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TRANSLATION

Tsukumogami ki 付喪神記
(The Record of Tool Specters)

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ACCORDING TO *Miscellaneous Records of Yin and Yang*,¹ after a span of one hundred years, *utsuwamono* or *kibutsu* 器物 (containers, tools, and instruments) receive souls and trick people. They are called *tsukumogami*. In view of that, every year people bring out the old tools from their houses and discard them in the alleys before the New Year. This event, called *susuharai* 煤払 (lit. “sweeping soot,” year-end house cleaning), is carried out to avoid misfortune caused by *tsukumogami* tool specters but a year short of a hundred.

This custom of renewing the hearth fire, drawing fresh water, and renewing everything from clothing to furniture at the New Year is thought to have started from the proud extravagance of the well-to-do, but now we understand the custom is meant to prevent the calamities caused by *tsukumogami*.

Around the era of Kōhō 康保 (964–967) perhaps, according to the usual custom of Sweeping Soot, old tools were thrown away from houses both inside the capital and in the surrounding area. Those abandoned instruments got together to discuss their fate: “We have faithfully served the houses as furniture and utensils for a long time. Instead of getting the reward that is our due, we are abandoned in the alleys to be kicked by oxen and horses. Insult has been added to injury, and this is the greatest insult of all! Whatever it takes, we should become specters and exact vengeance.” In the middle of these heated discussions, a Buddhist rosary named Ichiren Novice (*Ichiren nyūdō* 一連入道) cut into the debate: “Everyone, it must be our karma to be discarded like this. We should return hostility with benevolence.” Hearing the Novice, a club named Rough John (*Aratarō* 荒太郎) became angry and yelled, “You meddling Novice! Generally speaking, it is half-baked Buddhist priests that people can’t stand to look at. Go away!” Aratarō then beat Ichiren so badly that the Novice’s rosary knot was nearly severed. Ichiren Novice was near to death, and only by the help of his disciples did he escape.

Thus, the discussion went on and each was asked to voice an opinion. Professor Classical Chinese Literature (*Kobun sensei* 古文先生) said: “The beginning of Creation is chaos and there is no form for humans, grasses, or trees. But because

* This is a translation of the single-scroll National Diet Library *emaki*, a Type B text, typeset in MJMT 9: 417–25. While translating it, I also consulted KOKUMIN TOSHO KABUSHIKI GAISHA 1925, 24–34 and WASHIO 1992, 15–25. The illustrations are from the Kyoto University Library’s scrolls, also a Type B text. See KYOTO DAIGAKU FUZOKU TOSHOKAN 2000, <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/tsuroll/indexA.html> and <http://edb.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/exhibit/tsuroll/indexB.html>.

1. *In’yōzakki* 陰陽雜記. The work is assumed to be in classical Chinese. However, nothing about this work is known; there is no known text with this title.



FIGURE 1. People discard objects during the *susuharai*. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.



FIGURE 2: The abandoned objects discuss their revenge. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

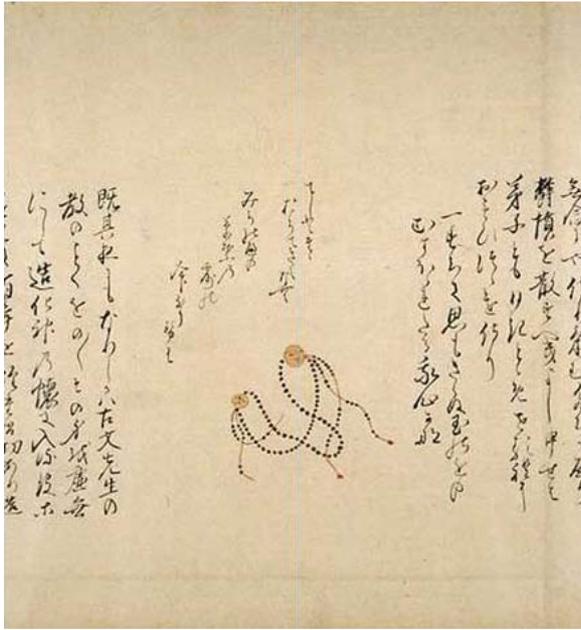


FIGURE 3. Ichiren Novice is restrained by his disciple. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

of yin-yang energy and the heavenly furnace, things are given temporary shapes. If we chance upon the art of yin-yang and heavenly craft, we, inanimate beings, will surely be given souls. Aren't such stories as the old pebbles' talking² and Mr. Gu's turning into a carriage³ testimony to the transformation of beings at the time of yin-yang change? So let us wait for the *setsubun* 節分 (the lunar New Year's Eve), when yin and yang change their places and shapes are formed out of entities. At that time we must empty ourselves and leave our bodies to the hands of a creation god (*zōkashin* 造化神). Then we will surely become specters." Everyone wrote down what the professor said on pieces of cloth and left.

Meanwhile, although Ichiren Novice was a pious man, he could not help but feel bitter and he insisted on going back to vent his anger. His disciples were able to restrain him, just barely, but he continued to seethe with resentment.

Hitosuji ni / omoi mo kiranu / tama no o no / musuhoboretaru / waga kokoro kana

Like a string of rosary beads, my mind cannot be severed from angry thoughts.

2. The story appears in *Zuo Zhuan* 左伝 (Chronicle of Zuo, ca. fourth century BCE), the earliest Chinese narrative history. Quoted in the head note of WASHIO 1992, 16.

3. The reference is unknown.



FIGURE 4. The abandoned objects are transformed into *tsukumogami*. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library. Courtesy of Kyoto University Library. (The characters' remarks on the illustration: "Hey, when that flute became an *oni*, I hear the *oni* was afraid of soybean vines. Don't you be afraid of soybean vines?" "Such a cowardly *oni* won't do at all. If someone throws soybeans at me,⁴ I will pick them up and eat them as fine tea confections").

Deshi to tada / ochite kienamu / michi no e no / kusaba no tsuyu no / inochi nariseba

I wish I could fall and disappear with my disciples, for my life is momentary,
just like dew on the grass in an alley.

New Year's Eve arrived at last. The old tools emptied themselves as Professor Classical Chinese Literature had told them, and entered into the bosom of the creation god. Since the tools lived meritoriously for more than one hundred years and the creation god had the power of transformation, no sooner did the two forces combine than the old tools became vengeful specters. Some tools became men or women, old or young, others took the shape of demons or goblins. Still others became beasts such as foxes and wolves. These various shapes were indeed fearful beyond description.

The *tsukumogami* discussed where they should live. "If it's too far from

4. Traditionally, on the night of *setsubun*, people scatter beans, one for each of their years alive, saying "oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi" (demons out, fortune in). In some rites, a male from the community goes to a house pretending to be an *oni* (wearing a paper *oni* mask) and is chased out while people scatter their beans.



FIGURE 5. The *tsukumogami* having a banquet. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shojo). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library. (The characters' remarks on the illustration: It is a traditional Japanese custom to recite *waka* poetry. Why don't we engage ourselves in the pursuit of the way of the six poetic principles?)

human habitation, it would be inconvenient for obtaining food.” So they decide to move to the place behind Mt. Funaoka 船岡山,⁵ deep in Nagasaka 長坂.⁶

From there, *tsukumogami* ranged in and out of the capital⁷ to avenge their grudges. As they took all kinds of humans and animals for food, people mourned terribly. But since specters are invisible, there was nothing that people could do but pray to the Buddhas and gods. Unlike the mortals who had cast them aside, the vengeful specters were having a great time celebrating and feasting—building a castle out of flesh and creating a blood fountain, dancing, drinking, and merrymaking. They even boasted that celestial pleasures could not surpass theirs.

5. Mt. Funaoka, which is more like a hill, is located northwest of the capital, Kyoto (present-day Kita-ku).

6. Nagasaka is a mountainous road that leads to Tanba province (an area that straddles present-day eastern Hyogo prefecture and the middle part of Kyoto). It is located farther northwest of Mt. Funaoka.

7. Kyō-Shirakawa 京白河. City of Kyoto and Shirakawa, which is an area outside the capital, east of Kamo River. Shirakawa is known as an important road with a checkpoint barrier as well as a place of scenic beauty.



FIGURE 6. The *tsukumogami* worshipping the Great Shape-Shifting God. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library. Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

Topic: Flower

Haru tatsu to / iu sono hi yori / waga gotoku / sakura mo hana no / nasake
tsukuramu

On the very first day of spring, perhaps the cherry blossoms have become
sentient like me

Ika ni shite / yōtaru hana zo / yamazakura / miru hito hoto ni / kokoro mado-
wasu

How did mountain cherry blossoms get magical power? Their beauty
enchants all who see them

Chinese poetry expresses one's heart. Without talent for articulating the beauty
of nature, we are no different from the old tools without souls we once were:

吾變明皇按樂來	I have changed myself into Minghuang ⁸ to play music
花驚羯鼓一時開	Startled by my drum, ⁹ [trees] simultaneously burst into bloom

8. Minghuang 明皇, Brilliant Emperor, is another title of Emperor Xuan Zong 玄宗 (reigned 713–755) of the Tang 唐 Dynasty.

9. David Chen (Professor, The Ohio State University, personal communication) kindly pointed out that the character 羯, a commoner's clothes, is mistaken for 羯, an ancient barbarian tribe in the northwest of China. According to Dr. Chen, the 羯 tribesmen made a good drum of a special design known as Jie drum 羯鼓, which was adopted by early Chinese musicians, and this was the



FIGURE 7. The *tsukumogami* processing along the First Avenue encounter the Prince Regent's party. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

今宵共奏春光好	This evening we play together “The Springtide Is Good”
永使茲身不可埃	This body will never be made into dust
珠簾影動落花春	Behind the jeweled screen move the falling spring petals
胡蝶成媒惱美人	A butterfly becomes a match-maker and disturbs a beautiful woman
人似妖紅如一夢	A human is similar to a bewitching red flower—like a dream
須傾鸚鵡酒霑脣	Let us pour wine into parrot cups to wet our lips

One day a *tsukumogami* said,

Japan is a divine country where everyone believes in Shinto. While we have already received our forms from the creation god, we have not worshipped him, and this is as if we were nonsentient beings like trees and rocks. I propose that we make the creation god our patron and worship him. That way we will be sure to have a long life with abundant posterity.

Thus a shrine was built soon in the recess of Mt. Funaoka and was named the shrine of the Great Shape-Shifting God (*Henge daimyōjin* 变化大明神). They chose a Shinto priest's headgear for a priest, bells for shrine maidens, and wooden clappers for *kagura* performers,¹⁰ and they offered prayers every morning and observed rituals every evening. Though they were evil and violent specters, they

drum that Minghuang liked to play. According to a legend about Minghuang, he was once playing the drum in a garden pavilion, in the first lunar month of spring, and his performance was so excellent that the trees were startled and all together burst into bloom before their natural flowering time. Upon this occasion, he improvised a song entitled “The Springtide Is Good.”

10. *Kagura* literally means “music of the gods”; it is the appellation for the most representative performing art of Japanese religious music. The etymology of *kagura* is *kami no kura*, the “seat of the kami”—the kami are seen as dwelling in the *kagura* performance. AVERBUCH 1995, 6.

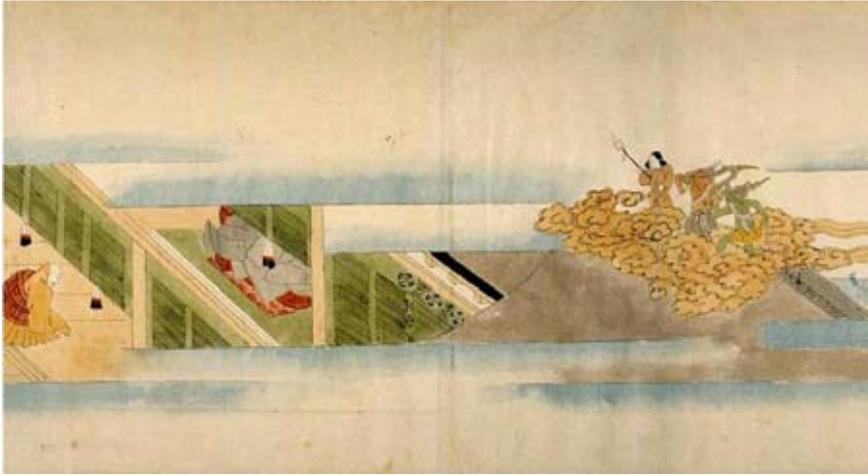


FIGURE 8. The divine boys appear above the Palace. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.



FIGURE 9. The divine boys attacking the *tsukumogami*. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

(The remarks of the divine boys and *tsukumogami* on the illustration: “All of you, we know what you’ve done. We’ve come to punish you. But if you stop killing people and decide to embrace Buddhism, we will spare your lives.”

“Thank you, thank you! From now on we will not have any evil thought and we will convert to Buddhism. Please spare us.”)



FIGURE 10. The *tsukumogami* going to visit Holy Ichiren. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

were pious. It is like that great thief, Dao Zhi 盜跖,¹¹ who followed the five cardinal Confucian virtues.¹²

They also proposed to have a religious festival as other shrines did, and they made a portable shrine. In the deep night of the fifth day of the fourth month, they made a procession eastward along the First Avenue.¹³ They made a festival float mounted with a decorative halberd, and other elaborate decorations.

At that moment the Prince Regent's party¹⁴ was proceeding westward along the First Avenue to the Imperial Palace through Tatchimon Gate 達智門¹⁵ for

11. A famous thief who was active during the time of Confucius (551–479 BCE).

12. Gojō 五常. Benevolence, justice, politeness, wisdom, and fidelity.

13. The route of the *tsukumogami*'s procession going eastward along the First Avenue corresponds to the route of *hyakki yagyō* 百鬼夜行 (Night procession of one hundred demons) in “Ongyō no otoko Rokkakudō no Kannon no tasuke ni yorite mi o arawasu koto” 隱形男依六角堂観音助顕身語, the thirty-second tale of Volume Sixteen of *Konjaku monogatari shū* (See TYLER 1987, 99–101. For the Japanese text, see SNKBZ 36: 271–76.

14. *Kanpaku denka* 関白殿下. Fujiwara Saneyori 藤原実頼 (900–970) becomes *Kanpaku* or Regent in 967, which corresponds to the fourth year of the Kōhō era, the background for this story. According to *Ōkagami* (The great mirror, ca. 1085–1125), his younger brother, Fujiwara no Morosuke 藤原師輔 (908–960), encountered the *hyakki yagyō*. See note 17.

15. One of the twelve external gates of the Greater Imperial Palace or Daidairi 大内裏. Tatchimon is located far east of the north side of the Greater Imperial Palace.



FIGURE 11. The *tsukumogami* apologize to Holy Ichiren. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

a special investiture. Here the Regent's party encountered the *tsukumogami*'s procession.¹⁶ Astounded, the escorts and outriders of the Regent's party fell from their horses in a swoon of fright while other attendants were stricken as well. The Regent, alone of his party, was not agitated or frightened. From inside his carriage, he glared angrily at the specters. A flame suddenly spurted from an amulet the Regent kept on himself, and in no time the flame spread and attacked the *tsukumogami*.¹⁷ The specters fled for their lives before the flames.

The Regent returned home, for the incident prevented him from visiting the Imperial Palace, but he reported this strange encounter to the Emperor at dawn. The Emperor was astonished and immediately had a diviner see to the matter. According to the diviner's report, restrained behavior was required, so the Emperor ordered offerings to be made to various Shinto shrines and for Buddhist priests of the exoteric and esoteric schools to pray in their temples.

Enquiring about the miracle of the Regent's amulet, the diviner discovered

16. The Prince Regent's encounter with the *tsukumogami* on his way to the Imperial Palace refers to the story of Fujiwara no Morosuke in *Ōkagami* (SNKBZ 34: 166–67. For an English translation, see MCCULLOUGH 1980, 136).

17. The amulet (of *Sonshō Darani*, see note 19 below) carried by the Regent that protects him from the demons is described in “Sonshō darani no genriki ni yorite oni no nan o nogaruru koto” 依尊勝陀羅尼驗力遁鬼難語, forty-second tale of Volume Fourteen of *Konjaku monogatari*shū. (See TYLER 1987, 237–39. For the Japanese text, see SNKBZ 35: 508–12.)



FIGURE 12. The *tsukumogami* take tonsure. From *Tsukumogami* (Kyoto University Library). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

that a certain bishop had copied *Sonshō Darani* 尊勝陀羅尼¹⁸ and had prayed for the sake of his patron, the Regent. The Regent then kept the amulet on him everywhere he went. Hearing the story, the Emperor issued an order to leave all matter of prayers in the future to the bishop. The bishop declined the request again and again, but an imperial order was hard to refuse. He finally agreed to carry out the Great Rite of *Sonshō Darani* at Seiryōden 清涼殿.¹⁹ The attending priests were all excellent, and skilled in the Yogācāra teachings (*yugakyō* 瑜伽教). Smoke from the ritual burning of mystic wooden sticks filled the court and prayers resounded in the palace.

On the night of the sixth day, on his way to Seiryōden to listen to the service, the Emperor saw a brilliant light just above the palace. Inside the light were seven or eight extraordinary-looking armed divine boys (*gohō dōji* 護法童子). Some had swords and others had bejeweled staffs—they all flew northwards. The emperor was moved to tears, understanding that the attendants of two *myōō* 明王 (Vidyārāja)²⁰ had appeared to conquer the evil specters. The emperor then

18. The full name is *Butchō Sonshō Darani* 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼 (*Dhāraṇī* of the victorious buddha crown). This *dhāraṇī* was used to prevent natural disasters, secure longevity, and ward off evils.

19. The Emperor's Residence within the Imperial Palace compound.

20. *Nimyoō* 二明王. They are Fudō myōō 不動明王 (*Acala Vidyā-rāja*), the Immoveable Protector of Dharma, and Gōzanze myōō 降三世明王 (*Trailokya-vijaya*), Conqueror of the Three Worlds.

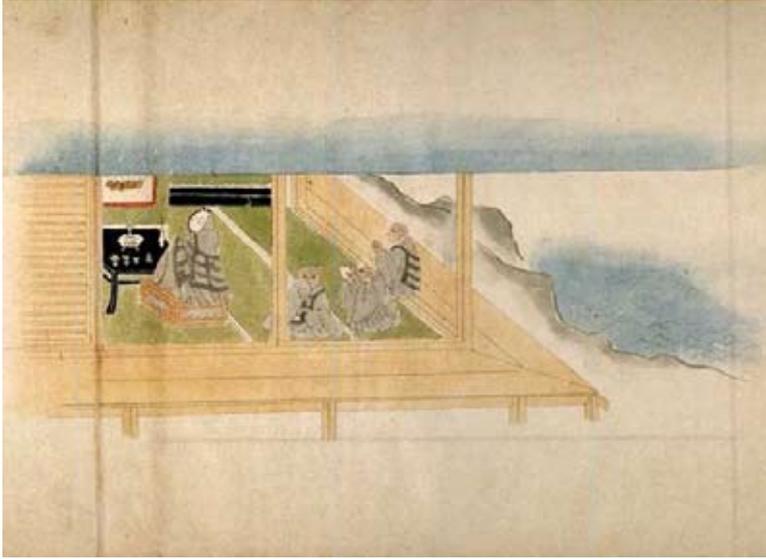


FIGURE 13. The *tsukumogami* practice the teaching of Shingon esoteric Buddhism under the guidance of Holy Ichiren. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

went to the place where the service was being held and he worshipped the principal Buddha image. After the service ended, and all the rituals were over, he summoned the bishop and said, “It’s not that miracles of Shingon Buddhism have only begun now, but the miraculous appearance of the divine boys is due to your pious practice.” The bishop was thankful for the imperial reverence for Buddhism and bowed out of the royal presence with tears of gratitude.

In the meantime, the divine boys flew to the *tsukumogami*’s den. Sacred “Wheels of Dharma” (*rinpō* 輪宝) whirled around in the air; flames from them attacked the *tsukumogami* and with little effort, the divine boys conquered the specters. The divine boys did not destroy the *tsukumogami* however. Full of mercy, they said, “If you forswear evil, promise not to harm humans, and revere the Three Treasures of Buddhism and seek buddhahood, we will spare your lives. Otherwise, you shall all perish.” The terrified specters forswore their vengeance and vowed to observe Buddhist doctrines.

Afterwards, the *tsukumogami* gathered together all shaken with fear—their close brush with doom fresh in their minds. One specter said, “We have incurred divine punishment because we took many lives and did much that was evil. But observing our penitence, they have generously spared our lives. We should aban-



FIGURE 14. A *tsukumogami* practicing the way in the mountains. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library.

don the quest for fleeting glory and follow the way of Buddha.” The rest of the *tsukumogami* agreed and immediately sought spiritual awakening.

They discussed who would be their mentor in Buddhism. “That Ichiren whom we scorned is a revered master, known for his experience in the doctrine and practice of the various Buddhist schools. Let us ask him to guide us. What a shame that we humiliated him last winter. But if we show our repentance, he will perhaps benevolently forgive us.” So saying they visited Ichiren’s dwelling.

As for Ichiren, [he had become the most pious of Buddhist priests, and was now called Holy Ichiren],²¹ he was deeply weary of this world since last winter’s incident, so he became a recluse in the deep mountains. He made the wind through the pine trees his friend, and thus awoke to the twelve links in the chain that bind us to suffering (*jūni innen* 十二因縁). He listened to the sound of water in the valley and thus cleansed one hundred and eight²² polluting thoughts from his mind. One evening a faint sound of the evening bell in the distance made Holy Ichiren think, “The day is almost over,” when he heard a knock on the door. “Who could it be at such an hour?” he thought as he opened the

21. Ichiren’s title changes from *nyūdō* 入道 (Novice) to *shōnin* 上人 (Holy Priest) at this time.

22. *hyaku hachi no bonnō* 百八煩惱. One-hundred-and-eight *kleśa* or afflictions. The number “one hundred eight” signifies many.



FIGURE 15. The *tsukumogami* attain Buddhahood. From *Tsukumogami* scroll, property of Kyoto University Library (Kyoto Daigaku Fuzoku Toshokan Shozō). Courtesy of Kyoto University Library. (The captions on the illustration of Buddha images:

- Human 人 The Essential Cause of Virtue Buddha²³
 Hermit 仙 The Immortal Adept Buddha²⁴
 Heaven 天 Longevity Immortal Buddha²⁵
 Golden realm 金界 The Essence of the True Realm of Phenomena Buddha²⁶)

door and was surprised to see specters of various extraordinary shapes gathered about his doorstep. Astonished, Holy Ichiren asked, “Who are you? Are you demons to shake my religious faith?” The *tsukumogami* replied that they were the specters of the familiar old tools and explained their situation—how the creation god transformed them into specters and the Buddhist divine boys awakened their religious faith. To this, Holy Ichiren replied, “I was wondering what happened to you all since then. I’m so happy that not only you visit me but also you have become religious.” Among the old tools, the club that beat Holy Ichiren nearly to death was especially repentant for his behavior. The holy man, however, comforted him, “Don’t say that. It was that very incident that led me to withdraw from the world. Thus you should be called my mentor in the way of the Buddha.”

Soon Holy Ichiren shaved their heads and had them don Buddhist garb. Starting from the ten Buddhist precepts given to a novice, under the guidance of Holy Ichiren, they progressed to receive more complex precepts.²⁷ One day the

23. *Intoku honshōō nyorai* 因德本性王如来

24. *Chōju daisenō nyorai* 長寿大仙王如来

25. *Myōshiki jizaiō nyorai* 妙色自在王如来

26. *Hokkai taishōō nyorai* 法界体性王如来

27. *gusokukai* 具足戒 (*upasampadā*). Buddhist precepts for monks and nuns. There are two hundred and fifty rules for the fully ordained Buddhist monk, and three hundred and forty-eight for the fully ordained Buddhist nun.

tool priests said to the holy man, “We understand that each and every Buddhist doctrine in the cannon opens a passage to Buddhahood, but a pace of progress towards enlightenment depends upon the profundity of teachings. If possible we would like to receive profound teachings and attain Buddhahood swiftly.”

Ever modest, Ichiren replied, “Although I am a priest of limited ability, under the guidance of virtuous priests I have studied teachings of various sects that came to Japan. The profundity of Shakamuni Buddha’s²⁸ teachings varies depending on the capacities of the sentient beings, but they all partake of the virtue of the Dharmadatu, and we cannot easily discuss their advantages and disadvantages. When it comes, however, to the immediate attainment of Buddhahood in this very body (*sokushin tongo* 即身頓悟), it resides solely in the power of the Three Mystic Practices²⁹ of the Shingon esoteric sect. Long ago, when Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師³⁰ preached the teaching of immediate attainment of Buddhahood, the master priests of various sects doubted it and did not follow his teaching. Consequently, important priests of various sects gathered at the Imperial Court and debated the doctrinal interpretations. The priests all delivered powerful speeches like Kasen’en 迦梅延 (Kātyāyana)³¹ and Furuna 富留那 (Purna),³² but none surpassed Kōbō Daishi’s eloquence, and his discourse on *sanmaji* 三摩地 or *samādhi* (meditative states) for enlightenment was as clear as glass. As he quite logically argued the teachings of the attainment for Buddhahood in this very lifetime (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏), the scholarly priests of every school at the debate were rendered speechless.

“Then the Emperor said, “The excellence of your discourse is doubtless. But I still wish to see the proof of it. Whereupon Kōbō Daishi sat facing south, and no sooner did he exercise the Three Mystic Practices, than his body was fused with Mahāvairocana: on his head was the crown of Five Wisdoms,³³ emitting a halo of five colors from his back. The Emperor bowed his head, his subjects and priests prostrated and worshiped Kōbō Daishi who had become Shana

28. Gautama Buddha or Shakamuni (ca. 563–486 BCE). The founder of Buddhism.

29. *sanmitsu* 三密. They are *shin-ku-i* 身口意 (the action of body or *mudra*, speech or incantation of mantra, and mind or concentration on the Principal Buddha),

30. Kūkai 空海 (774–835). The founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism. He founded Kongōbu-ji 金剛峰寺 in Mt. Kōya 高野 in present-day Wakayama prefecture.

31. One of the ten great disciples of Gautama Buddha or Shakamuni. Kasen’en is famous for his debating skills.

32. One of the ten great disciples of Gautama Buddha or Shakamuni. Furuna is noted for preaching.

33. *gochi* 五智. They are the: 1) wisdom of knowing the quintessence of all existences; 2) mirror-like wisdom, which reflects all phenomenal things as they are; 3) wisdom of observing the equality of all things; 4) wisdom of observing the distinctive features of all phenomena; and 5) wisdom of accomplishing metamorphoses. Mahāvairocana has a crown bearing five miniature figures of Five Wisdom Buddhas.

(Mahāvairocana). After awhile, Kōbō Daishi returned to his human form and thus demonstrated to them the doctrine of *shōbutsu funi* 生佛不二 or the non-duality of a living human and Buddha. Any doubt about the immediate realization of Buddhahood was solved on that day and from then on Shingon esoteric Buddhism has prospered. Everyone, I urge you to pursue the teaching of the Shingon sect and attain enlightenment,” and every one of the tool priests joyfully embraced the Shingon teachings.

As *tsukumogami* were all from birth great vessels (capable of holding vast knowledge), the reality and wisdom of the Two Mandalas as preached in the King of Sutras (Mahāvairocana Sutra) were transmitted to them completely, with nothing left out. Holy Ichiren said, “That Ryūchi Daishi 龍智大士 (Nāgabodhi)³⁴ of old was waiting for Konchi 金智 (Vajrabodhi)³⁵ and Kōchi 広智 (Amoghavajra)³⁶ for eight hundred years so took an elixir to (extend his life and)transmit esoteric Buddhism. As for me, fortunately I am blessed with you disciples and can teach all doctrines of the Shingon sect. My wish is realized.” So saying, at the age of one hundred eight, Ichiren entered the state of *samadhi* by reciting *mantras* and attained Buddhahood in the sitting posture, there, before his disciples. Immediately the western gate of his hut opened, releasing a brilliant light and the room transformed into the Paradise of Mahavairocana.

To witness a person attaining enlightenment is a thing unheard of even among the most advanced bodhisattvas at the tenth stage on the path, let alone ordinary and stupid mortals. However, due to the skillful means of miraculous grace, the practitioners of the Shingon sect are sometimes able to see it. Witnessing Holy Ichiren attain Buddhahood, the old tool monks applied themselves to the ascetic practices all the more.

After some time, one old tool monk declared, “While living together like this is good to teach one another and deepen our knowledge, we may become lenient toward each other and this may disturb our practice. That’s why the scripture says, ‘Go deep into the mountains and seek the way of Buddha.’ So we should go to the deep mountain valleys, severing any connection with the secular world,

34. A Buddhist priest in South India and the fourth patriarch in the lineage of esoteric Buddhism. He had extraordinary supernatural power and is said to have lived several hundred years in order to transmit the esoteric teaching to Kongōchi.

35. Konchi signifies Kongōchi 金剛智 (?–741), the fifth patriarch in the lineage of Shingon esoteric Buddhism. Having a revelatory dream of Kannon Bodhisattva, he moved from India to China in 720 and taught esoteric Buddhism in China. He was revered by Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (Jp. Gensō, 685–762) and translated a number of esoteric scriptures in Chang-an and Lo-yang.

36. Kōchi signifies Fukū Sanzō 不空三藏 (Amoghavajra 705–774, also known as Fukū Kongō 不空金剛), the sixth patriarch in the lineage of Shingon esoteric Buddhism. He was a disciple of Kongōchi and translated a great number of scriptures that he had brought from his trip to India and Sri Lanka.

and devote ourselves to training.” The rest of the tool monks agreed, and though reluctant to part, they went separate ways. One decided to live on the carpet of moss between rocks in deep mountains; another, under a pine tree in a valley.

Thus, each tool monk matured its ascetic practices and attained the state of Samadhi in their very bodies. Depending on the principal Buddha or Buddhi-sattva each tool revered for his or her ascetic practices, the character of their attainments varies. Some master the mantra of Kudonsen 瞿曇仙³⁷ and attain the power of enlightenment associated with that Buddha and his mantra (*jimyō shicchi* 持明悉地), others attain the power of enlightenment of all the various buddhas (*shobutsu shicchi* 諸仏悉地) by abiding in the central realm of the mandala [where Dainichi Buddha resides and whence all other Buddhas emanate] and from whence one sees the true nature of all things (*chūdai hosshō* 中台法性).

Regarding the teaching of realizing Buddhahood by nonsentient beings, although both *Tendai* 天台 and *Kegon* 華嚴 sects also preach this, their teachings are amorphous and they have not mastered all the subtleties. Therefore, while other sects advocate only *sōmoku jōbutsu* 草木成仏 (the enlightenment of plants), the teaching of the Three Mysteries of the Shingon sect alone goes so far as to say *sōmoku hijō hosshin shugyō jōbutsu* 草木非情発心修行成仏 (plants and nonsentient beings become Buddhas by arousing the desire for enlightenment and performing ascetic and religious practices). There is nothing in the *jikkai* 十界 (ten worlds)³⁸ that does not possess the virtue of the letter A 阿 [which is the substance of the universe, symbolizing the unity of the whole world; the origin of all elements of the world].³⁹ If attainment of Buddhahood by awakening and training is possible for animate beings, how much more so for the nonsentient beings? Now listening to the tale of how these old tools came to spiritual awakening, you must believe even more in the profundity of the yoga of the Three Mysteries.

Scholars of the exoteric Buddhist schools say that according to *Agon* 阿含,⁴⁰ *oni* and deities reside on the streets and in the houses, filling every inch of space. The exoteric Buddhists believe that the transformation of old tools into specters

37. An immortal mountain wizard who lived in ancient India.

38. They are, in descending order: *bukkai* 佛界 (realm of Buddhas), *bosatsu-kai* 菩薩界 (realm of Bodhisattvas), *engaku-kai* 緣覺界 (realm of Pratyekabuddhas), *shōmon-kai* 声聞界 (realm of śrāvakas), *ten-kai* 天界 (heaven), *jin-kai* 人界 (world of men), *shura-kai* 修羅界 (world of aśura), *chikushō-kai* 畜生界 (world of animals), *gaki-kai* 餓鬼界 (world of hungry ghosts), and *jigoku-kai* 地獄界 (hell).

39. “A” is the first sound in the Sanskrit alphabet and it embodies the mystic truth in esoteric Buddhist belief. According to esoteric Buddhism, all phenomena are originally “unproduced” or uncreated, and this principle is symbolized by the letter A. The one who meditates on A will attain Buddhahood.

40. A generic term for “hīnayāna” Buddhist sutras, as well as a specific group of sutras (the Āgama sutras).

is due to the deities and *oni* possessing them. They ask, “how could inanimate objects have souls?”

Indeed, the difference between esoteric Buddhism and exoteric Buddhism is great. The self-nature of the letter *A* exists inherently in both the animate and inanimate, and the uncreated *A* does not disappear or become exhausted. How then, could the tools—also inanimate objects—need to borrow the nature of others to become themselves?

If you wish to know the deepest meaning, quickly escape from the net of exoteric Buddhism and enter Shingon esoteric Buddhism.

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