one rank and place a sign at their house and pardon them of field tax until they die. Further, I bestow gifts on those of the fifth rank and above. Also I forgive half of the field tax of the provinces for this year. Also, I bestow rice on old people over eighty years old and widows unable to support themselves. Also, I change the reign name in accordance with the sign that has appeared. So, I change the third year of Tenpyō-Jingo to the first year of Jingo-Keiun.”