

Brigitte Steger

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Japanese historic “timescapes”: An anthropological approach¹

Abstract

In this article, I propose a methodology to investigate “timescapes” in Japanese history from an anthropological perspective by analyzing historical sources on social activities, more specifically on sleeping and napping. It provides the methodological basis for a research project on premodern Japanese “timescapes” at the University of Cambridge. Rather than studying the social use of the clock to investigate the extent to which various time structures have penetrated people’s private lives, I approach these questions by paying attention to how sleep and other social activities have been organized on a socio-temporal level; in other words, how people have been “doing time.” I argue that this focus makes abstract notions of time tangible. Issues discussed are time-use priorities, time measurement, appropriateness of performing certain tasks at specific times, regulating time as a tool of power, disciplining bodies through scheduling and early rising, as well as monochronic and polychronic time use.

Keywords: Timescapes, sleep, napping, Japan, Heian period, methodology.

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Sleep and the cult(ure) of “busyness”

In the mid-1990s, I set out to study the social and cultural aspects of sleep in contemporary Japan. My interest in this subject had been aroused by an apparent contradiction that I had observed during my first stay in the country during 1989–90. This was the height of the “bubble economy” when stock and real estate prices soared to stratospheric levels and people worked and played hard with little time to sleep. Many complained: “We Japanese are crazy to work so much!” but in their complaints I detected a sense of pride in being more diligent and therefore morally superior to the rest of humanity. Yet, when I looked more closely, these same people would fall asleep wherever and whenever they had the opportunity – during their commute, in the park, in the library or café, and even in business meetings or lectures at school and university. I felt intrigued and wanted to explore the values of time use and work ethics from the perspective of sleep. If it was frowned upon to go to sleep before midnight and to stay in bed beyond the crack of dawn, why was it acceptable to sleep during class or at work? What did this mean for notions of time and diligence?

When I began my fieldwork, I was often told that the habit of napping was caused by contemporary busy lifestyles: “People are so busy and exhausted that when they get a quiet moment, they cannot help but drop off.” That argument seemed compelling, but what sense did it make to encourage teenagers to stay up at night to study if they were allowed to doze off during class?² When did these habits start and how did they come about? What did people in the past think about daytime sleep? The imperial Heian court in ancient Japan,³ for example, the historically earliest society for which we have sources that give us insight into life from people’s own perspectives, was not known for a culture of “busyness,” so what were their views on napping and time use? Most importantly, I

² I have discussed this question in Steger 2006.

³ During the Heian period (794–1185), named after the capital Heian-kyō (modern-day Kyoto), the country was at peace and the aristocracy considered poetry, music, writing, and indeed all the refined arts to be the height of human accomplishment. Although widely influenced by Chinese culture and its writing system based on Chinese characters, the Japanese also developed a syllabic script which enabled them to express themselves more freely in their own language. This literature, much of it written by court ladies in the form of poems, novels, and diaries, provides us with an insight into the daily life of the nobility beyond the official regulations and chronicles produced in *kanbun* (using Chinese characters).

wanted to make sense of this sleep pattern and understand what such habits and attitudes could tell us about how the Japanese have perceived time and the value they have placed upon it.

By investigating these questions, I have developed a methodological approach to the study of time use and time consciousness in Japanese history, which I will outline in this paper. Unlike Gustav Bilfinger (1892) and Gerhard Dohrn-van Rossum in their seminal works on the history of the hour in Europe in which they sought to “understand the history of the clocks in the social context of their usage” (Dohrn-van Rossum 1995, 23), I will instead use an ethnographic approach and investigate how social activities – or more specifically sleeping and napping – were oriented in time and how they were practiced within wider historical “timescapes”. Borrowing from Cadance West and Don Zimmerman (1987), who have advanced a “new understanding of gender as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday” and have put forward the notion of “doing gender”, I suggest paying close attention to how people have been “doing time” in their everyday lives and what sense they have made of their temporal arrangements. However, since the term “doing time” might be confused with its idiomatic sense of spending time in prison, I will make no further use of it in this article.

Of course, I am not the first to point out that there are “a multiplicity of coexisting temporalities” and that time needs to be understood “as being constructed through interaction and discourse” (Hannken-Illjes 2007, 2, 3). At least since Jacque Le Goff’s seminal work on *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, historians in the tradition of the Annales School such as Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (1980, 277–282) have, for instance, systematically listed the ways in which peasants in the medieval village of Montaillou have talked about time. Norbert Elias (1984) has been interested in how time has been perceived over history, but few historians have systematically applied an anthropological approach as a method to investigate historical timescapes.

The term “timescapes” was first introduced by Barbara Adam:

Where other scapes such as landscapes, cityscapes and seascapes mark the spatial features of past and present activities and interactions of organisms and matter, timescapes emphasize their rhythmicities, their timings and tempos, their changes and contingencies. Through timescapes, contextual temporal practices become tangible. Timescapes are thus the embodiment of practiced approaches to time. (Adam 1998, 11)

In other words, the term “timescapes” refers to the complexities of time structures, regulations, time use, notions of time, and attitudes towards time in everyday life. Like Adam, rather than being guided by existing theoretical approaches to the study of time, I intend to take an emic anthropological approach to understand time as a set of practices from the perspective of the practitioners before comparing the results with existing theories.

Why focus on sleep?

Why choose sleep as the vantage point from which to investigate timescapes? There are both quantitative and qualitative arguments for this choice. According to time-use surveys from all over the world, sleep is the social activity which occupies by far the largest proportion of our time. Thus – although we are not consciously aware of this time – it certainly has great relevance for our lives. Sleep is also an activity that is both social and personal. The characterization of sleepers as being “dead to the world” points to its antisocial potential for shirking duties. The sleeper is not available to fulfill his or her duties or whatever time-use is valued, which is why studying sleep helps us to understand notions of time more generally. In the words of the Methodist preacher John Wesley, we do not only “waste time” during sleep, but “he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, as an epicure” (Wesley 1782, II/11). Viewed in this way, bodies need to be disciplined and controlled through scheduling routines, and the norms and values attached to sleep can point to the meaning of specific time-related virtues such as diligence and early rising (Steger 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008, forthcoming). A focus on sleep also helps us to counterbalance a “diecentric” (day-centered) view of our social world (Steger and Brunt 2003).

It goes without saying that clocks and bells have been used for regulating life, including sleep. However, many aspects of daily life, especially activities such as sleep that are difficult to regulate, do not necessarily follow the temporal orders of the clock. In this article, I will attempt to demonstrate how the study of sleep and other social activities enables us to understand historical timescapes more comprehensively and develop new ways of understanding temporal orders and power relations. Who is regulating social life and for whom? What are the temporal orders and power relations? What methods are used for disciplining bodies? What was meant by punctuality? Was social life organized

monochronically or polychronically?

Of course, studying *one* social activity within the limited framework of a single article is not sufficient to explain the complexity of timescapes or to present final conclusions on the premodern timescapes of Japan. Instead, my intention here is to set out an agenda for a research project at the University of Cambridge titled “Timing day and night: ‘Timescapes’ in premodern Japan”.⁴

Various terms for sleep and naps

In Japanese, various terms are used to describe sleep and naps. In translation, people rarely distinguish between these different forms, however the choice of terms provides an insight into the meaning of sleep. Compounds containing *sui* 睡 or *min* 眠 refer to the physiological aspects of sleep, and the compound *suimin* is a Sino-Japanese loanword that is the formal term for denoting sleep. *Nemu(ri)* (in older texts often read *neburu*) is an alternative Japanese reading of the character *min* and is the everyday term for sleep. In contrast, *ne(ru)* 寝る refers to the action of lying down and only by extension means to sleep; it is also used as a euphemism for sexual activities. *Fu(su)* 臥す also means to lie down, while *fu(su)* 伏す means to lie on one’s front. Both terms were common in the past but are rarely used today.

Similar distinctions in meaning also reveal themselves in terms referring to napping. *Hirune* 昼寝 means literally lying down during the day; similarly *gosui* 午睡, an outdated term, is a nap at the hour of the horse, which is around midday. Other terms emphasize the short, slight nature of the sleep: *kamin* 仮眠, temporary or provisional sleep, is a term often used by medical experts, and *madoromi* 微睡, where the first Chinese character means “minuteness” and “slightness,” is a term that for many people implies wellbeing. *Issui* 一睡, literally “one bit of sleep” is not often used today, but will be discussed later in this article. Other terms emphasize the physical action of lying down rather than the sleep itself. In addition to the previously discussed *hirune*, *utatane* 転寝 refers to taking

⁴ <https://timescapesjapan.wordpress.com>. Also, see Angelika Koch’s contribution to this special issue.

a short nap somewhere other than one's bed, for instance, under the *kotatsu*, a heated table covered by a blanket. *Gorone* ごろ寝, where *gorogoro* is onomatopoeia that expresses the action of rolling, is used to describe lazing about on the tatami floor and occasionally falling asleep.⁵

***Hirune* – napping during the daytime**

So, what can we learn about timescapes by studying references to sleeping and napping in historical texts? And how can we evaluate the view that daytime naps are a consequence of contemporary busy lifestyles? In particular, how was daytime sleep viewed in social groups that were not known for being busy?

In general, premodern Japanese literature, whether diaries, medical or educational literature, chronicles or belle letters, contains relatively few direct references to the subject of sleep; such references that exist are mainly at the margins. One particularly interesting paragraph, however, can be found in *The Pillow Book* by *Sei Shōnagon*, the English translation by Ivan Morris of the *Makura no sōshi*, a collection of personal observations and musings about Heian court life written around 1000 CE by a lady-in-waiting. In the following extract, *Sei Shōnagon* describes one of the things that make her feel depressed:

An elderly couple who have several grown-up children, and who may even have some grandchildren crawling about the house, are taking a nap in the daytime (*hirune*). The children who see them in this state are overcome by a forlorn feeling, and for other people it is all very depressing. (Morris 1970, 43–44)

In his annotation, Morris remarks that there were strong prejudices against taking naps during the daytime among the Heian court nobility. He suggests that as aesthetics was the dominant moral category, taking naps was seen as especially undignified and un-aesthetic for elderly people (cf. also Morris 1969, 297).

This statement is puzzling. Much of what we know about everyday life in the Heian

⁵ The Japanese language lends itself to playful inventions of new words: *terene* テレ寝 (*tere* is short for television) builds on *gorone*, to describe how since the 1960s people have increasingly dozed off while lying in front of the television; *bakusu* 爆睡 *i*, explosive sleep, is a more recent term to describe how people catch up on their sleep at the weekend to recover from exhaustion.

period was written by court ladies, who often had to stay awake at night in attendance on the *tennō* (emperor, see below), during which time they would talk, write, and recite poems. So why would they not have been allowed to take a nap during the day? In addition, women and men at court are overwhelmingly portrayed in classical literature as suffering from boredom or idleness (*tsurezure*) rather than a heavy workload. In such a context, why would the repression of daytime sleep have developed into a moral duty? Can this passage be explained in any other way?

Did the word *hirune* perhaps have an alternative meaning? The twenty-volume dictionary *Nihon kokugo daijiten* does not list any (Nihon Daijiten 1993, 11/205). Was there perhaps a particular sleep taboo for older people? Sometimes complaints are voiced with regard to older people falling asleep in the middle of a conversation, but criticism is usually directed at their loud snoring and is made regardless of the time of day or night (cf. Formanek 1994, 131–33). Or could the negative attitude towards midday naps be explained by a difference in the understanding of time during the Heian period with *hiru* (day) referring to a different time than it does today?

Investigating the sources more closely reveals that the habit of sleeping during the day was widespread and occurred as a matter of course. As Morris himself writes, sleeping and eating times (apart from official banquets) were not dealt with at all rigidly in Heian times (Morris 1969, 161). An analysis of other passages in which the word *hirune* is used reveals an additional meaning to sleep during the daytime: in many texts it clearly refers to sex.

One such usage of the word *hirune* can be found in the chapter *Hotaru* (“glow worms”, or “firefly”) from *The Tale of Genji* by the court lady Murasaki Shikibu, in which Prince Genji and his wife⁶ Murasaki discuss *The Tale of Kumano* while looking for appropriate reading material for their young adopted daughter, Akashi. In Royall Tyler’s translation, the relevant passage reads as follows:

“What a beautifully done picture!” she [Murasaki] said, examining one from *The*

⁶ The term “wife” is not to be understood in the sense of a modern nuclear family. There was no legal or religious wedding ceremony or family registration system, only various domestic rites with boys often taken into the household of their “wife” during their early teenage years. Men were permitted to have more than one “wife,” but usually cohabited only with the first, visiting others mainly at night; the children of the principal wife had higher rank than those of other women. Both parties could divorce and find a new partner (McCullough 2008, 134–142).

Tale of Kumano. The little girl, napping [*hirune*] there so sweetly, reminded her of herself all those years ago. “How knowing they are, even such little children! I myself was so impossibly slow—I should have been famous for it!” Genji remarked. Famous, yes he certainly should have been, for his rare collection of wanton adventures. “Please do not read our young lady naughty tales like that,” he said. “Not that a heroine secretly in love is likely to catch her interest, but she must not come to take it for granted that things like that really happen.” (Tyler 2001, 462; Murasaki Shikibu 1994b, 440–4; cf. Benl 1966, 729)

The Tale of Kumano has long been lost, so we have no way of reconstructing the picture discussed, but Tyler’s description of a little girl who is “napping there so sweetly” does not make sense in the light of Genji’s comments about “how knowing” such little children were and that one should not read “naughty tales” to his adopted daughter. The passage only makes sense if *hirune* is interpreted as sexual activity: the expression *nanigokoro mo nakute*, which Tyler translates as “so sweetly,” has an alternative meaning as “a state of undivided attention,” and *yonaretaru monogatari*, translated as “naughty tales,” usually refers to erotic stories. Hence, it is more sensible to conclude that Murasaki and Genji are discussing an illustration in an erotic story in which a young girl partakes in sexual activity; this is also the interpretation of the Japanese editors of the original text of the *Tales of Genji* (footnote 19, Murasaki Shikibu 1994b, 441). Furthermore, the passage ends with the comment: “The lady in the west wing would have been outraged to hear him talk that way” (Tyler 2001, 462). This clearly alludes to an earlier event, described in Chapter 5, “Waka Murasaki” (Young Murasaki), in which Genji, who was then eighteen years old, abused his position of power as an older mentor and father figure by forcing a sexual relationship on the orphan Murasaki when she was only nine or ten years old, much to the distress of the young girl and against the strong but futile protests of her female attendant, who repeatedly insisted that Murasaki was too young (Tyler 2001, 101–02).

Thus, we can conclude that in Heian court society daytime napping was not necessarily frowned upon and that criticism of *hirune* in the passage of the *Pillow Book* cited above was not a comment on sleep behavior. What Sei Shōnagon abhors is that an “elderly couple” (possibly in their forties) were sexually active during the day. Such criticism is not uncommon in literature of the period. The elderly and lascivious lady-in-waiting, Gen no Naishi, is a figure of fun in the *Tale of Genji* (“Momiji no ga,” An autumn excursion) for her attempts to seduce courtiers despite her old age: she was 57 or 58 when she had an affair with the then 19-year old Genji. This suggests a disapproval of sexuality in old

age, and a distaste for the way old people look during or after sexual activity (Gatten 1986). According to Japanologist Susanne Formanek, sexuality as such for older people was not necessarily scorned, but old age was largely defined through the inability to procreate and sexual unattractiveness (Formanek 1994, 390). In a different chapter of the *Pillow Book*, Sei Shōnagon makes clear that what distresses her about elderly and unattractive couples having sex during the day is seeing them in their untidy and disordered state (McKinney 2006, 117).

Regardless of whether *hirune* refers to sex or indeed to sleep as it does in other sources, the term suggests a notion of an appropriate time for certain activities that was applicable either to everyone or to a certain category of people – for example, elderly people were not supposed to have sex in the daytime, at least in Sei Shōnagon’s opinion. To put it another way, there appears to be a qualitative difference in the meaning attached to certain social activities depending on the time at which they were conducted as well as the age of the people concerned.

The appropriate time for sleep

Day and night is the most obvious distinction when thinking about the (appropriate) timing for sleep and other activities, but the more specific hours of the day and night also had certain characteristics associated with them. As described in the introduction to this collection, in ancient Japan, the twelve Chinese zodiacs (rat; cow/ox; tiger; rabbit; dragon; snake; horse; sheep/goat; monkey; rooster/bird; dog; pig/boar) were used to name the twelve units of day and night, to which I refer as “dragon hours.” One dragon hour was about two hours in length (cf. Steger 2016); they were assigned certain qualities and formed part of a complicated calendar system that was used to regulate official functions. This calendar needed to be consulted even for mundane activities such as washing one’s hair or cutting one’s finger nails (Morris 1969, 136–143). Thus hours – and time more generally – clearly had both quantitative and qualitative aspects.

Members of the court were aware of the dragon hours during both day and night. These were observed and calculated by the astronomer-astrologists in the so-called Yin-Yang Office of the government administration and announced at court in various ways, as Sei

Shōnagon explains in her *Pillow Book*:

Time announcement is quite intriguing: In the middle of the cold night, one hears sounds: the click-clack of shuffling shoes, an arrow whistles through the air, from far away a voice is raised, “Guard so-and-so; present time is the third *toki*⁷ of the hour of the ox [2 am]”, or “the fourth *toki* of the hour of the rat [0:30 am]” or the like, and also the sound when the time card is changed; it is really funny. In contrast to this, people who are new at court [from the provinces] say “rat, nine” or “ox, eight” and the like. Of any hour they seem to present only the card of the fourth *toki*. (Sei Shōnagon 1977, 217, Chapter 272; cf. McKinney 2006, 232, Chapter 271)

The characteristics attributed to the dragon hours do not appear to have held any particular relevance for sleep at court.⁸ There is little evidence of the dragon-time system being used for scheduling and regulating sleep at court with the likely exception of the *tennō*. In the following scene from of the *Pillow Book*, Sei Shōnagon provides an impression of the ambivalence of the regulation of sleep time at the Heian court:

One day, the grand chancellor Korechika paid a visit to the *tennō* and they recited poems. As always, it grew late in the night and the court ladies retired alone or in pairs to lie down (*fusu*) hiding behind their parasols and curtains. I was the only one who suppressed sleep (*neburu*) and kept vigil as the night guard announced the fourth *toki* of the hour of the ox.⁹ I said as if to myself: “It is daybreak,” whereby the grand chancellor remarked to the *tennō*: “There is certainly no longer any reason to withdraw to sleep (*ōtonogomori*).” He thus did not find it proper to sleep (*neru*). “Oh dear, whatever made me say that?” If others would have been around I could have sneaked out and got some rest (*fusu*). The *tennō* sat leaning against the pillar dozing (*neburu*). The grand chancellor remarked to the empress: “Look! How can he simply sleep, although it is already daybreak?!” “Yes, indeed,” she said, bursting into laughter, but the emperor dozed on, oblivious of the situation (Sei Shōnagon 1977, 246–47, Chapter 293; cf. McKinney 2006, 245 [No. 292]; cf. Morris 1970, 249 [No. 167]).

Ōtonogomori is a polite term referring to the sleep of the *tennō* and of other people at court of higher rank than oneself. More literally, it expresses that someone withdraws to a curtained bed. It implies that the emperor withdrew during the night from his duties as

⁷ Each dragon hour was divided into four *toki* of half an hour each.

⁸ In the popular literature of later periods, it was believed that ghosts appeared during the hour of the ox (1–3am), so it was wise not to go about during that time (cf. Großmann and Kinski 2012); however, I have not come across any references to this belief in Heian court literature.

⁹ As illustrated here, “daybreak” was considered to be at the forth *toki* of the hour of the ox, i.e. 2:30 to 3am. However, this has changed throughout history, becoming considerably later in more recent centuries (Koyama 2016, 42; Steger forthcoming).

a sovereign, while the ladies-in-waiting formally represented his rule.¹⁰ The grand chancellor's comment indicates that it was no longer appropriate to withdraw after daybreak. The crucial issue – at least in the case of the *tennō* – seems to be the withdrawal from duties. The attitude towards actual sleep behavior is more ambivalent. The wife and brother-in-law of the *tennō* laugh about him dozing off leaning against a pillar. He clearly is supposed to be up at daybreak, but there is no severe criticism about his dozing, which he does sitting up. The court ladies lie down when they are tired, even while on night duty, only separated from view by curtains, although one stays awake. They return to their own quarters to sleep after their official duty ends at daybreak, and there appears to have been little censure of sleeping during the day (cf. Steger forthcoming).

What does this say about regulation of time through the official time order and clock? Norbert Elias argues that common time indicators “serve people as means of orientation in coordinated social and natural processes. They often serve at the same time as a means of regulating behavior in the sense of adapting to each other” (Elias 1997, VIII). How far did the temporal order of the dragon-time system at court reach? In terms of sleep, it appears that the person most directly subject to this temporal order was the center of power, the *tennō* himself. Others had to adjust to his schedule when on duty, but there appear to have been limits to the extent that daily life was regulated by the central authorities. Paying attention to sleep behavior rather than to the clock reveals not only which activities and to what extent they were regulated by the clock, but also helps us understand what clock time meant in reality and how such rules were interpreted.

Monastic time and sleep regulation

One context in which sleep time was more strictly regulated, however, was in Buddhist temples and monasteries. The monastic rules of Genshin (942–1017), an influential Buddhist scholar of the Tendai school, state that:

You shall sleep during the hour of the wild boar, the rat, and the tiger; outside of these times, you shall not sleep. (Kurokawa 1977a, 463)¹¹

¹⁰ I argue that it was the role of the ladies-in-waiting to represent the waking consciousness of the *tennō* and discuss why this was necessary in Steger 2004, 361–373; Steger forthcoming.

¹¹ The rules are no longer preserved in the original and are available only in the medieval encyclopedia *Shūgaishō*. Thus we cannot be sure of the exact wording of the original text.

This rule limits sleep time to six hours per night and establishes a certain sleeping and waking rhythm. The hour of the wild boar or pig (9–11 pm) and the hour of the rat (11 pm–1 am) follow directly on from one another. Afterwards, during the hour of the ox, the monks are required to get up and chant, meditate, or attend ceremonies before sleeping again during the hour of the tiger (3–5 am). In the case of the temples and monasteries, any specific qualities associated with the hours was obviously not the motivation for the rules; the primary concern in the monastic organization of time was to regulate and synchronize the activities of the monks. In the chapter “Bendōhō” (The model for engaging the way) of the *Eihei Shingi*, Dōgen (1200–1253), the founder of the Sōtō Zen school of Buddhism, gives the following direction:

Therefore, when the assembly is sitting, sit together with them; as the assembly [gradually] lies down, lie down also. In activity and stillness at one with the community, throughout deaths and rebirths do not separate from the monastery (Andō 1978, 99; Leighton 1996, 63).

Thus, the coordination of the daily routine within the monastic community was more important than the observation of “objective” time. It was necessary for structuring the life of a close community in which daily work was not dependent on sunlight and therefore did not require a “natural” routine. Like their Christian counterparts, Buddhist temples and monasteries observed (and still observe) liturgical prayer routines throughout the day and night (cf. Pas 1986–87; Steger forthcoming). As in Christian monasteries (Wittmer-Butsch 1990, 41–48; Dohrn-van Rossum 1995, 58–66; cf. Le Goff 1980), the main goal of curtailing sleep time and creating a daily rhythm was the creation of a community and the imposition of self-discipline on its members. Time measurement was thus important and announced by bells, but it was less important that the time was aligned with the stars or with other temples and monasteries. Again, Elias’ observations are relevant here: the temples and monasteries regulated sleep in order to regulate the behavior of monks and nuns. There is a clear disciplining purpose of the sleep regime by forcing people to get up at a certain time, often before sleep would naturally come to an end.

When we try to understand the extent of the influence of the temporal orders imposed by the court administration and the monasteries, it seems clear that the latter had the greater influence on the lives of people outside of their immediate environment. Because time was announced by temple bells, ordinary people living nearby were also aware of the

time. I was able to find one source in the *Manyōshū*, compiled in the eighth century and the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry, which illustrates the relevance of such bells for timing sleep. Nothing is known about the author Kasa no Iratsume, but as most of her poems are love poems, she is unlikely to have been a Buddhist nun living in a convent.

<i>Mina hito o</i>	The bell tolls
<i>neyo to no kane wa</i>	to call everyone
<i>utsunaredo</i>	to sleep;
<i>kimi o shimoeba</i>	yet when I think of you
<i>inekatenu kamo</i>	I find no rest.

(Takagi et al. 1957, 277; author's translation)

In the opinion of editors of the *Manyōshū* (without providing references) the bell mentioned here is the evening bell of a temple, which would have been struck at approximately 10 pm. This coincides with the bedtime advocated by Genshin quoted above and also appears as the most common bedtime in the literature of later centuries (cf. Steger forthcoming).

The rooster's crow

The dragon hours at court were measured by water clocks and by astronomical observation of the stars; the temples mainly used incense clocks (cf. Steger 2016; see also Koch in this volume). However, as a signal for the end of the night, the “first rooster's crow” (*keimei*) appears to have been of greater significance. In antiquity, the “first rooster's crow” (*keimei*) in the morning was not merely a metaphor for the beginning of the day. It was believed that *kami* (Shinto gods and goddesses) were present at night and would ascend to heaven before dawn; because it announced their departure, the rooster's crow was seen as signaling the end of the night – independent of any objectively determined hour (Tsuji 1978, 339).

In the Heian period, a man would often visit his non-cohabiting lover or wife at night but was expected to leave and return home at the first rooster's crow, after which he would

show his appreciation by composing a poem and sending it by a messenger. The lady would then send a poem in reply. She might express her sadness that daybreak had come so early, or accuse her lover of imitating the rooster's crow in order to leave early (thereby complaining about his lack of affection), or she might even condemn the rooster that had chased her suitor away, as in the following poem by a girl from the provinces in the ninth-century *Tales of Ise*:

*Yo mo akeba
kitsu ni hamenade
kutakake no
madaki ni nakite
sena o yaritsuru*

When daybreak arrives,
I'll toss him into the cistern—
that pesky rooster
who raises his voice too soon
and drives my lover away
(quoted in McCullough 1990, 45–46)

There are numerous such poems in the literature of the period. They should be seen as a genre with specific rules, images, and season words for expressing appreciation and love, rather than accurate descriptions of real situations. Nevertheless, it is evident that there was a strict rule in place for lovers to separate at dawn. Encountering a man in the early dawn was synonymous with catching him in the act of a – perhaps clandestine – affair.¹² Consequently the first rooster's crow at dawn is the time indicator that appears most frequently in classical literature. It was largely unrelated to sleep, however, as both men and women could go back to bed afterwards.

Other types of literature in other periods, however, are quite explicit in their demand for “early rising” (*hayaoki*). This has been one of the most important time-related virtues throughout Japanese history, reflecting the influence of both Confucian and Buddhist teachings. The *Nihon shoki* (the second official chronicle of the history of Japan, completed in 720), for instance, demands that ministers and functionaries begin their administrative duties at sunrise and that latecomers be barred from entering the administrative precincts (Ujitani 1993, 181). This passage, which indirectly serves to regulate sleep time, is the earliest Japanese source that uses animal signs of the zodiac to indicate an hour. It can also be viewed as the earliest indication of a demand (and training)

¹² One example can be found in Chapter 38 of the *Genji monogatari*, “Yūgiri” (Evening mist); Murasaki Shikibu 1994a, 398–99; Benl 1996, 273.

for punctuality. In contrast to this demand for early rising, there have been few corresponding calls for going to bed early (*yoine*);¹³ instead, staying up late – or getting up at night – for work or study has been widely considered a virtue.

When we consider that sleepers are mentally and physically withdrawn from their social duties, the emphasis on early rising in moral teaching is not surprising. The benefits of early rising were argued in many ways, but the main purpose was that people learn to overcome their inclination towards laziness and discipline their bodies in order to be willing and able to fulfill their duties.¹⁴

Although scholars argue that the notion of punctuality was only introduced from the West in the late nineteenth century (Nishimoto 1997, 2002; Nagai 1993; Kinmonth 1981, 9–43), the example from the *Nihon shoki* illustrates that the demand to pay attention to time and to be on time existed more than one thousand years ago. Such punctuality was not only demanded of government officials but also of lovers in their response to the rooster's crow. However, by paying attention to how people dealt with such rules, we can gain greater understanding of the meaning of punctuality. For example, the rule that lovers had to separate immediately after the first rooster's crow appears to have been strictly observed but the rooster itself could be manipulated. There are anecdotes that describe people imitating the rooster's crow, pouring hot water into bamboo pipes to wake the rooster prematurely, and lovers giving *sake* (rice wine) to the bird to make him oversleep, thus extending their time together (cf. Steger 2016, 77).

Napping after a meal

Returning to the subject of daytime sleep, it is interesting to investigate Japanese medical texts written several centuries after the Heian period. Imaōji Dōsan (1577–1626), the physician to the second Tokugawa shogun Hidetada, explains in *Dōsan-ō yōjō monogatari* (The story of nurturing life by the aged Dōsan) the precautionary measures that need to be taken before a midday nap. He then concludes:

¹³ *Yoi* is the word for dusk or early evening; today, the more commonly used term is *hayane*, lit. early sleeping.

¹⁴ For details on early rising, see Steger (2008). See also Katja Schmidpott (2015) on the significance of early rising in the campaigns for the promotion of time consciousness by the Japanese government in the 1920s.

Previously, I explained that it is poison for us Japanese to take a midday nap (*hirune*), but if one lies on a grass mat (*kusafusu*) in order to rest for a while, then it is fine to sleep for a bit (*issui*). For the Japanese, in order to have a sharp mind, they would be better off not sleeping (*nenu hodo yoshi*). One keeps hawks awake (*nesasenunari*; lit. not letting them lie down/sleep) so that their minds will be sharp.

(Quoted from the 1832 edition; Kurokawa 1977b, 10)

Dōsan clearly distinguishes between *ne(ru)*, *hirune* and *kusafusu* on the one hand and *issui* on the other. The former emphasize the action of lying down and only by implication mean sleep, whereas the latter refers to a short amount of sleep. In other words, a short shut-eye after the meal might well be beneficial when tired, but having a proper lie-down during the day produces lethargy. As such, the moral argument is that people should be active and energetic during the day.¹⁵ Again, there is a clear distinction between a formal nap and an informal doze.

Issui

While the term *issui* was thus used to indicate a short nap that could in some cases promote wellbeing, the etymology of the word tells yet a different story about time. The second character *sui* was originally written with the Chinese character for boiling rice 炊 and not the character for sleep 睡. The source is a Chinese story, *The World Inside a Pillow* by Shen Jiji from the second half of the eighth century, in which an impoverished young man called Lu or – in Japanese – Rosei falls asleep during the day and dreams that he achieves great worldly success. On awakening, it seems to him that many years have passed and he has become an old man, but in fact the chestnut rice in the inn where he fell asleep has only just been cooked.¹⁶ The story has been popular in Japan since the Heian period; it was told to illustrate the ups and downs of worldly success, and *issui no yume* (lit. the dream of the rice-cooking time) became a well-known phrase to express the fleeting nature of worldly success. In Japan, the character for *sui* changed from boiling rice to sleep around the late sixteenth century,¹⁷ and subsequently the term came to refer to the short nap itself rather than to a given length of time.

¹⁵ This advice appears to concur with the conclusions of modern science: A short power nap can be very beneficial, but napping for more than twenty minutes can lead to sleep inertia and thus produce the opposite effect (cf. Inoue 1996).

¹⁶ <http://kobun.weblio.jp/content/一炊の夢> (accessed 14 July 2016).

¹⁷ Based on an analysis of the literature collections available in the database Japan Knowledge Plus.

Issui is an example of how a social activity can become a commonly understood unit of time. Cooking rice is an everyday activity and the time unit is therefore easy to understand.¹⁸ This was then used to measure the length of another social activity, namely sleep. Other common activities, such as reading a certain sutra or fulfilling a specific task, have also been used in the past as time indicators. Thus in daily life, the scheduling of activities is not only governed by the various clocks and official time indicators of the authorities or by animal sounds and other signals in nature, but also arranged in relation to other social activities (cf. Bourdieu 1990, 200). People used the reference to the task as a means to establish a unit of time. This was not for lack of a time system or of means to measure and announce time, but because people found it more practicable.

The fact that people may have used time units derived from social activities as freely as they paid attention to various types of clocks illustrates that there were limits to the extent that daily life was regulated by the central authorities. People seem to have used a plethora of different types of time signals to coordinate their lives. Thus, a methodological approach restricted to the clock and its social use omits a wide range of potential time indicators that shed light on historical timescapes. A thorough study of the temporalities of a range of social activities is therefore required to enable us to build up a more complete picture; this will be the agenda for our research project.

Unintentional naps

Let us return to the imperial court. A poem in the *Ben no naishi nikki*, the diary of a lady-in-waiting at the court of the child *tennō* Go Fukakusa (term of office 1246–1259), provides us with a glimpse of life after the sun has set. In her diary, she writes about a banquet held at night by the newly appointed grand chancellor Koga. Koga asks: “Is it still late at night or is it already the hour of the ox?” The witty reply by the court lady is in the form of a poem:

¹⁸ Thompson (1967, 58) also mentions the use of “rice-cooking time” (about half an hour) in Madagascar. Interestingly, the exact timing of rice cooking became a matter of concern for household efficiency in the early twentieth century in Japan, and the first issue of the popular magazine *Fujin no tomo* (The lady’s companion, 1908) featured a detailed discussion of this subject (Itō 2002, 135–137).

*Utatane ni
neyasugi namashi
sayonaka no
ushi no kuhi tomo
sashite shirazu wa*

(Ben no Naishi 1966, 52)

You do not seem aware
that time has advanced
to the Ox card¹⁹—
I wonder if you did not doze
through the Hour of the Rat?

(Hulvey 1989, 369)

The poem contains a play on words: *ne (ya) sugi* can be understood as both, “the hour of the rat (11pm–1am) has already passed,” or “perhaps you have overslept” (*ne* meaning not only sleep, but also rat). The court lady thus suspected the grand chancellor of dozing off either during or after the banquet, so that he did not realize it was already the hour of the ox (1–3 am). Rather than deliberately taking a nap, he obviously nodded off for longer than he intended.

What can we learn about time from this anecdote? Firstly, the story shows that some formal banquets were scheduled in the middle of the night. The scheduling of social activities needs to be explored in greater detail, but this example clearly contradicts the conventional wisdom that our ancestors went to bed when it was dark and got up “naturally” with the sun. Secondly, it indicates that a man who dozed off during a formal meal or at another inappropriate time at court might well become the target of a well-meaning joke but does not appear to have been severely criticized, as also shown by the example of the *tennō* quoted above. Informal transgressions of rules are noted, but hardly provoke negative consequences. The significance of this becomes clear when contrasted with legends surrounding King Arthur’s court (5th–6th century Britain) in medieval German literature, in which sleep was subject to courtly etiquette as much as any other area of life. To lie down and sleep in the great hall among the courtly society of knights and ladies was considered rude and dishonorable. Courtly etiquette dictated that those who wished to sleep had to ask the king or the lord of the castle for leave in a formal manner, in order to avoid being exposed to frowns and ridicule (Klug 2008, 39–40).

¹⁹ As mentioned previously, the dragon hours were displayed at court on cards in the inner garden of the palace.

Inemuri

This leads us back to our opening question about dozing off wherever and whenever there is the opportunity and whether this is a consequence of contemporary busy lifestyles. From the examples we have discussed, it is clear that the habit of taking naps has been common in the past regardless of lifestyle. At this point, I would like to introduce yet another term for napping: *inemuri* 居眠り. This term is written with the Chinese characters for “being present” and for “sleep”. Thus, the characteristic of this form of napping – unlike the other daytime and night-time forms of sleep discussed previously – is that this sleep takes place while one is officially doing something else and usually in the company of others. In historic sources, we find several terms for such naps, such as *uchineburi* to describe Prince Genji dozing off in the middle of a conversation with his friends (Murasaki Shikibu 1994a, 26; Tyler 2001, 26). However, these terms are no longer in common use and I will use the term *inemuri* here to describe dozing in a social situation that is not meant for sleep.

As in the cases of the grand chancellor at the banquet and of Genji with his friends, court society seems to have reacted by teasing or sometimes with annoyance if *inemuri* occurred at an inappropriate time, but there are no indications that it was considered a violation of etiquette. In fact, a discussion of *inemuri* is suspiciously absent from premodern moral and educational literature, not only in the case of court society but for all social classes throughout the centuries. One of the rare references to *inemuri* is by the neo-Confucian scholar Ogyū Sorai, who in 1715 criticizes a popular new lecture style which he finds unsuitable for the training of serious scholars:

The lecturer cultivates a well-modulated voice to charm the ears of his listeners. The worst of them mix in a few funny stories to wake up sleepers in the audience, and some mercenary ones stop not far short of suggesting an increase in their fees. It is a practice which degrades the teacher’s character and corrupts the student’s intellect. (Preface of *Yakubun sentei shohen* (“A recommendation on translation,” 1715); quoted from Dore 1965, 140)

Here, it is the teacher who is so entertaining that he keeps students awake rather than the student practicing *inemuri* who is reprimanded. Studying is supposed to be tedious and hard. That is why young men have to get up at night and strain their eyes over their books. Dozing off during lectures as a result of this seems to have been taken for granted by

mainstream scholars and not considered worthy of discussion.²⁰ A similar attitude towards *inemuri* becomes evident from picture scrolls of the fourteenth century in which guards on night-watch (both men and women, and usually not the main subject of the illustration) are pictured sitting on the veranda of a house, clearly dozing off (Komatsu 1988, 18–19; Komatsu 1991, 6, cover).

More often than not, pictures and anecdotes of those engaging in *inemuri* are humorous in nature. According to a medieval legend (*setsuwa*), the monk Chiunbō from Kōfuku-ji, a temple in Nara, was constantly falling asleep and was therefore dubbed “*neburi no shōshin*” (the righteous believer in sleep). He joined in a song during prayers without realizing that he had fallen asleep and that the song was entirely inappropriate. Another time he singed an expensive piece of clothing that he had hung over the fire because he had fallen asleep while waiting for it to dry (Mujū Ichien 1928, 338–39; 2001, 407). Other anecdotes and pictures show that it was common to play a joke on someone who had inadvertently fallen asleep so that they find themselves in an embarrassing situation when they awake (cf. Osumi et al. 2001, 15, 140–41).

I suggest that these examples show that we should not regard *inemuri* as an unintended negative consequence of an exhausting lifestyle, but a form of sleep that historically has been taken for granted as an integral part of sleep organization. People nod off to sleep when they feel like it and have an opportunity to do so. However, we need to pay attention to the fact that the person indulging in *inemuri* is not completely “dead to the world”, but makes use of an informal way of being mentally absent while formally following rules of engagement. In other words, the specific characteristic of *inemuri* is that it is sleep as a polychronic activity.

The anthropologist Edward T. Hall differentiates between monochronically and polychronically organized societies. Monochronic time or “clock-time” is the way that industrial societies organize time; it is orientated towards schedules and processes. Each task is fulfilled at the respective time slot intended for it. This creates the need for punctuality, since failure to comply with schedules leads to idle and unproductive time; in this context, time has a value and can be wasted. People in polychronic societies, however, orient themselves more toward relationships and events. They undertake several

²⁰ This attitude still influences school teaching (and napping) today (cf. Steger 2006).

things simultaneously and interrupt them as the situation demands; it is not essential to follow time schedules precisely, as there are no gaps in the flow of activities (Hall 1983, 44–58). Revisiting the discussion on sleep in this article, it is evident that in premodern Japanese society monochronic and polychronic time-use coexisted and that there has been a continuum of temporal arrangements of activities, rather than a dichotomy, in people’s everyday lives. Indeed, considering Japanese sources in depth, it is difficult to see how any society or social group could be organized in an exclusively polychronic or monochronic way.

As a heuristic device, however, the distinction between monochronic and polychronic time is useful. Sociologist Barry Schwartz observes that “social coexistence would cease to be gratifying—or even bearable—if [people] could not regularly renounce their consciousness of it” and that every social organization “exhibits structural features which both guarantee the regular performance of duties and ensure release from such performances” (Schwartz 1973, 18–19). Considering the evidence on sleep behavior, we can conclude that there are two main ways in which social activities, including sleep and rest, are organized and guaranteed by society. Firstly, society sets aside certain places and times for specific activities according to a monochronic use of time. The more rigorously sleep is prohibited in public life, the greater the need for clearly defined, protected sites and times reserved for sleeping in private. Secondly, sleep may be guaranteed by accepting that various social activities may be carried out simultaneously with it i.e., a polychronic organization of sleep in everyday life, as in the case of *inemuri*. In premodern Japan, we find examples of both types of temporal organization of sleep. Whereas there is clearly a notion of doing the appropriate thing at the right time, we also see examples of polychronicity, which allows a greater degree of flexibility in one’s use of time.

Further research is required to understand the complexity of timescapes and to investigate which activities are organized monochronically and which polychronically. We need to ask how this organization of time has changed during the course of history and consider the implications. By describing and evaluating the various timescapes in premodern Japan in our research project we endeavor to correct and enrich the standard narrative of the transmission of European time-keeping and time-ordering practices as a one-way process from West to East.

Conclusions

While the original intent of my study was to understand sleep, particularly the values related to the timing of sleep, it has served the additional purpose of developing a methodological approach to studying historical timescapes. In this article I have argued that the historic study of the notions and practices of time through observing social activities enables us to understand a variety of issues that would not be obvious through the investigation of the social use of clocks. In fact, “clock-time” is only one aspect of the timescapes of everyday life. In particular, we have seen that there are not only formal rules related to temporal structures and notions of daily life, but also ways of informally responding to these rules without transgressing them.

Paying attention to social activities from an emic perspective, especially those parts of daily life that tend not to be the focus of regulation by the governing authorities, helps us to understand the historic development of time use and the temporal organization of daily – and nightly – life, as well as notions and values related to time. In this article I have focused on sleep to discuss issues such as time-use priorities, the appropriateness of performing certain tasks at specific times, regulating time as a tool of power, disciplining bodies through scheduling and early rising, punctuality, and the difference between monochronic and polychronic time use.

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