The Practice of Exhaling and Inhaling Air  
— the Magic of *Usobuki* and *Nezunaki* —

TSUNEMITSU, Toru

This paper discusses the practice of facing a certain object and intentionally "exhaling" air, and the practice of "inhaling" air with some kind of intention or other. There are no documents that bring together data relating to the passing down of these practices, and in many cases partial examples can be found in various reports. With the exception of specific themes, research to date has provided little opportunity for focusing on these practices. This paper classifies materials associated with the exhaling and inhaling of air and will bring to light their supernatural elements.

The first chapter examines the practice of exhaling air. When burnt, injured or bitten by a poisonous insect, the practice of reciting a spell and blowing on the site was widely practiced. There is the anticipation that the power of the spell will alleviate the pain and have a healing effect, and it is fair to say that the exhaling is done for the purpose of driving away evil and the impure, as well as for purification. Although there are instances where ghosts are cast out by blowing, in the reverse situation where a person is blown on by a ghost it is believed that the person is in a dangerous situation. In popular ghosts stories there is an established motif of a ghost blowing on and killing a person. The act of pursing one's lips, exhaling with force and whistling is called *usobuki*. Folk beliefs that *usobuki* will cause the wind to rise or will cause bees to escape are also examined.

The second chapter addresses the practice of the inhaling of air. The practice of making a noise while inhaling is called *nezunaki*, and is performed when fishermen catch fish and when female divers dive down into the sea. This is a mystical practice that anticipates an abundant harvest from the sea. The erstwhile practice among prostitutes of performing *nezunaki* when attempting to attract custome- rs is well known. The same practice can also be seen when calling animals.

Whereas the practice of exhaling performs the function of driving evil far away, the practice of inhaling is acknowledged as performing the function of inviting external beings to draw near. The difference between the two coincides with the differences in the way that air is exhaled and inhaled, and the differences between exhaling and inhaling are fundamentally prescribed by the tenor of the significances and functions of their respective traditions.