

to believe in the law of karmic retribution, as expounded widely in the Mahayana scriptures? This is what the scripture means when it says: "Honeydew in the present will be an iron ball in the future."²² Hirokuni made Buddha images, copied scriptures, and made offerings to the Three Treasures to repay his father's love²³ and atone for his sin, thereafter turning evil into righteousness.

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On Attaining a Great Fortune Immediately Owing to Devotion to Kannon and Praying for a Share of Benefits¹

In the reign of ex-Emperor Shōhō-ōjin-shōmū² residing at Nara Palace 諸樂宮,³ Miteshiro no Azumabito 御手代東人⁴ went to Mt. Yoshino 吉野山⁵ to practice Buddhist teachings and seek his fortune. Three years passed during which he worshiped Kannon 觀音, reciting the name,⁶ and saying, "Homage to Kannon.⁷ Please give me ten thousand *kan*⁸ of copper coins, ten thousand *koku*⁹ of white rice and many beautiful girls."

At that time, Awata no asomi 粟田朝臣 of the Junior Third Rank¹⁰ had a daughter who was both unmarried and a virgin. She suddenly fell ill in her home in Hirose 廣瀬.¹¹ Her suffering was so great that there seemed no prospect of a cure. Her father sent messengers in all directions to call Buddhist monks¹² and lay brothers.¹³ Azumabito was called and begged to save her by chanting formulas.¹⁴ The power of

22. 現在甘露未來鐵丸. This given as a scriptural passage in this story, but as an ancient proverb in II.9. 甘露 and 鐵丸 are familiar metaphors in scriptures.

23. Gratitude to one's father is one of the four essential kinds of *on*. See Chap. II(2)a, nn. 69, 70.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVI, 14).

2. See I.5, n. 41.

3. Also written 奈良, 平城.

4. The Miteshiro family descended from kami, according to the *Shinsen shōjiroku*.

5. Including mountains located in present Yoshino-gun, Nara-ken. See I.28, n. 15.

6. 靜禮 devotional rite of reciting Kannon's name while prostrated before the image.

7. 南無, a transliteration of Skt. *namas*.

8. 貫: one *kan* consists of one thousand pieces, *mon*.

9. 石: one *koku* equals about five bushels.

10. Unidentified: Awata no asomi Mahito of the Senior Third Rank may be the person referred to, but he died in 719, before the reign of Emperor Shōmu (724-749).

11. Present Kita-kazuraki-gun, Nara-ken 奈良縣北葛城郡.

12. 禪師 *zenji*; *dhyāna* master.

13. 優婆塞 *ubhasoku*.

14. 咒 *ju*, see Chap. I(1)d, n. 97.

the formulas cured the illness, and she fell in love with him, eventually giving herself to him. Her family seized him and kept him confined in a room. Out of her affection, she cried and would not leave the place of his confinement. After a conference, her family decided to free Azumabito and let him marry her and inherit the fortune. He was given the Fifth Rank owing to the report to the Throne.¹⁵

After several years, when she was dying, she called her sister, and said, "I am dying now. I have but one wish: will you listen?" Her sister said, "I will do as you like." Whereupon Azumabito's wife said, "I can never forget my gratitude to Azumabito. I would like to make your daughter his wife and let her be in charge of the household."¹⁶ Faithful to her wish, the sister gave her daughter to Azumabito and put her in charge of the fortune.

Azumabito was richly blessed in this life because of the mysterious power he gained from his devotional practices and the great virtue of Kannon. How can anyone not believe that?

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On Gaining an Immediate Reward for Faith in the Three Treasures, Reverence to Monks, and Having Scriptures Recited¹

In the ninth month of the fourth year of the hare, the fourth year of the Jinki era,² Emperor Shōmu went hunting with his officers in the mountain at Yamamura in Sou upper district 添上郡山村.³ A deer ran into a farmer's house in the village of Hosome 納見里,⁴ and the family killed and ate it without knowing whose it was. Later, when the emperor heard this, he sent messengers to take them prisoner. More than ten men and women met with this misfortune, and they shuddered in fear without any recourse. Their only thought was that nothing but the divine power⁵ of the Three Treasures would save

15. As he became the son-in-law of Awata no asomi, he was given the rank.

16. This story demonstrates the practice of handing down authority for the ancestral cult and the family fortune from the aunt to the niece, which is still common in a priestess' family.

See Sakurai Mitsuru, "Mei no chikara: Naka no summeramikoto o megutte," *Kokugo to kokuhungaku*, XLII (No. 12, December 1965), 23-33.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XII, 16).

2. 727.

3. See I.10, n. 2.

4. Present Tomi-shi 天理市, south of Yamamura.

5. 神力.

them from their sad plight. As they heard that the sixteen-foot Buddha of Daian-ji 大安寺⁶ would respond to the people's prayers, they sent a man to visit the temple and have scriptures recited. They made an appeal to the monks, saying, "When we are led to court, please open the southern gate of the temple so that we may pay homage to the Buddha. Also we beg you to ring the bell when we are taken to court so that the sound of the bell may follow us."

According to their wishes, the monks rang the bell, recited scriptures,⁷ and opened the gate so that the people might worship. The latter were sent to court by the messengers and confined in a guard-room.⁸ Just then a prince was born,⁹ and the emperor granted a general amnesty to criminals and did not punish them. Instead, he gave alms to the people, and their happiness and joy could not be measured.

We learn that this is due to the influence of the Sixteen-foot Buddha and the merit of reciting scriptures.

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On the Miraculous Survival of a Buddha's Picture Offered by a Widow Who Made a Vow to Have It Painted for Her Deceased Husband¹

There is a painted image of Amida 阿彌陀² in the Hara-dera 八多寺³ in Ishikawa district, Kawachi province 河内國石川郡.⁴ Villagers say that a wise woman once lived in this neighborhood, but her name is

6. Daian-ji was located at the West Side of Nara, on the way to the court from the southern district. *ji-tokei* means one *ji* — 丈 and six *shaku* 六尺, which is about sixteen feet. One *ji* is ten *shaku* and one *shaku* is about one foot.

7. 轉讀 *tenidoku*; a ritual reading of scriptures or portions of lengthy scriptures. Since the *Dai hamya-kyō* is a voluminous scripture, some portions of it are read in a service. When we think of the probable relation between Daian-ji and the study of this scripture (see Chap. II (1)c, n. 65), this passage also may be translated "... read portions of the *Dai hamya-kyō*...."

8. 授刀寮; an office for the imperial guards which was instituted in 797. Only those who had committed some crime against the emperor were imprisoned there. See *Shoku Nihongi*, IV (Keitai 4:7:21): "The Office of Tachihaki no Toneri was created."

9. See *ibid.*, X (Jinki 4:9:29, 4:10:5).

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XII, 18).

2. See Chap. II(3)b, n. 132.

3. Unidentified; it may be a temple of the Hata family, originally immigrated from China by way of Korea.

4. Present Minami-kawachi-gun, Ōsaka-fu

unknown. On the day her husband was dying, she vowed to make an image of Amida, but many years passed and the vow was not fulfilled because of her poverty.

One autumn she gleaned in the rice fields, commissioned a painter, and made offerings to the dead for the first time, weeping in her sorrow. In sympathy, the painter joined in her devotion and completed a beautiful painting. After a ceremonial feast⁵ it was consecrated in the golden hall of the temple, and she paid constant homage to it.

A thief later set fire to the hall, and it was destroyed. Only the Buddha image survived the fire, suffering no damage.

Wasn't it a miraculous work of Buddha to help the woman? The note says: How good a wife she was in holding a memorial rite for her husband!⁶ Eventually she held it in the autumn. We know indeed how devoted she was. Even blazing flames cannot consume the holy image. Heaven's help is beyond our comprehension.

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On Taking Back Silk Robes Once Stolen Owing to the Petition to Bodhisattva Myōken¹

Once there was a house in front of the Kisakibe-dera 私部寺² in Ate district, Kii province 紀伊國安部郡.³ As ten silk robes were stolen from the owners, they prayed devotedly through Bodhisattva Myōken 妙見菩薩⁴ in the temple. The stolen silk robes were sold to a merchant in Kii. Hardly a week passed before a gale hit, and the robes were whisked south on the back of a deer to the original owners' garden; the deer then disappeared in the heavens. The merchant who had bought them, hearing that they were stolen goods, did not ask for them back but kept quiet.

5. 齋會 *sai-e*; a (dedication) ceremony in which a vegetarian feast is offered. See I.24, n. 3.

6. 追還報恩 *tsūkan hōon*; *tsūkan* means "perform proper rites to pray for the dead," and *hōon* means "repay for the kindness, love given." It is customary during the first year after a person's death to perform various religious acts in the hopes that the merits accumulated by such acts may benefit the deceased.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVII, 4).

2. Unidentified.

3. Present Arita-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣有田郡.

4. See Chap. II(3)b, n. 133.