

had treated both his eyes, they said, "We will come back here without fail in two days. Don't forget to wait for us." Before long both his eyes grew bright and he recovered his eyesight. On the promised day he waited for them, but they never returned.

The note says: How good it was for a blind man to recover his eyesight in this present life and to travel far along the Great Way,⁴ having thrown away his cane, seeing clearly and acting firmly. Indeed, we know that it happened because of the power of Kannon and the great devotion of the blind man.

I 3

*On a Man Who Made a Vow to Copy the Hoke-kyō and
Who Was Saved From a Dark Pit Devoid of Sunlight
Owing to the Power of His Vow¹*

In Aita district, Mimasaka province 美作國英多郡,² there was a state-owned iron mine. In the reign of Empress Abe, a provincial magistrate drafted ten workmen and had them enter the iron mine to dig out ore. All of a sudden, the entrance to the mine caved in. Surprised and terrified, the workmen made a rush for the exit, and nine of them barely managed to escape. Before the last man got out, the entrance was blocked. The magistrate and people, high and low, grieved for him, for they thought he had been crushed to death in the landslide. Wailing in grief, his family painted an image of Kannon and copied the scriptures to give merits to the dead man, thus completing the seventh day service.³

The man, however, was sealed in the pit alone, saying to himself, "I have not yet fulfilled my vow which I made recently to copy the *Hoke-kyō*. If my life is saved, I will fulfill it without fail." In the dark pit he felt regret and sorrow greater than he had ever experienced.

Meanwhile he noticed that the door of the pit opened a little and

4. 太方 *taihō*; the path of Buddha.

1. Cf. *Myōhōki* (I, On a Servant in Yeh 鄭下人), *Sanbō ekotoba* (II, 17), *Hokke kenki* (III, 108), *Fusō ryakki* (VI, Genmyō), *Konjaku monogatarihū* (XIV, 9).

2. Or Agata district; present Aita-gun, Okayama-ken 岡山縣英多郡.

3. Or "seventh day services" which are usually continued for seven seven-day periods during which the dead person's future existence is decided. But from the following story we choose "seventh day service" as more probable than a longer period.

a ray of sunlight came in. A novice⁴ entered through the opening and brought him a bowl filled with delicacies, saying, "Your family made offerings of food and drink so that I might save you. I have come to you since you have been wailing in grief." So saying, he went out. Not long after he had gone, a hole opened above the man's head, and sunlight flooded the pit. The opening was about two feet square and fifty feet high.

At the same time, about thirty men who had come into the mountain to collect vines passed near the hole. The man at the bottom of the pit saw them pass and cried, "Take my hand." The workmen in the mountain heard what sounded like the hum of a mosquito. Out of curiosity they dropped a vine into the pit with a stone at the end of the vine. The man took hold of it and pulled. It was evident that there was someone at the bottom. They made a rope and a basket of vines, tied lengths of vine rope to the four corners of the basket, and lowered it into the pit with a pulley set up at the opening. When the man at the bottom got into the basket, they pulled him up and sent him home.

Nothing could surpass the joy of his family. The provincial magistrate asked him, "What good did you do?" The man told him the whole story. Greatly moved, the magistrate organized a devotees' association⁵ to cooperate in copying the *Hoke-kyō* and held a dedication ceremony.

This took place owing to the divine power of the *Hoke-kyō* and the favor of Kannon.⁶ There is no doubt about this.

I 4

*On Receiving an Immediate Penalty of Violent Death
Because of Hitting the Reciter of the Dharani
of the Thousand-armed Kannon¹*

In Kaga district, Echizen province 越前國加賀郡,² there was an of-

4. An incarnated Kannon.

5. 知識 *chishiki*.

6. This story is a rare case of Kannon and *Hoke-kyō* combined in one story.

1. Cf. *Sanbō ekotoba* (II, 8).

2. Present Kawakita-gun and Ishikawa-gun, Ishikawa-ken 石川縣河北郡, 石川郡. Since Kaga district became Kaga province in 823, this story offers one evidence for dating the compilation of the *Nihon ryōiki* before 823. See *Ruijū sandai-kyaku*, V (Kōnin 14:2:3).