

On Recollecting and Reciting the Hoke-kyō and Gaining
an Immediate Reward to Show an Extraordinary Sign¹

In Kazuraki upper district, Yamato province 大和國葛木上郡,² there was once a devotee of the *Hoke-kyō*.³ He came from the Tajihi 丹治比 family,⁴ and, even before he was eight years old, he could recite the *Hoke-kyō* with the exception of one character which always escaped his memory and continued to escape it even when he was in his twenties.

Once he prayed to Kannon, confessing his offenses,⁵ and had a dream.⁶ A man said to him, "In your previous existence you were the child of Kusakabe no Saru 日下部猿⁷ in Wake district, Iyo province 伊豫國別郡.⁸ At that time while reciting the scripture you burned one character with a lamp so that you could no longer read it. Now, go and see."

When he awoke, he was filled with wonder, and he said to his parents, "I want to go to Iyo on urgent business." They consented.

Setting forth on his quest, he reached Saru's home at last and knocked at the door. A woman came and reported back to her mistress with a smile, saying, "There is a guest at the door who looks exactly like your deceased son." On hearing this, the mistress went to the door to see the guest, finding him the very image of her deceased son. In wonder, the master asked the guest, "Who are you?" And the latter answered by announcing the name of his home district and province. In turn, the

1. Cf. *Myōhōki* (II, On Ch'an (Yen)-wu 産(彦)武), *Hokke kenki* (I, 31), *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (VII, 20; XIV, 6, 12), etc. The Prince Shōtoku cycle gives one legend on the *Hoke-kyō* which was said to have been brought from China by Ono no Imoko 小野妹子 and used by the prince, Dhyāna Master Hui-ssu 慧思, in his former life. See "Shichidaiki" 七代記 in *Nara ibun*, II, 890-895; *Jōgū Shōtoku taishi-den hoketsuki* (DBZ, 112). In the late Nara and early Heian periods this legend was formed and became popular. See Iida Mizuho, "Ono no Imoko *Hoke-kyō* shōrai setsuwa," *Nihon kodaishi ronshū*, II, 435-478.

2. Present Minami-kazuraki-gun, Nara-ken.

3. 持經人 *jikyō no hito*; a translation of Skt. *sūtrāntadhāraka*; one who upholds, recollects, reads, recites, and expounds the scriptures.

4. According to the *Shinsen shōjiroku*, the Tajihi family descended from kami.

5. He repented of his past karma, for he thought he could not remember the character because of his evil deeds in the past.

6. Dreams are often occasions for revelation in which the spirit is said to leave the body and travel to the abodes of deities or the land of the dead. See Alex Waymann, "Significance of Dreams in India and Tibet," *History of Religions*, VII (No. 1, August 1967), 1-12.

7. Kusakabe is the name of a large group in the service of the emperor who were descendants of kami; they were probably first organized in Kawachi 河内 and later posted throughout the country. Saru means "monkey"; the name might be given because he was born in the year of the monkey according to the traditional Chinese calendar.

8. Present Onsen-gun, Ehime-ken 愛媛縣温泉郡.

guest asked the same question, and he was given a detailed answer. It became evident to him that they were his parents in his former life. He knelt down to pay respect to them. Saru affectionately invited him into the house, and, staring at him as he sat in the seat of honor, said, "Aren't you the spirit of my deceased son?" Their guest told them in detail about his dream and announced that the old couple were his parents. Saru, after some reminiscing, motioned to him, saying, "My late son, so and so, lived in this hall, read this scripture, and used this pitcher." The son entered the hall, opened the scripture, and found that the character which he could never remember was missing, for it had been burned with a lamp. When the young man repented of his offense and repaired the text, he could recite it correctly. Parents and son were amazed and delighted, and the son never lost the parent-child relationship and his sense of filial piety.⁹

The note says: How happy is this member of the Kusakabe family who, in pursuit of the path through Buddhist scriptures, recited the *Hoke-kyō* in two lives, present and past, and served two fathers to be renowned in posterity.¹⁰ It is an extraordinary phenomenon, and not commonplace. Indeed, we are sure it is due to the divine influence of the *Hoke-kyō* and the miraculous power of Kannon. In the same spirit, the *Zen'aku inga-kyō* 善惡因果經¹¹ says, "Look at present effects if you want to know past causes. Look at present deeds if you want to know future effects."¹²

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On Ridiculing a Reciter of the Hoke-kyō and Getting a Twisted Mouth as an Immediate Penalty¹

In Yamashiro 山背 province² there was once a self-ordained novice³

9. 孝養 *kōyō*; cf. Michihata, *Tōdai Bukkyōshi*, 271-380.

10. He who remembers his previous births succeeds in freeing himself from the world of samsara, according to Buddhist tradition. See Chap. II(2)c.

11. *Taishō*, LXXXV, No. 2881. The quotation is not found in this scripture.

12. Quoted from the *Shōkyō yōshū*, XI (*Taishō*, LIX, 53c). 欲知過去因 見其現在果 欲知未來報 見其現在業。

1. Cf. *Sanbō ekotoba* (II, 9), *Hokke kenki* (III, 96), *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XIV, 28).

2. Southern part of present Kyoto-fu.

3. 自度 *jido* or 私度 *shido*; a novice or monk without an official permit 度牒. Although the *Sōni-ryō* prescribes punishments for lay people who pretend to be monks and nuns (Article 22), a number of people left home and attempted to obtain immunity from taxation. See Chap. I(1)d; Tsumoto Ryōgaku, "Nihon ryōiki ni mieru shido no shami ni tsuite," *Ryūkyoku daigaku ronshū*, No. 348 (December 1954), 37-46.