

When twelve of the men had been beheaded, he had a strange vision: the wooden image of Kannon he had worshipped so devotedly accused him, saying, "Oh, why do you stay in such a filthy place?" and transfixed his body with its leg from head to toe, making his body a girdle of its leg.

At the moment when the executioner was about to behead him, after ordering him to stretch out his neck, an imperial messenger hurried in, asking, "Is there a man named Oma Yamatsugi among these?" "Yes, he is about to be beheaded," was the answer. Whereupon the messenger said, "Don't kill him. He is to be exiled to Shinano province."⁶

He was exiled, but, before long, was recalled and appointed an assistant governor⁷ of Tama district. On his neck could still be seen a scar from a cut inflicted by the sword at the moment he was to have been executed. It was Kannon that saved him from being beheaded. For you will be filled with great delight and saved from calamity with Kannon's help if your faith arises and your devotion deepens owing to the merit you have accumulated.

8

On a Miraculous Appearance of Bodhisattva Miroku in Response to the Vow

In the village of Oe, Sakata district, Ōmi province 近江國坂田郡遠江里,¹ there lived a wealthy man, whose name is unknown. Once he made a vow to copy the *Yuga-ron* 瑜伽論,² but many years passed, and the vow was not fulfilled. Finally the man fell on bad times and lost his means of livelihood. He left home, abandoning his family, and lived a life of discipline in pursuit of happiness. Remembering his unfulfilled vow, he was always thinking how he might achieve it. In the reign of Empress Abe, in the ninth month in the autumn of the third year of the horse, the second year of the Tenpyō jingō era,³

6. Present Nagano-ken 長野縣.

7. 少領 *shōryō*; see I.30, n. 3.

1. Present Azai-cho, Higashi-azai-gun, Shiga-ken 滋賀縣東淺井郡淺井町.

2. *Yugashijōron* 瑜伽師地論 (*Taishō*, XXX, No. 1579). (Skt. *Yogācārahīnīśāstra*) Maitreya's discourse translated by Hsüan-tsang 玄奘 and a major text for the Hossō School.

3. 766, in the reign of Empress Shōtoku.

he went to a mountain temple and stayed for several days. In its precincts there was a bush. All of a sudden, an image of Bodhisattva Miroku 彌勒菩薩⁴ appeared⁵ on the bark of a branch of the bush. When the ascetic saw it, he walked around the bush and prayed fervently.

At the news people came to see the image. Some donated bags of rice, while others gave money and clothing. With these donations he was able to copy one hundred scrolls of the *Yuga-ron* and hold a dedication ceremony, although the image vanished some time before.

Indeed we know that Miroku high in Tosotsuren 兜率天⁶ came down in response to his vow so that he could attain deep faith and happiness here below in this land bound by suffering.⁷ How can one doubt it?

9

In the reign of Empress Abe, Fujiwara no asomi Hiroetari 藤原朝臣廣足² was suddenly taken ill, and, in order to cure the illness, he went to live at a mountain temple of Makihara, Uda district, Yamato province 大和國菟田郡真木原.³ He kept the eight precepts and quietly practiced calligraphy with a brush at the desk till the evening of the seventeenth of the second month in the second year of the Jingo keium era.⁴ His young attendant, thinking he was asleep, shook him and tried to waken him, saying, "It is time to worship the Buddha since the sun has set." Still he remained motionless. The attendant shook

4. Maitreya; see Chap. II(3)b, n. 131. The Hossō School traditionally chose Maitreya as the focus of devotion.

5. 化生 *keishō*, one of the four kinds of birth. See I.21, n. 5.

6. A combination of a transliteration of Skt. *Tusita* and a translation of *deva*, 天; the fourth of the six heavens of the world of desire. Tradition says Maitreya resides and preaches in its inner palace waiting to descend to this world at the end of the age of degenerate dharma.

7. 願主下在 苦縛凡地在 contrast to the heavens.

1. Cf. *Jizō reigenki* (VI, 20). *Uji shūi monogatari* (VI, 1). On the theme "visit to the other world," this tale resembles I.30: II.5, 7, 16, 19; III.36, 37. See also Chap. II(1)b, c.

2. Unknown.

3. *Kariya* says that the remains of the temple are found near Kōsui Pass, north of present Habara-cho, Uda-gun, Nara-ken 奈良縣宇陀郡藤原町.

4. 768.

him harder, and he dropped his brush and fell flat on his back with his arms and legs folded, not breathing. Upon close inspection he was found to be dead. In awe and terror the attendant ran home to inform his family and relatives of his death. At the news they prepared for a funeral, but they went to the temple three days later and found him restored to life and cured of the illness, waiting for them.

He answered their inquiries in this way: "There came men with moustaches growing straight up, clad in red robes and armor and equipped with swords and halberds. They called to me, saying, 'The Office⁵ has suddenly summoned you,' and, with a halberd at my back urged me to accompany them. They forced me to hurry all the way, with one in front and two in the rear escorting me.

"Ahead of us there was a deep river; the water being black as ink, did not run but stood still. A good-sized young branch was placed in the middle of the stream, but it was not long enough to reach both sides of the river. The messenger said to me, 'Follow me into the stream and ford it by following in my footsteps.' Thus he guided me across.

"There was a many-story pavilion in front of us that was shining brightly and gave off light. Curtains made of precious stone beads closed four sides of the building, so that I could not see the face of the person sitting inside. One messenger ran inside and addressed him, saying, 'Here he is.' A voice answered, 'Let him in.'

"When I was led in, the curtain was moved, and the king asked me, 'Do you know the woman standing behind you?' Turning around, I saw my wife who had died in childbirth. I replied, 'This is none other than my wife.' Then the king said to me, 'I have summoned you because of this woman's appeal. She has already suffered three of her six years of punishment, and she has three more years to go. She implored me to let her share the rest of her suffering with you since she died in childbirth.'

"I said, 'I will copy, expound, and recite the *Hoke-kyō* and hold services in order to save her from suffering.' Then my wife addressed the king, saying, 'Please take his word and let him go back to the world at once.' Agreeing with her, the king said to me, 'Go back to the world immediately and practice good.'

"When I reached the gate of the palace, as he had directed me, I was curious to know who had summoned me, and, turning around, asked, 'I would like to know who you are.' Thereupon, he said, 'I am King Yama, also called Bodhisattva Jizō in your country.'⁶ Then he stroked

my neck with his right hand, saying, 'You will never meet disaster, since I have marked you with a charm. Lose no time in going home.' One finger of his hand was about ten yards around."⁷

This is the report of Hirotari no asomi. For the sake of his deceased wife, he copied, expounded, and recited the *Hoke-kyō*, held services, and accumulated many posthumous merits in order to atone for her suffering and save her. This is an extraordinary event.

IO

On the Hoke-kyō Copied with Devotion and Reverence

*Surviving a Fire*¹

Muro no shami 牟婁沙彌 was of the Enomoto 榎本 family,² being self-ordained without a clerical name. He was popularly called the Novice of Muro, for he came from Muro district in Kii province 紀伊國牟婁郡.³ Living in the village of Arata in Ase district 安部郡荒田村,⁴ he shaved his head and face and wore a surplice, but he led a householder's life, following a vocation to earn his livelihood.⁵ He made a vow to copy the *Hoke-kyō* as it should be done, and, in a state of purification, he started copying it by himself.⁶ After every bodily function he purified himself by bathing, and, when six months had passed, he finished copying. After the dedication ceremony he put the *Hoke-kyō* in a lacquered leather chest, which he placed in a high niche in his living room for occasional reading.

In the summer of the sixth year of the cock, the third year of the Jingo keun era,⁷ at noon on the twenty-third of the fifth month, a fire broke out and destroyed his whole house. In the raging flames only the chest containing the scripture remained unharmed. When he

7. +和暦: see Chap. II(1)c, n. 60.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XII, 29), *Myōshōki* (I, On a Nun of Honmō).

2. The *Sinsen shōjirōku* lists the Enomoto family as being descended from kami.

3. Present Higashi- and Nishi-muro-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣 東、西牟婁郡.

4. Present Arida-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣 有田郡.

5. See Chap. II(1)d.

6. Copying the *Hoke-kyō* is one of the five devotional practices recommended in it; upholding, reading, reciting, expounding, and copying it are regarded as adequate means to spread its teaching, although there are evidences that copying was added in the later stage of its compilation. Dedication ceremonies of copied scriptures became a popular means to attain merit. See Kiyota Jakuan, "*Hoke-kyō* no shoha ni tsuite," *Mitokyo bunka*, No. 71/72 (April 1965), 160-171.

7. 769.

5. 關 彌加多; see II, 24, n. 11.

6. See Chap. II(1)c, n. 55.