The Future is in the Feet, or the Evasive Maneuver in Heian Prognostics

It is well known that acute stress in humans and other animals triggers various somatic responses from fight to flight. Surviving often means scattering or taking evasive maneuvers. When the threat is the future itself, what are the options? I address this question by looking at how men and women of 11th-century Kyoto, living in a state of precarity both real and imagined, took somatic measures to manage exposure to the unthinkable. These measures involved distinctive behaviors relating to divination, housing, and transit which, taken as a whole, offer some lessons in the primeval sanity of avoiding things.