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# TAISHŌ PERIOD DIVINATION AS TSUNEKO KONDŌ KAWASE'S PERSONAL ITEM

Klara Hrvatin

## Introduction

Tsuneko Kondō Kawase (近藤常子, 1893–1963) was a Japanese woman who lived in Slovenia from the 1920s onwards. She was a key figure in cultural exchange and the first important promoter of Japanese culture and language in the country, leading a life that could be described as a “roller coaster.” Research into her photographs and other documents reveals that her life shows great shifts and changes, especially in the years before she came to Slovenia. Born in the Japanese prefecture of Gifu, she later lived in Kwantung, China,<sup>1</sup> and subsequently moved to north-east China, where she met Austro-Hungarian naval officer Ivan Skušek (1877–1947) in Beijing, with whom she came to Slovenia. From her first marriage to German official Paul Heinrich Schmidt, she had two children: Matthias Schmidt (1912–1933) and Erika Schmidt (1914–1958). Her efforts to promote Japanese culture, as well as the largest Chinese collection in Slovenia today<sup>2</sup>—which she

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<sup>1</sup> This is evident from the photographic material from the archive at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum. There are two photos showing Tsuneko Kondō Kawase with her mother and father, and one with just her mother, both with the name of a photo studio in Kwantung. From this, we can conclude that she lived there in her early youth, between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, regarding the supposed age in the photo.

<sup>2</sup> For the insight into the original scope of the Skušek Collection, see Tina Berdajs, “Retracing the Footsteps: Analysis of the Skušek Collection,” *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 141–66, <https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2021.9.3.141-166>, and Ralf Čeplak Mencin, *V deželi nebesnega zmaja (350 let stikov s Kitajsko)* (Ljubljana: cf., Zbirka Varia, 2012).

and Ivan brought from China—began mainly in the period after her church wedding, when she received all Christian sacraments in 1927 and also adopted her Slovenian name, Marija Skušek.<sup>3</sup>

The archive recently rediscovered at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum contains various documents that Tsuneko Kondō Kawase kept, collected, or considered important. Notable among them are her lecture manuscripts in German and Slovenian,<sup>4</sup> newspaper clippings about her activities in Slovenia—including lectures she gave in Slovenia, in the former Yugoslavia, Austria and elsewhere between 1920 and 1930—which she collected herself, etc.<sup>5</sup> All the objects provide insights into her and her interests, how she portrayed Japan, and her visions, knowledge and convictions at the time. As her “biographical objects,”<sup>6</sup> they can shed light on her life’s journey, which is still largely unexplored and unknown.

This article focuses on one such object: a sheet of rice paper with a thicker strip of paper woven through two holes to form a knot on the back, with calligraphic inscriptions, the large headings standing out from the main text, and a large red stamp extending across the joint covering the sides of the paper (see Figures 1 and 2).

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<sup>3</sup> For her activities after she came to Slovenia, see Klara Hrvatin, “The First ‘Mrs Japanese’ of Slovenia, Between the Two World Wars: Marija Skušek and Her Series of Lectures on Japanese Women,” *Asian Studies* 9, no. 3 (2021): 169–97, <https://doi.org/10.4312/as.2021.9.3.169-197>.

<sup>4</sup> For details, see Hrvatin, “The First ‘Mrs. Japanese’ of Slovenia Between the Two World Wars,” 169–97.

<sup>5</sup> Interesting are, for example, photos from various press photography agencies showing the life, culture and customs in Japan (be it from the photo agency Scherl Bilderdienst, Japan Press Illustrating Service from 1926, Pacific & Atlantic Photos Berlin, or Slavia Press Belgrade). Also of interest is a small booklet measuring 13 by 19 centimeters, titled *The Primary School Songbook* (小学唱歌集, Shōgaku shōka shū) from 1883 (second edition), compiled by the Music Investigation Committee of the Japanese Ministry of Education, which represents the first music notation system in Japanese music textbooks and was used for school lessons from 1881.

<sup>6</sup> Janet Hoskins, “Agency, Biography and Objects,” in *Handbook of Material Culture*, 74–84 (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2006).

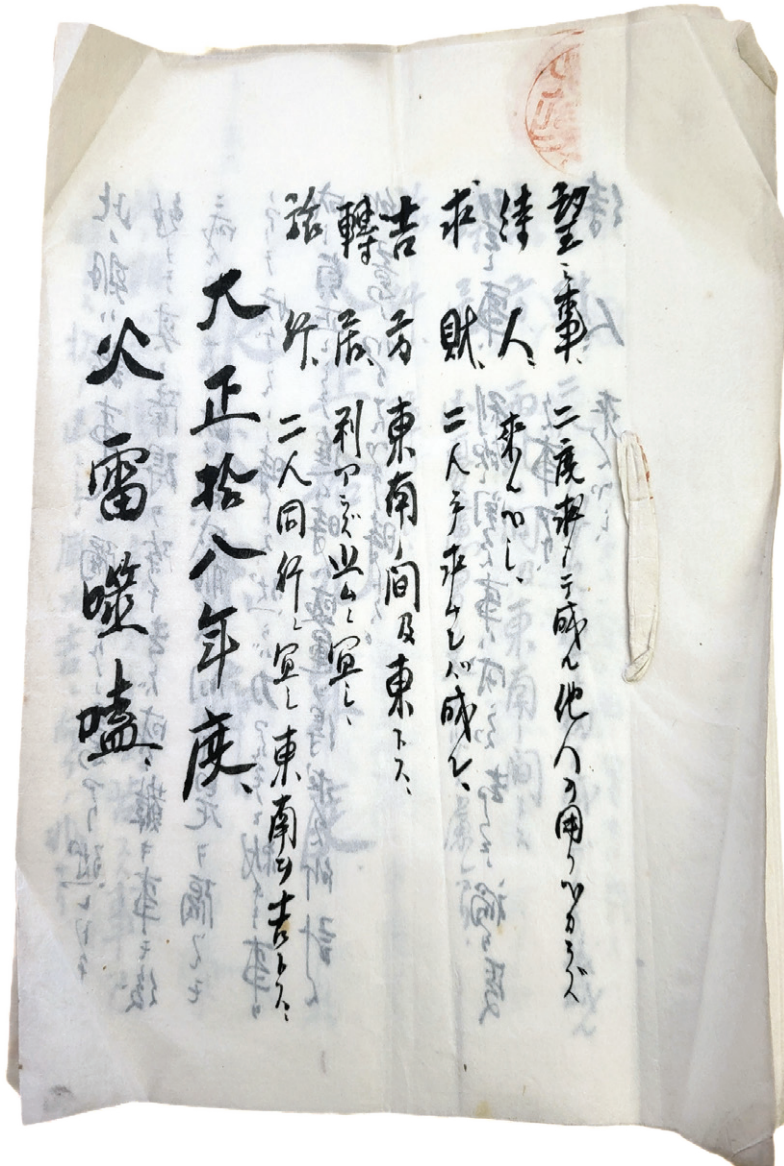


Figure 1: The first page of the document bound with a paper string made of twisted Japanese paper (*koyori* こより). Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

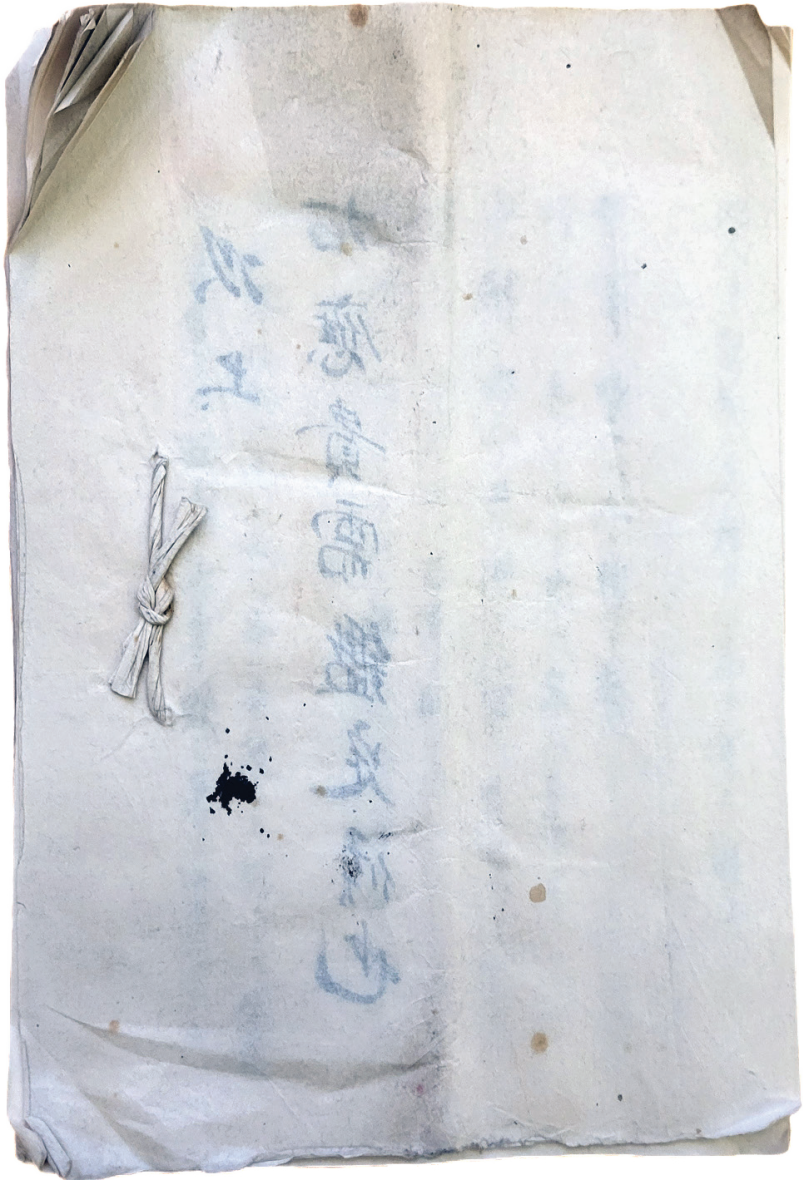


Figure 2: The back of the document with the binding knot. Photo by the author.  
(Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

The document, which Tsuneko kept until her death, is a handwritten piece of calligraphy depicting a prophecy based on the *Takashima's Judgments on the Book of Changes* or *Takashima ekidan* 高島易斷, an important divination book based on *Yijing* or *I Ching* 易經 (易經) or *Ekikyō* (The Book of Changes). Firstly, to reflect on the characteristic of the divination—what kind of divination is it and what can it tell us about Tsuneko Kondō Kawase? Was it customary to receive it at the beginning of the 20th century, when Tsuneko probably received it, and how common was this type of divination in China, where Tsuneko stayed in the early 20th century? Secondly, we will be interested in what kind of document it is; its form—the style of calligraphy and the significance of its stamps—its precise dating, as well as its content. The transcription and translation of the first year of the forecast is presented, in order to show the characteristics of the whole composition of the document. Moreover, this paper highlights its content's characteristics, and according to the summary of the whole prediction, it attempts to reflect on Tsuneko's life. And thirdly and most importantly, what does this item say about Tsuneko? Why did she feel the need to order this type of document? Was it before she left China, or when she visited Japan for the last time? Did she perhaps order the divination before she got married in Slovenia in 1927, received all the Christian sacraments and also took the Slovenian name Marija Skušek? Did she perhaps even make some decisions in her life in relation to this prophecy?

Characteristics of the divination in the document:

*Takashima Ekidan* (高島易斷) or  
*Takashima's Judgments on the Book of Changes*

Looking at contemporary Japan, divination consumerism<sup>7</sup> is very much alive and manifests itself in various forms. Walking through the entertainment districts in the streets of Tokyo at night, one can find fortune tellers sitting quietly in their furnished stores, which usually

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<sup>7</sup> Kentarō Suzuki, "Divination in Contemporary Japan: A General Overview and an Analysis of Survey Results," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22, no. 3/4 (1995): 249, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30234454>.



consist of a table, two chairs, a billboard, and paper-covered oil lamps, or sitting in front of their closed offices. There are a variety of divination techniques, including palm reading, tarot cards, geomancy (divination based on the interpretation of geographical features, *ti li* “geography”, *feng shui*, “wind and water”, or *kasō* “house divination”<sup>8</sup>), astrology, physiognomy (face reading), Chinese augury (fortune telling by analysing the parts and number of strokes in Chinese characters of personal names) and Eastern astrology; while palmistry and physiognomy are most often found in street fortune telling.<sup>9</sup> From what we can observe from the Japanese culture of fortune-tellers, we can agree: “Divination in its various forms is a subject that is truly close to the awareness of the general public. Indeed, it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that fortune-telling in all its diverse manifestations comprises a distinct culture of its own, particularly in the nation’s urban areas.”<sup>10</sup>

The same applies to the divination of Tsuneko’s document—the Yi-jing divination, *ekisen* 易占 or *shūeki* 周易, one of the oldest forms of divination in the world, which is still used today as the main tool of the divination corners described above. It is based on the philosophy derived from the *Yijing* or *Book of Changes* (in Japanese *Ekikyō* 易経) or the *Classic of Changes*, an ancient Chinese divination text among the oldest of the Chinese classics, which has a long and interesting history in Japan. It is often seen as a guide to understanding the natural world, human experience and the cosmos. It uses a system of trigrams and hexagrams, which are essential for divination. A trigram consists of three lines, each of which can be either broken or unbroken. These lines are stacked on top of each other so that there are eight possible combinations of these three lines—trigrams. Hexagrams are also used, which are formed by combining two trigrams, one on top of the other, giving

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<sup>8</sup> See Mary Picone, “The ghost in the machine: Etiology and divination in Japan,” in *Beyond Textuality: Asceticism and Violence in Anthropological Interpretation*, edited by Gilles Bibeau and Ellen E. Corin, 249–270 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 1995), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110903010.249>.

<sup>9</sup> Suzuki, “Divination in Contemporary Japan,” 252; Audrius Beinorius, “On the Religious and Cultural Aspects of Divination in Japanese Society,” *Scholarly Papers University of Latvia*, 813 (Oriental Studies Managing Cross-Cultural Communication: Asia, Europe and Latvia) (2006): 94, 104.

<sup>10</sup> Suzuki, “Divination in Contemporary Japan,” 249.

a total of six lines. In total, there are 64 unique hexagrams in the Yijing, each of which represents a particular situation, energy or concept and is used to interpret different life situations or questions.<sup>11</sup> Divination often involves asking a question or focusing on a specific topic and then casting a series of lines to determine a hexagram. There are several methods for this process, but the most common are the coin method (tossing three coins six times to create a hexagram, with heads and tails representing the yin and yang lines) and the yarrow stick method (a set of 50 yarrow sticks to obtain lines for the hexagram). Each hexagram is then interpreted by reading the corresponding text in the *Yijing*.<sup>12</sup>

The Yijing divination theory and method is of particular importance in East Asian history. Both the philosophy and the divination derived from it were integral components of Chinese civilization, which Japan sought to introduce into its own cultural sphere. It came to Japan around the sixth century and was rarely studied in ancient Japan (539–1186), but in the Middle Ages (1186–1603) it enjoyed great popularity among Zen Buddhist monks, courtiers, and high-ranking warriors.<sup>13</sup> The Yijing reached Japan as a part of the Chinese cultural wave and had a long period of interest in Japan, while its popularity peaked in the Tokugawa period (1603–1868). In his study, Wai-ming Ng emphasizes a statistical analysis of the text itself and its popularity, which, according to him, included 1085 texts written by at least 416 Tokugawa scholars on the Yijing during the Tokugawa period, thus surpassing the other Confucian classics of the period according to these parameters.<sup>14</sup> The textual study demonstrates as well an extensive use of the text in divination.<sup>15</sup> It was supported well by the military government which ruled Japan between 1192 and 1868.<sup>16</sup> Closely associated with Confucianism, the work was mainly commented on by the scholars in this field. To a much lesser extent (about 10%), it was used in schools of thought

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<sup>11</sup> John Blofeld, *I Ching: The Book of Change* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978), 59–72; for details, see also *Yijing [Knjiga premen]*, trans. Maja Milčinski (Ljubljana: Domus, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Wai-ming Ng, “Study and Uses of the I Ching in Tokugawa Japan,” *Sino-Japanese Studies* 9, no. 2 (1997): 24.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 25,

and religions such as Shintō, Buddhism, Shingaku, and national learning, while it was also used in medicine, science, art, and the military. The authors and the uses of the text varied, but indicates the extent of the text's importance in the Tokugawa period (1603–1867), with Confucianism as its dominant force.

The prediction of the future for Tsuneko Kondō Kawase belongs to one of the most important schools of Yijing divination in Japan during the Edo and early Meiji periods—the Takashima School of divination (or *Takashima eki* 高島易).<sup>17</sup> At that time, it was the largest organization of Yijing practitioners in Japan, using the *Book of Changes* as the basis for divination. The school's methods were used by Meiji leaders as a guide for political and military decisions. At the same time, it served as a tool to promote conservative political goals. Wai-ming Ng describes these goals as “imperial state ideology, pan-Asian colonialism, the political and moral implications of Shinto, and aspects of traditional morality.”<sup>18</sup>

The school used *Takashima's Judgments on the Book of Changes* (or *Takashima ekidan* 高島易断, 1901) as its most important publication. This work was authored by Takashima Kaemon 高島嘉右衛門 (1832–1914), who is best known for his contributions to the modernization of Japan by launching modern industries and businesses, and advocating the development of public institutions and modern enterprises such as electricity, railroads, Western education, and experimental agriculture.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, was also known as a prominent traditional scholar with a focus on the Book of Changes. Takashima was also known as a semi-official soothsayer who was called “the sage of the Book of Changes”<sup>20</sup> (*eki sei* 易聖) during the Meiji period, because he advised prime ministers, generals, high-ranking officials, and others. He was most famous for his prediction

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<sup>17</sup> The style of divination of Tsuneko Kondō Kawase's document was examined and verified with the help of Dr Zhou Weiqiang (維強敬上), an expert on Chinese art and history, and curator of the Palace Museum in Beijing (Forbidden City) and Hong Kong.

<sup>18</sup> Wai-Ming Ng, “Divination and Meiji Politics: A Reading of Takashima Kaemon's *Judgments on the Book of Changes (Takashima Ekidan)*,” *Dao Companion to Japanese Confucian Philosophy* vol. 5, ed. Huang Chun-chieh and Johan Allen Tucker (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 329.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 317.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



of the outcome of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the assassination of Meiji leader Itō Hirobumi. The use of divination by the leader was not a new practice. Japan had a tradition of using oracles in politics and the military, and the Confucian-educated Japanese were also familiar with the *Book of Changes* as a tool to promote their ideology.

As such, Takashima was an influential *Book of changes* diviner. Above all, he popularised the *Book of Changes*, while also simplifying its method, making it more practical for divination, as well as easier to apply to political, military, business, and agricultural affairs in the country.<sup>21</sup> He also promoted it as overseas by ordering an English translation<sup>22</sup> by the head of the Tokyo English School, Sugiura Shigetake 杉浦重剛 (1855–1924). It was first edited in 1893 and a Chinese edition was prepared by Wang Zhiben (1835–1907), which increased the book's popularity also in China.<sup>23</sup>

#### Analysis of the divination document: its form

The document consists of a bundle of nine thin, folded sheets of Japanese rice paper (commonly used for calligraphy) written from the first page onwards, with the last, reverse side left blank (see Figures 1 and 2). It is written in the classic *bungotai* 文語体 style, a Japanese writing style used from the Meiji to the beginning of the Shōwa period, which developed on the basis of the Japanese language from the Heian period (794–1185).<sup>24</sup>

That this is a formal document is also evident from the seals stamped over the pages of the text. The smaller seal (see Figure 3), stamped directly over the text, indicates that the text is official and demonstrates the responsibility of the person in charge of description. This seal is often used in cases of correcting and deleting parts of the text.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Kaemon Takashima, *Takashima Ekidan*, trans. Sugiura Shigetake (Tokyo: Keigyōsha, 1893).

<sup>23</sup> Ng, “Divination and Meiji Politics,” 317.

<sup>24</sup> Segawa Yumi, E-mail correspondence, 20 September 2024, August 2021.

<sup>25</sup> The form of the paper and the contents were examined and transcribed by Segawa Yumi 瀬川結美, through correspondence with the author from 2 February 2021 to 20 September

The characters of the seal are 泉川 (see Figure 3), which could be read as Izumikawa or Izumigawa and might represent the name of the person who prepared the description, though this remains uncertain. Another seal, larger in size, appearing in the document is so called *kei-in* 契印 seal (see Figure 4). It is stamped across the crease portion between the page edges and the binding tape on the upper or lower part of the document. It is used when a single document consists of multiple sheets and shows that the multiple papers are an official set.<sup>26</sup>

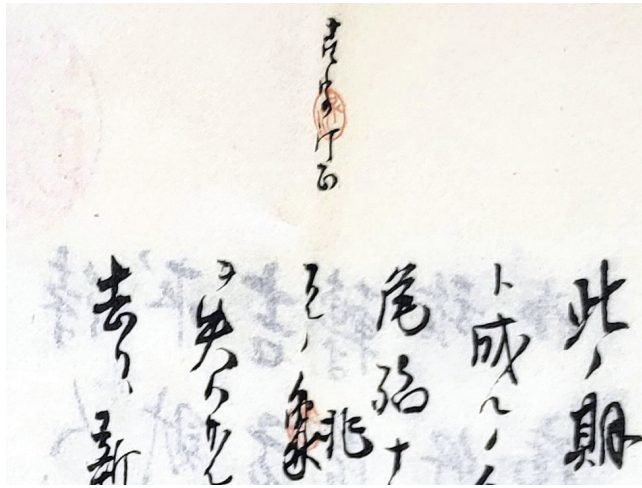


Figure 3: The seal with the characters 泉川 stamped over the text, used for corrections and deletions. Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

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ber 2024. Segawa is a staff member of the Gakugei University Library in Tokyo, who is researching digital archives in Japan (digital resources of Japanese arts and crafts and contemporary movements). One of her research topics is *ōraimono* 往来物, elementary education textbooks used from the end of the Heian Period to the early Meiji Period, and *kusazōshi* 草双紙, illustrated popular fiction published in Edo from the middle of 17th to the late 19th century.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

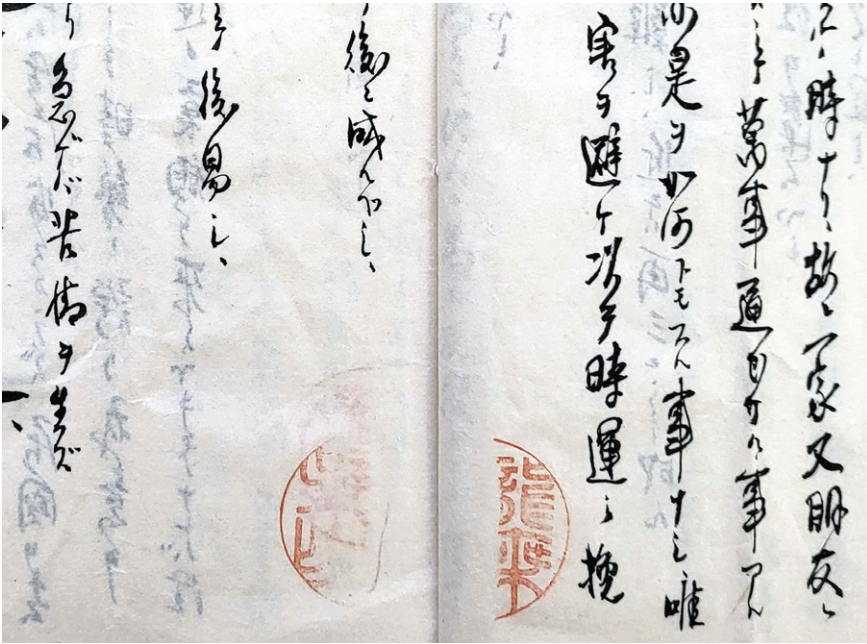


Figure 4: *Kei-in* 契印 seal stamped across the crease portion between the pages in order to show that the document is official and consists of multiple sheets. Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

It is used mainly in order to prevent falsification of the document, document replacement and extraction, or to prove that the document has one copy.<sup>27</sup> It demonstrates that it is one document, and may correspond to the Western page numbering. The character of the seal is 龍乘<sup>28</sup> which could be read as Ryūjō or Tatsunori, 龍 (ryū) meaning “dragon”, an auspicious symbol in Chinese culture, often representing strength, vitality, and good fortune, while 乘 (jō) means to “get on,” “ride on,” or “to get on a vehicle.”

<sup>27</sup> See “Keiin to wa? Ōin basho to keiyakusho no fukurotoji seihon hōhō, wariin to no chigai wa? 契印とは？押印場所と契約書の袋とじ製本方法、割印との違いは？(What is a seal? What is the difference between the place of stamping, covered binding method of the contract, and the stamp?),” GMOsain burogu, accessed July 11, 2024. <https://www.gmosign.com/media/work-style/keiin/>.

<sup>28</sup> Zhou Weiqiang 維強敬上, E-mail correspondence, 15 November 2024.

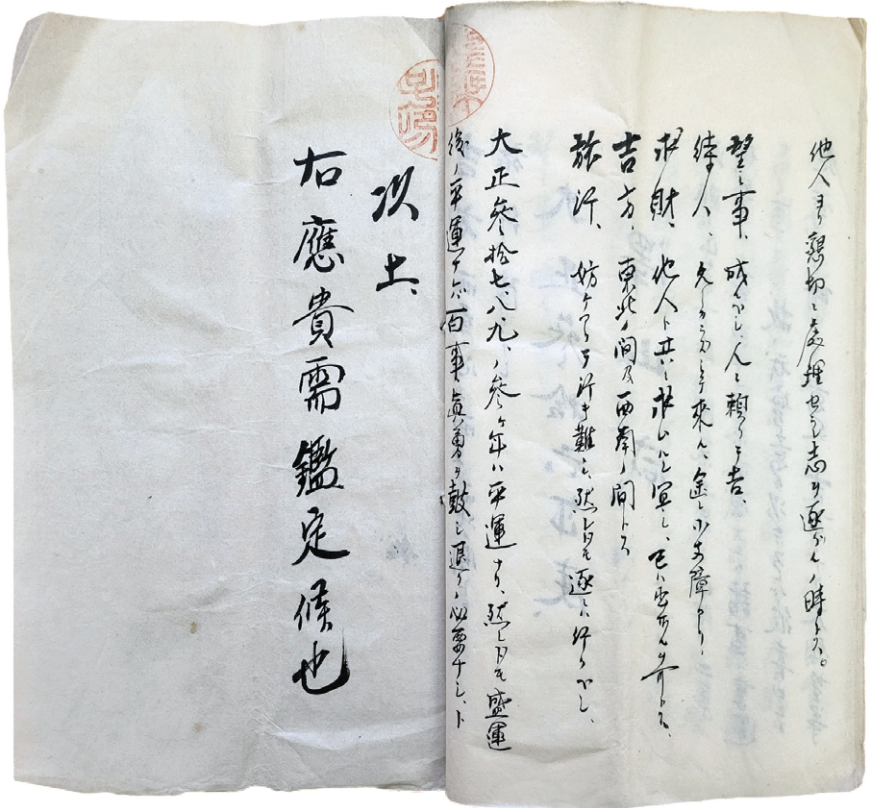


Figure 5: The last page (left) showing the closing sentence of the document. “以上、右応貴需鑑定候也” (With this, I appraised your fortunes at your request and wrote it down on previous pages). Photo by the author. (Source: Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum)

As can be seen from the first page of the document (see Figure 1), where only one half of the *kei-in* stamp is visible, this is an indication that there may have been more pages in the document, or that the first page of the document is missing. This is also evident from the content of the document, which will be presented below. On the other hand, the end of the document is very clearly indicated. On the last written page (see Figure 5), after the document is finished, the expression *ijō* 以上 is used to indicate the end or the conclusion of the paper. Followed by the last line in the document—written in classical Chinese, indicating that the paper was prepared in accordance with the order for the document, with the phrase 以上、右應貴需鑑定候也 which could be transcribed into Japanese (以上、右、貴の需に應じ鑑定候也 I jō, migi ki no ju ni ōji kantei sōrō nari) as meaning “With this, I appraised your fortunes at your request and wrote it down on the previous pages.”<sup>29</sup>

According to Wang Jianyu (National Palace Museum in Taipei), the seal belonged to a famous soothsayer in Japan whose divinations were based on *Takashima's Judgments on the Book of Changes*. Below (see Figure 6) is an advertisement<sup>30</sup> for his services in Taiwan titled “The Incredible Prophet is here!” According to his advertisement, which is kept in the National Museum of Taiwan History, the fee is one gold yuan per person (equivalent to 750 milligrams of gold).<sup>31</sup>

### Analysis of the divination document: its dating

The document is missing its first page, where it would have explicitly stated for whom the prediction was made and the date the document was given. However, what is evident from the document is the years for which the prophecy was commissioned and made. Based on the transcription of the document, we can determine that the prediction

<sup>29</sup> Segawa Yumi, E-mail correspondence, 15 February 2021.

<sup>30</sup> Advertising flyer “The Incredible Prophet is here!” (Taiwan: National Museum of Taiwan History (Registration Number: 2018.024.0076)), <https://collections.nmth.gov.tw/Collection-Search01.aspx?a=112>.


<sup>31</sup> Zhou Weiqiang 維強敬上, E-mail correspondence, 15 November 2024.



(廣告) 郵便

● 不思議の豫言者来る

(好機逸する勿れ  
一度來つて將來の幸福を受けられよ)



高島易斷研究部長  
權大教正 龍乘子先生

**易斷鑑定項目**

運勢、家相、方位、職業の選擇、願望、仕官、雇入、訴訟、金融、株式、相任の吉凶、病氣、盜難、遺失、逃亡、水火難、天倉地獄、旅行、移轉、普請、工事、株式、期米、鑛山、山林、養蠶、造業、耕地、土地買賣、五箇物品買賣、發明願望、貿易、諸事業購買等人事百般

**(龍乘子先生鑑定の特色)**

先生の前にだまつて座れば過去現在の事をくわしく説き猶將來の事を親切にわかりやすく面かも丁寧に豫言せらる

**觀相人相**  
手相

(但し指の鑑定は別に料金を申受候)

**白 謹**

不肖龍乘子當年中來者以來茲ニ一週一般諸君ノ御賞賛ヲ得蒙外ノ好成績ヲ見ルニ至リシニ(一)重ニ在任諸君ノ賜物ト拜滿奉候  
併而有志諸君ノ御賜ニ隨ヒ 本月廿七日迄延期鑑定 從事仕候ニ就キ今正ニ新春ヲ迎ヘントスルノ今日一度駕ヲ枉ケラレ大正九年度ノ吉凶禍福運ヲ實ニ益々多クラシメテラシム事ヲ希フ

**鑑定時間** 毎日 午前十時ヨリ 午後九時マデ

新盛橋通

**鑑定場所** 於 樋口旅館

Figure 6: Advertisement for the services of a fortune teller consulted by Tsuneko Kondō Kawase (Source: Archives of National Museum of Taiwan History).

was made for at least the years between the 18th and the 39th year of the Taishō period. This indicates that the prediction was made for the years 1929 to 1950 in the Western calendar. What is striking is that the prediction was pre-calculated for the years of the Taishō period that do not exist in the Japanese calendar, which also gives clues to the period in which the prediction was made. The Taishō period ended with Taishō 15, which is the year 1926 according to the Western calendar, since the Emperor Taishō died in the beginning of 1926. Despite this, the prediction shows the years up to Taishō 39.

This suggests that the prediction was probably written before the year 15 of the Taishō period, that is before the Showa period (beginning in 1926), or at least in the year 15 of Taishō period. The fact that the document is from an earlier period is also evidenced by the content of the text and the half-stamp on the first page of the document, as mentioned earlier. The text has neither an introduction to the text nor a title. In all other parts of the prediction, the inscription of the year and the names of the hexagram are mentioned for each year. This is also



evidenced by the *kei-in* stamp on the first page of the document, which is only half the size, while the other half, which usually extends across both pages, is missing (see and compare Figures 1 and 4). From this it can be concluded that at least one of the pages is missing from the text and therefore, the prediction dates of an earlier period are missing.

The fact that the prediction was written in the Taishō period is also proven by an advertisement of a soothsayer (see Figure 6), whose stamp can be found in the document. The document shows that the fortune teller was active in Taishō 9 (1920).

### Analysis of the divination document: its content

The content of the document follows a certain pattern. It is structured in such a way that a future forecast is described for one year up to a total of three years: first, a general forecast is given, summarising the content of the prediction, followed by a forecast according to selected points concerning aspects of one's life, including 1) *nozomigoto* 望み事 (one's wish or desire), 2) *machibito* 待人 (person you are waiting for), 3) *kyūzai* 求財 (wealth), 4) *kippō* 吉方 (direction of luck), 5) *tenkyō* 転居 (relocation or change of residence), 6) *ryokō* 旅行 (travel). When predicting each year (or several years in total), the text begins with the year(s) for which the prediction is made, followed by the name of the hexagram predicted for that year. In the sixth example, the title of the prediction tells us the year for which the prediction was made. Taishō 18 (which we know is the year 1928) corresponds to the hexagram number 21, *karai zeigō* 火雷噬嗑 (see Figure 7 and Diagram 1).



望事

二度解して成心他人の用をさる

待人

来りし東南の間に

求財

二人手取れし成心

吉方

東南の間及東下入

轉辰

利の成心し

治片

二人同行し宜し東南の吉方

大正拾八年度

火雷噬嗑

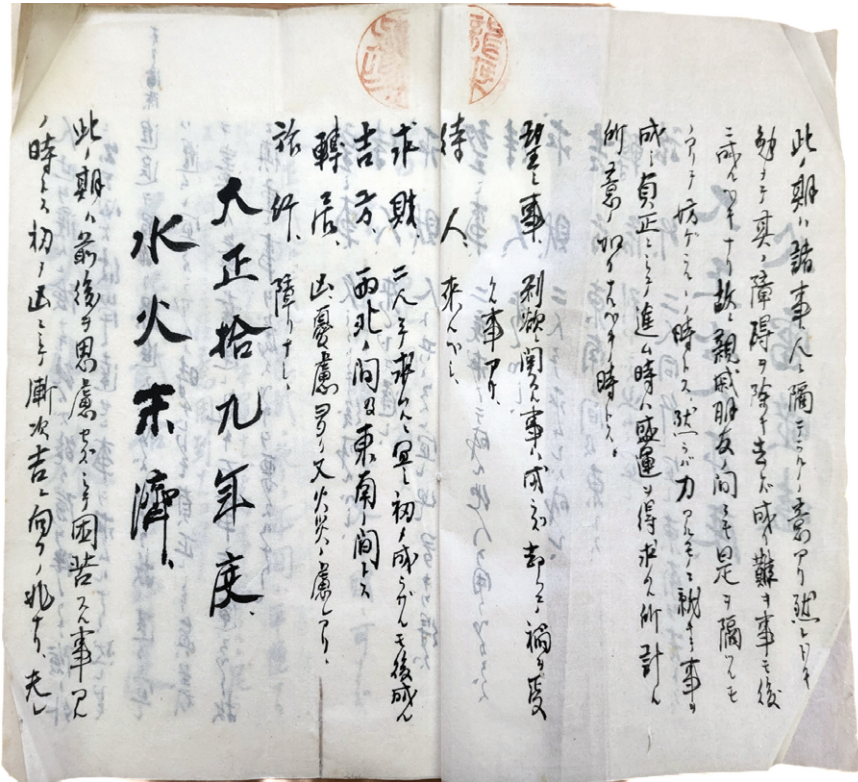


Figure 7: The first page of the divination document (on the right), featuring a divination likely for the year *Taishō* 17 (1927) (the previous page is missing). A complete divination for the year *Taishō* 18 (1928) starts at the end of the page on the right side and continues on the left of the figure.

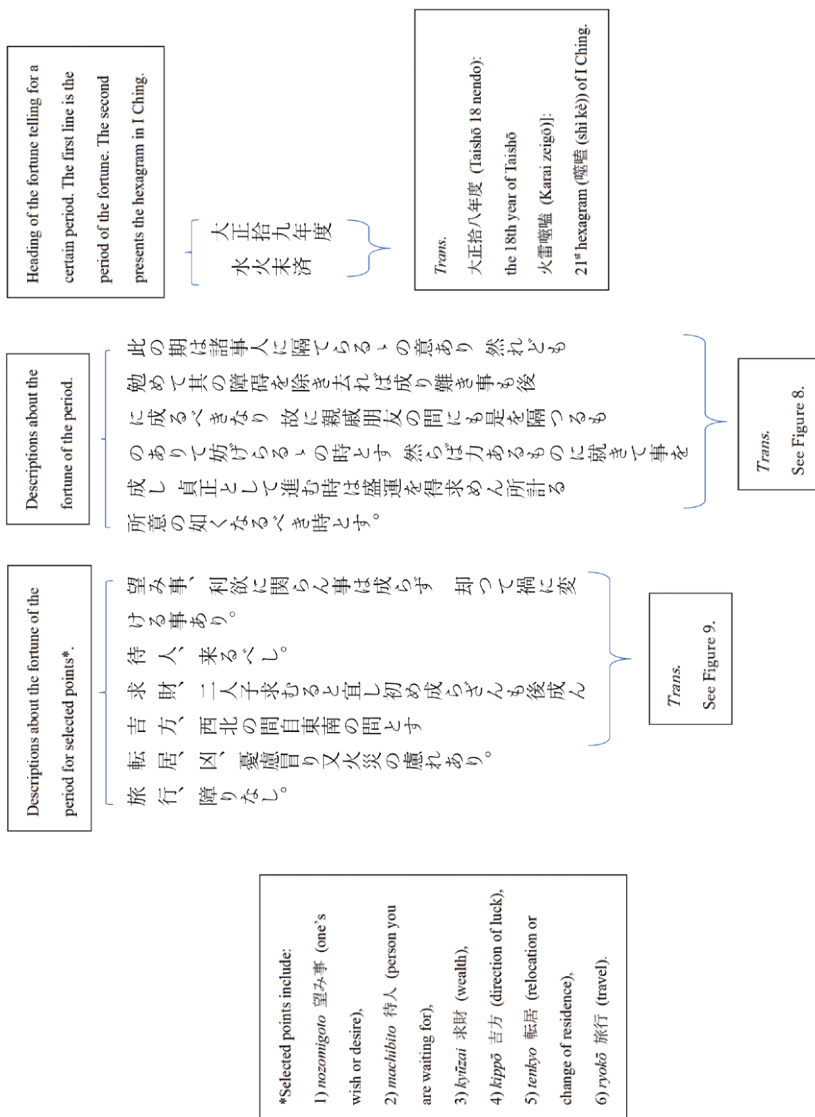


Diagram 1: Transcription and translation of the divination document for one year (the year *Taishō 18* or 1928)<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The transcription and the rough translation was prepared by Segawa Yumi (Segawa Yumi, E-mail correspondence, 20 February 2021).

Kono ki wa shoji hito ni hedateraruru no i ari. Shikaredomo tsutomete sono shōgai wo nozokisareba narigataki koto mo nochi ni narubekinari. Yue ni shinseki hōyū no aida nimo kore wo hedatsurumo-no arite samatageraruru no toki to su. Shikaraba chikara aru mono ni tsukite koto wo nashi teisei to shite susumu toki wa seiun wo e motomen tokoro hakaru tokoro i no gotoku narubeki toki to su.

This period will be a time when you will be disturbed by others in many ways (with various things).  
But if you diligently remove the obstacles, the difficult things will later become possible to achieve.  
Because there are times when even among relatives and companions, there are those who stand in your way.  
In this case, you should follow someone who has power (could be interpreted as “ability, influence and power”). So, it is a time when you are hindered by obstacles even among relatives and friends.  
If you proceed with discipline and the right mind, you should be able to achieve the great fortune you seek.

Figure 8: Transcription and approximate English translation for the broad prediction for the year Taishō 18 (1928).

- 1) 望み事 (*nozomigoto*) one's wish or desire:  
利欲に關はる事は成らず却つて禍を受ける事あり。(Riyoku ni kakawaru koto wa narazu. Kaette wazawai wo ukeru koto ari.)  
*Things related to profit and desire will not work, instead they may even lead to misfortune.*
- 2) 待人 (*machibito*) person you are waiting for: 来るべし。(Kitaru beshi)  
*Should come.*
- 3) 求財 (*kyūzai*) wealth: 二人子求むるに宜し初め成らざるも後成る (Futari ko motomuruni yoroshi. Hajime narazaru mo nochi naru.)  
*What you wish two children? you shall find, even if it does not happen at first, it will happen later.*
- 4) 吉方 (*kippō*) direction of luck: 北の間及東南の間とす (Kippō seihoku no aida oyobi tōnan to su.)  
*Between the northwest and the southeast.*
- 5) 転居 (*tenkyō*) relocation or change of residence: 凶、憂慮冒り又火災の慮れあり。(Kyō, yūryo kaburi mata kasai no osore ari.)  
*There is a risk of bad luck, concern (trouble?) or a fire.*
- 6) 旅行 (*ryokō*) travel: 障りなし (Sawari nashi.) *No obstacle.*

Figure 9: Transcription and approximate English translation for prediction of selected points from 1) to 6) for the year Taishō 18 (1928).



This is the earliest year (see Figure 7) for which we have a complete forecast, both for the general forecast and for the summary by selected points, whereas for the year before, 1927, we have a forecast without a title, without the year and without a general forecast, only a forecast for selected points.<sup>33</sup> So the content of the beginning of the document indicates that it is probably the first part of the document and at least the title of the document and the part of future forecast is missing, as already mentioned in the text.

Looking at the overall prediction, the most favourable year is 1927, which has a positive prediction in many respects. That is for love, health, change of residence, a trip for two as well. The following year, if we see from the above translation, 1928 show difficulties between relatives and partners, bad luck, and even dangers of fire. The years 1929 and 1930 also point to hardship, unsuitability for travel and the acquisition of wealth, and warn above all to act very cautiously. The following years up to 1932 are calmer and show no major anomalies. Selecting one of the years with a really bad forecast that could be described as a turning point is 1932–33, which shows clear changes and a negative mood. The forecast points out that “you will feel like you are in a foreign country,” and warns of problems in terms of where you live and your home address. In addition, only to this year is a new item added to the prediction of the selected items, namely shippei 疾病 or illness (急に治し難し。然れども治す。Shippei kyū ni naoshigatashi. Shikaredomo naosu. (Diseases that are difficult to cure quickly, but can be cured). The prediction for the years 1933–1934 encourages change, the search for something new and fresh, and advises to relate her desires to others or to do things for the sake of others. The year 1934–35 heralds a mediator of financial gain or the possibility of losing money and advises not to try to make a profit and go public. Later years are more promising: the prediction for 1937–38 encourages working with others in the pursuit of wealth and realising one’s dreams by being treated kindly by others and in 1950, fortune and peace is predicted.

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<sup>33</sup> Those points are similar to what we find today on the random divinations *omikuji* お御籤/御神籤, widely recognised and practised random fortunes on the small slips of paper you can buy in Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines.



If we compare the prediction with her real life, we can point to two points where the prediction corresponds fairly well with her life, namely 1927 is the year in which she marries, and the year 1923-1933, for which the gloomiest prediction is made, is the year in which her son Matthias falls ill and dies in 1933.

Tsuneko Kondō Kawase's recourse  
to the traditional practises of divination

Tsuneko's life went through many phases and changes, often including hard times, which she had to endure even before her arrival in Slovenia. From the photographic material, most of which comes from the archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, we can conclude that she moved with her family to the Liaodong Peninsula, Kwantung,<sup>34</sup> which was under Japanese concession at the time. She arrived in Slovenia on 8 September 1920, together with her children—son Matthias Schmidt and daughter Erika Schmidt from her previous marriage to the German official Paul Heinrich Schmidt. She probably met the first husband in Beijing, where she probably moved between 1905 and 1906, but this requires further research.

There were probably many moments in Tsuneko's life when she sought the advice of fortune-tellers. Her life—particularly the period before she came to Slovenia, as well as her visits to Japan, Kwantung, and later Beijing—remains unclear. Since the document suggests that the prediction was written at least in the 15th year of the Taishō period (before 24 December 1926) or earlier, the following deductions can be made.

One of the most likely occasions when she could obtain or order the divination would have been before she left China (see Figure 10). In this case, this would be the period before she travelled to Slovenia and visited Japan for the last time (see Figure 11), more precisely, when she applied for her Swiss visa. This was to be her last visit to Japan. On her visa for the trip to Europe, it is noted that she travelled as Tsune Schmidt and applied for and received her visa (a document entitled *Certificate*, which was issued in lieu of a passport) at the Swiss legation

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<sup>34</sup> See Footnote 1.



Figure 10: Tsuneko in Beijing on a trip to Badaling, the site of the most visited section of the Great Wall of China, with two Japanese women (Source: Photo archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum).

which was in charge of German interests at the time in Tokyo, on 5 March 1920.<sup>35</sup> The decision to travel to a completely unknown country with a new partner, Ivan Skušek Jr., was probably not easy for her and marked a new turning point in her life. She left behind her life in Japan and also in China, her job and the greenhouse flower shop where she had lived for many years, and set off with her two children Matis, then 8 years old, and Erika, then 5 years old, to unknown Europe.

Interestingly, she commissioned a forecast for a period of at least more than 20 years, which probably indicates that she knew that she would not have the opportunity to contact a forecaster when she wanted or needed to, because she knew that this would not be possible in the new world. Given that this fortune prediction was ordered, we can also assume that she could order it from China, already when she was left

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<sup>35</sup> *Certificate*, Tokyo: Legation de Suisse, March 5, 1920.



Figure 11: A photograph of Tsuneko with her children in front of the Muge Bridge (Mugebashi 武藝橋) at that time in Atobe, Gifu prefecture (probably in 1920, her last trip to Japan), bearing the mark Minō Japan, Minō Ōgaki 美濃大垣, Seinō insatsu sha 西濃印刷寫 (Seino Printing Co.) (Source: Photo Archive of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum).

alone with two children when her first husband probably had to leave for Europe due to war circumstances.

If the prediction had been ordered from Slovenia, it could be due to her marriage in 1927, when she married in Church, accepting all Christian sacraments in 1927, and adopted the Slovenian name Marija Skušek, while her children were converted from the Protestant to the Catholic religion. This is probably a little less likely. It was a big change in her life, but according to Ivan Skušek in the manuscripts of František Skušek, this step was the wish of Ivan Skušek, who thought that in this way he would win the opportunity to be accepted into the navy.<sup>36</sup> The

<sup>36</sup> “Ivan wanted to return to the navy, where he had served for so many years. He also relied on the help of Dr Korošec, who was a priest and then a minister in Belgrade. In his opinion,

family records also show that in the early years of her stay in Slovenia she did not have much contact with Japan,<sup>37</sup> which is of course less relevant and requires further study of her documentation.

The fact that she could have received the document in China or ordered it to China could also be a possibility. At that time divination used in the document: *Takashima Ekidan* (高島易斷) or *Takashima's Judgments on the Book of Changes* was popular in China as well, and the translation into Chinese well known. Tsuneko Kondō Kawase received her divination in Japanese, and, even if she lived in China at the time, she consulted in Japanese in order to obtain the fortune prediction. Her consultation of a Japanese fortune-teller, who was very popular in Japan at the time, indicates that she had very good connections to Japan and events there. The formality of the document and the price of the forecasting service also indicate that Tsuneko Kondō Kawase came from a society that could afford such services.

### Concluding thoughts

Despite the transcription and rough translation of Tsuneko Kondō Kawase's divination document, the prediction's dating is difficult to evaluate. Since the present analysis indicates that the beginning of the document or probably some pages are missing, it is difficult to determine the exact date of the document. However, we can assume that it was written entirely for the Taishō period, as it dates back to at least 1926, the last year of the Taishō period. It is also likely that her name or the name of the commissioner of the prediction would have been at the beginning of the document, which would have definitively confirmed that she herself was the commissioner of the document.

The transcription and the seal on the document also suggest that the prediction uses *Takashima's Judgments on the Book of Changes*, which was common in late 19th and early 20th century Japan. It was used

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this required Tsuneko's conversion to the Catholic faith, a church wedding, the 'Mary call' and all the rest of the circus. Everything she did was Ivan's idea, and she did it for Ivan, who believed that this would give him a chance to join the navy." (Franci Skušek, *Rokopisni zapiski Francija Skuška* [Handwritten notes of Franci Skušek], Ljubljana: Slovenski etnografski muzej, n.d.).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

by one of the most important schools of Yijing divination in Japan at that time—the Takashima School of divination, which used the *Book of Changes* as the basis for divination. The publication was authored by Takashima Kaemon, a businessman and an intellectual who, by popularising the *Book of Changes* and simplifying its method, made it more practical for divination and apply it to political, military, business and agricultural affairs in the country. It is likely that Tsuneko was familiar with this divination technique, or divination was something she was already familiar with, a practice related to her costumes? We can hardly guess, but given her life circumstances; she travelled a lot, changing her place of residence and the circle of people around her,<sup>38</sup> she could turn to ask for fortune teller guidance. Considering the fact that she commissioned a forecast for a period of at least more than 20 years, and that this was one of her important steps in life, we can assume that she ordered the divination before leaving for Europe, i.e., before 1920.

The seal on the document (龍乘) shows that the divination was prepared by a well-known soothsayer active in the Taishō period Japan, known by the name 龍乘子, who around 1919 and 1920 visited Taiwan, which was at the time under Japanese rule. No matter where Tsuneko Kondō Kawase lived or from where she ordered the divination, this indicates that she had a strong lineage and connection to Japan and her Japanese cultural background.

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<sup>38</sup> This also brought about changes in religious practice: she herself, a Japanese woman who belonged to the Buddhist and Shinto religions, married a German who adhered to the Protestant faith and then joined the Christian religion years later.

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