

## Preface to Volume III<sup>1</sup>

The Inner Scriptures<sup>2</sup> show how good and evil deeds are repaid, while the Outer Writings<sup>3</sup> show how good and bad fortunes bring merit and demerit. If we study all the discourses Śākyamuni made during his lifetime, we learn that there are three periods: first, the period of the true dharma (*shōbō* 正法), which lasts five hundred years; second, the period of the counterfeit dharma (*zōbō* 像法), lasting a thousand years; and third, the period of the degenerate dharma (*mappō* 末法), which continues for ten thousand years. By the fourth year of the hare, the sixth year of the Enryaku era,<sup>4</sup> seventeen hundred and twenty-two years have passed since Buddha entered nirvana.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, we live in the age of the degenerate dharma following the first two periods. Now in Japan, by the sixth year of the Enryaku era, two hundred and thirty-six years have elapsed since the arrival of the Buddha, Dharma, and Samgha.<sup>6</sup> Flowers bloom without voice, and cocks cry without tears. In the present world those who practice good are as few as flowers on rocky hills, but those who do evil are as plentiful as weeds in the soil. Without knowing the law of karmic retribution, one offends as easily as a blind man loses his way. A tiger is known by its tail.<sup>7</sup> Those devoted to fame, profit, and killing doubt the immediate repayment of good and evil which occurs as quickly as a mirror reflects. One who is possessed of an evil spirit is like one who holds a poisonous snake; the poison is always there ready to appear.

The great power of karmic retribution reaches us as quickly as sound echoes in a valley.<sup>8</sup> If we call, the echo never fails to answer, and this is the way karmic retribution works in this life. How can we fail to be more careful? It is useless to repent after spending a lifetime in vain. Who can enjoy immortality since you are given a limited life? How can you depend on your transient life as being eternal? We are already in the age of the degenerate dharma.<sup>9</sup> How can we live with-

1. The Shinpukuji manuscript lacks the first ten lines of the preface. The only extant manuscript which has this paragraph is the Maeda manuscript, and thus this portion is called "Unknown Passage of the Maeda Manuscript." For a discussion of it, see Chap. I(1)b. It consists of one hundred and seventy-seven characters, translated as the first paragraph.

2. 内經 *naikyō*; see I.Preface, n. 1.

3. 外典 *geten*; see I. Preface, n. 2.

4. 787.

5. See Chap. I(1)b, n. 36. The date around 480 B.C. is accepted by most modern scholars.

6. 538 or 552. There is an indication that Kyōkai adopts 552 as the year for the official introduction of Buddhism to Japan.

7. The text may be corrupt.

8. See Chap. I(2)a, n. 139; I.Preface, n. 24.

9. 末劫 *matsugō*; 劫 *kō*, an abbreviated transliteration of Skt. *kalpa*, an astronomical length of time.

out doing good? My heart aches for all beings. How can we be saved from calamity in the age of the degenerate dharma? If we offer monks only a handful of food, the merit of our good deed will save us from the calamity of hunger. If we keep a precept of nonkilling for a day, we will be saved from the calamity of sword and battle.

Once there was a full-fledged monk who lived on a mountain and practiced meditation. At every meal he shared his food with a crow which came to him every day. After a vegetarian meal, he chewed a toothpick,<sup>10</sup> cleaned his mouth, washed his hands and played with a stone. The crow was behind the hedge when he threw the stone. He hit the crow without knowing that it was there. The crow died on the spot, its head crushed into pieces, and was reborn as a boar. The boar lived in the same mountain as the monk. It happened to go to the place above his hut, rooting about among the rocks for food, whereupon one of the rocks rolled down and killed the monk. Although the boar had no intention of killing him, the rock rolled down by itself. A sin committed by an action which is neither good nor bad<sup>11</sup> will in turn generate the same kind of action. In the case of intentional murder, how is it possible to escape the penalty? A deluded mind produces the seed and fruit of evil; an enlightened mind produces the seed of good to attain Buddhahood.

I, the mediocre monk Kyōkai, have not studied enough to ask questions in the manner of the Tendai Sage.<sup>12</sup> Nor am I sufficiently enlightened to answer in the manner of holy and eloquent men.<sup>13</sup> My efforts are like bailing water out of the ocean with a shell or looking at the sky through a straw. Though I am not an eminent monk who transmits the light of dharma<sup>14</sup> I try hard to meditate on it, following the path to the pure land and directing the mind toward enlightenment. I repent of my previous misdeeds and pray for future good. By editing these stories of miraculous events I want to pull the people forward by the ears, offer my hand to lead them to good, and show them how to cleanse their feet of evil. My sincere hope is that we may all be reborn in the western land of bliss, leaving no one on the earth, and live together in the jeweled palace in heaven, abandoning our earthly residence.

10. See I.26, n. 5.

11. 無記 *muki*. This story may have originated in the *Bonmō-kyō bosatsukaihon-sho* 梵網經菩薩戒本疏 (*Taishō*, XL, 611), according to Haraguchi ("Nihon ryōiki shutten goku kanken," *Kuntengo*, No. 34, 61-62).

12. 天台智者; see Chap. I(1)b, n. 51.

13. 神人辯者.

14. 傳燈良匠.

# I

## On the Tongues of the Reciters of the Hoke-kyō Which Did Not Decay in the Skulls Exposed to the Elements<sup>1</sup>

In the reign of Empress Abe 帝姬阿倍天皇<sup>2</sup> who governed Ōyashima<sup>3</sup> at Nara Palace, there was a monk, Dhyāna Master Eigō 永興<sup>4</sup> in the village of Kumano in Muro district, Kii province 紀伊國牟婁郡熊野村.<sup>5</sup> He taught and guided the people by the sea. His contemporaries revered him as a bodhisattva, respecting his self-discipline.<sup>6</sup> As he lived in a place south of the imperial capital, he was called the Bodhisattva of the South 南菩薩.<sup>7</sup>

Once a *dhyāna* master came to the bodhisattva. He had with him a copy of the *Hoke-kyō* (written with very small characters in one scroll),<sup>8</sup> a pewter pitcher, and a stool made of rope.<sup>9</sup> He used to recite the *Hoke-kyō* constantly. After one year or so, he thought of leaving Dhyāna Master Eigō, and with a bow presented his stool as an offering, saying, "I am leaving you and going into the mountains to cross over to Ise province 伊勢國."<sup>10</sup> Hearing this, the master gave him one bushel of ground dry glutinous rice, and had two lay brothers accompany him to see him on his way. After having been escorted for a day, he gave them his *Hoke-kyō*, bowl, and ground dry rice, and sent them back, while he continued with only twenty yards of hemp rope and a pewter pitcher.

After two years had passed, the villagers of Kumano went up to a mountain by the upper stream of the Kumano to cut down trees

1. This section consists of two independent stories on the same motif of the "singing skull." See Chap. II(1)b, n. 41, and (3)a. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XII, 31), *Genkō shakusho* (XXIX, 3).

2. Teiki Abe no sumeramikoto, that is, Empress Kōken 孝謙 (r. 749-757) or Shōtoku 稱德 (r. 764-770), twice enthroned. It is hard to know whether this story should be dated in her first or second reign.

3. See II.1, n. 3.

4. See III.2, nn. 3, 4, 5. Also see the *Shoku Nihongi*, XXXII (Hōki 3:3:6). He was appointed as one of the ten *dhyāna* masters in 772.

5. In the vicinity of present Shingū-shi, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣新宮市.

6. 行 *gyō*.

7. Minami no bosatsu.

8. Kyōkai's note.

9. Monks are allowed to possess and carry scriptures, a begging bowl, a pitcher of water for drinking and washing, a stick, a toothpick, a stool made of rope, etc. in traveling. In the Mahayana tradition, the number of such items is eighteen (十八物 *jūhachimotsu*).

10. Present Mie-ken 三重縣.