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SOME REMARKS ABOUT TAMAMO
AND TAMAMO NI ASOBU MENTIONED
IN STORY-MATCHING CONTEST ORGANIZED
BY PRINCESS BAISHI
(ROKUJŌ SAIIN BAISHI SHINNŌ
MONOGATARI UTA AWASE)

Princess Baishi (Baishi [Miwako] Naishinnō, called Rokujō Saiin, literally, 'High Priestess [of Kamo Shrine] from the Sixth Quarter'), 1038-1096, was the forth daughter of Emperor Gosuzaku (r. 1036-1045) and Fujiwara no Genshi¹. This extremely sickly person from the very beginning thanks to her talent for poetry – as a very active protagonist of cultural life at the court – organized more than twenty *uta awase* (poetry contest) during her life (Kokushi Daijiten 1990: 456-7). Many of these poetry contests were arranged as gorgeous court events, but especially one of them is remarkable. In the 3rd year of Tengi (1055), on the 3rd day of the 5th month, Princess Baishi was the mastermind of contest known as *Rokujō Saiin Baishi Shinnō monogatari uta awase* ('Story-poems-matching contest [held by] High Priestess [of Kamo Shrine] from the Sixth Quarter, Princess Baishi').

In what does the extraordinariness of that *uta awase* lie? Certainly, in that contest – like in other poetry contests – the main purpose was to compose and match poems on proper subject with other, and the participants probably had been regarding it in that way.² An innovation here was, however, combination of that *uta awase* with elements of new type of *mono awase* ('contest of object', or 'comparison of things')³. The organizers of that contest decided to use poems selected from specially for that occasion written short tales (*monogatari*), hence appearing in the name of Baishi's contest *monogatari awase* (story-matching contest).

Participants of such poetry contests were usually well-educated people, and many of them could pride oneself on complete familiarity with classic poetry anthologies (i.e. *Kokinshū*, *Gosenshū*, etc.), and compose own poems, what was *de rigueur*. Again characteristic of the period of Princess Baishi's activity is a running high of interest in romances. It is thought, that participants of Rokujō Lady's contest in 1055 were poets as well as story-writers. Among them were Baishi's ladies-in-waiting, people from Shijō no Miya ('[Lady] of the Residence in the Fourth Quarter') Empress Kanshi's⁴ entourage, and ladies-in-waiting of other princesses.

As mentioned above, poems for competition were chosen from new tales written for that event, and composed on these tales. Critically, broadly composed poems about *monogatari* were exchanged and contested by the left and right teams, but besides presenting each poem only, naturally the stories itself were presented as well. It resembles *uta e awase* ('poem-picture contest') held by Lady Reikeiden⁵ in 1050, where pictoralizations of old poems, and six new poems on three topics were compared, i.e. the first comparison was a picture contest (*e awase*), while the second was essentially a poem contest (*uta awase*). Lady Reikeiden's *uta e awase*

¹ Fujiwara no Genshi (or Motoko), 1016-1039, Empress Consort (*Chūgū*) of Emperor Gosuzaku.

² More about *uta-awase* see: Ito, Setsuko. 1982. The Muse in Competition. *Uta-awase Through the Ages*. Monumenta Nipponica 37(2). 201-222.

³ See: Masukawa, Kōichi. 2000. *Awase mono*. Mono to Ningen no Bunkashi 94. Tokyo: Hōsei Daigaku Shuppan.

⁴ Fujiwara no Kanshi (or Hiroko), 1036-1127, Empress Consort (*Kōgō*) of Emperor Gozeizei (r. 1045-1068), called 'Lady of the Residence in the Fourth Quarter'.

⁵ Fujiwara no Enshi, 1016-1095, ca. 1042 became a Consort (*Nyōgo*) of Emperor Gosuzaku. The contest was prepared in celebration of fifth birthday of Enshi's daughter Seishi.

was an example of amalgamation of painting and literature, whereas the Princess Baishi's *monogatari uta awase* is a synthesis of prosperity of *monogatari* and poem contests since Emperor Ichijō's reign.

There are eighteen tales used as topics during the contest, but in the present article the author would like to deal with only one of them, i.e. *Tamamo ni asobu* 'Play among jewel-like water-/seaweeds'. The word *tamamo* is a compound term, which consists of *tama* ('jewel', but in ancient Japanese used as a poetic prefix expressing and intensifying a description of beautiful objects as well⁶), and *mo*⁷ 'waterplant; seaweed'. What can, however, the ambiguous title mean? Who has been playing among the seaweeds? This article is an attempt to answer these questions.

1. TAMAMO AS A POETIC MOTIF IN EARLY JAPANESE POETRY

As a littoral object, the motif of *tamamo* belongs to things referring to the topic of waterside. It is considered, the beautification of word *mo* by the prefix *tama* could originally refer to an ancient custom, when people presenting somebody with seafood like fishes, shellfishes, for containing its spiritual power that, was believed, has been preserved freshness, were wrapping it with *mo* picked in the same place, where they fished. The gift became then like a gem, i.e. „jewel-like seaweed” (Kogo Daijiten 1994: 215).

Seaweeds were gifted not only for another people, but also offered to the gods. Cranston reads as follows:

The Japanese have always depended on the riches of the sea for an important part of their diet. Images of seaweed-gathering are extremely common in the *Man'yōshū*⁸, reflecting the actual lives of the people. That seaweed also had a sacral importance in ancient Japan is indicated in the Shinto liturgies known as *norito*, where it has a regular place in the list of offerings to the gods. A typical example can be drawn from the *Toshigi no matsuri*, a prayer for abundant harvest: [...] (“Of things that grow in the plain of great fields, sweet herbs and bitter herbs; of things that live in the plain of blue sea, from things broad of fin and thing narrow of fin, to the seaweed of the offing and the seaweed of the waters close to the shore... I shall offer with reverent word of praise”).

(Cranston 1971: 138)

⁶ The other examples of nouns using that prefix are following: *tamagaki* (a fence enclosing shrine area), *tamakazura* (vines), *tamakushige* (jeweled comb box), *tamasudare* (bead curtain), *tamamo* (beautiful train), etc.

⁷ *Mo* (read in other water-plants names *so* or traditionally as well) is the most common among terms referring to either seaweeds or waterweeds. Apart from *tamamo* it often appears in specific variant such as *kawamo* (riverweed), *hetsumo* (weeds of the waters close to shore), *nanoriso* (gulfweed or sea lentil), *nikime* (soft weed), *wakame* (maiden-weed); Cranston (1971).

⁸ *Man'yōshū* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves) is the oldest anthology of Japanese poetry, believed to be compiled ca. 780 by Ōtomo no Yakamochi. Mirroring collections of Chinese poems of the time, *Man'yōshū* is divided into twenty parts, and contains 265 *chōka* (long poems), 4207 *tanka* (short poems), one *tanrenga* (short connecting poem), one *bussokusekika* (poems on the Buddha's footprints at Yakushiji in Nara), four *kanshi* (Chinese poems), and 22 Chinese prose passages.

An example of *tamamo* as a suitable gift in secular contexts was described in a long poem (*chōka*) by Ōtomo no Ikenushi (mid 8th century) written in 747. The following fragment of that poem relates how the poet gathered seaweed and made a chaplet for his wife; *Man'yōshū*, XVII, 3993:

...sugiyuki Shibutani no ariso no saki ni okitsu nami yosekuru tamamo katayori ni kazura ni
tsukuri imo ga tame te ni makimochite... (Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 4. 149-150)
...passing on to Shibutani's rock-encrusted cape, where waves from the offing sweep ashore
the gemlike weed; which with a twist I twined into a garland to give my wife, and carried
wrapped about my arm... (Cranston 1971: 139)⁹

The word *tamamo* read through early Japanese poetry shows, that it can be freighted with special meanings and overtones. But when *tamamo* is nothing beyond its dictionary meaning, and when it was used figuratively?

1.1 TAMAMO AS SYMBOL OF A RUSTIC LIFE OF THE SEA FOLK

Jewel-like seaweed functioning as a *keibutsu*¹⁰ closely connected with water is indispensable element of image of the sea folk. The following nature-praising poem composed by Yamabe no Akahito (fl. 8th century) in 724 presents a picturesque scene of man at work in the midst of nature; *Man'yōshū* 1999-2003: 4. 917:

Yasumishishi wa go ōkimi tokomiya to tsukaematsureru Sahikano yu sogai ni miyuru okitsu
shima kiyoki nagisa ni kaze fukeba shiranami sawaki shio fureba tamamo karitsutsu kamiyo
yori shika so tōtoki Tamatsushimayama (Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 2. 22)
Where our Great Lord reigns,/ Ruling the land in all tranquility,/ From this eternal palace/
Where we wait upon his will/ Here in Sahika Fields/ Beyond this precincts can be seen/ An
island in the offing./ Along the clean-swept margin of its waves/ When the wind blows fresh/
White billows storm across the beach/ And when the tide is out/ The sea folk bend and cut
gemlike weed./ From the Age of the Gods/ Awesome and noble has it stood./ The
sea-mountain Tamatsushima. (Cranston 1971: 140-41)

Here on the seashore, beyond precincts of the Great Lord, the “gemlike weed” completes scenery seen in “Sahika Fields”. A periodicity of nature (“And when the tide is out/ The sea folk bend and cut gemlike weed”) imposes a definite rhythm of labor on the sea folk. Gathering of *tamamo* becomes a part of this eternal scenery as age-long as the sea-mountain Tamatsushima standing there “from the Age of the Gods”. As Cranston noticed, this poem is “a combination of rusticity and innate divinity” (Cranston 1971: 141).

⁹ All further translations, if it is not noted, are the author's translations.

¹⁰ Natural motifs: plants, animals, landscapes etc., characterizing concrete places, the four seasons.

Some remarks about tamamo and tamamo ni asobu mentioned...

1.2 PRECIOUSNESS OF TAMAMO

As mentioned, seaweeds' gift could resemble gem, hence the word *tamamo*, which could associate with unfettered natural beauty and with the idea of preciousness. But this preciousness can be considered metaphorically, with regard for *tamamo*'s evanescence, inclination to its disappearing under the waves as if something dearest has vanished. A *hanka*¹¹ added to the presented above poem 917 contains, perhaps, image of losing something precious. Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 4. 918:

okitsu shima ariso no tamamo shiohi michite kakuroiyukaba omōemu ka mo

(Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 4. 22)

When the tide comes in/ And the gemlike weeds on the rocks/ On this island cost/ Hide themselves slowly in the waves/ Will our thoughts go after them?

(Cranston 1971: 141)

Poet regrets that he must soon leave that seashore scenery, return to the capital, and "gemlike weeds", which "hide themselves slowly in the waves", evoke symbolic parting from something, for what he will surely pine.

1.3 „JEWEL-LIKE SEAWEEDS” AS WOMAN’S HAIR

The word *tamamo* has, however, another metaphorical meaning as well. Hitomaro composed following poem:

*wagimoko no nekutaregami o Sarusawa no ike no tamamo to miru zo kanashiki*¹²

how sorrowful is to see the disheveled hair of my beloved resembling so the jewel-like seaweeds in Sarusawa Pond¹³

Above poem was written in memory of *wagimoko*¹⁴ translated here as „beloved [woman]”, and a simile: *nekutaregami (...)* *tamamo to miru* (disheveled hair looks like / resembles jewel-like seaweeds) became exactly grounds of linking the word *tamamo* with the death. Namely, Hitomaro's poem refers to a story of one *uneme*¹⁵, described in the hundred fiftieth tale¹⁶ of *Yamato Monogatari* (Tales of Yamato)¹⁷. The heroine was in love with the Emperor, but her love was vain, so for her unhappy fate she threw herself into Sarusawa Pond. The Emperor composed then this poem:

Sarusawa no ike mo tsurashi na wagimoko ga tamamo kazukaba mizu zo hinamashi

how I detest Sarusawa Pond! I wish its waters had dried up when my beloved, throwing herself in, was enveloped by the jewel-like seaweeds

¹¹ Lit. 'response-poem'; short poem (*tanka*) appendage to long poem (*chōka*).

¹² Poem 1289 from *Shūi Wakashū* (Collection of Gleanings) and in the *Kakinomoto Shū* (Anthology of Kakinomoto). Cf. oryg.: Shūi Wakashū 1990: 376.

¹³ Name of a pond near Kōfukuji Temple in Nara.

¹⁴ A word used by men toward a close women, wife or beloved.

¹⁵ Lady attendant who waited on the emperor's table in ancient times; usually between the ages of sixteen and thirty, who was a daughter of provincial noble.

¹⁶ See original text of that tale in: *Yamato Monogatari* 1973: 322-323.

¹⁷ A collection of tales and *waka* poetry from the Heian period. Majority of the text was completed in the year 951 by an unknown author.

An allusion to the simile: *nekutaregami* (...) *tamamo to miru* Hitomaro included in his another poem, Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 3. 430:

Yakumo sasu Izumo no kora ga kurokami wa Yoshino no kawa no oki ni nazusau

(Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 1. 272-73)

black hair of my beloved, like manifoldly piling up clouds that rise in Izumo, floats on
waters of Yoshino River

In case of that poem, not a word was uttered about seaweeds, but an indirect reference to hair resembling these water plants was made.

Finally, not to dwell longer on motif of seaweeds-like hair, it is worth to mention, that a similar motif on the grounds of *uneme*'s tragic death can be found in Western art. An example here is story of Ophelia from Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, and paintings basing on her latter end, for instance *Ophelia* (1852) by Sir John Everett Millais or *The Death of Ophelia* (1843) by Eugène Delacroix.

1.4 MAKURAKOTOBA EXPRESSIONS WITH TAMAMO

The word *tamamo* can appear also in fixed formulaic expressions known as *makurakotoba*¹⁸. Those are following phrases:

- *tamamo karu* (gather [literally: cut] „jewel-like seaweeds”) + offering; Minume¹⁹; maiden (*otome*), etc.

The poetic epithet evokes a lyric quality of the lives and labors of the sea folk. Short poem (*tanka*) by Hitomaro, Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 3. 250:

tamamo karu Minume o sugite natsukusa no Nonoshima no saki ni fune chikazukinu (Man'yōshū

1999-2003: 1. 189-190)

passing Minume where the jewel-like seaweeds are gathered our boat has come near by the
Point of Noshima abundant in its summer grass

- *tamamo nasu* (like „jewel-like seaweeds”) + to float; wave; nestle, etc.

We can see it in fragment of a following poem, Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 1. 50:

...*maki saku hi no tsumade o mononofu no yaso uji kawa ni tamamo nasu ukabenagasere*...

(Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 1. 46-48)

...on Uji River as jewel-like seaweeds float pieces of excellent cypress timber of many
warriors' clans...

¹⁸ Lit. 'pillow word'; often called a fixed epithet being a five-syllable word or phrase used for decoration, sometimes for creating an effect of dignity or even joyousness, and is applied to a specific place or thing.

¹⁹ Name of a place in present city Kōbe, in Nada ward (Nadaku).

And another fragment of poem by Hitomaro, Man'yōshū 1999-2003:2. 194:

*tobu tori no Asuka no kawa no kamitsuse ni ouru tamamo wa shimotsuse ni nagarefurabau
tamamo nasu kayori kakuyori nabikaishi tsuma no mikoto no tatanazuku nikihada sura o
tsurugitachi mi ni soeneneba nubatama no yo toko mo aruramu...*

(Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 1. 138-39)

growing in headwaters of Asuka River full of birds flying over jewel-like seaweeds, though
the soft skin of my beloved, who wobblingly snuggled up to me as jewel-like seaweeds that
float in downstream touching often each other, overlaps with mine, without blade of sharp
sword at a blackberry lily resembling night my bed seems to be rough too...

– *tamamo yoshi* (splendid with „jewel-like seaweeds”) + Sanuki²⁰

This *makurakotoba* connects with a place name Sanuki, where *tamamo* was often gathered.
The following fragment of poem by Hitomaro begins with an exordium describing the divine
character of the land of Sanuki and the seaweed image serves as an ornament dignifying this
place name (Cranston 1971: 143).

*tamamo yoshi Sanuki no kuni wa kunikara ka miredo mo akanu kamukara ka kokoda tōtoki
ame tsuchi hi tsuki tomo ni tariyukamu kami no miomo to tsugite kuru...*

(Man'yōshū 1999-2003: 1. 161-63)

splendid with jewel-like seaweed is land of Sanuki, and is it for its excellent nature I gaze on
it but not tire, and is it for its divine nature it bides in awe, together with the heavens and
earth, sun and moon it will endure and flourish, this land whose face, what through ages has
come down, is the face of the god

2. LITTLE GREBES PLAYING IN THE POND

As it has been shown, word *tamamo* exemplifies a frequent motif in early *waka* poetry.
There is, however, no phrase *tamamo ni asobu* anywhere seen. As Matsuo suggested (Hagitani
1960: 1056), this expression appears for the first time in *Gosen Waka Shū* (or *Gosenshū*, Later
Collection of Poems)²¹, II, 72:

haru no ike no tamamo ni asobu niodori no ashi no ito naki koi mo suru kana

(Gosen Wakashū 1990: 25)

the legs of little grebes playing in a pond among jewel-like waterweeds in spring bustle so
they are also in love

It is considered, the title of *Tamamo ni asobu* story used as one of the topics in Princess Baishi's
monogatari awase could be borrowed exactly from that poem. Is it, however, possible anyhow
to confirm that? And another question, who is the author of *Tamamo ni asobu*?

²⁰ Name of an old province (present Kanagawa Prefecture).

²¹ The second imperial poems' anthology compiled in 951 at the behest of Emperor Murakami (r. 946-967) by *Nashitsubo no gonin* "the Five Men of the Pear Chamber" (a group of poets and scholars who cooperated in the compilation of this anthology): Ōnakatomi no Yoshinobu (922-991, Kiyohara no Motosuke (908-990), Minamoto no Shitagō (911-983), Ki no Tokibumi (fl. ca. 950), and Sakanoue no Mochiki (fl. ca. 950). It consists of 20 volumes containing 1426 poems.

Among supplementary sources referring to this story-poems-matching contest is a passage in *Mumyōzōshi* (Untitled Book)²² describing *Tamamo ni asobu* story.

Again, if somebody will ask: „Why *Tamamo*?”, thus [a lady answered]: „There are no any particularly pitiable things or incredible things, thought the opening <Although the father chided me when I went out... [*oya wa ariku to sainamedo*]> seems rather unusual and makes the reader eager to know how the story will develop. A very moving character in this story is Yomogi no Miya, who later on becomes the Head of the Palace Attendants' Office [*Naishi no Kami*], and her bold behavior when in attendance on the former Minister [*Daijin*] is quite distasteful. The heroine, as far as her background is concerned, who made entirely great things, turns out to be a wrongheaded viper [*nejikebami*], and it is odious. Even the Reverend of the Buddhist Law [*Hō no Shi*] of sacred portable shrine [*mikoshi*], and others whom we needn't mention, are pitiful. The condition of the protagonist of that story is very deplorable. But a woman, who also says <There is no man pining for the pine growing on the rock [*iwa ni ouru matsu hito mo araji*]> is not so uninterested.”

(*Mumyōzōshi* 1999: 240)

It is probably only one fragment briefly presenting a plot of story, which, indeed, does not explain the story's title. Present passage gives, however, some hints, that let us link them with poem believed to be a source of *Tamamo ni asobu* phrase. We know the opening of *Tamamo ni asobu* reads as follows: <Although the father chided me when I went out... [*oya wa ariku to sainamedo*]>. It must be evidently an excerpt from a *saibara*²³ entitled *Ikanisemu* (What I am to do?)²⁴:

Ikanisemu, semuya. Oshi no kamotori, idete yukeba, oya wa ariku to sainamedo, yoru tsumasadametsu ya, sakindachiya (Kodai Kayōshū 1963: 393)

What I am to do, I trouble. Lovely wild ducks came, so I went out [to see and play with them], and though my father scolded me for it, in the evening I have chosen for a I am to marry man, a young nobleman!

Mentioned it this *saibara* wild ducks [*kamodori*], which aroused maiden's interest, so that she went out for a walk to see them, are associated with playing in a pond among jewel-like waterweeds little grebes [*niodori*] from *Gosenshū*. Such word-play could be thought to be quite complicated, was, however, oft used contrivance.²⁵ It can be result from two reasons, firstly, it was, probably, not so difficult to link these three texts to know, where does the title *Tamamo ni*

²² A valuable critique of numerous literary works by daughter of Fujiwara no Shunzei from the beginning of Kamakura Period (1192-1333)

²³ A genre of accompanied vocal Japanese court music that existed during the Heian period.

²⁴ *Saibara* no. 22.

²⁵ A similar technique of associations was used, for example, by the authoress of *Sarashina Nikki* (*Sarashina Diary*, ca. 1060). The name of *Sarashina* (a place known from a beautiful moon's sights) appears nowhere in her diary, but through a one poem contained in this work she lets the reader instantly link it with a diary's title. See more on the origin of the *Sarashina Diary*'s title in the introduction to Polish translation of this work: Sugawara Takasue no Musume. 2007. Pamiętnik z Sarashiny. Part I. *Silva Japonicarum* 14. 28-29. Poznań: Instytut Orientalistyczny UAM.

asobu come from, when an intimate knowledge of poetry at court was obligatory. Secondly, the author of *Tamamo* itself must have had an ineradicable weakness for constructing stories' titles on the basis of references to another works, for the most part to poems. As Matsuo pointed out, the opening of *Tamamo ni asobu* depicted in *Mumyōzōshi* resembles a beginning of another story *Sagoromo Monogatari* (Tale of Sagoromo)²⁶ by Senji²⁷ of Rokujō no Saiin²⁸, where the authoress must have used the same technique. Hence, we can consider that one of the participants of Princess Baishi's contest for the authoress of *Tamamo no asobu* as well (Hagitani 1960: 1056).

3. TAMAMO NI ASOBU IN THE CONTEST

The essential text of Princess Baishi's contest is contained in twenty-scroll work (*nijikkanbon*)²⁹, where we can find twenty two verses. Only one of them, the second one, is on *Tamamo no asobi* topic:

(A)

Great Counselor (*Gondainagon*) from *Tamamo no asobi*

ariake no tsuki matsu sato wa ariya tote ukitemo sora ni idenikeru ka na (Hagitani 1960:
1041)

a village where I wait for a fading moon though floating appeared in the sky

The other poems from that competition, which refer to *Tamamo no asobi* were included in *Fūyō Waka Shū*, or *Fūyōshū* (Collection of Wind-Blown Leaves)³⁰.

(B)

Fūyōshū, V, 342:

Wind was blowing impetuously, and in the morning came a man.

Regent (*Kanpaku*) from *Tamamo no asobi*

fukiwarau kaze ni midareruru shiratsuyu mo monoomou sode ni nitaru kyō kana

(Nakano 1970: 131)

kicked around by blowing-off wind white dewdrops are today, I worry, like my sleeves

²⁶ A tale from the mid Heian Period, mentioned in *Mumyōzōshi* as the second best one after Genji *Monogatari* (Tale of Genji, ca. 1008).

²⁷ *Senji* was a name of a woman personally responsible to the sovereign who transmitted his messages or commands to the outside; widely, a court lady.

²⁸ Rokujō no Saiin Senji (fl. mid eleventh century), a daughter of Minamoto no Yorikuni; a poetess and lady-in-waiting of Princess Baishi.

²⁹ *Nijikkanbon Ruiju Utaawase* (Collection of Poetry Contests in Twenty Scrolls), contains 147 *uta awase* held from the tenth to the beginning of twelfth century.

³⁰ Composed at the behest of Emperor Saga's Consort (*Chūgū*) Saionji Kitsuki (1225-1292) in 1271 collection of poems, which originally had appeared in *monogatari*. Formerly, it consisted of 20 scrolls and contained 1400 poems; the present version lacks in two last scrolls.

(C)

Fūyōshū, VI, 429:

After the Head of the Palace Attendants' Office (*Naishi no Kami*) has changed, on the next day appeared snow.

A poem by Emperor Suzaku from *Tamamo no asobi*

aware to wa omoikoseyo katashikite mi mo saewataru yuku no yo na yo na

(Nakano 1970:

147)

I sympathize with you, when I sleep alone, and my heart makes tranquil that night

(D)

Fūyōshū, IX, 623:

After the death of Emperor Ichijō, visiting the First Crown Princess (*Ippon no Miya*) of Emperor Reizei:

Emperor Ichijō's First-Born Imperial Princess (*Onna Ichi no Miya*) from *Tamamo no asobi*

aritote ya hito no tōramu kiehateshi tsuyu mo tomareru kusa no hara ka na

(Nakano 1970:

184)

like a haze fallen on plain of grasses is he still alive, but if I ask somebody, he has passed away

(E)

Fūyōshū, IX, 669:

After the death of the First Imperial Consort (*Ōkisaki*) of Emperor Reizei, seeing the First Crown Princess dressed in black robe, and saying nothing

Regent from *Tamamo no asobi*

kakikurashi ochitsuru namida no fujigoromo kiru hito wakeru iro zo kanashiki

(Nakano 1970:

192)

my eyes clouded with tears dropping down on mourning in color that separates people –
oh! it is sorrowful!

(F)

Fūyōshū, XI, 774:

The Commander-in-Chief of Left Guards' Troop (*Saemon no Kami*) from *Tamamo no asobi*

iwagaki ya numa no mizugomori morashi wabi kokorozukara ya kudakehatenamu

(Nakano 1970:

214)

I worry wholeheartedly over muffled voice of my apology getting out from rocky enclosure and pond

Some remarks about tamamo and tamamo ni asobu mentioned...

(G)

Fūyōshū, XI, 809:

You can hear, she is hidden at the First-Born Imperial Princess of Emperor Ichijō, and today
she won't appear, I guess

Regent from *Tamamo no asobi*

shitamoe ni mi o nomi kogasu waga koi no kemuri ya kyō wa sora ni michinuru

(Nakano 1970:

216)

I long for you, the smoke of my flame today filled the sky

(H)

Fūyōshū, XI, 810:

In response

Poem by Emperor Ichijō

shita ni taku omoi wa taeji kumo no ue ni tachinoborinuru kemuri nari tomo

(Nakano 1970:

216)

smoke of my flame burning all the time raised above clouds

(I)

Fūyōshū, XII, 909:

The hidden woman was said to come tomorrow.

Regent from *Tamamo no asobi*

tokiyaseshi musubiyashikemu shitahimo no midarete koi furu kesa no wabishisa

(Nakano 1970:

232)

You untie, or you tie the under-band being in disorder, but I think of you with love this
morning when I am so lonely

(J)

Fūyōshū, XII, 936:

I saw the Head of the Palace Attendants' Office for the first time during taking service, when
she came today morning.

Regent from *Tamamo no asobi*

koete nochi shizugokoro naki Ōsaka o nakanaka seki no konata nariseba

(Nakano 1970:

235)

If here were after all the barrier of „Encounter Hill”, which I passed across with uneasy
heart

(K)

Fūyōshū, XIII, 964:

Woman, who asked for a date, was this night in other place.

Regent from *Tamamo no asobi*

kyō made mo nagaraemashi ya wasureji to iishi ni kakaru inochi narazuba

(Nakano 1970:

241)

even if I could live today longer I won't forget it, I said, however, such life could not be

(L)

Fūyōshū, XIV, 1021:

When I came to the Palace unaware of attendance of the Head of the Palace Attendants' Office,
I saw written: „I came as I was asked, oh, what a sorrowful night...”

Regent from *Tamamo no asobi*

kuretake no yoso ni taeji to omoishi o ikade munashiki naka to narikemu

(Nakano 1970:

253)

I thought of you with love in that remote place all the time, but our relations seem
somehow to be hollow

(M)

Fūyōshū, XIV, 1022:

After she returned home, she promised some dates. In response to a person who said: “There is
no man pining for the pine growing on the rock”

Similarly Empress Mother of the Crown Princes

Chigiriki to wa ga wasurezu omou to mo iwa ni ouru matsu hito mo araji

(Nakano 1970:

253)

I think I did not forget what I have promised but there is no man pining for the pine
growing on the rock

(N)

Fūyōshū, XV, 1133:

Gifted by a woman

Crown Princess (*Haru no Miya*) from *Tamamo no asobi*

akifukaki hagi no ue fuku kaze no oto no soyonazo kakaru monoomouramu

(Nakano 1970:

272)

sound of a lightly touching wind that is blowing over bush clovers in the depth of autumn –
why does it worry me

It is clearly seen, the title *Tamamo no asobu* in poems is accompanied by names of many persons. That are in (C): Emperor Suzaku; (D): Emperor Ichijō's First-Born Imperial Princess; (F): Commander-in-Chief of Left Guards' Troop; (N): Crown Princess, whereas in poem (A): Great Counselor, and in (B), (E), (G), (I), (J), (K), (L): Regent. Great Counselor and Regent are considered to be the same person, and one of the characters from that story. Presence of so many other persons (Suzakuin, Ichijōin Onna Ichi no Miya, Haru no Miya, Saemon no Kami, et al.), appearing in another existent sources as well, let us suppose the plot of story could be quite extensive.

But does the plot of *Tamamo ni asobu* refer anyhow to the motif of *tamamo* used in numerous early poems? Aside from *Mumyōzōshi*'s passage, also extant poems of Princes Baishi's story-poems-matching contest provide some details about the story of main character, gives, however, no explanation, what a meaning does in it have the phrase *tamamo ni asobu*. Referring to the 72 poem from *Gosenshū*, little grebes playing in a pound among jewel-like waterweeds must have been in a courtship time that is why they bustle and are joyous. It is, perhaps, a poetic representation of emotional relations between the protagonist, Yomogi no Miya, and Regent at the beginning, that after a while become worse disappearing like jewel-like seaweed in water. As we can see in poem (K) by Regent: "I thought of you with love (...), but our relations seem somehow to be hollow", the man regrets he did not meet the woman in expected place. He has fallen in love, but this feeling fades away as if he was losing something precious.

Of course, we cannot say for certain, it is exactly that hidden sense of *tamamo ni asobu* phrase, because the text of present story itself does not exist. There is, however, another possibility explaining an excerption of *tamamo ni asobu* phrase. It might be only an endeavor with the object of a literary fun, which except for the referring to above mentioned poem from *Gosenshū* through the *saibara* song *Ikanisemu*, has no implicit significance.

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