

Shortly after midnight they heard a male voice, and the man said to Maro, "Go away quickly, for here comes my brother who killed me!" In wonder, Maro asked him about this, and he answered, "Once my brother and I were traveling on business, and I acquired about fifty pounds<sup>11</sup> of silver in my trade. Out of envy and hate my brother killed me to take the silver. For many years my skull was trampled by passing men and beasts, till your master mercifully rescued me from that suffering, which is why I have given you a banquet this evening."

It was at this point that the man's mother and elder brother entered the room to worship all spirits.<sup>12</sup> Being surprised at the sight of Maro, they asked why he was there, and Maro told them what he had just heard. The mother thereby accused her elder son, saying, "Ah! You killed my dear son. It was not a robber, but you!" Then she thanked Maro and gave him a feast. On his return, Maro reported this to his master.

Even a spirit of the dead or a skeleton repays an act of kindness,<sup>13</sup> how can a living man forget?

## I3

### *On a Woman Who Performed Work in an Extraordinary Way, Ate Sacred Herbs, and Flew up to Heaven Alive<sup>1</sup>*

In a village of Nuribe, Uda district, Yamato province 大倭國宇太郡漆部里, there lived an extraordinary woman,<sup>2</sup> who was married to Nuribe no miyatsuko Maro 漆部造麿.<sup>4</sup> Innately pure and straightforward in upholding what was right, she gave birth to seven children, but she was too poor to feed them since she had no one to depend on. Since the children had no clothes, she wove vines into clothes for them. Every day she purified herself in a bath and clothed herself in rags. She would gather edible herbs in the fields, and devoted herself to staying at home and cleaning the house. When she cooked the herbs, she called her children, sat up straight, and ate the food, all the

11. 斤 *gon*; as 1 *gon* is 1.323 lbs., so 40 *gon* makes 53 lbs.

12. 諸靈 *shiryō*.

13. For the motif of "the grateful dead," see Chap. II(1)a, n. 10.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XX, 42).

2. Present Sōmi-mura or Mitsue-mura, Uda-gun, Nara-ken 奈良縣宇陀郡骨爾村, 御杖村.

3. 風流 *mizao*.

4. 妾 not the legal wife, but a concubine.

while smiling, talking cheerfully, and being grateful. This constant discipline in mind and body made her spirit resemble that of a guest from heaven.<sup>5</sup>

In the fifth year of the Hakuchi era<sup>6</sup> of the emperor who resided at the Palace of Nagara no Toyosaki in Naniwa,<sup>7</sup> heavenly beings<sup>8</sup> communicated with her,<sup>9</sup> and she ate special herbs<sup>10</sup> gathered in the field in springtime and flew about in the heavens.

Indeed, we know that her extraordinary qualities and her diet of special herbs are well recognized, even though she has not studied Buddhist teachings. The *Shōjin nyōmon-kyō* 精進女問經<sup>11</sup> gives this relevant passage: "You will be able to achieve five kinds of merit<sup>12</sup> by leading a lay life and sweeping the garden with an upright mind."<sup>13</sup>

## I4

### *On a Monk Who Got an Immediate Reward for Recollecting and Reciting the Shin-gyō and Showed an Extraordinary Sign<sup>1</sup>*

Saka Gigaku 釋義覺<sup>2</sup> was originally from Paekche.<sup>3</sup> When it was destroyed<sup>4</sup> in the reign of the empress who resided at the later Palace of Okamoto,<sup>5</sup> he immigrated to this country and lived in Kudara-dera

5. 天上客 *tenjō no kyaku*, literally, a guest from heaven, that is, a *hien* or Chinese Taoist saint. See I.28, n. 10.

6. Hakuchi era (650-654) during the reign of Emperor Kōtoku.

7. See I.9, n. 5.

8. 神仙 *shinsen*; Taoist saints.

9. 感應 *kantō*; see I.8, n. 9.

10. 仙草 *sensō*; diet for Taoist saints.

11. *Mukō ubai-mon-kyō* 無垢懷婆夷問經 (*Taishō*, XIV, 950c).

12. 五功德 *go-kudoku*, five kinds of merit attained after rebirth in the pure land.

13. The quotation differs from the original, which reads: "Buddha taught a pure lay sister, saying, 'sweep the precinct of the pagoda, and you will be rewarded with five kinds of merit.'" The original text stresses the merit of sweeping the precinct of the pagoda, while Kyōkai's altered quotation shifted the emphasis to everyday household work by replacing the "precinct of the pagoda" with the "garden" and adding, "leading a lay life . . ." See Chap. II(2)b.

1. Cf. *Sanhō ekeotōa* (II, 7), *Fusō ryakūi* (IV, Saimet), *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XIV, 32), *Mizunokagami* (II, Saimet), *Genkō shakusho* (IX), etc.

2. *Saka* is a shortened form of Sakyamuni; those who renounced the world are regarded as descendants of Sakyamuni, and given the surname Saka.

3. See Preface, n. 3, above.

4. See I.7, n. 6.

5. Empress Saimet (655-661), whose palace was called the later Palace of Asuka no Okamoto because it was built on the site of Emperor Jomei's Palace of Okamoto, presently Asuka-mura, Tachibana-gun, Nara-ken. See *Nihon shōki*, XXIII (Jomei 2:10:12), XXVI (Saimet, 2:9): Aston, "Nihongi," II, 165, 250.