

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

5. 關 *mikado*; see II.24, n. 11.

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

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 Fire¹

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 Ate district 安諦郡荒田村,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 keiun 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. 十抱餘; see Chap. II(1)c, n. 60.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari shū* (XII, 29), *Myōhōki* (I, On a Nun of Hotung).

2. The *Shinsen shōjiroku* 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. I(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 Jakuun, "Hoke-kyō no shosha ni tsuite," *Mikkyō bunka*, No. 71/72 (April 1965), 160-171.

7. 769.

opened the chest, he found the color of the scripture brilliant and its characters distinct. People came from all quarters to see it and could not help wondering at it.

Indeed, we know that the same manifestations of power took place here as in the case of the scripture being copied properly by a highly disciplined nun of Hotung 河東練行尼, or as in the case of the daughter of Wang Yü 王與女 in the time of the Ch'en dynasty being saved from fire by reciting the scripture.⁹

The note says: How praiseworthy was this member of the Enomoto family for accumulating merits by his great devotion and by copying the Ekayana scripture!¹⁰ The guardian deity of dharma performed a miracle in the flames. This is an effective story for converting the minds of nonbelievers and an excellent guide for stopping offenses of the evil-minded.

II

On a Blind Woman Whose Sight Was Restored Owing to Her Devotion to the Wooden Image of Yakushi Buddha¹

There was a wooden image of Yakushi-nyorai 藥師如來² in Tadehara-dō 蓼原堂³ in the village of Tadehara, south of the pond of Koshida 越田池 in the capital of Nara.⁴ In the reign of Empress Abe, a blind woman lived in the village. She was a widow whose only daughter was seven years old. She was so poor that she could not get food, and almost starved to death. She said to herself, "My poverty comes not only from my deeds in this life but from those in my previous lives.⁵ I had better practice good with faith rather than die of hunger in vain."

Asking her daughter to lead her, she went to the hall and prayed to

8. See *Myōhōki*, I (*Taishō*, LI, 789).

9. Source unknown.

10. 一乘經, that is, *Hoke-kyō* which expounds the Ekayana teaching that all vehicles are reduced into one vehicle on the ultimate level. See I.Preface, n. 16; III.38, n. 42.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XII, 19), *Genkō shakusho* (XXIX, 3).

2. *Bhaiṣajyaguruvaidīryaprabhatahāgata*; see Chap. II(3)b, n. 135.

3. Unidentified.

4. It may be located in the southern outskirts of the capital.

5. 宿業; see I.8, n. 4.

the image of Yakushi Buddha for restoration of her sight, saying, "I do not care for my life, only for my daughter's. Both of us are about to die. I entreat you to give me sight!" A patron of the temple who was present saw her and, in sympathy, opened the door of the hall to let her pay homage to the image and recite its name.⁶

Two days later the daughter saw something pink and as sticky as gum suddenly oozing from the breast of the image. She told her mother about it. The mother, who wanted to eat it, said to her child, "Will you take some and put it in my mouth?" It was delicious, and all at once her eyes were opened.

Indeed we learn that any vow will be fulfilled if made with utmost devotion. This is an extraordinary event.

I 2

On a Blind Man Whose Sight Was Restored Owing to His Chanting of the Name of Nichimanishu of the Thousand-armed Kannon¹

In a village east of Yakushi-ji 藥師寺² in the capital of Nara, there was a blind man whose eyes were open, but he could not see. He was devoted to Kannon and meditated on Nichimanishu 日摩尼手³ to restore his eyesight. During the day he used to sit at the eastern gate of Yakushi-ji, spread a handkerchief, and chant the name of Nichimanishu. Passersby and sympathizers put money, rice, and cereal on the handkerchief. At other times he sat in the marketplace doing the same thing. When he heard the temple bell at noon, he would go to the temple to beg food from the monks and in this way he lived for many years.

In the reign of Empress Abe, two strangers came to him, saying, "In sympathy for you we have come to cure your eyes." After they

6. 稱禮 *shōrai*.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XVI, 23).

2. See Editor's Preface, n. 4.

3. The Thousand-armed Kannon has forty arms in addition to the regular two, and each of them has twenty-five spheres of existence; hence, the figure 1,000 is arrived at. Nichimanishu or Nishhōmanishu 日精摩尼手 is the eighth right arm of the forty, which holds the jewel of the sun, a symbol of Kannon's cosmic significance. It gives off light continuously. *Senju-sengen-kanzeon-bosatsu-daihishin-darani* says, "The blind man should recite [the following *mantra*] in the name of Nishhōmanishu . . ." (*Taishō*, XX, 111a).