

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.

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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).

Then the patient talked, being possessed by a spirit, saying, "I am Nagate. I had the banners of Hokke-ji 法花寺⁵ taken down and later was responsible for the pagodas of Saidai-ji 西大寺⁶ having four corners instead of eight and five stories instead of seven. Because of this sin, I was summoned to the Office of King Yama, who made me hold a pillar of fire and drove bent nails into my hands, interrogating and beating me. Then the palace filled with smoke. When the king asked, 'What smoke is this?' there was a reply, 'This is the smoke of the incense from the hand of the monk who has been attending Ieyori, Nagate's son, suffering from disease.' Thereupon, the king released me and sent me back to the world. My body, however, has perished, and I have nothing to live in, and must float about in the air." All at once, the patient, who had not been eating, asked for food and recovered from his disease, leaving his sickbed.

Speaking of the banners of the temple, they are good causes for being born as a Buddhist universal king 轉輪王.⁷ On the other hand, a pagoda is a treasury to store the Buddha's remains in the past, present and future. Accordingly, this man committed sins by taking down the banners of the temple and lowering the proposed height of the pagoda. How could we not be in awe? This is a recent instance of immediate repayment.⁸

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On Receiving a Penalty for Doing Evil because of Ignorance of the Law of Karmic Causation¹

Saheki no sukune Itachi 佐伯宿禰伊太知² of the Junior Fourth Rank,

5. Located at present Hokkeji-chō, Nara-shi 奈良市法華寺町. Founded by Empress Kōmyō 光明皇后 in 741 as the headquarter of all provincial nunneries.

6. Located at present Saidaiji-chō, Nara-shi 奈良市西大寺町 and founded by Empress Shōtoku in 765. There were two five-storied pagodas at Saidai-ji.

7. See Chap. II(2)a, n. 79. Banners were symbols of royalty in India and later were used as symbols of the Buddhist dharma.

8. As shown (n. 1, above), this story differs greatly from the court history in its assessment of Nagate. In the court history he is a loyal and wise minister, but in the *Nihon ryōiki* he is a destroyer of the Three Treasures and hence made to suffer in hell. This story is intended to show that even a man of great influence and high status is not free from karmic retribution.

1. Similar to III.35 as to the motif of suffering in hell reported by a visitor to hell; similar to III.36 as to the hero politically lauded but religiously criticized.

2. Or 伊多智, 伊達, who won crucial wars against Nakamaro in 764 and was promoted to the Junior Sixth Rank (*Shoku Nihongi*, XXVI, Tenpyō jingo 1:1:7), and Junior Fourth Rank, Upper Grade (*ibid.*, XXXI, Hōki 2:3:1) in 771.

Upper Grade, lived in the reign of the emperors who resided at Nara Palace.³

Once a man from the capital went to Chikuzen 筑前⁴ and died of a sudden illness, arriving at the palace of King Yama. Though he did not see anybody, he heard the voice of a man who was being beaten echoing through the earth. At every lash of the whip, he cried, "What pain! What pain!"

The king asked his clerks,⁵ saying, "When he was in the world, what good did he do?" The clerks answered, "He made one copy of the *Hoke-kyō*." Then the king said, "Atone for his sins by balancing them against the scrolls of the scripture."⁶ When they matched the scrolls with his sins, the scrolls were outnumbered without any comparison. Then they matched the 69,384 characters of the scripture⁷ with his sins, but still the latter outnumbered the former, and he could not be saved. Thereupon, the king clapped his hands in surprise, saying "Although I have seen many people who committed sins and suffered, I have never seen a man who committed so many sins."

The man from the capital secretly asked a person beside him, "Who is the man being beaten?" The answer was, "This is Saheki no sukune Itachi." When he returned from the Land of the Dead⁸ unexpectedly and was restored to life, he remembered the name very well and sent a report on the Land of the Dead to the local government.⁹ The government, however, did not believe it. Therefore, he took an opportunity to go up to the capital by boat and gave a report on how Lord Itachi had labored and suffered in the palace of King Yama. At this news, his family was deeply troubled, saying, "From his death to seven times the seventh day¹⁰ we practiced good and applied the merits to his benevolent spirit. How can we think of him suffering severely, having fallen in an evil state?" Then they made another copy of the *Hoke-kyō*, revered and dedicated it in order to save his spirit from suffering. This is also an extraordinary event.

3. He must have lived in the reigns of Emperor Shōmu, Empress Kōken (Shōtoku), and Emperor Kōnin.

4. Present Fukuoka-ken 福岡縣, the northern part of Tsukushi.

5. 諸史 *shoshi*, clerks in charge of records.

6. The *Hoke-kyō* consists of either seven or eight scrolls or volumes.

7. See III.35, n. 17.

8. See Chap. II(1)b.

9. Dazaifu; see III.35, n. 8.

10. The forty-ninth day, the end of the funeral rites.