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Sages, Sinners, and the Vernacularization of

Buddhism in *Nihon ryōiki*

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Shih-Wei Sun

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor Torquil Duthie, Chair

Nihon ryōiki is known as the earliest extant Buddhist anecdotal collection in Japan.

Very little is known about its compiler, a monk named Kyōkai who belonged to the lower aristocracy and was active in the provinces rather than at the central court.

Nihon ryōiki was compiled to keep a record of the miraculous events occurred in Japan. Like the tales documented in Buddhist sutras and Chinese anecdotal collections, Kyōkai insisted that similar events had happened in Japan in different

ages and areas. Evidence of such miraculous events indicated, in Kyōkai's view, that Japan, like India and China, was a land that deserved the Buddha's salvation. *Nihon ryōiki* makes the case that the reason miraculous events occurred equally in Japan is the existence of Japanese sages of great virtue who were not inferior to Chinese sages. Although the reliability of the historical accounts in *Nihon ryōiki* is somewhat questionable, I am not interested in whether the *Nihon ryōiki* stories have any basis in reality, but rather in what has been changed and why the changes have been made. Stories that are adaptations from sutras or Chinese sources have been modified and adapted to become miraculous events that supposedly occurred in Japan. In the first chapter, I discuss how Kyōkai establishes a Japanese lineage of sagehood as evidence of Japan being a sacred land. In the second chapter, I focus on Prince Nagaya, who is depicted as a sinner who receives the penalty of death because he is unable to identify a "hidden sage". In the third chapter, I examine the historical context of the Chinese monk Jianzhen's arrival at Japan and introduce how Tiantai teachings were promoted by Jianzhen's disciples, how a tale that asserted Prince Shōtoku was a reincarnation of monk Huisi spread. I also make a comparison between the *Nihon ryōiki* and a Chinese anecdotal collection titled *Min bao ji* to examine how Chinese influences are vernacularized and changed. *Nihon ryōiki* adopts a deliberate and

consistent policy of vernacularizing its Chinese sources by changing key details in the stories and thereby adapting them to a Japanese context.

The dissertation of Shih-Wei Sun is approved.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DBZ *Dainihon Bukkyō Zensho* 大日本仏教全書

NKBT *Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* 日本古典文学大系

NKBZ *Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* 日本古典文学全集

SAT Daizōkyō DB *SAT Daizōkyō Text Database* 新脩大正大藏經テキストデータベース

SNKBT *Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei* 新日本古典文学大系

SNKBZ *Shinpen Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshū* 新編日本古典文学全集

Ch. Chinese

J. Japanese

K. Korean

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This dissertation began as a presentation I made in 2014 at the Japanese Studies Graduate Conference at UCLA. Since the first year of my PhD program, my interest toward *Nihon ryōiki* kept growing, and eventually expanded to this dissertation project. My interest in early Japanese texts began with a modern Japanese translation of *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* mythology that I read when I was an international exchange student at Waseda University dispatched by my undergraduate Alma Mater, National Taiwan University. After my mandatory military service in 2005, I was lucky to have the opportunity to study at Peking University where I majored Comparative Literature and received my first MA. My thesis was a comparative research project on the textual Kiki mythology, and the folklore, anecdotes, and myths orally transmitted by the ethnic minorities of southeastern China and aborigines of southeast Asian regions including the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan and Okinawa.

I have been fortunate to study with great teachers at Columbia University. After I joined Columbia to pursue my second MA degree in 2010, I focused more on textual analysis and close readings of the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*. I am extremely grateful to my advisor at the time, Professor David Lurie, who helped me complete my second thesis and encouraged me to pursue my interest in early Japanese mythology by addressing larger questions. My words of gratitude also go to professors Haruo Shirane, Tomi Suzuki, the former librarian of C.V. Starr Library Dr. Sachie Noguchi, and the late Professor Emeritus Donald Keene who taught his final graduate seminar on *yōkyoku* and *Nō* theater before he moved to Japan permanently in 2011. I was lucky enough to attend this class.

After a short period of work experience in Japan, I came back to the US and began my PhD program at UCLA. I appreciate the opportunity that the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures gave me. The abundant resources provided an ideal environment for anyone intending to conduct a long-term research project on Japanese literature. The Terasaki Center of Japanese Studies offered a variety of funding opportunities that supported my study experience in Japan in the summer of 2014.

My best words are not enough to express my appreciation for all the faculty members and staff of ALC. I am extremely grateful and owe a debt of gratitude to my advisor, professor Torquil Duthie. Without his kindness, patience, understanding and helpful advice at every point of my study at UCLA, I would not

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記中巻第十縁における脚色と改変

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Sages, Sinners, and the Vernacularization of Buddhism in *Nihon ryōiki*

Introduction

In this dissertation I make three interrelated arguments about *Nihon ryōiki* 日本
靈異記, or *Record of the Miraculous and Strange in Japan*. The first is that the
collection proposes a lineage of Japanese sagehood; the second is that it depicts Prince
Nagaya as an exemplary sinner (a portrayal that conflicts with the portrayal of
Nagaya in historical records), and the third is that it adopts a deliberate and
consistent policy of vernacularizing its Chinese sources by changing key details in the
stories and thereby adapting them to a Japanese context.

Although the reliability of the historical accounts in *Nihon ryōiki* is somewhat
questionable,¹ I am not interested in whether the *Nihon ryōiki* stories have any basis
in reality, but rather in what has been changed and why the changes have been made.
In other words, my interest is in how stories that are adaptations from sutras or
Chinese sources have been modified and adapted to become miraculous events that

¹ As I will show in the examples I give in the following chapters, *Nihon ryōiki*
contains numerous inaccuracies in its descriptions of the names, ages, and other
details of historical characters.

supposedly occurred in the land of Japan.

Nihon ryōiki, or *Record of the Miraculous and Strange in Japan*, is the abbreviated title of *Nihonkoku genpō zen'aku ryōiki* 日本国現報善悪靈異記, or *Records of the Miraculous and Strange and of the Present Life Retribution of Good and Evil in the Kingdom of Japan*. It is a Buddhist anecdotal collection compiled in late Nara and early Heian periods. As the title indicates, the collection consists of narratives of present life retribution for good and evil acts in Japan. Compiled by a monk named Kyōkai 景戒 (?-?) between 787 and 824, *Nihon ryōiki* consists of three volumes with one hundred and sixteen stories. Known as the earliest extant collection of *setsuwa* (anecdotes) tales, its circulation and readership in the early ninth century remains mostly unknown.² It is not until the mid Heian period that *Nihon ryōiki* is first cited by a literatus who served at the central court in the *Sanbōe kotoba* 三宝絵詞, which was compiled in 984.³

² There is no single extant manuscript of the *Nihon ryōiki* that contains the complete text of the three volumes. Among the manuscripts of *Nihon ryōiki*, the earliest one is the Kōfuku-ji bon 興福寺本 of the first volume that is dated to Engi 延喜 4 (904) according to its postscript. Other manuscripts date from after the late eleventh century and Kamakura period. See Mori Masato, *Kodai no setsuwa to setsuwa shū* 古代の説話と説話集, *Setsuwa shū no sekai* 説話集の世界, volume 1, page 18-19.

³ *Sanbōe kotoba* 三宝絵詞 was compiled by Minamoto no Tamenori 源為憲 as an introductory textbook of Buddhism for Emperor Reizei's 冷泉天皇 daughter

Very little is known about the compiler of *Nihon ryōiki* except his name. Kyōkai was a monk who belonged to the lower aristocracy and was active in the provinces rather than at the central court. Unlike the high-ranked more prominent monks of his time such as Saichō 最澄 (766-822) and Kūkai 空海 (774-835), his name is not found in historical records such as *Shoku nihongi* 続日本紀. Although Kyōkai is introduced as the compiler of *Nihon ryōiki* in the *Honchō kōsō den* 本朝高僧伝, the information about him in this Edo period text does not go beyond the biographical statement made by Kyōkai himself in the *Nihon ryōiki* accounts.⁴ As a “self-ordained” monk 私度僧, or a monk that did not receive official ordination from the court, he became affiliated with Yakushi-ji Temple and received a humble priest rank only late in his life. There is no evidence detailing his connections with high ranking aristocrats or courtiers who served at the central court.

Kyōkai’s main purpose in compiling *Nihon ryōiki*, according to his own words in the preface to the first volume, was to keep a record of the miraculous events occurred in Japan. Like the tales documented in Buddhist sutras and Chinese anecdotal collections, Kyōkai insisted that similar events had happened in the land of Japan in

Princess Sonshi 尊子内親王.

⁴ *Honchō kōsō den* 本朝高僧伝 is compiled by Shibān 師蛮 in 1701. See DBZ, vol. 102, page 125-126.

different ages and areas. Evidence of such miraculous events indicated, in Kyōkai's view, that Japan, like India and China, was a land that deserved the Buddha's salvation.

Nihon ryōiki makes the case that the reason miraculous events occurred equally in Japan is the existence of Japanese sages of great virtue who were not inferior to Chinese sages, and thus guaranteed Japan's qualifications for Buddha's salvation. In the first chapter, I discuss how Kyōkai establishes a Japanese lineage of sagehood as evidence of Japan being a sacred land. Three of these sages are figures of the imperial family—Emperor Nintoku 仁徳天皇, Prince Shōtoku 聖徳太子 and Emperor Shōmu 聖武天皇—and one is a distinctly non-imperial figure: the wandering monk Gyōki 行基.

Kyōkai's definition of a sage is primarily a Buddhist one, but also involves an essential Confucian aspect. Emperor Nintoku (who reigned before the arrival of Buddhism) is thus portrayed as a Confucian sage, while Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu are idealized as sages of both Confucianism and Buddhism. It is significant that Kyōkai excludes, at least ostensibly, Daoist aspects from his ideal model of sagehood. For the most part, *Nihon ryōiki* contains few references to Daoist thought and practices, even though these are quite common in many other literary texts

compiled in the second half of the eighth century. I suggest possible reasons in the second and third chapters to explain why Daoist aspects are excluded.

The sages identified by Kyōkai have an important ability in common: they are able to identify another sage even if they appear in humble form. People of common ability cannot tell the difference between a beggar and a hidden sage, but a sage always known another sage (聖之知聖). This concept of a “hidden sage” (隱身之聖) is a key element through which the lineage of sagehood in *Nihon ryōiki* is established.

In the second chapter, I focus on Prince Nagaya 長屋王 (676?-729), who is depicted as a sinner who receives the penalty of death because he is unable to identify such a hidden sage. Prince Nagaya punishes the hidden sage by striking him on the head hard enough to draw blood, and soon after is forced to commit suicide in retribution. One of the central messages of *Nihon ryōiki* is that disdain for the Three Treasures will merit serious penalties and immediate retribution in the present life. There are a number of episodes in the text in which characters who commit violence against monks are immediately punished, and Nagaya is among them.

The historical Prince Nagaya was an unlikely candidate to receive such a punishment, since he was one of the most influential political figures and promoters of Buddhism in the early eighth century. A close examination of the accounts of

Shoku nihongi and other texts compiled in the eighth century suggests that he was forced to commit suicide by his rivals from the Fujiwara lineage who regarded his sons as future threats to the successor of Emperor Shōmu. This incident was almost certainly a political stratagem to remove him from power. The story in *Nihon ryōiki*, however, attempts to relate Nagaya's death to his offenses against the Buddhist clergy, and makes him into a violent character that is very different from Nagaya's image in historical records and literary collections.

Judging from the accounts of *Nihon ryōiki*, it is unclear whether Kyōkai was fully aware of the historical context and actual background of the Nagaya incident, but as a member of the provincial lower aristocracy, Kyōkai was very distant from the struggles for political power at court. I argue that the reason Kyōkai made Nagaya into a sinner probably had little to do with Nagaya, and was in fact related to the suppression of Gyōki, one of Kyōkai's "hidden sages." During Gyōki's early career, the court strictly prohibited his religious group and social activities. The court later changed its policy and chose to compromise with him in 731, the seventh year of Emperor Shōmu's reign. However, the *Nihon ryōiki* does not mention the court's suppression of Gyōki in order to avoid blaming Emperor Shōmu, who is also depicted as a sage. The solution to this, I argue, was to make Prince Nagaya into a scapegoat

and make him responsible for the court's policy of suppression against unofficially ordained monks, even as this was in fact historically inaccurate, given that Nagaya was simply following an earlier policy of Fujiwara no Fuhito's 藤原不比等 (659-720) administration.

In the third chapter, I examine the historical context of the Chinese monk Jianzhen's 鑑真 (688-763, J. Ganjin) arrival at Japan and introduce how Tiantai 天台 (J. Tendai) teachings were promoted by Jianzhen's disciples. In this process, a tale that asserted Prince Shōtoku was a reincarnation of monk Huisi 慧思 (515-577), the second patriarch of Tiantai, spread and was widely accepted by courtiers in the second half of the eighth century. Unlike Saichō who positively embraced this idea and made full use of this Huisi-Shōtoku reincarnation tale to promote Tendai teachings, Kyōkai did not include such a reincarnation tale in his collection. Instead, he presented a tale that portrays Emperor Shōmu as a reincarnation of Prince Shōtoku. I argue that this is not because Kyōkai was against the Tendai teachings from his position as a Hossō monk. The reason he did so was to exclude the Huisi reincarnation tale from his lineage of sagehood consisting of sages from the land of Japan.

I also make a comparison between the *Nihon ryōiki* and a Chinese anecdotal collection titled *Min bao ji* 冥報記 (J. *Myōhōki*) to examine how Chinese influences

are vernacularized and changed to fit the definition of “vernacular miraculous events” (自土奇事). Although the tales in *Nihon ryōiki* are inspired by and adapted from a variety of Chinese texts and sutras, the *Min bao ji* merits exceptional attention since it is one of the few Chinese texts directly mentioned in the preface. In comparing the two texts, I highlight the remarkable changes made in *Nihon ryōiki*. Kyōkai makes various changes to the more identifiable architectural details and social aspects of the stories in order to adapt them to the Japanese context and makes the stories in *Nihon ryōiki* more accessible for his target readers, and more suitable for the worldview he is proposing.

Chapter 1: The Sages in the *Nihon ryōiki*

Nihonkoku genpō zen'aku ryōiki 日本国現報善悪霊異記, or *Records of the Miraculous and Strange and of the Present Life Retribution of Good and Evil in the Kingdom of Japan*,¹ usually abbreviated to *Nihon ryōiki*, consists of one hundred and sixteen stories divided into three volumes. The tales are generally arranged in chronological order, according to the reigns of the emperors during which the stories are set. Most of the anecdotal narratives are short and written compactly or concisely with simple plots. Each of the three volumes is introduced by a preface.

As the full title of the collection suggests, most of the anecdotal stories concern retribution for good or evil deeds. As the emphasis on the concept of instant retribution, *genpō* 現報, suggests, in most of the stories retribution for

¹ There are two full English translations of *Nihon ryōiki*, Nakamura's *Miraculous stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition* (1973) and Watson's *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan* (2013). The citations of *Nihon ryōiki* in the dissertation are from Watson's translation unless stated otherwise.

good or bad acts is something that occurs immediately in the present, rather than a karmic consequence in the next life. However, there are several exceptions to this, as some narratives depict karmic bonds, reincarnation, journeys to Hell and the judgment of the king of hell, Enra 閻羅 or En'ma 閻魔 / 琰魔. Furthermore, there are also some secular stories that seem unrelated to Buddhist teachings.

One puzzle for many scholars², is the fact that the first story in the first volume is set during the reign of Emperor Yūryaku 雄略 (r.456-479), before the arrival of Buddhism in Japan. The second and third stories, are set after Buddhism came to Japan, during the reigns Kinmei 欽明 (r. 539-571) and Bidatsu 敏達 (r. 572-585), but they appear to have no connection to the Buddhist framework of karma and retribution. It is not until the fourth story, which is set during the reign of Suiko 推古 (r. 592-628), that we see the first explicitly Buddhist tale, an iconic episode about Prince Shōtoku's 聖徳太子

² For example, see Izumoji in his introduction to the first volume. SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, p. 2.

sagely nature. If *Nihon ryōiki* was compiled to promote Buddhist teachings and persuade people with the stories of instant retribution, then why did the compiler Kyōkai begin his collection with a story set in a reign before Buddhism arrived at Japan?

As I will argue in this chapter, part of the answer to this question can be found in the preface to the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, which references a well-known episode about the legendary Emperor Nintoku 仁徳 (r. 313-399) who is portrayed as an exemplary sage sovereign of great virtue that takes care of his people with great virtue.³ Similarly to Buddhist sage-like figures such as Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu, Nintoku is also portrayed as ensuring the legitimacy of his descendants through his virtuous deeds. Just as the teachings of the “outer writings” (gesho 外書, non-Buddhist texts) are considered equally important as the Buddhist “inner classics (naikyō 内経)”, the Confucian model of sage king is juxtaposed with Shōtoku and Shōmu as a powerful resource of

³ Although dates for the early emperors and the length of their reigns, based on the records found in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*, are not reliable, it is clear that the compiler is fully aware that Nintoku’s reign predates the arrival of Buddhism.

imperial family legitimacy. Thus even though Nintoku is not a promoter of Buddhism, from Kyōkai's perspective, he is a sovereign of Japan that deserves to be remembered as a sage-king.

1. Before Buddhism: Emperor Nintoku

The preface to the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki* describes Nintoku in the following terms:

Among the successive emperors, there was one who, ascending a high hill, was moved to compassion and, content to live in a palace where the rain leaked in, brought succor to his people.⁴

唯代々天皇、或登高山頂、起悲心、住雨漏殿、撫於庶民。⁵

⁴ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 9.

⁵ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 201.

This is an abbreviated version of an anecdote recorded in both *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* with some slight differences in detail. The *Kojiki* version is as follows:

At the time the emperor climbed up to a high mountain and, viewing the lands of the four quarters, said: “There is no smoking rising in the land. The entire land is impoverished. For a period of three years the people are released from all taxes and conscription.” For this reason, the palace became dilapidated; although the rain caught in vessels...Later, when he views the land [again], the entire land was filled with smoke...Thus his reign is praised as being the reign of a saintly ruler.⁶

於是天皇、登高山見四方之國詔之、於國中煙不發。國皆貧窮。故、自

⁶ Philippi, *Kojiki*, page 303.

今至三年、悉除人民之課役。是以大殿破壞、悉雖雨漏、都勿脩理...後

見國中、於國滿煙...故、稱其御世、謂聖帝世也。⁷

This well-known episode, known as Nintoku's *kunimi* (viewing the land 国見) tale, remained popular in following periods among court aristocrats and became a motif of poems in *Wakan rōeishū* 和漢朗詠集 and *Shin kokin wakashū* 新古今和歌集⁸. It is significant that Nintoku's reign is referred to as “the reign of sage” (聖帝世也), and that this is the only example of this term being used throughout the *Kojiki* except for one other instance in its preface, in which it also refers to Nintoku.

The *Nihon shoki* records a similar but longer and more detailed version of the story. After Nintoku is satisfied to see smoke rising (for cooking), a conversation

⁷ Kurano, *Kojiki*, page 317.

⁸ Nintoku's *kunimi* tale is mentioned in both the preface to the *Shinkokinshū* and the first poem of volume 7. Unlike earlier poems found in *Nihongi kyōen waka* 日本紀竟宴和歌 or *Wakan rōeishū* 和漢朗詠集, in the early Kamakura period when *Shinkokinshū* was compiled, the poem that praises Nintoku's virtue is regarded as a poem composed by the Emperor himself.

ensues between him and his consort:

7th year, Summer, 4th month, 1st day. The Emperor was on his tower, and looking far and wide, saw smoke arising plentifully.

On this day he addressed the Empress, saying: "We are now prosperous. What can there be to grieve for?" The Empress answered and said: "What dost thou mean by prosperity?" The Emperor said: "It is doubtless when the smoke fills the land, and the people freely attain to wealth." The Empress went on to say: "The Palace enclosure is crumbling down, and there are no means of repairing it; the buildings are dilapidated so that the coverlets are exposed. Can this be called prosperity?" The Emperor said: "When Heaven establishes a Prince, it is for the sake of the people. The Prince must therefore make the people the foundation. For this reason the wise sovereigns of antiquity, if

a single one of their subjects was cold and starving, cast the responsibility on themselves. Now the people's poverty is no other than our poverty; the people's prosperity is none other than our prosperity. There is no such thing as the people's being prosperous and yet the Prince in poverty.”⁹

七年夏四月辛未朔、天皇、居台上而遠望之、烟氣多起。是日、語皇后曰「朕既富矣、更無愁焉。」皇后對諮「何謂富矣。」天皇曰「烟氣滿国、百姓自富歟。」皇后且言「宮垣壞而不得脩、殿屋破之衣被露、何謂富乎。」天皇曰「其天之立君是爲百姓、然則君以百姓爲本。是以、古聖王者、一人飢寒、顧之責身。今百姓貧之則朕貧也、百姓富之則朕富也。未之有百姓富之君貧矣。」

It is clear that the *Nihon shoki* version is more overtly influenced by Chinese

⁹ Aston, *Nihongi*, page 279.

writings than the episode found in *Kojiki*, both in its rhetorical and ideological aspects. As the original text shows, the words and expressions used to describe the “sage king” are directly cited, or rephrased, from a variety of classical Chinese texts.¹⁰ Moreover, the *Nihon shoki* describes Nintoku’s three-year long effort to reduce the spending and hard work for his people, the “wind and rain came in due season, the five grains produced in abundance 是後、風雨順時、五穀豐穰.” In the context of Confucian canons, the virtue of a sovereign is directly related to natural phenomena as well as the behaviors of his people. For instance, *Li ji* 禮記 argues that when the great virtue of a sage king is fulfilled, the five grains shall not fail, and the people shall not suffer.¹¹ A sage king

¹⁰ For example, the following quotation is from a conversation in between Huan gong 桓公 of Qi 齊 and Guan zi 管子: “When the people are prosperous, there is no reason for the sovereign to be poor; when the people are poor, there is no reason for the sovereign to be prosperous. 民富君無與貧，民貧君無與富”. See *Wen yuan ge si ku quan shu* 文淵閣四庫全書, *Guan zi* 管子, vol.23, *Shan zhi shu* 山至數, page 480.

¹¹ See *Chong kan song ben shi san jing zhu shu* 重刊宋本十三經注疏, *Li ji* 禮記, *li yun* 禮運: “The heavenly sovereign utilizes his virtue as his vehicle, and made the music as his driver...he must follow the virtue of the time when he entitles his men and marries his women. The sovereign employs his people following the

should follow the rule of the earth and be directed by the heaven. Should he fail to do so, natural disasters arise.¹²

There is another reason that Nintoku is significant. Describing the transmission of Chinese writing to Japan from the Korean peninsula, the preface to the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, notes the following:

If we inquire into the matter, we find that the inner, or Buddhist, writings and the outer, or non-Buddhist writings were first transmitted to Japan in two groups. Both of them came from the country of Paekche, the latter in the reign of Homuda [Ōjin, r.

rules (of the heaven and the earth). That is why there is no natural disasters of flood, drought, or vermin in his reign. His people do not suffer from pest, hunger, curse and harmful beasts. 天子以德為車、以樂為御...合男女，頒爵位，必當年德。用民必順。故無水旱昆蟲之災，民無凶饑妖孽之疾”， page 440. *Li ji* 禮記, *Yueji* 樂記: “When the virtue is fulfilled and the teachings are highly respected, the five grains prosper. 德盛而教尊，五穀時熟”， page 677.

¹² In the last story of *Nihon ryōiki* (volume 3, 39), people criticize Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇 and think he is not a “sage sovereign 聖君” because the country saw many natural disasters during his reign. As Aston suggests, “the notion that the virtue of the Emperor has a direct influence on the weather is, of course, Chinese.” See Aston, *Nihongi*, page 279-280.

270-312], who resided at the Toyoakira Palace in Karushima,
and the former in the reign of Emperor Kinmei, who resided at
the Kanazashi Palace in Shikishima.¹³

原夫内經外書、伝於日本、而興始代、凡有二時。皆自百濟国将来之、
輕嶋豐明宮御宇譽田天皇代、外書来之、磯城嶋金刺宮御宇欽明天皇
代、内典来也。¹⁴

This statement coincides with both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* accounts of
how non-Buddhist writings were transmitted to Japan.¹⁵ As Ōjin's son and
successor, Nintoku was still a prince when the non-Buddhist writings first
arrived at Japan, and was (according to this legendary account) the first ruler
who was educated in the Chinese classics.

¹³ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 9.

¹⁴ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 201.

¹⁵ In *Kojiki*, Wanikishi 和邇吉師 is dispatched from Paekche and bring *Lun'yu* 論語 and *Qianziwen* 千字文 to Japan. (Wani 王仁 in *Nihon shoki*)

The *Kojiki* text emphasizes Nintoku's status as the first sovereign educated in the Confucian classics by situating his reign as the first in its third and final volume. The first volume of *Kojiki* is mostly about mythology and the ancestral deities of the imperial family and aristocratic lineages. The second volume begins with the legendary first emperor Jinmu and his military campaign to the east to conquer Yamato. Characters such as Jinmu, or Prince Yamato Takeru later in the second volume, are no longer gods, but are portrayed as demigod protagonists with extraordinary powers who are either helped or challenged by the gods. The third volume, which begins with Nintoku, departs from the previous worlds of gods and legendary rulers and princes to depict human-like emperors and their affairs. In this context, Nintoku's portrayal as a Confucian sage king appeals to a different kind of authority that the divinely aided Jinmu, an ethical authority that is represented by the non-Buddhist Chinese classics.

It is unclear whether Kyōkai consulted *Kojiki* or *Nihon shoki* when he wrote

this preface.¹⁶ However, Nintoku's kunimi episode would have probably been well known to Kyōkai and his target readers. Indeed, the kunimi episode is not like those “miraculous happenings” that reflect the idea of the Karma and retributions. Nintoku was mentioned in the preface as an example of “sage kings” of Japan before the arrival of Buddhist teachings.

Kyōkai's preface then continues to juxtapose Emperor Nintoku with two other “sage kings,” Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu:

Among the successive emperors, there was one who, ascending a high hill, was moved to compassion and, content to live in a palace where the rain leaked in, brought succor to his people. Or another who was born with great ability and knew the direction things were taking. He could listen to ten men expounding

¹⁶ Generally speaking, *Nihon shoki* is the text that was widely used after Nara period. However, in the *Nihon shoki* version of Nintoku's episode, the emperor climbed on a tower (台), instead of a mountain, to view his land and his people. It seems that *Nihon ryōiki* follows the *Kojiki* version of this story.

without missing a word. When he was twenty-five, at the request of the emperor, he lectured on a Mahayana sutra, and his commentaries on the scriptures have long been handed down to later ages. Or there was an emperor who, making great vows, reverently created a Buddhist image. Heaven assisted his vows, and the earth opened up its treasure.¹⁷

唯代々天皇、或登高山頂、起悲心、住雨漏殿、撫於庶民。或生而高弁、兼委末事、一聞十訴、一言不漏、生年廿五、受天皇請、說大乘經、所造經疏、長流末代。或発弘誓願、敬造仏像、天随所願、地敞宝蔵。¹⁸

Although the preface lists all three as “successive emperors,” Prince Shōtoku, of course, was not an actual emperor, but is treated as such due to his extraordinary contribution to the promotion of Buddhist teachings.

¹⁷ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 9-10.

¹⁸ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 201.

Nintoku's presence among these three imperial figures explains how Kyōkai defined a sage, and why stories set in reigns before the arrival of Buddhism should be included in his compilation. As a Confucian-style sage king, Nintoku's virtue is comparable to that of the later Buddhist sages, just as "non-Buddhist" (Confucian) texts should be valued together with Buddhist sutras.

However, it was customary for those who studied the non-Buddhist writings to denigrate the Buddhist Law, while those who read the Buddhist writings made light of the other works. But they are ignorant and foolish, embracing fatuous beliefs and disbelieving in the consequences of evil or good action. People of true wisdom regard both types of writing with seriousness and have faith in and are fearful of karmic causation.¹⁹

¹⁹ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 9.

然乃学外之者、誹於仏法、読内之者、軽於外典、愚痴之類、懷於迷執、
匪信於罪福。深智之儔、觀於内外、信恐於因果。²⁰

In this way, Kyōkai establishes the framework of sagehood for his collection of tales with reference to the two traditions of “outer texts” and “inner classics”, which are embodied in the three figures of Nintoku, Shōtoku, and Shōmu.

2. Prince Shōtoku

Why does Kyōkai list Prince Shōtoku as one of the “successive emperors”? To answer this question we will need to first examine the historical and cultural context of *Nihon ryōiki*.

As is well known, Prince Shōtoku has been deified and treated as an iconic

²⁰ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 201.

Buddhist figure throughout Japanese cultural history. What has been referred to as the “Prince Shōtoku belief” (taishi shinkō 太子信仰) began to take shape not long after his death, and a large number of biographical records of Shōtoku were compiled in the Heian period. The Kamakura period witnessed the emergence of scholarship and commentary on these early records. In the Edo period, such beliefs in Prince Shōtoku were challenged by both Confucianists and nativists, and the Shōtoku tradition was rediscovered, reconstructed and reinterpreted during the Meiji period and in the twentieth century²¹.

Prince Shōtoku has been a challenging topic for modern scholars. As Tanaka Tsuguhito notes, “what makes research on Prince Shōtoku difficult is the unreliability of the records. Given the great number of extant historical records and documents, reliable evidence about what he really did is unfortunately scarce.”²²

²¹ For a detailed description on the cultural history of Prince Shōtoku, see Shinkawa, *Shōtoku taishi no rekishi gaku* 聖徳太子の歴史学, page 12-35.

²² See Tanaka Tsuguhito, *Shōtoku taishi shinkō no seiritsu* 聖徳太子信仰の成立, page 3.

Based on information about Prince Shōtoku that appears in *Nihon shoki*, a variety of biographies were compiled from the Nara period onward.²³ However, most of these records from later periods constructed an idealized image of Shōtoku that was probably different from the historical figure of the real Prince Umayado. Because the narratives about Shōtoku are hagiographical, it is difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. For instance, Prince Shōtoku is generally assumed to be the author of *Sankyō giso* 三經義疏, but this doubtful.²⁴ Some extreme arguments even suggest that Shōtoku himself may not have existed.²⁵

²³ Before *Shotoku taishi denryaku* 聖徳太子伝暦 was compiled in the early 10th century, biographies of Prince Shōtoku include *Jōgūki* 上宮記, *myō'itsu den* 明一伝, *Jōgū kōtaishi bosatsu den* 上宮皇太子菩薩伝, *Jōgū shōtoku hō'ō teisetsu* 上宮聖徳法王帝説, *Shichidai ki* 七代記, *Jōgū shōtokutaishi den hoketsuki* 上宮聖徳太子伝補闕記, and so forth. See Wakabayashi: *Shōtoku taishi kankei bunken mokuroku* 聖徳太子関係文献目録.

²⁴ See Fujieda, *Shōmangyō giso* 勝鬘經義疏. Fujieda argues that seventy percent of *giso*'s content is the same as a Dunhuang excavation text named *Sheng man jing yi shu ben yi* 勝鬘經義疏本義, and assumes that *giso* is one of the commentaries of the same group that was compiled in Northern dynasty China.

²⁵ See Ōyama, *Shōtoku taishi no shinjitsu* 聖徳太子の真実.

Among the earliest accounts of Prince Shōtoku, is the following brief genealogical note in *Kojiki*:

Again he (Emperor Yōmei) took as wife his half sister
Pasipito-no-anapo-be-no-miko and there was born the child
Upe-no-miya-no-Umayado-no-toyo-to-mimi-no-mikoto; next,
Mamuta-no-miko. (Four children)

又娶庶妹間人穴太部王、生御子、上宮之厩戸豐聰耳命、次久米王、
次植栗王、次茨田王。四柱。²⁶

Similar to other emperors after Kenzo listed in *Kojiki*, there is no information here about the prince other than his lineage. Moreover, his title is recorded as “Uhe no miya”上宮 and his name as “Umayado 厩戸”, and there is no sign of

²⁶ Philippi, *Kojiki*, page 393.

the name Shōtoku.

The name Shōtoku, which means “sage 聖” and “virtue 徳”, appears for the first time in the much more extensive account in *Nihon shoki*:

1st year, Spring, 1st month, 1st day. The Imperial Princess Anahobe no Hashibito was appointed Empress Consort. She bore four sons. The first was called the Imperial Prince Mūmayado [also called Mimito Shōtoku, or as some have it Toyoto-mimi, Great King of the Law, or again Master King of the Law]. This Imperial Prince at first lived at Kamitsu miya. Afterwards he removed to Ikaruga in the reign of the Empress Toyomike Kashikiya hime, where he occupied the Eastern Palace, and discharged the duties of Emperor, being associated with her in the management of all matters of administration, as is stated in the history of the Empress Toyomike Kashikiya

hime.

元年春正月壬子朔、立穴穗部間人皇女爲皇后、是生四男、其一曰廐
戸皇子、更名豐耳聰聖德、或名豐聰耳法大王、或云法主王、是皇子
初居上宮、後移斑鳩、於豐御食炊屋姫天皇世、位居東宮、総摂万機、
行天皇事。²⁷

In contrast to *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki* introduces Prince Shōtoku as the crown prince (taishi 太子/東宮) and notes that he “discharged the duties of an emperor” at the court of his aunt Suiko. In addition to the name Shōtoku, his other titles, such as “Great King of Law” or “Great Master King,” foreshadow his contributions to Buddhism.

Although we do not know what kind of Shōtoku-related texts Kyōkai might have referred to, it is clear that he had read other texts besides the *Nihon shoki*,

²⁷ Aston, *Nihongi*, page 107.

including those that are not extant. For example, in *Nihon ryōiki*, Prince Shōtoku is called Kamitsu-no-miya-no miko 上宮皇 and Shōtoku kōtaishi 聖徳皇太子 in the fourth story of the first volume, and Umayado-no-miko 厩戸皇子 and Shōtoku kōtaishi 聖徳皇太子 in the fifth story of the same volume. None of these three titles to refer to Shōtoku appear in *Nihon shoki*.

As Shinkawa points out, the term “crown prince” probably did not even exist around six hundred A.D. when Prince Umayado was active.²⁸ He further argues that the title “Shōtoku taishi 聖徳太子” was originally just one historically used name among many other alternative variants. In fact, the term “Shōtoku taishi 聖徳太子” did not appear until the Chinese poem collection *Kaifūsō* 懷風藻 was compiled at court in 751.

Regardless of what the historical Prince Shōtoku’s actual contributions may have been, by the late eighth century and early ninth century when *Nihon ryōiki* was compiled, he had become a sagely figure that promoted Buddhist

²⁸ See Shinkawa, *Shōtoku taishi no rekishi gaku* 聖徳太子の歴史学, page 7.

teachings and political reform. For Kyōkai, Prince Shōtoku was the reason that Buddhism had been made to prevail in the land of Japan. In the fourth story of the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, he is introduced as followed:

Imperial Prince Shōtoku was the son of Emperor
Tachibana-no-toyohi...

He had three names: Umayado no toyotomimi, Shōtoku, and
Kamitsu-miya. Umayado, or “stable door”, because he was born
in front of the stables. Toyomimi, or “intelligent eras”, because
he was born by nature so wise that he could attend to ten men
arguing legal claims at the same time without missing a word.

And because he not only was scrupulous in his conduct like a
monk, but also wrote commentaries on the Shōman-gyō
[Srimala Sutra] and the Hoke-kyō [Lotus Sutra], spread the
Way, brought profit to the nation, and was so well versed in the

Chinese classics that he instituted the system of court ranks and honors, he was called Shōtoku, or “Sacred Virtue”. And because his residence was above that of the palace of the empress, he was called Kamitsu-miya, or “Prince of the Upper Palace.”

聖德皇太子者、磐余池辺双觀宮御宇橘豐日天皇之子也。

太子有三名、一号曰厩戸豐聰耳、二号曰聖德、三号曰上宮也。向厩戸産、故曰厩戸。天年生知、十人一時訟白之狀、一言不漏、能聞之別、故曰豐聰耳。進止威儀、似僧而行、加以製勝鬘法華等經疏、弘法利物、定考績功勳之階、故曰聖德。從天皇宮住上殿、故曰上宮皇也。²⁹

The passage concisely records several well-known stories about the prince as a versatile politician and an influential religious leader. According to Kyōkai's

²⁹ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 19.

understanding, the title “Shōtoku” originates from the prince’s contributions to both Buddhist and Confucian disciplines.

One significant difference between the *Nihon shoki* record I cited earlier and Kyōkai’s account concerns the origin of the name Kamitsu-miya (upper palace). In *Nihon shoki*, Kamitsu-miya was the first palace he lived in before moving to Ikaruga. In Kyōkai’s interpretation, the “upper-palace” is not the palace where Prince Shōtoku used to live, but literally a higher-ranked residence——— even higher than Empress Suiko’s palace.

Prince Shōtoku thus plays a critical role in the *Nihon ryōiki*’s worldview as a figure who is a sage of both Buddhism and Confucianism, and who embodies the authority of the imperial institution. Another key to understanding Kyōkai’s theoretical framework is Shōtoku’s ability to recognize sages of lower status. The following citation is also from the fourth story of the first volume, in which the character of Prince Shōtoku is first introduced.

When the prince was living at the Okamoto Palace in Ikaruga, he had occasion to leave the palace and go for a pleasure ride. When he reached the village Kataoka, he came on a beggar lying sick beside the road. Seeing this, the prince got down from his palanquin, questioned the beggar, and, taking of his cloak, placed it over the man. Then, his visit concluded, he returned to his palanquin and went on his way.

On his way back, he saw his cloak hanging on the limb of a tree, but the beggar was gone. When the prince put on the cloak again, one of his ministers said, “Are you so poor that you have to wear a dirty cloak worn by beggar?” The prince replied, “It’s all right – you wouldn’t understand.”

The beggar, meanwhile, went someplace else and died. When the prince heard of this, he held a temporary burial for him, and then had a grave made in the village of Okamoto, in a corner of

Mount Moribe, northeast of Hōrin-ji, and placed the body in it.

It was called the Hitoki Grave. Later, a messenger he sent to the grave found that the door could not be opened and no one could go inside. Only beside the grave door was a poem that read:

The little stream of Tomi

In Ikaruga –

should it dry up,

only then would the name of My Lord

be forgotten!

On his return, the messenger reported this. The prince, hearing it, remained silent and said nothing. Thus we know that a sage recognizes sagely worth, but an ordinary individual does not. The eyes of an ordinary man saw only a humble person,

but to the keen eyes of a sage, his hidden identity was apparent.

This was a miraculous event.

皇太子、居住于鵜岡本宮時、有緣出宮、遊觀幸行。片岡村之路側、有乞句人、得病而臥、太子見之、從輦下、俱語之問訊、脫所著衣、覆於病人、而幸行也。遊觀既訖、返輦幸行。脫覆之衣、挂于木枝、無彼乞句。太子取衣著之。有臣白曰、触於賤人而穢衣、何乏更著之。太子詔、佳矣。汝不知之也。後乞句人、他處而死。太子聞之、遣使以殯、岡本村法林寺東北角有守部山、作墓而收。名曰人木墓也。後遣使看、墓口不開、無之入人。唯作歌書、以立墓戶。歌言、

伊可流可乃刀三乃乎可波乃太江波己曾和可於保支見乃三奈和数良
礼女（鵜の富の小川の絶えばこそ我が大君の御名忘れめ）

使還白状、太子聞之、嘿然不言。誠知、聖人知聖、凡人不知。凡夫之

肉眼見賤人、聖人之通眼見隱身。斯奇異之事。

This famous episode is usually referred to as “the Mount Kataoka beggar 片岡山飢人” in modern scholarship. An earlier version of the story appears in *Nihon shoki*, and it became one of the popular motifs of Shōtoku biographies composed in later eras.

After describing the story, Kyōkai concludes with an editorial comment: “Thus we know that a sage recognizes sagely worth, but an ordinary individual does not.” Only a sage with “keen eyes” is able to see a “hidden identity” of another sage.

As I will show, this concept of “the hidden sage” (隱身/隱身之聖) shapes the ideological framework of the whole collection. The term is used in four stories in *Nihon ryōiki*, and among these “hidden sages”, the most important one is Gyōki 行基, who is also called a “hidden sage” in the twenty-ninth story of the second volume. Gyōki appears six times in the second volume and once in the first

volume. Particularly in the fifth story of the first volume, Gyōki is juxtaposed with Emperor Shōmu and Prince Shōtoku.

Why does Gyōki play such an important role in *Nihon ryōiki*? Among all the highly influential monks that were active during Emperor Shōmu's reign, why did Kyōkai raise Gyōki to the stature of the three imperial sages, Nintoku, Shōtoku, and Shōmu?

Unlike other monks who were closely related to the imperial court, in his early career Gyōki was suppressed by the court for preaching Buddhist teachings among ordinary people and promoting social welfare projects without the court's official permission. It was not until the reign of Shōmu that the court changed its policy and allowed Gyōki to preach. For Kyōkai, Gyōki represents the "hidden sage" of humble status who became successful thanks to Shōmu's "keen eyes" to recognize his "hidden identity." This is significant in light of Kyōkai's own background. As a member of a lower aristocratic family based in Ki'i province, Kyōkai did not have strong connections with the high-rank

courtiers and was not officially ordained until his late life. Although Kyōkai claimed to be a monk, he was in an unstable social status without official ordination for most of his life. He had to struggle for a position until he was finally ordained with a relatively low rank at Yakushi-ji. This is the reason why Masuda Katsumi's influential work defined *Nihon ryōiki* as “literature of a self-ordained monk 私度僧の文学”: since Kyōkai was self-ordained, he did not have access to a high-ranked aristocratic audience, and his stories presented in an acceptable style for provincial powerful clans instead of high-ranked courtiers.³⁰

I will examine Gyōki-related episodes and illustrate how these stories functioned based on Kyōkai's worldview later in this chapter. However, before accepting Masuda's theoretical framework and moving forward, there is one issue with regard to the anecdote of Mount Kataoka beggar that deserves our attention.

³⁰ See Masuda: *Setsuwa bungaku to Emaki* 説話文学と絵巻.

Although Kyōkai interpreted the episode from a Buddhist perspective, it is apparent that the story is influenced by Daoist ideas of immortality or transcendence. This is especially clear in the *Nihon shoki* version of this episode:

12th month (21th year of Empress Suiko), 1st day. The Prince Imperial took a journey to Katawoka. Now a starving man was lying by the roadside. He asked his name, but there was no answer. The Prince Imperial, seeing this, gave him to eat and to drink, and taking off his own raiment, clothed with it the starving man, saying to him, "Lie in peace." Then he made a song, saying—

Alas! for

The wayfarer lying

An hungered for rice

On the hill of Katawoka

(The sunshiny). Art thou become

Parentless?

Hast thou no lord

Flourishing as a bamboo?

Alas! for

The wayfarer lying

An hungered for rice!

2nd day. The Prince Imperial sent a messenger to see the
starving man. The messenger returned and said: "The starving
man is already dead." Hereupon the Prince Imperial was
greatly grieved, and accordingly caused him to be buried at that
place, a mound erected, and firmly closed. Many days after, the

Prince Imperial called for his personal attendants, and said to them: “The starving man who was lying on a former day on the road was no ordinary man. He must have been an upright man.”

A messenger was sent to see. On his return he reported that when he went to the mound and made inspection, the heaped-up earth had not been disturbed, but on opening the tomb and looking in, there was no corpse. It was empty, and there was nothing but the garment folded up and laid on the coffin. Thereupon the Prince Imperial sent the messenger back a second time to fetch the garment, which he continued wearing as before. The people of that time wondered much at this, and said: “How true it is that a sage know a sage.” And they stood more and more in awe of him.³¹

³¹ Aston, *Nihongi*, vol.2, page 144-145.

十二月庚午朔、皇太子、遊行於片岡。時飢者臥道垂、仍問姓名、而不言。皇太子視之與飲食、卽脫衣裳、覆飢者而言、安臥也。則歌之曰、

斯那提流 箇多烏箇夜摩爾 伊比爾惠弓 許夜勢屢 諸能多比等阿波
禮 於夜那斯爾 那禮奈理雞迷夜 佐須陀氣能 枳彌波夜那祇 伊比爾
惠弓 許夜勢留 諸能多比等阿波禮（しなてる 片岡山に 飯に飢て
臥せる その旅人あはれ 親無しに 汝生りけめや さす竹の 君はや無
き 飯に飢て 臥せる その旅人あはれ）

辛未、皇太子遣使令視飢者。使者還來之曰、飢者既死。爰皇太子大悲之、則因以葬埋於當處、墓固封也。數日之後、皇太子召近習者謂之曰「先日臥于道飢者、其非凡人、必眞人也。」遣使令視。於是、使者還來之曰「到於墓所而視之、封埋勿動。乃開以見、屍骨既空、唯衣服疊置棺上。」於是、皇太子復返使者令取其衣。如常且服矣。時人大異之曰「聖之知聖、其實哉。」逾惶。

There are many differences in the details of this episode between the *Nihon ryōiki* and *Nihon Shoki* versions. Among all these differences, the most significant one is the beggar being called “genuine person 真人” (“upright man” in Aston’s translation) by the prince.

“Genuine person” is a term mostly used in Daoist contexts, referring to a sage who is completely without artifice.³² The term is also used in Chinese translations of Buddhist Sutras along with many other concepts of Daoism. Although the “genuine person 真人” here is probably understood as a synonym of a “sage” recognized by “another sage” 聖之知聖, and the yomikudashi transcription was probably “hijiri (the sage)”, the episode itself has strong Daoist overtones insofar as it serves to illustrate that a sage can transform into

³² The term can be found in Han dynasty writings such as *Huinanzi* 淮南子 and Wang yi’s 王逸 *Jiu si* 九思, but it was frequently used especially in Daoist context after the Wei and Jin dynasties because of the popularity of Laozi and Zhuangzi’s teachings. In Wei and Jin dynasties’ texts such as *Bao pu zi* 抱朴子, “genuine person” means one who thoroughly comprehends the essence of Daoism.

an immortal regardless of the boundary between his physical body and spiritual mind, even the body is in the shape of a corpse. In Chinese texts, this phenomenon is called shi jie 尸解, or resolution of one's corpse.³³ An immortal whose mentality sublimates from his corpse is therefore called shi jie xian 尸解仙. According to Ge Hong's 葛洪 *Bao pu zi* 抱朴子, when such a genuine person transforms into an immortal, his corpse will disappear and only one of his garment or items (such as a rod or a sword) is left.

According to *Nihon shoki*, in 602 the Korean monk Kanroku 觀勒 (K. Gwalleuk) presented books on calendars, astronomy, dunjia 遁甲 divination, and fangshu 方書 to the Japanese court during Suiko's reign. *Nihon shoki* seems to portray Prince Shōtoku as a sage of Confucianism, Buddhism and

³³ Similar to “genuine person 真人”, the term shi jie 尸解 can be found in Han dynasty writings such as Wang Chong's 王充 well-known passage *Lun hen* 論衡, but it is mostly used in Daoist texts in later periods such as Ge Hong's 葛洪 *Shen xian zhuan* 神仙傳 compiled in Jin 晉 dynasty. In *Shōtoku taishi denryaku* 聖德太子伝暦, it is used in the phrase “shikai tōsen 尸解登仙” (his body resolves and he ascends to the immortality). Since the *Denryaku* is compiled approximately in the beginning of the tenth century, it is not possible for Kyōkai to read it.

Daoism (儒釈道). However, we do not have enough evidence to examine how much Prince Shōtoku was influenced by Ying-Yang and Daoist thought except for his ability to identify a “genuine person.”

The acceptance of Daoist ideas is much more apparent in Emperor Tenmu's reign. With the launching of the ritsuryō state system, the rank title “genuine person 真人” was placed at the top of the kabane ranking system (八色の姓). According to *Nihon shoki*, Tenmu studied astronomy and *dunjia* divination when he was young. Moreover, his Japanese-style posthumous name, “Ama no nunahara oki no mahito” 天淳中原瀛真人, includes two key words of Daoism, “Ying 瀛” and “genuine person 真人”.³⁴ Ying zhou 瀛洲 is one of the three mythological islands floating on the eastern ocean where the immortal dwell in Daoist cosmology.

³⁴ It has been repeatedly pointed out by earlier scholarship that there is an apparent influence of Daoist thought on Tenmu-Jitō reigns. See Ueda, *Wafū shigō to Jindaishi* 和風諡号と神代史; Uehara, edited by, *Shikō to sekaikan* 信仰と世界観; Ooms, *Imperial politics and Symbolics in Ancient Japan*. For the influence of Daoist ideas on Japanese literati, see Bialock: *Eccentric Spaces, Hidden Histories*.

Ōyama argues that the acceptance of Daoist thought on a large scale in Japan happened after the envoys to Tang brought back large amounts of Daoism-related texts in the beginning of the eighth century, which is around the time *Nihon shoki* was compiled.³⁵ For example, Yamanoue no Okura 山上憶良 cited both *Bao pu zi* 抱朴子 and *You xian ku* 遊仙窟 in his well-known essay *Chin'a jiai no bun* 沈痾自哀文.³⁶ Daoism and immortal thought were thus clearly within the scope of the *Man'yōshū* poet's knowledge. For a literatus with a solid basis of Chinese classics like Okura, there is little doubt about his knowledge on a variety of Chinese poetics and thoughts.

The question is how much did Kyōkai know about Daoist thought, and whether he intended to include this “outer” thought into his anecdotal story collection. Kyōkai was not as well-educated as Okura. We do not know exactly

³⁵ Ōyama, *Nagaya ō ke mokkan to kinsekibun* 長屋王家木簡と金石文, page 210.

³⁶ *Man'yōshū*, volume 5, no.897. In this essay, Okura lamented for his suffering from chronic diseases in a style that blends the ideas of Buddhism, Confucianism and Daoism. He cited words from *Bao pu zi*, *you xian ku* and Confucius, which demonstrates his highly sophisticated literacy on the three teachings. See NKBT *Man'yōshū*, vol.2, page 75-86.

what was the basis of his literary education, since there are no records of his personal life except for a rough biographic description in *Nihon ryōiki* itself. Are the “outer texts” that he highly regarded exclusively Confucian? Did he read Daoist stories and appreciate them as much as the stories found in Chinese anecdotal collections that he used for reference?

What we can say is that Daoist features are mostly excluded from his version of the Kataoka beggar story, where Prince Shōtoku is portrayed as a Buddhist and Confucian sage instead of a Daoist one. On the one hand, this might be expected given the *Nihon ryōiki*'s Buddhist framework. At the same time, there are probably other reasons for Kyōkai to exclude Daoist features from his work.

I will discuss these issues in the following chapter in my discussion of Prince Nagaya 長屋王.

3. Emperor Shōmu

Nihon ryōiki consists of one hundred and sixteen anecdotes that are set between the reigns of Emperor Yūryaku and Emperor Saga. These stories are mostly listed in chronological order. Among these anecdotes, stories related to Emperor Shōmu play an extremely important role. Five stories in the first volume (31th-35th) and thirty-eight stories in the second volume (1st-38th) are set during Emperor Shōmu's reign. The total amount is more than one third of all stories in the whole collection.

In addition, Shōmu is also mentioned in the prefaces to the first and the second volumes. In the first section of this chapter, I have discussed how Shōmu is juxtaposed with other sages such as Emperor Nintoku and Prince Shōtoku. In the preface to the second volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, Shōmu becomes even more important because most of the stories in the second volume are set in his reign.

Izumoji suggests that Kyōkai tried to define three different historical periods marked by the arrival of the inner and outer texts to Japan. Emperor Nintoku represents the first period when only non-Buddhist texts were introduced.

Prince Shōtoku represents the second period when both inner and outer texts arrived at Japan. The third and most important period is the reign of Emperor Shōmu when both Buddhist and Confucian teachings prevailed.³⁷ Why did most of the miraculous events happen during the reign of Shōmu? Kyōkai explains that it is “because of the great virtue of the sage king 由聖皇德” in the preface to the second volume:

From the reign of Emperor Kinmei on, people honored the Three Treasures of Buddhism and believed in the correct doctrine. To be sure, there were some ministers to the throne who burned temples and cast away Buddhist images. But there were other ministers to the throne who built temples and worked to spread the Buddhist teachings. Among the latter was Retired Emperor Shōhō-ōjin-Shōmu, who built a colossal statue of the Buddha

³⁷ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記, page 56-57.

and established the long-lasting propagation of the Law. He shaved his head, put on the surplice, received the precepts, and dedicated himself to the good, governing the people according to what is right. His mercy extended to animals and plants, and his virtue excelled that of all past ages. He attained the One, governing accordingly; he communicated with the Three, bringing rest to the spirits. Through his fortune and virtue, even insects flying in the sky gathered sacred grass to thatch the temple roofs, while ants crawling over the earth brought grains of gold to build a pagoda. Banners of the Law were raised on high, fluttering in eight directions. The bark of the enlightenment floated lightly on the water, its sails reaching to the ninth level of the sky. Flowers of good fortune opened in rivalry, filling cities and towns. Good and evil appeared as immediate Karmic retribution, signaling fortune or misfortune.

Therefore, he was called Retired Emperor Shōhō-ōjin-Shōmu, which means “Superb-treasure-corresponding-sacred-might”. But the records of good and evil and of their results are very many for the reign of this emperor, which are due to his holy virtue. They are, in fact, so numerous to record them... I have put down here only those that I have heard of. ³⁸

自欽明天皇之後、敬三宝、信正教、然或皇臣燒寺流仏像、或皇臣建寺弘仏法。之中、勝宝応真聖武太上天皇³⁹、尤造大佛、長紹法種、剃鬚髮、着袈裟、受戒脩善、以正治民、慈及動植、德秀千古。得一撫運、通三居靈。由此福德、飛空之螯、咋芝草葺寺、走地之蟻、搆金沙建塔。法幢高聳、而蟠足颺八方。慧船輕汎、而帆影扇九天。瑞応之華、競而開国邑。善惡之報、現而示吉凶。故号稱勝宝応真聖武太上天皇焉。

³⁸ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 61-62.

³⁹ In *Shoku nihongi* (2nd year of Tenpyō hōji 天平宝字), Emperor Shōmu's title is “Shōhō-kanjin-Shōmu 勝宝感神聖武皇帝”. It is probably a confusion with Empress Kōmyō's title “Tenpyō-ōjin-jinsei 天平応真仁正皇太后”.

唯以是天皇代、所錄善惡表多数者、由聖皇德、顯世最多、漏事不顧。

今隨所聞、且載且覆。

According to Kyōkai, events of immediate karmic retribution happened frequently in Shōmu's reign because he was a sage who possessed great virtue and followed the Law. In such an ideal realm, the Law punished those who did evil and rewarded those who did good with “instant karmic retribution 善惡之報、現而示吉凶.” In *Nihon ryōiki* anecdotes, most of the evil characters are those who attack the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sanga, while most of the good are those who protect and promote the Three Treasures.

One should not overlook the fact that while that the definition of a sage is based on the idea of karma and instant retribution, it is strongly influenced by Confucian thought and literary style. The *Nihon ryōiki* contains numerous phrases that can be found in Chinese texts such as *Wen xuan* 文選, as well as basic concepts from the *Zhou yi* 周易, explaining how an emperor's virtue

corresponds to natural phenomena: For instance, a sovereign who “attains the One 得一” (the Way of ancient sage kings) is able to “communicate with the Three 通三” (Heaven, Earth, and Humans 天地人);⁴⁰ or the notion that “sacred grass 芝草” grows because of the sovereign’s kindness.⁴¹ Like Prince Shōtoku, Emperor Shōmu is also defined as both a Buddhist and a Confucian sage by Kyōkai, and Emperor Shōmu’s qualification as a sage is further guaranteed by his karmic bond with Prince Shōtoku, as strikingly, Kyōkai advances the striking claim that Emperor Shōmu is a reincarnation of Prince Shōtoku.⁴²

⁴⁰ Gongsun wuji 公孫無忌, *Jin wujing zhengyi biao* 進五經正義表: “(The sovereign) attains the one to succeed enlightenment; he communicates with the three to govern the reign 得一繼明、通三撫運”. The “One” means the Confucian Way of the ancient sage kings, and “Three” indicates the three forces 三才 of heaven, earth and human. See *Quan tang wen* 全唐文, vol. 1, scroll 136.

⁴¹ See Zuo si 左思, “Rhapsody on the Wei Capital 魏都賦: “His virtue stretches into the branches of trees; his kindness raises sacred grass 德連木理、仁挺芝草”. See *Qin ding siku quan shu* 欽定四庫全書, *Wen Xuan* 文選, vol.6, page 27.

⁴² Unlike the well-known story that claims Prince Shōtoku being the reincarnation of Huisi 惠思, Kyōkai’s assertion is scarcely found in other contemporary texts other than ryōiki itself.

However, in the end of the Heian period, a text called *Tōdaiji yōroku* 東大寺要錄 was compiled by an anonymous editor in 1106 to record the history of the temple. In this text, the *Engi* 緣起 claims that Emperor Shōmu is a

The fifth story of the first volume, titled “On Having Faith in the Three Treasures and Gaining an Immediate Reward”, introduces a man named Yasunoko from the Ōtomo 大伴 clan:

Lord Ōtomo no Yasunoko no muraji of the Great Flower Rank was an ancestor of the Ōtomo no muraji in Uji, in the Nagusa district of Kii province. He was endorsed by Heaven with a clear mind, and he revered the Three Treasures...

In the first year [593] of her (Suiko) reign, in the summer, the Fourth Month, the month konoe-uma, on the day tsuchinoto-u, Prince Umayado was appointed prince regent, and Yasunoko no

reincarnation of Prince Shōtoku, and the resource for the compiler to make such a claim is *Nihon ryōiki*: “I believe that Prince Shōtoku is a transformation of Savior Avalokitesvara. He is a reincarnation of Zen master Huisi. Emperor Shōmu is a reincarnation of Prince Shōtoku. A manifestation of Savior Avalokitesvara. 私云、彼聖徳太子者、救世観音変身。思禪師念比丘之後身也。聖武天皇者、聖徳太子之後身。救世観音之垂迹也。”The fifth story of the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki* is cited right after these lines. See Tsutsui, compiled by, *Tōdaiji yōroku* 東大寺要録, page 40.

muraji was made his personal attendant.⁴³

大花上位大部屋栖野古連公者、紀伊国名草郡、宇治大伴連等先祖也。

天年澄情、尊重三宝...

（推古天皇）元年夏四月、庚午朔己卯、立厩戸皇子為皇太子、即以

屋栖古連公為太子之肺脯侍者。⁴⁴

Yasunoko is portrayed as a devout follower of the Buddhist teachings and faithful attendant to Prince Shōtoku. In the story, Yasunoko is rewarded and comes back to life after death because of his good deeds. According to Kyōkai, Yasunoko was eventually appointed Sōzu 僧都, a high rank officer charged with the regulation of the clergy. There is, however, no record of this in the *Nihon shoki* or in any other text than *Nihon ryōiki*.

Yasunoko is not only a model character of “the good”, but can also be thought

⁴³ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 21-22.

⁴⁴ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 206-207.

of as closely related to the compiler Kyōkai himself. Because biographic records about Kyōkai are scarce, there is almost nothing that can be said for certain about Kyōkai's lineage. However, some early scholarship noted that Kyōkai was strongly tied with the Nagusa region of Ki'i province because many stories in *Nihon ryōiki* are set around this area, and some scholars further assumed that Kyōkai must have come from one of the provincial aristocratic families that were closely tied to Ōtomo clan.⁴⁵

After Yasunoko passes away, his spirit goes on a journey to a golden palace, where he meets Prince Shōtoku. The story continues:

In the thirty-third year, the year kinoto-tori [625], in the winter,
on the eighth day of the Twelfth Month, Yasunoko no muraji
died suddenly at his home in Naniwa. His corpse gave out an

⁴⁵ See Maruyama, *Nihon ryōiki setsuwa no kenkyū* 日本霊異記説話の研究, page 320-321. Also Harada, *Nihon ryoiki no shin kenkyū* 日本霊異記の新研究, page 15-20.

unusually fragrant odor. The empress decreed that it be retained for seven days in honor of his loyalty. But on the other day, he came back to life and spoke to his wife and children. “There was a five-colored cloud,” he said, “like a rainbow stretching to the north. I was walking along it, and the cloud was fragrant, as though fine incense were there. At the end of the road, I could see a golden mountain, which, when I reached it, dazzled my eyes. There the Imperial Prince Shōtoku, who has departed this life, was waiting for me and together we climbed the golden mountain. On top of the golden mountain was a bhikshu [monk], who bawled to the prince and said, ‘I am a servant in the Eastern Palace. In eight days you will encounter a sharp sword. Please drink the elixir of immortality!’ The monk then handed the prince a goblet in which a jewel had been dissolved, which he drank. Then the monk said, ‘Recite three

times the words “Homage to the Bodhisattva of Miraculous power,”” after which he withdrew. The prince then said, ‘Go home at once and prepare for the making of a Buddhist image! When I have finished the rite of repentance, I will come back to your place and make it!’ So I came back here along the road I’ve mentioned. And so, to my surprise, I’ve returned to life!”

Accordingly, people called him the “Returned-to-Life-Muraji”.⁴⁶

卅三年乙酉冬十二月八日、連公居住難波、而急卒之。屍有異香、而
酴馥矣。天皇敕之、「七日使留、詠於彼忠。」逕之三日、乃蘇甦矣。語
妻子曰：「有五色雲、如霓度北、自其而往。其雲道芳、如鷄舌香。觀
之道頭、有黃金山、即到炫面、爰薨聖德太子待立。共登山頂、其金山
頂、居一比丘。太子敬礼而曰：『是東宮童矣。自今已後、逕之八日、
應逢銛鋒、願服仙藥。』比丘于環解一玉授之、令吞服、而作是言：『南

⁴⁶ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 23-24.

無妙德菩薩。』令三遍誦礼、自彼罷下。皇太子言：『速還家、除作佛处。

我悔過畢、還宮作佛。』然從先道還、即見驚蘇也。」時人名曰、還活連

公。⁴⁷

Like the *Nihon ryōiki* version of the Kataoka beggar story, this miraculous event is illustrated in a familiar style that can be found in other Buddhist anecdotal collections and sutras. However, it is important to highlight the clear influence of Daoist conceptions of immortality. As I noted earlier, a corpse that does not decay when an immortal's spirit leave his body is common in Daoist shi jie 尸解 transformation stories. Given the fact that the story contains such a Daoist feature, it seems that Kyōkai is not interested in the shi jie element of the story and put it in a way that excludes Daoist understanding.

The reason for Kyōkai to provide such a detailed description of Yasunoko's journey is explained when he concludes the story with the following comments.

⁴⁷ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 208.

Unlike *Ming bao ji* 冥報記, the Chinese anecdotal collection that Kyōkai frequently consulted, in many stories he added a section at the end with his own comments or thoughts, a style common in historical records such as *Shi ji* 史記. Kyōkai claims that there is a valuable message people should learn from this story:

Looking back, it is apparent that the sentence “In eight days, you will encounter a sharp sword” refers to the rebellion raised by Soga no Iruka. “Eight days” means “eight years”. By “Bodhisattva of Miraculous Power” is meant Bodhisattva Manjusri. The “jewel” that he drank refers to the medicine that allowed him to avoid danger. The “golden mountain” is Mount Wutai in China, and the “Eastern Palace” is Japan. When he was told “go home at once and prepare for the making of a Buddhist image,” this was made manifest by the birth of

Emperor Shōhō-ōjin-Shōmu, who was from Japan, built a temple, and fashioned a statue of Buddha. The Most Venerable Gyōki, a contemporary of Emperor Shōmu, is an incarnation of Bodhisattva Manjusri. This was a miraculous event.⁴⁸

今惟推之、逕之八日、逢銛鋒者、當蘇我入鹿之亂也。八日者、八年也。
妙德菩薩者、文殊師利菩薩也。令服一玉者、令免難之藥也。黃金山
者、五台山也。東宮者、日本國也。還宮作仏者、勝寶心真聖武太上天
皇、生于日本國、作寺作佛也。爾時並住行基大德者、文殊師利菩薩
反化也。是奇異事矣。

In this passage, Kyōkai not only connects Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu through a bond of rebirth, but also raises Shōmu's contemporary, the monk Gyōki, to the list of successive sages who promoted Buddhist teachings.

⁴⁸ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 24-25.

Moreover, he also relates Mount Wutai and the belief in Manjusri to Gyōki. Fujisawa argues that this story provides an early example of Gyōki being described as Manjusri's reincarnation, a legend that was transmitted and handed down by Gyōki's disciples after his death, and became popular in following ages⁴⁹. This was long before Gyōki was described as a reincarnation of Manjusri in *Sanbō e kotoba* 三宝絵詞, which was compiled at the end of tenth century.

While focusing on the topic of reincarnation, there is an issue that deserves further attention. In fact, Kyōkai's notion that Emperor Shōmu was a reincarnation of Prince Shōtoku did not become widespread, especially compared to the famous legend that was already popular in the end of the eighth century: the belief that Prince Shōtoku was a reincarnation of Huisi 慧思, the second patriarch of Tiantai and the disciple of Zhiyi 天台智顗.⁵⁰ In spite of

⁴⁹ Fujisawa, *Monju bosatsu zō zōryū no ichi keifu* 文殊菩薩像造立の一系譜. 東海女子大学紀要, vol.20, page 154-155.

⁵⁰ See note 42.

this, Huisi is never mentioned in any of the Shōmu-related stories in *Nihon ryōiki*.⁵¹ Why did Kyōkai include the Wutai and Manjusri legend while excluding the popular Huisi-Shōtoku reincarnation story?

Had Kyōkai chosen to incorporate this legend that connects Huisi and Shōtoku, then it would have allowed him to bridge the lineage of Buddhist sages to Emperor Shōmu since he is a reincarnation of Shōtoku. This would explain why Prince Shōtoku was born with many extraordinary abilities to govern and capability to understand the meaning of sutras and teachings. However, he chose not to do so. One possible reason for Kyōkai not to mention Huisi, is that the lineage of Huisi-Shōtoku-Shōmu would seem to contradict the basic idea of *Nihon ryōiki*: Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu must be sages of Japan instead of a reincarnation of a Chinese monk. In other words, in order to portray Japan as a land that deserves Buddha's salvation, evidence must be provided to

⁵¹ In the preface to the third volume, Kyōkai humbly mentioned that he has not studied enough to acquire the wisdom of “The Leaned One Tiantai 天台智者”. By “One of Wisdom 智者” he probably meant Zhiyi 智顗. See Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 128.

demonstrate that Japan is not second to China or India where miraculous events occurred. The reason miraculous events occurred in Japan is that sages existed in Japan long before Confucianism and Buddhism were introduced to the court. As a result, Emperor Nintoku, Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu must be defined as sages born and originated in the land of Japan. Their qualification as sage kings cannot be based on the reincarnation of a famous Chinese monk.

On the other hand, if Kyōkai intended to exclude the connections with Chinese sages, then why did he chose to mention the Wutai and Manjusri legend and link it to Gyōki, who is undoubtedly a Japanese sage in his definition? Are there other reasons that made Kyōkai exclude Huisi-Shōtoku reincarnation story from his framework? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the context of Huisi-Shōtoku related stories that first appeared in the second half of the eighth century. I will leave this issue to the third chapter. For now, I will examine how Gyōki was portrayed in *Nihon ryōiki*.

4. Gyōki

Similarly to Prince Shōtoku, legends and stories about Gyōki kept developing in later ages after his death, especially during the Heian and Kamakura periods. What we know about Gyōki today is mostly based on the records found in *Shoku nihongi*, as well as later sources.

Historically, Gyōki's life and career can be summarized as follows: born in Kawachi Province, he became a Hossō sect 法相宗 monk who studied at Yakushi-ji from his mentor Dōshō 道昭, the famous monk who studied at the Tang court with Xuanzang 玄奘. Gyōki devoted himself to the building of temples, particularly Tōdaiji and the great statue of Buddha Vairocana under the leadership of Emperor Shōmu. He also undertook numerous social welfare projects, such as dam and bridge building. In his later years, Emperor Shōmu bestowed on him the name Daibosatsu 大菩薩 (Great Bodhisattva) and raised

him to the rank of Daisōjō 大僧正 (great bishop). Because of his outstanding virtue, he was often known as Gyōki Bosatsu 行基菩薩 (Bodhisattva Gyōki) and was popularly taken to be a manifestation of the Bodhisattva Manjusri. He was long remembered as an ascetic with great charisma, and many temples are attributed to him.

However, his image as a sage in *Nihon ryōiki* is quite different from the above-mentioned contributions that were recorded mostly in *Shoku nihongi*. Gyōki appears in five stories in *Nihon ryōiki* (the second, seventh, eighth, twelfth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth stories of the second volume) as well as in the fifth story of the first volume which claims he was the reincarnation of Manjusri. None of these stories mention his suppression by the court in his early life or his contribution to the Tōdaiji project.

Kyōkai positions Gyōki as one of his four “successive” sages by illustrating his extraordinary ability to identify evil people regardless of their social status or physical appearance. Just as Prince Shōtoku was capable of identifying the

“hidden sage” Mount Kataoka beggar, in the *Nihon ryōiki* stories, he was able to differentiate those who are evil from those who do good.

In the twenty-ninth story of the second volume, Gyōki’s sagely ability is portrayed in the following way:

In the village of Gangō-ji in the old capital, there was once held a splendid Dharma meeting at which, before the gathering of monks and lay members, the Most Venerable Gyōki was invited to preach for seven days. Among those assembled to listen to the preaching of the Law was a young woman whose hair had been smeared with animal oil. When the Most Venerable Gyōki saw her, he spoke admonishingly, saying, “This smell is highly offensive to me. Her hair smells of blood! Take her away from here!” The woman was greatly astonished and left the congregation.

We ordinary mortals with our human eyes see only the color of the oil. But a saint with his penetrating eyesight can see the actual blood of the animal. This was the work of a sage who, a manifestation of the Buddha body appeared in Japan. It was the Buddha in disguise!⁵²

故京元興寺之村、嚴備法会、奉請行基大德、七日說法、于是道俗、皆集聞法。聽衆之中、有一女人、髮塗豬油、居中聞法、大德見之、嘖言：「我甚臭哉、彼頭蒙血、女遠引棄。」女大恥出罷。凡夫肉眼、是油色、聖人明眼、見視穴血、於日本国、是化身聖也。隱身之聖矣。⁵³

The story is titled “*On How the Most Venerable Gyōki Used His Divine Insight to Examine a Woman’s Hair and Scold Her for Applying Animal Oil* 行基大德放天眼視女人頭塗豬油而呵嘖緣”. The “divine sight” 天眼”, or more

⁵² Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 110.

⁵³ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 251-252.

literally, “celestial eye,” is a heavenly vision that sees in the causes and effects of things. It is one of the three cognitive abilities that heavenly beings possess.⁵⁴

Kyōkai’s comments that describe Gyōki as a “manifestation” (化身) relates to the fifth story of the second volume which claims him to be a reincarnation of Bodhisattva Manjusri. The term “hidden sage 隱身之聖” here is a key word, since he is one of the three figures that were defined as “hidden sages”. Like the Mount Kataoka beggar, he is one of those saintly beings who can only be identified by other sages. This means that the very act of failing to identify Gyōki, is going to be severely punished with instant retribution. The seventh story of the second volume is about how monk Chikō 智光 is admonished by the King of Hell, Enra, for defaming Gyōki.

Emperor Shōmu was so impressed with his [Gyōki’s] keen

⁵⁴ *Longer Agama-sutra* 長阿含經: “With his celestial eyes, the bhikshu sees all the good and evil deeds of all living beings...This is the second cognitive ability acquired by the bhikshu.以天眼淨盡見衆生所爲善惡...此是比丘得第二明。” The SAT Daizōkyō Text Database, 阿含部 no.0001 長阿含經, 0083-0088.

virtue that had great respect for and confidence in Gyōki, and all the people of the time honored him by calling him a bodhisattva.

In the sixteenth year of the Tenpyō era, the year kinoe-saru [744], in the winter, the eleventh Month, Gyōki was made great chief executive (Daisōjō).

Dharma Master Chikō, envious at heart, spoke ill of him, saying, “I am the wise one; Gyōki is a mere novice! Why does the emperor ignore my wisdom and put faith only in the novice?” At the same time, he retired to Sugita-dera, where he resided, and immediately developed a digestive ailment.⁵⁵

聖武天皇、感於威德、故重信之、時人欽貴、美稱菩薩。以天平十六年甲申冬十一月、任大僧正。於是智光法師、發嫉妬心、而誹之曰：「吾

⁵⁵ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 76.

是智人、行基是沙弥、何故天皇、不齒吾智、唯譽沙弥而用焉。」恨時、

罷鋤田寺而住、儻得痢病。⁵⁶

As Izumoji has noted⁵⁷, according to *Shoku nihongi*, Gyōki was made actually Daisōjō 大僧正 in the first month of Tenpyō 17 (745), not in Tenpyō 16. Moreover, Chikō was forty-five years old in the fourth year of Tenpyō Shohō (752), forty years younger than Gyōki (668-749), so Chikō can hardly have been a contemporary rival of Gyōki given their age gap.

Knowing he is going to die soon, for some unexplained reason, Chikō asks his disciples not to cremate his body for ten days, not to let anyone know about his death and to pretend nothing happened. The disciples do as instructed and close the door to his death chamber. Two messengers dispatched by King Enra then come to visit Chikō:

⁵⁶ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 233-234.

⁵⁷ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 69-70.

Meanwhile, two messengers from King Yama came to Master Chikō to escort him, and they set out for the west. Along the way, they saw a golden palace. “Whose palace is that?” asked Chikō. “You are a famous wise man of the country of Ashihara,” they said. “How is that you do not know? You should know that this is where Bodhisattva Gyōki will reside when he is born here!”

On both sides of the gate were two divine men, their bodies clad armor, and on their foreheads wore red bands. The messengers knelt and said to them, “We brought him.” They said to Chikō, “Are you the Venerable Chikō from the land of Mizuho in Toyoashihara?”

Chikō replied, “Yes, I am.” Then they pointed north and said, “Go along this road!” Accompanied by the messengers, he went along the road. Although he could see no light of a fire, there was intense heat beating down on his body and face. But in

spite of the great heat that plagued him, he felt a desire to go forward. “Where does this heat come from?” he asked. “This is the great heat of Hell that is intended to burn you up!” was the reply.

As they went forward, they came to an extremely hot pillar of iron.

“Embrace it!” commented the messengers. When Chikō embraced the pillar, all his flesh melted away, and he was left with nothing but bare bones. After three days, the messengers swept the pillar with a worn broom, saying, “Let him live, let him live!” With this, his body was restored to its original form.⁵⁸

時閻羅王使二人、來召於光師、向西而往。見之前路、有金樓閣、問是何宮。答曰：「於葦原国名聞智者、何故不知？当知、行基菩薩将来生

⁵⁸ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 76-77.

之宮。」其門左右、立二神人、身著鉀鎧、額著緋纓、使長跪白之曰：

「召也。」問曰：「是有於豐葦原水穗国所謂智光法師矣。」智光答曰：

「唯然。」即指北方曰：「從此道將往。」副使步前、覓火非晃、甚熱之

氣、當身炙面。雖極極熱惱、而心欲近就、問何是熱。答：「為煎汝地

獄熱氣。」往前、極熱鐵柱立之。使曰：「抱柱。」光就抱柱、肉皆銷爛、

唯骨瓌存。歷之三日、使以弊箒、撫於其柱、而言：「活、活。」如故身

生。⁵⁹

Similar descriptions on the hell of heat can be found in a variety of sutras⁶⁰.

There are, however, several outstanding details that distinguish this passage

from a sutra. First, the terms used to describe Japan are “Ashihara 葦原国” or

the “land of Mizuho in Toyoashihara 豐葦原水穗国,” instead of the term

⁵⁹ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 234.

⁶⁰ *Sutra on the Past Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva* 地藏菩薩本願經: “There is also a hell named embracing pillar. There is also a hell named drifting fire... There is also a hell called feet-burning. 復有地獄名曰抱柱。復有地獄名曰流火... 復有地獄名曰燒脚。” The SAT Daizōkyō Text Database, 大集部, no.0412, 0781-0782. I will examine a *Nihon ryōiki* story on the “feet-burning” hell in the third chapter.

Nihon-koku 日本国 that is used in the title *Nihon ryōiki*. This is the only story in which the name Ashihara appears in the whole collection. Second, the two warriors standing in front of the gate both wear red bands on their forehead, an accessory that Chiisakobe no Sugaru 小子部栖輕 also wears when he is sent by Emperor Yūryaku to catch the thunder deity in the first story of the first volume. In *Nihon ryōiki*, “Red 緋” items are related to stories of King Enra or the messengers from Hell. Third, the messengers who force Chikō to embrace the hot pillar bring a broom, and sweep the pillar with the broom, to bring Chikō back to life. The description of bringing brooms to a funeral can be found in an episode about the heavenly deity named Ame-no-waka-hiko 天若彦 / 天稚彦 in *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.

Chikō comes back to life after being painfully tortured, but he is forced to experience the same thing again and again:

Again they started northward, and they came to a copper

pillar that was much hotter than the one before. But once again, he seemed drawn to it by evil and felt a desire to embrace it. “Embrace it!” commended the messengers, and he did so, and all his flesh was melted away. After three days, when the messengers brushed the pillar and said, “Let him live, let him live!” his body was restored as before.

Once again, they started northward. The scorching heat was so intense that birds fell out of the sky. As he faced the burning heat, he asked, “What place is this?” “This is the Avichi Hell, which is here to burn you up!” was the reply. And as he went forward, he was seized and dragged into the flames and burned up. Only when he heard temple bells ringing did he feel any cooling, and he found a little rest. After three days, when he heard the messengers knocking at the gates of Hell and saying,

“Let him live, let him live!” he came alive again.⁶¹

又指北將往、倍勝於先、熱銅柱立、極熱之柱、而所引惡、猶就欲抱。

使言：「抱之。」即就抱之、肉皆爛銷。逕之三日、如先撫柱、而言：

「活、活。」如故更生。又指北而往、甚熱火氣、如雲而覆、從空飛鳥、

當於熱氣、而落煎之。問：「是何處？」答：「為師煎熬、阿鼻地獄。」即

至執師、投入燒煎。唯聞打鍾音時、冷乃憩、逕之三日、叩地獄邊、而

言：「活、活。」如本復生。⁶²

Such a never-ending torture is, fortunately, only the first level of the eight burning hells (八熱地獄). In the hell of the repetition of painful life (等活地獄), people are chopped, stabbed, ground, and pounded, killed, but by a cool wind are brought back to life, to undergo renewed torment.⁶³ Chikō suffers from such a

⁶¹ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 77.

⁶² Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 234.

⁶³ *Fa yuan zhu lin* 法苑珠林: “In the hell of the repetition of painful life, a cool wind blew and brought back flesh and life. 等活地獄中。有時涼風所吹血肉還生。”

painful punishment three times only because he defames the sage Gyōki. The two messengers finally bring him back to the gate of the palace and release him. The two warriors in front of the gate tell Chikō the reason that he was summoned and suffered was that he spoke ill of Gyōki. He comes back to life, tells his disciples what happened in the land of King Enra, and regrets what he said to abuse Gyōki. After Chikō has recovered a little, he decides to meet Gyōki in person to apologize for what he said:

When the bodhisattva [Gyōki] saw him, he used his divine power of intellect to discover what Chikō had in mind. Smiling and showing his affection, he said, “I’ve wondered why our meetings are so infrequent.” Chikō, for his part, frankly confessed his wrongdoing and regret, saying, “Out of a jealous heart, I have slandered you, saying such thing as “I am an old

monk of great virtue, whereas Gyōki is of poor judgment and does not observe the precepts. Why, then, does the emperor praise only Gyōki and cast me aside?” For these sins of my mouth, I was summoned before King Yama and made to embrace the iron and copper pillars. After nine days, he said that I had atoned for my offenses of slander. But I am afraid that other sins of mine will affect my future life, and so I am making this plea. Please help me become free of sin!”

At this, the Most Venerable Gyōki looked compassionate, but said nothing. Chikō continued speaking, saying, “I saw the palace where you will be reborn. It is a palace made of gold!” Gyōki, hearing this, said, “How delightful! What an honor!”⁶⁴

菩薩見之、即以神通、知光所念、含咲愛言：「何罕面奉。」光爰露懺

⁶⁴ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 78.

悔曰：「智光於菩薩所、致誹妒心、而作是言：『光者古大德僧、加以智光生智者。行基沙弥者、淺識之人、不受具戒。何故天皇、唯譽行基、捨智光也？』由口業罪、閻羅王召我、令抱於鉄銅柱。經之九日、償誹謗罪、恐至餘罪於後生世、是以慚愧發露、當願免罪。」行基大德、和顏嘿然、亦更白：「見大德生處、以黃金造宮。」行基聞之言：「歎矣貴哉。」⁶⁵

Through his hagiographical accounts of Gyōki, Kyōkai emphasizes that sagehood has nothing to do with social status or being officially ordained with the complete set of precepts (不受具戒). The implication is that those who are not ordained, including Kyōkai himself, should never be mistreated as long as they kept the right view and good virtue. At the same time, those who fail to identify a sage will be punished with instant retribution no matter how high their status might be.

⁶⁵ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 235.

Unlike many of the protagonists in other stories that were severely punished, some even to their death, Chikō was able to compensate for his wrongdoing by recognizing Gyōki as a sage, and through this recognition himself becomes a monk of good virtue:

From this time on, the Venerable Chikō put his faith in Bodhisattva Gyōki, realizing clearly that he was a sage. As for Gyōki, he sensed that his time had run out, and in the twenty-first year of the Tenpyō era, the year tsuchinoto-ushi [749], in the spring, on the second day of the Second Month, at around six in the evening, he left his clerical form on Mount Ikoma, and his compassionate spirit moved on to the golden palace. As for the Venerable Chikō, he spread the Dharma, passed on the teachings, converted the ignorant, and taught what is right. In the time of Emperor Shirakabe [Kōnin, 光仁 r.

770-781]⁶⁶, this font of wisdom left his shell in the land of Japan,
and his wondrous spirit moved on to a world unknown.⁶⁷

從此已來、智光法師、信行基菩薩、明知聖人。然菩薩感機緣盡、以天
平廿一年己丑春二月二日丁酉時、法儀捨生馬山、慈神遷彼金宮也。
智光大德、弘法伝教、化迷趣正、以白壁天皇世智囊蛻日本地、奇神
遷不知堺矣。⁶⁸

Mount Ikoma is depicted as the location where Gyōki “moved to the golden palace” because it was a region highly related to his early career. It was also the place where Gyōki was cremated after he passed away in 749.

These two stories illustrate that Gyōki’s status as a sage is based on his extraordinary ability to identify evil beings and being identified by Emperor

⁶⁶ The date of Chikō’s death is not recorded in *Shoku nihongi*. The reference for this is unknown.

⁶⁷ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 79.

⁶⁸ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 235.

Shōmu. However, an important question must be addressed: if Gyōki “impressed” Emperor Shōmu and was “highly respected”, why does Kyōkai call him a “hidden sage”? A Daisōjō is not a low status monk or one who in such shabby shape that ordinary people would be unable to identify him.

I would argue that the motif of a “hidden sage” is a way of alluding to the fact that the court suppressed Gyōki for most of his career. His activity was not authorized until Shōmu’s reign in the third year of Tenpyō (731) when he was sixty-four. In Gyōki’s early life, he moved to Mount Ikoma and founded several small temples based on financial support from local aristocratic families and Chikurin-ji 竹林寺 on Ikoma. These small temples were located on the road that connected Setsu, Kawachi, and Capital Heijō. Tamura suggests that the main target of Gyōki’s preaching were ordinary people who were recruited as corvée labor by the court for national projects and Heijō-kyō related constructions⁶⁹. Those who became followers of Gyōki formed an early group

⁶⁹ See Tamura Enchō 田村圓澄, *Gyoki ni tsuitemo nisan no mondai* 行基についての

linked to his activities promoting public constructions and social projects.

However, the court did not officially approve Gyōki's activity at this point.

One year after a small temple called Onkō-ji 恩光寺 was established by Gyōki, in the first year of Yōrō 養老元年 (717), an edict was issued to restrain his unauthorized religious organizations and activities. Gyōki was named in the edict and his activities were suppressed. The edict was a strong reprimand to those who shaved their head, wore surplice and claimed to be monks without official ordination, and claimed that Gyōki's group and its activity violated the Sōni-ryō 僧尼令 (code on regulating monks and nuns). The edict reads as follows:

Now, the humble monk Gyōki and his disciples disturb social order. They gather on the streets, preach on punishment and reward without permission, group together, and cremate their

二、三の問題: *Zoku ritsuryō kokka to kizoku shakai* 続律令国家と貴族社会.

bodies. Pretending to preach, they break into houses and forcibly beg for leftovers. This is a fraud that swindles in the name of the sagely way. People are deceived and bewitched. Both monks and lay people are disturbed, and many people of all occupations give up their duties. First of all, the group's behaviors are against the teachings of Buddha. Furthermore, they violate the codes and laws of the court.

方今、小僧行基。并弟子等。零疊街衢。妄說罪福。合構朋党。焚剥指臂。歷門仮説。強乞余物。詐称聖道。妖惑百姓。道俗擾乱。四民棄業。進違釈教。退犯法令。⁷⁰

Given that the clergy (including sramanera or bhikshu) were exempted from paying tax, there were serious economic consequences if increasing numbers of

⁷⁰ Aoki, etc. compiled by; SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol. 2, page 27.

people shave their heads and claim to be monks without permission. Those who wished to become either a monk affiliated to one of the kokubu-ji temples or a nenbun dosha 年分度者 (annual ordinands) had to undergo severe inspections and examinations. This meant, that the priority mostly went to high-ranked aristocrats instead of to people from lower ranked local clans. For those who were unable to be officially ordained, self-ordination was the only option even though it was strictly prohibited. Kyōkai himself was one of these self-ordained monks before he became affiliated with Yakushi-ji in his late life. This is why *Nihon ryōiki* idealizes Gyōki and his group and pays respect to him as a “hidden sage.”

The historical Gyōki, even as he was suppressed by the court, continued to promote his social welfare and construction projects while preaching among the ordinary people. He became increasingly influential in the Yōrō and Jinki 神龜 eras, and eventually, his activity was partially permitted by the court in the following edict issued in the eighth month of the third year of Tenpyō (731):

Since this year, among the upasaka and upasika (male and female lay disciples) followers of Master Gyōki who practice the Law, those who are male and over sixty-one years old, and those who are female and over fifty-five years old, are permitted to enter the Way. Other disciples who beg for alms on their own must be regulated severely by local authorities. Those who lose their parents or spouses are allowed to practice within the same year without permission.

比年、随逐行基法師。優婆塞・優婆夷等。如法修行者。男年六十一已上。女年五十五以上。咸聽入道。自余持鉢行路者。仰所由司、嚴加捉搦。其有遇父母・夫喪。期年以內修行。勿論。⁷¹

⁷¹ Aoki, etc. compiled by; SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol. 2, page 247-248.

In this edict, Gyōki was no longer a “humble monk” 小僧 but a Master of the Law. If we think of this edict as the historical basis for Kyōkai’s idealized depiction of Gyōki as a sage who is identified by another sage, i.e., Emperor Shōmu, one inconvenient fact is that the court did not issue this edict of permission until 731, seven years after Emperor Shōmu took the throne in 724. This seems like an unreasonable lag, and casts some doubt over Shōmu’s “sage-identifying” abilities.

The actual reasons why the court changed its attitude toward Gyōki are unknown, but are probably related to the complicated political context of the times. Inoue has suggested the following possible reasons.⁷² First, is the possibility that since Gyōki did not submit to the court’s authority his movement kept growing, the court had no choice but to give up the suppression policy. The second possibility is that the court officially recognized Gyōki’s contribution of public constructions and agricultural projects in order to build

⁷² Inoue Kaoru, *Gyōki* 行基. Page 74-81.

irrigational facilities with the support of the provincial aristocracy. Since local political leaders in many regions supported Gyōki, the court was not able to suppress him anymore. As for the timing of why this did not happen until the third year of Tenpyō (731), both Inoue and Yoshida⁷³ agree that it was possibly a way for Fujiwara no Muchimaro 藤原武智麻呂 to avoid political criticism after the conspiracy that forced Prince Nagaya 長屋王 to commit suicide in the first year of Tenpyō (729). Nagaya had been the most powerful political leader at court since Fujiwara no Fuhito's 藤原不比等 death in the fourth year of Yōrō (720), and represented a grave threat to Fuhito's sons who were planning to have a child of Emperor Shōmu and Kōmyōshi 光明子 to succeed to the throne.

Significantly, Prince Nagaya appears in the first story of the second volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, in which most of the stories are set during Emperor Shōmu reign. As I discuss in the following chapter, in Kyōkai's tale, Nagaya's death in the political conspiracy is due to karmic retribution for his mistreatment of a

⁷³ Yoshida Yasuo, *Gyōki to ritsuryō kokka* 行基と律令国家. Page 217.

“hidden sage.”

Chapter 2 Immediate Penalty of Death: Prince Nagaya as a Sinner

In this second chapter, I focus on the *Nihon ryōiki*'s depiction of Prince Nagaya as a sinner who offended the Three Treasures by punishing a monk and therefore received the immediate penalty of death in the present life.

As was the case with the figures I discussed in the first chapter, many details about well-known historic figures in *Nihon ryōiki* are different from the records found in official historical texts. Furthermore, Kyōkai's text includes much inaccurate information on citations, dates, names and so forth. However, in the case of the first story of the second volume, almost all the details about Prince Nagaya mentioned by the compiler differ from the records found in *Shoku nihongi*. In fact, the only thing the two texts have in common is the fact that he was forced to commit suicide.

Although little is known about what kind of resources Kyōkai referred to when he compiled *Nihon ryōiki*, the inaccuracies in Prince Nagaya's story go well beyond the level of understandable errors or minor omissions. It seems that Kyōkai intentionally made these changes in order to create a story that

portrayed Nagaya as a sinner who deserved the severe penalty of death. There is not enough evidence to determine whether Kyōkai referred to *Shoku nihongi*¹ but if he himself did not create this version of the Nagaya story, he must have referred to materials or anecdotes that depicted Prince Nagaya as a sinner who disregarded Buddhist teachings by punishing a monk.

It should be noted that Prince Nagaya was an unlikely figure to pick as a Buddhist sinner since he was in fact the most prominent protector and promoter of Buddhism of his time.

In this chapter I argue that Kyōkai's purpose in his depiction of Nagaya in *Nihon ryōiki*, makes sense in the broader context of Kyōkai's clear intention to exclude from his work any possible critique of the figures he elevates as sages. In this sense, Prince Nagaya makes a convenient scapegoat who can be made responsible for the court's policy of suppressing unofficially ordained monks, and thus absolve Emperor Shōmu from any responsibility and portray him as a "sage

¹ The completion of *Nihon ryōiki* is not certainly recorded, but it is no later than 822 judging from the content of the thirty-ninth story of the third volume. *Shoku nihongi* is completed in 797. See Nakata, *Nihon ryōiki* 日本靈異記, page 7.

king.” As I will show, a close comparison of the accounts of Prince Nagaya in the *Nihon ryōiki* and *Shoku nihongi*, reveals a variety of different aspects that point to why Nagaya was selected as a target by Kyōkai.

1. Sinners of imperial lineage

Most of the evil acts that are punished in *Nihon ryōiki* fall under the following categories: insulting the clergy, destroying Buddhist images, disdain the sutras, killing living creatures, or simply failing to identify a “sage” that appears in a humble form. Stories about retribution for evil acts tend to be presented in a compact style, with a relatively simple logic of cause and effect leading to a didactic conclusion. A typical example is the sixteenth story of the first volume, titled “On Mercilessly Skinning a Live Rabbit and Receiving an Immediate Penalty” 無慈心剥生兔皮而得現惡報緣. The story short enough to quote in its entirety:

In Yamato province, there lived a man whose name and native

village are unknown. He was by nature merciless and loved to kill living creatures. He once caught a rabbit, skinned it alive, and then turned it loose in the fields. But not long afterward, pestilent sores broke out all over his body, his whole body was all covered with scabs, and they caused him unspeakable torment. In the end, he never gained any relief, but died groaning and lamenting.

Ah, how soon do such deeds receive an immediate penalty! We should consider others as we do our selves, exercise benevolence, and never be without pity and compassion!²

大和国有一壮夫、郷里姓名、並未詳也。天骨不仁、喜殺生命。其人捕兔、剥皮放之於野。然後不久之頃、毒瘡遍身、肌膚爛敗、苦痛無比、終不得癒、叫号而死。嗚呼、現報甚近、怒己可仁、不無慈悲矣。

3

² Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 36.

³ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 214.

As is the case here, many of the protagonists of these stories are anonymous. But there are also many historical figures who are portrayed as sinners, such as the monk Chikō in the seventh story of the second volume which I cited in the previous chapter. Regardless of their status, however, all the sinners in *Nihon ryōiki* are punished equally, and members of the imperial family are not exempt from this rule.

Although sagehood is associated with the imperial lineage in the preface to the first volume (in the figures of Emperor Nintoku, Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu), the reverse is not necessarily true. In other words, imperial figures are not exempted from becoming sinners if they abuse their power and mistreat the Three Treasures: when princes engage in evil behavior that offends the Buddhist teachings, they receive an immediate penalty.

There are three stories that portray imperial figures as sinners in the second volume of *Nihon ryōiki*. Prince Nagaya in the first story, a prince named Uji 宇遲王 in the thirty-fifth story, and Tachibana no Naramaro 橘奈良麻呂 (諾樂麻

呂 in *Nihon ryōiki*), son of Prince Katsuragi 葛城王/ 葛木王⁴, in the fortieth story. Among these three figures, Prince Nagaya and Tachibana no Naramaro are well documented in *Shoku nihongi* and were deeply connected to conflicts over the successor to Emperor Shōmu's throne.⁵ Prince Nagaya was forced to commit suicide in Tenpyō 1 (729) after an accusation of rebellion, and Naramaro lost power (and possibly was tortured to death) after a failed attempt to overthrow the administration of Fujiwara no Nakamaro 藤原仲麻呂 in Tenpyō-Hōji 1 天平宝字元年 (757).

Nevertheless, in *Nihon ryōiki*, it is not the political conflicts that are the cause of their tragic fates. Rather, they receive a karmic penalty in this present life because they mistreat and punish Buddhist monks.

⁴ Naramaro's father was a son of Agata Inukai Tachibana no Michiyo 県犬養橘三千代 and Prince Minu 美努王. He was demoted to the aristocracy and bestowed with the family name Tachibana and was renamed Moroe 橘諸兄 in the eleventh month of Tenpyō 8 (736) and appointed to Minister of the Right after the sudden death of the four Fujiwara brothers in Tenpyō 9 (737). Moroe was also a well-known *Man'yōshū* poet. See Takinami, *Saigo no jotei Kōken tennō* 最後の女帝：孝謙天皇, page 48.

⁵ Records about Prince Uji are scarce in *Shoku nihongi*. He advanced to Junior Fifth Rank Lower Grade in Tenpyō 9 (737) and occupied several positions at the court, but was not directly related to any major political incident. See Izumoji, *Nihon ryōiki*, page 115.

In the thirty fifth story of the second volume, titled “*On Hitting a Monk and Incurring the Immediate Penalty of Death*” 打法師以現得惡病而死縁, Prince Uji, who is described as a figure who is “innately evil and put no faith in the Three Treasures 天骨邪見、不信三宝,” punished a monk named Taikyō 諦鏡 simply because the monk and his followers failed to yield on the road when they came upon the Prince’s convoy. The prince’s men violently hit the monk and broke the sutra boxes. Being resentful, the monk Taikyō put a curse on Prince Uji. Immediately, Uji suffered from a severe illness and great pain.

The Prince had not time to proceed far on his way when he was suddenly seized by a serious illness. He let out a loud cry and leaped two or three feet off the ground. His attendants, observing the prince’s distress, begged the monk Taikyō to lend his aid, but he refused. Two or three times they repeated their request, all in vain. “Is he in pain?” asked the monk. “Yes, very great pain!” was the answer. To which the monk said, “Let the miserable prince suffer a thousand times, ten

thousand times the pain!”

王去不遠、於其路中、儻受重病、高声叫呻、踊離于地、二三尺許。

從者知狀、勸請法師、師否不受。三遍請之、猶終不受。問曰：「病。」

答：「甚為痛。」法師復曰：「斯下賤王、千遍痛病、萬遍痛病。」

In order to stop the curse, the relatives of the Prince reported to Emperor Shōmu. However, the emperor's decree was against Prince Uji.

At the same time, the relatives of the prince submitted a report to the emperor, stating, “Monk Taikyō has put a curse on Prince Uji. He should be seized and put to death!” But the emperor did not allow this to happen. Three days later, Prince Uji died, his body turning as black as ink. Once more, the relatives appealed to the emperor, saying, “One suffered death, so the other must die! Since Prince Uji is already dead, Taikyō should be arrested and pay the penalty of death!” But the

emperor issued a decree, saying, “I am a monk, and Taikyō is a monk.” How can a monk inflict death on a monk? Taikyō is not responsible for the disaster that befell Prince Uji.” The emperor himself had shaved his head, received the precepts, and become a follower of the way. Therefore, he showed special favor and refused to kill Taikyō. The insane Prince Uji was extremely evil in nature and was punished by the guardian of Dharma. The guardian of Dharma is ever at hand. How can you not believe this?⁶

時王眷屬、奏於天皇：「諦鏡法師、咀于宇遲、令捉將殺。」天皇知狀、猶忍不可。王經三日、如墨而卒。眷屬復奏：「殺報之者、殺而報之。宇遲既死、受於諦鏡、以報怨也。」天皇敕詔：「朕亦法師、諦鏡亦僧。法師云何殺於法師。宇遲招災、非諦鏡咎。」天皇剃除鬢髮、受戒行道、故儻比法師、不殺諦鏡。狂王宇遲、邪見太甚、護法加罰。護法

⁶ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 119-120.

非無、何不恐之也。⁷

Similar to the story of Prince Nagaya that I will examine next, there seems to be no historical basis to this story. Emperor Shōmu took the oath in Tenpyō 21 (749), but there is no further description of Prince Uji's promotion after Tenpyō 9 (737). We do not know what rank Uji is when the story is set, but the Sōni ryō 僧尼令 regulations on monks' behavior stipulate that a low ranked monk is supposed to yield when he meets a convoy of a high ranked prince. From the perspective of the ritsuryō system, Uji was the one who acted properly. A monk is supposed to yield when meeting courtiers higher than the Fifth Rank⁸. At any rate, the retaliation seems overly harsh on the prince. The “sage king” Shōmu, by Kyōkai's definition, demonstrates excessively strong compassion for the clergy. In this case, what Kyōkai expects from the emperor is not a fair-minded judgment based on ritsuryō laws and regulations, but an unconditional

⁷ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 256.

⁸ See Nyūbu, *Ryōiki ni arawareru sōni* 『靈異記』に現われた僧尼. Bukkyō bungaku kenkyū kai 仏教文学研究会, compiled by. *Bukkyō bungaku kenkyū* 仏教文学研究 vol.10, page 231-259.

preference for monk Taikyō, or all monks in general. There is not much tolerance in Kyōkai's view for a powerful imperial figure to suppress low-ranked monks.

The story of Prince Nagaya is presented in a similar manner, although the context behind Nagaya's story is more complicated.

2. Prince Nagaya in *Nihon ryōiki* Tales and *Shoku Nihongi* Accounts

As I noted earlier, Prince Nagaya's tragic suicide is a completely different story in Kyōkai's anecdotal collection from the official historical record approved by the court. The complete first story of the second volume, titled “*On Depending on One's Exalted Virtue, Committing the Offence of Hitting a Humble Novice, and Receiving the Immediate Penalty of a Violent Death* 恃己高德刑賤形沙弥以現得惡死緣” reads as follows:

Retired emperor Shōbō-ōjin-Shōmu [Shōmu, r. 724-749], who resided at the Nara Palace and reigned over the Eight Great Islands, in the first year of the Tenpyō era, the year

tsuchinoto-mi [729], in the spring, on the eighth day of the Second Month, held a great Dharma meeting at Gangō-ji in the eastern sector of the capital and paid honor to the Three Treasures of Buddhism. Prince Nagaya, Chancellor of the Senior Second Rank, was directed by edict to take charge of serving food to the monks. At that time, there was a novice who brazenly went to the place where the food was being served and held up his bowl for some. The prince, observing this, to punish him struck the novice on the head with his ivory writing tablet, hard enough to draw blood. The novice, wiping the blood from his head and wailing pitifully, immediately disappear. No one knew where he had gone, but both the clergy and the lay members of the gathering whispered in secret, “An ill omen—not good!”⁹

⁹ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 65-66.

諾樂宮御宇大八嶋国勝宝応真聖武太上天皇、発大誓願、以天平元年己巳春二月八日、於左京元興寺、備大法会、供養三宝。敕太政大臣正二位長屋親王、而任於供衆僧之司。時有一沙弥、濫就饍供養之處、捧鉢受飯。親王見之、以牙冊以罰沙弥之頭。頭破流血、沙弥摩頭、捫血恸哭、而忽不覩、所去不知。時法会衆道俗偷嗙之言：「凶之、不善矣！」¹⁰

As noted in the previous chapter, Emperor Shōmu's title in the story is not accurate, and has probably been confused with the title of Empress Kōmyō 光明皇后 (Fujiwara no Kōmyōshi 光明子).¹¹ Moreover, Nagaya's stated position at this time is not accurate either. According to *Shoku nihongi*, he was the Minister of the Left at the time of his suicide.¹² In fact, no one occupied the position of Chancellor (Dajō-daijin 太政大臣) while alive since Nagaya's father Prince

¹⁰ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 228-229.

¹¹ See note 39, Chapter 1.

¹² He was promoted to Minister of the Left in the Second Month of Jinki 1 (724), the year that Emperor Shōmu succeeded to the throne. See SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, page 144.

Takechi in the Nara period.¹³ Furthermore, Nagaya was never referred to as shinnō 親王 (royal prince) in *Shoku nihongi*, because he was the grandson, not the son, of an emperor.¹⁴

Notwithstanding the confusion of court ranks and titles, there is an even more critical issue with the story: the *Nihon ryōiki* account of such a Dharma gathering at Gangō-ji is not documented in any other text. Nor can any record be found in *Shoku nihongi* or Gangō-ji related texts documenting Nagaya's physically punishing a monk in person.

The story continues:

¹³ In the Tenth Month of Yōrō 4 (720), the title of Dajō-daijin was bestowed posthumously on Fujiwara no Fuhito. In addition to Fuhito, Prince Toneri 舍人親王, Fujiwara no Muchimaro 武智麻呂, Fujiwara no Fusasaki 房前, Fujiwara no Nagate 長手 and Ki no Moroto 紀諸人 also received the honor of Dajō-daijin as a posthumous title, but none of them actually occupied the position while alive. See Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol.2, page 483.

¹⁴ On the other hand, one of the wooden tablets recovered from the excavation site that is considered Nagaya's residence does have the inscription "Nagaya Shinnō 長屋親王". However, it is questionable whether this title was ever officially used at the court. See Ōyama, *Nagayaōke mokkan to kinsekibun* 長屋王家木簡と金石文, page 10.

Two days later, a man, acting out of envy, went to the emperor with false accusations, saying, “Prince Nagaya is plotting to overthrow the state and usurp the throne!” The emperor, angered, called up the troops and sent them against the prince. The Prince thought to himself, “I am falsely charged and about to be taken into custody. That means I will surely put to death. Rather than being killed by another, better to kill myself.” After administering poison to his children and grandchildren and sending them strangled, he took poison himself.

逕之二日、有嫉妬人、讒天皇奏：「長屋謀傾社稷、將奪国位。」爰天心瞋怒、遣軍兵陳之。親王自念：「無罪而被囚執、此決定死。為他刑殺、不如自死。」即其子孫、令服毒藥、而絞死畢後、親王服藥而自害。

The suicide of Nagaya, also known as the Nagaya incident, was one of the

major historical events of Nara period, and as such is well documented in *Shoku nihongi*. He was forced to commit suicide only three days after the accusation was made. The details in *Shoku nihongi* are as follows:

The tenth day of the Second Month, the first year of Tenpyō.
Nuribe no Yatsuko Kimitari (Junior Fifth Rank, Lower Grade)
from the eastern sector of the capital and Nakatomi no Miyako
no muraji Azumahito (no Rank) secretly informed the emperor,
claiming that the Minister of the Left, Prince Nagaya (Senior
Second Rank) was privately studying the Sinister Way and
attempting to overthrow the state.

《天平元年（七二九）二月辛未【壬戌朔十】》二月辛未。左京人從
七位下漆部造君足。無位中臣宮處連東人等告密。称、左大臣正二
位長屋王私学左道。欲傾国家。

The eleventh day of the Second Month, the first year of Tenpyō.

At ten o'clock, Prince Toneri (First Rank), Prince Ni'itabe (First Rank), the Chief Councilor (Dai-nagon) Tajihi no mahito Ikemori (Junior Second Rank), the Middle Councilor (Chū-nagon) Fujiwara no ason Muchimaro ... were dispatched to Prince Nagaya's residence to accuse him.

《天平元年（七二九）二月壬申【十一】》壬申...巳時。遣一品舍人親王。新田部親王。大納言從二位多治比真人池守。中納言正三位藤原朝臣武智麻呂...就長屋王宅、窮問其罪。

The twelfth day of the Second Month, the first year of Tenpyō. Prince Nagaya was ordered to commit suicide. His consort Princess Kibi (Second Rank), his sons Prince Kashiwade (Junior Fourth Rank Lower Grade), No Rank Prince Kuwata, Prince Katsuragi and Prince Kagitori also committed suicide. Other family members were arrested sent to jail in the Left and the Right Divisions of the Middle Palace Guard.

《天平元年（七二九）二月癸酉【十二】》癸酉。令王自尽。其室二品
吉備内親王。男從四位下膳夫王。無位桑田王。葛木王。鉤取王等。
同亦自經。乃悉捉家内人等。禁着於左右衛士・兵衛等府。¹⁵

Unlike the concise story of *Nihon ryōiki*, *Shoku nihongi* reveals the fact that it was no easy task to force such a high-ranked and powerful politician as Nagaya to commit suicide. Although the actual leader of the group sent to Nagaya's residence is undoubtedly Fujiwara no Muchimaro, high ranked imperial princes¹⁶ were dispatched with him in order to enforce the command.

Except for the simple fact of Nagaya's suicide, what happened after the incident documented in the *Nihon ryōiki* story is also completely different from the account in *Shoku nihongi*. The story in *Nihon ryōiki* continues as follows:

The emperor ordered their bodies to be thrown out of the

¹⁵ Aoki, etc, SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol.2, page 205-206.

¹⁶ Both Princes Toneri and Ni'itabe were Emperor Tenmu's sons and Nagaya's uncles.

capital, burned to ashes, and cast into the river that flows to the sea. Only the prince's bones were exiled to Tosa province, where many people were sent to die. The people, fearful, petitioned the officials, saying, "All of us in this province will die because of the prince's angry spirit!" Hearing this, the emperor, so that the bones might be nearer the capital, moved them to an island off the coast of Hajikami in the Ama district of Kii province.¹⁷

天皇敕捨彼屍骸於城之外、而燒末散河擲海。唯親王骨、流于土左
国。時其国百姓多死云。百姓患之、而解官言：「依親王氣、国内百
姓可皆死亡。」天皇聞之、為近皇都、置于紀伊国海部郡椒村奥嶋。

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Because *Nihon ryōiki* is the only known source that depicts Nagaya's death in

¹⁷ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 66.

¹⁸ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 228-229.

this way, it is not clear that how Prince Nagaya was related to Tosa and Kii provinces¹⁹. Because the story resembles later examples of *goryō* 御霊 (vengeful spirits) such as that of Prince Sawara 早良親王 (750?-785),²⁰ there is a distinct possibility that this part of the *Nihon ryōiki* story has been confused with tales about later princes.

At any rate, the account in *Shoku nihongi* is a completely different story. Given the fact that Nagaya was forced to commit suicide for his plot to “overthrow the state”, the historical record documents that Prince Nagaya and his consort were treated with exceptional respect and honor after death:

The thirteenth day of the Second Month, the first year of
Tenpyō. The emperor sent a minister to bury Prince Nagaya

¹⁹ Harada suggests that these are probably remote provinces where some of Nagaya’s staff members were exiled. However, there is no evidence in *Shoku nihongi* to support this speculation. See Harada, *Nihon ryōiki no shin kenkyū* 日本霊異記の新研究, page 268-271.

²⁰ Terasaki assumes that the smallpox epidemic in Tenpyō 8 (737) and 9 (738) may have been attributed to Nagaya’s curse. However, the first *goryō* ceremony was not held after Prince Sawara’s death, and the spread of so-called *goryō* belief probably did not happen until the mid Heian period. See Terasaki, *Nagaya ō* 長屋王, page 259-260.

and Princess Kibi at Mount Ikoma, and issued a decree that says, “Princess Kibi is not guilty. Her funeral ceremony shall be held following the regulations. Only the performance of drums and flutes must be cancelled. All the other princes and their retainers shall be released. Prince Nagaya offended the law and died. Even though he is a equivalent of a sinner, his funeral must not be defamed.”

《天平元年（七二九）二月甲戌【十三】》甲戌。遣使葬長屋王・吉備内親王屍於生馬山。仍勅曰。吉備内親王者無罪。宜准例送葬。唯停鼓吹。其家令・帳内等並從放免。長屋王者依犯伏誅。雖准罪人。莫醜其葬矣。²¹

Nagaya’s body was definitely not “burned to ashes and cast into rivers”, and the emperor did not order their bodies to be “thrown out of the capital.” Instead,

²¹ Aoki, etc, SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol.2, page 206.

their funeral was held with great respect. The reason for such an exceptional treatment is also clearly described in *Shoku nihongi*:

Prince Nagaya is a grandson of Emperor Tenmu. He is a son
of Prince Takechi. Princess Kibi is a daughter of Hinamishi no
miko no mikoto.²²

長屋王、天武天皇之孫。高市親王之子也。吉備内親王、日並知皇
子尊之皇女也。²³

In the next section, I discuss the importance of Nagaya and Kibi's lineage, and why *Shoku nihongi* defined the incident as a political stratagem. Judging from the historical accounts, it is obvious that the accusation against Nagaya and his suicide were the result of a succession dispute. The *Nihon ryōiki*, however, offers the following sui generis interpretation of the incident:

²² Prince Kusakabe 草壁皇子, also a son of Emperor Tenmu, was also father to Kibi's siblings, Emperor Monmu and Empress Genshō.

²³ Aoki, etc, SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol. 2, page 206.

Ah, how pitiful! However widely known in the capital and beyond for his wealth and good fortune, when misfortune fell on him, he had nowhere to turn, but perished in a day. Truly we learn that taking pride in his high virtue, he struck a novice in punishment, and because of this, defenders of the Law frowned on him and the good deities hated him. We should respect those who wear the surplice, humble though they might seem, for there are sages hidden among them. The *Kyōman-gyō* says: “Even among the high ranking, those who accidentally stepped on Shakyamuni’s head with their boots on were guilty of offenses.”²⁴ Needless to say, then, that those who strike one who wears the surplice are guilty of error! ²⁵

嗚呼惆哉、福貴熾之時、高名雖振華裔、而妖災窘之日、無所歸、唯

²⁴ The source of this quotation, *Kyōman-gyō*, has not been identified.

²⁵ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 66.

一旦滅也。誠知、怙自高德、刑彼沙弥、護法嘖嘖、善神惡嫌、著袈
裟之類、雖賤形、不忤不恐、隱身聖人、交其中故、僥倖經云：「先
生位上人、釈迦牟尼仏頂、佩履跣人等罪」云々。何況著袈裟之人、
打侮之者、其罪甚深矣。²⁶

Unlike Prince Uji in the thirty fifth story of the second volume, Prince Nagaya is not depicted as a figure who is “innately evil” and “puts no faith in the Three Treasures”. On the contrary, he is a man who “depends on his exalted virtue” as the title of the story indicates. And yet in spite of this “exalted virtue”, he receives the immediate penalty of death because he is unable to identify a “hidden sage” 隱身聖人 in the shape of a humble monk. The term “hidden sage” is a key word in this story, since it is the same expression Kyōkai used to describe the Mount Kataoka beggar who was identified by Prince Shōtoku, and the monk Gyōki who was active in Emperor Shōmu’s reign.

Why is the *Nihon ryōiki* story of Prince Nagaya so different from the historical

²⁶ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 229.

accounts of *Shoku nihongi*? Why did Kyōkai make Prince Nagaya into a sinner?

What kind of contribution did Nagaya make to the Three Treasures that allowed him to have such a “exalted virtue” to “depends on”? Most importantly, why did Prince Nagaya deserve such a severe penalty if he made such great contributions to promoting Buddhist teachings?

In order to answer these questions, the following section first discusses the historical Prince Nagaya, before turning to the possible reasons for his portrayal in Kyōkai’s anecdotal story collection.

Chart 1. Genealogy of Prince Nagaya

*Arabic numbers=order of succession as emperors

Jitō, Genmei and Genshō are female

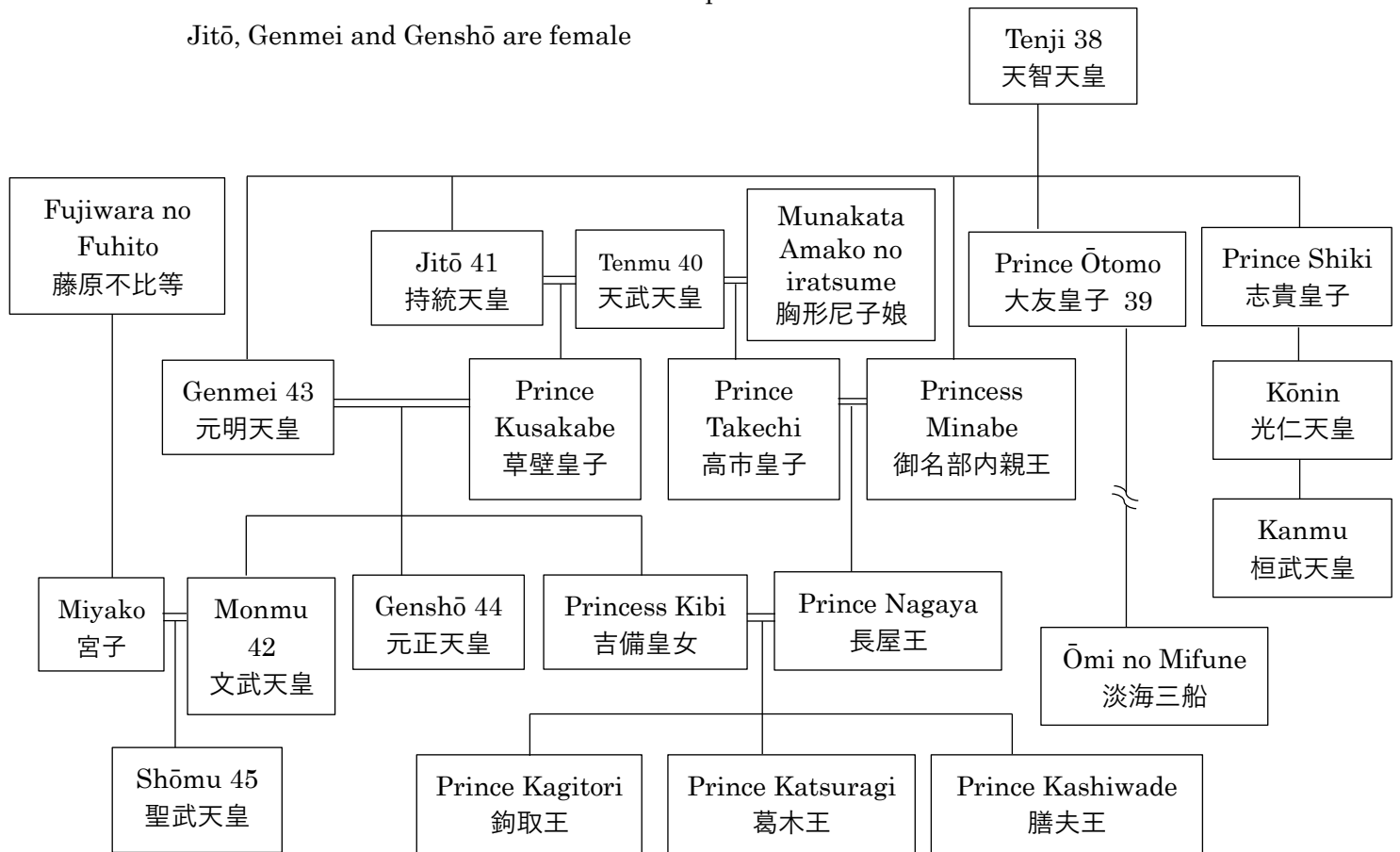
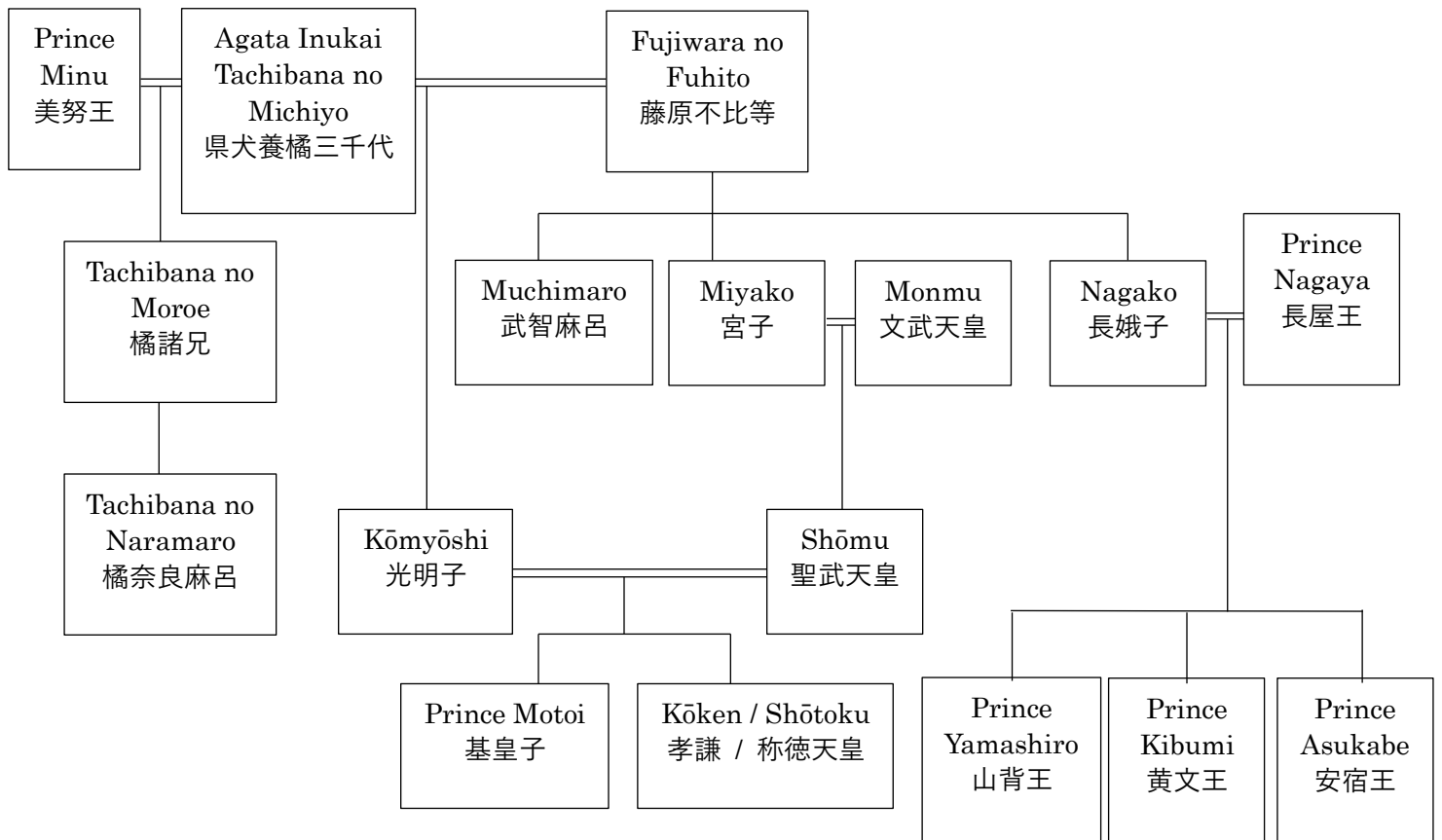


Chart 2. Fujiwara no Fuhito and Emperor Shōmu



3. The Historical Prince Nagaya: The Background to the Nagaya Incident

The historical context of the Nagaya incident can be concisely summarized as follows. After the Jinshin War 壬申の乱 (672), a war of succession in which Emperor Tenmu (Prince Ōama at the time, ?-686, r. 673-686) defeated his nephew Prince Ōtomo, Emperor Tenji's (626-672, r.668-672) son and successor, there were no clear rules of succession for several generations of emperors. The competition between Tenmu's descendants was extremely complicated. Tenmu's consort Empress Jitō allied with Fujiwara clan to secure the future of her grandson Monmu, son of Prince Kusakabe. Therefore, the Fujiwara lineage was able to successfully place the princes with Fujiwara mothers (Emperor Shōmu whose mother was Fujiwara no Miyako) on the throne. After Fuhito died, Prince Nagaya, a grandson of Tenmu and descended from Emperor Tenji on his mother's side, had come to rival the influence of the Fujiwara family. In 729, a minor official of the Fujiwara lineage falsely informed the emperor that the prince was plotting a rebellion. The emperor had Nagaya's residence surrounded, and the prince and his family were forced to commit suicide.

The reason Prince Nagaya and his consort Princess Kibi were such a threat to the Fujiwara was that their sons were of sufficiently high status to rival Emperor Shōmu and Fujiwara no Kōmyōshi's children. As Chart One shows (please refer to the appendix Chart 1), Prince Nagaya's father was Prince Takechi 高市皇子 (654?-696), the hero of the Jinshin war¹. He was the oldest son of Tenmu and kept being powerful during Empress Jitō's reign. However, unlike Prince Kusakabe 草壁皇子 (662-689) whose mother was Jitō, Takechi's mother was a daughter of the Munakata clan, which made him a less competitive candidate to the throne than Kusakabe². Although Takechi did not succeed the throne, he was ranked the highest among Tenmu's sons while Kusakabe and Ōtsu were still children.³ Being a son of Takechi and Princess Minabe (a daughter of Tenji),

¹ See Inoue, *Nihon Shoki*, vol. 2, 295-297. Prince Takechi's poems can be found in *Man'yōshū*, and Kakinomoto no Hitomaro's *banka* (elegies) commemorating Prince Takechi (vol. 2, no.199) is one of the well-known poems in *Man'yōshū*. See SNKBT *Man'yōshū*, vol. 1.

² In the thirteenth year of Tenmu (684), Munakata was bestowed with the title of *ason* 朝臣 when the ranking system of *Yakusa no kabane* 八色の姓 was first established. It was considered exceptional case for a provincial clan to receive such a high rank. As Terasaki points out, Prince Takechi's influence was a likely factor. See Terasaki, *Nagaya ō* 長屋王, page 2-3.

³ See Duthie: *Man'yōshū and the imperial imagination in Early Japan*, page 298-299.

Nagaya was a descendant of both Tenmu and Tenji lines.

Because Prince Kusakabe died early, he did not succeed Tenmu as planned. Instead, Kusakabe's mother Jitō (645-703, r. 686-697) succeeded to the throne after Tenmu's death until her grandson Monmu (683-707, r. 697-707) came of age. Kusakabe's consort Genmei (661-721, r. 707-715), who was also a daughter of Tenji, and her daughter, Monmu's sister Genshō (680-748, r. 715-724), became the "interim" emperors before Emperor Shōmu succeeded in 724.⁴

Emperor Shōmu's mother Miyako, the consort of Monmu, was Fujiwara no Fuhito's 藤原不比等 daughter. As the son of Kamatari (614-669), Fuhito (659-720) was a powerful politician at the court and contributed to establish the Taihō (in Monmu's reign) and Yōrō (in Genshō's reign) ritsuryō systems. Moreover, Shōmu's consort, Fujiwara no Kōmyōshi (later Empress Kōmyō), was also a daughter of Fuhito. In order to further secure the Fujiwara clan's status in the coming generations, the most urgent issue after his death for Fuhito's sons

⁴ See *Rekishī gaku kenkyū kai* 歴史学研究会, University Tokyo Press, etc., compiled by, *Nihon shi kōza: ōke to kizoku* 日本史講座 王家と貴族, page 40-44.

(Muchimaro 武智麻呂, Fusasaki 房前, Umakai 宇合 and Maro 麻呂, also known as the four brothers of Fujiwara) was to make sure that a child of Shōmu and Kōmyōshi would succeed to the throne.

As Chart Two shows, Kōken and her younger brother Motoi were the children born to Shōmu and the Fujiwara daughter Kōmyōshi. Princess Abe 阿倍内親王 (later Kōken 孝謙/ Shōtoku 称徳) was born in Yōrō 2 (718) before Shōmu succeeded to the throne, but a male heir, Prince Motoi 基王, was not born until the ninth month of Jinki 4 (727). Needless to say, he was the most favored prince for the Fujiwara since both his mother and grandmother were from the clan. In the eleventh month of the same year, Shōmu issued a decree to institute the new-born son as the crown prince. It was unprecedented at the time for such an immature child to be appointed as crown prince. According to *Shoku nihongi*, Prince Motoi was born and raised at Fuhito's residence⁵.

However, the Fujiwara plan failed due to the unexpected early death of Prince

⁵ The fourteenth day of the Eleventh Month, the forth year of Jinki. The audience with the Crown Prince was held at the residence of Dajō-daijin (Fuhito's past residence) 神龜四年十一月辛亥拜皇太子於太政大臣第. See SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol. 3, page 185.

Motoi. *Shoku nihongi* records Shōmu's frustration as followed:

The twenty-first day of the Eighth Month, the fifth year of Jinki. (The emperor) issued a decree, saying “The Crown Prince is sick. He has not recovered from the illness for a long time. What can relieve him from the pain except relying on the power of the Three Treasures? Therefore, I made one hundred and seventy-seven images of Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva and one hundred and seventy-seven scrolls of sutras. I pray for him and wish him a peaceful recovery with my good deeds.”

《神龜五年（七二八）八月甲申【廿一】》甲申。勅。皇太子寢病。經日不愈。自非三宝威力。何能解脫患苦。因茲。敬造觀世音菩薩像一百七十七軀并經一百七十七卷。緣此功德。欲得平復。⁶

⁶ Aoki, etc, SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 199.

The Twenty-third day of the Eighth Month, the fifth year of Jinki. The emperor visited the crown prince's palace. Because the prince suffered from illness, the emperor dispatched his men to make offerings to the imperial mausoleums.

《神龜五年（七二八）八月丙戌【廿三】》丙戌。天皇御東宮。緣皇太子病。遣使奉幣帛於諸陵。⁷

Unfortunately, Shōmu's prayers to both the bodhisattva and his ancestral deities did not save Prince Motoi from the fatal illness. The prince passed away on the thirteenth day of the ninth month. *Shoku nihongi* notes that he was “two years old”, but he was in fact less than one year old according to a modern age count.

Motoi's death was tragic for both Emperor Shōmu and the Fujiwara family,

⁷ Aoki, etc, SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 201.

and it greatly complicated succession to the throne. Given that Shōmu and Kōmyō had no male heir, Prince Nagaya and Princess Kibi's sons suddenly became plausible candidates.

Princess Kibi was a daughter of Prince Kusakabe and Genmei (please see Chart One). She was Tenmu's granddaughter, "Hinamishi no miko no mikoto's (Prince Kusakabe's)" daughter, and a sibling to Emperor Monmu and Empress Genshō. Prince Nagaya, a grandson of Tenmu on his father's side and of Emperor Tenji on his mother's side, was a son of Prince Takechi. Their sons were therefore double royals on both paternal and maternal sides.

When Prince Obito 首皇子 (later Emperor Shōmu) was appointed as the crown prince in Reiki 1 (715), there was an important edict issued by Genmei before she announced her abdication.

The twenty-fifth day of the Second Month, the first year of Reiki. (Empress Genmei) issued an edict that the third rank Princess Kibi's sons and daughters should be treated in the same way as the grandsons of an emperor.

《靈龜元年（七一五）二月丁丑（廿五）》丁丑。勅以三品吉備內

親王男女。皆入皇孫之例焉。⁸

Since Prince Nagaya was the grandson of Tenmu, and his father was not an emperor, his children, the great grandchildren of Tenmu, were automatically regarded as third generation princes (三世王) instead of second generation (二世王) ones. However, the edict confirms that his children by Princess Kibi's should be exceptionally treated as second generation princes, or the equivalent of an emperor's grandchildren in terms of their promotion and inheritance of official ranks.⁹

The ultimate purpose of Genmei was to secure the succession of her grandson, Prince Obito (Shōmu). After abdication, she did not pass the throne directly to Shōmu, but first to her daughter Princess Hidaka 氷高內親王 (Genshō) because

⁸ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 1., page 223.

⁹ See the note of Aoki and Takinami, *Saigo no jotei Kōken tennō* 最後の女帝：孝謙天皇, page 10-12.

Obito was “too young (年齒幼稚)”¹⁰. Therefore, it would not have been her intention to promote other competitors that might threaten Shōmu and his future successors.

One possible reason for Genmei’s edict was to balance the power between her children. Since Princess Hidaka had succeeded to the throne, her younger sister Kibi, who was married to Prince Nagaya, needed to be rewarded in some way in order to make her and her spouse loyal enough to support the newly crowned prince Obito. Genmei made Nagaya the protector of the future emperor. In short, in exchange for making Nagaya’s sons give up the succession to the throne, Nagaya and Kibi were guaranteed an exceptional political status as a reward. If Nagaya and Kibi’s sons were treated as second generation princes (二世王), this implied that their father Nagaya would be treated as a first generation prince (一世王)¹¹, or a son of an emperor even though he was actually the grandson.

In fact, after Fuhito passed away in the eighth month of Yōrō 4 (720), Prince Nagaya was promoted instantly by the retired Genmei to support Genshō and

¹⁰ See Aoki, etc., *SNKBT Shoku nihongi*, vol. 1, page 235.

¹¹ See Takinami, *Saigo no jotei Kōken tennō* 最後の女帝：孝謙天皇, page 11-12.

the crown prince. In the tenth month of the same year, Nagaya (Senior Third Rank dai-nagon at this time) and Ōtomo sukune no Tabito 大伴宿禰旅人¹² (Senior Fourth Rank Lower Grade Chū-nagon) were dispatched to the residence of Fuhito, the past Minister of the Right, and announced the edict to give the posthumous title of Dajō-daijin 太政大臣 and the Senior First Rank to Fuhito. Two months later, in the first month of the next year (Yōrō 5), Prince Nagaya was promoted to the Junior Second Rank and became the Minister of the Right, the position previously filled by Fuhito. High ranked positions were reshuffled.¹³ In the tenth month of the same year, the retired Genmei summoned Nagaya and Fujiwara no Fusasaki (Junior Third Rank Sangi 参議 at this time) to her deathbed, entrusted the two with her will and asked them to hold her funeral in

¹² Tabito became middle counselor (Chū-nagon) in 718. In 727 or 728 he was appointed governor of headquarters at Dazaifu during which Nagaya incident occurred. In 730 he was promoted to great counselor (Dai-nagon) and returned to Nara, but he died the following year. He is known as one of the important *Man'yō* poets that has influenced his half-sister Ōtomo no Sakanoue no Iratsume, his son Ōtomo no Yakamochi and other prominent poets in his generation. Tabito's Chinese studies and poetic activities were stimulated by Yamanoue no Okura when he served at Tsukushi. The *Man'yōshū* records the plum blossom feast held by Tabito in 730 and poems composed by the participants, while *Kaifūsō* contains Tabito's Chinese poems. See Takagi, *Ōtomo no Tabito, Yamanoue no Okura*.

¹³ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 83.

a simple non-luxurious ceremony.¹⁴

Prince Nagaya thus became the most influential politician at court after Fuhito's death. When Shōmu finally succeeded to the throne in the second month of Jinki 1 (724), Nagaya was further promoted to Senior Second Rank and filled the position of the Minister of the Left. Until the incident that forced Nagaya and Kibi to commit suicide in the second month of Tenpyō 1 (729), Nagaya was the most powerful figure at court.

Since the Nagaya incident occurred only four months after the sudden death of Prince Motoi, it is clear that Nagaya and Kibi's sons had become a realistic threat from the perspective of Fujiwara no Muchimaro. However, judging from the accounts of *Shoku nihongi*, there is no direct evidence that relates Motoi's death to a potential plot against the emperor or any suggestion of plan by Nagaya to have his sons succeed to the throne.

Likewise, the “sinister way 左道” of which Nagaya was accused is never clearly defined, and the edict issued by Shōmu does not reveal any concrete

¹⁴ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 103.

details about how Nagaya might have planned to “overthrow the state”. The decree, issued three days after Nagaya’s suicide, reads as follows:

The fifteenth day of the Second Month, the first year of Tenpyō.

The decree says, “Senior Second Rank Prince Nagaya, the Minister of the Left, was cruel, twisted, ignorant and evil. His evil deeds were blatant once they were exposed to the public.

He spoke all kinds of false words and committed the most atrocious crimes, which resulted in the consequence of his sudden arrest by a loose net. Such a villain must be exterminated, and his evil attempts must be eradicated. All the provincial governors should not allow the people to get together (and talk about the incident). The decree is instantly effective since the twelfth day of the second month.¹⁵”

¹⁵ The decree is effective from the day Nagaya commit suicide.

《天平元年（七二九）二月丙子【十五】》勅曰。左大臣正二位長屋王。忍戾昏凶。触途則著。尽慝窮姦。頓陷疎網。芟夷姦党。除滅賊惡。宜国司莫令有衆。仍以二月十二日、依常施行。¹⁶

The decree emphasizes Nagaya's evil nature and why it was necessary to execute him, but it is little more than a series of repetitive rhetorical statements in a tautological style. It does not actually provide any evidence of his evil deeds. The only concrete message is the instruction toward the provincial leaders, which asks them to forbid people to “get together”.

In fact, except for Nagaya, Kibi, and their children, no other related family members were charged. Most of the courtiers and the staff members who supported Nagaya's administration also escaped punishment:

The seventeenth day of the Second Month, the first year of Tenpyō. Seven people including Outer Junior Fifth Rank

¹⁶ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 207.

Lower Grade Kamitsukeno ason Sukunamaro are jointly liable and sentenced to be exiled. All other ninety people are acquitted of the charge.

《天平元年（七二九）二月戊寅【十七】》戊寅。外從五位下上毛野朝臣宿奈麻呂等七人。坐与長屋王交通、並処流。自余九十人悉從原免。¹⁷

Even this exiled courtier, Sukunamaro, is documented as returning to the Outer Junior Fifth Rank in the fourteenth year of Tenpyō after Fujiwara no Muchimaro and his brothers passed away. Judging from his court rank being a *ge'i* (外位), it can be assumed that he did not come from a high ranked aristocratic family. As for Nagaya's family members and relatives, none of them were punished.

¹⁷ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 207.

The seventeenth day of the Second Month, the first year of Tenpyō. (The emperor) dispatched the Major Controller of the Left (Sadaiben) Senior Fourth Rank Upper Grade Ishikawa no ason Iwatari and other courtiers to the residence of Prince Suzuka (Senior Fourth Rank Upper Grade), who is a younger brother of Prince Nagaya, to announce the following decree: All brothers, sisters, children and grandchildren, and consorts of Prince Nagaya are acquitted regardless of their gender.

《天平元年（七二九）二月己卯【十八】》己卯。遣左大弁正四位上石川朝臣石足等。就長屋王弟從四位上鈴鹿王宅。宣勅曰。長屋王昆弟・姉妹・子孫及妾等合縁坐者。不問男女。咸皆赦除。¹⁸

The twenty-sixth day of the Second Month, the first year of Tenpyō. Prince Nagaya's brothers and sisters who are alive

¹⁸ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 207.

will receive the same stipends and benefits according to the regulations.

《天平元年（七二九）二月丁亥【廿六】》丁亥。長屋王弟・姉妹并男女等見存者。預給禄之例。¹⁹

After Nagaya's death, Muchimaro and his three brothers were able to dominate court politics. However, the administration of the four Fujiwara brothers only lasted eight years until they all died from the smallpox epidemic in Tenpyō 9 (737).

It is notable that the *Shoku nihongi* itself confirms that the accusations against Nagaya were false, as an entry dated one year after Muchimaro's death confirms:

The tenth day of the Seventh Month, the tenth year of Tenpyō.

¹⁹ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 207.

The Junior Officer of the Armory of the Left, Junior Eighth Rank Lower Guard Ōtomo no sukune Komushi killed the Head of the Armory of the Right, Outer Junior Fifth Rank Lower Guard Nakatomi no muraji Azumahito. Previously, Komushi had served Prince Nagaya. He was favored and well-treated by the prince. At this time, Komushi was coincidentally assigned to the Armory Office and worked with Azumahito. They were playing gō chess together to pass the time, and were talking about Prince Nagaya, when (Komushi) got angry and remonstrated with Azumahito, and eventually killed Azumahito with his sword. It was Azumahito who had made the false accusations against Prince Nagaya.

《天平十年（七三八）七月丙子【十】》丙子。左兵庫少属從八位下大伴宿禰子虫。以刀斫殺右兵庫頭外從五位下中臣宮處連東人。初子虫、事長屋王、頗蒙恩遇。至是、適与東人任於比察。政事之隙、相共困碁。語及長屋王。憤發而罵。遂引劍斫而殺之。東人、即誣告

長屋王事之人也。²⁰

We do not know what happened to Komushi, a lower-ranked courtier from the Ōtomo clan, after he killed his superior. This is the only record that can be found in *Shoku nihongi* about him. Azumahito was not a high-ranked courtier, but he was promoted to the Fifth Rank as a reward for making the accusation against Nagaya.²¹ Because neither Komushi nor Azumahito are influential historic figures, there are no other records about them except this story. What should not be overlooked about this account is the fact that the compilers used the phrase “false accusations 誣告” to describe the charge against Prince Nagaya, thus revealing their own judgment.

It is clear that most courtiers in the second half of the eighth century would not have believed that Prince Nagaya was guilty. One indication of this is the fact that Prince Nagaya is one of the most influential figures in the *Kaifūsō*, which was completed in Tenpyō Shōhō 天平勝宝 3 (751), during the reign of

²⁰ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 341-343.

²¹ See Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., note 3, page 204.

Kōken 孝謙: the collection includes three poems compiled by Nagaya himself and a variety of poems compiled at banquets held by the prince at his residence for envoys from Silla (J. Shiragi 新羅). As Kojima points out, “he is not only an extremely important figure in politics at this time, but also a sponsor of the poetics at the Nara court. This patronage is extremely meaningful in terms of the poetic history of Japan.”²²

The question, therefore, is why the compiler of *Nihon ryōiki* included a story that portrayed Prince Nagaya as a sinner? It is evident that Kyōkai did not share the same perspective as the high ranked courtiers who compiled *Kaifūsō* or *Shoku nihongi*. As I will argue, however, there does seem to be a certain inner logic to Kyōkai’s portrayal of Nagaya as someone who received the penalty of death because he defamed a “hidden sage.”

4. The Prince who Suppressed the Unofficial Monks: Prince Nagaya and

²² See Kojima, compiled by, NKBT *Kaifūsō*, *Bunka shūreishū*, *Honchō monzui* 懷風藻 文華秀麗集 本朝文粹. Page 14. Kojima divides the *Kaifūsō* into four periods in chronological order, and he calls the third period “the Era of Prince Nagaya” 長屋王時代, from middle of Yōrō to the beginning of Tenpyō.

Buddhism

As I discussed in the first chapter, for Kyōkai, Shōmu's reign was an idealized era when the Buddhist teachings prevailed and there were numerous instances of good and evil retributions because Emperor Shōmu was one of the “sage kings” of great virtue. This idea is presented in the preface to the second volume:

But the records of good and evil and their results are very many for the reign of this emperor (Shōmu), which are due to his holy virtue. They are, in fact, so numerous that to record them...I have put down here only those that I have heard.²³

唯以是天皇代、所録善惡表多数者、由聖皇德、顯事最多、漏事...
今随所聞、且載耳。²⁴

²³ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 62. The ellipses represent words that were lost. See note 38, Chapter 1.

²⁴ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 227.

Although most of the second volume of *Nihon ryōiki* is dedicated to Shōmu's reign,²⁵ the portrayal of Shōmu's reign actually begins in the thirty-first and the thirty-second stories of the first volume, which are followed by three undated stories that conclude the volume. Since most of the stories are presented in chronological order, it is unclear why Kyōkai did not move the last five stories of the first volume to the beginning of the second volume, and make the last three stories of the second volume part of the third volume. This would have matched the content of second volume to its preface (albeit making the first volume much shorter than the other two), and would also have avoided the awkwardness of placing Prince Nagaya's story, a story of retribution for evil, at the beginning of the second volume. Regarding this issue, Harada²⁶ has argued that this placement was probably intentionally designed to illustrate the conflict between "the most powerful man at court" and a "begging monk who represents

²⁵ Almost all the stories of the second volume of *Nihon ryōiki* are set in the reign of Emperor Shōmu. Of the forty-one stories in the second volume, the first to the thirty-ninth stories are set in Shōmu's reign, while the thirty-ninth, fortieth and the forty-first stories are set in the reign of Kōken and Junnin.

²⁶ See Harada, *Nihon ryōiki no shin kenkyū* 日本靈異記の新研究, *Nihon ryōiki chūkan bōtō setsuwa o meguru shomondai* 日本靈異記中巻冒頭説話をめぐる諸問題, page 257-287.

vagabonds of low status.”²⁷

The historical background to this conflict originates with the introduction of an official priesthood certification system (丁巳始授僧尼公驗) in the first month of Yōrō 4 (720).²⁸ This system made a clear distinction between officially ordained monks and self-ordained monks, and ensured that self-ordained monks were strictly regulated. The court’s objective with this new policy was to prohibit tax evasion and secure tax revenue in order to solve financial issues resulting from land ownership. For ordinary people who suffered from food shortage and economic difficulty, claiming to be a monk was one solution to avoid the heavy burden of tax payment, both in cash and in the form of conscripted labor.

Kyōkai was too young to have experienced this reform, but his own sense of economic hardship can be deduced from his words in the thirty-eighth story of the third volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, titled *On the Appearance of Good and Evil Omens, which Were Followed by Results Indicating Disaster or Good Luck* 災与善表相先現而後其災善答被縁. This story is the longest in the entire collection,

²⁷ See Harada, *Nihon ryōiki no shin kenkyū* 日本靈異記の新研究 , page 284.

²⁸ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 121-122.

and records several historical events as well as the compiler's own experiences.

Part of the story is presented as a biographical account:

Alas, how weak, how shameful! I was born into the world,
given life, yet have no means to sustain it! I am dragged along
by the net of circumstances, caught in its meshes. Bound by
its ties, I struggled in the battle of life and death. I race of in
all directions, burning up my body. I remain in the secular
world, feeding my wife and family, but I have no means to
support them, no food for their mouths. I lack greens; I lack
salt; I lack clothes; I have no firewood. Always I lack
everything, my mind forever fretful. My heart knows no peace.
In the daytime, hungry and cold; at night, again starving and
cold. In my presence existences, I did not practice alms giving-
how mean was my heart, how low, the things I did! ²⁹

²⁹ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 193.

鳴呼恥哉、生世命活、存身無便。等流果所引、而結愛網、業煩惱所纏、而繼生死、馳乎八方、以炬生身。居于俗家、而蓄妻子。無養物、無食物、無菜無塩、無衣無薪。每万物之無、而思愁之。我心不安、晝復飢寒、夜復飢寒。我先世不修布施行、鄙哉我心、微哉我行。³⁰

Economic considerations were not the only reasons why the court sought to regulate unofficial monks. Another concern was that those who had no place to go or suffered from economic difficulties became the followers of unapproved religious leaders that were perceived as a threat to social stability and the court's authority.

During the Nagaya administration, monks who were not officially ordained were suppressed according to ritsuryō regulations. Officers of monastic affairs (僧綱) were not allowed to leave their affiliation, and no officially certificated monks were allowed to travel to the mountains or beg for food without the court's

³⁰ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 293.

permission. Traveling and begging for food thus became unlawful activities for monks.

Unapproved religious activities led by the self-ordained monks were strictly banned in the decrees. A report to the throne that was signed in Nagaya's name in Yōrō 6 (722) reads as follows:

The tenth day of the Seventh Month, sixth year of Yōrō.

Recently, monks and nuns who dwell near the capital use their fawning words to falsely preach about punishment and rewards of cause and effect with their shallow wisdom. They do not follow rules and disciplines. The people of the capital are deceived by their false words. Not only are the sacred teachings defamed, but the imperial laws are also harmed. They even seduce others' wives and children to shave their heads and carve their skin. They make people abandon their home, ignore the laws and regulations, and forget their own husbands in the name of Buddhist teachings. Some of them

carry the sutra and beg for food with their bowls on the streets and lanes. Others settle in villages and towns to spread their evil teachings. They always get together and sleep together in vicious groups. What they do resembles the practice of the Way at first glance, but their evil ideas result in the committing of crimes. These activities have been discussed for a long time and must be prohibited.

《養老六年（七二二）七月己卯【十】》己卯。近在京僧尼。以淺識輕智。巧說罪福之因果。不練戒律。詐誘都裏之衆庶。內黷聖教。外虧皇猷。遂令人之妻子剃髮刻膚。動稱佛法。輒離室家。無懲綱紀。不顧親夫。或負經捧鉢。乞食於街衢之間。或偽誦邪說。寄落於村邑之中。聚宿為常。妖訛成群。初似脩道、終挾姦亂。永言其弊。特須禁斷。³¹

³¹ Aoki, etc., SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2., page 123.

Although he is not named, the target of this decree is Gyōki and his group. As I discussed in the first chapter, Gyōki was one of the “hidden sages” that Kyōkai admired. For Kyōkai, a decree such as that issued by Nagaya is not only suppressing Gyōki, but also contributing to the suffering of all self-ordained followers, including Kyōkai himself.

At the end of the first chapter, I noted that Shōmu’s court eventually changed its policy and approved Gyōki’s religious and social welfare activities in the eighth month of Tenpyō 3 (731), as well as some of the possible reasons for this change.³² However, there is a problem for Kyōkai’s narrative: Emperor Shōmu. If the suppression of Gyōki lasted for so many years after Shōmu succeeded to the throne and became emperor in the second month of Jinki 1 (724),³³ there is an inconsistency in the lineage of sagehood proposed by Kyōkai: if Prince Shōtoku was able to identify the Mount Kataoka Beggar as a hidden sage, Emperor Shōmu should have been able to identify Gyōki, who is defined as a hidden sage by Kyōkai.

³² See note 69 of Chapter 1.

³³ Prince Nagaya was promoted to Minister of the Left two days after Shōmu’s accession.

Since the change of policy did not happen until Tenpyō 3 (731), two years after Prince Nagaya's death (under Muchimaro's administration), it is possible that Kyōkai assumed that it was Prince Nagaya who had kept Gyōki's group from being approved by the court. In other words, in order to fill the gap between Shōmu's accession and Gyōki's approval, Kyōkai created a fictional "hidden sage" in the shape of a humble monk who visited a Dharma meeting that was not documented in any other contemporary source. According to Kyōkai's story, Prince Nagaya punished the monk for begging and therefore became a sinner who had failed to identify a hidden sage. This is why he failed to identify Gyōki and suppressed him. Kyōkai probably knew nothing of the actual events behind the Nagaya incident, but that is not relevant to his narrative. All Kyōkai needs is a story in which Prince Nagaya 1) suppressed the unofficial monks and 2) was forced to commit suicide. In this narrative, the suicide of Nagaya symbolizes the beginning of Shōmu's sagely era, and thus makes the Nagaya tale a fitting opening for the second volume.

Needless to say, Kyōkai's narrative only works by ignoring the actual historical context. In fact, as I noted in the first chapter, the first edict that criticized Gyōki

by name (小僧行基) was issued in the first year of Yōrō (717),³⁴ under Fuhito's administration before Nagaya was fully in power. The style and the phrases used in this Yōrō 1 edict are actually stronger than in the Yōrō 6 one issued by Nagaya. Moreover, the official certificate system (公驗) that was designed to regulated self-ordained monks was issued in the first month of Yōrō 4 before Fuhito died in the eighth month of the same year. In other words, although Prince Nagaya was responsible for suppressing self-ordained monks, this is not an original policy of his administration, but rather a continuous policy maintained by the court since Fuhito's time. As Terasaki points out, "in general the politics of Prince Nagaya's administration was very similar to Fuhito's policies. Fuhito's legacy was well inherited."³⁵ Based on details documented in *Shoku nihongi*, Terasaki pointed out that Prince Nagaya put his focus mostly on maintaining the effectiveness of ritsuryō laws and orders. He was a moderate whose main concern was the stability of society as a whole.

Moreover, there was a lot more to Prince Nagaya's policies on Buddhism than

³⁴ See note 70 of Chapter 1.

³⁵ See Terasaki, *Nagaya ō* 長屋王, page 224.

the suppression of unofficial monks. In fact, his career was deeply concerned with the promotion of Buddhism. This is acknowledged by Kyōkai's narrative insofar as, unlike Prince Uji who is "innately evil," Prince Nagaya had a great "virtue" to "depend on" (the title of the first story of the second volume) in terms of his contribution to Buddhism. Some of these contributions were state projects. For example, in the twelfth month of Jinki 5 (728), the court distributed *Golden Sutras* (*Kon kōmyō saijō ō kyō* 今光明最勝王經) to all provinces. According to *Shoku nihongi*, before this distribution of Jinki 5, some provinces had held four, and others eight copies. This project made sure each province had ten copies for reading and copying.³⁶ Among the Buddhism related projects led by Prince Nagaya, the transcription of the *Sutra of Great Wisdom* (*Dai han'nya haramita kyō* 大般若波羅蜜多經) is also worth highlighting. First, the *Dai han'nya kyō* consists of six hundred scrolls, which is considered extremely long and unusual for transcribing under a personal name. This meant that Prince Nagaya

³⁶ This distribution occurred only two months before the Nagaya incident. The circulation of the Golden Sutra was related to Fuhito, his daughter Kōmyōshi, Emperor Shōmu and the Fujiwara family. See Sango, *The Halo of Golden Light: Imperial Authority and Buddhist Ritual in Heian Japan*.

dedicated extraordinary financial resources to make the project possible. Second, the project was undertaken twice, in Wadō 和銅 5 (712) and Jinki 5 (728) respectively. The historians call the former the *Wadō sutra* (*Wadō kyō* 和銅經), and the later *Jinki sutra* (*Jinki kyō* 神龜經) to distinguish them. Parts of these two sutras are extant.³⁷ Several wooden pieces excavated at the site that is considered Nagaya's residence also provide evidence that professional craftsmen, painters and calligraphers were hired and paid to work at his residence.³⁸

According to the postscript written in the fifth year of Wadō, the *Wadō kyō* was transcribed in order to mourn the past Emperor Monmu³⁹. As Chart One shows, Monmu was the older brother of Nagaya's wife Princess Kibi and a cousin of Prince Nagaya.

However, unlike the *Wadō kyō*, *Jinki kyō* is somehow controversial in terms of the content of its postscript and the time of release. In the postscript of the *Jinki*

³⁷ Two hundred and thirty scrolls of the Wadō sutra are left at three monasteries in Shiga prefecture, while only five scrolls of the Jinki sutra remain. See Terasaki, *Nagaya ō* 長屋王, page 225-226.

³⁸ See Terasaki, *Nagaya ō ke no monjo mokkan* 長屋王家の文書木簡. *Nihon rekishi* 日本歴史, no. 500, page 110-115.

³⁹ Monmu passed away in the sixth month of Kei'un 4 (706).

kyō, it is noticeable that the text has a clear Daoist inclination. In the following section I examine this text and how this inclination of Nagaya is related to the “sinister way” of which he was falsely accused.

5. Prince Nagaya and Daoism: The “Sinister Way”

The postscript of *Jinki kyō* reads as follows:

The fifteenth day of the Fifth Month, fifth year of Jinki. I, a disciple of the Buddha, Prince Nagaya, arouse the vow with my best sincerity to transcribe one copy of *Dai Han'nyā Kyō* consisting of six hundred scrolls. Every line of the sutra is beautifully ornamented, and every stroke has a deep meaning. Those who chant the sutra get rid of evil; Those who read it merit happiness and good fortune. My good action of transcribing the sutra helps the two honored spirits who ascend to immortality follow their vows to be reborn in the

heavenly land, pay homage to Bodhisattva Maitreya, play in
the pure territory, face the Buddha, hear the correct Dharma,
and become enlightened with the patient acceptance based on
awareness of the non-arising of phenomena.

神龜五年歲次戊辰五月十五日、佛弟子長王、至聖發願、奉写大般
若經一部六百卷。其經乃行行列華文、句句含深義。讀誦者、蠲邪
去惡、閱者福納臻榮。以此善業、奉資
登仙二尊神靈、各隨本願、往生上天、頂禮弥勒、遊戲淨域、面奉弥
陀、并聽聞正法、俱悟无生忍。⁴⁰

The “two honored spirits” to whom the copy is dedicate are Prince Nagaya’s
parents, Prince Takechi and Princess Minabe. Remarkably, a Daoist term
“ascend to immortality 登仙” is used in such a Buddhist context. The postscript
continues:

⁴⁰ Ōyama, *Nagayaōke mokkan to nara chō seiji shi* 長屋王家木簡と奈良朝政治
史. Page 169.

Also, this virtuous root helps the reigning emperor and all the successive emperors beginning from the creation of the heaven and earth. The Three Treasures cover and guard them. Hundreds of spirits stand by them and protect them. The present ones stand out among the five peaks and live on for thousands of years. Those who ascended to immortality are reborn in the pure land, climb to the heaven, hear the Dharma, cultivate their goodness and achieve enlightenment.

又以此善根、仰資 現御宇天皇并開闢以來代代帝皇、三寶覆護、百靈影衛。現在者、争榮於五岳、保壽於千齡。 登仙者、生淨國、昇天上、聞法悟道、脩善成覺。

Among all the phrases used in this passage, most of which are Buddhist terms, “five peaks 五岳” and “thousands of years 千齡” stand out as frequently used

Daoist terms.⁴¹ The past emperors are called “those who ascended to immortality” 登仙者. Before they are reborn in the pure land and achieve nirvana, they became immortal after death.

The timing of the completion of *Jinki kyō* is also suspicious. The postscript is dated to the fifteenth day of the fifth Month. At this stage, the news that crown Prince Motoi was very sick was well-known by most higher ranking court officials. In the eighth month, Shōmu produced images, copy sutras and made offerings at the imperial mausoleums⁴² to pray for Motoi. The young crown prince passed away in the ninth month of the fifth year of Jinki. Prince Nagaya’s *Jinki kyō* was completed on the twenty-third day of the same month following the Motoi’s death, only ten days after the prince had passed away. Although a

⁴¹ The “five peaks” are the Daoist sacred mountains of Mount Tai 東岳泰山, Mount Heng 南岳衡山, Mount Song 中岳嵩山, Mount Hua 西岳華山 and Mount Heng 北岳恒山. The mountains on the list may vary based on different texts. “Thousands of years old 千齡” is frequently used since the Wei and Jin dynasties especially in Daoist texts to describe the longevity of immortals. Ge Hong’s 葛洪 *Shen xian zhuan* 神仙傳, section of *Huai nan wang* 淮南王 has “live for thousands of years 壽千齡.” *Wen yuan ge siku quan shu* 文淵閣四庫全書, vol. 10:59, page 284.

⁴² See note 31 and 32.

clear line between a state project and a personal vow cannot be easily drawn for Nagaya's *Jinki kyō* project, there do seem to have been real reasons for Muchimaro and Shōmu to cast doubt on Nagaya's intentions.

Because the Daoist inclination of the text is clearly identified, early scholarship asserted that the “sinister way 左道” that Nagaya was accused of study was, in fact, Daoism. Shinkawa has argued that the “sinister way” is an “equivalent to such a Daoist world view” presented in the postscript, in which Shōmu's authority declines with the usage of “the reigning emperor” 現御宇天皇 instead of “the reigning divine emperor” 現神御宇.⁴³ Ōyama agrees with Shinkawa's view, and further argues that Nagaya's claim challenged the authority of the emperors based on the ritsuryō system established and maintained by Fuhito. “At the very least,” notes Ōyama, “Muchimaro seems to have believed that the ‘sinister way’ was Nagaya's attempt to challenge the authority of Ritsuryō state emperors.”⁴⁴

⁴³ See Shinkawa, *Nara jidai no dōkyō to bukkyō: nagaya ō no sekai kan* 奈良時代の道教と仏教 長屋王の世界観. Hiraoka, edited by. *Ronshū nihon bukkyō shi* 論集 日本仏教史 vol, 2 Nara period.

⁴⁴ See Ōyama, *Nagayaōke mokkan to nara chō seiji shi* 長屋王家木簡と奈良朝

In my view, however, there is no clear evidence to identify Nagaya's "sinister way" as Daoist. It is true that the postscript unusually contains a variety of Daoist elements and that its timing was suspicious, but the text is still fundamentally Buddhist. When offering the sutra to his parents, Prince Nagaya would also have been thinking of his grandfather Emperor Tenmu. If Nagaya's interest in Daoism is interpreted as the "sinister way," then Emperor Tenmu, whose posthumous name "Ama no nunahara oki no mahito" 天淳中原瀛真人, includes the Daoist terms "Ying" 瀛 and "genuine person" 真人, and who is said to have studied astronomy and *dunjia* 遁甲 divination,⁴⁵ must be described a "sinister" emperor. But this would never happen since he is the source of authority for both Nagaya and Shōmu.

For high ranking courtiers during Nagaya's time, Daoist ideas, Ying and Yang thought, Chinese cosmology of five elements, and the concept of immortality were all essential elements of their knowledge and literacy. In the first chapter,

政治史. Page 171-172.

⁴⁵ See note 34, Chapter 1. In the accounts of *Nihon Shoki*, Tenmu demonstrates a clear interest in Daoism.

I mentioned the *Man'yōshū* poet Okura's *Chin'a jiai no bun* 沈痾自哀文 as an example of both Confucian and Daoist ideas intertwined into a Buddhist context.⁴⁶ For most of the well-educated Chinese literati after the Wei and Jin dynasties, Daoist thought did not exclude Buddhist belief or Confucian ideas, and this was also true of someone like Prince Nagaya.

From the wooden tablets discovered at Nagaya's residence site, we know that courtiers such as Roku no Emaro 角兄麻呂, who served as Onmyō Hakase 陰陽博士, was invited to and got paid at his residence, and Ōtsu no Obito 大津首, who was also an Onmyōshi 陰陽師, has two poems included in the *Kaifūsō*. Courtiers who attended Prince Nagaya's literature salon include those who studied astronomy and divination, but these were obviously not regarded as “sinister ways.”⁴⁷

Another possibility is that Prince Nagaya was accused of secretly performing an occult act (fuko, Ch. wugu 巫蠱) at his residence, and killing the young crown

⁴⁶ See note 36, Chapter 1.

⁴⁷ See Terasaki, *Nagaya ō* 長屋王, page 247-248. As Terasaki argues, it was not unusual for people who served at Onmyō bureau to visit the residence of the powerful politician. None of the two were punished after the Nagaya incident.

prince with a curse. But once again, there is no evidence of such a possibility in the *Shoku nihongi* accounts, and in any case, the relation between occult acts, “sinister ways” and Daoism is far from clear. The term “sinister ways” actually predates Daoism. In *li ji* 禮記, the chapter of *Wang zhi* 王制篇 introduces an ideal bureaucratic system of the ancient sage kings in which there are several kinds of crimes that merit an unconditional penalty of death. One of them is “zuo dao” 左道 or “sinister way.”

Splitting words so as to break the laws; confounding names so as to change what had been definitely settled; practicing sinister ways so as to throw government into confusion: all guilty of these things were put to death.

析言破律，亂名改作，執左道以亂政，殺。⁴⁸

⁴⁸ *Wen yuan ge siku quan shu* 文淵閣四庫全書, *Bao pu zi wai pian* 抱朴子外篇 vol. 1:59, page 289.

Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 defines “zuo dao” 左道 as “wugu and folk taboos 巫蠱及俗禁” in his commentary. Here “zuo dao” is considered the same kind of subversive crime as breaking laws or confusing “names” 名 (core concepts in Confucianism since name and rank, post, and position in the aristocracy regulates behavior) and similarly deserving of the death penalty. According to Ge Hong’s *Bao pu zi* 抱朴子, the definition of “the sinister way” seemingly expanded toward the end of the Han dynasty. In the chapter of *Han guo* 漢過 where Master Baopu lists all the political mistakes that occurred in the late Han period (and caused the dynasty to collapse), he laments how Daoism was misinterpreted and misunderstood:

Those who are against the scriptures, assume the names of the sages, agree with others who have different opinions and pretend to be broad-minded, call themselves guests of Zhuangzi and Laozi...Those who study sinister ways and conduct evil acts, cheat people with demons and monsters and

call themselves sacred beings that are capable of
communicating with the spirits.

反經詭聖、順非而博者、謂之莊老之客...

左道邪術、假托鬼怪者、謂之通靈神人。⁴⁹

According to this text, supernatural thought, occults and spiritualism were related to Daoism in the late Han dynasty at a time when society was extremely unstable. Here, *zuo dao* (sinister way) is not about a rebellion or a plot to overthrow the state, but relates to occult arts. In such a context, it is not impossible that Prince Nagaya's interests in Daoism went beyond orthodox practices and that the suspicions of him putting a curse on Prince Motoi had some basis in fact. But the fact remains that there is no evidence for this, and absent such evidence I would argue that the "sinister way" should not be related to Nagaya's interest in Daoist ideas.

⁴⁹ *Wen yuan ge siku quan shu* 文淵閣四庫全書, vol. 10:59, page 390.

A different and more relevant question is Kyōkai's attitude toward Daoism and his possible conflation of the “sinister way” accusation against Nagaya with sinfulness. In the following section, I discuss how Daoist elements and representations of Daoist immortality are mostly excluded from the *Nihon ryōiki*.

6. The Exclusion of Daoist Elements from *Nihon Ryōiki*

Unlike other texts that include Daoist elements into a Buddhist context,⁵⁰ Daoist ideas are seldom found in *Nihon ryōiki*.⁵¹ In regard to Kyōkai's attitude

⁵⁰ Except for Okura's *chin'a jiai no bun* 沈痾自哀文, Dōji's 道慈 (?-744) used both “Three Treasures 三宝” and “hundred spirits 百靈” in his poem dedicate to the crown prince (在唐奉本国太子：三宝持聖德、百靈扶仙寿). The “hundreds spirits 百靈” is used in *Bao pu zi* as a Daoist term (黃帝生而能言、役使百靈). See Tatsumi, *Kaifūsō chūshaku* 懷風藻注釈, page 449; Matsumoto, *Kaifūsō shaku dōji no shi jo no saikentō* 懷風藻釈道慈の詩・序の再検討, *Komazawa daigaku bukkyō bungaku kenkyū* 駒沢大学仏教文学研究 v.17, page 55-70. The two phrases were used in the postscript to the *Jinki kyō* transcribed by Prince Nagaya. I will also note Kūkai's *Sangō shiiki* 三教指帰 in the following paragraphs.

⁵¹ An exceptional case is the thirteenth story of the first volume, titled *On a Women who Loved Pure Ways, Ate Sacred Herbs, and Flew to Heaven Alive* 女人好風声之行食仙草以現身飛天縁. The story portrayed a woman from the village of Nuribe in Uda district of Yamato Province who daily “bathe her body, clean it

toward teachings other than Buddhism, Terakawa argues, through an analysis of the preface to the first volume and the twenty-fifth story of the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, that Kyōkai's education was deeply rooted in Confucian texts.⁵²

As I outlined in the first chapter, Kyōkai's lineage of sages begins with Emperor Nintoku, the model Confucian sage who preceded the Buddhist sages Prince Shōtoku, Emperor Shōmu, and Gyōki. The twenty-fifth story of the first volume, titled *On a Loyal Minister, Satisfied and with Few Wants, Who Won Heaven's Sympathy and was Rewarded by a Miraculous Event* 忠臣小欲知足諸天見感得報示奇事縁, is a story with a clear Confucian framework:

The late Middle Councilor Lord Ōmiwa no Takechimaro, of

up and put on ragged clothing 日々沐浴、潔身着綴” ate “herbs of immortality 仙草” and then “flew up to Heaven 飛於天.” Kyōkai explained that “although one does not practice the Buddhist Law, those who love such ways can communicate with those who drink the elixir of immortality 不修仏法、而好風流、仙藥感応.” In the tale, the practice of purification is regarded as an equivalence of learning Buddhist teachings. Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 33-34; Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 213.

⁵² See Terakawa, *Kyōkai to gekyō* 景戒と外教, Kurosawa, compiled by, *Nihon ryōiki: dochaku to gairai* 日本靈異記 土着と外来, page 1-28.

the Junior Third Rank awarded posthumously, was a loyal minister of Empress Jitō. According to the records, in the seventh year of the Akamidori era, the year mizuno-e tatsu [692], an imperial order was given to the officials telling them to prepare for the empress's visit to Ise on the third day of the month. The Middle Councilor, fearing that the visit would interfere with agricultural work, presented a memorial attempting to dissuade the empress. She dismissed this, however, saying that she would go anyway. He then took off his official cap and in court repeated his remonstrance. "Now, when people are busy with farm work, you should not go!"

Another time, in a period of drought, he closed off the water to his own fields and directed it to the fields of others, leaving his own fields to dry up. But the gods of Heaven responded with sympathy and ordered the dragons to send down rain. It rained on only his fields, however, and no on others. Yao's clouds gathered for him, and Shun's rains fell. Truly he was a

model of loyalty, a man of great humaneness and virtue.

In appraisal we say: This praiseworthy man of the Ōmiwa family from childhood loved to study, was loyal and benevolent, his actions pure, never unclean. He looked kindly on the people, bestowing blessings on them, directing water to their fields, shutting off his own, until the sweet rain fell. His fame will last for long!⁵³

故中納言從三位大神高市万侶卿者、大后天皇時忠臣也。有記云：「朱鳥七年壬辰二月、詔諸司：『当三月三日、將幸行伊勢。宜知此意、而設備焉。』時中納言、恐妨農務、上表直諫。天皇不從、猶將幸行。於是脫其蟬冠擎上朝庭、亦重諫之：『方今農節、不可行也！』或遭旱災時、使塞己田口、水施百姓田。田施水既窮、諸天感応、龍神降雨。唯澍卿田、不落余地。堯雲更靄、舜雨還霈。諒是忠信之至、德儀之大。」贊曰、修々神氏、幼年好学、忠而有仁、潔以

⁵³ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 45-46.

無濁、臨民流惠、施水塞田。甘雨時降、美譽長伝。⁵⁴

The events of the first part of this story, in which Empress Jitō ignores Takechimaro's advice and visits Ise anyway are also recorded in *Nihon Shoki*.⁵⁵ The logic behind Takechimaro's advice is that the movements of a sagely sovereign should not interfere with the order of the nature. Seeding, cultivating and harvesting are activities that must be carried out at their proper time each season.

The second half of this account which illustrates the rewards of falling rain is not documented in the *Nihon Shoki*. Remarkably, the clouds and rains are described as “Yao's clouds” 堯雲 and “Shun's rains” 舜雨. Like other stories in *Nihon ryōiki*, this account concerns the cause and effect of good deeds, but the context is Confucian rather than Buddhist.

⁵⁴ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 219.

⁵⁵ See Inoue Mitsusada, compiled by, *Nihon Shoki* 日本書紀, vol 2, page 607. This event is documented in the sixth month of the six year of Jitō. There is only one year of Akamidori 朱鳥 (686), the last year of Tenmu's reign. There is no reign name documented for the sixth year of Jitō.

With one minor exception⁵⁶, there are no real equivalents to this story in which Daoist ideas are related to the cause and effect of good deeds in *Nihon ryōiki*. As I noted in the first chapter, the elements of immortality and features of a Daoist *shi jie xian* 尸解仙 were excluded from the *Nihon ryōiki*'s version of the story of the Mount Kataoka beggar, the “hidden sage” identified by Prince Shotoku.⁵⁷ Although “outer writings” (non-Buddhist texts)” is a term that refers primarily to Confucian texts, we know that Daoist texts were also read by elite courtiers during the Nara and early Heian periods. A good illustration of this is Kūkai's 空海 *Sangō shiiki* 三教指帰. In this text that was originally written when he was twenty-four years old⁵⁸, three fictional characters, Master Kimō 龜毛先生, Hermit Kyomu 虛無隱士 and Beggar Kamei 仮名乞児 stand for Confucianism,

⁵⁶ See note 77 for the thirteenth story of the first volume about the woman who “flew to Heaven”.

⁵⁷ See note 33 of Chapter 1.

⁵⁸ A text named *Rōko shiiki* 聾瞽指帰 was written in the sixteenth year of Enryaku 延暦 (767) before he went to China. It is revised and renamed *Sangō shiiki* during the Tenchō 天長 era. *Rōko shiiki*, which means “a guidance for the blind and the deaf people”, is an expression influenced by Mei sheng's 枚乘 poem in *Wen Xuan* 文選. See Fukunaga and Tamura, *Nihon no meichō* 日本の名著, vol.3, page 54.

Daoism, and Buddhism, respectively, and debate with each other to decide which teaching is the most valuable.

The style of such a debate between fictional characters is clearly influenced by Han dynasty Fu 賦 works, but since this text is written from the perspective of a Buddhist, it is no surprise that the beggar Kamei persuades the other two that Buddhism is the best among the three teachings. Buddhism is also described in far more detail Confucianism and Daoism.⁵⁹ However, even though Buddhism overwhelmingly surpasses its rival teachings, Kūkai argues that all the three teachings should be equally studied in the preface to *Sangō shiiki*:

I believe that all the living creatures have different characters.

Those who fly are different from those who swim in the deep water. Therefore, the sages drive people into three different nets of teachings. They are called Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. Although the three teachings differ in their

⁵⁹ See Shimazono, *Shūkyō gaku no meichō* 30 宗教学の名著 30, page 27-34.

depth and shallowness, they are all teachings of the sages. A man who is captured by one of these nets will definitely behave himself. How can a captured man disobey the teachings of loyalty and filial piety?

余思、物情不一、飛沈異性。是故聖者驅人、教網三種、所謂釈李孔也。雖淺深有隔、並皆聖說。若入一羅、何乖忠孝。⁶⁰

We do not know whether Kyōkai shared this perspective, but his attitude toward the Way of Ying and Yang as well as Chen wei (J. Shin'i) 讖緯 divination appears to have changed in his late life. In the thirty-ninth story of the third volume, the last story of the *Nihon ryōiki*, Kyōkai mentions monk Zen'ju 善珠 (723-793) who was reborn as a prince of Emperor Kanmu because of his good virtue. As Terakawa notes, Zen'ju cites *Lun yu* 論語, *Zhou yi* 周易, *Lao zi* 老子, *Zhuang zi* 莊子, *Shan hai jing* 山海經 and so forth in his writings, which

⁶⁰ Fukunaga and Tamura, *Nihon no meichō* 日本の名著, vol.3, page 292.

demonstrate a general familiarity with all the three teachings.⁶¹ Moreover, in the thirty-eighth story of the third volume, to conclude his list of accounts, Kyōkai argues as follows:

It is evident from all this that an omen of disaster appears first, and afterward the actual disaster occurs. But I have never studied the art of yin-yang divination taught by the Yellow Emperor, nor am I learned in the profound wisdom of Tendai Chisha. Therefore, I am struck by without knowing the cause. And not having any means to avoid it, I am worn out with worry. We must maintain discipline, must we not? We cannot but be in awe!⁶²

是以当知、災相先兼表、後其实災来被也。然景戒未推軒轅黄帝之

⁶¹ See Terakawa, *Kyōkai to gekyō* 景戒と外教, Kurosawa, compiled by, *Nihon ryōiki: dochaku to gairai* 日本靈異記 土着と外来, page 3.

⁶² Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 198. See Note 54.

陰陽術、未得天台智者之甚深解、故不知免災之由。而受其災、不
推除災之術、而蒙滅愁。不応不勤、不可不恐也。⁶³

Because both the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth stories are written after he became affiliated with Yakushi-ji, it is possible that Kyōkai's knowledge had been broadened since he had better access to texts from a variety of genres. "Tendai Chisha", or Zhiyi, is mentioned in the preface to the third volume as well.⁶⁴ When he notes that he never studied the Yin and Yang divination, this does not seem to be simply modest rhetoric, but suggests that actually he did not have chance to study Daoist ideas or read Daoist texts earlier in his life. If we compare the preface to *Nihon ryōiki* with that of *Sangō Shiiki* written by the well-educated aristocrat Kūkai, Kyōkai does not seem to share a similar level of access toward all genres of Chinese texts. It seems unlikely, therefore, that Kyōkai made Nagaya a sinner because of Nagaya's interests in Daoism.

⁶³ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 295.

⁶⁴ See note 51 of Chapter 1.

7. Nagaya's Burial and his Descendants

There are two further outstanding differences between Kyōkai's story about Prince Nagaya and the accounts of *Shoku nihongi*. First, in Kyōkai's tale, it is suggested that all Nagaya's children and grandchildren were also forced to commit suicide. However, according to *Shoku nihongi*, all his children except for those between Prince Nagaya and Princess Kibi were pardoned.⁶⁵ Among these were Nagaya's sons by Nagako 長娥子, a daughter of Fujiwara no Fuhito (please refer to Chart 2). Princes Asukabe 安宿王, Kibumi 黄文王, and Yamashiro 山背王 survived the incident and went on to serve at the court. In a further twist, however, Nagaya's sons Asukabe and Kibumi would themselves later be implicated in a succession dispute, as is documented in the following entry on the death of Prince Yamashiro, also known as Fujiwara no Otosada 藤原弟貞:

The seventieth day of the Tenth Month, seventh year of

⁶⁵ See note 15 and 21.

Tenpyō Hōji. Associate Counselor, Minister of the Rites, Junior Third Rank Fujiwara no ason Ootosada passed away. Ootosada was a son of Senior Second Rank Prince Nagaya, the Minister of the Left of the Heijō court. In the first year of Tenpyō, Prince Nagaya committed suicide for his crimes. His sons, Junior Fourth Rank Lower Grade Prince Kashiwade, No Rank Prince Kuwata, Prince Katsuragi, Prince Kagitori also committed suicide. At this time, Prince Asukabe, Prince Kibumi, Prince Yamashiro and his daughter Kyōshō were jointly liable. However, because their mother was a daughter of the Dajō-daijin Fujiwara (Fuhito), they were exempted from the death penalty. In the eighth year of Shōhō (757), Asukabe and Kibumi joined a rebellion. Prince Yamashiro secretly informed the emperor of their plot. Empress Takano (Kōken) rewarded this and bestowed the family name of Fujiwara on him. His first name was Ootosada.

《天平宝字七年（七六三）十月丙戌【十七】》丙戌。参議礼部卿從三位藤原朝臣弟貞薨。弟貞者、平城朝左大臣正二位長屋王子也。天平元年、長屋王有罪自尽。其男從四位下膳夫王。無位桑田王。葛木王。鉤取王、亦皆自經。時安宿王。黄文王。山背王。并女教勝。復合從坐。以藤原太政大臣之女所生。特賜不死。勝宝八歲。安宿。黄文謀反。山背王陰上其變。高野天皇嘉之。賜姓藤原。名曰弟貞。

66

Princes Asukabe and Kibumi joined Tachibana no Naramaro's rebellion against Fujiwara no Nakamaro.⁶⁷ Naramaro backed Nagaya's son Kibumi as a candidate to become crown prince. The incident ended with Naramaro's failure, Kibumi's death, and Prince Asukabe and his wife were exiled to Tosa (Tenpyō-Hōji 1 天平宝字元年, 757).⁶⁸

Of the three princes, only Prince Kibumi is mentioned in *Nihon ryōiki*, in the

⁶⁶ Aoki, etc, SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol.3, page 441.

⁶⁷ See note 4.

⁶⁸ There is a possibility that Kyōkai confused this incident with Nagaya's and had his body exiled to Tosa in his tale. See note 17.

thirty-eighth story of the third volume, but his death is not related to Nagaya's. In Kyōkai's story, Prince Nagaya's bones were first "exiled to Tosa province" and because his curse caused the death of many people, they were "moved to Kii Province." However, as I explained earlier, this would in fact have been impossible given Nagaya and Kibi's exceptionally high status. In actual fact, they were buried with great reverence at Mount Ikoma.⁶⁹

Why did Kyōkai ignore this and change the details of Nagaya's burial? It is possible that he did not have access to *Shoku nihongi* and therefore simply made up the story. On the other hand, if he did read *Shoku nihongi* and was familiar with the details of Nagaya's burial, what might be the reason for him to make such a change?

One possible reason is that Mount Ikoma, as I noted in the first chapter, was closely associated with Gyōki. Mount Ikoma was central to Gyōki's early career,⁷⁰ and was also the place where he "left his clerical form on Mount Ikoma and his

⁶⁹ See note 21.

⁷⁰ See note 67 of Chapter 1. Also, See Yoshida, *Gyōki to ritsuryō kokka* 行基と律令国家 page 68-70.

compassionate spirit moved to the golden palace.”⁷¹ Judging from the content of the seventh story of the second volume which I cited in the first chapter, it is clear that Kyōkai was well-aware of Mount Ikoma’s connections to Gyōki and for that reason may have wanted to erase Nagaya’s connection to Ikoma, given that he regarded Prince Nagaya as responsible for the suppression of the “hidden sage.”

⁷¹ The seventh story of the second volume. See Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 79.

Chapter 3: The Vernacularization of Miraculous Events

In this chapter, I discuss how the *Nihon ryōiki* adapts Chinese sources to fit the framework of “vernacular miraculous events” (自土奇事) defined by Kyōkai. The nature of the *setsuwa* (anecdotes or “spoken stories”) genre is that the circulation of stories usually results in variations that differ from one narrator to another. In the context of Buddhist preaching, the action of a monk orally transmitting the teachings is called *shōdō* 唱導, literally “to chant and to guide”.¹ In many cases, this kind of preaching is delivered in an approachable style using a variety of anecdotes, folk tales or stories from the sutras. A narrator might change the details of a story based on his own experience, and when the oral narration is written down, the record keeper might add their own interpretation

¹ For the definition and the history of *shōdō* in Japan, see Abe Yasurō, *Setsuwa no ba* 説話の場, *Setsuwa no kōza* 説話の講座, Honda, edited by, volume 3, page 9-40. Although there is no direct evidence to show that *Nihon ryōiki* was used as a script for *shōdō* gatherings, some scholars argue that the main target of Kyōkai’s preaching are lower-ranked provincial aristocrats, an audience that relied on *shōdō* transmission rather than reading the texts. Therefore, they have assumed that *Nihon ryōiki* is a “literature of oral transmission” 唱導の文学. See Kojima, *chūsei shōdō bungaku no kenkyū* 中世唱導文学の研究; Yagi, *Nihon ryōiki no kenkyū* 日本靈異記の研究.

to the story. Likewise, when a story is adapted from other sources, the writer might change the details and present the story in a style that makes sense for their audience. In such a context, it is difficult to attribute authorship to either the narrator or the recorder. Therefore, it is preferable to describe Kyōkai as the “compiler” instead of the “author” of *Nihon ryōiki*.²

As the title of *Nihon ryōiki* suggests, the collection consists of tales that are defined as miraculous happenings. These events occurred in the land of Japan rather than in other remote countries such as China. In fact, Kyōkai’s compilation policy is clearly stated in the preface to the first volume as follows:

Long ago in the land of China, the *Myōhōki* [Ch. *Mingbaoji*; *Record of Invisible Works of Karmic Retribution*] was compiled; and during the great Tang Dynasty, the *Hannyagenki* [Ch. *Bore yanji*; A collection of Stories on the *Kongō-hannya-kyō* (*Diamond Sutra*)] was written. But why

² See Kasuga, *Koten toshite no nihon ryōiki* 古典としての日本霊異記, *Bukkyō bungaku no koten* 仏教文学の古典, vol.1, page 3.

should we respect only these records of foreign countries and not credit the miraculous stories that occur in our own land? Since these events occurred here and I saw them with my own eyes, I cannot let them go unrecorded. After pondering them for a long time, I can no longer maintain silent. Therefore, I have written down what I have chanced to hear, entitling it *Nihonkoku genpō zen'aku ryōiki* [*Miraculous Stories of the Reward of Good and Evil from the Country of Japan*], compiling it in these three volumes and handing it down to future times.³

昔漢地造冥報記、大唐国作般若驗記。何唯慎乎他国伝録、弗信恐乎自土奇事。粵起目矚之、不得忍寢。居心思之、不能默然。故聊注側聞、号曰日本国現法善惡靈異記、作上中下参卷、以流季葉。⁴

³ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 11.

⁴ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 201-202.

Although Kyōkai states that the collection consists exclusively of vernacular stories that “occur in the land of Japan,” many of the tales in *Nihon ryōiki* are in fact strongly inspired by or adapted from Chinese anecdotal collections and Buddhist texts such as *Ming bao ji* 冥報記, *Fa yuan zhu lin* (J. *Hō'on jurin*) 法苑珠林, *Tai ping gung ji* 太平廣記, *Sou shen ji* 搜神記, and so forth. Some of the stories share similar motives, others are similar in the outlines and details.⁵

In the stories that share similar plots, Kyōkai switches the names of characters and locations to Japanese ones, resetting the stories in Japanese reigns and historical context. In doing so, Kyōkai seemingly intended to present the stories not as citations from Chinese sources, but as records of miraculous events that had occurred both in Japan and remote China. Kyōkai provides these miraculous events as evidence to argue that Japan is a land that deserve the Buddha's salvation. This chapter examines how Kyōkai reinterprets and retells the details of originally Chinese tales and makes them accessible for his target

⁵ See Nakata, *Nihon ryōiki*, 426-439. Nakata lists all one hundred and sixteen tales in *Nihon ryōiki* and compares them with similar stories in other texts. For the influence of the Chinese narratives that are non-Buddhist, also see Kōno: *Nihon ryōiki to chūgoku no denshō* 日本靈異記と中国の伝承.

readers.

As Kyōkai emphasizes in the preface to the first volume⁶, he believed that people should equally study the “outer texts” 外書 and the Buddhist sutras. Indeed, the sages in *Nihon ryōiki* are often related to Confucian models, and stories of filial piety also show the influence of Confucian ideas.⁷ However, the *Nihon ryōiki* is also selective in how it relates its stories to Chinese precedents. For example, Kyōkai does not include any mention of Prince Shōtoku being the reincarnation of the Chinese monk Huisi 惠思 (515-577), a widely accepted story that further idolized the prince with a legendary reincarnation tale. As I will argue, the reason for this omission is due to the vernacularizing agenda of *Nihon ryōiki*.

1. The Reincarnation of Sages: Monk Huisi, Prince Shōtoku and Emperor Shōmu

⁶ See note 13 and 19, chapter 1.

⁷ The seventeenth story of the first volume and the thirty-ninth story of the second volume are tales that mention Ding Lang 丁蘭, a character that symbolizes filial piety in *Xiao zi zhuan* 孝子傳.

In the first chapter of the dissertation, I discussed the fifth story of the first volume, “*On Having Faith in the Three Treasures and Gaining an Immediate Reward*”, a story in which Kyōkai claimed that Emperor Shōmu was the reincarnation of Prince Shōtoku.⁸ As I noted, this particular version of Shōmu’s reincarnation seems not to have been a widely circulated tale among high-ranking courtiers in the second half of the ninth century. On the other hand, with the arrival of the Chinese monk Jianzhen (J. Ganjin 688-763) 鑑真 in Japan in Tenpyō Shōhō 6 (754), a story describing that Prince Shōtoku was the reincarnation of Huisi became increasingly popular at court. By the end of the eighth century, when Kyōkai was active, this connection was used to further legitimize the sagehood of Prince Shōtoku.⁹

For example, Saichō 最澄(766-822) made full use of this reincarnation tale in promoting Tendai teachings. He was familiar with the idea before he travelled to China and studied at Mount Tiantai 天台山 in Enryaku 23 (804).¹⁰ Later in

⁸ See note 46 and 48 of Chapter 1.

⁹ See Tanaka Tsuguhito, *Shōtoku taishi shrinkō no seiritsu* 聖徳太子信仰の成立, page 157-158.

¹⁰ See Yoshimura, *Shōtoku taishi* 聖徳太子, page 161.

Kōnin 弘仁 7 (816), in the foreword to a poem he composed to attribute to the Shitennō-ji 四天王寺,¹¹ Saichō mentioned this connection in order to promote the Tendai teachings:

Our Lotus Prince Shōtoku is the reincarnation of the Great Master Huisi of the Nanyue mountains...As a great-great-grandson of him, I, Japanese Monk Saichō of Kōfuku-ji, would like to promote my master's teachings even though I am not wise.

今我法華聖德太子者、即是南嶽慧思大師後身也...日本玄孫興福寺沙門最澄、雖愚、願弘我師教。¹²

In this passage, Saichō confirmed that Shōtoku was the reincarnation of Huisi,

¹¹ Shitennō-ji is one of the seven temples that are believed to be founded by Prince Shōtoku.

¹² See Saichō, *Dengyō daishi zenshū* 伝教大師全集 vol. 1, page 591.

and identified himself as a descendant of the prince. In Saichō's view, Shōtoku is not only the sage who first promoted Buddhism in Japan, but also the sage who introduced the Lotus sutra and Tendai teachings.

Even though Tiantai's Zhiyi (Tendai Chisha 天台智者) is mentioned twice in *Nihon ryōiki* in the third volume¹³, Kyōkai did not include this well-known reincarnation tale in *Nihon ryōiki*. What could be the possible reasons for Kyōkai to have excluded this Huisi-Shōtoku connection while introducing his own tale of a Shōtoku-Shōmu reincarnation? As Shida points out, since Kyōkai became affiliated with Yakushi-ji temple in his late life, there is little doubt that he was a Hossō sect 法相宗 monk.¹⁴ Indeed, it would be reasonable to assume a rivalry between the Hossō sect and Tendai sect, or a conflict between the reform on ordination and precepts proposed by Saichō's new Buddhism and objections from

¹³ See note 51 of Chapter 1 and note 88 of Chapter 2.

¹⁴ According Kyōkai's own words in the thirty-eighth story of the third volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, he received the rank of Dentōjūi 伝燈住位 in Enryaku 14 (795). See Shida, *Nihon ryōiki to hossō shū* 日本靈異記と法相宗, *Kodai bunka* 古代文化 vol. 24, no.10. Shida assumes that Chikō, an important monk of Sanron shū 三論宗, was portrayed as a monk who insulted Gyōki because of the conflict between Hossō and Sanron.

the Southern Capital Buddhism.¹⁵ However, Kyōkai did not seem to personally oppose the Tendai teachings in *Nihon ryōiki*. On the contrary, in the thirty-eighth story of the third volume,¹⁶ Kyōkai mentions humbly that he was not knowledgeable enough to “learn the profound wisdom” of Tendai. In the preface to the third volume, his attitude toward the Tendai teachings is stated in a similar way:

I, the miserable monk Kyōkai, have not studied enough to rival the Learned One Tiantai. My understanding does not grasp the subtleties known to the holy and eloquent man. I am one who wields a mere seashell to dip up the ocean, who look through a straw to measure the sky.¹⁷

羊僧景戒、所学者、未得天台智者之問術、未得神人弁者之答術、

¹⁵ See Tamura and Fukunaga, *Nihon no meichō* 日本の名著, vol.3, page 15-17, 21.

¹⁶ See note 88 of Chapter 2.

¹⁷ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 133.

是猶以螺酌海、因管窺天者矣。¹⁸

Given the fact that Kyōkai showed his interest in Tendai teachings in general, what makes him exclude the well-known Huisi-Shōtoku reincarnation tale? Before answering this question, I will first examine the historical context with regard to Jianzhen and people connected to him.

2. Jianzhen and the Tiantai teachings: How the Huisi Reincarnation Tale was Created

Jianzhen is known as the Chinese monk who introduced the Ritsu sect 律宗 of Buddhism to Japan and founded the temple Tōshōdai-ji 唐招提寺. He was invited to Japan to establish the precepts necessary to regulate monastic life and an ordination platform. In Tenpyō 14 (742), Jianzhen accepted the invitation of the Japanese monks Ei'ei 栄叡(?-749) and Fushō 普照(?-?) and made up his

¹⁸ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 262.

mind to move to Japan. Between 743 and 748, he made five unsuccessful attempts to reach Japan. In the first month of Tenpyō Shōhō 6 (754), Jianzhen, at age 66 and totally blind, finally reached the southern shores of Kyūshū. According to *Shoku nihongi*, three months later, in the fourth month of that year, he arrived in Nara and immediately established an ordination platform at Tōdai-ji 東大寺 where he ordained Emperor Shōmu and Empress Kōmyō. In 759, Shōmu bestowed on him the former residence of Prince Niitabe, where he established Tōshōdai-ji and resided. Therefore, Tōshōdai-ji is regarded as the headquarters of the Ritsu sect.

The establishment of precepts and the ordination platform was not Jianzhen's only contribution. He was also deeply involved in the spread of Tiantai teachings in Japan. Important Tiantai texts were introduced to Japan with his arrival, and his disciples claimed themselves as Tiantai sect monks.¹⁹ Among the disciples

¹⁹ Among the sutras he brought to Japan, the so-called “big three commentaries of Tiantai” 天台三大部 (*Mo he zhi guan* 摩訶止觀, *Fa hua xuan yi* 法華玄義 and *Fa hua wen ju* 法華文句) are included. See Ibuki, *Shōtoku taishi eshi goshin setsu no keisei* 聖徳太子慧思後身説の形成, *Tōyō shisō bunka* 東洋思想文化, 2014.

of Jianzhen who traveled to Japan with him, Situo 思託 (J. Shitaku, 思託?) is one of the key people who spread the teachings of Tiantai through his writings. In his work *Enryaku sōroku* 延暦僧録²⁰, he signed his name as “The author, Tiantai Monk Shi Situo 天台沙門釈思託撰”.

Saichō first was attracted to Tiantai teachings through the works of Daoxuan 道璿²¹ (702-760), and later became familiar with the Tiantai sutras brought to Japan by Jianzhen. Ibuki assumes that Saichō made up his mind to devote himself to the Tiantai teachings thanks to the promotion of Tiantai by the disciples of Jianzhen.²²

Among the works written by Jianzhen’s students, *Tō daiwajō tō seiden* 唐大和上東征伝 is deeply related to the tale of Huisi-Shōtoku reincarnation. The text was

²⁰ It originally consisted of ten scrolls, but most are lost. Its contents are found in citations of later texts such as *Fusō ryakki* 扶桑略記 and *Tōdaiji yōroku* 東大寺要録. See *DBZ*, vol. 112, page 1.

²¹ Daoxuan traveled to Japan in 736 and had a student named Gyōhyō 行表 (724-797) who became a teacher of Saichō. See *Iwanami bukkyō jiten* 岩波仏教辞典, page 610.

²² See Ibuki, *Shōtoku taishi eshi goshin setsu no keisei* 聖徳太子慧思後身説の形成, *Tōyō shisō bunka* 東洋思想文化, 2014.

written in Hōki 宝亀 10 (779) by Shinjin Genkai 真人元開, better known as Ōmi no Mifune 淡海三船.²³

Before Mifune's work, Situo had already completed a three-scroll biography of Jianzhen, titled *Daitō denkaishi sōmeiki daiwajō Ganjin den* 大唐伝戒師僧名記 大和上鑑真伝. Based on a request of Situo, Mifune synthesized the content of the three-scroll biography and wrote the concise one-scroll *Tō daiwajō tō seiden*.²⁴

In *Tō daiwajō tō seiden*, Jianzhen told the Japanese monks the reasons encouraging him to travel to Japan as follows:

At this time, the great master resided at Daming-si temple in Yangzhou. He taught precepts for the monks there. Ei'ei and Fushō arrived at Daming-si, paid homage to the master, and

²³ Genkai 元開 is the Buddhist name that Daoxuan 道璿 gave him as one of his disciples. He returned to the lay life in Tenpyō shōhō 3 (751) and received the family name of Ōmi. Mifune is a son of Prince Ikebe 池辺王; Ikebe is a son of Prince Kadono 葛野王 and a grandson of Prince Ōtomo 大友皇子. After Jianzhen arrived at Japan, Mifune became one of his students.

²⁴ See Andō, *Ganjin daiwajō den no kenkyū* 鑑真大和上伝の研究, page 305-306. Situo's three-scroll biography of Jianzhen is lost and only part of its contents can be seen in citations.

explained the purpose of their visit. The two Japanese monks said: “Buddhism spread eastward and arrived at Japan. Although the Dharma exists there, there is no one who can transmit the Dharma. In Japan, there used to be a prince named Shōtoku who predicted that ‘the sacred teaching will prevail in Japan in two hundred years.’ We are honored to follow this fate, and humbly ask you to travel to the east and promote the Buddhist teachings in our land.”

時大和尚在揚州大明寺、爲衆僧講律。榮叡、普照、至大明寺頂禮大和尚足下、具述本意。曰：「佛法東流、至日本國。雖有其法、而無傳法人。日本國昔有聖德太子、曰：『二百年後、聖教興於日本。』今鍾此運、願大和尚東遊興化。」²⁵

Hearing this, Jianzhen spoke of his concerns about Japan. He listed two

²⁵ Andō, *Ganjin daiwajō den no kenkyū* 鑑真大和上傳の研究, page 111.

Japanese princes that he already knew before this meeting.

The master answered: “I heard that after Monk Si of Nanyue (Huisi) passed away, he reincarnated as a prince of Japan, promoted Buddhism in that land and brought salvation to the people. I also heard that a Japanese Prince named Nagaya had a deep reverence for Buddha and respected the Buddhist teachings. He made one thousand robes and donated to the monks of great virtue in this country. On these robes, a poem of four lines was stitched. The poem said: ‘Although the mountains and rivers are divided into different territories, the moon and the wind share the same sky. I send this poem to all the disciples of Buddha and wish for a karmic bond in the next life’. When I think over this, I know that Japan is truly a land where Buddhism prospers. It is a land where people are connected to the Buddha.”

大和尚答曰：「昔聞南岳思禪師遷化之後、託生倭國王子、興隆佛法、濟度衆生。又聞、日本國長屋王崇敬佛法、造千袈裟、來施此國大德、衆僧。其袈裟緣上、繡著四句曰：『山川異域、風月同天、寄諸佛子、共結來緣。』以此思量、誠是佛法興隆、有緣之國也。」²⁶

Some scholars argue that this Huisi-Shōtoku reincarnation tale was not initially related to the promotion of Tiantai,²⁷ but others assert that the tale was created in Japan by those who were closely related to Jianzhen for the purpose of securing the status of Tiantai.²⁸ The circulation of this tale not only helped to empower Jianzhen's voice, but also legitimized the promotion of Tiantai teachings.

Why was Huisi chosen to be the previous incarnation of Prince Shōtoku? Jianzhen's disciples who intended to promote Tiantai teachings in Japan chose

²⁶ Andō, *Ganjin daiwajō den no kenkyū* 鑑真大和上伝の研究, page 111.

²⁷ See Wang Yong, *Shōtoku taishi jikū chōetsu* 聖徳太子時空超越, page 123, 128-129. He cites texts compiled later in the Kamakura period such as Kokan shiren's 虎関師錬 *Genkō shakusho* 元亨釈書 to argue that the spread of Tendai began before Jianzhen and was not related to his disciples.

²⁸ See Iida, *Shōtoku taishi den no kenkyū* 聖徳太子伝の研究, page 319.

him not only because Huisi was the second patriarch of Tiantai and the teacher of Zhiyi, but also due to some historical facts that the reincarnation tale might have been based on.

First, is the fact that Huisi was known for his reincarnation stories in China. In the *Xu gao seng zhuan* 續高僧傳 (or *Tang gao seng zhuan* 唐高僧傳, compiled in the middle of Tang dynasty), Huisi was depicted as a monk with the extraordinary ability to remember what happened in his previous life and the knowledge of where he was to go in the next life.²⁹ Second is the fact that the year Huisi passed away was close to the year Shōtoku was born.³⁰ Since Prince Shōtoku was highly idolized in this period, reincarnation was a reasonable explanation for all his extraordinary talents.³¹ According to *Eshi shichidai ki* 慧

²⁹ When Huisi first arrived at the Nanyue mountains, he told other monks that he remembered the location where he had practiced meditation and been killed by robbers in a previous life. Huisi had people dig out the bones of his previous incarnation in the exact location he had been killed. He also implied that the sages were waiting for his visit after he passed away. See SAT *Daizō kyō* database, 50, 2060, 563b.

³⁰ Huisi passed away in 577. Shōtoku was born in 574.

³¹ In *Song gao seng zhuan* 宋高僧傳 (compiled in 989 in the Northern Song dynasty), both the reincarnation tale and Nagaya's poem (about the donation of robes) are included in the biography of Jianzhen (鑑真傳), with some slight changes in the details. First, Huisi reincarnated as the "king" of Japan (生彼、

思七代記, compiled in Hōki 2(771)³², Huisi was reincarnated six times before he “was born in the royal family of Japan (生倭国之王家)” and “became a Japanese emperor” (倭州天皇彼所聖化).³³

Did Prince Nagaya actually donate robes to China? Why did Jianzhen care to know about this contribution of Nagaya? There is no further evidence to prove the reliability of the story since it was not documented in other historical records.

為國王), while the name of Prince Shōtoku was excluded. Second, the man who made one thousand robes is referred to as “Nagaya of that country”(彼國長屋) instead of “Prince Nagaya,” who was the “Prime Minister”(所言長屋者、則相國也) at the time. The source listed by the compiler Zan’ning 贊寧 (919-1001) is not Mifune’s *Tō seiden* 東征伝 but Situo’s work (僧思託著東征傳詳述焉). It is assumed that the text was circulating in Song dynasty China while Zan’ning compiled his biographical collection. See Fan Xiangyong, *Song gao seng zhuan* 宋高僧傳, page 317-318. Also, Nagaya’s poem was included in *Quan tang shi* 全唐詩, composed by the “Japanese Prime Minister Nagaya” (長屋日本相國也) instead of “Prince Nagaya.” See *Wen yuan ge siku quan shu* 文淵閣四庫全書, *Quan tang shi* 全唐詩, vol. 732, page 5.

³² This text is believed to be compiled by the Shitennō-ji monk Keimyō 敬明 in 771. See Iida, *Shōtoku taishi den no sui’i: denryaku seiritsu izen no syo taishi den* 聖德太子伝の推移—『伝暦』成立以前の諸太子伝—, *kokugo to kokubungaku* 国語と国文学, no.50, page 90-103.

³³ See Takeuchi, *Nara ibun* 寧楽遺文, volume 2, page 890-895. This text included the Mount Katayama beggar tale and the story of Goguryo Monk Hejya 慧慈 who passed away from the deep sorrow of losing his beloved student Prince Shōtoku.

However, as Terasaki notes, it is highly possible that fine robes were made at Nagaya's residence judging from the excavated wooden tablets that document an "office of sewing" 縫殿所 and "office of dyeing" 染所. If this donation was indeed a historical fact, then the robes would have been delivered by the envoy sent in Yōrō 1 (717), led by Tajihi no Agatamori 多治比県守, accompanied by literati such as Genbō 玄昉, Kibi no Makibi 吉備真備 and Abe no Nakamaro 阿倍仲麻呂.³⁴

As I argued in the second chapter, it is obvious that in the second half of the eighth century, Nagaya was not regarded as a sinner who intended to "overthrow the state." If he was still considered to have been a threat to Shōmu and his daughter Kōken 孝謙/ Shōtoku 称徳, Situo or Ōmi no Mifune would have been unlikely to mention Prince Nagaya's contributions to Buddhism. We do not know if Kyōkai had a chance to read Mifune's *Tō daiwajō tō seiden*, compiled in 779. What we can say, judging from the contents of *Nihon ryōiki*, is that unlike the high ranked courtiers and literati, Kyōkai did regard Nagaya as a sinner who

³⁴ See Terasaki, *Nagaya ō* 長屋王, page 240-241. Ei'ei and Fushō was sent to invite Jianzhen at the next envoy in Tenpyō 5 (733).

punished a hidden sage.

To conclude this section and to answer the question that why the Huisi reincarnation tale was excluded from *Nihon ryōiki*, there are two possibilities that we should take into consideration. First, is the possibility that Kyōkai had not read any of the texts³⁵ that contributed to the formation of the Huisi reincarnation tale or had not heard this story from any other source. This is plausible given that Kyōkai was affiliated with Yakushi-ji as a Hossō sect monk, and modestly claimed in the third volume of *Nihon ryōiki* that “I have not studied enough to rival the Learned One Tiantai” 未得天台智者之問術, “Nor am I learned in the profound wisdom of Tendai Chisha” 未得天台智者之甚深解.

The other possibility is that if Kyōkai did read or had heard the reincarnation story, then he must have excluded the story not because he necessarily opposed

³⁵ The following works are related to the Huisi reincarnation tale. Written in the second half of the eighth century, they are listed in chronological order: Situo's *Myōki den* 名記伝(736?), Fajin's 法進 (709-778, one of the disciples of Jianzhen who followed him to move to Japan) *Bonmō kyō chū* 梵網經注(?), Ōmi no Mifune's Chinese poem *Kojū shōtoku gūji* 扈從聖德宮寺 (767, vol. 10 of *Keikoku shū* 經国集), Keimyō's 敬明 *Eshi shichidai ki* 慧思七代記 (771), Ōmi no Mifune's *Tō seiden* (779), Situo's *Enryaku sōroku* (788) and Myōitsu's 明一 *Umayado kōtaishi den* 厩戸皇太子伝 (771-798).

Tiantai teachings but for other reasons. Given that Kyōkai and Saichō were contemporaries, Shirado argues that there are several ideas in common between the two: they both opposed the ritsuryō regulations on the priesthood and showed their preference toward the newly introduced Tiantai teachings.³⁶

Judging from the compilation policy and the sagehood framework Kyōkai established, I argue that there are two possible reasons for him to exclude the Huisi-Shōtoku tale. First, since Kyōkai has claimed that Emperor Shōmu is a reincarnation of Prince Shōtoku, to include the Huisi-Shōtoku tale might have connected his lineage of Japanese sages to a Chinese lineage, and given that the stories in this collection are supposed to be exclusively miraculous events in Japan, such a Huisi-Shōtoku-Shōmu reincarnation lineage would seem to contradict the main purpose of his collection.

Second, Kyōkai might have excluded the tale because of Prince Nagaya. Since he has made Nagaya a sinner in the first story of the second volume, Nagaya's

³⁶ See Shirado, *Jidai fūchō toshite no bukkyō shisō to Saichō* 時代風潮としての仏教思想と最澄, *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度学仏教学研究, no.28, vol.2, page 561-566. Also see Shirado, *Saichō shisō keisei ni tsuite no ichi shiten* 最澄思想形成についての一視点, *Ōtani gakuhō* 大谷学報, vol.59, no. 2, page 21-33.

contribution of donating the robes and his unexpected connection with Jianzhen would contradict the role of sinner he plays in Kyōkai's collection. Jianzhen too, who named Prince Nagaya as one of the reasons that encouraged him to move to Japan, must be excluded as a Chinese monk who had benefited from the prince. Therefore, Jianzhen and his disciples are also not mentioned in *Nihon ryōiki*.

This is not the only example of a tale related to China being excluded from *Nihon ryōiki*. In the next section, I compare a story from *Min bao ji* 冥報記 (*Tales of Miraculous Retribution*) and a story in *Nihon ryōiki* that are extremely similar and share the same plot, focusing on the details that were revised in *Nihon ryōiki* and analyzing why these changes are made.

3. The Missing Walls of the Citadel: How the Main Point of a Chinese Tale was Removed

In this section, I analyze the tenth story of the second volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, titled *On Constantly Stealing Bird's Eggs, and Boiling and Eating them, He Suffered an Immediate and Evil Penalty* 常鳥卵煮食以現得惡死報緣, and make

a comparison with the similar story in *Ming bao ji*, titled *The Young Boy of Zhi County in Sui Dynasty* 隋冀州小兒.

Given the fact that stories in the *Nihon ryōiki* were inspired by a variety of Chinese sources, this specific text *Ming bao ji* is worth our special attention because it is one of the texts directly mentioned in the preface to the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki*.³⁷

Ming bao ji was compiled by a Tang dynasty bureaucrat named Tang Lin 唐臨 around Yong Hui 永徽 5 (651). According to its preface, the collection consists of stories that the compiler heard from the others or witnessed by himself.³⁸ The influence of the teachings of three levels (三階教) which were popular in the Sui and early Tang dynasties is notable in this text. Although *Ming bao ji* has been lost in China, many stories are cited in the Buddhist *leishu* 類書 *Fa yuan zhu lin* 法苑珠林 (668) and later in *Tai ping guang ji* 太平廣記 (978). The three-scroll *Min bao ji* we see today is based on the collections of Kōzan-ji 高山寺 and

³⁷ See note 3 and 4. *Min bao ji* is also one of the important sources for the *Shintan* 震旦 section of the *Konjaku monogatari shū* 今昔物語集.

³⁸ See *Setsuwa kenkyū kai*, compiled by, *Myōhōki no kenkyū* 冥報記の研究, page 431-432.

Chi'on-in 知恩院 in Japan.³⁹

Judging from the content of the tenth story of the second volume of *Nihon ryōiki*, it seems clear that the tale is adapted from *Min bao ji*. For the purpose of comparison, I cite the whole story here:

In the village of Shimoanashi in the Izumi district of Izumi province, there lived a young man whose name is unknown.

He was inherently evil and did not believe in the law of karmic causation, but constantly looked for birds' eggs to boil and eat.

In the sixth year of the Tenpyō shōbō era, in the spring, the Third Month of the year kinō-uma [754], a strange soldier came to him and announced, "I was sent by a provincial official!" He had a formal document four feet long fastened at

³⁹ Little is known about the initial length of *Min bao ji*. Unlike the three-scroll text that circulates today, in the *Nihon koku genzai sho mokuroku* 日本国見在書目録(831), *Ming bao ji* was documented as a ten-scroll collection. However, *Jiu tang shu* 舊唐書, *Xin tang shu* 新唐書, *Song shi* 宋史 and *Fa yuan zhu lin* all documented that *Ming bao ji* is a two-scroll text. See Fang Shiming, compiled by, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 7.

his waist. They went off together, and when they came to the village of Yamatae in Hitada district, they made their way into a field several acres in size that was filled with wheat more than two feet tall. When the young man looked, he saw that it was all in flames, with no place to put his feet. He began racing around the field, crying out, "I'm burning, I'm burning!"

At that time, one of the villagers had gone up into the hills to collect firewood. Seeing the young man racing around the field and crying, he came down from the hills and tried to drag him out of the fire, but the young man would not move. He struggled with him until he dragged him out beyond the hedge that bound the field, where the young man fell over on the ground.

He lay on the ground, moaning but saying nothing. Then, after a while, he recovered his senses and began crying, "Oh—my feet!" The villager asked him why he said that. He replied, "There was a soldier who summoned me and brought

me to this fire and forced me to walk in it. My feet felt as though they were being boiled! Wherever I looked, I was surrounded by hills of fire. There was no way out of the flames, and so I was racing around!” When the villagers heard this, they pulled open the garment the young man was wearing and looked at his legs. All the flesh had been burned away, and only the bones were left. The next day he died.

Truly we know that Hell exists in our present world and that we should believe in the law of karmic retribution. We should not be like crows that loving care of their own chicks but eat those of others. Without compassion, a person is no better than a crow! The Nirvana sutra says: “Though men and beasts differ in degree of respectably, they are alike in prizing life and regarding death gravely.” And the *Zen’aku-inga-kyō* [*Sutra on the effects of Good and Evil*] says: “He who in his present state cooks the little chicks, in death will fall into the

Hell of the River of Ashes!” This is what it means!⁴⁰

和泉国和泉郡下痛脚村、有一中男、姓名未詳也。天年邪見、不信因果、常求鳥卵、煮食為業。天平勝宝六年甲午春三月、不知兵士、來告中男言：「国司召也。」見兵士腰、負四尺札、即副共往、纔至郡內於山直里、押入麦畠。畠一町余、麦生二尺許。眼見燭火、踐足無間、走迴畠內、而叫哭曰：「熱哉々々！」時有当村人、入山拾薪、見於走轉哭叫之人、自山下来、執之而引。拒不所引、猶強追捉、乃從籬之外、牽之而出、蹠地而臥。嘿然不曰。良久蘇起、然病叫言：「痛足矣」云々。山人問言：「何故然也。」答曰：「有一兵士、召我将来、押入燭火、燒足如煮。見四方者、皆衛火山、無間所出、故叫走迴。」山人聞之、褰袴見膊、膊肉爛銷、其骨瓊在、唯逕之一日而死也。誠知、地獄現在、応信因果、不可如鳥、鳥慈己兒、而食他兒。無慈悲者、雖人如鳥矣。涅槃經云：「雖復人獸尊卑差別、宝命重死、二俱無異」云々。善惡因果經云：「今身燒煮鷄子者、死墮灰河地獄」者、

⁴⁰ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 82-83.

其謂之矣。⁴¹

This is a typical story about evil retribution in *Nihon ryōiki*, which depicts an instant punishment of death for the “inherently evil 天年邪見” young man who killed living creatures.⁴² His feet were burnt for boiling the eggs. A “Hell of feet-burning” is found in the *Sutra on the Past Vows of Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva* 地藏菩薩本願經: “There is also a hell called burning feet 復有地獄名曰燒脚.”⁴³ The “Hell of the River of Ashes 灰河地獄” is one of the sixteen hells in the eight Hell of Heat 八熱地獄.⁴⁴

The story is set in a fictional village named “Shimo-Anashi 下痛脚村” written in specific Chinese characters. As Izumoji explains, the young man’s scream of pain, “ana, ashi 痛、足”, is a pun with a double meaning that also indicates the name of the village, “anashi 痛脚”.⁴⁵ Therefore, Izumoji assumes that this story

⁴¹ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 237.

⁴² Other tales such as the eleventh and the twenty-seventh stories of the first volume also deal with the same issue of killing lives.

⁴³ See SAT Daizōkyō Text Database, 大集部, no.0412, 0781-0782. Also see note 60 of Chapter 1.

⁴⁴ See Nakata, *Nihon ryōiki*, page 175.

⁴⁵ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 77. As Matsuura explained, “Anashi” is

can also be interpreted as a tale about the origin of the place name (地名起源譚).⁴⁶ As Nakata argues, the Anashi pun shows the process of vernacularization of a tale that was originally Chinese (説話の日本化の経路).⁴⁷ By doing so, Kyōkai made the story of *Ming bao ji* better fit the context of a Japanese anecdote.

However, there are some details of the story that readers might find unsatisfying. For example, the reason the young man was “racing around” the wheat field is not clarified until the end of the story. He was not able to find a way out of the flames because the field was “surrounded by hills of fire”.

Unlike the somewhat confusing *Nihon ryōiki* version, the original story in *Min bao ji*, *The Young Boy of Ji County in Sui Dynasty* 隋冀州小兒, clearly explains why the protagonist was forced to “race around.”

a commonly used place name found in Yamato, Haraima and Musashi provinces. It was a playful writing to create a location that is named after the young man’s scream. See Matsuura, *Nihonkoku zen’aku genpō ryōiki chūshaku* 日本国善悪現報靈異記注釈, page 235.

⁴⁶ An early example of such a tale that explains the origin of a place name is in the first volume of *Kojiki*. When deity Susanowo first arrived at a place called Suga 須賀, he felt “refreshing” (sugasugashi, 吾來此地、我御心須賀須賀斯而). That is why this place is named Suga. See Kurano, *Kojiki*, page 45.

⁴⁷ See Nakata, *Nihon ryōiki*, page 175.

During the early years of the K'ai-huang period (581-600) of the Sui dynasty there lived in a village in Chi-chou a youth in his thirteenth year. He often stole hens' eggs from his neighbors and then roasted and ate them.

Early one morning before the villagers had gotten up, his father heard someone outside knocking on the door and calling out to the boy. His father told him to answer the door, where he saw a man, who said, "The officials are calling you up for corvée service."

"If they're summoning me for corvée," said the youth, "I'll have to go inside and get some clothes and provisions."

"That's not necessary," said the messenger, who then led the boy out the village gate.

South of the village were mulberry trees and fields, which had been tilled, but not yet planted. This morning the youth unexpectedly saw that to the right of the road there was a small citadel. All four sides had gates and towers, which were

scarlet and white and very beautiful.

The youth was curious, and asked, “Since when has this been here?”

The messenger scolded him and made him stop talking. Then leading him up to the north gate of the walled town, he ordered him to go in first. The youth went in and, just as he crossed the threshold, the gates suddenly closed.

The youth saw no one, for all the area inside the walls was empty. The ground, however, was covered with hot ashes and tiny flames just deep enough to cover his ankles. The boy suddenly began to scream and howl, and he ran toward the south gate, but it closed as he was about to reach it. He also ran toward the east, the west, and then the north gates, but in every case the same thing happened. Although each gate was open before he got there, as soon as he reached it the gate would close.

When the villagers came out to the fields, everyone—men

and women, young and old—saw the boy in the middle of the tilled fields. From his mouth came sounds like the screams of a bird, and he was running about in all four directions.

They all said to one another, “The boy must be crazy, coming out here in the morning like this and running around playing without taking a rest.”

When lunch time came the mulberry gatherers all returned home.

“Have you seen my son?” asked the boy’s father.

“He’s south of the village running around playing,” replied the mulberry gatherers. “We called out him but he wouldn’t come.”

The boy’s father went out of the village and in the distance he could see his son running. He loudly called out his name, and at that sound the youth halted. The citadel and the ashes suddenly disappeared, and upon seeing his father he collapsed to the ground. Crying tearfully, he told [what had happened].

When his legs were examined, the flesh or the upper parts proved to have been scorched dry, while below the knees they were roasted to a runny pulp. He was carried home and his injuries treated, but although the upper parts of his legs returned to normal, from the knees down they became withered bones. The neighbor heard about it and went to look at the place where he had been running, but although his footprints were clearly visible, there was no trace of ashes or flames. Thereupon the villagers—men, women, young and old alike—all upheld the precepts and become devout.

There was a most venerable monk from Chi-chou named Tao-hui 道慧 who told me this story. This was his neighboring village.⁴⁸

隋開皇初，冀州外邑中有小兒、年十三、常盜隣家雞卵、燒而食

⁴⁸ Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, page 235-237.

之。後早朝、村人未起、其父聞外有人叩門呼此兒聲。父令兒出應之、見一人云：「官喚汝役。」兒曰：「喚我役者、入取衣糧。」使者曰：「不須也。」因引兒出村門。村南舊是桑田、耕訖未下種、是旦、此兒忽見道右有一小城、四面門樓、丹素甚麗、兒怪曰：「何時有此？」使者訶之、使勿言。因引至城北門、令兒前入。兒入度闔、城門忽閉、不見一人、唯是空城。地皆熱灰碎火、深纔沒踝、兒忽呼叫、走趣南門、垂至而閉。又走東西北門、亦皆如是、未往則開、既至便闔。時村人出田採桑、男女大小皆見此兒在耕田中、口似啼聲、四方馳走、皆相謂曰：「此兒狂耶？旦來如此、遊戲不息。」至日食時、採桑者皆歸、兒父問曰：「見兒不？」桑人答曰：「在村南走戲、喚不肯來。」父出村、遙見兒走、大呼其名、一聲便住、城灰忽不見。見父而倒、號泣言之、視其足、半脛已上、血肉焦乾、其膝以下、洪爛如炙、抱歸養療之、髀已上肉如故、膝下遂為枯骨。隣里聞之、共往視其走處、足跡通利、了無灰火。於是邑人、男女大小、皆持戒練行。有大德僧道慧，本冀州人，為臨言之，此其隣邑也。⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Fang Shiming, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 53-54.

There are many changes made to the *Nihon ryōiki* tale from to the *Ming bao ji* original, such as the name place, the time period, and the ages of the protagonists.⁵⁰ The young man in *Nihon ryōiki* is older than the boy in *Min bao ji*; he receives an instant retribution of death⁵¹ while the boy in *Min bao ji* survives the horrible torment. Also, unlike *Nihon ryōiki*, there is no conclusive paragraph in *Min bao ji* stories where the compiler leaves his comments.⁵² The most remarkable change made in Kyōkai's tale, however, is the absence of the citadel and its closing gates. Since the citadel setting has an extremely important function in the original story, its exclusion makes the story harder to follow and less interesting. In the *Nihon ryōiki* version, there seems to be no reason for the

⁵⁰ In *Ming bao ji*, the young boy was “in his thirteenth year” (twelve-years old by the modern count), whereas the protagonist in *Nihon ryōiki* was a chūnan 中男, aged from seventeen to twenty according to the Taihō code regulations. See Izumoji, *Nihon ryōiki*, page 76.

⁵¹ As Kyōkai notes at the end of his story, the Hell of the Rivers of Ashes is a place where sinners fall after death. It implies that the young man will keep suffering even after death.

⁵² Such a style is usually seen in Chinese biographical historiography. For example, *Shi ji* 史記 concludes a biography with the comments of the compiler starting with “the Historian said” 太史公曰. In the case of *Shi ji*, it is not always clear whether this means Sima Qian himself or his father who served in the same post.

youth to race around the wheat field surrounded by the “hills of flames” (皆衛火山) without a way out. However, in the *Min bao ji* story, the boy runs about in all four directions because he is trying to find an open gate and is frustrated at every turn by the gates closing when he is about to reach them. The villagers do not try to save the boy because “from his mouth came sounds like the screams of a bird” (口似啼聲), which makes the villagers think the boy is playing around. In short, the *Nihon ryōiki* version excludes the punch line of the original story and removes the most fascinating part of it. The question is, why did Kyōkai make such a revision?

From the perspective of the vernacularization of the story, a burning wheat field may have reminded the readers of Japanese traditional fire-fallow cultivation,⁵³ or the story of Yamato Takeru’s grass-burning in the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki*.⁵⁴ However, I would argue that the story was changed because the

⁵³ Slash-and-burn agriculture was popular in Japan since the Jōmon period and was still used during the Nara period in certain areas. See Miyamoto: *Yama ni ikiru hitobito* 山に生きる人々, page 213-218.

⁵⁴ In the *Kojiki* version of this story, a provincial leader deceives Yamato Takeru and plans to kill him by setting a fire when he was in the middle of a prairie. Yamato Takeru cuts the grass around him with the Kusanagi sword and sets a counter-fire with the flint Yamato-bime gave him. See Kurano,

Japanese readers of *Nihon ryōiki* would probably have had difficulty imagining such a Chinese style citadel when they had never seen one.

In general, the Chinese “cheng 城” indicates both the city itself and the constructions that fortify the city. A city is surrounded by solid stone walls, with high towers established above the gates to watch for enemies and prepare for battle. In a small city (小城), such as the one illustrated in the *Ming bao ji* story, there stood four walls in the four directions, and there were four gates with towers above them in each of the walls respectively (四面門樓). Since the walls were invisible to the villagers, from afar all they saw is a boy who ran around on a tilled field.

It is doubtful that such Chinese-style surrounding walls (羅城) were ever completely constructed in Japanese capital cities. In *Nihon shoki*, it is documented that walls were erected around the Naniwa palace in the eighth year of Emperor Tenmu (679), but there is no archeological evidence to confirm this record.⁵⁵ For Fujiwara kyō 藤原京, neither historical records nor

Kojiki 古事記, page 137-138.

⁵⁵ (Eleventh month of the eighth year) Naniwa built an outer line of

archeological evidence point to the existence of surrounding walls. In both Heijō kyō 平城京 and Heian kyō 平安京, high walls were only constructed in a limited area to the left and right sides of Rajō gate (羅城門).⁵⁶ Only the south side of the two cities were fortified by walls.

While we cannot be sure of Kyōkai's intentions, there is no question that the omission of the citadel and its four walls had the effect of vernacularizing the tale for his target readers, who would have never seen a Chinese city surrounded by walls on all four directions and would therefore probably not have understood the trick of the closing gates. In this way, the story was adapted from *Min bao ji* and transformed into a “miraculous event in Japan,” with Japanese locations, names, and the omission of unfamiliar elements.

fortifications (天武天皇八年十一月)難波築羅城. See Inoue, *Nihon shoki*, vol.2, page 582.

⁵⁶ Based on archeological excavations, walls that were about one-block long built at the two wings of Rajō gate were found at the Heijō kyō site. According to *Engishiki* 延喜式, walls are constructed only at the south side of the city next to the Rajō gate of Heian kyō. See Ueda, compiled by, *Tojō* 都城, page 106-107. For the comparison between Chinese capital cities in Sui and Tang dynasties and Japanese palaces, also see Shen ruiwen, *Zhong guo gu dai wu zhi wen hua shi* 中國古代物質文化史.

4. The Palace in an Exotic Land: King Yama's Palace in *Nihon ryōiki*

However, not all Chinese-style buildings are omitted from Kyōkai's collection. On the contrary, some are used in *Nihon ryōiki* in order to create a foreign and exotic space for readers to imagine a world different from the land in which they live. A good examples of this is the palace of King Enra 閻羅王 (King Yama, the king of Hell).

As we saw in the previous section, the *lou* 樓 towers that were usually built above the walls of four-walled compounds(四面門樓) have been excised along with the entire citadel in the tenth story of the second volume of *Nihon ryōiki*. However, the towers do appear in three other stories, all of which depicts King Yama's palace. First, the fifth story of the second volume, titled *On worshipping Chinese Gods, Killing Oxen as a Sacrifice, but also Doing Good by Setting Living Creatures, He Received Both Good and Evil Rewards* 依漢神崇殺牛而祭又修放生善以現得善惡報緣,⁵⁷ is a tale about a rich man who was sent to the court of King

⁵⁷ In *Shoku nihongi* it is documented that people in seven provinces killed oxen to worship Chinese gods in the tenth year of Enryaku (791). The court

Yama to be judged after death. The description of Enra's palace is presented as follows:

When only nine days had passed, the men returned to life and told them the story:

“There appeared to me seven beings who had the heads of oxen and bodies of men. They tied ropes to my hair and dragged me along with them. As I went, I saw a palace with tall towers. ‘Whose palace is that?’ I asked, but the creatures only looked at me with eyes full of hatred and pushed me on, saying ‘Hurry up!’

“When we had entered the gates of the palace, they announced, ‘We have summoned him!’ and I realized that this was the palace of Yama, the king of Hell. The king asked the

prohibited this worship 断伊勢、尾張、近江、美濃、若狭、越前、紀伊国百姓、殺牛用祭漢神. It is not clear, however, what the “Chinese gods” worshiped by the people who killed oxen refer to. See Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 66.

demons, ‘Is this your enemy, the man who killed you?’ ‘This is he!’”⁵⁸

唯歷九日、還蘇而語：「有七人非人、牛頭人身、我髮繫繩、捉之衛往。見之前路、有樓閣宮、問：『是何宮？』非人惡眼睚眦、而逼之言：『急往。』入于宮門、而白：『召之。』吾自知之、閻羅王也。王問言：『斯是殺汝之讎？』答曰：『当是。』」⁵⁹

Here the king’s palace is described as a “palace of tall towers” (樓閣宮). The man is eventually released and comes back to life thanks to the living creatures he set free who come to the court to testify that he killed the oxen for the gods and spirits he worshiped.

Second, in the seventh story in the second volume, in which Monk Chikō falls into Hell for defaming Gyōki, the palace of King Yama is also described using the Chinese word “lou” 樓. I already cited this story in the first chapter,⁶⁰ but for

⁵⁸ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 72.

⁵⁹ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 232.

⁶⁰ See section 4 of the first chapter.

the purpose of comparison, I present the descriptions of the “golden palace” here again:

Meanwhile, two messengers from King Yama came to Master Chikō to escort him, and they set out for the west. Along the way, they saw a golden palace. “Whose palace is that?” asked Chikō.⁶¹

時閻羅王使二人、來召於光師、向西而往。見之前路、有金樓閣、問是何宮。⁶²

As I argued in the first chapter, it should not be overlooked that both the messengers and King Enra call Chikō a monk who “came from the land of Ashihara” 葦原国 or the “land of Mizuho in Toyoashihara” 豊葦原水穗国. This implies that King Yama’s palace is not set in Japan but a remote land that is

⁶¹ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 76.

⁶² Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 234.

foreign and exotic for the readers. In this story, the “golden palace with towers” (金楼閣) plays an important role to create a sense of cultural and geographical difference.

Third, in the ninth story of the third volume, titled *On King Yama Sending out a Strange Order and Encouraging a Man to Do Good* 閻羅王示奇表勸人令修善緣, which is set in the reign of Shōtoku 称徳 (Jingo Kei'un 神護景雲 2, 768), a courtier named Fujiwara no Hirotari 藤原広足⁶³ is summoned by King Yama. In the king's palace, Hirotari meets his dead wife who passed away when she gave birth to his child. The palace is described as follows:

“In front of us on the road stood a tall building, gleaming
and glittering. Its four sides were hidden by a curtain of beads,
so I could not see the face of the person inside. One of the
messengers ran inside and said to him, ‘He has answered your

⁶³ The man named Hirotari who is from the Fujiwara clan only appears here in *Nihon ryōiki*. There is no further evidence that can confirm his existence in other historical documents. See Nakata, *Nihon ryōiki*, page 280. Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 141.

summons!’ In reply he said, ‘Bring him in!’”

“In response to the order, I went in. The curtain of beads was parted, and he said, ‘Do you know the woman standing behind you?’” When I turned and looked, I saw that it was my wife, who had died in giving birth to my child. I replied, ‘Yes—this is my wife.’ Then he spoke again, saying, ‘It is because of this woman’s grievance that I have summoned you.’ She had been condemned to suffer for six years. She has already spent three years here and has three years to go. Now she has implored me, saying that when she bore your child, it died in infancy. Therefore, she wishes to share the rest of her suffering along with you.’

“I answered, ‘For this sake, I will copy the Lotus Sutra, read and expound it, and thus help to alleviate her suffering.’ My wife then addressed the king, saying, ‘If he will truly undertake this duty as he says, then free him at once and let him go back to life!’ Heeding her words, the king then said,

‘Return to the land of the living and quickly carry out this task!’”⁶⁴

「前道之頭、有重樓閣、炫耀放晃。四方懸珠、其中居人、不覲面貌。一使走入、而白之言：『召將來也。』告之：『召入。』奉詔召入。簷簾問告：『知於汝後立人不也？』睽広足妻、懷妊不得產兒而死也。乃答之曰：『是實我妻。』復告：『依此女患事、故召汝耳。斯女可受苦六年、之中三年受、未受三年。今愁之白、孕於汝兒、而嬰之死、故今殘苦、與汝俱受。』広足白言：『我為此女、寫法華經、講讀供養、救所受苦。』妻白之言：『實如白儻、忽免忝還。』便隨女白、而告之曰：『速還疾修。』」⁶⁵

In this tale, the palace of King Yama is described as towered with multiple levels (重樓閣), and “curtain of beads” are also used to give the readers an impression of Chinese style ornaments. The reason Hirotari’s wife has to suffer

⁶⁴ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 147-148.

⁶⁵ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 268-269.

for six years is not clear, but seemingly has something to do with the death of the stillborn infant. Wondering who is giving him such an order, Hirotari asks who he is before coming back to life. It is not revealed to the readers that the lord was actually King Yama himself until the end of the story:

“Having received his order, I went back to the entrance to the palace. There, wishing to know who had summoned me, I asked, ‘What is your name, sir?’ He replied, ‘If you wish to know, I am King Yama.’ In your country, I am called Bodhisattva Jizō. Then he stretched out his right-hand, stroked my neck, and said, ‘I have placed my seal on you. Therefore, you will never meet with disasters. Now hurry on back!’ One finger of his hand was around ten yards long.”

Such, then, is the story of the Asomi Hirotari. For the sake of his deceased wife, he copied the Lotus Sutra and read it, expounding it as his offering and gathering together many merits to atone for her sufferings and to bring her salvation.

This was a miraculous event!⁶⁶

「廣足受詔、罷至闕門、即念欲知召我之人、更還白之：『欲知御名。』爰告：『欲知我、我閻羅王、汝國稱地藏菩薩是也。』即下右手、摩我頂告：『我印点之、故不逢災。速忽還往。』彼手指大、如十抱余。」広足朝臣、如之語伝、為彼死妻、奉写法華經、講読供養、追贈福聚、贖祓彼苦。斯奇異事矣。⁶⁷

This is the only example of Bodhisattva Jizō being mentioned in *Nihon ryōiki*.

It is generally believed that Jizō's vow to aid and benefit all suffering beings made him an object of popular veneration from the Heian period onward, especially after the concept of the Pure Land became widely accepted. In the *Jizō jūō kyō* 地藏十王經, a sutra compiled in Japan roughly in the end of Heian period

⁶⁶ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 148.

⁶⁷ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 269. In this tale, the seal King Yama attached to Hirotari's body is a pass or a ticket back to life. A similar function of such a seal on the protagonists' bodies is described in the third volume of *Min bao ji* (the stories of Wang Tao 王濤 and Zhang Fayi 張法義), the three-hundred and eighty first story of *Tai ping guang ji* (Zhang Yao 張瑤), *Fa yuan zhu lin* (Fang Shankai 方山開) and so forth.

or in the early Kamakura period, it is assumed that Bodhisattva Jizō is a manifestation of King Yama.⁶⁸

Tanaka Hisao assumes that *Nihon ryōiki* is an early example that connected Jizō with Enra before the *Jizō jūō kyō* was compiled. The image of King Yama's palace was first introduced by Chinese Ten-Kings belief, and later bodhisattva Jizō merged into the King Yama belief.⁶⁹ In such a context, King Yama is depicted in Japan as a figure that has markedly Chinese characteristics.

⁶⁸ There are two kinds of *Jūō kyō* 十王經 that circulated in Japan. *Jizō Jūō kyō* 地蔵十王經 indicates the *Bussetsu jizo bosatsu hossin in'nen jūō kyō* 仏説地蔵菩薩発心因縁十王經 compiled in Japan. Before this text, a Chinese sutra named *Yu xiu shi wang jing* 預修十王經 (*Fo shuo yu xiu shi wang sheng qi jing* 佛説預修十王生七經) was compiled in the late Tang dynasty. The belief of Ten-Kings (十王信仰) was first introduced in this *Yu xiu shi wang jing* 預修十王經. It is a Chinese sutra heavily influenced by Daoist ideas; it assumes that King Yama and Daoist deities such as Taishan Fujun 泰山府君 and Wudao dashen 五道大神 are bodhisattvas that will become buddhas in the future. *Yu xiu shi wang jing* circulated in Japan along with the *Jizō Jūō kyō*. They are both abbreviated as *Jūō kyō*. See Shimizu: *Jizō Jūō kyō kō* 地蔵十王經考, *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究, vol. 51, no.1, page 189-194. Motoi, *Yu xiu shi wang jing no shohon* 『預修十王經』の諸本, *kyōto daigaku kokubun gaku ronsō* 京都大学國文學論叢, vol.11, page 1-22.

⁶⁹ See Tanaka Hisao, 生死の民俗と怨霊. For details of King Yama and Jizō beliefs in Japan, see also Sawada, *Jigokuhen* 地獄変.

In the first chapter, when introducing Emperor Nintoku's kunimi 国見 tale, I cited both the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* versions of the story in order to make a comparison with the preface to the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki*.⁷⁰ I argued that of the three, the *Nihon shoki* version has the most significant Chinese influence both rhetorically and ideologically. It is significant that this version depicted Emperor Nintoku climbing a “tower 台” to inspect his people, instead of a hill. Unlike *Nihon shoki*, the *Kojiki* version depicts Emperor Nintoku as ascending a “high mountain” (登高山) to view his land. *Nihon ryōiki* follows the later (登高山頂). Given that the *Nihon shoki* is supposed to be the official historical record for most to study and was more widely read, it is significant that *Nihon ryōiki* adopted the *Kojiki* version, perhaps because the “tower” had Chinese resonances and the mountain was a better fit for *Nihon ryōiki*'s vernacularizing agenda.

In the case of King Yama's palace, however, Kyōkai does not omit the descriptions of “towers” but intentionally uses them to create a foreign and exotic image of King Yama. In other words, Kyōkai makes use of this difference to

⁷⁰ See notes 6, 7 and 9 of Chapter 1.

create both the space of a Japanese setting and a space of a remote foreign land. Walls, gates, and towers (四面門樓) were unsuitable to his fictional village located in Izumi province, but useful to illustrate the “otherness” of the land of King Yama.

5. The Bureaucracy of the Afterlife: Offices of the Judges and the Palace of King Enra

Comparing the return-to-life type of tales in *Nihon ryōiki* with similar stories in *Ming bao ji*, there is one remarkable difference between the two texts: all the protagonists in *Nihon ryōiki* are summoned by King Yama to visit his palace, whereas most of the protagonists in *Ming bao ji*'s tale do not meet the king.⁷¹ Instead, they are summoned by lower-ranked bureaucrats and sent to smaller administrative offices.

⁷¹ In fact, there is only one protagonist, monk Huiru 慧如 of the Sui dynasty, who is summoned by King Enra and visits the Hell of Heat. See *Miraculous Retribution*, story number 2, *Shih Hui-ju*.

The story of *Kong Ke* 孔恪 in the third volume of *Ming bao ji* describes the protagonist, a bureaucrat who served in provincial government, being judged at court after death. He is allowed to return to life for only seven days thanks to his good deeds. However, he is accused of having his younger brother kill buffalos to pacify a tribe, of killing two ducks to treat his guests, of eating chicken eggs with his mother when he was nine years old, and so forth. His good behavior is, unfortunately, not enough to offset his sins. He dies in seven days anyway even though he gathers monks and nuns to carry out services to repent of his bad deeds killing living creatures. The place where he is judged is depicted as follows:

During the early years of the Wu-te period (618-626) there was an administrator of the secretarial service in the administration of the commander-in-chief of Sui-chou 遂州 named K'ung K'o, who died of a sudden illness. After one day he returned to life and explained that he had been arrested and taken to a government office, where he was asked why he

killed two buffalos.⁷²

武德初、遂州總管府記室參軍孔恪、暴病死。一日而蘇、自說、被收
至官所。問恪：「何因殺兩牛水。」⁷³

As an administrator of Sui county himself, he is summoned to a “government office 官所” and is judged by “an official 官”. The court is not depicted as a gorgeous or splendid palace, and the judge is not a king or a high-ranking aristocrat. This is significantly different from the fifth story of the second volume in *Nihon ryōiki*, which I discussed earlier, *On worshipping Chinese Gods, Killing Oxen as a Sacrifice, but also Doing Good by Setting Living Creatures, He Received Both Good and Evil Rewards*.

The following are further examples of returning-to-life tales in *Min bao ji*:

Sun Pao was originally a northerner; but at the end of the

⁷² Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, page 248.

⁷³ Fang Shiming, compiled by, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 67.

Sui dynasty he moved to live in Chiang-tu 江都. When he was young, he died, but his body remain warm. After more than forty days he returned to life.

He explained that he had first been arrested and taken to a government office.⁷⁴

江都孫寶本是北人、隋末徙居焉。少時、死而身暖、經四十餘日乃蘇。自說、初被收、詣官曹內。⁷⁵

Cheng Shih-Pien, an administrative officer in the service of the Right Gate Guards of the Heir Apparent, died of a sudden illness before coming to age.

After three days he returned to life and said that he had been arrested by several men and taken through the main

⁷⁴ Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, page 193.

⁷⁵ Fang Shiming, compiled by, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 23.

gate of an official's compound.⁷⁶

東宮右監門兵曹參軍鄭師辨、年未弱冠時、暴病死、三日而蘇、
自言、有數人見收、將行入官府大門。⁷⁷

During the Northern Ch'i dynasty there was an official surnamed Liang who was very powerful and wealthy. When he was about to die, he said to his wife and children, "During my life I loved my slave and my horse. They have long served and carried me, and know how to please me. When I die, you can sacrifice them to me. If you don't I will have no one to serve me and nothing to ride."

When he died, his family members filled a sack with dirt, and killed the slave by smothering him. But they had not yet killed the horse when after four days the slave returned to life

⁷⁶ Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, page 211.

⁷⁷ Fang Shiming, compiled by, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 40.

and explained that he had departed while unconscious, and suddenly arrived at the gate of an official's compound.⁷⁸

北齊時、有仕人姓梁、甚富豪、將死、謂其妻子曰：「吾平生愛奴及馬、皆使乘日久、稱人意。吾死、可以為殉。不然、無所使乘也。」及其死、家人以囊盛土、壓奴殺之、馬則未殺。奴死四日而蘇、說云：「當不覺去、急至官府門。」⁷⁹

In all three stories, the protagonists visit a government court after death and are judged by the official who is in charge of the office. There are also stories that illustrate judges with higher rank than provincial administrators. For example, in the following two tales, the protagonists are invited to the residence of a “lord” or a “king” because they are well-known for being talented and learned. First, the story of *Ma Chia-yun* 馬嘉運 reads as follows:

In the first month of the sixth year of the Chen-kuan period

⁷⁸ Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, page 233-234.

⁷⁹ Fang Shiming, compiled by, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 51.

(632), Ma Chia-yun of Wei-chun 魏郡 was living at home. One evening he went out his main gate and unexpectedly saw two men, Each was riding a horse, and they first stopped to stand beneath a tree outside the gate. Chia-yun asked who they were, and they replied that they had be sent by the Lord of Tung-hai 東海公 with an invitation for Mr. Ma. Chia-yun was learned, and quite well known in the area, so whenever there were officials or important guests from throughout the empire he was often invited to meet them.

When he heard this summons he did not think it unusual, but said to the messengers, "I have no horse."

A messenger led forward a horse and said, "This one is for you, Mr. Ma."

Chia-yun then mounted the horse beneath the tree and left. But actually, he fell down and lay beneath the tree.

In a moment they arrived at a Government office. He was about to enter a large gate, outside of which were several tens

of men and women, apparently petitioners.⁸⁰

魏郡馬嘉運、以武德六年正月居家、日晚、出大門、忽見兩人各捉馬一匹、先在門外樹下立。嘉運問是何人、答云：「是東海公使、來迎馬生耳。」嘉運素有學識、知名州里、每有臺使及四方貴客、多請見之、及是聞召、弗之怪也、謂使者曰：「吾無馬。」使者進馬曰：「以此迎馬生。」嘉運即樹下上馬而去、其實倒臥於樹下也。俄至一官曹、將入大門、有男女數十人、在門外如訟者。⁸¹

In this tale, the one who invited Chia-yun is “the Lord of Tung-hai” 東海公. Gong 公 is the highest rank in the Chinese aristocracy,⁸² and it can also be used simply as an honored title for anyone who holds high social status. At any rate, it is clear that the protagonist is invited by a high-ranked aristocrat. The story of Liu Chih-kan 柳智感 describes the protagonist meeting a “king 王,” which is

⁸⁰ Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, page 244-245.

⁸¹ Fang Shiming, compiled by, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 64.

⁸² The five ranks of aristocracy are Gong 公, hou 侯, bo 伯, zi 子, and nan 男.

higher than “gong 公”:

During the early years of Chen-kuan period (627-649), Liu Chih-kan of Ho-tung was the magistrate of Ch'ang-chu District in Hsing-chou. One night he suddenly died, but the next day he returned to life and told the following story.

He was first taken into custody by officials of the nether world, when they arrived at a large official's compound his escorts took him in to see the king.

“There is at present,” said the king, “a vacancy on my official staff. I have therefore troubled you to come and fill it.”⁸³

河東柳智感以貞觀初為興州長舉令、一夜暴死、明日而蘇、說云、始為冥官所追、至大官府。使者以智感見王。謂曰。今有一員官闕。故枉君來任之。⁸⁴

⁸³ Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, page 259-260.

⁸⁴ Fang Shiming, compiled by, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 77-

The master of the “large official compound” is a “king” whose name is not revealed, though it could plausibly be King Yama or any one of the ten kings mentioned in the *Yu xiu shi wang jing* 預修十王經.

Most of the protagonists, however, including the young boy of Ji whose feet were burnt for his sin of eating eggs, are summoned by low-ranking officers. Whether the judge is a king, a lord, or an official, the setting of the returning-to-life tales is based on the real-life social hierarchy and aristocratic system in which a bureaucrat like the compiler Tang Lin himself lived. Unlike the stories in *Nihon ryōiki*, the “official compounds” or “government offices” of Hell are not depicted as exotic or foreign palaces.

By contrast, in the case of returning-to-life tales in *Nihon ryōiki*, no matter the reason for the protagonist to visit the netherworld after death, the place they go is King Yama’s court, and the judge is always King Yama, as illustrated by the following excerpts cited from the nineteenth story of the second volume, *On a*

Woman Devotee of the Shin-Gyō Visiting the Palace of King Yama and the Following Extraordinary Event 憶持心經女現至閻羅王闕示奇表緣, and the twenty-fifth story of the second volume, *On the Devil, Messenger of King Yama, who Accepted the Hospitality Offered Him and Repaid the Kindness* 閻羅王使鬼受所召人之饗而報恩緣:

The laywoman Tokari no ubai was from Kawachi province. Her surname was Tokari no suguri, and hence she was called the laywomen Tokari. She was innately pure of heart and put her faith in the Three Treasures of Buddhism. She constantly chanted the Shin-gyō as a form of religious devotion. Her chanting of the Shin-gyō was so beautiful that she was beloved by both clergy and laity.

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, this laywoman went to sleep one night and, without being ill, died suddenly and went

to the palace of King Yama.⁸⁵

利苅優婆夷者、河内国人也。姓利苅村主、故以為字。天年澄情、
信敬三宝、常誦持心經、以為業行。誦心經之音、甚微妙、為諸道俗
所愛樂也、聖武天皇御世、是優婆夷、夜寢、不病卒爾而死、到閻羅
王所。⁸⁶

In the Yamada district of Sanuki province, there lived a
woman named Nunoshi no omi Kinume. In the reign of
Emperor Shōmu, this woman suddenly fell ill. At the time, she
prepared a splendid feast and placed it to the left and right of
her doorway as an offering for the god of the dead. A demon
messenger came from King Yama to summon her.⁸⁷

讃岐国山田郡、有布敷臣衣女。聖武天皇代、衣女忽得病。時偉

⁸⁵ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 94-95.

⁸⁶ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 243-244.

⁸⁷ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 103.

備百味、祭門左右、賂於疫神、而饗之也。閻羅王使鬼、來召衣女。

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Why did Kyōkai ignore the bureaucracy hierarchy depicted in *Min bao ji* and replace all the judges of different ranks with King Yama and all the “government offices 官所” with King Yama’s splendid palace with high towers? When Buddhism was interpreted in the Chinese context that regards the super-nature world as an extension of the human society,⁸⁹ King Yama, as well as the Hell ruled by him, were understood not in the exaggeratedly large scale presented in

⁸⁸ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 248.

⁸⁹ To put it precisely, nature does not determine human organization. It is the ancient sage kings who imitate nature to establish an ideal political system that always follows the flow of the nature. Since the human political system is supposed to be a reflection of the nature, failures in human politics resemble disasters generated by the nature. In such a context, bad policies or the sovereign’s lack of virtue result in natural disasters. In the Han dynasty, this concept was further connected with the Tian ren gan yin thought 天人感應說 presented by literati such as Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒. A good example of this in a Japanese text is the story of Emperor Nintoku blaming himself for the hunger of his people in the *Nihon shoki* version of the kunimi story, which has significant Confucian characteristics. The heaven responds to Nintoku’s three-year long effort to reduce the spending and hard work for his people, and makes the “wind and rain come in due season, the five grains produce in abundance 是後、風雨順時、五穀豐穰.” See Suenaga, *Tenjin ron saikō* 天人論再考, *Chūgoku tetsugaku kenkyū* 中国哲学研究, no.11, page 1-67.

Buddhist sutras, but rather as part of the ruling system under the emperor. In fact, such an idea is explicitly outlined in a tale in *Min bao ji*. The following passage is cited from the story of Sui Jen-ch'ien 睚仁蒨 of the second volume. In this story, the protagonist Jen-ch'ien is a man who does not believe in ghosts and spirits and is also doubtful about the afterlife as depicted by both Buddhism and Daoism. A ghost named Cheng Ching 成景 becomes his friend and they discuss the teachings of Buddhism and Daoism. Jen-ch'ien's ghost friend answers his questions as follows:

Jen-ch'ien had never been a believer of Buddhism, and he still had some doubts. So he asked Ching.

"Buddhist doctrines states that there is an all-encompassing cause and effect," he said. "Is this true or false?"

Ching replied, "It is true."

"Then if this is so," Jen-ch'ien continued, "When people die, they should separate and enter into one of the six paths. How is it that they all become ghosts, and you and King Wu-ling of

Chao⁹⁰ are still ghost today?”

“How many households are there in your district?” asked Ching.

“More than ten thousand,” answered Jen-ch’ien.

“How many prisoners in the jail?”

“Usually less than twenty.”

“Among the ten thousand households in your district,” continued Ching, “how many officials are there of the fifth rank?”

Jen-ch’ien answered, “None.”

“How many officials of the ninth rank or above?” inquired Ching.

“Several tens,” replied Jen-ch’ien.

“In the six paths”, explained Ching, “it is just the same. Not

⁹⁰ When Cheng Ching was alive, he served the King Wu-Ling of Chao 趙武靈王 (325-299 BCE), who reigned the state of Zhao 趙國 during the period of war states.

one man in ten thousand attains the path of heaven, just as in your district there is not one official of the fifth rank. Of those who attain the path of humans, in ten thousand there are but several tens, just as your officials of the ninth rank. Those who enter hell also number several tens, just as the prisoners in your jail. It is the ghosts and animals that are most numerous, just as the common people who are subject to taxes and corvée in your district. But even in this one path [of ghost] there are several gradations.” Ching then pointed to his retainers, and continued, “These people are greatly inferior to me, and those that don’t measure up to them are even more numerous.”

“Do ghost die?” asked Jen-ch’ien.

He replied, “They do.”

Jen-ch’ien continued, “When they die, what path do they enter?”

Ching answered, “I don’t know. It’s just as people know that

they will surely die, but don't know about things after death.”⁹¹

Jen-ch'ien asked, “The prayers and offerings carried out by Taoists, do they bring any benefit?”

Ching replied, “As far as the Taoists are concerned, the Emperor of the Heaven (天帝) controls the administration of the Six Paths, which are called Heavenly Offices (天曹). King Yama is equivalent to your emperor, and the prefectural lord of Mt. T'ai (泰山府君)⁹² is like your president of the Department of the Affairs of the State. The spirit recorders of the Five Paths (錄五道神) are equivalent to your presidents of the Six Ministries, and states like that which I serve are like

⁹¹ Ching's answer reminds readers of a famous quote from the *Analects*, *Lun yu zhu shu* 論語注疏 *Xian jin* 先進篇: “How can one knows what is death before he knows what is life?” 未知生、焉知死. *Wen yuan ge siku quan shu* 文淵閣四庫全書, vol.8-33, page 208.

⁹² The prefectural lord of Mt. T'ai, *Tai shan fu jun* 泰山府君, ruled over the world of the dead located beneath the mountain. The Daoist deity is adapted and absorbed into the Buddhist interpretation in this context. See Gjertson, page *Miraculous Retribution*, page 224.

large provinces or commanderies. Whenever there is some matter in the human world for which a Taoist sends up a supplication seeking aid, the Heavenly Offices receives it and send it down to King Yama, saying, 'On such and such a day in such and such a month, we received an appeal from so and so, etc., etc. Please investigate its propriety thoroughly and allow no injustice to be done.' Yama receives the order respectfully and carries it out, just as humans would an imperial command."⁹³

蒨情不信佛、意尚疑之、因問景云：「佛法說有三世因果、此為虛實？」答曰：「實。」蒨曰：「即如是、人死當分入六道、那得盡為鬼？而趙武靈王及君今尚為鬼耶？」景曰：「君縣內幾戶？」蒨曰：「萬餘戶。」又：「獄囚幾人？」蒨曰：「常二十人已下。」又曰：「萬戶之內有五品官幾人？」蒨曰：「無。」又曰：「九品已上官幾人？」

⁹³ Gjertson, *Miraculous Retribution*, page 200-201.

蒨曰：「數十人。」景曰：「六道之內亦一如此耳。其得天道、萬無一人、如君縣內無一五品官。得人道者有數人、如君九品。入地獄者亦數十、如君獄內囚。唯鬼及畜生最為多也、如君縣內課役戶。就此道中又有等級。」因指其從者曰：「彼人大不如我、其不及彼者尤多。」蒨曰：「鬼有死乎？」曰：「然。」蒨曰：「死入何道？」答曰：「不知。如人知死、而不知死後之事。」蒨問曰：「道家章醮、為有益不？」景曰：「道者、天帝總統六道、是謂天曹。閻羅王者如人天子、太山府君尚書令、錄五道神如諸尚書、若我輩國如大州郡。每人間事、道上章請福、天曹受之、下閻羅王云、某月日得某甲訴云云、宜盡理、勿令枉濫。閻羅敬受而奉行之、如人之奉詔也。⁹⁴

In this self-explanatory passage, the compiler demonstrates how Buddhist teachings and Daoist ideas are interpreted in a way that matches the hierarchical rank system of Chinese society. As Sawada points out, in Chinese tales the residence of King Yama is portrayed as the equivalent to “a government

⁹⁴ Fang Shiming, compiled by, *Min bao ji Guang yi ji* 冥報記 廣異記, page 27-28.

office of a middle-sized city or a house of high-ranked aristocrat” instead of the gorgeous and splendid palace seen in Buddhist sutras. Influenced by Six Dynasties and Tang dynasty depictions, King Yama in Japan is portrayed as a strict bureaucrat who wears the robes of Chinese officials and holds an ivory tablet. Sawada further suggests that this is why the size of Hell and the political status of King Yama shrank to a more realistic and smaller scale than the exaggerated depictions in Buddhist sutras.⁹⁵ Because the world of afterlife is structured exactly like human society, King Yama’s court has officials of a variety of ranks just like the imperial court, and it is assumed that different levels of authorities are designed to deal with different levels of sins. In other words, not every case is sent to King Yama’s court and judged by the king himself. Indeed, in *Min bao ji*, most people who were summoned to one of the “government offices” and judged by the “officials” other than King Yama. For instance, the young boy of Ji who ate eggs is sent to a “small citadel 小城” and receives instant retribution in this life. The story implies that his sin was actually not a case

⁹⁵ Sawada, *Jigokuhen* 地獄変. Page 15-26.

complicated enough to be put on trial, or at least not enough to be judged at the court of the highest level. He is punished and his feet are burnt in a citadel that was located near his village, which can be interpreted as a district level court.

In the *Nihon ryōiki*, however, Kyōkai revises all the returning-to-life stories and has his protagonists have the privilege of meeting King Yama directly. Following this compilation policy, his version of the feet-burning tale, *On Constantly Stealing Bird's Eggs, and Boiling and Eating them, He Suffered an Immediate and Evil Penalty*, should have had the young man sent to Hell and meet King Yama at his palace of high towers (樓閣宮). However, influenced by the original story in the *Min bao ji*, in which Kyōkai maintains the same plot of an instant retribution tale instead of a returning-to-life type of story.

Why do the *Nihon ryōiki* versions of the *Ming bao ji* stories remove the hierarchical framework of the afterlife courts? I would suggest that there are two possible reasons.

First, is Kyōkai's compilation policy of vernacularizing all the stories and adapting them to the Japanese context. We have seen how *Nihon ryōiki* rejects explicit connections to China, such as the story of Prince Shōtoku being a

reincarnation of Huisi, and how it omits Chinese architectural features such as walled citadels that would have been unfamiliar to a Japanese audience. Similarly, the worldview presented in *Min bao ji* that regards the afterlife as an extension of the social life in this world was probably an unfamiliar one in the Japanese context. As the story of Sui Jen-Ch'ien suggests, the image of such a hierarchical structure of the afterlife courts is influenced by both Buddhist and Daoist ideas. However, in *Nihon ryōiki*, while King Yama is portrayed as a manifestation of bodhisattva Jizō, Taishan Fujun 泰山府君, one of the Ten-Kings and an important Daoist deity, is not mentioned in *Nihon ryōiki*. Although Daoist features are not completely excluded, Buddhist ideas are given much greater weight in *Nihon ryōiki*. In short, a hierarchy consisting of both Daoist and Buddhist elements was not suitable for Kyōkai's framework.

Second, it is likely that the *Nihon ryōiki* is in fact rejecting the very idea of a hierarchical structure in the afterlife. That is why even imperial princes, who are supposed to be descendants of the “successive sage sovereigns” (代々天皇), can be targets of reproach when they commit sinful offenses. On the other hand, “hidden sages” like the Mount Kataoka beggar identified by Prince Shōtoku, or

Gyōki (whom Kyōkai greatly admired and was not identified by Emperor Shōmu until late in his career) can be more virtuous than imperial princes. This is illustrated by the tale of Prince Nagaya, the “Great Minister” (Dajō-daijin 太政大臣) of his age, who is forced to commit suicide in the *Nihon ryōiki* for having punished a “hidden sage” in the shape of a shabby monk. In Kyōkai’s view, social status and hierarchy do not necessarily determine sagehood. The same logic suggests that punishment or reward should depend on one’s actual deeds of good or evil, not on social status. This, unlike the examples found in *Min bao ji*, where sinners are judged in different levels of courts, in *Nihon ryōiki* all sinners are equally judged by King Yama in person, no matter how slight their offense nor how low their social status.

To sum up, it seems that Kyōkai excluded the *Min bao ji*’s hierarchical structures and the Daoist interpretation of King Yama in order to establish his own model of returning-to-life story. Although the “towers” and “curtains of beads” give his King Yama a Chinese veneer, the returning-to-life stories in *Nihon ryōiki* propose a different social framework than those of *Min bao ji*.

In this chapter I have discussed some the ways in which Kyōkai

vernacularized his Chinese sources to fit his collection of tales “in this realm” of Japan. As we have seen, although the Huisi-Shōtoku reincarnation tale was widely known due to the promotion of Tendai teachings by people near Ganjin and later by Saichō, Kyōkai did not include it, opting instead to make the unprecedented claim that Shōmu was a reincarnation of Shōtoku. It cannot be said for sure if this was due simply to Kyōkai’s lack of sources and access to Tendai related texts, but the omission has the effect of maintaining Kyōkai’s lineage of Japanese sagehood.

In my analysis and comparison of *Nihon ryōiki*’s tenth story of the second volume on feet-burning with *Min bao ji*’s *The Young Boy of Ji County in Sui Dynasty*, I showed how one of the most important elements of the original tale—the walled citadel—was omitted in order to fit the Japanese setting of Kyōkai’s collection. Moreover, I also demonstrated how the portrayal of King Yama and Hell in *Nihon ryōiki* is significantly different compared to the Chinese sources that inspired Kyōkai’s return-to-life type stories. Whereas the sinners in *Nihon ryōiki* are all sent to King Yama’s gorgeous and splendid palace, many of the protagonists in the *Min bao ji* stories are sent to small and local administrative

halls and judged by low ranking officers. While the image of afterlife courts portrayed in *Nihon ryōiki* is close to that of Buddhist sutras, the *Min bao ji* depicts a hierarchical structure that resembles the bureaucratic system of Tang Dynasty China. The scale of such an afterlife world, in which people are sent to courts of different levels based on their sins and social status, is smaller and more realistic than the Hell portrayed in sutras.

I also noted that Kyōkai's view of King Yama was influenced by the Ten-Kings belief since his text mentions that one of these kings is a manifestation of Bodhisattva Jizō. However, the image of Hell and the portrayal of King Yama in *Nihon ryōiki* is different from that of *Min bao ji* insofar as it removes the Daoist elements. This has the effect of removing unfamiliar social elements from the stories while maintaining a superficial veneer of exoticity. These changes and omissions are the result of a deliberate and coherent compilation policy, according to which stories of Chinese origin are vernacularized and presented in a style that fits their Japanese context and Kyōkai's aims of presenting a collection of miraculous events that occurred in Japan.

Conclusion: The Succession of Sagehood

In this dissertation, I have discussed multiple examples of *Nihon ryōiki* tales to argue that Kyōkai established a lineage of Buddhist sagehood in Japan which he contrasted with stories about sinners who were severely punished for disobeying Buddhist teachings. Among the offenses committed by those sinners, the killing of living creatures was regarded as particularly inexcusable, as was the case with the “born to be merciless” man who skinned a rabbit and the “inherently evil” young man who ate eggs.

However, there are some exceptional cases in *Nihon ryōiki* which excuse those who kill living creatures. These sinners are exempted from retribution thanks to the great virtue of the sages. In the thirty-second story of the first volume, a farmer and his family kill a deer and eat it, unaware that the deer was supposed to be game for royal hunting. Set in Emperor Shōmu’s reign, the story is titled *On Having Faith in the Three Treasures, Revering Monks, Having Sutras Recited, and Gaining an Immediate Reward* 帰信三宝欽仰衆僧令誦經得現報緣:

In the fourth year of Jinki era, the year hinoto-u [727], in the Ninth Month, Emperor Shōmu went hunting with his officers in the mountains in Yamamura in the Sou upper district. A deer ran into a farmer's house in the village of Hosomi, and the people in the house, unaware of where it had come from, killed it and ate it. Later, when the emperor received word of this, he sent officers to arrest the people involved. There were more than ten men and women implicated in the affair, and they shook with fear, having no one to depend on.¹

神龜四年歲次丁卯九月中、聖武天皇、与群臣獵於添上郡山村之山、有鹿走入細見里百姓之家中、家人不覺、殺而噉之。後天皇聞之、遣使捕其人等。時男女十余人、皆遭其難、身单心慄、無所憑恃。²

The *Shoku nihongi* does not document this royal hunting trip, and it seems

¹ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 54.

² Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 201.

implausibly severe for a “sage king” to arrest the whole family only because they killed a deer.³ The arrested villagers decide that only the divine power of the Three Treasures can save them and they send a message to Daian-ji 大安寺 to request the reciting of sutras, ringing of the temple bell, and opening of the gate of the temple so that they may pay homage to the Buddha when they are taken to court. Following this request, they are suddenly and unexpectedly released:

It happened, however, that an imperial prince was born, and accordingly, the emperor granted a general amnesty and did not punish them. On the contrary, he bestowed alms on the people, and their joy knew no bounds.⁴

即依皇子誕生、于時朝廷大賀大赦、天下不加刑罰、反賜官祿於衆

³ The well-known decree regarding the building of Kokubun temples 国分寺 and nunneries 国分尼寺 in all provinces prohibited hunting and fishing in both official and private affairs on the six monthly days of purification (毎月六齋日、公私不得漁獵殺生). The decree was issued in Tenpyō 13 (741), fourteen years after the story is set. See SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2. page 391.

⁴ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 55.

人、歡喜無比。⁵

The fortuitous amnesty is interpreted as their reward for the recitation of sutras. Kyōkai does not mention, however, that the newborn “imperial prince”, Prince Motoi, would pass away in less than one year, which triggered the accusations against Prince Nagaya that I have discussed in the second chapter.

One way to interpret this story is that in order to maintain the impeccability of Emperor Shōmu as a sage, Kyōkai needed to justify the practice of imperial hunting and explain why the killing of living creatures by an emperor should be allowed under some circumstances. Kyōkai addresses this issue explicitly clearly in the thirty-ninth story of the third volume. This is the concluding tale in the collection, and its second half is a reincarnation tale set in the reign of Empress Kōken. The protagonist of the tale is Emperor Saga 嵯峨天皇 (786-842, r. 809-823), the reigning emperor at the time *Nihon ryōiki* was probably completed.

⁵ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 201. This general amnesty and alms bestowing to celebrate the birth of Prince Motoi are documented in *Shoku nihongi* (為皇子誕生。赦天下大辟罪已下。又賜百官人等物). See SNKBT *Shoku nihongi*, vol 2. page 183.

Kyōkai begins by arguing that Emperor Saga is the reincarnation of a virtuous monk named Jakusen 寂仙:

In Iyo province, in the district of Kamino, there is a mountain called ishizuchi-yama. The name derives from that of the god of Ishizuchi, who lives on the mountain. Only those who are pure in conduct are able to reach it and live there.

In the reign of Retired Emperor Shōbō-ōjin-shōmu, who ruled the country for twenty-five years at the Nara palace, and in the reign of Empress Abe, who ruled for nine years at the same palace, there lived on that mountain a monk who was pure in deed. His name was Bodhisattva Jakusen. The people of the time, both the clergy and the laypersons, praised him with the name bodhisattva because of the purity of his conduct.

In the ninth year of the empress reign, the second year of the Hōji era, the year tsuchinoe-inu [758], Meditation Master Jakusen realized that he was about to die. He therefore put

his written records in order and transmitted them to his disciples, saying “Twenty-eight years after my death, I will be reborn as a prince with the name of Kamino. You may know that the prince is I, Jakusen!”

Twenty-eight year passed, and in the reign of Emperor Yamabe, who ruled the country at the Heian Palace, in the fifth year of the Enryaku era, the year hinoe-tora [786], a prince named Kamino was born to the emperor. This is the present Emperor Kamino [Saga, r. 809-823], who has been ruling the country for fourteen years at the Heian Palace.

Therefore, we know that he is surely a sage.⁶

又伊予国神野郡部内有山、名号石槌山、是即彼山有石槌神之名也。其山高峻、而凡夫不得登到、但淨行人耳、登到而居住。昔諾樂宮廿五年治天下勝宝応真聖武太上天皇之御世、又同宮九年治天下帝姬阿倍天皇御世、彼山有淨行禪師而修行、其名為寂仙菩薩。

⁶ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 199-200.

其時世人道俗、貴彼淨行故、美稱菩薩。帝姬天皇御世於九年、宝
字二年歲次戊戌年、寂仙禪師、臨命終日、而留錄文、授弟子告之
而言：「自我命終以後、歷廿八年之間、生於国王之子、名為神野。
是以当知我寂仙」云云。然歷廿八年、而平安宮治天下山部天皇御
世、延曆五年歲次丙寅年、則生於山部天皇々子。其名為神野親王、
今平安宮統治天下賀美能天皇是也。是以定知、此聖君也。⁷

Like many other characters that appear in *Nihon ryōiki*, Jakusen's name is not documented in historical records such as *Shoku nihongi*.⁸ As a monk based

⁷ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 296.

⁸ Jakusen's name is not seen in other sources except *Nihon ryōiki*. However, in *Montoku jitsuroku* 文徳実録, it is documented that a monk named Shakuzen 灼然 who dwelled at Kamino district in Iyo province was known as a sage. He had a disciple named Jōsen 上仙, whose virtue exceeded his teacher. All the spirits and deities followed Jōsen's instructions. (昔有高僧名灼然。稱為聖人。有弟子名上仙。住止山頂。精進練行。過於灼然。諸鬼神等。皆隨頤指) He declared that he will reborn as a prince with the name Kamino. Emperor Saga is the reincarnation of Jōsen. (天皇之前身、上仙是也) Since *Montoku jitsuroku* is compiled in 879, it is possible that the compiler referred to *Nihon ryōiki* as one of its sources. It should not be overlooked that the story in *Montoku jitsuroku* has a strong shugendō 修驗道 influence since Jōsen was able to manipulate spirits and deities like En no gyōja 役行者, the protagonist of the twenty-eighth story of the first volume of *Nihon ryōiki*. Also, his name Jōsen literally means “ascending to immortality” in Daoist terms. See Saeki, compiled by, *Rikkokushi*

in a provincial monastery, Jakusen is similar to the compiler Kyōkai himself. Although Jakusen was not categorized as one of the “hidden sages” by Kyōkai, he was praised with the name bodhisattva, just as Gyōki was.

Kyōkai then argues that Emperor Saga was a sage for being kind to sinners and valuing their life. The story continues as follows:

And how do we know he is a sage? The world says, “According to the laws of the imperial institution, someone who is guilty of murdering a person will surely be punished by the law for his crime. This Emperor, however, makes us realize the meaning of his era name, Kōnin [Spreading Benevolence]. It means that he spared the life of one who deserved to be put to death for murder, replacing death with exile. Therefore, we know that he is a sage-ruler!”⁹

六国史, vol. 8, page 15.

⁹ Watson, *Record of Miraculous Events in Japan*, page 200.

又何以知聖君耶。世俗云：「国皇法，人殺罪人者、必随法殺。而是
天皇者、出弘仁年号伝世、応殺之人成流罪活彼命、以人治也。是
以咄知聖君也。」¹⁰

After the Kusuko Incident 薬子の変 in Daidō 大同 5 (810), the political situation was relatively stable under Emperor Saga's leadership.¹¹ This passage portrays Saga as a sage in Confucian terms rather than Buddhist ones, perhaps fittingly for a sovereign who promoted classical Chinese literary learning. The story goes on to dispute accusations that Saga was not a sage ruler since he allowed hunting and killing, and there were natural disasters during his reign:

There are those who speak ill of him, saying, "He is no sage-ruler! Why do we say this? Because in this emperor's reign, the country has seen the plague of draught! And there have been many other heavenly disasters and earthly plagues, and

¹⁰ Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 296.

¹¹ See Hayashi, *Jōdai seiji shakai no kenkyū* 上代政治社会の研究.

famines as well. Moreover, he keeps hunting birds and dogs with which to catch birds, wild boars, and deer. No one with a heart of compassion would do such!”

But the charges are not just. Everything within the land is the property of the ruler—there is nothing that is privately owned! All is for the use of the ruler, as he wishes. Although we are his people, have we the right to criticize him? Even in the time of the sage-rulers Yao and Shun, there were still droughts to plague the nation. Therefore, it does not do to criticize him!

或人誹謗：「非聖君。何以故、此天皇時、天下旱厲有、又天災地妖飢饉難繁多有。又養鷹犬、取鳥猪鹿、是非慈悲心。」是儀非然。食国内物、皆国皇之物。指針許末、私物都無也、國皇随自在之儀也。雖百姓、敢誹之耶。又聖君堯舜之世、猶在旱厲、故不可誹之也。¹²

¹² Izumoji, SNKBT *Nihon ryōiki*, page 296-297.

Similar to the case of Emperor Shōmu in the thirty-second story of the first volume, Kyōkai does not directly answer the question of whether the killing living creatures by an emperor is excusable or not. If we follow a strict interpretation of the idea of Buddhist cause and effect proposed by Kyōkai, those who kill must merit instant retribution in their present life, and no one should be exempted from this fundamental rule. To avoid this accusation, Kyōkai emphasizes that hunting is justified since everything in the realm of the emperor is under his control. As for the disasters that symbolize a sovereign's lack of virtue, he argues that even the paragons of Confucian virtue, Yao and Shun, experienced such challenges.

Given that Kyōkai was writing this last tale in the collection from a perspective (as a monk of junior rank at Yakushi-ji) subject to the imperial court, one can detect some tension here between the airing of a Buddhist critique of Saga's actions and a defense of Saga that affirms the ultimate supremacy of Confucian ideals of rulership. But this tension is then framed by the postscript to the entire collection, in which Kyōkai promises to confer the benefits that may

derive from reading the book on those “who go astray” and prays for his own and their “rebirth together in the Western Land of bliss 共生西方安楽国矣”.

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