

*On the Appearance of Good and Evil Omens Which  
Were Later Followed by Their Results<sup>1</sup>*

It is said that before good and evil events occur they are preceded by some forms of songs which spread throughout the countryside. Thereupon, all the people under heaven hear them and sing them to communicate the message.

Ex-Emperor Shōhō-ōjin-shōmu, who had governed the country for twenty-five years at Nara Palace,<sup>2</sup> called High Councilor<sup>3</sup> Fujiwara no asomi Nakamaro 藤原朝臣仲麿<sup>4</sup> close to the throne and decreed, "It is my desire to make my daughter, Princess Abe 阿倍内親王,<sup>5</sup> and Prince Funado 道祖親王<sup>6</sup> rule over the country. What do you think of this? Do you agree with my decree?" In reply Nakamaro said, "It is an excellent idea," thus expressing his consent.

Thereupon the emperor made him drink the divine wine<sup>7</sup> and swear, saying to him, "You must swear an oath that, if you forget my decree, both heaven and earth shall hate you and bring you great disaster." Therefore, Nakamaro swore, saying, "If I do not follow Your Majesty's decree in the future, deities in heaven and earth shall hate and get angry with me, and I shall incur great disaster which will destroy my body and take away my life." After swearing this oath, he drank the divine wine, and the ceremony was over. Later, when the emperor passed away, Nakamaro followed his wish according to the decree and made Prince Funado the Prince Regent.

1. This story consists of two parts; the first part illustrates the mysterious correspondence between natural phenomena and human events, while the second part is an account of Kyōkai's own experience. The latter has an autobiographical quality, although it is more symbolic than factual. The Maeda manuscript omits the first part. For the motif, see Chap. I(t)a; Chap. II(t)a.

2. Emperor Shōmu (r. 724-749).

3. 大納言 *dainagon*.

4. Or 惠美押勝 (706-764). For his biography, see *Shoku Nihongi*, XXV (Tenpyō hōji 8:9:18); Kishi Toshio, *Fujiwara no Nakamaro*. He became Chancellor of the Junior First Rank in 760.

5. (718-770). The eldest daughter of Emperor Shōmu and Empress Kōmyō, and a cousin to Nakamaro; she became Princess Regent at the age of twenty-one. In 749, when she was enthroned as Empress Kōken 孝謙, Nakamaro was made High Councillor of the Senior Third Rank.

6. 道祖王 (d. 757). In 756 ex-Emperor Shōmu died, and, according to his last wishes, Prince Funado was appointed Prince Regent on the same day. However, Empress Kōken and Nakamaro replaced him with Prince Ōhi 大炊 in the next year. See *Shoku Nihongi*, XIX (Tenpyō shōhō 8:5:2, 9:3:29, 9:4:4). He joined in the rebellion against Nakamaro and Empress Kōken and was executed in 757. See II.40.

7. 祈御酒 *ukei no misake*, used in the ritual to swear before the kami.

When the empress dowager<sup>8</sup> and Empress Abe<sup>9</sup> resided at Nara Palace, all the people under heaven sang a song which said:

A young prince, who passes away at such a young age,  
Like a dead fish floating on the water:  
When will your life be taken? Oh, poor flatfish!  
When will your life be taken?

Then, on the eighteenth day of the eighth month, in the ninth year of the Tenpyō shōhō era, the reign of Empress Abe and the empress dowager, the name of the era was changed from Tenpyō shōhō to Tenpyō hōji.<sup>10</sup> In the same year Prince Regent Funado was captured at the palace, imprisoned, and executed. Together with him were killed Prince Kifumi 黃文王,<sup>11</sup> Prince Shioyaki 鹽燒王,<sup>12</sup> and their families.

Again in the tenth month in the eighth year of the Hōji era, Emperor Ōhi 大炊<sup>13</sup> was attacked by ex-Empress Abe and dethroned, retiring to Awaji province 淡路國. Also killed were Nakamaro and his family. The song quoted in the above was an omen of the fatal destiny of these princes.

Also in the reign of the empress dowager there was a song which circulated among the people in the country:

Don't be contemptuous of monks because of their robes.  
For under their skirts are hung garters and hammers.<sup>14</sup>  
When the hammers erect themselves,  
The monks turn out to be awesome lords.

Or, there was another song that went like this:

Lie down along  
The dark valley of my thighs  
Till you become a man.

In the reign of Empress Abe, in the beginning of the second year of the snake, the first year of the Tenpyō jingo era, Dharma Master

8. Empress Kōmyō (700-760).

9. Empress Kōken.

10. 757. It is said the four characters 天平大平 appeared on the canopy of the empress' bedroom. This event may be interpreted as a political measure to smooth over the replacement of the prince regent.

11. The son of Prince Nagaya (see II.1), he was executed with Prince Funado.

12. Prince Funado's brother, who escaped accusation because he did not participate in the rebellion. In 764, however, Nakamaro supported him as successor to the throne, and he and Nakamaro were executed as rebels against the court. Kyōkai is mistaken in adding his name to those who were killed in Nakamaro's rebellion.

13. (r. 758-764). Grandson of Emperor Tenmu, married to Nakamaro's daughter-in-law and thus supported by Nakamaro. He was exiled to Awaji after Nakamaro's unsuccessful rebellion, but he tried to escape and died an unnatural death in 765.

14. Garters refer to the monks' political involvement; hammers to their love affairs.

Dōkyō 道鏡 of the Yuge 弓削 family<sup>15</sup> had intercourse with the empress on the same pillow, hearing the affairs of state and ruling over the country together. The above songs were a prediction of his relations with the empress and his control over state affairs.

Also in the reign of the empress dowager, there was a song that went like this:

Look straight at the root of the tree,  
And you will find the most venerable master  
Standing satiated and fat.

It is evident that this was a prediction of the participation in state affairs of Dharma Master Dōkyō as Dharma King 法皇 and Dharma Master Ingō 韻興<sup>16</sup> of the Kamo 鴨 family as spiritual councillor.<sup>17</sup>

Or, in the reign of ex-Emperor Shōhō-ōjin who governed the country at Nara Palace for twenty-five years, this song was sung by people all over the country:

The morning sun is shining over Sakurai 櫻井,<sup>18</sup>  
West of the Toyura-dera 豊浦寺,  
A white jewel sinks at Sakurai;  
A good jewel sinks at Sakurai.  
Therefore, my house will prosper.

Later, in the reign of Empress Abe, on the fourth day of the eighth month in the seventh year of the dog, the fourth year of the Jingo keiun era,<sup>19</sup> Emperor Shirakabe ascended to the throne, and on the first of the tenth month of the same year, when a turtle was presented from Tsukushi province, the era name was once again changed, this time to Hōki, and thus he ruled over the country. Therefore, we learn that the song was a sign of the reign of Emperor Shirakabe.

Or, in the reign of Empress Abe, all over the country, men sang:

Don't trample on the slope of Yabe 山部坂<sup>20</sup>  
Which faces the imperial palace,  
Though it is the earth.

After the circulation of this song, on the fifteenth day of the fourth month in the eighth year of the cock, the first year of the Ten'ō<sup>21</sup>

15. (705?-772). He came from Wakae district, Kawachi province 河内國若江郡 studied under Giin 義淵 and Rōben 良辨 (see II.21, n. 4), was put in charge of the court chapel, and won the empress' favor. See Yokota Ken'ichi, *Dōkyō*.

16. Or Ongō; appointed senior assistant executive in 766, of the Kamo-no-asomi family.

17. 法臣參議.

18. The name of a well. See *Shoku Nihongi*, XXXI (Hōki 1: 10), for another version of this song.

19. 770 (Jingo keiun 4, Hōki 1).

20. Yabe-saka faces Fujiwara Palace. It implies Prince Yamabe.

21. 781.

era, in the reign of Emperor Shirakabe, Emperor Yamabe ascended to the throne to rule over the country. Therefore, it is clear that the song was a prediction of his reign.

In the reign of Emperor Yamabe, on the night of the eighth of the eleventh month, in the first year of the rat, the third year of the Enryaku era,<sup>22</sup> all heavenly stars moved and flew about wildly from eight in the evening to four in the morning. On the eleventh of the same month, the emperor with Prince Regent Sawara 早良<sup>23</sup> moved the palace from Nara 諾樂 to Nagaoka 長岡.<sup>24</sup> The flight of the heavenly stars was a sign that the imperial palace would be moved.

On the night of the fifteenth day of the ninth month, the second year of the ox, the following year,<sup>25</sup> the moon looked dark all night in the lightless sky. At ten o'clock on the evening of the twenty-third of the same month, Fujiwara no asomi Tanetsugu 藤原朝臣種繼,<sup>26</sup> Minister of Ceremony<sup>27</sup> of the Senior Third Rank, was killed by an arrow in a residential quarter of Nagaoka Palace by Ojika no sukune Kozumi 雄鹿宿禰木積 and Hahaki no Mochimaro 波々岐將丸, imperial guards.<sup>28</sup> The disappearance of the moonlight was an omen of the death of Lord Tanetsugu.

In the reign of the same emperor, at six in the evening on the fourth of the ninth month in the autumn of the fourth year of the hare, the sixth year of the Enryaku era,<sup>29</sup> Monk Kyōkai, stricken with remorse, grieved over himself, lamenting and saying:

"Ah! What a shame! Born in this world, I know no way to make a living. Because of karmic causation<sup>30</sup> I am bound by the net of

22. 784, in the reign of Emperor Kanmu.

23. (d. 785). Emperor Kōnin's second son and Emperor Kanmu's brother, he was made prince regent in 781, but was deposed and exiled to Awaji province, dying on the way (see n. 26, below). As his spirit terrified the imperial family and the Fujiwaras, he was given a posthumous title of emperor and ceremonially reburied.

24. The capital from 784 to 799, located at present Mukō-machi, Otokuni-gun, Kyoto-fu 京都府乙訓郡向日町.

25. 785, in Emperor Kanmu's reign.

26. (737-785). A grandson of Fujiwara no Umakai 藤原宇合, a member of the Shikike 式家 branch of the Fujiwara family and named after the title Shikibukyō (see n. 26, below) conferred on Umakai. He was favored by Emperor Kanmu and was put in charge of the construction of the capital of Nagaoka. Prince Regent Sawara was deposed because of involvement in his assassination. See *Shoku Nihongi*, XXXVIII (Enryaku 4:9:23, 24); *Nihon kiryaku* (Enryaku 4:9:23, 24).

27. 式部卿 the minister of ceremony had charge of court ceremonies, advancement and conferring ranks, appointment and assessment of local officials, qualifying examination of government officials, etc.

28. They are unknown imperial guards 近衛舍人.

29. 787. See Chap. I(1)a, for the following autobiographical passage.

30. 等流果 *tōruka*, the result of a past cause, where the result is of the same quality as the cause, but in this passage it means karmic causation in general.

lust, enveloped in cravings, combining death and life, running in all directions, and burning my body alive. Remaining in the secular life, I have no means to support my family and am without food, salt, clothes, or firewood. My mind is never at rest, worrying about the things I need. As I am hungry and freezing in the daytime, so at night I am hungry and freezing. For in my previous lives I did not practice almsgiving. How mean my heart is! How low my deeds are!”

Then at midnight, while sleeping, he had a dream: a mendicant came to his door, recited the scripture, and preached, saying:

“If you practice the good of the upper grade,<sup>31</sup> you will become seventeen feet tall; if you practice the good of the lower grade,<sup>32</sup> you will become ten feet tall.”

Having heard this, Kyōkai looked around to see the mendicant and discovered that he was Novice Kyōnichi of the village of Awa in Kusumi, Nakusa district, Kii province 紀伊國名草郡楠見粟村.<sup>33</sup> Looking at him closely, he found a wooden tablet<sup>34</sup> about twenty feet long and one foot wide. On the tablet there were two marks, one at the height of ten feet, and the other at the height of seventeen feet. Seeing this, Kyōkai asked, “Are they marking the heights of those who practice the good of the upper and lower grades?” The answer was, “Yes, they are.”

Thereupon Kyōkai was stricken with remorse, making a sign of repentance, and said, “Thus one gets great height by practicing the good of the upper and lower grades. I am only about five feet tall, for I did not practice the good of even the lower grade before. How foolish I was!” Repenting, he grieved and lamented. Having heard his remark, all who stood by said, “You are right!”

Then Kyōkai made an offering to the mendicant of a few cups of white rice which he was about to cook. The mendicant received it with a blessing<sup>35</sup> and immediately took out a scroll to give to Kyōkai, saying, “Copy this scroll, for it is an excellent scripture to guide people.” Kyōkai looked at it and discovered that it was the *Shokyō yōshū*,<sup>36</sup> which is as good as the mendicant had said. In grief, Kyōkai

31. 上品善 *jōhon no zen*.

32. 下品善 *gehon no zen*.

33. Present Nagusa-gun, Wakayama-ken.

34. A provincial magistrate's messenger or King Yama's messenger carries the same type of tablet but not as big as this. See II.10, n. 5; III.22, n. 8; III.23, n. 10.

35. 咒願 *juigan*; a short prayer, blessing, or vow expressed in short phrases. See II.8, n. 9; II.12, 16.

36. See Chap. I(1)a, n. 14.

said, “What shall I do? I have no paper to copy it on.” The mendicant took out some used paper and gave it to Kyōkai, saying, “Copy it on this paper. In the meantime I will visit other places for begging and come back here.” Then he went away, leaving the tablet and the scripture.

Thereupon Kyōkai said, “This novice does not usually beg food. Why is he doing it now?” Somebody answered, “Because he has many children. As he does not have any way to support them, he is begging.”

This is the dream I had, and I am not sure what it means. I suspect it is none other than a revelation of Buddha. The novice may be an incarnation of Kannon. As one who is not yet ordained is called a novice; so is Kannon, who remains in the stage of self-discipline<sup>37</sup> in order to save all sentient beings in spite of having attained enlightenment. Begging shows the thirty-three incarnations of Kannon illustrated in the “Chapter on the All-Sided One.”<sup>38</sup> “The seventeen feet of the upper grade” is the result of all virtues in the pure land. Ten feet is a complete number, for it is perfect, while seven feet is incomplete, for it is imperfect. “The ten feet of the lower grade” is the result of the cravings in this world and heaven. “Being stricken with remorse, making a sign of repentance” means that one has been endowed with good causes,<sup>39</sup> and by adding wisdom and practice one may make up for sins in previous lives and gain benefits. Repentance, shaving oneself, wearing a surplice, and showing remorse help destroy sins and gain benefits. “I am only about five feet tall” may be analyzed as follows: “five” refers to the five ways of being, and “about” means tentative orientation<sup>40</sup> to the upper or lower spheres according to the working of the mind. For “about” does not designate a specific number, and it does not give an exact height.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, it is the cause for five different modes of being.

Offering white rice to a mendicant refers to practicing good by vowing to make a Buddha image and copy a scripture in order to

37. 位 *in'i*; literally the stage in which bodhisattvas accumulate causes to become Buddhas. Buddhahood is called 果位 *kai*, the stage of consequences.

38. *Myōhōrenge-kyō*, “Kanzeon bosatsu fumon-bon” (*Taishō*, IX, 57 a-c).

39. 種子 *shushi* or *shuji*; meaning, literally, seeds. As plants grow from seeds, so consequences arise from causes. According to the teaching of the Hossō School, the seeds are stored in the *ālayavijñāna*. See Chap. I(1)a, n. 6.

40. Only the Maeda manuscript has 不定種性 *fujō no shujō*, meaning tentative potentiality. For *shujō*, see Chap. II(2)a, n. 63.

41. 非尺非丈.

get the great white bullock-cart.<sup>42</sup> The mendicant's acceptance of them with a blessing means that Kannon accepted the prayer. Giving a scripture is interpreted as adding wisdom to the path seekers by giving new seeds for good. Taking out used paper implies that good seeds of wisdom covered and hidden for a long time in the past will be revealed by practicing the good dharma. "I will visit other places for begging and come back here" may be paraphrased as "Kannon's boundless compassion will fill the world and save all sentient beings, and Kyōkai's wish will be granted with fortune and benefits given." "He does not usually beg food" means that Kyōkai has not sensed anything till he makes a vow. "Why is he doing it now?" may be interpreted that benefits will finally be given to him according to his wish. "He has many children" means that there are many sentient beings to guide and teach. "He does not have any ways to support them" means that those who lack potentiality are not oriented for enlightenment. "He is begging to support them" means that they are getting seeds in this world and heaven.

Again Kyōkai had another dream on the night of the seventeenth of the third month, in the spring of the second year of the ox, the seventh year of the Enryaku era.<sup>43</sup>

In the dream, Kyōkai died, and his corpse was burned with fire-wood. Thereupon his spirit watched his corpse burn, but it did not burn as he wished. Therefore, he took a stick to skewer his corpse and broil it. He said to others who were burying their corpses, "Burn as well as I do." His legs, knees, joint bones, elbows, head and other parts were all burned and fell off. Then Kyōkai's spirit cried aloud, putting his mouth to the ear of a bystander to tell him his wish, but his voice sounded hollow and the bystander did not answer. Then Kyōkai thought that he could not hear his voice as the spirit of the dead was voiceless.

42. See *Myōhōrenge-kyō* (*Taishō*, IX, 12b-13c); Katō, trans., *Myōhōrenge-kyō*, 82-100; Kern, *Saddharma*, 72-76. This is the most famous parable of the *Hoke-kyō*: Once there was an old, rich householder who had a great mansion with one door. Suddenly his house was swept by a blaze while he was outside but his children were playing inside. In order to make them run out of the house, the father called them saying that bullock-carts, goat-carts, and deer-carts were ready for them. When they rushed out of the house safely, thanks to the father's skill in means, he gave them only bullock-carts, saying that he would give them only the greatest vehicles. In China this parable gave rise to a debate. One party maintains that the bullock-cart is *bodhisattvayāna*, the goat-cart *pratyekabuddhayāna*, and the deer-cart *śrāvakayāna*. (The house is the world of karma and samsara, and Buddha uses skillful means to save all beings.) Therefore, the bullock-cart is Mahayana, which the *Hoke-kyō* teaches. The other party says the bullock-cart and the great cart are different, and that there are four kinds of carts altogether. The above three are the teachings of skill in means and the fourth cart is the true teaching of Buddha.

43. 788, the year of his second dream.

44. For an interpretation of this dream, see Chap. I(1)a.

This dream has not been interpreted yet.<sup>44</sup> He only suspects that it is a sign of attaining longevity or an official rank. He hopes that by waiting he will learn the meaning of the dream in the future.

Then, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth year in the winter of the second year of the boar, the fourteenth year of the Enryaku era,<sup>45</sup> Kyōkai was given the Junior Rank of Transmission of Light.<sup>46</sup> In the fourth and fifth months in the summer of the sixteenth year of the Enryaku era, in the reign of the same emperor residing at Nara Palace,<sup>47</sup> a fox came to Kyōkai's room to cry every night. The fox also dug a hole in the wall of the hall built by Kyōkai<sup>48</sup> and entered inside the hall, soiling the seat of the Buddha with filth and crying in the daytime. Two hundred and twenty days or so passed, and Kyōkai's son died.<sup>49</sup>

Again, about the eleventh and twelfth months of the sixth year of the hare, the eighteenth year, a fox cried, and at times the sound of a cicada was heard. In the following year, the seventh year of the dragon, on the twelfth of the first month, Kyōkai's horse died, and on the twenty-fifth of the same month another horse died. Accordingly, it is evident that an omen of disaster appears first, and disaster comes later. Kyōkai, however, has not studied the *yin-yang tao* 陰陽道 of Huang Ti 黃帝,<sup>50</sup> nor understood the profound truth of the Tendai Sage 天台智者,<sup>51</sup> and he is stricken with disaster without knowing how to evade it, worrying and grieving without looking for the way to do away with disaster. We must work hard for discipline, and maintain a sense of awe.

## 39

### *On the Rebirth as a Prince of a Monk Who Excelled in Both Wisdom and Discipline<sup>1</sup>*

The secular name of Dhyāna Master Saka Zenshu 尺善珠禪師<sup>2</sup> was

45. 794.

46. 傳燈住位 *Dentō jū-i*; see Chap. I(1)a, n. 5.

47. 797, in Emperor Kanmu's reign. 平城宮 Nara Palace should read Heian Palace.

48. The translation follows the Maeda manuscript which has "wall" 私造堂壁, but other manuscripts lack the last character.

49. See Chap. I(1)a, nn. 22, 23.

50. 軒轅黃帝 Kenion Kōtei; 軒轅 Hsien-yüan is a name for Huang Ti, or the Yellow Emperor, which probably originated with his home district in Honan. See Chap. I(1)b, n. 52.

51. See Chap. I(1)b, n. 51.

1. Cf. *Fusō ryakki* (Shō II, Kanmu), *Genkō shakusho* (II).

2. See III.35, n. 18.