

*On the Visit to the Palace of King Yama by a Woman,
Devotee of the Shin-gyō, and the Following
Extraordinary Event¹*

Tokari no ubai 利莉優婆夷² came from Kawachi 河内 province. As her surname was Tokari no suguri 利莉村主,³ she was called Tokari no ubai. With an innately pure heart she had faith in the Three Treasures⁴ and used to recite the *Shin-gyō*⁵ as a form of religious discipline. Her chanting was so beautiful that she was loved and appreciated by clergy and laity alike.

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, this lay sister died while asleep, a sudden death without suffering, and went to King Yama.⁶ Seeing her, the king stood up, made a seat, and spread a mat [for her], saying, "I have heard that you are very good at reciting the *Shin-gyō*. I was longing to hear you, and this is why I have invited you here for a short visit. Will you please recite the scripture? I am listening." She did so, and the king, delighted, rose from his seat and knelt to pay his respects to her, saying, "How noble! The rumor was true."

When three days had passed, the king said to her, "Now it is time for you to go home." When she came out of the palace, there stood three men in yellow robes.⁷ They were delighted to see her, saying, "We met you only once before. We have longed to see you since we have not met for so long. What good luck brought you here! Hurry on home, and we will see you without fail in the east market of the capital of Nara⁸ three days from today." Then she left them, returned home, and awoke.

On the morning of the third day she decided to go to the east market of the city because of the promise, but though she made her way there and waited all day, the three men did not come. Only a humble man came into the market by the east gate to sell Buddhist scriptures. He displayed them, calling out, "Will anybody buy some

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XIV, 31).

2. The name Tokari may have originated with a local name in Kawachi province. *Ubai* is a transliteration of Skt. *upāsikā*, one who keeps the five precepts while remaining in lay status. The male counterpart is *ubasoku*.

3. *Suguri* is a title often conferred on immigrants.

4. 三寶 *sanbō*; see Chap. II(3)b.

5. *Hannya haramitsu shin-gyō* 般若波羅蜜心經; see Chap. II(1)a, n. 19.

6. 閻羅王; see Chap. II(1)c.

7. As it turns out later, they are the spirits of the scriptures she copied. Their yellow robes may signify scriptures which were written on yellow paper.

8. There was a market on each side of the capital.

scriptures?" Passing the sister, he went out of the city by the west gate. As she wanted to buy the scriptures, she sent for him to return, and, on opening them, she discovered that they were the two volumes of the *Bonmō-kyō* 梵網經⁹ and the one volume of the *Shin-gyō* she had copied in the past. They had been stolen before the dedication ceremony, and she had looked for them unsuccessfully for many years. With forbearance and great joy in her heart, she asked the price of the man, whom she knew had stolen them, saying, "How much do you want?" He replied, "I want five hundred pieces¹⁰ for each scroll." She bought them at this price.

It occurred to her that the three scrolls were the three men who had promised to meet her at the market. Thereupon she held a service to read these scriptures and deepened her faith in the law of causality. She recited the scriptures with even more devotion, never ceasing the recitation day and night.

How miraculous! Just as the *Nehan-gyō* says: "If a man does good deeds, his name will be noticed among heavenly beings; if he does evil deeds, his name will be recorded in hell."¹¹

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*On the Mother Who Had a Bad Dream, with the Utmost
Faith¹ Had a Scripture Recited, and Saved Her
Daughter by an Extraordinary Sign²*

In the village of Yamamura in Sou upper district, Yamato province 大和國添上郡山村里,³ there lived an aged mother⁴ whose name is unknown. She had a married daughter who bore two children. Her son-in-law was appointed provincial magistrate,⁵ and he took his family to his post. Several years passed.

9. *Bonmō-kyō* (*Brahmajālasūtra*) (*Taishō*, XXIV, No. 1484).

10. 文 *mon*.

11. See I.27, nn. 9, 10.

1. 至誠心; one of the three minds (至誠心, 深心, 廻向發願心) which lead to rebirth in the pure land. The Chinese monk Shan-tao 善導 (613-681) says that by the utmost faith is meant the essential sincerity which generates the physical act of prostration, the oral deed of praising Buddha, and the mental deed of meditating on Buddha with concentration (see the *Nihon ryōiki*, ed. by Kasuga and Endō, 236, n. 2). See his *Ōjō raisan* (*Taishō*, XLVII, 1980); also, I.22, n. 10.

2. Cf. *Sanbō ekotoba* (II,12).

3. See I.10, n. 2.

4. 長母; in order to differentiate the mother from her daughter 長 is added to 母.

5. 縣主宰 *agata no mikotomochi*, or 国司 *kuni no tsukasa*.

Once the old mother, who had stayed in the home village to take care of the household, received an omen in a dream concerning her daughter. Surprised and fearful, she wanted to have a scripture recited for her daughter, but she was too poor to ask a monk to do it. As her mind was never free of worry for her daughter, she finally thought of taking off her robe and washing it to offer it to the monk for his service. Then another omen appeared in a dream. In even greater fear she took off her skirt, cleaned it, and, as she had done before, gave it as an offering to the monk for reciting a scripture.

Meanwhile her daughter was living in the official residence for a provincial magistrate at her husband's post. It happened that her children were playing in the court, while she herself was inside the back quarters. The two children saw seven monks seated on the roof reciting a scripture. They called to their mother, saying, "Mother, seven monks are chanting a scripture on the roof. Hurry! Come and see them!" The chanting sounded like bees humming together. Wondering at this, the mother had scarcely come out of the rear building when its wall collapsed. All of a sudden, the seven monks disappeared. Greatly terrified and marveling at this accident, she thought to herself that heaven and earth had saved her from being crushed. Later, however, she heard from her mother who had sent a messenger to tell her about the evil omens and the subsequent services for the recitation of scriptures. She was so impressed with her mother's report that she professed her faith in the Three Treasures with the greatest awe.

Thus we know that the whole sequence of events was generated by the power of reciting scriptures and the determination of the Three Treasures to protect us.

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On the Clay Divine Image Which Showed an Extraordinary Sign by Emanating Light from Its Legs and Incurred an Immediate Reward¹

On a hill east of the capital of Nara² there was a temple named Konsu 金鷲.³ In that mountain temple lived a man who was popularly called

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVII, 49), *Fusō ryakki* (Shō II, Shōmu), *Genkō shakusho* (XXVIII, Jizōshi), *Hōbutsu-shū* (V), *Kojidan* (III), etc. A famous story on the foundation of the original Tōdai-ji.

2. Present Kasugayama 春日山 area.

3. Or 金鐘寺 which was the old name of Hokke-dō, Tōdai-ji.

Konsu ubasoku⁴ because he made his residence there. That temple has since become Tōdai-ji 東大寺.⁵

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, before the establishment of the huge temple,⁶ Konsu the Ascetic stayed there and lived a disciplined life. In the temple was enshrined a clay image of Shūkongōjin 執金剛神.⁷ The ascetic never ceased to pray day and night, holding a rope tied to the legs of the image.⁸

It happened that light emanated from its legs and reached the imperial palace. In surprise and wonder, the emperor sent a messenger to discover its origin. The imperial messenger⁹ traced the light back to the temple, where he found a lay brother prostrating himself before Buddha and confessing his offenses,¹⁰ holding in his hand a rope tied to the legs of the divine image. The messenger went back immediately to report this to the emperor. The emperor sent for the ascetic, and asked, "What have you been praying for?" In reply he said, "I prayed that I might renounce the world and devote myself to the study of Buddhist teachings."¹¹ Therefore he was ordained¹² by an edict and adopted the name Konsu. The emperor admired his practice and made sufficient offerings to provide the four necessities.¹³ People called him Bodhisattva Konsu, praising his discipline.

The image of Shūkongōjin which gave off the light still stands at the north door of Kensaku-dō 羈索堂¹⁴ of Tōdai-ji.

The note says: How good is Konsu the Ascetic! He kindled a fire of faith in spring and made it flare up in the autumn. The light from the legs helped the fire to be recognized, and the emperor reverently revealed the sign of his faith in Buddha.¹⁵ Indeed we learn from this story that no vow is made without obtaining a response.

4. Identified with Rōben 良辨 (689-773), who came from Ōmi province. Tradition says he was caught by an eagle and abandoned in front of Kasuga Shrine in Nara, where Giin 義淵 saved him and taught him the Hossō doctrines. In 733 Emperor Shōmu founded Konshō-ji for him, and after it was expanded into Tōdai-ji, he was in charge of the great temple. He became *sōjō* in 760. See I.9, n. 1, for the story of a child carried away by an eagle.

5. See Chap. I(1)c, for the construction of Tōdai-ji.

6. Its construction started in 747 and was completed in 749. Since the image of Lochana Buddha was dedicated in 752 (see I.Preface, n. 14), that is also taken as the year of the erection of Tōdai-ji.

7. Skt. Vajradhara, the guardian of dharma, originally a Vedic deity that was adopted in the Buddhist tradition; also an incarnation of Kannon.

8. This practice is called 綱引業 *tsunahiki-gyō* which became popular during the Heian period, particularly among those who aspired to rebirth in the pure land.

9. 勅信 *chokushin*.

10. 禮佛海邊 *raibutsu keka*; for *keka*, see Chap. II(1)a.

11. 佛法 *Buppō*.

12. 得度 *tokudo*; see Chap. I(1)d.

13. 四事 *shiji*, a shortened form of 四事供養 *shiji kuyō*, four kinds of offerings; shelter, clothing, food and drink, and flowers and incense.

14. Or 法華堂 Hokke-dō, 三月堂 Sangatsu-dō.

15. Refers to Emperor Shōmu.