

Kotodama and the Kojiki - the Japanese word soul' between mythology, spiritual magic and political ideology

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The idea of the “word soul“is considered an important mental and spiritual concept of Japanese antiquity. Behind it stands a conception originating in sympathetic magic, according to which no essential difference between a thing and its naming exists. Semiotically spoken there is an identity of signifier and signified. In Japan this idea expresses itself 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". Mostly this term is translated as “word soul”.

Historically the earliest reference to this concept is found in songs of the lyric collection *Manyōsshū* from the eighth century in which Japan is called a country of *kotodama*. Almost forgotten in the Japanese Middle Ages, respectively replaced by word magic of *Shingon* Buddhism, this idea became a sort of conceptual general key to the national philology of Edo period (1600-1868) and the *kokutai*-nationalism of the modern age to postulate basic specific features of Japan and her language, seemingly originating in high antiquity and the Age of the Gods.

The talk deals with the question, whether the *kotodama* concept is explicitly provable also for the Kojiki, the oldest Japanese historiographical writing, which contains the most important set of Japanese mythology and which was raised only in modern times to the rank of a Holy Book“of *Shintōs*.

Within this scope, the following questions should be discussed:

- a. *kotodama* within the myths of the Kojiki
- b. *kotodama* in the emperor annals of the Kojiki
- c. *kotodama* in the modern interpretation of the Kojiki itself.

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