

Chirizuka Monogatari

Tales of a Dust Mound

Translated and Edited
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I Introduction to *Chirizuka Monogatari*

*Chirizuka Monogatari*¹, or “Tales of a Dust Mound”, is a collection of sixty-five stories in six books, mainly about historically celebrated figures, including emperors, priests, warriors, and mountain ascetics. According to the brief preface dated 1689, the unidentified compiler or author gathered notable tales of the past with thirty-two illustrations to educate young people. Here I have translated forty one tales with the illustrations which appear in *Chirizuka Monogatari*, presently owned by Tokyo Daigaku Shiryō Hensanjo.

Most of the translated tales include illustrations which depict the themes of the tales and help readers understand the background and the situations of the stories. I have chosen these forty one stories because I personally like them and they have the best illustrations. Examples include the story about Benkei, a popular hero, humorously depicting his casual and relaxed personality. Another tale tells how skillfully and cleverly Sōgi, a celebrated *renga* poet, composed a poem and fooled a self-conscious man of his physical defect. Another tale explains how elegantly an emperor handled his personal frustration, while others tell how lords and masters should treat their vassals and servants.

¹ *Chirich* 塵 means dust, *zuka* 塚 means mound, and *monogatari* is a tale or story. "Dust" here refers to a humble attitude or a feeling of humility, and also to these brief tales which may seem as small and insignificant as dust. But when dust is gathered into a mound, or these seemingly insignificant tales are gathered into a collection, they may become something meaningful. The reference to dust reminds us of a popular proverb, *Chiri mo tsumoreba yama to naru*, or "Even dust, if gathered, will become a mountain", meaning, a small effort, if repeated, will produce a great result. As the author points out in his Preface, over time a mere mound of dust may become a mountain reaching to the sky.

Lastly, I especially appreciate the tales with poems depicting aesthetic taste and sensitivity toward nature and human relationships which are still very apparent in the *waka* and *haiku* poems of the present-day Japan.

Although the compiler or the author of the *Chirizuka Monogatari* is unidentified, we can assume his personality, tastes, values, and educational background through some stories. Tale 1:13 narrates how he was writing the story two hundred years after Yoshida Kenkō (1282-1350), the author of a celebrated collection of essays, *Tsurezuregusa*, or “Random Notes”. So the author must have been alive during the Tenbun era, 1532-1554. 5:3 tells how the author appreciates Shogun Yoshitane for his gentle and honest personality as if he had known him personally. This tale suggests that the author was a contemporary of the shogun who died in 1523 and that he was someone with high status and was able to associate with the shogun.

Another feature about the author is presented at the end of 6:11. The tale includes the date, the eleventh month of the 21st year of Tenbun (1552) sealed by a member of the Fuji family. Thus, we may assume that the author was someone called Fuji and was living in 1552.

What kind of person was the author, Fuji? Tale 4:7 describes how as a young man he attended a *sake* drinking party with some noblemen. The story also suggests that he must have come from a family freely associating with people of high rank, and that he was perhaps related to the eminent Fujiwara family. Careful reading of other *Chirizuka* tales helps us to learn

something more about the author.

His frequent quotations and citations from Chinese and Japanese works reveal his strong educational background in classical tradition and writings. His deep appreciation of poetry is apparent in a number of tales including 1:1 and 3:7. Various stories about temples and shrines, for example, 3:4 and 4:1, and his admiration and respect for the eminent scholarly monks and priests in 2:2 and 5:5, reflect his religious and academic values. The tales involving Shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu and Yoshitane and other lords and nobles contain his comments on the Way of Rulers, while the stories about faithful warriors such as Kusunoki Masashige and his son present his concept of the Way of Warriors. His taste in calligraphy is revealed in 3:1, while his sense of humor is apparent in 1:12, 2:1, 3:2, 4:7, 4:10, 5:9, 5:10, 6:1, 6:4, and 6:7.

These comical tales remind us of the varieties of other collections of humorous tales such as the *Seisuishō* by Anraku Ansaku, published in 1623, and *Kashōki* by Nyoraishi in 1642, and as well as many similar short tales by the most celebrated townsman writer, Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693). These humorous tales tersely describe the commoners' satirical views on the life and society of Japan in their time.

As a whole, the tales in *Chirizuka Monogatari* well reveal the author's views on the lives and outlook of people from the time of Sakanoue no Tamuramaro (758-811), the oldest historical figure appearing in the collection, to the time of the contemporary shogun, Ashikaga Yoshitane (d.1523).

We should especially pay close attention to 6:11, which tells how Yamana Sōzen (1404-1473), a warrior lord and an instigator of the Ōnin War (1467-1477), criticizes the life style of the aristocrats who were losing their prestige and authority. And lastly 4:10 should not be overlooked as it mentions how the *tokusei* edicts, literally “virtuous governing”, were issued by the Muromachi authorities to save the impoverished samurai; this indicates the economic deterioration of the lowly samurai and peasants who eventually took part in uprisings, called the *tokusei ikki*, demanding better government.

The text of *Chirizuka Monogatari* may be found in *Kaitei Shiseki Shūran*, volume X, 1882, and *Nihon Zuihitsu Zenshū*, volume XVII, 1928.

In translation, I placed family names first in the Japanese style. All the story titles and the information in the brackets are supplied by the translators. Diacritics are deleted in popular place-names including Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Kyushu. For dates and years, the Gregorian calendar is used in place of the old Japanese way of calculation, as in 1596 for the first year of Keichō. Footnotes are for the general readers who are not familiar with things Japanese. Chinese characters are supplied for certain terms including personal and place-names and book titles.

Lastly I would like to show my deep appreciation to Dr. Michael Cooper, the former editor of the *Monumenta Nipponica*, who kindly read my entire translation and gave me many valuable suggestions.

II Translation of *Chirizuka Monogatari*

Preface

Mountains rise from dust and earth, and soar up to the floating clouds in the great sky.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas have softened their awesome radiance in the dust² to make easier contact with common people. A long period of Five Hundred Dust-Speck *Kalpa*³ has passed since Shaka became a Buddha as he entered into the state of *nirvana*.

Dust has been mentioned in this way since olden times. Now if we gather the dust and pile it on a corner of the desk, it will look nice and neat. Such a dust mound will do no harm.

A man of the Fuji family has gathered into a collection here the tales and precious sayings of celebrated lords and priests of the past. These tales include the words of lowly people, too meaningful

² The buddhas and bodhisattvas were believed to dim their radiance and become dust like ourselves so that uneducated people could better understand the precepts.

³ *Kalpa*, a Buddhist term meaning a unit of time running into millions of years.

to be ignored, and also seemingly insignificant stories casually scribbled on the back of paper. They have been published as a book for young people with illustrations explaining the contents of the tales.

Fifteenth Day of the First Month, the Second Year of Genroku [1689].

1:1 How a Poem of Lord Jōtokuin Shaded the Burning Sun



(Yoshihisa is leading his army)

One day Old Asukai told the following story.

Lord Jōtokuin Yoshihisa⁴ was a very talented and elegant man. He was devoted to *waka* poems even when engaged in military exercises. When his close friends, high-ranking officials, and court nobles visited him, he talked only about poems instead of conversing with them.

A certain grand councilor, an expert in poetry, used to coach Lord Yoshihisa on the form and essence of poetry. But later when the lord

⁴ Jōtokuin Naidaijin Yoshihisa 常德院義尚, 1465-1489, the ninth Ashikaga Shogun.

reached the age of twenty, the councilor in turn asked him about the taste and aesthetics of poems. People often said how regrettable it was that Lord Yoshihisa, a fine shogun, passed away before he reached middle age.

While camping at Ōmi for some time, Lord Yoshihisa went on a trip to the lakeside. Several experts in various artistic fields accompanied him in many beautifully decorated boats loaded with rare feasts.

While gazing at the lake, the lord noticed two children amusing themselves aboard a small boat.

“Who are those children?” he asked.

“They are from Umegahara [Plum Field],” replied an attendant. The lord spontaneously composed a Chinese-style poem:

“The lake front naturally
Looks different from the forest.
Children are rowing a boat
Seeking plum blossoms.”

The lord thus composed the first two lines of his poem,
but could not finish the rest, and returned to the camp.

That night, he dreamed of a man who composed the latter half of the poem and completed a *shichigon-zekku* [seven-characters in four lines] Chinese-style poem. The pleased lord woke up and had an attendant write down the poem. But his

people later forgot all about the second half of the poem, and so all was regrettably lost.

When enemies attacked near the capital, Lord Yoshihisa quickly left for the front line,⁵ and he and his fifty thousand soldiers marched under the burning sun. Soon his soldiers were covered with sweat and felt exhausted, and their horses fell to the ground in the unbearable heat. Everyone was most confused and bewildered. The lord was then at the foot of Mount Kagami [mirror] and composed a *waka* poem:

*Kyō bakari
Kumore Ōmi no
Kagami yama
Tabi no Yatsure no
Kage no miyuru ni*

Only for today,
Mount Mirror of Ōmi,
Please give us shade,
Since I see the shadow of fatigue
On my marching army

While they were resting in the shade of some trees, the sky suddenly became cloudy and a cool breeze began to blow. The soldiers felt refreshed as if in an

⁵ In this battle Yoshihisa led his army to attack Rokkaku Takayori 六角高頼 of Ōmi Province in the ninth month of 1487. The campaign dragged on and Yoshihisa, who had abused his body by heavy drinking, could not endure the hardship of camp life. Finally he fell, could not rise, and died in the camp at the age of twenty-five in the third month of 1489.

autumn evening and were instantly revived. This was a wonderful event which should be remembered by later generations.

It was truly remarkable that the power of poem alleviated the sufferings of thousands of soldiers. Even Heaven was moved and responded to Lord Yoshihisa's profound poetic talent.

1 -2 Lord Motouji and His Servant



(Motouji punishes his servant)

Lord Kamakura Samanokami Motouji⁶ was very honest and benevolent by nature. He was talented in military arts and poetry, and often composed scores of *waka* poems and sent them to his friends for their comments. There is an elegant tale about him.

⁶ 左馬頭基氏 (1340-1367) was the second son of Ashikaga Takauji and the first Kantō kubō 関東公方, the shogunal assistant in the Kantō (north-eastern) area.

Lord Motouji appreciated good food. One day he called his cook, ordered a *funa* fish, and said to him, “Broil this fish well and cook it in the soup. Don’t make any mistakes.” After he gave these strict instructions, he left to go to his room.

Following the order, the cook broiled the fish and cooked it in the *miso* soup. When the fish was presented to the lord, he removed the lid of the container and saw the fish looking delicious. After he finished eating one side of the fish, he turned it over, but the other side appeared uncooked. The cook did not mean to neglect his duties, but perhaps he just had bad luck, and the fish looked shiny and raw.

The angry lord immediately called his steward and told him to fetch the cook. The steward felt very sorry for the cook, but had to obey the order. After passing through many guest rooms, both steward and cook arrived at the lord’s room. The cook paled fearing that he might be cut down on the spot as he knelt on the wooden floor of the veranda before the room.

The lord appeared with a short sword at his waist and a long one in his left hand. He approached the cook and said to him, “You made a mistake like this because you lacked a sense of loyalty toward me. I could take your life right now, but will give you another chance. Next time, pay more attention to cooking. This time, however, you are not going to get away so easily. Take off your clothes, sit and stay on the veranda. Don’t move until you are forgiven.”

With this the lord left and went out hunting, while the cook, in a most wretched condition of being half-naked, quietly crouched on the *sunoko* bamboo floor⁷ at the end of the veranda.

But after the lord had left for hunting, the sympathetic steward came by and released the cook from the punishment, saying in a low voice, “Never mind while the lord is out. Just go to the kitchen.” Relying on these kind words, the cook timidly returned to the kitchen and put on his clothes.

After hunting during the day, the lord returned home late. As soon as he reached the gateway, the cook quickly appeared on the veranda with no clothing. Looking at him crouching on the veranda, the lord said, “Are you still there? That’s enough. Go back to your room.” So the cook thankfully retired to his room.

The lord now summoned the steward and said, “The cook’s mistake was nothing serious, but I punished him so that he would not repeat it. Why did you have him stay half-naked all day long? You were slow to see my intention. You should be more considerate about everything when dealing with such situations. In general, you are the only person who should tell me what is good and what is bad. Since you mishandled the situation, the poor cook must have suffered, and you are responsible for this.”

⁷ *Sunoko* is a basket woven with strips of bamboo or reed leaves. Here, it refers to the bamboo or wooden plank floor which has cracks to drain water. Such surface is often used in the bathroom and veranda.

What the lord said was quite true. A man who rules a domain should learn from this incident.

1:3 About Miraculous Tenjin, Lord Ōe, and the Eleven-Faced Kannon

Since olden times, the miraculous powers of Tenjin, Heavenly Deity, of the Tenmangū Shrine⁸ have been very effective, and no one has failed to receive benefits if he worships the deity.

Once, Ōe Masahira [952-1012],⁹ a poet and a scholar of Chinese studies, presented various offerings before the altar of the Tenmangū Shrine with a letter saying, “Tenjin, the Great God of the Tenmangū, has assisted emperors by administering governmental affairs. At present, he is benefiting all the people under the heavens as the sun and the moon in the heavens. Since he is the founder of the Way of Learning in this country, all the scholars should try to emulate his superior scholarship.”

That night, Lord Ōe had a most marvelous dream about Tenjin. Opening the shrine doors,

⁸ Sugawara Michizane 菅原道真(845-903), a celebrated poet and scholar, was promoted to

be the Minister of the Right while serving Emperors Uda and Daigo, but was exiled to Kyushu in 901 through the slander of Fujiwara Tokihira. He missed the court life of the capital Kyoto so much that he composed a famous poem for the emperor. He died on the twenty-fifth day of the second month in exile. After his death, so many strange things, including natural calamities, occurred in the capital that, to appease his disturbed soul, the people enshrined him as a deity in the Tenmangū Shrine 北野天満宮 in Kitano, and he is known as Kitano Tenjin 北野天神, Heavenly Deity of Kitano. Later he was popularly worshipped as the deity of learning and his shrines were built throughout the country. Even today, many students wishing to pass entrance examinations for major universities often visit his shrines. Michizane compiled a historical work, the *Sandai Jitsuroku* 三代実録. For his story, see the *Konajku Tales* (Japanese Section, II), pp.320-321.

⁹ 大江匡衡, a poet, scholar and a government official of the Heian period served Emperor Ichijo as a doctor of letters. His wife was Akazomeemon 赤染衛門. He wrote *Kōribushū* 江吏部集. For a story of Oe Masahira, see the *Konajku Tales* (Japanese Section II), pp.372-375. For a story about Masahira and his wife, Akazomeemon, see the *Konajku Tales* (Japanese Section II), pp.371-372.

Tenjin appeared and said to him, “Every word in your dedicatory letter is very true in my heart. However, a phrase, ‘. . . as the sun and the moon in the heavens’ should be changed since it refers to the god. My true body is the Eleven-Faced Bodhisattva Kannon,¹⁰ and is called Amida Buddha of Unlimited Life in paradise. In the human world, I am referred to as Tenjin of Kitano.” The lord was overwhelmed and woke up in tears.

Thus Tenjin has been identified with the Eleven-Faced Kannon in accordance with the divine words of the deity himself [in Lord Ōe’s dream]. And the date of the poetry contest in the Imperial Palace has been set on the twenty-fifth of every month [Tenjin’s Memorial Day is the twenty-fifth of the second month]. From those of higher status including noblemen and lords, down to lowly folk, all have highly respected and reverently worshipped Tenjin.

Miyoshi Kiyotsura [847-918],¹¹ a Confucian scholar, also dedicated to Tenjin a letter in which he noted that no scholars other than Tenjin, with the exception of Lord Kibi,¹² had been promoted from

¹⁰ The Two- or Four-Armed Eleven-Faced Kannon 十一面観音 has nine small faces on its head and eleven smaller ones on its crown, all of which show various expressions of mercy, anger, scorn, etc. This Kannon saves especially those in the realm of *ashura* 阿修羅 (fighting demons), one of the six realms of heaven, human being, *ashura*, animal, hungry ghost, and hell where one’s soul transmigrates. This tale reveals the assimilation of Buddhism and Shintoism as Bodhisattva Kannon is embodied in Michizane and worshipped as a Shinto deity.

¹¹ 三善清行, a scholar and a government official, became a doctor of letters and a director of the university. For a story of Miyoshi Kiyotsura, see the Konjaku Tales (Japanese Section III), pp. 111-114.

¹² Kibi no Makibi 吉備真備 (693-775), a scholar and the author of the *Shikyōruijū* 私教類聚,

went to China in 717 with Priest Genbō. He excelled in Confucian studies, astronomy, and

the scholarly ranks to be a minister. Lord Kibi was a great and unique imperial subject. But people below the middle rank, including farmers and peasants, did not know anything about him, while Tenjin has been greatly celebrated for his miraculous efficacy throughout the country.

In the spring of 1490, a certain scholar dedicated a letter and received benefits through this miraculous efficacy. Also, I myself asked for a favor and received a revelation of great profit. Other deities also show much efficacy, but Tenjin was an exception for he was raised from his scholarly status to become a minister, and finally after his death he was worshipped as a deity. Someone once criticized Tenjin's life declaring, "Among all his poems, there are few love poems. This means that he must have been involved in vulgar and indecent affairs in his life. I wonder if it was the life-style of those days. It is certainly unsuitable in our present way of life."

But my research has proved that his life was as solid and pure as iron and gold.¹³ So it is not right to say that in those days it was customary for scholars and celebrated poets to lead indecent lives.

military arts. Lord Kibi served Emperor Shōtoku and was promoted to be the Minister of the Right with the Second Rank.

¹³ Apparently, Lord Michizane had some mistresses, but all the unfavorable accounts about him disappeared in the process of his deification.

1:4 A Linked-Verse Master and the Way of Poetry

A book of poetry says that *renga* linked verse became very popular in the Ōchō era [1311-1312] during the reign of Emperor Hanazono. Many linked-verse masters have appeared since the Bunshō era [1466-1467] in the reign of Emperor Gotsuchimikado, and people have enjoyed linked verse until the present.

There was once a man who was devoted to linked verse since his youth. But as he lacked talent, he seemed to have no hope in spite of his great efforts. One day a man warned him, “They say a person should give up his art if he cannot succeed in it by the age of fifty. No matter how much he tries, his efforts will be in vain. Haven’t you heard of that ancient man who said, ‘My son is close to fifty. How much more time remains for him in the future? He’s not really talented, and I wonder if he still wishes to become famous. He should give it up right away!’” But ignoring the warning, the man continued his efforts, and eventually became known as an accomplished linked-verse master.

The man was not good at anything except poetry, and he never became tired of working day and night on his poems. Although he had been ill since his youth, he never felt sick while composing poems.

One day he said, “In pursuing the Way, effort and devotion are most important. Though I am not talented, I am willing to make effort, and soon I will

be known for the Way.” He continued, “Venerable Kyōgoku¹⁴ lived till eighty while constantly suffering from illness. But he diligently recorded daily activities, including his official duties and composing poems. His diary¹⁵ says that he was always sick and hardly felt well all his life. Yet his devotion and effort in the Way of Poetry made his name known to posterity. So his devotion seemed to have nothing to do with his illness.

“Moreover, Tsurayuki¹⁶ spent more than twenty days to finish a poem, while Fujiwara Nagatō’s¹⁷ life was shortened because of Kintō’s¹⁸ severe criticism of his poems. Kunaikyō¹⁹ vomited blood as a result of the suffering caused by thinking too much about her poems. Also, Sōgi²⁰ was so much involved in his linked verse that he didn’t notice his friend coming to his desk. In China, Fan An-ren²¹ pondered too much on his poems and became a white-haired old man while still young. We can give many examples of the devotees of the Way, yet the talented and devoted are quite rare.

“Even though untalented, by making a great effort a person can finally reach the profundity of

¹⁴ Fujiwara Teika 藤原定家(1162-1241), a celebrated poet of the Heian period.

¹⁵ A reference to *Meigetsuk* 名月記, the diary of Fujiwara Teika written in *kanbun* style; it relates incidents and events from the time he was nineteen to seventy-four years of age (1180-1235). See *Chirizuka Monogatari*, 4:6.

¹⁶ Ki no Tsurayuki 紀貫之 (d. 945, a celebrated poet of the Heian period, wrote the *Tosa Nikki* (Tosa Diary). For a story of Ki no Tsurayuki, See the *Konjaku Tales* (Japanese Section II), pp.360-361.

¹⁷ Fujiwara Nagatō 藤原長能, junior upper fifth rank, appears in *Jikkishō* 十訓抄, I:4.

¹⁸ Fujiwara Kintō (966-1041), a poet of the Heian period.

¹⁹ Kunaikyō 宮内卿, a poetess, died in 1204 or 1205.

²⁰ Iio Sōgi (1421-1502), a linked-verse master of the Muromachi period.

²¹ Fan An-ren 潘安仁(274-300), a representative literary figure of the Jin dynasty.

the Way. People often complain they cannot remember this and they forget that, but that is because they do not enjoy what they do. Forgetfulness is often compared to keeping water in a basket. If the basket is left in the water, it will eventually be filled. Likewise, continuous efforts in learning eventually fill a person with the essence of things just as the basket was filled with water. But in this case, we should remember that the basket must always remain in the water.”

People know such things, but giving examples on a proper occasion is most helpful. The point is that greater effort will be rewarded sooner or later.

1:5 About Meishōmaru and Mt. Storm

Meishōmaru, a poet, was a disciple of Priest Kenkō.²² After his master passed away, the lamenting poet joined another poet, Imagawa Ryōshun,²³ and was always discussing poetry with him. He sometimes visited the Southern Court of Yoshino.²⁴ After receiving the tonsure, he narrated various elegant tales with his poems about the Southern Court. The following is one of his stories.²⁵

A stone *stupa* stood at the grave site of Kusunoki Masatsura, a celebrated warrior lord.²⁶ Someone wrote a poem [for fun] on the stone.

Kusunoki no

Ato no shirushi wo

Kitemire ba

Makoto no ishi to

Narini keru kana

²² Meishōmaru 命松丸. Yoshida Kenkō (1282-1350), a poet, a Buddhist essayist, and the author of the *Tsurezuregusa* (a collection of random notes in idleness), which is popularly read even today.

²³ Imagawa Sadayo 今川貞世 (1325-1420), a poet and a warrior lord, served the shogunate by controlling the *wakō* pirates for twenty years in Kyushu. After he retired, Ryōshun 了俊 (his Buddhist name) actively engaged in the literary world, and excelled in composing *waka* poems of 31 syllables and linked verses. His writings include the *Nigonshō* 二言抄, and *Nantaiheiki* 難太平記.

²⁴ Emperor Godaigo (1288-1339, r.1318-1339) defeated the Hōjō Family of the Kamakura Shogunate. As the result of the treason by Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358), the first shogun of the Muromachi or Ashikaga Shogunate, the emperor left Kyoto and established his own court, the Southern Court, at Yoshino near Nara. Emperor Kōmyō, supported by the Ashikaga Shogunate, maintained the Northern Court at Muromachi in Kyoto.

²⁵ Perhaps a reference to the *Yoshino Shūi Monogatari* (Collection of Gleanings of Yoshino Tales), the authorship of which is uncertain.

²⁶ Kusunoki Masatsura 楠木正行 (1326-1368), a son of Kusunoki Masashige 楠木正成 (?-1336), supported Emperor Godaigo and fought against the Kamakura Shogunate. Both the father and the son are celebrated for their loyalty to the emperor.

Having traced the site
Of Kusunoki (Camphor)
I see it has now
Truly turned into
A stone stupa²⁷

The same tale also mentions the scattered cherry blossoms in the garden of the Imperial Mother of Emperor Gomurakami [r. 1339-1368]. One spring day in the third month, she saw many fallen blossoms on the ground, and she had her servants sweep them up and gather them into a mound five feet tall. The amused Imperial Mother called the mound “Arashiyama, Mt. Storm”. Her ladies in attendance composed poems on the blossom mound and reported the event to the emperor. He was also amused and said that he would come to see the mound on the following day.

But unfortunately a stormy wind that night blew away the blossom mound. In the morning, Ben no Naishi, a court lady of Emperor Godaigo, sent a poem to Lady Hyōe no suke [Deputy of the Imperial guard] which read:

Miyoshino no
Hana wo atsumeshi
Yama no na mo

²⁷ The family name, Kusunoki, meaning camphor tree, here symbolizes loyalty, but ironically, in place of the tree, a stone *stupa* stood at the grave site of the Kusunoki family. The term *makoto* in the poem, means “truth or sincerity”, the sense of loyalty in the traditional samurai value. The word appears as “truly” in the English translation.

Kesa ha arashi no
Ato ni koso are

**This morning,
Only the name of the mountain
Of gathered blossoms of Yoshino
Remains on the site
Of the storm**

**The poem was sent to the emperor, who found it
interesting and composed this poem:**

Chihayaburu
Kamiyo mo kikazu
Yo no hodo ni
Yama wo arashi no
Akechirasu to ha

**Since the times of the gods,
I have never
Heard of a storm²⁸
That has blown away
A mountain over night**

**I wonder if many of the poems in these tales were
written by Meishōmaru since certain terms and words
reflect his style and taste.**

²⁸ Here “storm” or *arashi* is linked to the same word in the previous poem, thus these two poems can be regarded as linked verses since the topic, theme, term or concept in both of them is related.

1:6 About Emperor Komatsu and the Origin of the Stone Pagoda



(A blind monk and a stone pagoda)

Emperor Komatsu [or Kōkō, 830-887] was the second son of Emperor Ninmei. When he was crown prince, he served as the governor of Hitachi and

Kōzuke Provinces,²⁹ and as the director of the Nakatsukasa Office for Imperial Personnel, of the Shikibu Office for Rites and Ceremonies, and of the Dazaifu Police Headquarters of Kyushu.

Since his youth, he loved pine trees and planted many small ones in his garden, and when he was enthroned and became emperor, they had all grown tall and big. Their widespread branches and boughs made it difficult for the imperial carriage to pass through the gateway.

After consultation, the officers and ministers decided to cut back the trees and reported their decision to the crown prince. But he told them, “The imperial position which I am to assume has been handed down from the time of the Great Sun Deity. I will proceed in the carriage. If it goes through without disturbing the trees, I will accept the position of emperor. If not, I will decline.”

So the officers and ministers started to move the carriage, and amazingly, the pine branches opened on their own accord to allow it to pass, and it proceeded as easily as if it were going along a large avenue in the capital. On account of this event, the emperor came to be popularly called Komatsu Tennō, or the Emperor of Small Pines. No historical writings of that time failed to mention him as a most wise emperor.

The emperor also had deep sympathy for blind monks and gave them the province of Ōsumi

²⁹ Crown princes traditionally governed the three provinces of Kazusa, Hitachi, and Kōzuke.

[in present-day Kagoshima in Kyushu]. Since then, the blind monks have worshipped him, and to show their appreciation they hold the Sekitō [or Shakutō] Service on his memorial day, the sixteenth of the second month.

In Kyoto, they pile pebbles and stones on the bank of the Kamo River at Rokujō to form a pagoda in memory of the emperor. This is the origin of the Sekitō, or Stone Pagoda.

1:7 About the Sumiyoshi Shrine



(Emperor Montoku behind the screen visits the shrine)

A certain man said, “The *Ise Monogatari*³⁰ notes that Emperor Montoku [827-858] once visited the Sumiyoshi Shrine³¹ in the first year of the Ten’an

³⁰ *Tales of Ise*, a collection of 125 tales with *waka* poems, narrates the romantic life of a handsome poet, supposedly Ariwara Narihira 在原業平 (825-880). His legendary image popularly appears in the later *noh*, *kabuki* and *jōruri* puppet plays. For stories of Narihira, See the *Konjaku Tales* (Japanese Section II), pp. 336-342.

³¹ The shrine in Osaka enshrines the deities of Suminoe and Empress Jingō,

Era [857-859]. But no such mention is found in any historical writings of that time. Also the preface to the *Shinkokinshū*³² records an imperial visit to the shrine, but does not identify the emperor. I have been very much concerned about this. I wonder if anyone knows which emperor actually visited the shrine.”

I happened to be near the man and told him, “Sometime last year, I saw a book written by Emperor Gokomatsu [1377-1433]. The title was *Isenimon Gokurikanjō Selected from the Orally Transmitted Tales by Akoneho*.³³ The book was about the discussions on Shinto which had been formally prepared on the order of Emperor Takakura [1161-1182]. According to the book, two emperors, Montoku and Seiwa [850-880], visited the shrine. They started from the capital Kyoto around eight-thirty in the morning of the eighteenth day of the fifth month of the first year of Ten’an and Ariwara Narihira joined the imperial visit. The book includes other matters such as the mystical revelations of the Sumiyoshi Deities and the biographical notes of Narihira. I actually saw and read the book.”

As I finished, the man changed color and said, “Oh, it is very important that you saw the book.

thewife of Emperor Chūai (r. 192-200). The shrine has been popular for protection of the nation and safety in sea voyages.

³² *New Anthology of the past and now* 新古今和歌集, 1202, one of the twenty-one Imperial anthologies in twenty rolls, contains 1,980 poems compiled by contemporary celebrated poets, including Fujiwara Ariie and Fujiwara Teika, by order of Emperor Gotoba.

³³ 伊勢二門極理灌頂選阿古根浦口伝

Don't talk loudly about it as they say, 'Even walls have ears.'" The man winked at me knowingly and left.

On the following day, the man sent me a polite invitation and asked me about the book. Since I had nothing to hide, I told him everything I knew about it. He was pleased to listen to me and wrote down everything I said.

I don't mean to keep this secret. The reason why I mention this now as I recall the incident is because I thought something seemingly insignificant to someone could be very important to others. Later, I myself wrote about the book in my notebook.

1:8 About the Legend of Tamuramaro and His Tragic End.

Sakanoue no Tamuramaro³⁴ was an incomparable warrior. All his brave and valorous deeds are recorded in various writings and repeating them here is quite unnecessary.

Once in spring, I read the chapter about Emperor Saga [786-842] in the *Nihonkōki*³⁵ which says, “Tamuramaro was a son of Sakyōdaibu Karitamaro of the Lower Fourth Rank. He was five foot seven inches tall and his chest was a foot and nine inches wide. His eyes were like those of the blue hawk and his beard was like woven gold threads. He could alter his weight from 301 *kin*³⁶ to 64 *kin*, if necessary. His wide eyes in anger frightened birds and beasts while his smiles relaxed children and the elderly.”

The *Ruijūshifu* [unidentified] also praises Tamuramaro and his charismatic deeds, but his end in a legendary tale is unsuitable for a man of such fame and prestige.

A certain lowly man once said: “At his prime, Tamuramaro was so famous that Emperor Kanmu invited him and said to him, ‘I hear that you are blessed in the marshal arts. That is wonderful.’

³⁴ Tamuramaro 田村麻呂(758-811) was appointed to the position of Generalissimo of Quelling Barbarians by Emperor Kanmu (r.781-806) in 791, and contributed to controlling the northern part of Japan. He also built the Kiyomizudera Temple in Kyoto. For another story of Tamuramaro, see the *Konjaku Tales* (Japanese Section I), pp. 79-82.

³⁵ *Nihonkōki* 日本後記 includes the historical records from the time of Emperor Kanmu Emperor Junna (r. 823-833), the third son of Kanmu.

³⁶ One *kin* equals 16 grams.

Tamuramaro replied, ‘I can humbly say that people are frightened by my swordsmanship. But I have always been sorry to end my life in this way. You are a most noble emperor of this country which does not deserve you. It is natural that you think of conquering other countries. In that case, I humbly offer my services to you, sire. If you allow me, I will subjugate even Great Tang and then welcome you as the emperor of China and Japan.’

When Tamuramaro had finished expressing his bold wishes, the emperor smiled and said, ‘I don’t think such things will be possible.’ But Tamuramaro was insistent and replied, ‘Naturally, you have some doubts. Let me show you my swordsmanship.’

“He gathered five hundred innocent men, smeared his great sword with soot-ink, and swung it once. All the necks of the five hundred men were marked black.

“Tamuramaro then said, ‘Now, look at this. I can cut down hundreds of our enemies with my sword. So please grant me the position [of general of quelling barbarians].’ The emperor was impressed and finally offered him the position.

“When Tamuramaro was ready to leave Japan for China, the news had already reached China, where it rained so hard that there was a great flood. Taking this as an omen, the alarmed Chinese emperor ordered Priest Hui Guo³⁷ of the

³⁷ Hui Guo 惠果(746-806), a priest of the Tang Dynasty, taught Shingon doctrine to Master Kūkai, or Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師. See *Chirizuka Monogatari*, 4:1.

Blue Dragon Temple to offer prayers to Great Acala.³⁸ After the service was finished, Great Acala crossed the sea, and came to Hakata in Kyushu where Tamuramaro was waiting to depart. Acala cut off his head, returned to China with it, and buried it at the Blue Dragon Temple. No one knows which book mentions this incident, and only some Buddhists are familiar with the story.”

³⁸ Acalas 不動明王 ranked below bodhisattvas in Buddhist teaching, and assume power and strength with fearful expressions to destroy evil. They have been popularly worshipped by warriors and soldiers.

1:9 The Great Gate of the Byōdōin Temple of Uji³⁹

Long ago, the Regent of Uji, Lord Yorimichi, built the Byōdōin Temple in Uji spending much gold to decorate it.

Priest Jōchō [?-1057]⁴⁰ an incomparable sculptor at that time, carved the Amida statue, the principal image of the temple, which is richly decorated with seven kinds of jewels. The statue still appears as brilliant as ever. A most celebrated artist, Tamenari, painted all the four walls of the inner hall, and Prince Tomohira [964-1006], who excelled in sutras and poems, did the calligraphy revealing the power and energy of a dragon flying in the great sky.

Because the temple has never been burnt in the past five hundred years, all the decorations and ornaments still retain their original radiance. Truly, it is a unique sacred place.

Once when Prince Mochihito⁴¹ revolted, Lord Minamoto Yorimasa,⁴² a poet warrior, encouraged

³⁹ The main hall of the Byōdōin Temple 平等院 on the western bank of the Uji River in Uji, Kyoto, resembles a phoenix spreading its wings. The temple was built by Ason Fujiwara Yorimichi (992-1074), the first son of Michinaga (966-1027), who controlled court politics as he was a relative of three emperors, Goichijō, Gosuzaku and Goizei, as is written in the *Midōkanpakuki*.

⁴⁰ 定朝 (法眼) originated the Jōchōyōshiki, Jōchō style.

⁴¹ Mochihito 茂仁 (1151-1180), the third son of Emperor Goshirakawa (r.1155-1158) revolted against the Heike clan with Minamoto Yorimasa in 1180, but failed and died while trying to escape.

⁴² Yorimasa 頼政 (1107-1180), the first son of Minamoto Nakamasa, favored by Emperor Goshirakawa, gained merit in the Hōgen-Heiji disturbance. He later plotted against the Heike clan assisting Prince Mochihito. He failed, and committed suicide by the Uji River. He excelled in poetry and wrote the *Minamoto San'i Yorimasashū* 源三位頼政集, or *Anthology of Minamoto San'i Yorimasa*.

his soldiers to fight with the utmost loyalty to their master. But he failed when enemy attacked, and his corpse was exposed on the moss-covered bank while his soul and fame drifted in the flow of the Uji River. During this commotion, the temple remained undamaged without losing a single rafter or roof tile. Truly, it is a most extraordinary spiritual place.

The great gate of the temple stands in the north. At the time of its construction, Lord Yorimichi was wondering about the position of this gate. Just at that time, Grand Councilor of Shijō, Lord Kintō,⁴³ happened to visit Uji and spoke with Lord Yorimichi.

When Lord Yorimichi asked him, “As regards this place, the river is in the east, mountains in the south, and the back of the temple in the west. There is no place for the main gate except in the north. I wonder if there are any temples with their main gates in the north.” Lord Kintō, a learned scholar, could not give him any answer.

Just at that time, Masafusa⁴⁴ was accompanying Lord Kintō and riding in the rear part of the carriage. When Lord Yorimichi asked him the same question, the thirty-year-old Masafusa replied instantly, “Yes, such examples include the Rokuharamitsuji Temple⁴⁵ in Kyoto where Priest

⁴³ Fujiwara Kintō (966-1041), a scholar poet and compiler of the *Wakan Rōeishū*, and the author of the *Kitayamashō* 北山抄 and *Kintōshū* 公任集. For more stories of Kinto, see the *Konjaku Tales* (Japanese Section II), pp.330-336.

⁴⁴ Ōe Masafusa 大江匡房(1041-1111) was a scholar of Chinese studies, a poet and the author of the *Gōdanshō* 江談抄.

⁴⁵ The temple、六波羅蜜寺 presently located in Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto, was built by Priest Kūya, or Kōya 空也 (903-972), the founder of the *nenbutsu-odori*, Dancing-Chanting the Name of Amida Buddha.

Kūya resided, Ximing Temple⁴⁶ in China where Master Ensoku [unidentified] resided, and the Great Nālandā Temple⁴⁷ in India. So throughout the three countries, there are some examples.”

Lord Kintō was impressed by Masafusa’s fluent response and remained silent for a moment. Lord Yorimichi was most pleased and said, “Oh, so there are examples. That solves my problem.” So the great gate was built facing the north. That is the gate popularly called the *Sanmon*, the Mountain Gate. (However, as I recall, Uji appears quite different geographically from outside. I hear that the river flows in the north. People should ask the villagers for details.)

⁴⁶ The temple was built in 658 at Changan by Emperor Gao Zong of Tang China.

⁴⁷ The temple near Rājagṛha was built in the fifth century as the academic center of the Indian Buddhism and Xuan Zhuang studied there.

1:10 About Priest Ikkyū Who Visited Poet Hitomaro's Grave



(Ikkyū is sketching a portrait of Hitomaro)

Priest Ikkyū,⁴⁸ a descendant of Emperor Gokomatsu [r. 1392-1412], was a most superior monk who was widely respected for his talent and achievements during the reign of Emperor

⁴⁸ Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394-1481), an itinerant Zen monk of the Rinzai School, excelled in poetry and calligraphy. He was popularly known as Ikkyū-san since he often appears in folk tales and children's books.

Gohanazono [r.1428-1462].

Ikkyū accomplished everything he had wished. Blessed with humor, wit and wisdom, he was famous for his exemplary conduct and was regarded as a reincarnation of Shaka Buddha.

In his middle age, he once traveled to the province of Harima [the southwest region of Hyōgo Prefecture]. He first arrived at an old battle ground, Ichinotani, or First Valley,⁴⁹ where he stayed for a few days, reminiscing about past warriors, and praying for the repose of their souls. While walking about five *ri*⁵⁰ from Ichinotani, he came to a strange field as the sun began to set. He spent the night in the field sleeping on the dewy grass.

In the morning, he left the field and came to the grave site of Hitomaro.⁵¹ He sat down in front of the grave mound, and took out a sheet of paper from his bosom. He sketched Hitomaro's portrait from memory and signed it with a poem which read:

**[Hitomaro,]An incarnation of poetry
If not a bodhisattva,
He must have been a Buddha or a God.**

⁴⁹ Ichinotani 一の谷 in Suma-ku, Kōbe, was a famous battle ground where Yoshitsune of the Genji clan attacked the army of the Heike clan in 1184. Eventually, the Heike were destroyed and Yoshitsune was killed by his half-brother, Yoritomo, who founded the first samurai government, or shogunate, in Kamakura.

⁵⁰ One *ri* equals 3,927 meters.

⁵¹ Kakinomoto no Hitomaro 柿本人麻呂(?-708) served Empress Jitō (r.686-697) and Empero Monmu (r. 698-707) as an imperial poet. Nearly three hundred and seventy poems by him appear in the *Manyōshū* 万葉集, the oldest anthology of Japanese poetry, which contains 4,500 poems.

**Just as in the olden times,
Boats and islands are floating
In the morning dew of Akashi Bay,
But there is no more Hitomaro**

**As he finished his impromptu poem, he dedicated it
and left it at the mound.**

**Later, the grave site and its surroundings were
pillaged and ransacked by bandits and lawless
warriors during the battles and wars. Many
storehouses were broken down and the treasures
were stolen. Perhaps because of these unfortunate
circumstances, no one has heard of the portrait and
poem by Priest Ikkyū since the Eishō Era
[1504-1520].**

1:11 About Senbon Shaka Nenbutsu,⁵² and Fugenzō, a Celebrated Cherry Tree

In the middle of the Second Month, a service called *Senbon Shaka Nenbutsu* [Chanting Many Times Shaka Buddha's Name] is held in the Shaka Hall of Daihōonji Temple [Kamigyō-ku, Kyoto]. The ceremony is related to the *Yuikyōgyō* [Shaka Buddha's last sutra at the time of his *nirvana*].

The *Tsurezuregusa* mentions that this chanting was first practiced by Priest Nyorin (or Myōkyōritsuin) during the Bun'ei era [1264-1275],⁵³ but that is not correct.

The chanting was first practiced by Priest Jōgaku, a disciple of Priest Genshin⁵⁴ during the Kan'nin era [1017-1020]. So Jōgaku was the originator of the chanting (officially called Onran Myōgō Dainenbutsu,⁵⁵ but popularly called Shaka Nembutsu). Meanwhile, the chanting died out. Priest Nyorin⁵⁶ revived it two hundred fifty years later during the Bun'ei era in the reign of Emperor Kameyama [r. 1260-1274].

Neither the *Honchō Sōdenfu* nor the *Genkō Shakusho*⁵⁷ mentions Priest Jōgaku, but the

⁵² *Senbon* 千本, a thousand sticks, means “many times”. *Nenbutsu* 念仏, is the chanting of Buddha's name.

⁵³ See story #218 in the *Tsurezuregusa* (*Chirizuka*, 1:5, note 1).

⁵⁴ Genshin 源信, or Eshin (942-1017), laid the foundation of the Jōdo (Pure Land) sect in Japan.

⁵⁵ 音乱名号大念仏.

⁵⁶ 如輪 (明鏡律院).

⁵⁷ *Honchō Sōdenfu* 本朝僧伝譜. *Genkō Shakusho* 元亨釈書 contains the biographies of priests and monks since Buddhism entered Japan.

*Sanmon Yokawa no ki*⁵⁸ says :

“Priest Jōgaku, a member of the Masada family in Higo Province and a disciple of Genshin, studied Shingon and Tendai teachings and also practiced Zen while staying for thirty years on Mount Hiei. In the beginning of the Kan’nin era, he began the Chanting of Shaka Buddha’s Name in three places. But the practice died out and later Priest Nyorin revived it and continued the practice. So Priest Jōgaku was the originator of the chanting.

Examples show that many practices died out, but were revived at the original places many years later. It is said that the records and the origin stories of the Shaka Nenbutsu were lost in the course of time.

The Third Month of Eiwa 1 [1375]

**Gonsei, priest of
the Shuryōgon’in
Temple**

So the originator of the Senbon Shaka Nenbutsu was Priest Jōgaku and he was succeeded by Priest Nyorin two hundred fifty years later. Also the inscription on the temple bell said that it was cast in the Seventh Month of Kōryaku 1 [1379].

Also, there was a very famous cherry tree called Fugenzō [Image of Bodhisattva Fugen] in the temple. It is said that once a blossoming branch of

⁵⁸ 定覚上人. 山門横川の記.

the tree was presented to the shogun of that time and the chanting began on the following day. In return, the shogun granted the temple fifty *koku*⁵⁹ of rice for the occasion.

Once Emperor Gokomatsu [r.1392-1412] asked Lord Yoshimitsu⁶⁰ to stay at his Kitayama Villa (so it is noted in the *Kitayama Gyōkōki*). During the twenty some days of the imperial visit at the villa, the Nenbutsu chanting of the middle of the Second Month was postponed to the Third Month, the cherry blossoms season (as described in the following).

At the time of the imperial visit to Kitayama Villa in the spring of Ōei 15 [1408], Shogun Yoshimitsu stopped the chanting because of the noise of the people who gathered for the occasion. At that time, Shiba Yoshishige brought a message from the shogun to the temple, saying, “When the shogun heard of your temple’s celebrated cherry tree, your priests presented him with a blossoming branch. But seeing such a large branch, the shogun became angry and declared, ‘In future, send me a smaller branch. It is a shame to break off a large branch from such a famous tree.’” Until the present day, the temple has continuously received the grant of rice for the chanting.

As for Fugenzō, the famous cherry tree, when Emperor Uda [867-931] once visited the Urin’in

⁵⁹ One *koku* equals 5.119 US bushels.

⁶⁰ The third Ashikaga Shogun, also called Lord Kitayama, built the Kinkakuji Temple, or Golden Pavilion.

Temple,⁶¹ he admired the cherry blossoms there. At that time Sugawara Michizane was accompanying him and had been allowed to wear the blue robe.⁶² Michizane composed a comment and a poem on the cherry blossoms to show his gratitude to the emperor and they are still extant today. The cherry tree is said to be the same kind as the Fugenzō.

As the temple was the military headquarters of the repeated battles during the Ōnin war⁶³ and the Funaokayama Battle, many precious articles and writings, including the tale of the temple's origin, have been lost.

⁶¹ The cherry tree, Fugenzō 普賢像 was in the Urin'in 雲林院 Temple located south of the Daitokuji Temple, Murasakino, Kita-ku, Kyoto.

⁶² Sugawara Michizane (see Chizuka, 1:3) was promoted to Junior Third Rank. Courtiers wore variously colored robes according to their rank.

⁶³ The Ōnin War (1467-77) involving the Hosokawa and the Yamana families caused much damage and many casualties in Kyoto, the capital.

1:12 About a Poem by Sōgi and *Unohana*
Blossoms⁶⁴



(Sōgi and the master of the hut)

Monk Sōgi [1421-1502] was so talented as regards

⁶⁴ Sōgi 宗祇、a celebrated renga linked verse master of the late Muromachi period. His writings include the *Azuma Mondō* 吾妻問答 and *Wakuraba* 老葉、and *Shirakawakikō* 白河紀行. *Unohana* 卯の花, a white bell-shaped blossom that blooms from May to June on shrubs. The term *hana* of *unohana*, blossom 花, also means nose 鼻.

linked verse that his disciples from distinguished families felt embarrassed while taking poetry lessons from him. He was constantly traveling and had no place to settle in.

In those days, many linked-verse masters were Sōgi's disciples; these included Shōhaku [1442-1527], Sōchō [1448-1532], and Sakurai Motosuke [who quarreled with Sōgi and left him]. Thus Sōgi was regarded as the main pillar of the poetry world of that time.

Once when the former emperor [held a poetry contest], he selected Sōgi and several other linked-verse masters, and had them compose fifty thousand linked-verses. He gave Sōgi the highest points while he scored the others low. Though of lowly birth, Sōgi was higher and superior in the Way of Poetry than anyone else including the regents and ministers.

One day, Sōgi saw a grass hut north of Adashino field⁶⁵ in Saga. He approached and saw many *unohana* blooming in the yard. The master of the hut, dressed like a monk, was out in the yard. He looked so ugly with his big nose. Sōgi wrote down a poem on a sheet of paper, folded it and attached it to [a stem of] the *unohana*. The poem read:

Sakabauno
Hana ni kite nake

⁶⁵ Adashino in Saga, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto, was an old burial ground. Nenbutsuji Temple 年仏寺 in the vicinity has 8,000 stone Buddhist statues commemorating unidentified souls.

*Hototogisu*⁶⁶

As Sōgi was about to leave, the master of the hut noticed the folded paper on the blossom, and thinking it strange, shouted to Sōgi, “Hey, you, the traveling monk, stop.” As Sōgi turned and stopped, the master demanded, “Explain this poem.” Sōgi read his poem, “Nightingale, come and sing for the *unohana* blossoms of the Saga Hut.” “That sounds fine. I thought you said in your poem, ‘Nightingale, come and sing for the nose of the Saga Hut.’ I first took it as most insulting, but now it sounds much better.” It was an amusing incident.

A person with a physical defect always interprets everything in relation to his deformity [owing to his lack of confidence]. People say it is a typical habit of the deformed, and the master of the hut was no exception. On the other hand, Sōgi, so confident of his splendid poem, skillfully superimposed the images of the nose and blossom, and thus successfully deceived the master of the hut.

⁶⁶ Contrary to the traditional *waka* court poem of thirty-one syllables, Sōgi’s first part called *hokku* 発句 (starting verse) of the linked verse has only seventeen syllables, the prototype of the *haiku*.

1:13 The Voices of Prince Motoyoshi, Priest Jōan and Ashikaga Tadatsuna

Prince Motoyoshi [890-943],⁶⁷ a son of the fifty-seventh emperor, Yōzei, was popularly known for his love affairs and elegant poems.

According to the *Tsurezuregusa* [Tale, #132], *The Diary of Prince Rifuō Chōmei*⁶⁸ mentions that Prince Motoyoshi had a magnificent voice audible even on the Toba Avenue when he delivered the New Year's Day message in the Great Imperial Hall.⁶⁹

The celebrated *Diary* was apparently very rare and precious. Perhaps some noblemen might have copies. People say that the shogun entrusted copying the diary to Imagawa Sadayo who was ordered to serve in the Kyushu Tandai Office. Since then the diary has been missing. It could have been burned or destroyed in battle fires, and people thought it most regrettable.

Recently, someone quoted from the diary in his commentary on poetry. The writer might have had a copy of the diary or heard about it somewhere. Thus the diary has been often quoted in various old commentaries, but such repeated quotations sound quite dubious. While the author of the *Tsurezuregusa* expresses his uncertainty about the

⁶⁷ 元良親王

⁶⁸ *Rifuō Chōmei Shinnōki* 李部王重明親王記. Rifuō Chōmei, Emperor Godaigo's prince, died in 954 at the age of forty-nine.

⁶⁹ The Daigyokuden, or Daigokuden, the main administrative hall in the imperial palace where the emperor had his offices. The Toba Avenue started from the old site of the Rajōmon Gate, presently located in Yotsutsuka-Kujō, Shimogyō-ku, Kyoto.

diary, someone like me over two hundred years later should not casually discuss it, since I am much afraid of causing future misunderstanding. So Prince Motoyoshi had a loud voice which was heard from the Great Imperial Hall as far as the Toba Avenue.

The *Honchō Kōsōden* [*Biographies of the High Priests in Japan*] also mentions that Priest Jōan [1500-?] studied the Hossō doctrine with Priest Jōtō,⁷⁰ lived in a grass hut on Mt. Hira of Ōmi, and recited the sutra of *The Twelve Buddhas' Names*.⁷¹ His voice was loud enough to reach the Imperial Court as well as other areas. This story sounds like that of Prince Motoyoshi. Also Ashikaga Tadatsuna,⁷² voice reached as far as ten *ri* as mentioned in an old writing. This is also another similar tale.

Such similar tales must have been known in China as well as in this country. People must have a reason to repeat such stories, but I myself am not so sure. Since these tales appear in old writings, we can neither freely fabricate nor fictionalize them. When Buddhist priests try to explain these tales, they usually give deliberately significant meanings and try to benefit from their teachings. But these tales

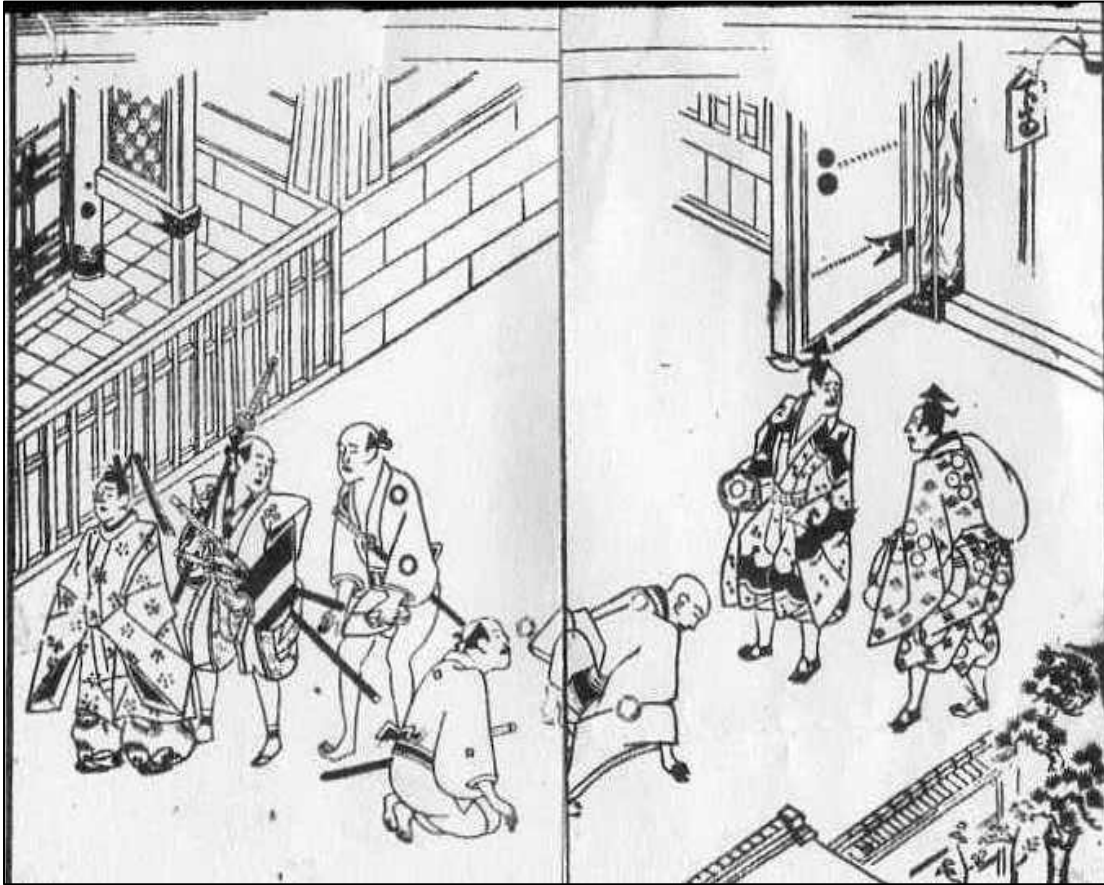
⁷⁰ Jōtō 常騰(1400-1475), a scholar monk of the Dianj Temple of the Hossō Sect, one of the Six Sects of old Nara Buddhism.

⁷¹ The *Jūni Butsumyō-kyō* 十二仏名經 preaches the merits of reciting the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas in twelve rolls.

⁷² Ashikaga Matatarō Tadatsuna was a strong man with one-inch long teeth, the power of a hundred men, and voice heard for ten *ri* (one *ri*, 3,927meters), according to an article dated Yōwa 1(1181) in the historical record, the *Azuma Kagami*.

must have been known in foreign lands before Buddhism entered Japan. So whatever these priests say is not necessarily true.

2:1 How a Blind Monk Greeted the *Manzai* Entertainers⁷³



(The blind monk is greeting the *manzai* entertainers)

During the Tenbun Era [1532-1555], there was a blind monk in the capital who often entertained high-ranking officials and noblemen at their mansions. He was so talented in every way, including narrating amusing tales that many

⁷³ During the New Year's season, the *manzai* 万歳 entertainers visit each household as they sing, dance and tell funny stories to celebrate the occasion. The custom began in the Kamakura Period (1185-1333) and continues till today in the Mikawa, Owari and Kawachi areas. The *manzai* entertainers dress like noblemen in long-sleeved robes with headgear. There are two in a team: one dances while the other sings and beats a hand drum.

wealthy townsmen came to the monk's gateway to pay their respects.

In the beginning of the fifth year of the era, the monk decided to visit his noble patrons to deliver his New Year's greetings. His servant who was to guide him had just come up to the capital from the countryside and was completely ignorant of anything in the city. So the monk had been instructing him on various manners and styles of the capital.

On that day, too, the monk carefully instructed his servant, "The compound of the imperial palace [where many noblemen live] is surrounded by earthen walls, and once you enter it you should not act like a townsman or a man of the merchant class. If you see anyone wearing a robe with long sleeves, let me know in advance so that I have time to prostrate myself and greet him."

After a while, the monk and his servant went through the gateway of the Ōgimachi district. Again the monk repeated his instructions to his servant, "From here on, you will see more noblemen. Remember to let me know when you see someone dressed in a long-sleeved robe and headgear. Beware of those dressed in long-sleeved robes but with no headgear for they are only commoners. So pay attention to the headgear and long-sleeved robes."

Soon the servant whispered to the monk, "Here comes a man dressed like you described." The monk quickly prostrated on the ground with his

hands on the white sand and greeted the nobleman, introducing himself, “I am a monk of so-and-so.” But he received no response, or any messengers from the nobleman who would usually reply, “Thank you.”

Thus the monk prostrated about ten times in one *chō* [109 meters], and during the day, he was up and down over a hundred and fifty times. Eventually he was worn out as his body became cold and his robe was soiled with sand and mud. Many passers-by laughed at the wretched sight. However, after so many times kneeling and prostrating, the monk received no response from any of the noblemen he greeted. Exhausted, he and the servant went home.

After resting there, the monk thought over what had happened during the day and said to his servant, “Every year, I have received some words from the noblemen as I greeted them. Also I was often invited to their mansions. But today’s greeting was most extraordinary. I wonder if you made mistakes and let me greet the wrong persons. It was certainly strange, for I have repeated to you the instructions so carefully.”

The servant replied, “I did not tell you to greet anyone other than those you described to me.” The doubting monk questioned him, “Did they wear headgear?” “Exactly,” answered the servant. The monk continued, “Were they wearing long-sleeved robes?” “Of course. They were all dressed in long-sleeved robes with headgear and holding

drums in their hands. Their servants were all carrying bags.” The surprised monk cried out, “Oh, no. They were all petty *manzai* entertainers! So I wasted my greetings.”

The monk scolded his servant, but he soon realized this to be futile and even found the whole situation most comical. Later he visited his noble patrons to greet them and told them about his servant’s mistakes. They were well entertained and laughed at his extraordinary and farcical experience. It was indeed an amusing incident.

2:2 How Zen Master Egen Ertained Master Musō



(Egen entertains Musō)

Master Egen of the Myōshinji Temple⁷⁴ used to live on a grass hut in a mountain of Mino Province and with his superior knowledge and practice, was

⁷⁴ Sekiyama (or Sekizan) Egen 関山慧玄 was the founder of the Myōshinji Temple 妙寺 (Ukyō-ku, Kyoto), once a detached palace of former Emperor Hanazono, and the headquarters of the Myōshinji School of the Rinzai Sect. In the Ōei Revolt 1399, the temple was confiscated and added to the Nanzenji Temple. Later Toyotomi Hideyoshi revived the temple, and it became the most popular Rinzai School temple in the Edo Period with its buildings of the Momoyama-Edo styles representing modern Zen temple architecture.

regarded as the most accomplished Zen master of that time.

After the Kenmu era [1334-1336], Master Myōchō,⁷⁵ or Daitō Kokushi [National Master of the Great Light] of the Daitokuji Temple became so celebrated that many noblemen, including the emperor, placed their faith in him. The elders of the Five Temples⁷⁶ of the capital also paid him great respect and they would dust their desks to receive him. Even some high-ranking priests who had renounced secular life would feel inferior to him as if taking left-over cold *sake*⁷⁷ in his presence. Thus, the name Daitō Kokushi sounded like thunder at that time.

But none of his disciples pleased Myōchō. They trembled before their master, who appeared to them like a dragon. When a disciple had a question and answer session with him, and the master did not like his answers, he struck him on his neck so hard that he finally died. Since then, no one had come near him and served him. The tragic news reached every one in the country. Some respected him with awesome feelings, while others became doubtful about him.

As soon as Egen heard of him, he thought that

⁷⁵ Shūhō Myōchō 宗峰妙超 (1282-1337, the founder of the Daitokuji Temple [Kita-ku, Kyoto-shi], the headquarters of the Daitokuji school of the Rinzaï Sect, received the title Daitō Kokushi 大灯国師 from Emperor Hanazono. His writings include the *Daitōkokushi Goroku* 大灯国師語録.

⁷⁶ The Five Temples of the capital Kyoto were Tenryūji, Sokokuji, Ken'ninji, Tōfukuji, and Manjuji Temples, all belonging to the Rinzaï Sect of Zen. They were popularly called the Kyoto Gozan, or the Five Mountains or Five Temples of Kyoto, in contrast to the Kamakura Gozan, the Five Temples of Kamakura.

⁷⁷ Taking cold *sake* left by someone else was considered a rudeness.

Myōchō should be his teacher. Dressed in his everyday robes with a pair of sandals, he immediately started out to the capital to meet Myōchō. When he arrived at the temple, he asked for Myōchō and he came out of his room leaning on a stick. Standing in the front garden, Egen began to ask him a few questions. Impressed by these questions, Myōchō replied, “So you know me. I have never thought of meeting you today like this.” He invited him to his room and there the two Zen masters engaged in a congenial discussion on the teachings. This was the first time for Egen to come up to the capital and exchange his ideas with another master.

In those days, whenever people mentioned “the Zen master,” they referred to Master Egen, as he was regarded as the revival of the highest-ranking Bodhisattava.

At the request of former Emperor Hanazono [1297-1348], Egen became the founder of the Myōshinji Temple which was more beautiful than any of the Five Temples of the capital as regards its style and the appearance of its belfry, gateway, pagoda and the Mikagedō main hall. (According to some Myōshinji monks, Master Myōchō once said, “The Daitokuji Temple is superior as a temple [as regards its size], but the Myōshinji Temple is better for its teaching.”) Indeed, the temple is still very prosperous with many disciples and acolytes.

When Egen was residing in the Myōshinji

Temple, Master Musō Kokushi⁷⁸ of the Tenryūji Temple passed by, and sent a messenger asking for Egen. Straightening his robes, Egen rushed out of his room, saying, “Welcome! Please come in.” He invited Musō into his room, and there the two masters enjoyed a pleasant conversation. Now Egen wanted to treat Musō, but he was too poor to offer him anything special for him. He took out a few copper coins from his ink box and sent a messenger to a neighbor’s house to get some *yakimochi* baked rice cake with the coins. When Egen offered the rice cake to him, Musō was much moved by this hearty treat; he expressed his thanks, and then left. It is foolish to criticize Egen’s humble way of entertaining Master Musō.

Master Musō was indeed a celebrated Zen master of that time. It was truly difficult to describe how much people admired and respected his elegant and pure life style. He often embarrassed some noblemen poets by his excellent poems and by his great virtue; he was easily ranked higher than the second among all the priests of the Five Temples of the capital. Indeed, he enjoyed a serene life as he appreciated the wind, water, and unusual stones and rocks.

⁷⁸ Musō Soseki 夢窓漱石(1275-1351), the founder of Tenryūji Temple of the Rinzaï Sect (Sagano, Ukyo-ku, Kyoto), instigated trade with Sung China with the ship, the Tenryūji-bune 天竜寺船, or Heavenly Dragon Ship, in support of Ashikaga Takauji, the first shogun of the Ashikaga Shogunate. He designed many Zen temple gardens including those of the Tenryūji, Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), Ginkakuji (Silver Pavilion) and Saihōji (Kokedera or Moss Temple). His literary activities made the temple most important as the headquarters of the Gozan Bungaku, or Five (Zen) Temples Literature. His writings include the *Muchū Mondōshū* 夢中間答集.

Many agreed that it was Egen's first time to entertain such a celebrated master as Musō in his unpretentious manner.

2:4 About Uesugi Dōshō and the Farmers and Villagers



(Dōshō instructs the framers)

Uesugi Dōshō was a very capable administrator of the Kamakura [shogunate]. Once the farmers of the Uesugi domain disputed the boundary of Matsuyama with neighboring villagers. Those ignorant farmers and peasants were easily agitated and talked about rioting as they began to polish their rusty arrows and bamboo lances. Soon some

appealed to the local magistrate, who finally reported the matter to Dōshō.

After some investigation, Dōshō concluded that the only solution to end the dispute was to find out the height of the mountain at the boundary. But no one knew how to do it. Finally Dōshō told the people how to measure the mountain. First, a man stood at the summit. Another man with a five-foot-long pole walked down from there the distance equaling the length of his pole, marked the spot, and called the first man on the summit. The first man then came down to join him. Then the second man, leaving the first at the second marked place, descended the mountain as far as the length of his pole, marked the spot, and then called the first man, and he came down to join him. In this way, the two continued their work until they reached the foot of the mountain, where they totaled the measurements to get the height of the mountain. This method worked quite well with few discrepancies, no matter how winding the mountain path was.

The farmers and villagers were all very impressed and thought it most extraordinary. Excelled in military arts, Dōshō might have read about measuring mountains in some military writings.

At another time after a party, Dōshō was enjoying conversation with men who had renounced the world and entered the Buddhist Way, and they began to recount unusual stories. One of them said, “There is a five-storied pagoda in this area, and it is

such-and-such high.” Another disagreed, “No, you're wrong. It is such- and-such high.” They began to argue, each insisting he was right.

Dōshō smiled and listened to the two for a while, but finally said, “Both of you are wrong. You think you are right because you believe what you have heard about it. Neither of you is correct. No matter how many stories the pagoda has, we can get the exact height by measuring the circumference or the square area of the lowest story. For example, in the case of a five-storied pagoda, if the lowest story is three *ken* square, it will be fifteen *ken* high to the top story. If the lowest story is five *ken* square, then the pagoda is twenty-five-*ken* tall. This is the way they construct a pagoda. If there are any discrepancies or miscalculations, the pagoda would look unbalanced and would easily collapse in storms and floods. Now, why don't we send people to the pagoda and have them measure the height.” So they measured the height of the pagoda following Dōshō's instructions and the measurement was just right.

Dōshō also told them, “The nine rings around the pole at the pagoda's highest roof vary according to the design and style of the pagoda. Remember this.”

He was a most extraordinary man. (This story was told by someone from Kamakura. I should wait for the opinion of an expert carpenter).

2:5 About Kinkakuji, the Golden Pavilion



(The Golden Pavilion)

In the spring of the fifteenth year of Ōei [1408], Emperor Gokomatsu [r.1392-1412] asked Lord Rokuon'in Yoshimitsu to invite him to stay at his villa in Kitayama.⁷⁹ Before the imperial visit, Lord Yoshimitsu renovated the villa in every respect.

⁷⁹ Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満(1358-1408), the third Ashikaga shogun, engaged in trade with Ming China, constructed the Golden Pavilion in the Kitayama 北山 district of Kyoto, and also the Muromachi Palace in the Muromachi district.

He made a waterfall by channeling water, and using shapely rocks and stones from the Iseshima and Saiga areas, he created a pond resembling a sea with small islands and pebble beaches.⁸⁰ It was said that Lord Yoshimitsu made so much effort to welcome the emperor to his villa because of the promise he had made with the emperor of having a parent-son relationship⁸¹ with him.

To the south of the pond in the compound of the villa there was a three-storied structure popularly called Kinkakuji, or the Golden Pavilion, with its walls covered with gold leaf. When you look at the surface of the pond from the top of the pavilion, you see some water plants floating on the surface, their shiny leaves reflecting the sun, while others sink deeply into the water creating dark shadows in which the fish and turtles seem to be playing among the tips of their leaves. As you cast your eyes in the distance, you see snow-capped hills and mountains appearing as if covered with white flowers, and others colored in subtle hues in the soft mist. The incomparable beauty pleased the emperor so much that he stayed in the villa for some twenty days.

One mid-autumn day at a mansion, some samurai gathered and talked about the Golden

⁸⁰ Present-day Iseshima National Park in the Shima Peninsula, the eastern part of Mie Prefecture, is known for the scenic beauty of its bay and the ancient Ise Shrine. Saika 雑賀, or Saiga, refers to the area around the mouth of the Kinokawa River in Wakayama Prefecture.

⁸¹ After the mother of Emperor Gokomatsu died, Yoshimitsu's wife, Hino Yasuko (also called Kitayama-in), served the young emperor with the title *junbo* 準母 (surrogate mother) in 1407 and the emperor visited the Golden Pavilion in the following year.

Pavilion. They were most impressed to hear about its third story's ceiling made of one-*jo*-square [ten-foot-square] boards which were most rare. Nakatsukasa, a priest of the Ōmiya Shrine at Mt. Fuji, came out of the inner part of the mansion and looking down at those in the gathering, said, “You people in the city don’t know anything outside the city, and are so impressed by a board as small as one-*jō*-square.

Among the petrified buried wood at Mt. Fuji, we find many twice as large as those used in the ceiling of the pavilion. For example, I have a sliding door at home made of a two-*ken*-square (twelve-foot-square) cedar board. If you don’t believe me, come to my place.” The man spoke in a low voice, but those who heard him all clapped their hands and were too impressed to continue their conversation.

Indeed, the small country of Japan with only sixty-some provinces has these unusual things in remote places. Just imagine what they have in China and India! The trees called *kō* refer to those containing some oil. They look strange, but their fragrance is indescribable. *Sendan* [*candana*] is also a tree with most mysterious fragrance. Compiling a list of all these extraordinary things is not easy.

2:6 Selfless Lord Amako Tsunehisa



(Lord Amako and the servants are digging up the pine tree)

Amako Tsunehisa,⁸² the lord of Izumo, excelled in military arts and governing his domain. He was blessed with many subjects and the great prosperity of his clan. The present Lord Amako Tsunehisa belongs to the fifth generation from the original founder, En'ya Takasada. Takasada committed suicide in Izumo because of the slanders spread by

⁸² Amako Tsunehisa 尼子経久(1458-1541), governor of Iyo, controlled Izumo, Oki, Inaba, and Hōki after the Ōnin War (1467-1477).

Lord Kō Moronao⁸³ an administrative assistant of the shogun during the time of the first Ashikaga Shogun Takauji.

After the death of Takasada, his three-year-old son received the tonsure and was brought up by a nun. When he became an adult, he left the priesthood and called himself Amako, or the Child of *Ama* [nun], in honor of the nun. The ancestors of Amako are said to be the descendants of the celebrated Sasaki family related to Emperor Uda.

Lord Amako Tsunehisa was honest and generous by nature. As he helped the poor, including the *rōnin*, and shared everything with his subjects, he was highly regarded and greatly respected. The people admired him and said that the good old days of Meng Chang-jun⁸⁴ of Qi with his three thousand guests had been revived in the land of Izumo.

After the disturbance at Funaokayama in the eighth year of Eishō [1511],⁸⁵ the capital, Kyoto, enjoyed peace for a time. But incessant battles took place in the local regions because greedy war lords fought against each other. During this time, Lord Amako spent peaceful days in his Izumo castle.

⁸³ Kō Moronao 高師直 won promotion by assisting Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358), the first Ashikaga shogun, but later became arrogant and was killed in 1351. For his amorous affairs, see *Chirizuka Monogatari*, 5:9.

⁸⁴ Minister Meng Chang-jun 猛嘗君(?-279 B.C) of Qi was known for entertaining several thousand guests at his palace.

⁸⁵ Ashikaga Yoshitada 足利義伊 defeated Hosokawa Masanori in the incident. Funaokayama, a small hill in Kita-ku, Kyoto, has the Kenkun Shrine 健君神社 where Oda Nobunaga is enshrined.

Whether his guests were the daimyo lords who were closely related to him or mere samurai, the congenial lord treated everyone equally. If anyone praised any of his possessions, including books, robes, swords and even horses, he would offer them to him as a gift. So those who knew the lord's generous and selfless disposition used to refrain from praising anything belonging to him, but simply looked at them without offering any comments on their second visits.

At the end of the year, the lord took off his robes and garments, and gave them to his servants. He spent several days wearing only a thin cotton kimono, yet he never seemed cold. His complexion remained unchanged and his hands and feet were unaffected by the cold weather. He appeared as if he was enjoying a warm spring day.

Once when a certain man visited the lord, he noticed a tall pine tree in the front garden. Although the man knew the lord's generous nature, he thought it impolite not to comment on such a magnificent tree with such beautiful branches. So he said to the lord, "The old pine tree in your garden looks most splendid. The way the branches curve and are spread is beyond description. I wonder who donated the tree. Or did it naturally grow in the garden? I have never seen such a tree like that. Please take good care of it." After praising the tree, the man left.

On the following day, the lord told his retainer, "Dig up the tree carefully. Get more men and send

it to the man who visited me yesterday.” So the retainer had some men dig up the tree and they tried to load it on a cart. But the trunk ten *ken* long⁸⁶ and its widespread branches were too big for the cart, and it was difficult to carry the tree through the narrow streets. So the retainer reported the trouble to the lord. Nonchalantly he replied, “That’s not a big problem. Simply cut off the branches as there is no other way.” So the tree was cut into small pieces and sent to the man in an ox-drawn cart. It is foolish to question the lord’s decision for he was utterly devoid of any selfish desire.

When a lord of the Hosokawa family heard this story, he said to his men, “Samurai should never forget that fighting is their primary concern. Although all samurai share the basic idea of the Way of the Warrior, there are differences among individuals. Some in the service of their master are tricked by enemies, and so they fail. Others fight over trifling matters such as the order of seating. One loses his life in a sudden enemy attack, while another suffers from the shame brought on his posterity by an insulting remark made by an opponent. Such things often happen. So depending on the circumstances, one lord raises an army, fights, and loses, while another wins and seizes the enemy territory. This is the natural course in the way of the samurai. Personal desire or avarice is not necessarily a cause of fighting.

⁸⁶ One *ken*, about six feet.

“Born into a samurai family of talent, Lord Amako is familiar with the Way of the Warrior, and all the stories about him sound quite wonderful. I have never heard of anyone so selfless as he is. He is truly an exemplary and superior lord.

“Since a warrior’s life can never be completely safe, not even for a moment, he cannot easily promise anything for the future. How can he be worried about the ups and downs of his posterity? I am deeply impressed by Lord Amako’s manner and behavior. Some may criticize his way, but not everyone can practice it for it is difficult to be as selfless as he is. But I would at least like to try to be fair with my subjects and avoid extreme favoritism.”

2:9 Honma Magoshirō and His Horsemanship⁸⁷



(Honma teaches his horsemanship)

Honma Magoshirō who lived in Sagami Province was famous for his archery and horsemanship in the Kenmu era [1334-1336], but his merits and achievements were scarcely recorded after his death.

⁸⁷ Ashikaga Yoshimochi 足利義持(1386-1428), the son of Yoshimitsu and the fourth Ashikaga shogun.

Lord Shōtei'in Taiju Yoshimochi wished to practice archery and horsemanship, and began to collect writings on these subjects. He found an account of Magoshirō's secrets of archery and horsemanship among the several booklets presented to him by Inamura Motosumi, a *rōnin* of Mimasaka Province. One booklet described Honma's many merits. Recently, I read a copy of it at a certain place and felt it most unfortunate that so many of his achievements were unknown by the general public.

Honma once shot a flying bird at Wadamisaki in Hyōgo. At another time, many master horsemen refused to approach a splendid horse presented to the emperor by En'ya Hōgan Takasada, but on the emperor's order, Honma rode the horse. As soon as he mounted the horse, it ran like a flying dragon on a cloud or a running tiger shaking a mountain. It was utterly indescribable how he controlled such a superb horse, and all the spectators were most impressed. Since then, many people came to learn his style of horsemanship.

In general, there are many kinds of learners, including beginners, experts, talented, and untalented, pursuing various ways of art. Whatever they do, once they have mastered the first few steps, they often skip the middle, and want to learn the advanced stages, and so they finally fail to master the secrets of the Way. Indeed, a man should diligently learn step by step like climbing a ladder to attain the depths of the Way. This is only possible

for someone who is sincere in pursuing the Way. Alas, it has been so long since people have been seriously devoted to the Ways. How can a man expect to attain the Way only by trying to learn the beginning and the end process while skipping the middle?

Among the many men who tried to learn horsemanship from Honma, none pleased him. As soon as they learned the first step, they often wanted to skip the middle and learn the final stage. One of his disciples once asked him, “May I ask how many secrets you know? You must have thousands hidden techniques.” Honma smiled and replied, “If a man learns the first step thoroughly, he can easily master the rest. The first, and the most important, step is to ride across a hanging bridge and masters have handed down this tradition by word of mouth to their disciples. If a man masters this technique, he can learn the rest as he wishes. But this secret is not so easy to teach.”

The disciple who had learned only a few steps was so eager to learn the secret of horsemanship that he joined his hands and begged his master, “Oh, how I wish I could learn the secret even at the cost of my life. So please teach me.” Unable to refuse his request, Honma said, “Well, it is difficult to teach you here. Let’s go to a valley in the mountains. Come with me.”

So the master and his disciple went to a mountain where they soon saw a bridge crossing over a river in a valley. The master rode ahead with

his disciple following. As they arrived at the bridge, the master swiftly dismounted, and said, “This is most important. Look at me carefully.” Honma slowly started to cross the bridge on foot leading his horse by the reins. When he had finished crossing, he mounted the horse. Confused, the disciple asked, “Why did you do that? What is the meaning of it, sir?”

The master explained, “This means, ‘You should not gain merit by an insignificant action,’ as a golden proverb says. Where there is no hanging bridge, by giving the whip to your horse, you can easily jump three to five *ken* over a river. Moreover, riding across a bridge is even easier. And certainly you would do that if I had shown you how. But if you always like to use such a technique, I will be teaching you something involving danger. Even though you had not yet learned much of the Way, you asked me to teach you the secret. That was the first useless thing to ask for. You should avoid becoming famous for doing something dangerous. The most important thing [in riding] is not to lose your life. When surrounded by many enemies at a sudden attack, the important thing is to die quickly. Besides riding across the bridge, other secret techniques, including going under eaves and going through bars,⁸⁸ are only to please the eyes of spectators. Hereafter, be careful and avoid acrobatics.”

⁸⁸ *Nokihawatashi* 軒端渡し and *kannukitōshi* 間とおし, two technical terms in ancient horsemanship.

This was indeed a most reasonable instruction for his disciple, and the example shown by the master horseman was truly valuable.

3:1 About Various Comments on Calligraphy



(The head priest listens to Fujiwara)

Fujiwara, a disciple of the head priest of the Shōren'in Temple,⁸⁹ was very famous for his calligraphy of the Shōren'in School⁹⁰ and was

⁸⁹ A temple in Higashiyama-ku, Kyoto City.

⁹⁰ A school of calligraphy established by Prince Son'en 尊円親王(1298-1356), head priest of the Shōren'in Temple. Son'en studies calligraphy under Sesonji Gyōbō 世尊寺行坊, and incorporated an ancient style. The school, also called the Oieryū お家流,

highly respected by many people, including the head priest.

One day when Fujiwara was in a good mood, he said to his people, “Lately, many things, including the Way of Calligraphy have been deteriorating. Emperors Fushimi, and his successor, Gofushimi,⁹¹ truly excelled in calligraphy as they had faithfully combined a Chinese style with Japanese taste. Indeed their style was superior to anyone in this country. In contrast, the style of Prince Son’en, a son of Emperor Fushimi, was inferior.

“While the two emperors were still alive, the young prince already had a marvelous style in his calligraphy and pleased his father very much. When he was seventeen years old, he copied a letter of petition with a slightly modified touch in his style, and showed it to his father. The father became very angry to see his calligraphy which reflected his intention of beautifying the style. He considered such an intention was degrading and vulgar. Since then, the father and son did not get along well because of the differences in their calligraphic taste.

“Meanwhile, the style of other princes after Son’en has also deteriorated. In comparison to the Son’en style, mine is just like a combination of withered bamboo sticks. Many people say that

was popular among commoners through the Muromachi and Edo periods, but it eventually deteriorated and finally declined.

⁹¹ Both Emperors Fushimi (1265-1317) and Gofushimi (1288-1336) were active in literature and compiled anthologies, the *Gyokuyō wakashū* 玉葉和歌集 (by Fushimi) and *Gofushimiin-gyoshū* 後伏見院御集 (by Gofushimi).

Son'en was responsible for the weak brush strokes of the calligraphers of today. It is most unfortunate that the harder the untalented learners try to imitate their master's style, the more inferior their own style becomes.

“The Son'en style is not easy to master for those who wish to gain recognition. And those who ignore the essence of his style can never succeed in any other styles. On the other hand, if they master his style, they will be able to learn the secrets of any calligraphic style.

“Writing styles remain after the death of writers. But no matter how famous a calligrapher becomes, if his style is illegible, it is utterly useless. Since there are no particular instructions for the Way of Calligraphy, people should study and learn it by themselves. That is something they should know. Moreover, the styles of the Sesonji,⁹² of Kōnō, and Tsunetomo⁹³ are not interesting because they emphasize only the traditional forms and shapes of letters.

“Lately, some people who look like Zen monks criticize and despise the traditional ways and styles of our country. And it is most unpleasant to see such people often boasting of their writing styles which are inferior and completely illegible. Some of

⁹² The Sesonji school of *kana* calligraphy, the most prestigious school during the Kamakura period, was established by Fujiwara Yukinari 藤原行成, or Kōzei (972-1028), who modeled his script after the *kana* style of Ono Dōfū 小野道風(894-966). The name of the school comes from the Sesonji Temple, a former mansion of Yukinari's grandfather, Koremasa [924-972].

⁹³ See *Chirizuka Monogatari*, 3:10, for the expertise of Fujiwara Kōnō 藤原行能, the seventh generation of Yukinari, and Fujiwara Tsunetomo, a son of Suketsugu.

them recently came to take lessons from me, but I would never allow them to come near me. Now perhaps they may be speaking ill of my style.”

All his listeners agreed with him and admired him even more.

3:2 About Benkei's IOUs

During his lifetime Shogun Yoshimasa,⁹⁴ wanted to inspect antique things. Many visitors brought him a mountain of antiques from China and Japan, including rare documents and papers. Among them were some twenty writings of Benkei,⁹⁵ all of them his IOUs, for example, “Please lend me a skinny horse,” “Please let me have some money,” and “Please lend me a roll of silk and a bag of rice.” The people at the shogun’s mansion were most amused to see these papers and regarded them as unique among the shogun’s collection.

The shogun said, “Judging from his IOUs, Benkei must have borrowed many more things during his life. It is very interesting to judge his personality by these papers. It seems that he was a man of no desires, for he accumulated nothing for himself. Apparently he asked for one thing on one day and for another on another day, relying on kind people. It is possible that he ignored his debts, but in the end, he had saved nothing to fill his purse.” The shogun was very impressed. If people today, including both clergy and lay people, were just as selfless as Benkei, they would not hate each other.

Incidentally, Benkei has been usually depicted

⁹⁴ 足利義政 or Lord Jishōin 慈照院殿, the eighth Ashikaga shogun [1435-1490], built the Ginkakuji, or the Silver Pavilion, and created Higashiyama culture.

⁹⁵ Musashibō Benkei 武蔵坊弁慶, a most brave and loyal retainer of Minamoto Yoshitsune (1159-1189), appears in many tales, noh dramas and kabuki plays.

in vulgar and frightening images, but many writings of monks of his time describe him as a handsome monk. This is most extraordinary.

3:4 About the Legends of Mount Ōmine



(Shōhō and the serpent)

A Shingon monk once said, “Like Mount Yudono of the northeastern region, Mount Ōmine embraces both the Diamond and the Womb

Worlds.⁹⁶ Since the mountain is very high and has many trees and branches, hardly any sunlight reaches it.”

Since En’nogyōja⁹⁷ opened the mountain in olden times, no one visited it because of its poisonous snakes and demons. By the Engi era [901-923], it had become a demonic world, and people only talked about it but never visited it.

When Shōhō of Daigoji Temp,⁹⁸ an accomplished ascetic with miraculous powers, heard about it, he lamented that the mountain had lost its miraculous powers owing to the demonic snakes. Using his strong determination, Shōhō one day climbed the mountain, and when he saw a poisonous serpent lying across the path and blocking his way, he nonchalantly stepped on it with his iron shoes. The serpent instantly turned into pieces of white bones which are said to be still kept in Daigoji Temple. While climbing the mountain, Shōhō encountered various demonic creatures, including the *tengu*⁹⁹ who came out to meet him. Shōhō completely ignored them as he chanted the secret *darani* spells.¹⁰⁰ Finally the demonic beings were exhausted, and they asked him for forgiveness and

⁹⁶ The two major teachings of Shingon doctrine. For another story of Mount Ōmine, see the *Konjaku Tales* (Japanese Section III), pp. 338-341.

⁹⁷ 役行者, the founder of *shugendō* in the Nara period (710-784). For a story of En’nogyōja or Ubasoku E, see the *Konjaku Tales* (Japanese Section I), pp. 13-16.

⁹⁸ The general headquarters of the Shingon sect presently located in Fushimi-Daigo in Kyoto, and founded by Priest Shōhō 聖宝(832-909).

⁹⁹ A mystical creature in Japanese folklore who usually appears with a long nose and beak, dressed in the robes of *shugenja*, or mountain ascetics.

¹⁰⁰ The *darani* in Japanese refers to the eighty-seven invocations in the *Sonshōdarani-kyō* 尊勝陀羅尼經. *Darani*, as well as *mantra* or *Shingon*, are mystic syllables which sustain the faith of their reciters.

promised to be the protectors of the mountain, and then they disappeared.

Later, Priest Nichizō¹⁰¹ went deep into the mountain and confined himself in a rock cave called Shō no Iwaya.¹⁰² There with the protection of deity Zaō Gongen he practiced the Way and ate neither grains nor salt. It is said that when Nichizō was still a young novice, he was often annoyed by snakes and almost lost his life. When snakes chase somebody, they usually emit a bad smell or fishy breath, and this is so hot and strong that the victim loses his sight and sense of direction. So people advised anybody being chased by a snake should cover his nose.

Now Nichizō lived in a place difficult for ordinary ascetics to reach. Led by Deity Shitsukongō, Nichizō went before deity Zaō and received a gold tablet inscribed with eight characters, *Nichi-zō-ku-ku-nen-getsu-yō-go*. But Nichizō was at a loss as he did not understand the meaning of these eight characters. Meanwhile, the Great Holy Deity Tenmangū descended from the western sky and sat next to Zaō.

When Nichizō asked the Great Holy Deity the meaning of these characters, the deity replied, “*Nichi* means the Great Sun Buddha [of the Shingon doctrine], while *zō* signifies the Womb World. *Ku-ku* [nine times nine] means months and years, and

¹⁰¹ 日藏, a younger brother of Miyoshi Kiyoyuki 三善清行(847-918), an, accomplished scholar of Chinese studies.

¹⁰² One of the major practice sites of the *shugendō* ascetics, located southwest of Mount Ōmine 大峯.

yō-go protection. So [your name] Nichizō sounds too grand. If you change your name, you will live for *ku-ku* or eighty-one years. If you don't, then you will have a short life of only eighty-one months. If you change your name immediately, you will have Zaō's protection, for eighty-one years."

Nichizō was overwhelmed, and wiping his tears away, he changed his name to Dōken on the spot. This was a wonderful event and the story appears in the *Genkō Shakusho*, and with more detail in *Ōmine no Engi*.¹⁰³

Ryōkyō¹⁰⁴ practiced the Way in another rock cave and acquired his cultic powers of a recluse. There were some more dwellings of recluses, and strange-looking ascetics were often noticed in the locality. Hardly any visitors, except those from the mountains of Kumano and Yoshino, ever came there. Since it was in a secret place in a remote region of the mountain, hardly anyone approached and even birds could not live there. Leaves were piled up several feet high, and sometimes even ten feet high, and no bugs and insects could survive there. Only the mountain wind sounded among the tree branches. It was truly a mysterious place, and only unusual recluses dwelt there.

At one time, Abbot Gyōson,¹⁰⁵ the head priest of Enman'in Temple¹⁰⁶, came to a remote place in

¹⁰³ 大峯の縁起 (unidentified)

¹⁰⁴ Miyako no Yoshika 都良香(834-879), a poet and a scholar of Chinese studies.

¹⁰⁵ Gyōson 行尊(1057-1135), a great grandson of Emperor Sanjō, was a poet and an imperial priest of the Heian court.

¹⁰⁶ 円満院, the headquarters of the Jimon School of the Tendai Sect, located in present Ōtsu city.

the mountain in the fourth month and gazed at the cherry blossoms in bloom. He recited this poem:

Moro tomo ni
Aware to omoe
Yamazakura
Hana yori hito mo
Shiruyoshi mo nashi

Mountain cherry
Have pity on me,
Only you know me
In this remote
Mountain village.

Someone from the Nijō family [known for *waka* poetry] said that the true meaning of this poem could be understood only by people who had been in the mountain.

Lately, many people have gone into the mountain, but most of them reached only halfway up, and then returned talking about various things as if they had actually seen them all. This was especially true of the casual local mountain ascetics who were heard to brag before their masters about what they had seen in the mountain. But in reality, people said they had returned only from the foot of the mountain. They say there was a rule forbidding anyone to speak about the mountain. Before climbing it, both laymen and priests were obliged to

vow not to repeat what they had seen there.

3:7 About Moroki who visited the Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine



(Moroki visited the Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine)

Long ago, there was a man called Moroki [various trees] of Yoshimine.¹⁰⁷ He was a leaned gentleman with great faith in the Buddhas and gods, and never lost his temper. Those who met him for the first time wanted to cultivate a long-term friendship with

¹⁰⁷ Yoshimine Moroki 良峰衆樹, a lord councilor, passed away at the age of fifty-nine in 920. His name, Moroki (means varieties of trees).

him, while others who already knew him deeply respected him.

Some time in the thirteenth year of Engi [913], Moroki and his men visited the Iwashimizu Hachiman Shrine and were caught by a sudden shower. As it became dark and frightening, they quickly took shelter under a *tachibana* tangerine tree in front of the shrine. At the sight of the dry and half-withered tree, Moroki composed a poem.

Chihaya buru
Omae no mae no
Tachibana mo
moroki¹⁰⁸ mo tomoni
Oikeru kana

The Tachibana tree,
Before the venerable Deity
After so many years,
Has become as old as
Various other trees

While they were waiting under the tree, perhaps Moroki's poem moved the Deity, for suddenly the dry branches became fresh and green. As soon as the sky cleared, Moroki and his men left the shrine after paying their respects to the Deity by deeply bowing for several times.

Since olden times, those who believed in the

¹⁰⁸ Here the term *moroki*, various trees, is associated with the poet's personal name, Moroki.

Buddhas and gods were always blessed. Even plants such as radishes in the ground benefit people. How can we ignore this as human beings? Oh, why is it so difficult to have faith? Why are people against this even after reading and hearing many reasons? Even when there is a marvelous revelation, so deep is their distrust that some people despise and fail to experience the heartfelt feelings. Such people can be regarded as bandits, for bandits are not limited to thieves and robbers. They should be ashamed [of their disbelief] and try to be sincerely faithful.

Looking at the people around us, we see the fools and the ignorant are often blessed. Why is this? It is because they easily accept what they hear without any selfish judgment, and have deep respect to the Buddhas and gods whose revelations they easily accept.

But the foolish and the ignorant will not do well as governing lords at times of national crisis. If engaged in [political affairs], the foolish and the ignorant will not only destroy themselves, but also bring suffering to their descendants. They will overlook important matters while engaged with trifles. The foolish and the ignorant often cause much harm.

Since olden times, only a few people have had faith in the Buddhas and gods, respecting the teachings of the holy and the wise, and being well learned as well as self-enlightened. What should a

person do?

Two old sayings; “The learned make mistakes while the ignorant have sincerity”, and “The learned have faith while the ignorant cause harm.” Both are wise remarks.

3:10 How Lord Kōnō of the Sesonji style¹⁰⁹ prayed for a child to the Kannon of Kiyomizu

In the reign of Emperor Gosaga [r.1242-1246], Lord Kōnō was seventy years old but still had no child to succeed in his family. He lamented this both morning and evening. One day in the first year of Kangen [1243], he visited the Kiyomizu Temple where he stayed for seven days praying to Kannon for a child. Eventually, he had a son, later Lord Mishina Tsunetomo of Shirakawa.

At the age of thirteen, when Tsunetomo wrote in the records of the officers on duty in the imperial palace, his superior writing style aroused much admiration. Later at the age of sixty, he was summoned by King Enma of the world after death. King Enma ordered him to make a calligraphy. Although Tsunetomo was not breathing, his body was still warm during the seven days when it was preserved at the palace. On the seventh day, he awoke and told everything to the friends who visited him. But some days later, he finally died.

This was truly extraordinary. Councilor Lord Sukemasa¹¹⁰ made a calligraphy saying, “Mishima, The Great Bright Protecting Deity of Japan, at the request of the Mishima Deity.”

¹⁰⁹ 世尊寺行能 was Fujiwara Koretsune's first son and the seventh generation from Fujiwara Kōzei 藤原行成(972-1027); he was one of the three great calligraphers (*sanseki*) of the Heian period, and the founder of the Sesonji style of calligraphy. See *Chirizuka Monogatari*,3:1

¹¹⁰ Fujiwara Sukemasa 藤原佐理 (944-998), one of the three great calligraphers of the Heian period.

Thus, there were many extraordinary people, priests and monks, who were regarded as the incarnations of gods and Buddhas in olden times. We have no-one like them, nor have we even heard of such people in the present time of this degenerate age. This is truly amazing.

Is it proper that some of today's self-conceited Confucian scholars deny the extraordinary things that happened in olden times? This is because today we have no extraordinary people. But we should never doubt the marvelous revelations left by gods and Buddhas which still survive until this present generation.

4:1 About Extraordinary Tales of Master Kōbō¹¹¹



(Kōbō placed a tub in the river)

Last year, a samurai who lived in the north-eastern region said, “Historical writings record Master Kōbō’s many achievements, and so there is no need

¹¹¹ This is another legendary anecdote about Master Kōbō 弘法, or Kūkai 空海 (774-835), the founder of the Shingon sect of Japan. He studied in China for two years (804-806), advocated esoteric Buddhist teachings, and passed away at the age of sixty-two. For a biographical tale, see Yoshiko Dykstra, *Konjaku Tales : Japanese Section I*, pp. 30-35.

to mention here any of them which are familiar to nobles and common folk. But I will introduce here another unusual event which took place in my province. In a deep valley of a mountain, there was a village called Shiokawa [Salt River] with forty or fifty houses. Since it was some ten *ri* away from the sea, it was difficult for the people to obtain rice and grain, and especially salt.

“In olden times, when Master Kōbō visited the village during his journeys, he heard about the people’s grief and lament for their hardship. So he said to the villagers, ‘What a pity this is. With my power of incantation I will immediately produce salt, and this will help you for generations.’

“So the Master had a tub made and placed it in the river which ran by the village. From the next day, only the water in the tub became salty, while the rest remained pure. So the villagers as well as people from neighboring villages came, scooped up the salt water from the tub, and boiled it in pots and pans to obtain the salt, which they used to improve their lives. Even today, the tub, just as it was in the time of Master Kōbō, still remains in the middle of the river and has never been buried in the sand despite the violent currents and floods. Such an extraordinary deed is truly noble as it has benefited the people for generations. So what the Master did was deeply appreciated.

“This is not everything about the master. Today, we notice each reed leaf has wrinkled marks in two places on its surface. There is a legend about

a playful deed of Master Kōbō's. One day, he watched a man making *chimaki*¹¹² by wrapping the rice cakes with reed leaves, and he said to him, 'Your *chimaki* don't look good because their sizes are different. You should place the rice cake at the proper place on the leaf. I will make marks on the reed leaves of various provinces from next year.'

"When he heard this, the man who was making the *chimaki* put a rice cake on a leaf and said to the master, 'This is the right place.' The master immediately made marks with his finger and said, 'From next year on, there will be two wrinkles on each reed leaf. If the positions of these wrinkles are compared with those made by my nail, they will match well. You should place the rice cake between the two wrinkles on the leaf.'

"As was to be expected, from the following year reed leaves all have had two marks of wrinkles. The origin of these two marks is said to have come from this legend. This should not be doubted.

"People say that there were no places-villages, districts, and provinces-where Master Kōbō had not visited during the some sixty years of his life. He was a very active man and spent some years in Tang China and left many writings including essays, poems and prefaces. People often wonder how he achieved so much during his short life of some sixty years. It is true to say that he was indeed an

¹¹² *Chimaki* 粽 rice cake, wrapped in a reed leaf in the shape of a triangle, was originally used as an offering to the water deity in China. Later it was offered to appease the soul of Qū-yuán 屈原, a poet of Chǔ (343-277? B.C.), who committed suicide by drowning in the Milou Jiang River. In Japan, the *chimaki* has been popularly enjoyed, especially on Boys' Day, 5 May, the memorial day of Qū-yuán.

incarnation of a Buddha or a god.”

Last year, a scholarly monk of Mount Hiei said, “Since Master Kōbō buried a sacred *nyoihōshu* ball¹¹³ on Mount Kōya,¹¹⁴ this mountain has flourished through later generations even after all others have declined.” Someone sitting near the monk said, “Master Dengyō¹¹⁵ was also a most celebrated *gonge*¹¹⁶ incarnation in Japan, but did not seek prosperity for his mountain, Mount Hiei, while [Master Kōbō] wanted Mount Kōya to flourish till the present day. So I hear that the decline of Mount Hiei¹¹⁷ was the wish of its founder, Master Dengyō.”

At this, the scholarly monk retorted, “That is just sour grapes on the part of the Tendai sect on Mount Hiei. No matter how selfless a person is, is there anyone who does not desire the success of his sect to save sentient beings?” Thus the two argued with each other, and it all sounded rather amusing to me.

“As we consider the Salt River legend, we realize that no place in this country is too far from

¹¹³ The *mani*, or *nyoihōju* jewel ball, purifies muddy water, and gets rid of bad luck.

¹¹⁴ Mount Kōya in Wakayama-ken has the Kongobuji Temple, the headquarter of the Shingon sect founded by Master Kōbō in 816.

¹¹⁵ Master Dengyō, also known as Saichō (767-822), went to China and returned with the Tendai teachings, and founded the Enryakuji Temple on Mount Hiei as the headquarters of the Tendai sect of Japan. For a tale recounting his life, see Yoshiko Dykstra, *Konjaku Tales: Japanese* Section I, pp. 36-37.

¹¹⁶ Here the term *gonge* 権化 refers to an incarnation of a Buddha, a bodhisattva or a god.

¹¹⁷ The context implies the political issues within the Tendai sect and the institutional pressure from old Nara Buddhism. In contrast, the Shingon teachings popularly accepted by the nobles and courtiers seemed to have less pressure. But the Tendai sect had great influence on the rise of Kamakura Buddhism as it produced many eminent priests and monks, including Shinran, Eisai, Dōgen, and Nichiren.

the sea, and the people often used salt. Salt is the first of the Five Tastes¹¹⁸ which give flavor to food. Without it, even life itself is hard to maintain. Though this country is small, it has everything and so is the richest in the world. In China, people favor flesh and meat, and they eat insects, snakes and animals. There is nothing they don't eat. And so, from time to time, they suffer from food poisoning which kills many victims. That is because they eat bad food.

“Moreover, people think they lack salt if they are living several thousand *ri* from the sea. But thanks to the immeasurable wonders of Nature, they can obtain three kinds of salt--from earth, from rocks, and from wells--to satisfy their needs.

“The people in this country have shunned eating flesh and meat since the olden times of the gods. That was probably because this country has everything needed, and so people did not have to eat meat.”

¹¹⁸ The Five Tastes, *gomi* 五味, include sweet, sour, bitter-salty, bitter, and spicy.

4:4 Lord Katsumoto and the Cooked Carp of Yodo



(Katsumoto commented on the cooked carp)

After the Ōei Era [1394-1429], the three shogunal assistants¹¹⁹ had become very powerful, and people

¹¹⁹ The three families Shiba 斯波, Hosokawa 細川 and Hatakeyama 畠山 were the assistants to the shoguns in the Muromachi period in Kyoto, and are referred to as the *kanrei* 管領 or *sanshoku* 三職, or three positions.

respected them more than the shoguns. Before the present shogun, there was a shogun who was assigned to the position after being secularized from the priesthood, another who died young, and Lord Akamatsu,¹²⁰ a traitor who killed his shogun. Meanwhile, the shogunal assistants had ignored their shoguns, managed all the administration, and finally accumulated so much power that all the lords and samurai feared them as if they were wolves and tigers.

Among these shogunal assistants was Lord Katsumoto,¹²¹ the most powerful and prosperous one. He was famous for his luxurious life, and spent much wealth in pursuing a variety of pleasures. In addition to his beautiful robes and gourmet food, his magnificent mansion with its guest and residence halls was indescribably gorgeous. Since he especially appreciated cooked carp, many *daimyo* lords sent him all kinds of carp from various places.

One day, someone invited Lord Katsumoto and entertained him with a variety of dishes, including cooked carp. A few of the lord's retainers joined him and helped to serve the carp. While all the retainers expressed their appreciation for the dishes, they praised the carp with only a few general comments. The lord commented on this as he spoke to his retainers.

¹²⁰ Afraid that his domain might be confiscated, Akamatsu Mitsusuke 赤松満祐 (1381-1441) invited Shogun Yoshinori (the sixth Ashikaga shogun) to his mansion in Kyoto, and killed him.

¹²¹ Hosokawa Katsumoto 細川勝元(1430-1473), a central figure involved in the Ōnin War, 1467-1477, which devastated Kyoto, the capital.

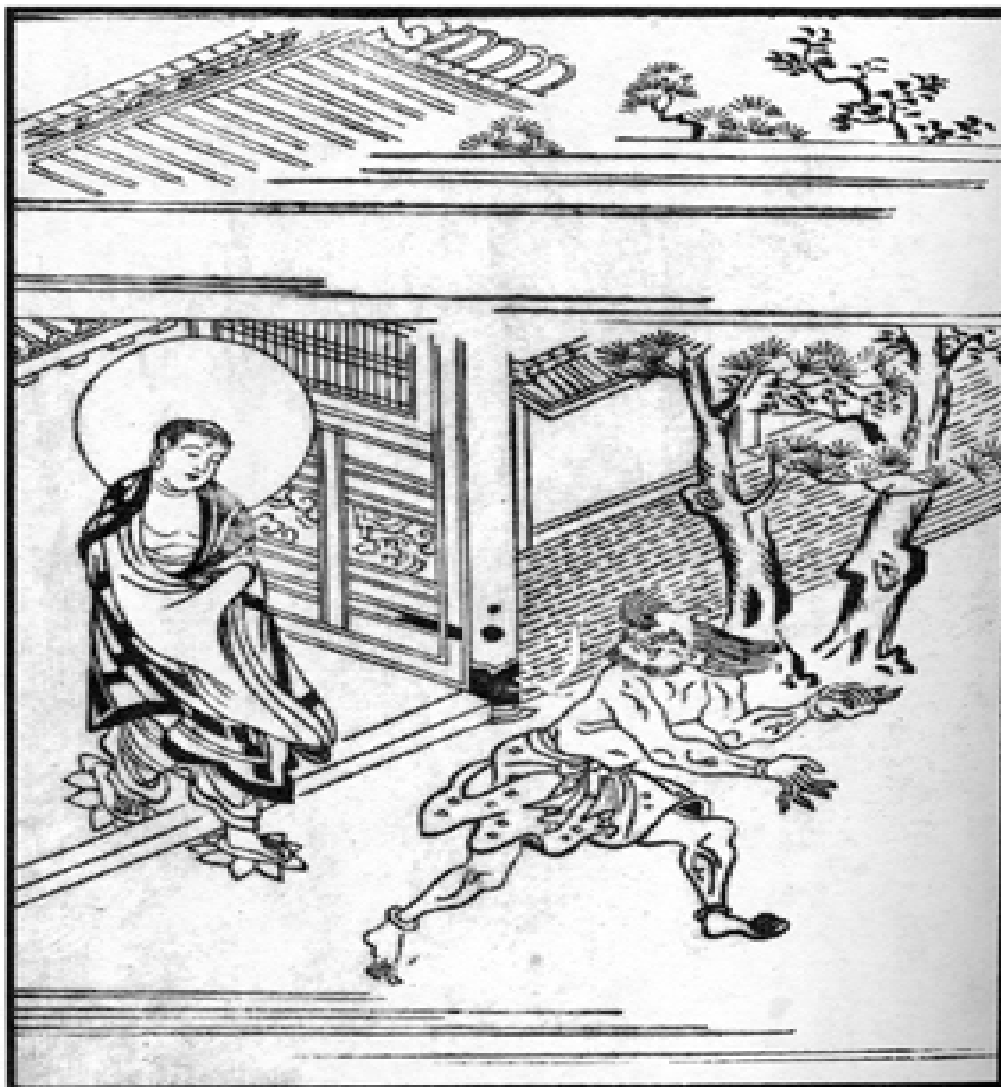
“This carp seems to be something special. The host must have especially sent for it to please us. So the way you have expressed your appreciation is insufficient and impolite. You have only said something general about the carp dish. But it is not proper to be entertained with special food and say nothing particular about it.

“The carp seems to have come from a distant place like Yodo. As for carp from other areas, when they are soaked in *sake* before being cooked, their juice and the soup become murky when the cooked fish is poked with chopsticks a few times. But the soup of the carp from Yodo will remain clear even after soaked in *sake* for a long time. This proves that this carp is truly special.

“In future, if someone treats any of you, you should not forget my words and should praise the food in the way I have done for this carp.”

Besides the carp from Yodo, anything famous and celebrated, regardless of its size, has some special qualities. So people should appreciate the food by paying more careful attention to it in every respect. Someone who had served the carp on that occasion repeated this story.

4:7 Witty Tales of Japan and India



(The Buddha and a heretic)

Sometimes a person thinks his story is interesting,
but others find it boring.

Once in my youth, I went to a courtier's¹²² mansion
where many noblemen were discussing songs and

kurando, who were

¹²² The *tenjōbito* 殿上人, or courtier, included the fourth-, and the fifth-ranked noblemen and the sixth-ranked imperial clerks and secretaries *kurōdo* 蔵人 or allowed to enter the Seiryōden Hall 清涼殿, the imperial residence hall, in the Imperial Palace.

poems. Everyone thought highly of poetry. After a while, they began to have a party and happily enjoyed food and drink.

When it had quieted down for a moment, I began, “Please, everyone. Let me tell you an interesting story I heard lately. A young novice in the service of the abbot of Tōfukuji Temple¹²³ went to a certain place. The master there jokingly said to him, ‘I have seen many monks and priests, but none so handsome as you. I believe nobody in the secular world can match you either. Your parents must also be very good-looking. Now tell me, are you the child of your father or of your mother? I would like to know more about you.’

“The novice replied, ‘Certainly. I am from a humble family and that is my fate. I don’t know if I should feel honored or embarrassed by your compliments. I also don’t know how to answer your question. But let me ask you a question first, and then I will give you my answer.’ At that, the novice clapped his hands and asked, ‘Please tell me which of my hands made the sound? The right one, or the left one?’

““The sound came from both, neither from the right one alone nor the left alone,’ answered the master.

““Exactly. My reply to your question is the same. I come from both of my parents. I am neither

¹²³ Tofukuji Temple in Higashiyama, Kyoto, the headquarters of the Rinzai (Zen) sect, was founded by Fujiwara Michiie (1193-1252).

the child of my father, nor of my mother alone. And as for my looks, you should ask my parents.'

"The master was much impressed. 'Splendid! Your answer is most reasonable,' and he treated the novice very well.

"When I finished my story, many people at the party were pleased and said to me, 'Your story is most amusing.' But a man sitting near me commented. 'Your story is just fine for young people. But such stories are quite common and are like those in India where Shakamuni Buddha was born and preached. At one time, many *gedō* and *madō*¹²⁴ heretics gathered and talked about the Buddha, saying, 'What the Buddha does is most hateful. We should ask him a question which he cannot answer and in this way ridicule his teachings.'

"A clever heretic among them agreed, 'A good idea. Leave it to me.' He took a small bird in his hand and went to see the Buddha. Holding out the bird, he asked the Buddha, 'Is this bird alive or dead? If you make a mistake, you will have a difficult problem.' "Ignoring the question, the Buddha looked at the bird carefully and simply walked to the gateway, stepped over the threshold, and asked the heretic, 'Am I going in or out? Answer me when you have thought about it carefully. If you make a mistake, great misfortune

¹²⁴ *Gedō* 外道 refers to non-Buddhists and the *mazoku* 魔族 to those in the demonic world.

will befall you.’ The clever heretic could not answer and immediately ran away.

“Ignoring the question, the Buddha looked at the bird carefully and simply walked to the gateway, stepped over the threshold, and asked the heretic, ‘Am I going in or out? Answer me when you have thought about it carefully. If you make a mistake, great misfortune will befall you.’ The clever heretic could not answer and immediately ran away.

“In the case of the bird, if the Buddha answered it was alive, the heretic would have squeezed it to death in his hand, and shown him the dead bird. And if the Buddha said it was dead, then he would have shown him the live bird. It was a clever trick, but with his superior knowledge of the three ages of past, present and future the Buddha was not going to be beaten by the heretic, no matter how clever he was. If the heretic had answered that the Buddha was going out, then he would have put both his feet inside the threshold and asked the heretic, ‘Am I going out?’ And if the heretic answered the Buddha was going in, then stepping out of the threshold, he would have asked, ‘Am I coming in?’ The heretic who ran away was no fool as he had seen the Buddha’s intention.

“There are many stories like this in the Buddhist teachings, and the one of the young novice must have been compiled from fragments of similar tales. Those who heard this at the party were very impressed, and admired the speaker.”

Being young, I felt ashamed of my simple story, although I thought it interesting. But it was good that I benefited from my embarrassing experience.

4:9 About the Efficacy of Deity Awashima



(An ascetic is carrying a small shrine)

Some people were recently walking around the town preaching the origin and efficacy of Deity Awashima.¹²⁵ They emphasized the special efficacy for curing women's diseases and illnesses. They sounded rather peculiar but must surely have

¹²⁵ Some ascetics carried around small shrines with the image of Deity Awashima 淡島明神. The deity is enshrined in the Kata Shrine 加太神社 of Kata-cho, Kaisō-gun, Wakayama prefecture.

had a reason.

Deity Awashima was identified with Sukuna-hikona, an ancient god of medicine, and also related to Great Bright Deity Yuki of Kurama, and Deity Tenjin of Gojō. Praying to these deities would cure not only women but also men who were suffering from all kinds of illnesses. So those who were preaching Deity Awashima had a reason, and anyone wishing to learn about medicine should worship these deities.

During the Eishō era [1504-1521], a quack in Ōsumi village of Yamashiro province wanted for something and prayed to Deity Tenjin of Gojō. An old man appeared in his dream and said to him, “What you asked for in your prayer is against the god’s will. But if you work harder in the Way of Medicine and show mercy to people, you will be prosperous.”

After he woke up, he was convinced that his dream was a true revelation of the deity. So he practiced medicine following the advice he had received in his dream, and finally became very wealthy and popular among the people.

4:10 About Cancellation of IOUs

In olden times, the shogunal assistants did whatever they liked and issued unusual decrees called *tokusei*, or “virtuous policy.”

It all began when the samurai borrowed money from merchants and townsmen to cover their expenses while fighting as they could not pay their debts during times of upheaval. To avoid problems in later generations, the shogunal assistants issued decrees declaring that borrowers did not have to repay their debts. This was called *tokusei*, and was supposedly to maintain peace and harmony in the country.

But these decrees were quite outrageous and had never been heard of in this country, and the shogun was unaware of them. Only the top administrators, called the *san-kanrei*, or the Three Shogunal Assistants, knew about them. These administrators caused all sorts of trouble among themselves over succession rights and they had fought each other like tigers and wolves.¹²⁶ During these struggles, not only the administrators, but also their subjects and followers were injured and lost their lives.

In general, it was not difficult for the samurai to gain merit on the battlefield. As far as retainers and followers were concerned, the lords’ enemies were often mere strangers. Naturally it was very difficult for those

¹²⁶ This probably refers to the Ōnin war, 1467 - 1477, which began with the fighting between the Hatakeyama and Shiba families.

who had never fought to kill even enemies. Most of the time, they did not kill out of sympathy for each other. That was also true for both allies and enemies.

According to a samurai who had just returned from a battlefield, no matter how clear the sky was in the bright sun, everything appeared fuzzy and unclear while fighting. As they became tired and exhausted after sunset, they returned to their camps and felt relieved for having the good fortune of surviving another day. As they relaxed, they began to think about and miss their children, wives and parents at home. But they were not completely relaxed for they feared that their enemy might launch a night attack. When we consider the matter, it would surely have been wiser for lords to avoid fighting, even if this had cost them of their status, positions, and the sense of shame. It would have been ultimately more beneficial not only for themselves but also for their subjects and retainers.

In olden days, battles took place one after another causing much damage and destruction. And who were to bear the expense? Why, the noble families, priests, merchants and farmers. So when the shogunal government issued a special decree, all the non-samurai people wished that everything that had been promised to them for their services should be honored, and that all the IOUs for the rice, money and pawned articles would remain valid despite the *tokusei* policy; they hoped that those who violated this should be severely punished.

As regards a *tokusei* decree issued in a certain year of Bunmei [1469-1487], someone recounted an interesting story. Many travelers were staying in the area near Sanjō

and Gojō in the capital and a rumor spread that a new *tokusei* decree would be issued shortly. An innkeeper thought that this would be a good chance to make some money, and he began to admire and keep the travelers' belongings such as swords, clothes and other articles while they were staying at his inn. Unaware of his intention, the lodgers casually entrusted their belongings to him.

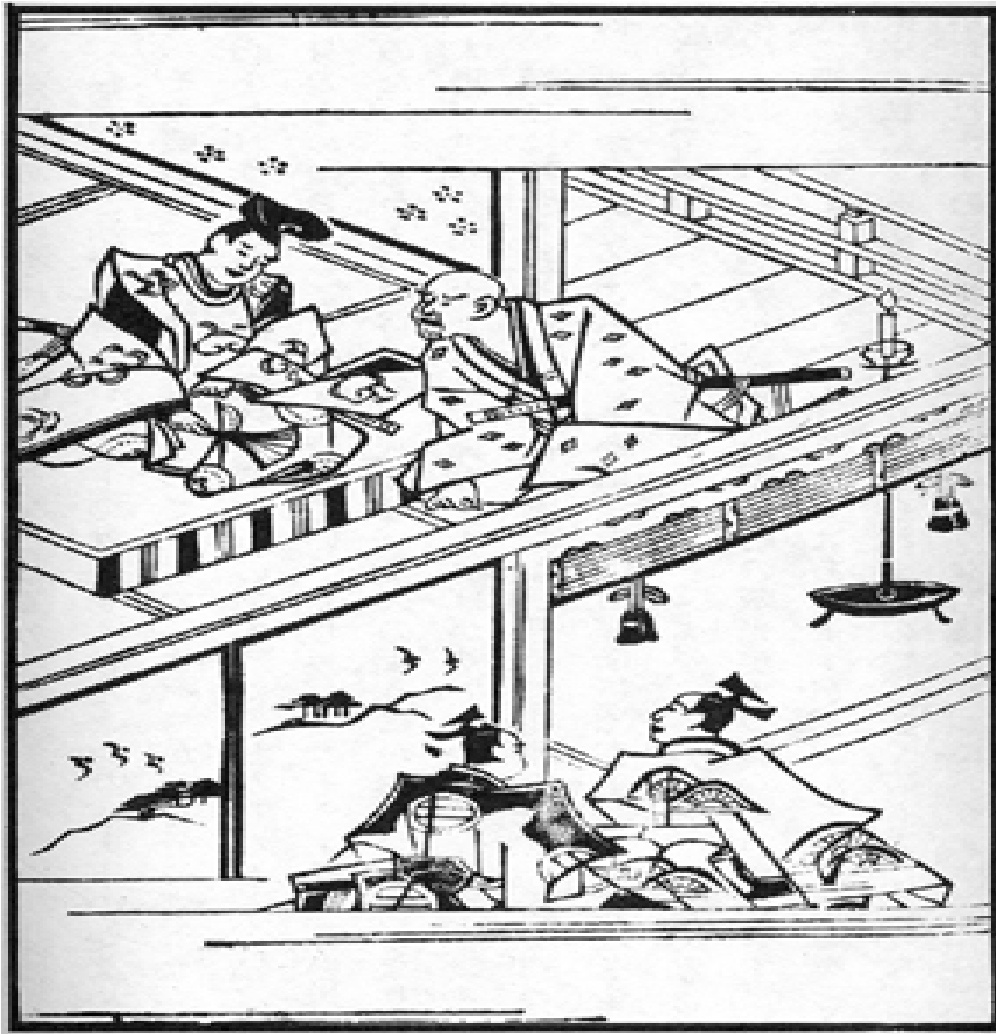
As expected, in a few days officials loudly rang bells and blew conch shells at the corners of all the streets to announce a new *tokusei* decree. The sly innkeeper now gathered his guests and told them, "I am sorry about the bad news but with this new *tokusei* decree just issued by the shogun, everything borrowed belongs to the borrowers. So, I am afraid everything I borrowed from you is now mine. This is not my own wish, but that of the shogun." The travelers were all puzzled and confused as they looked at each other helplessly.

Among them was a clever man who stepped forward and said to the innkeeper, "Fine. Since it is the shogun's wish, we cannot do anything about it. So you can keep everything we have entrusted to you. In return, it happens that we are renting your rooms precisely at this time. In accordance with the shogun's decree, whatever we have rented from you now belongs to us. So please leave this inn with your wife and children. We are very sorry that you have to give up this inn which has belonged to you and your family for generations, but none of us can help that."

"This is most preposterous," cried the excited innkeeper but the travelers would not give in. Finally the

innkeeper appealed to the magistrate, but he was severely scolded and was ordered to leave the inn immediately. Thus the poor man lost his inn because of his greed, and became the laughing stock of everyone who heard about it.

5:4 Lord Hosokawa's Secret Plot¹²⁷



(Hosokawa is talking with the shogun)

Lord Hosokawa was a great samurai lord who was celebrated for his three virtues of intelligence, benevolence, and courage.

¹²⁷ Hosokawa Yoriyuki 細川頼之 or Jōkyū 常久, 1329-1392, was a retainer of Ashikaga Takauji, 1305-1358, the first Ashikaga shogun. Yoriyuki defeated Hosokawa Kiyouji in 1367, and brought peace to Shikoku. On the order of Ashikaga Yoshiakira, 1330-1367, he became the *kanrei* regent for the young shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. In 1379, criticism from other lords brought about his downfall, but he later resumed his post.

Once when he attended a moon-viewing party given by Shogun Yoshimitsu,¹²⁸ he strongly admonished the shogun, who became very angry with him and dismissed him. As a result, Lord Hosokawa left the capital for a local province, took the tonsure, and called himself Jōkyū, a Buddhist name.

After a while, he was pardoned and resumed his position as the shogun's regent. Various contemporary writings mention that nobody was against his regaining the post. But there was a secret plot behind this incident.

As regent, Lord Hosokawa had assumed the most important position in the government since the shogun was still young, and so many people flattered him and tried to play up to him. But he had no selfish motives and always served the shogun with utmost loyalty; he was also generously benevolent to the commoners.

Meanwhile, the shogun's prestige became as dim as fireflies' light while Lord Hosokawa's glory radiated like the sunlight, and this caused Lord Hosokawa to ponder day and night on the Way of Lord and Subject.

Late one night, Hosokawa went to see the shogun. After dismissing all the attendants, he approached the shogun and spoke to him in a low voice.

"I have been humbly and faithfully serving you for all these years, but unfortunately I have come to gain unsuitable prestige. This is solely thanks to your deep

¹²⁸ Ashikaga Yoshimitsu 足利義満 or Lord Rokuon'in 鹿苑院殿, 1358-1408, the third Ashikaga shogun, a son of Ashikaga Yoshiakira, brought about unification of the Southern and Northern Courts in 1392, engaged in trade with Ming China, built the Kinkakuji Golden Pavilion in Kitayama (he was often called Lord Kitayama), and also built the Muromachi Palace, also called Hana no gosho, from which the name of his *bakufu* (shōgun's government), the Muromachi Bakufu, originated.

trust in me. But the more you favor me, the more people will respect me and ignore you. If this situation continues much longer, I will inevitably invite much criticism and this will be my downfall.

“So, for our better relationship, I will deliberately behave contrary to the Way of Subject and degrade myself so that you increase your prestige. Thus our relationship will become a perfect example of the Way of Lord and Subject. So how about doing this? I will admonish you so harshly that you will punish me by humiliating me before all your subjects, various daimyo, and high officials.”

So both the shogun and Lord Hosokawa carried out their plot, and as a result Hosokawa left the capital as *The Records of the Heavenly Dragon's Minister*¹²⁹ mentions.

People said to each other, “Indeed, we haven’t heard any examples like this since olden times. Masashige¹³⁰ and Lord Hosokawa Jōkyū are the only examples of truly faithful subjects.”

¹²⁹ The Heavenly Dragon refers to Shogun Yoshimitsu, but this record cannot be identified.

¹³⁰ Kusunoki Masashige 楠木正成, 1294-1336, an exemplary loyal subject of Emperor Godaigo, fought against the Kamakura shogunate, but was defeated by Ashikaga Takauji.

5:5 Master Kokan's Advice on the Way of Learning



(Kokan sees the monk reading some books)

There was a very talented monk among the disciples of Zen Master Kokan¹³¹ of the Tōfukuji Temple. Many people said, “Some day, that monk will become an accomplished scholar.”

One day, the master happened to see the monk diligently reading some books. He called him and said to

¹³¹ Kokan Zenshi 虎関禅師(1278-1346), a scholarly monk of the Rinzai Zen School, was the author of the *Genkō-shakusho* 元亨釈書.

him, “If you want to achieve the Way of Learning, you should not spend too much time studying notes and annotations. If you do, you will become old before you accomplish much in the Way.

“Beginners should try to grasp the general meaning of the Chinese classics such as the *Gokyō*, *Sanshi*, and *Kōmō*¹³² without spending much time. When they don’t understand certain deep meanings of the texts, they should always consult with their masters. Generally, as they continue reading and ignoring the details, they will gradually understand everything as they advance in the Way.

“If you take so much time reading, for example, a part of a verse, you will never achieve anything significant. Don’t forget the proverb, ‘A great deed ignores small actions.’¹³³ You should not waste your time saying to yourself, ‘There are certain places I don’t understand in this book,’ or ‘Some words in that verse are not clear.’ While continuously reading, you will eventually clarify all the details. It is too difficult for a beginner to understand everything even in a page or two of these great books. But constant reading and learning eventually will enable him to comprehend the whole.”

¹³² The *Gokyō* 五經 refers to the five major writings by Confucian sages, including the *Yijing* *Shijing*, *Shujing*, *Chunqiu*, and *Lijing*; *Sanshi*, the three historical writings, the *Shiji*, *Hanshu* and *Houhanshu*; while *Kōmō* includes the works by Confucius and Mencius.

¹³³ This means that they should ignore something small when they aim to attain something great.

5:9 Lord Moronao's Amorous Affairs



(Moronao suddenly appeared and seized the wife)

Lord Kō Moronao¹³⁴ was notorious for his amorous nature and countless illicit affairs. Recently a samurai found an interesting book which listed all the lord's

¹³⁴ Kō no Moronao 高師直(-1351) was an administrative assistant to Ashikaga Takauji who was the first Ashikaga shogun. Moronao fought against the Southern Court, and later was killed by some Uesugi family members. See *Chirizuka monogatari*, 2:6.

relationships and the women involved in his life. It contains many shameful affairs which are too embarrassing to be mentioned here, and only a score have come to be known publicly. Some persons involved in these affairs will be greatly inconvenienced if their names are published.

According to the book, the lord's most shameless conduct was selecting retainers who had pretty wives and using a fifty-year-old woman to inspect them. Pretending to be a confidante of the lord, she casually visited the samurais' private homes, and naturally the samurai and their well-dressed wives were obliged to entertain their lord's lady confidante.

A few months after the lady submitted her detailed reports, Lord Moronao sent messengers to the samurai saying that their wives were required to present themselves at his mansion on a certain day. Having already received and entertained the lady confidante, the husbands had no hesitation about sending their wives to the mansion. The excited ladies competed with each other as regards their appearance and attire for their interview with the lord.

When the day arrived, the lord's mansion was full of the most beautiful wives, formally dressed and comparable to the imperial concubines and mistresses of ancient China, such as Lady Li of Emperor Wu and Lady Zhao-jun of Emperor Yuan of the Former Han Dynasty [202 B.C.-24 A.D.]. Their husbands were too dazzled to give their radiant wives a second look.

Meanwhile at the lord's mansion, the lady confidante announced that the lord could not see all the

wives together, and would like to meet them one at a time. So the lady took one of the wives and led her to a room. Now Lord Moronao was hiding in a small room next to the inner part of the mansion and he suddenly appeared on hearing the wife's footsteps. He seized her, held her down, and forced her to submit to his lustful desires. The rest of the wives were likewise utterly helpless as regards the lord's outrageous conduct, which is too shameful to describe.

After returning home, the wives were unable to tell their husbands about the lord, and only said that he was just fine. Thereafter the wives were often summoned to the mansion.

Everything was supposed to be kept quiet, but as a proverb says, "Heaven knows, Earth knows, you know, and I know," so eventually the husbands came to learn about the secret of their wives and the lord, and they gathered to discuss the matter.

One of them began, "Since olden times, the great Way of the Lord is to care for his subjects, while his retainers serve him with utmost sincerity. This relationship may vary, because some may serve him with less reward, while others work for greater returns even if it costs them their life. In any case, a subject should be ready to sacrifice his life for his lord even in a minor conflict to preserve his samurai honor. Now at this time constant wars and battles are causing the people great anxiety and fear, and our lord's behavior is most outrageous. We share with our wives the two lives of the present and the future, but they have been violated. Our samurai honor has been reduced to the level of beggars.

What do you think of this situation? I believe we should all go to the mansion and make our lord commit suicide!”

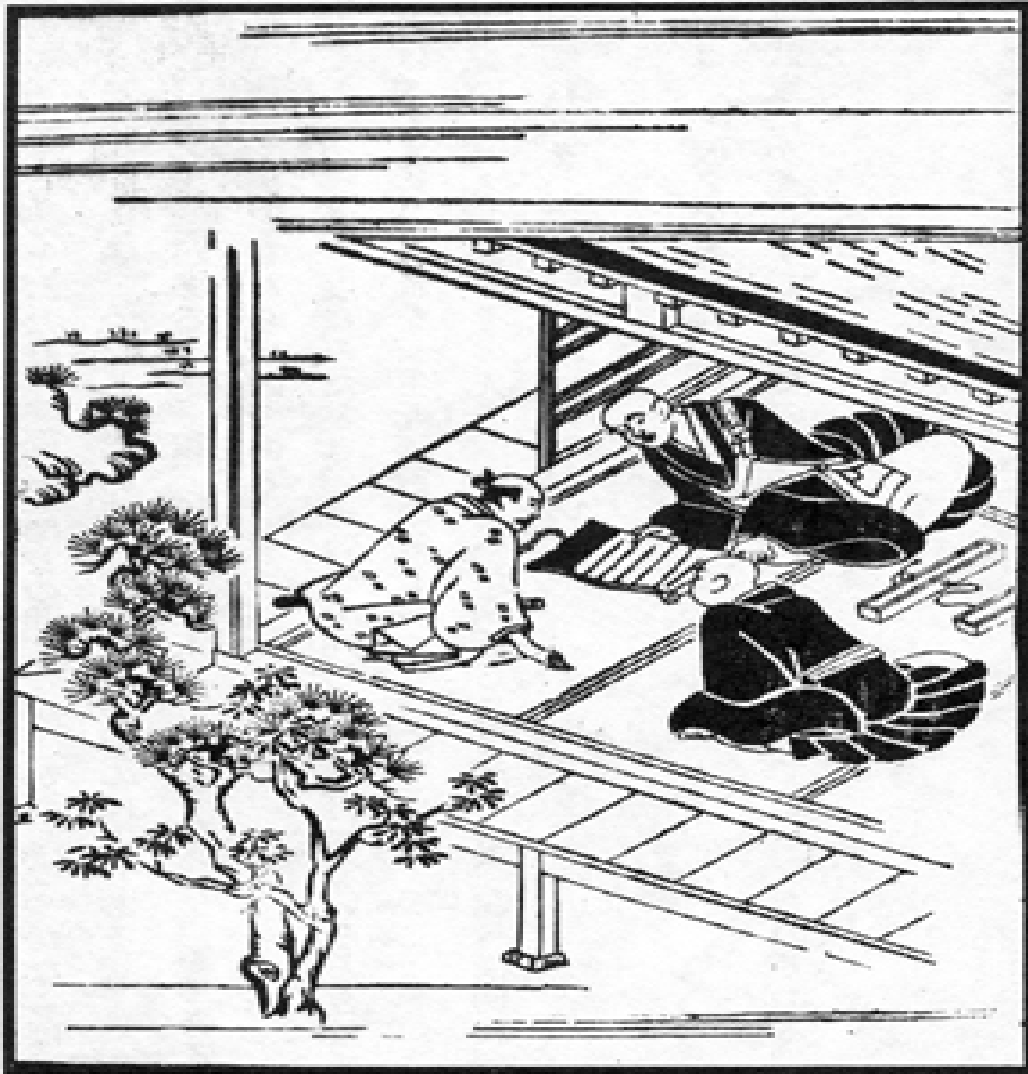
In this way the excited samurai raised his voice, and his companions were in agreement and prepared to march to the lord’s mansion. Now among them was a brave and thoughtful samurai, and he began to express his opinion.

“Your anger and frustration are certainly understandable, but your decision lacks thought. Just put your personal problems into perspective. Despite the differences in our incomes, we all serve our lord and depend on him for everything, including the means to feed our wives, children, and servants. We are able to keep our prestige and honor only by depending on our lord. In such circumstances, our wives also depend on him. We maintain our wives with our lord’s financial support. So if he needs them, then we should freely let our wives serve him. If you think about it in this way, you won’t begrudge anything. But if you consider your wife belongs to you alone, then your anger and frustration will be doubled. Our lord has often summoned even my ugly wife before your wives, but I have neither regrets nor hard feelings toward him.”

His listeners calmed down and their anger subsided. “What an extraordinary idea! We should wait and reflect on our decision before taking action,” they said.

And so, all the samurai ended their meeting with much laughter, and did not revolt against the lord. They concluded that the extraordinary idea was like that of an enlightened Buddha.

5:10 About the Advice of a *Tengu* Goblin



(Examining a military treaties by Master Akamatsu)

A chapter of a military treatise by Master Akamatsu,¹³⁵ owned by the Nisonji Temple in the Takashima District in Ōmi, includes the itemized *Hyōhō-kuzekki* which was

¹³⁵ Akamatsu Sokuyū 赤松則祐 or Myōzen 妙善(1311-1371) first entered the priesthood, and later supported Emperor Godaigo to disrupt the shogunate, and eventually served Ashikaga Takakuji as governor of Harima and Bizen Provinces.

orally transmitted by a *tengu* goblin¹³⁶ to Lord Yoshitsune¹³⁷ on Mount Kurama.

Item One. You should be attentive to urinating early in the morning; much foam in the urine means good luck while no foam means bad luck.

Item Two. Before going out, you should drink hot water, tea, and *sake* in that order. If they circulate well in your body, it is a good sign. If not, you should not go out.

Item Three. No reflection of your image in the hot water you take at meals is a bad sign.

Item four. A line appearing at the tip of your nose is a bad sign. A blue one means someone is trying to kill you, and a purple one, to poison you.

Item Five. When you spit on your hands and there is some foam in the spit, that is a good sign. No foam is a bad sign.

Item Six. A vertical line appearing in the inner corner of your eye is a good sign, but one in the outer corner may bring you serious misfortune within three days.

Item Seven. When your palms become swollen and red, your body is soiled and impure. You should immediately observe abstinence and pray to Goddess Marishiten.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ *Tengu*, a legendary figure popularly depicted as a long-nosed goblin, is generally depicted as an arrogant and conceited monk and often associated with mountain ascetics. A popular account tells how the young Yoshitsune learned martial arts from a *tengu* ascetic on Mount Kurama.

¹³⁷ Yoshitsune 義経 (1159-1189) was a son of Minamoto Yoshitomo and a younger half-brother of Yoritomo, the first shogun of the Kamakura shogunate. Biographical tales about him appear in *Gikeiki* 義経記.

¹³⁸ To purify their mind and body samurai often abstained from meat and *sake*, and worshipped

Item Eight. Something serious may happen when your left palm and private parts become itchy. When your right palm feels itchy, that is a good sign.

Item Nine. Hearing ringing sounds in your ears at the hours of the Mouse, Tiger, Dragon, Snake, Horse, and Monkey is a good sign. Hearing them at the hours of the Ox, Rabbit, Sheep, Rooster, Dog, and Boar is a bad sign.

Item Ten. Having the same pulse under your chin and in your hand is a good sign. Otherwise, it is a bad sign.

Item Eleven. While walking on a path, a weasel crossing your way to the left is a good sign. But if it crosses to the right, you should not continue and should leave the path.

All these items are written in *hiragana* script and are listed here because they are regarded as good advice for samurai as well as for people in general.

their protector, Goddess Marishiten 麻利支天, an Indian deification of the sun, moon, and light. She appears riding on a wild boar with two arms, or three faces with six arms, and often hides her identity, rids obstacles, and blesses her worshippers with victory and protection.

5:11 About Gambling in Camps

Since the Kenmu era [1334-1336], there were many battles fought one after another, and this gave warriors a good opportunity to prosper. But people wondered why there were so few experts in the martial arts. The main reason was gambling.

All the warriors, from generals to foot soldiers enjoyed gambling in their camps when they were not fighting. Their stakes ranged from five to ten *kan*¹³⁹ of silver and five to ten *ryō* of gold dust. Some of them quickly lost a lot of gold and silver. Others staked their belongings, including their suits of armor and harnesses, and lost them all.

On a battleground, a Hatakeyama clan samurai saw some soldiers wearing armor without helmets, helmets without armor, while others had no swords and so were totally unfit for fighting. Thus many middle- and low-class samurai were poorly equipped for fighting. But strangely those soldiers won much merit in the battles, as they must have fought desperately in order to make up their losses in gambling. It was said that the *tokusei* decrees¹⁴⁰ of those days were issued mainly to help those samurai.

By the time of the Ōnin and Bunmei eras [1467-1487], the soldiers became cleverer and few of them were ill-equipped on the battlefields. After they had exhausted their gold and silver, they staked the

¹³⁹ One *kan* was 8.267lbs. One *ryō*, was one-sixteenth of one *kin* (600g.)

¹⁴⁰ For the *tokusei* 徳政令 decree, see *Chirizuka Monogatari*, 4:10.

storehouses of wealthy merchants, priests, and Shinto priests in the capital. The winners calculated the value of the contents of the storehouses and took the money while the losers promised to break into them to steal the treasures within. Eventually, they gambled only with words as their stake and no money was involved. Such a pastime was possible in a degenerate age and no one should be blamed for it.

But it was most pathetic to see some samurai who were so involved in such gambling games that they were overcome by mental exhaustion when cheated and forgot their profession.

6:1 A Case of Most Unusual Filial Piety



(A young samurai is attending the older sister of his lord)

In the beginning of the Entoku era [1489-1492], a petty samurai rose to be the lord of half a province in only a decade thanks to his valor and skill. He brought much prosperity to his family and clan with many

retainers and cattle, and his success was comparable to that of Chen-sheng of ancient China.¹⁴¹

The lord had a strong sense of filial piety, but unfortunately he had lost his parents before he became successful enough to practice the Way of Filial Piety. He had only one older sister and she was living in his mansion. He had been looking after her with utmost care as though practicing filial piety toward his parents by paying great attention to her food, clothes and living conditions as if she were a relative of a shogun or a daimyo lord owning a province. But he still thought his services to her were insufficient and was constantly trying to do more to improve her well-being.

One day, he said to himself, “I have always wanted to practice filial piety. Unfortunately, my parents passed away in my youth when I was still struggling in poverty, and I have no relations except my older sister. Taking care of her by giving her the best food, clothes and housing is nothing at all considering my present prosperous situation. When I think of the things in this life, nothing gives me more pleasure than love. Especially I have found the Way of Pleasure is most pleasing in my past experience. For being a man I can easily pursue the Way. But it must be difficult for my sister as a woman to act as freely as a man to practice the Way. She must have been suffering all these years, and I wish I could give her some pleasure.”

¹⁴¹ Chen-sheng 陳勝 of the later Qin dynasty (221 B.C.-209 B.C), became king of Chu, a country of which the capital was in the present Hubei area. Chen-sheng and his colleagues rose in revolt and brought about the downfall of the Qin dynasty.

Finally the lord chose a young and strong samurai from among his retainers and had him learn the art of massage. Then he summoned the samurai and told him, “There is no need to improve your massage skill anymore. Instead, I want you to serve my sister, who suffers from illness. Nurse her in the morning and evening by closely attending her and report to me on her health, such as gaining or losing weight and any signs of sickness and fatigue. From now on, work for her just as you serve me as your master.”

The young samurai complied with this order, “Yes, my lord, I understand your command. I will follow whatever instructions you give me.”

“I am glad that you agree with my plan. But remember this is a secret between you and me. Don’t repeat it to anyone.” Then the lord immediately sent the samurai to his sister.

The samurai humbly greeted his lord’s sister, saying, “I have come here to serve you as ordered by my lord, so please tell me whatever you want me to do.”

The sister happily replied, “Such consideration is quite unusual these days. Even now, I have some pain, so please come closer and give me a massage.” As soon as he massaged her along her veins and arteries, she was pleased to say that her pain had gone.

In the beginning when the samurai started to serve the sister, she behaved modestly, but as time went on, she became more familiar with him by telling him to rub her body here and there, and finally she made him take off his kimono, and embraced him to her bosom.

The samurai masseur did not like this at all, but put up with her for the time being. The bony and wrinkled sister in her fifties did not attract him at all. Whenever he became tired and returned to his quarters to rest, she immediately called him back, and obliged him to perform his duties. Several months passed in this manner, and the young and healthy samurai became thin and exhausted, just like [the women of] the king of Chu in ancient China.¹⁴²

Finally the miserable samurai appealed to his lord to release him from this duty, and the lord gave him leave saying, “If you cannot perform your duties now, rest well and serve her again as soon as you recover your health.”

It was a strange way of practicing filial piety. Later the samurai masseur confided to a friend, “My sufferings during these several months were indescribable.” He added with much regret, “Engaging in battle is worthy for the honor of a man’s descendants, but serving someone under such unusual conditions was most distressing.”

¹⁴² King Ling 靈王 of Chu favored women with small waists. Many of the king’s women died of starvation on account of their extreme diet. This legend recounts the suffering of lowly people who try to please those of higher rank.

6:4 A Clever Monk and His Devotees



(The clever monk is preaching)

A certain Kōmon¹⁴³ Fuji recently said, “These days, the world has become very disturbed because of the confusion in the neighboring Kinai provinces.”¹⁴⁴ But

¹⁴³ *Kōmon* 黄門 was a middle councilor in Tang China.

¹⁴⁴ The Kinai was the metropolitan region, and included Yamashiro, Yamato, Kawachi, Izumi and Settsu provinces.

during this confusion, the Law still survives. For example, two summers ago, a monk of a certain temple in the north of the capital began to preach. Clever and learned, he was so eloquent that his smooth talk could change fire into water. Many people in the capital came to listen to him. He cleverly began his sermon by comparing the teachings of his temple with those of other sects and schools with various tales as examples. He concluded that this life was nothing but an illusion and that people should devote themselves only to the Law and abandon all secular fame and wealth.

“His convinced devotees included wealthy townsmen, merchants, and some elderly ladies of noble birth, and they donated to his temple all of what they had accumulated. Some told the monk, ‘We offer these pieces of rare brocade as our donation so that you can make decorative banners or canopies to be placed above your Buddhist statues for the ceremonies.’ Others brought their treasures, saying ‘Our deceased father’s anniversary will be on a certain date of a certain month. Please offer special services for his soul for a few nights and preach for seven days.’ Thus the devotees began to compete with each other as regards their offerings and donations, and eventually observing the Law became their secondary concern.

“Indeed, the holy saying,¹⁴⁵ ‘A benevolent man in a family creates a benevolent country, while an avaricious man against all reason will produce great confusion in his country,’ is very true. One monk’s preaching influenced so many people that his temple accumulated a

¹⁴⁵ A quotation from the ninth chapter of the *Daixué* 大学, a classical Chinese writing.

mountain of wealth and the poor monk became tired of delicious food and costly robes. He was revered so much by his devotees as if he were the famous Zen master, Musō,¹⁴⁶ who had been highly admired by so many noblemen.

“Meanwhile, some people began a rumor that the monk was such a greedy man that he changed all the treasures donated by his tearfully overwhelmed devotees into gold and silver coins, and kept them in the temple storehouse; but he never offered a penny to any other priests and the staff of his temple. But a man who heard the rumor respected him even more saying, ‘How noble he is! He must have a reason why he has never wasted the donations. The low-ranking monks and acolytes of the temple have benefited through him, but are now criticizing him according to the rumor. They are just like birds taking shelter in the branches of a tree, eventually withering and destroying the tree.’

“One night when the monk was preaching, someone stealthily and jokingly wrote a poem on a temple pillar which read,

‘Cleverly urging his devotees
To scatter their treasures
For the sake of their afterlife,
And quickly picking them up to store,
What a smart monk he is!’

When he read the poem, the monk might have felt embarrassed, for he stopped preaching, and finally retired and left his position to his successor.”

¹⁴⁶ See the *Chirizuka Monogatari*, 2:2.

6:5 Priest Myōsen and Masashige



(Masashige is watching the bell)

Long ago, Myōsen was a celebrated scholar priest of Gangōji Temple.¹⁴⁷ He began his studies in his later

¹⁴⁷Myōsen 明詮 was a priest of the Gangoji Temple 元興寺, one of the seven great temples of Nara. Presently only the Kannon Hall remains in Shibashinya-cho, Nara.

years, after he had reached the age of thirty. Wasting not a single moment, he diligently worked and finally became an incomparable scholar familiar with many Buddhist writings. He even had a dialogue in the format of question and answer with the eminent Abbot Jie.¹⁴⁸

Once on a rainy day in his youth, Myōsen took shelter under the eaves of a mansion. While watching the raindrops falling on the hollow of a stone on the ground, he thought, “Raindrops are so soft and fragile that they break in a splash as they hit anything. Yet if they fall constantly on the same spot, they can create a hollow even in a hard stone. No matter how slow I am, if I make constant effort, surely in future I will reach the profundity in things.”

With his firm determination and constant effort, Myōsen finally became a great scholar.

There is a similar tale about Kusunoki Masashige.¹⁴⁹ He once visited Kasuga Shrine with his servants and walked around the compound of the adjacent Tōdaiji Temple. He saw a group of clever-looking people talking to each other in front of the belfry.

They were saying, “This is the best bell in Japan. It needs more than thirty men to move it.”

Someone in the group stepped out and said, “Exactly. Even if thirty men push it, it will not move. But with a clever trick, I may be able to move it all by myself within a day.”

¹⁴⁸ Priest Jie 慈恵, the 18th Tendai *zasu* (abbot) 天台座主, died in 985 at the age of seventy four.

¹⁴⁹ Kusunoki Masashige, See *Chirizuka Monogatari*, 5:4

Another man scornfully said, "You always have such clever talk, but you've never done anything so clever to show. The first man retorted, "You may be right. But how can I do anything without being asked? If you are really interested, why don't you come back here tomorrow? If I can move the bell, I would like to receive as much of your treasures as I wish. If not, you may ask me for anything you like."

The two men continued to argue and finally they became excited and began to use abusive language. Masashige went to the first man and told him, "It will be truly wonderful if you can move the bell all by yourself with your plan. I have also figured it out by myself, and it is a splendid idea."

Masashige's servants did not understand their master at all, and after they returned home, they asked him, "Won't you tell us your plan to move the bell? We would like to know."

Masashige replied, "It is really nothing special. Let's go there again, and I will show you how."

Several days later, Masashige and his servants returned to the belfry of Tōdaiji Temple. He chose a strong man from among his servants, and placed a box, two feet high, by the bell, saying to him, "Now, you step up on the box, and push the bell with your two hands. Don't push it too hard, but apply the same amount of pressure for a while, and then rest. Repeat this for a while, but don't give up even if it does not move. Just keep on."

With this, Masashige kept the servant pushing the bell from the Hour of the Snake (9:00 a.m.-11 a.m.) to the Hour of Monkey (3:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.).

But the bell did not move. Masashige urged him, “Keep trying !” After a while, the base of the Dragon Head [crown] of the bell began to squeak, and soon the bell started to move slightly inch by inch. Seeing this, the servants were moved to tears and said, “What a wonderful plan!”

This was what people in later generations called “Masashige’s wonderful scheme.”

If the bell had to be moved quickly, then the efforts of thirty men would be needed. But one man could move it all by himself by slowly applying constant pressure on it for a day and this would be more efficient than the efforts of thirty men. This is possible only with constant application without any rest.

Perhaps such a legendary tale may be unbelievable, but people can easily understand how Masashige often overcame a great enemy with his small army by his “profound scheme.”

6:6 How Emperor Shirakawa Imprisoned the Rain



(Emperor Gotoba is fighting)

I once read that Emperor Shirakawa¹⁵⁰ chose an appropriate day for a dedication service at the completion of the Hōshōji Temple that he had built. He invited eminent priests for the special sutra recitations,

¹⁵⁰ Emperor Shirakawa 白河 (1053-1129) established the *insei* 院政 system in which retired emperors controlled political power. The system lasted about one hundred years until the decline of the Heike clan. The Hōshōji Temple is in Okazaki, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto.

as well as nobles and government officials, to attend the ceremony.

When the day arrived, it unfortunately rained from the early morning, and so the service was postponed. A few days later, the emperor selected another day and everybody prepared for the occasion, but from the previous night it rained again. Later he chose a third day, but it rained once more. The emperor became very angry and said to his council members, "This is terrible. What shall I do?" Since he had no one to blame, he became even more frustrated. Finally he imprisoned the rain by putting it into a container, and had a watchman guard it.

Some people thought the story was quite ridiculous, while others considered what the emperor had done was quite reasonable. Regardless of age and status, people often lose their temper when they become angry. Unable to control their feelings, they behave senselessly, forget the difference between parents and children, ignore their lords' orders and advice, and finally lose the trust of their friends. Especially people in the lower strata such as servants are too emotional to control their feelings. They are easily agitated as they forget all sense of obligation, manners and etiquette.

On the other hand, some people in higher positions suppress their feelings, reflect, wait until anger and agitation subside, and then act as if nothing has happened. Such controlled conduct is often seen among those of higher status, such as academics, who are usually neither concerned nor interested in revealing their private feelings, and so remain harmlessly nonchalant and not calling any attention to themselves. Thus

controlling personal feelings depends greatly on one's status.

Meanwhile, regardless of their ranks and titles, people should occasionally show their frustration and annoyance depending on time and occasion. What the emperor did was quite gentle and elegant in handling his personal frustration. As the ruler of the country, why should he hold himself back and refrain from doing anything? He could have done anything he wanted, such as acting wildly. However, all he did was imprison the rain and this harmed no one. Indeed, such an idea must have originated in a most gracious mind.

One rainy day, a friend of mine visited and we reminisced about the good old days when the Way of King flourished. High-ranking people in those days used to behave more gracefully in accordance with the Way. But after Yoritomo¹⁵¹ died, an emperor revolted in the years of Shōkyū,¹⁵² but failed and was exiled to a distant island. That was because the Hōjō family had become too powerful for the emperor to control. But people thought it most regrettable that the emperor had not waited for an opportune time and had not chosen proper means to handle the situation instead of relying on demeaning means, that is, military power, which was contrary to the Way of Kings and Emperors.

People knew those old stories, but we reminisced about them because we were bored with the rain.

¹⁵¹ Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199) founded the Kamakura shogunate, in 1185.

¹⁵² Emperor Gotoba (1180-1239) tried to regain power from the Hōjō clan, fought, failed, and was exiled to Oki Island where he eventually died.

6:7 How Regent Michiie¹⁵³ built the Tōfukuji Temple



(Michiie paid the carpenters and laborers double)

People say that when Regent Michiie placed his faith in Great Zen Master En'ni¹⁵⁴ and built the Tōfukuji

¹⁵³ Fujiwara Michiie 藤原道家, the Minister of the Right, died in 1252 at the age of sixty.

¹⁵⁴ 円爾, the first founder of the Tōfukuji Temple 東福寺; he died in 1280 at the age of seventy-nine.

Temple, he gathered all the carpenters and laborers involved, had them submit their estimates of the cost of construction, and then paid them double. So all the workmen as well as their families and relatives were most pleased. Since its completion, the temple has flourished till today with so many people of all classes visiting it, and it has never been damaged by fire. Devotees of the Law who wish to construct a temple should follow this example.

It is almost impossible to build a fine temple at the minimum cost. Suppose there are two lords who become jealous and compete against each other as regards construction. While trying to spend more for his building than the other one does, one of them may abuse and exhaust his expenses, and finally become unable to pay the cost and the labor. The aggravated workers may set fire to the building they had constructed. But this is all due to the master's delusion and anger which are as strong as the fire that burnt his own building.

On the other hand, some may say that if you leave everything to your carpenters and workmen, they will ask for whatever they want and there will be no way to meet their demands. It is true that people's greed and desires have no limit. But just as a golden saying, "Human nature is good,"¹⁵⁵ proves, when you trust your workmen to do a job, usually they will not cheat you.

So, in the beginning, you should seek and select honest men and experts for the job, and thoroughly

¹⁵⁵ From the Chinese classic, *Meng-zi*.

instruct them how the job should be done. Then, how can they deceive you? If you pretend you know better, even though you actually don't, eventually your workers will cheat you. Building a single house may be different, but they say most of the fires in temples and shrines have been caused by the angry and frustrated carpenters, laborers and merchants involved in the construction. Regent Michie's story may sound unimportant, but is worthwhile to reflect that the Tōfukuji Temple has never caught fire while others have often been damaged by flames.

Thus, Regent Michiie was a capable man in every respect and among all his children his three sons were most successful. The first was called Lord Kujō, Regent Norizane; the second, Lord Nijō, Regent Yoshizane; and the third, Lord Ichijō, Regent Sanetsune. Michiie favored his third son most, and entrusted him with all the family documents to succeed to his position. The Ichijō still flourish as a scholarly family.

6:10 Yoshitsune's Wit and Benkei's Analysis



(Yoshitsune and Benkei saw two young boys)

After the former shogun's ¹⁵⁶ drinking party, some retainers enjoyed amusing talk about old times.

Everyone, whether high or low, young or old, knew that Yoshitsune ¹⁵⁷ was a most talented and intelligent

¹⁵⁶ This may refer to the tenth Ashikaga Shogun, Yoshitane 義植(1466-1523).

¹⁵⁷ Yoshitsune (1159-1189), also called Genkurō and Hōgan, a most tragic figure in Japanese history who helped his half-elder brother, Minamoto Yoritomo (1147-1199), in establishing the Kamakura Shogunate. Eventually, because of his close connection with the former emperor, Goshirakawa, he was killed by Yoritomo's men at the Koromo River.

man of those days. Once when he and his retainers were traveling incognito through the Yoshino region, they saw two young boys in front of a peasant's house; the ten-year-old one was carrying a three-year-old on his back, and both were calling each other, "Uncle". As he looked at them and heard them talking, Yoshitsune smiled and said to himself, "So, they must be illegitimate." His retainers did not understand the situation at all, and neither did Benkei¹⁵⁸ see his master's reasoning at that time, and he continued pondering on the two boys' relationship and his master's remark.

At sunset, Yoshitsune and his party took shelter at an inn. Benkei was still thinking about the problem all through the night, but finally arrived at a solution and said to himself, "Indeed, Master Yoshitsune is truly an extraordinary man. He immediately perceived the complex relationship of those boys. It is most regrettable that a man of such superior quality is now suffering under such unfortunate circumstances. What a pity. My reasoning could never match my master's." Benkei shared his conclusion with the rest of the retainers, who were likewise impressed.

Now this is the explanation of the boys' relationship. Suppose a married couple had two children, a son and a daughter. Now if the father had produced a boy with his daughter while the mother a boy with her son, then the two young boys would call each other,

¹⁵⁸ Musashibō Benkei 武蔵坊弁慶(-1189), a monk of Saitō on Mount Hiei, faithfully served Yoshitsune and died at the Koromo River with him. His heroic image as a strong and faithful retainer of the tragic Yoshitsune has been romanticized in various writings as well as in noh and kabuki dramas.

“Uncle.” (This is so obvious and reasonable that anyone can understand). So the two boys whom Yoshitsune and his men had seen on the previous day must have been in such a relationship. With his superior insight, Yoshitsune had perceived this right away.

All his retainers and attendants wondered why Yoshitsune, a man of such superior insight, failed to foresee his own fate while joining the warriors of the northeastern region, and was finally killed in the Battle of the Koromo River.¹⁵⁹ It was most regrettable.

¹⁵⁹ The fifty-four-kilometer river in Nanbu, Iwate Prefecture, famous for its historical sites.

6:11 About Monk Yamana Sōzen's Remark

About the time of a great turmoil,¹⁶⁰ Monk Yamana Sōzen¹⁶¹ visited a minister and discussed social conditions of the time. When the minister introduced various ancient examples, Sōzen frankly expressed his opinion, and said, “I mostly understand what you have just said, but I don’t agree with your way of using ancient examples. You should have used a term such as ‘time’ in place of ‘example.’ You may have your reasons to explain everything by referring to ancient examples such as events held in the imperial court.

“But in my opinion, all the laws since the time of the Genkō and Kenmu eras [1331-1336] should be revised. You mention as an ancient example a certain ceremony once held in the Great Hall of the imperial palace. But if the Great Hall did not exist any more, then you would have to explain how the ceremony was held at another hall. And later if that hall disappeared, your ancient example would be utterly useless.

“When people use the term ‘example’, they generally mean the ‘time [when the example took place]. As far as the Great Law is unchangeable in the Way of Ruling, you may use ancient examples, but otherwise they are quite useless.

“Since you nobles depend only on ancient examples and ignore the present time, your class will eventually

¹⁶⁰ A reference to the Ōnin War (1467-1477).

¹⁶¹ Yamana Kingo 山名金吾, also known as Nyūdō (monk) Sōzen 入道宗全 (1404-1473), was a warrior lord who assisted Shogun Ashikaga Yoshihisa fighting against one of his subordinates, Hosokawa Katsumoto (See Chirizuka, 4:4), and this brought about the Ōnin War.

decline. Moreover, because you are only concerned about your titles and ranks and compete with other nobles, you pay no attention to present-day time and trends, and so you will soon lose your ruling power. You will be despised by warriors, and finally will end up flattering them.

“But if you still insist on applying the term ‘example’ to this particular occasion when someone of low birth like me is freely speaking to someone of high birth like you, what sort of examples of the past are you going to cite? None, I suppose. This is what I mean by ‘time.’ What I am saying to you now may sound most insolent, but worse situations may arise later when you have to flatter those who are much inferior to you in terms of status and rank. So I suggest that you should never bring up ancient examples when you speak to ruthless warriors. If you understand the meaning of ‘time’, I will do my best to assist and protect you, the emperor, the royal family and the nobles.”

On hearing this, the minister stopped speaking and his amusing talk sounded quite boring. I wonder which term [time or example] is more reasonable.

Eleventh month of 1552

Sealed by Fuji

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