

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.<sup>9</sup>

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.<sup>10</sup> 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<sup>11</sup> says, "Look at present effects if you want to know past causes. Look at present deeds if you want to know future effects."<sup>12</sup>

## I9

### *On Ridiculing a Reciter of the Hoke-kyō and Getting a Twisted Mouth as an Immediate Penalty*<sup>1</sup>

In Yamashiro 山背 province<sup>2</sup> there was once a self-ordained novice<sup>3</sup>

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 *Shokyō 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 monogatarihū* (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," *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū*, No. 348 (December 1954), 37-46.

whose name is unknown. He used to play *go* 碁<sup>4</sup> all the time. One day when he was playing *go* with a layman,<sup>5</sup> a mendicant came to recite the *Hoke-kyō*<sup>6</sup> and beg for alms. The novice laughed at him, mimicking his accent with a twisted mouth. The layman was greatly shocked at this and exclaimed, "How awful!" at each turn in the game. The layman won the game every time, and the novice lost. Meanwhile the novice's mouth became twisted, and no medicine could cure it.

The gist of this story is stated in the *Hoke-kyō* as follows: "Those who laugh at and slight this scripture will lose many teeth and get a twisted mouth, a flattened nose, crippled limbs and squint eyes."<sup>7</sup> It is better to be possessed by evil spirits and talk in a daze than to abuse the devotees of the *Hoke-kyō*. Remember that evil comes from one's mouth.<sup>8</sup>

## 20

### *On a Monk Who Gave away the Firewood Provided to Heat the Bath and Was Reborn as an Ox for Labor, Showing an Extraordinary Sign<sup>1</sup>*

Saka Eshō 釋惠勝<sup>2</sup> was a monk<sup>3</sup> of Engō-ji 延興寺.<sup>4</sup> Once he gave away a bundle of firewood to be used for boiling water for the bath,<sup>5</sup> and then he died.

At that time the temple kept a cow which gave birth to a calf. When the calf grew into an ox, it was continually made to draw a cart filled with firewood. One day, as it entered the temple precincts

4. The *Sōni-ryō* (Article 9) prohibits monks and nuns from performing music or games of chance, but they are allowed to play the *koto* 琴 (a string instrument) and the game of *go*. See Sansom, "Early Japanese Laws," Part Two, 129.

5. 白衣 *hyakue*, meaning literally "white robe," in contrast to the saffron or black robes of monks.

6. *Hoke-kyō-bon*.

7. *Hoke-kyō*, XXVIII (*Taishō*, IX, 62a). 若有輕笑之者 當世世牙齒疎缺 醜唇平鼻 手脚瘰癧 眼目角睜。See Katō, trans., *Myōhō-enge-kyō*, 438.

8. 惡鬼 *akuki*; when one is possessed by an evil spirit, one's mouth becomes the channel for its message. There was a belief that illness or madness was caused by evil spirits.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XX, 20).

2. For Saka, see I.14, n. 2. Eshō is unknown.

3. 沙門 *shamon*; see Chap. I(1)a, n. 4.

4. Unidentified.

5. The practice of taking a steam bath was introduced to Japan by Buddhist monks during the Nara period, and a special room for taking a hot bath, which was almost a luxury, was built in many temples. Cf. *Onjitsu senyoku shūisō-gyō* 溫室洗浴衆僧經 (*Taishō*, XVI, No. 701).