

*On Gaining an Immediate Cure of a Bad Disease for
Being Ordained and Practicing Good¹*

Kose no Asame 巨勢砦女² was a woman from the village of Haniu, Nagusa district, Kii province 紀伊國名草郡埴生里.³ In the eighth year of the ox, the fifth year of the Tenpyō hōji era,⁴ she contracted a serious disease, which caused a growth as big as a melon on her neck. The pain almost killed her, and it was not cured for years. She thought to herself, "This disease was brought to me by my deeds not only in this life, but also in previous lives.⁵ In order to be healed, I had better atone for my sins by practicing good." Thus, she shaved her head, was ordained, put on a surplice, and lived in Ōtani-dō 大谷堂⁶ in the village, reciting the *Shin-gyō*⁷ and practicing the path intently.

When fifteen years had passed, an ascetic named Chūsen 忠仙⁸ came to the temple to live with her. In sympathy with her, he tried to cure her disease by reciting a formula, making a vow, and saying: "In order to cure this disease, I will recite the *Yakushi-gyō*⁹ and the *Kongō hannya-kyō*¹⁰ three thousand times, the *Kanzeon-gyō*¹¹ ten thousand times, and the *Kannon sanmai-kyō*¹² one hundred times."

Fourteen years later, he finished reciting the *Yakushi-gyō* two thousand and five hundred times, the *Kongō hannya-kyō* one thousand times, and the *Kanzeon-gyō* two hundred times. He was constantly chanting the Senju dharani.¹³ Twenty-eight years passed from the time she contracted the disease, but the scriptures had not yet been recited as many times as had been vowed. About eight o'clock in the morning, on the twenty-seventh of the eleventh month, in the winter

1. The motif is miraculous healing; similar to I.8; III.11, 12, 21.

2. The Kose family is listed in the *Shinsen shōjiroku* as descendants of the imperial family.

3. Present Kaisō-gun, Wakayama-ken. Haniu is unidentified.

4. 761, in the reign of Emperor Jun'nin.

5. 宿業; see I.8, n. 4.

6. A small private temple unidentified.

7. *Hannya haramitsu shin-gyō*; see Chap. II(1)a, n. 19.

8. Unknown.

9. *Yakushi rurikō nyorai hongan kudoku-kyō*, 1 vol. (*Taishō*, XIV, No. 450).

10. *Kongō hannya haramitsu-kyō*, 1 vol.; see II.24, n. 20.

11. Chap. xxv of the *Hoke-kyō* (*Taishō*, IX, 56c-58b).

12. *Kanzeon bosatsu juki-kyō* 觀世音菩薩授記經, 1 vol. (*Taishō*, XII, No. 371).

13. See III.14, n. 11.

of the sixth year of the Enryaku era,¹⁴ her growth opened and discharged the pus of its own accord, and it was healed as she had prayed.

Indeed, we learn that it took place owing to the miraculous power of the Mahayana divine formula and the accumulated merits of the sick person and the ascetic. This is what people mean when they say that the all-embracing compassion¹⁵ brings a miraculous sign to the pious, and mysterious knowledge of the ultimate principles of voidness¹⁶ reveals a clear manifestation to men of deep faith.

*On Being Penalized for Abusing an Official's
Authority and Ruling Unrighteously¹*

In the reign of Emperor Shirakabe, a man by the name of Hi no kimi 火君² of Matsura district, Hizen province in Tsukushi 筑紫肥前國松浦郡,³ died suddenly and reached the land of Yama. When the king checked, it turned out that his death was premature, and he was sent back home.

On his way back he saw a hell which looked like a boiling kettle in the ocean. In it something black like a stump that was sinking and rising as the water boiled called to him, saying, "Wait! I have something to tell you." It sank as the water boiled, and then it came again to the surface, saying, "Wait! I have something to tell you."

After this had happened three times, the object spoke a fourth time, saying "I am Mononobe no Komaro 物部古丸⁴ from Harihara district in Tōtōmi province 遠江國榛原郡.⁵ During my life I worked as an official⁶ for many years in charge of transporting hulled rice and took other people's property unrighteously. Because of this sin, I have been suffering here. I pray that you will copy the *Hoke-kyō* for me so that I may be excused from my sin."

14. 787, in Emperor Kanmu's reign.

15. 無緣大悲 the great mercy of Buddha and the bodhisattvas, Kannon in particular.

16. 無相妙智 as expounded in the *Hannya-kyō*.

1. Cf. *Genkō shakusho* (XXIX).

2. Probably of the local gentry. See *Nihon shoki*, XIX (Kinmei 17:1): "The Lord of Hi no Tsukushi was sent to escort a prince of Paekche."

3. Matsuura-gun is now divided into two parts, one in present Saga-ken, the other in present Nagasaki-ken.

4. Unknown.

5. Present Harihara-gun, Shizuoka-ken.

6. 網丁 *gōchō*, a transportation master.

When Hi no kimi came back from the Land of the Dead,⁷ he wrote a precise report of what he had seen and heard and sent it to the local government.⁸ Having received this report, the local government in turn forwarded it to the central government. As the central government did not take it seriously, the grand secretary⁹ did not bother to report it to the emperor, ignoring it for twenty years.

When Sugano no asomi Mamichi 菅野朝臣真道¹⁰ of the Junior Fourth Rank, Upper Grade, was appointed head secretary,¹¹ he noticed the report, and presented it to Emperor Yamabe.¹² Having heard this, the emperor inquired of Assistant Executive Sekyō 施儼僧頭,¹³ saying, "Are we, living beings in this world, released from suffering after twenty years in hell?" Sekyō answered, "Twenty years on earth is only the beginning of the suffering in hell, because one hundred years in this world corresponds to one day and night in hell.¹⁴ This is why he is not yet released."

Upon hearing this, the emperor made a sign of repentance and sent his messenger to Tōtōmi province to investigate Komaro's case. Having asked about Komaro's deeds, he discovered that the report was true. The emperor grieved over this, believing it, and summoned four scripture copiers to copy the *Hoke-kyō* for Komaro on the seventh of the third month in the beginning of the fifteenth year of the Enryaku era.¹⁵ He organized a devotees' association to support this work, inviting the prince regent, ministers, and officials in number equal to the 69,384 characters of the scripture.¹⁶ Also, the emperor held an elaborate service at a private temple in the capital of Nara,¹⁷ to recite that scripture with the Most Venerable Zenshu 善珠¹⁸ as lecturer¹⁹

7. See Chap. II(1)b, for 黄泉(國) Yomi (no kuni).

8. 太宰府 Dazaifu; the local government which controlled all of Kyūshū and the islands of Iki and Tsushima.

9. 大辨官 *daiben no tsukasa*, the secretary under *daijō daijin*, of the Junior Fourth Rank, Upper Grade. See *Ryō no gige*, "Kan'i-ryō," Article 9.

10. Of an immigrant family. The title was conferred on him in 790; he died in 814.

11. The head secretary is called *sadaiben* 左大辨. See *Nihon kōki* (Enryaku 16:3:11).

12. Emperor Kanmu.

13. 施儼僧都 who was appointed junior assistant executive 少僧都 in 797.

14. See Chap. II(1)c, n. 60.

15. 796.

16. The number of all the Chinese characters of the *Hoke-kyō*.

17. 平城宮野寺; unidentified. One theory maintains that it is a private temple in contrast to the state temples of Nara; another, that it is a temple transferred from Nara to Kyoto by Emperor Kanmu.

18. (724-797) a monk of Akishino-dera and Kōfuku-ji who devoted himself to the study of the Yuishiki doctrines. Five out of his twenty writings are extant. See III.39. See also Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon Jōdokyō seiritsushi*, 75-81. Inoue traces Zenshu's faith in the pure land to the Kegon School of Silla.

19. 講師 *kōji*.

and Assistant Executive Sekyō as reciter,²⁰ giving merits to Komaro to save his spirit from suffering.

Ah! How deplorable he was who, without knowing the law of karmic causation, ruled unrighteously like a fox who borrows a tiger's skin and its power and who was eventually punished for his inordinately mean heart! The law of causation never fails to work.

36

On Receiving a Penalty for Building a Lower Pagoda and Taking down the Banners of the Temple¹

Fujiwara no asomi Nagate 藤原朝臣永手² of the Senior First Rank was Chancellor³ in the reign of Emperor Shirakabe who resided at Nara Palace. In the first year of the Enryaku era, his son Ieyori 家依⁴ of the Junior Fourth Rank, Upper Grade, had a bad dream about his father, and said to him, "More than thirty soldiers came to summon you, Father. Since this is an ill omen, you should pray to ward off disaster."

In spite of this warning, his father would not follow his advice. Meanwhile, he died. Then Ieyori succumbed to a long disease and invited monks and lay brothers to protect him with formulas, but was not healed. At that time one *dhyāna* master among those attending him made a vow, saying, "I live a life of discipline according to the Buddha's teaching so that I may save other living beings. Now I offer my life in exchange for my patient's. If the Buddha's teaching is true, please let the patient live!" Not caring for his own life, he put hot charcoals on his hand to burn incense, walked round the Buddha, chanting dharani, and suddenly began to run around and roll on the ground.

20. 讀師 *tokuji*.

1. Cf. *Genkō shakusho* (XXIX), *Shoku Nihongi*, XXXI (Hōki 2:2:22).

2. He served Emperor Shōmu, Empress Kōken, Emperor Jun'nin, Empress Shōtoku, and Emperor Kōnin. See *Shoku Nihongi*, XXXI (Hōki 2:2:22). When he died, he was the Senior Minister of the Senior First Rank. Since, according to the *Ryō no gige*, ministers belong to the Second Rank, there is some confusion in the *Shoku Nihongi* as well as the *Nihon ryōiki*. The title of Chancellor was conferred by Emperor Kōnin posthumously. The *Nihon ryōiki* is incorrect in dating his death in 782 or later.

3. 太政大臣.

4. (?-785).