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## Eulogizing Kūya as More than a Nenbutsu Practitioner A Study and Translation of the *Kūyarui*

Kūya is widely known as a tenth-century Buddhist holy man who was the first to spread the nenbutsu practice among common lay people. The document that scholars regard as the most credible for understanding who Kūya was is the *Kūyarui*, which is a eulogy for Kūya written in Sino-Japanese (*kanbun*) in the 970s by the author of the *Sanbōe*, Minamoto Tamenori. This article first elucidates the origins and influence of the text. Then it approaches the text as a piece of Buddhist biographical literature and examines its depiction of Kūya. It is argued that Kūya is depicted in the *Kūyarui* not primarily as a nenbutsu practitioner but as a selfless holy man who rejects any status in the world, yet serves it by promoting Buddhism in a variety of ways and by striving to relieve the suffering of others. Finally, a translation of the complete *Kūyarui* is provided.

KEYWORDS: Kūya — nenbutsu — *rui* — Minamoto Tamenori — religious biography — *shōnin*

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KŪYA's life has long been deemed worth remembering.<sup>1</sup> For over a thousand years depictions of him have been produced by a wide range of people, including aristocrats, Buddhist priests, tea-whisk makers, playwrights, novelists, sculptors, painters, dancers, musicians, and comedians (Itō and MIURA [1993, 49] refer to Kūya as a rapper of *namu Amida butsu*). Accounts about Kūya can be found in collections of religious biographies (*ōjōden* and *kōsōden*), temple foundation stories (*engi*), an illustrated biography (*eshiden*), a noh play, medieval tale literature (*setsuwa*), and in most textbooks on Japanese history used in Japanese high schools.

Historians today and much of the general public remember Kūya<sup>2</sup> as the first to spread the recitation of the nenbutsu among common people, and many say he was the founder of the dancing nenbutsu (*odori nenbutsu*). He is thus seen as important for understanding the history of Japanese Buddhism, particularly Pure Land Buddhism. Because of his perceived historical significance, scholars have frequently tried to reconstruct a historically accurate account of his life. To do this, they have accepted only a few primary sources as credible: a description of a dedication ceremony held by Kūya in 963 written by Miyoshi Michimune 三善道統 that is included in the *Honchō monzui* 本朝文粹 (359–60); a brief biography of Kūya by Yoshishige Yasutane 慶滋保胤 in the *Nihon ōjōgokurakuki* 日本往生極樂記; and a eulogy titled the *Kūyarui* 空也誄 written by Minamoto Tamenori 源為憲 while a university student in Kyoto. Of these, scholars regard the *Kūyarui* as the most important source because it is the earliest text to give an overview of his life and much of its contents, as will be shown below, are repeated in Yasutane's later and briefer account of Kūya's life.

Using the *Kūyarui* (hereafter, *Rui*) as their primary historical source on the life of Kūya and on the basis of particular understandings of religion in the tenth century, historians have made claims about what type of person Kūya was. He is most commonly located in the tradition of wandering ascetics (*hijiri*),

1. I would like to thank Robert Rhodes at Ōtani University and Edward Kamens at Yale University for taking the time to read and comment on my translation of the *Kūyarui*. They saved me from a number of embarrassing errors, and any that remain are mine. If the reader finds a mistake, it is probably where I chose not to heed their counsel. I am grateful to Linda Keenan for her helpful suggestions that allowed me to improve the style of my translation of the last section of the *Kūyarui* written in verse. I would also like to express my gratitude to Charles Hallisey for discussing the *Kūyarui* with me at length and for his keen insights that led me to think about the text in new ways. Finally, I would like to thank the Wabash Center and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science for grants that afforded me the time and resources to complete this article.

2. Ishii has argued at length that the historically correct reading of 空也 is “Kūya,” not Kōya (ISHII 2002, 106–123; and 2003b). “Kūya” is also the reading most commonly used today.

particularly *nenbutsu hijiri*. Frequently, he has also been seen as a shamanic figure, a perception that is based largely on a depiction of him in the *Rui* reciting the *nenbutsu* while burning skeletal remains and on an assumption that his *nenbutsu* was regarded as a magical practice (see, for example, INOUE 1975, 237–38; KITAGAWA 1966, 117; HAYAMI 1996, 11). The *Rui*, however, does not depict Kūya as exhibiting any of the characteristics most closely associated with shamanism, namely, ecstasy, spirit possession, or soul flight.

Some historians, rather than reading the *Rui* simply as a source to reconstruct the life of Kūya, have analyzed it as a document that provides insight into the religion of late tenth-century Japan. Hayami Tasuku, for example, has argued that the depiction of Kūya in the *Rui* reflects “the ideal image of a *nenbutsu* proselytizer held by the nobility” (Hayami 1996, 26).

Reading the *Rui* as a source for reconstructing the historical Kūya and as an artifact for understanding his religious milieu have their merits, but, as with any approach, they are not perfect. As a historical source on the life of Kūya, the *Rui*, with its miracle tales, has long been recognized as less than ideal. But even without these miracle tales, it is problematic for reconstructing Kūya’s life because it is laudatory in nature, it lacks depth, and is based on few sources of information. As a window into the religion of the time, it is also limited in that we have little data about how the text was understood, who read it, how wide its readership was, or to what extent it reflected the views of a particular group. Because it was not written by a member of a religious community that regarded Kūya as its founder and because we know little about Kūya’s closest followers at the time of his death, it is hard to say to what extent the *Rui* reflects the values or ideals of a particular religious community or his followers.

In addition to the limitations in their approaches to the *Kūyarui*, earlier studies have also been limited in their emphases. Most previous studies of Kūya have focused on Kūya’s *nenbutsu* practice. While understanding his *nenbutsu*, or at least representations of it, is certainly important for understanding Kūya and the history of the *nenbutsu* practice, it is only one of many religious activities described in the *Rui*.

Instead of examining the *Rui* as a primary historical document that tells us what Kūya actually did, or about the religious milieu of his time, I wish to read it as a piece of Buddhist biographical literature that represents Kūya not simply as a *nenbutsu* practitioner but as someone who was active in serving the world while rejecting any social position in it. Moreover, I hope the reader will see



A modern replica of Roku-haramitsuji’s statue of Kūya. Photograph by author.

that, although the *Rui* represents Kūya at a particular point in time, its image of him was of interest to people beyond that time. Similar to other literary works, the *Rui* creates with language a meaningful representation of its subject that is not necessarily confined to the specific socio-historical context in which it was written. In fact, I suspect that the *Rui*'s depiction of Kūya as someone who was dedicated to selflessly working to relieve suffering and to promoting Buddhism is an image that even some people today, despite being far removed from the time and context in which Tamenori wrote the *Rui*, might recognize as indicative of a saintly life.

In order to understand how the *Rui* came to present Kūya, I will first examine its origins and the extent to which images of Kūya in it have survived before showing how it depicts him as someone who lived in the world but who was not of it. Finally, I offer a translation of the entire *Rui* so that its presentation of Kūya's life will be accessible to readers of English.

#### *Minamoto Tamenori and the Origins of the Kūyarui*

The author of the *Kūyarui*, Minamoto Tamenori, makes no indication that he was a disciple of Kūya, personally knew him or had ever seen him. Toward the end of the text, he tells us that in order to write the eulogy he visited Kūya's disciples and main temple and collected from Kūya's Dharma companions (*zenchishiki* 善知識) dozens of documents, including votive prayers, which he then put in chronological order. This suggests that much of Tamenori's information on Kūya came from admirers and thus that the content of the text was determined in part by them. Who these admirers were, we can not say for sure. On the basis of people mentioned in the *Rui* and the stated temple where Kūya died (namely, Saikōji, which is the predecessor of Rokuharamitsuji), we can speculate that a number of them were aristocrats associated with that temple; but some may also have been convicts or ex-convicts, if we read the *Rui* as an accurate representation of who were among his admirers.

Although Tamenori never tells us when he wrote the *Rui*, he does provide a number of clues to help us figure it out. The first clue he provides is the term *rui* 誄 in the title. The kanji for *rui* was originally used in China to indicate a funeral oration that lauded a person's life, usually rulers but occasionally eminent Buddhists. There were, for example, *rui* composed for the great Indian scholar and translator of Buddhist texts Kumarajiva as well as for Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416) and Daosheng 道生 (?–434) (MIMA 1979, 106–107; INOUE 2002, 37). The kanji had also been used in ancient Japan for *shinohigoto*, which were funeral orations particularly for members of the imperial family. The term can be seen, for example, in the *Nihon shoki* where it tells us a *shinohigoto* was offered to Emperor Jomei (*Nihon shoki*, vol. 3, 51). Although *rui* rather than *shinohigoto* were very rare in Japan, and Tamenori's *Rui* differs from Chinese *rui* (*lěi*) in that it has a

long “preface” in prose followed by a short section in verse (FUKUI 1990, 46–47), Tamenori’s use of the term does designate the text as a funerary oration. As such, it was probably presented not long after Kūya’s death, most likely at a memorial service for Kūya, if not the funeral itself. On the basis of the nature of the text, the historian Hirabayashi Moritoku suggests that the *Rui* was probably presented on the first anniversary of Kūya’s death, while Ishii argues that it was written within forty-nine days of when Kūya died (HIRABAYASHI 1958, 48; ISHII 2003a, 41).

By verifying Kūya’s death date, therefore, we can make an estimate of when the text was written. The *Rui* originally stated the date of Kūya’s death but the year of death in early extant copies of the *Rui* is illegible. Scholars have deduced the accepted date of his death as the eleventh day of the ninth month of the third year of Tenroku (972) based on the *Rokuharamitsuji engi*, which copies much of the *Rui* verbatim. Even if we question the death year given in the *Rokuharamitsuji engi*, which was not written until 1122, the *Rui* itself states that Kūya attended a funerary service for the aristocrat Fujiwara Morouji in 970, indicating that it was written after then. Furthermore, below the title, Tamenori signs the text, “Imperial University student Minamoto Tamenori.” This indicates that he wrote it before the autumn of 977 because we know from the *Nihon kiryaku* that he was already Inner Secretary (*naiki*) by that time (*Nihon kiryaku*, 134). So it seems safe to conclude that the text was written between 970 and 977, and most likely by the autumn of 973.

The term *rui*, in addition to providing a clue for when the text was written, also helps us discern for whom it may have been written and why. Although in Japan before the *Kūyarui* we have evidence of only one other *rui*, which was written for a son of Fujiwara Kamatari (614–669), in China they were not so rare (INOUE 2002, 39). So while Tamenori with the title of his text does not situate it in a well-established Japanese genre, he does associate it with a wider body of commemorative mortuary literature.<sup>3</sup> As a piece of mortuary writing, the initial primary audience for the text most likely consisted of people who knew Kūya and were mourning his death. The larger genre to which the *Rui* belongs also suggests that one of the reasons for writing it was to praise Kūya. In fact, this is indicated in the *Rui* when Tamenori writes that “to review the life of the *shōnin* [i.e., Kūya] and eulogize him is in order to truly honor his virtues.”

While it seems certain that Tamenori wanted to praise Kūya’s life as a whole, it is uncertain what or who prompted him to write the *Rui*. Documentary evidence to answer this question conclusively is lacking, but a brief look at Tamenori’s life and interests are suggestive. Tamenori was born into a mid-level aristocratic family, probably sometime between the early 930s and 941. His lineage, which was linked to a son of Emperor Kōkō (r. 884–887), allowed him to attend university and become a government administrator, but prevented him

3. For more specifically on the genre *rui*, see FUKUI 1990 and MIMA 1981.

from achieving an elite rank in the aristocracy. At university, where he remained until after age thirty, he studied Chinese histories and verse as well as the Confucian classics. While still a student he gained a reputation as someone with literary talents, although not genius. His literary skills were recognized when he compiled upon request a composition handbook titled *Kuchizusami* 口遊 for Fujiwara Tamemitsu's son that was meant to complement a primary-school text used at the time (KAMENS 1988, 18–19; URY 1989, 488). His participation in a poetry contest (*utaawase*) at the palace in 972 also indicates that he was a reputable poet.

During his years at university, Tamenori showed an interest in Buddhism and almost certainly became a member of the Kangakue 觀學會 (Society for the Advancement of Learning), which formed in 964.<sup>4</sup> One of the key founding members of the society was Yoshishige Yasutane, who was most likely a university *senpai* of Tamenori. In an introductory text on Buddhism titled *Sanbōe* 三寶繪 written by Tamenori and presented to Princess Sonshi in 984, there is a detailed description of the Kangakue. Tamenori indicates that members of the society were to encourage each other in their “studies of the Way of the Law and the Way of Literature.” He describes what members did when they met twice a year on the fifteenth of the third and ninth months as follows:

At dawn on the fifteenth they discuss the *Lotus Sutra*, and in the evening they meditate on Amida Buddha. Then, until dawn on the following day, they compose Chinese verses in praise of the Buddha and of his teachings, and these verses are recorded and kept within the temple.

(KAMENS 1988, 295; *Sanbōe*, 173)

This description indicates that Kangakue members were interested in Pure Land Buddhism, in furthering their knowledge of Buddhism, and in cultivating their poetic skills. It also suggests that Tamenori as a Kangakue participant would have had experience in composing verses in praise of Buddhism, which he no doubt thought of as meritorious.

Scholars think it unlikely that Tamenori wrote the *Rui* on his own volition, especially since his writings for other people were written upon request of his social superiors. Thus there has been some debate over who would have asked him to write the *Rui*. Hirabayashi, on the basis of Tamenori's involvement in the Kangakue and on the assumption that Yasutane was an admirer of Kūya, argues

4. The best evidence we have for Tamenori's direct involvement in the Kangakue is a text that was found in 1984 and given the title *Kangakueki* 勸学会記. A reproduction and study of this text can be found in GOTŌ 1993, 90–112. Some scholars have cited an essay by Fujiwara no Arikuni (a.k.a., Kange Shōkō 勘解相公) in the *Honchō reisō* on page 609, volume 8 of the *Gunsho ruijū*, as evidence of Tamenori's participation in the Kangakue. Unfortunately, however, none of the people mentioned in the essay can be clearly identified as Tamenori (see KAWAGUCHI and HONCHŌ REISŌ O YOMU KAI 1993, 359–63).

that Yasutane asked Tamenori to write the *Rui* because he recognized Tamenori's style as superior to other students (HIRABAYASHI 1958, 54). Itō, in contrast, argues on the basis of Tamenori's statement that Kūya's disciples were a main source for the *Rui*, that it was these disciples of Kūya who asked Tamenori to write it (ITŌ 2005, 19–20).

Whatever or whoever led Tamenori to write the *Rui*, it is worth noting that he never wrote on Kūya again, despite the fact that he did include in his *Sanbōe* biographical accounts of other prominent Japanese holy men, including E no Ubasoku and Gyōki. The *Rui* thus marks the end of Tamenori's writings on Kūya; but it also marks the beginning of a long tradition of biographical writings on Kūya, a tradition in which the accounts it offered of him would echo throughout history.

### *The Survival of the Rui and Its Echoes in Later Accounts of Kūya*

Today in an area of Nagoya well-known for its discount electronic stores stands a Shingon temple popularly known as Ōsu Kannon but officially named Shinpukuji. Hidden away in this temple lies a tattered and ink-smudged copy of the *Kūyarui*.<sup>5</sup> As the earliest extant copy of the text, it has been designated by the Agency for Cultural Affairs as an important cultural property (*jūyō bunkazai*). The monk scribe who copied it signed the text with the name Isai 惟西.<sup>6</sup> He tells us in a note that he copied it on the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month (*hatsufuyu* 初冬) in the second year of Tenji (1125). Suggesting that he was not working from a perfect version of the text, Isai warns the reader that “The phrases are in disarray and should be compared with other works” (文句狼籍也以他本可校). But if we consider Ōe no Mochitoki's statement about the *Kūyarui* quoted in the *Godanshō* that “the *rui* for Kūya *shōnin* is hard on the eyes; it is a biography (*den*), not a eulogy (*rui*),” it is possible that even the original text might have seemed less than perfect (*Godanshō*, 235).

Despite any imperfections, Isai's copy represents what was and would remain the standard version of the text. This is evident first in the *Rokuharamitsuji engi*, which was written by the author of the *Shui Ōjōden* 拾遺往生伝, Miyoshi Tameyasu 三善為康, in that it quotes most of the *Rui* as we know it from Isai's copy. The similarities between the *Rokuharamitsuji engi* and Isai's copy suggest that Tameyasu and Isai were working from earlier copies that were similar if not the same.

After Isai's copy, many others were made based on it. A popular woodblock print edition is included in the nineteenth-century *Zoku gunsho ruijū* (ZGR). Since this also includes Isai's above statement, we can assume it is in the same lineage as Isai's text. The structure of the text is, however, slightly different with

5. Photographs of the entire text can be viewed in KOKUBUNGAKU KENKYŪ SHIRYŌKAN 2004.

6. The correct kanji for the monk scribe might be 唯西. See YAMAZAKI 2004, 625.

two episodes being given earlier than in the Shinpukuji text and not in chronological order. It is also missing fifty of the more than one thousand six hundred characters that make up the text as opposed to only thirty-seven illegible characters in the Shinpukuji version (ISHII 2002, 130). We can thus conclude that the ZGR was not an exact copy and the printer did not have direct access to the original Shinpukuji text. More recent editions attempt to fill in the missing characters. The *Dai Nihon shiryō*, which contains the best widely available copy of the *Rui*, for example, provides suggestions for the missing characters, while Mima and Ishii have studied the text closely arguing for what are the most likely missing characters (MIMA 1979; ISHII 2002).

The long and continual copying of the *Rui* as an independent document is evidence that it has long been considered worth preserving. In addition to its preservation as a whole, the partial repetition of the *Rui* found in other texts, particularly biographies, also indicates its importance over time. The earliest example of a biography of Kūya based on the *Kūyarui* is that in the *Nihon ōjōgokurakuki*, which was written by Yasutane in the mid 980s, probably about a decade after the *Rui*. Yasutane states in his preface to his *ōjōgokurakuki* that he “examined national histories and separate biographies of various people” (*Nihon ōjōgokurakuki*, 11). When he wrote on Kūya, he seems to have done more than merely examine the *Rui* as much of his account closely paraphrases it. This can be seen in the full translation below, which, although long, is worth providing because historians have regarded it as the second most important text on Kūya and because it illustrates how extensively the *Rui* was repeated shortly after being written. The parts that closely follow the *Rui* are in italics.

The śramaṇa Kūya *did not talk about his mother and father*. He fled his home, thus avoiding having anything recorded about him in the family registry. *Some say he was of imperial lineage. He continuously recited “Amida butsu” and therefore, was universally called “Amida holy man” [Amida hijiri]. He was also called “holy man of the market” because he practiced Buddhism while living in the market. When he encountered a steep impassible road, he would at once shave it down; where there was no bridge, he would build one. When he saw a place without a well, he would dig one—these were called “Amida wells.” At Mineai temple in Iihono district of Harima province there was a copy of the entire Buddhist canon, which he spent several years studying. If he had a problem understanding something, a golden figure would tell him its meaning in a dream.*

*Between the provinces of Awa and Tosa there is an island called Yushima with a statue of Kannon, which according to tradition, has great miraculous powers. There the holy man [shōnin] burnt incense on his forearms. After seven days and nights there of not moving or sleeping, the sacred statue emitted new bright light that was visible with closed eyes.*

A blacksmith, who was carrying gold in his chest pocket on his way home, met the *shōnin*, to whom he said, “The sun is setting and the road is long. I



am not without fear.” The *shōnin* responded “Keep you thoughts on Amida Buddha.” As expected, the blacksmith encountered a thief. Following the *shōnin*’s instructions he silently held in his mind the Buddha. When the thief approached the blacksmith and saw him, he cried “holy man of the market” and left.

*In the western part of the capital lived an old nun. She was the former wife of the deputy governor of Yamato province, Tomo no Norimoto. She practiced the nenbutsu her whole life and made the holy man her master. The shōnin had her repair one of his vestments. When it was finished she said to her servant girl, “My master is going to die today. Take these to him quickly.” When the servant girl returned and said he had passed away, the nun did not act surprised or sad. People who saw this thought it strange.*

*On the day of his death, the shōnin wore a clean robe and offered incense. He turned to the west, sat straight and said to his disciples, “Many buddhas and bodhisattvas will come to welcome and lead me into the Pure Land.” After he stopped breathing, incense was again burned. At that time his disciples heard music from the heavens as the room was filled with a pleasant aroma. “Ah...the causes that led the shōnin to propagate the teachings have been exhausted and he has returned to the Land of Supreme Bliss.”*

Before the Tenjō era (938–946) contemplation of Amida in the community temples was rare. Indeed, many petty men and stupid women shunned it. But after the *shōnin* came, he recited Amida’s name and led others to recite it. After that, the nenbutsu was done everywhere. This holy man truly had the power to save all sentient beings.<sup>7</sup> (*Nihon ōjōgokurakuki*, 18–19 [no. 17])

Later biographies from the medieval period, including those found in the *Asabashō meishōtō ryakuden* (327) and *Genkō shakusho* (173–74), also borrow extensively from the *Rui*. Not surprisingly, however, the number of stories we see about Kūya increase as we get further from his life. By the mid-seventeenth century we find many stories about him that are not found in the *Rui* that contributed to the way he was understood. This is particularly evident in *Kūya shōnin eshiden*, an illustrated biography of the mid-seventeenth century attributed to Prince Sonshō (1651–1694). It was taken by the Edo-period Kūyasō (Kūya priests) of the Kūyadō in Kyoto as the life story of their founder and declares Kūya to be a manifestation of Amida.<sup>8</sup> After the Edo period, with the development of modern historical scholarship, many of the stories were no longer deemed to be historically credible. This led to a return to the *Rui* as the primary historical document on Kūya. Since the 1960s virtually every in-depth biographical account and study of Kūya has relied primarily on it for

7. Other translations of this text, from which I benefited, can be found in MORRELL 1987 (15–16), and WETZLER 1977 (224–26).

8. The illustrations for the *Kūya shōnin eshiden* were supposedly produced by Kaihō Yūsetsu 海北友雪 (1598–1677).

reconstructing the historical Kūya and for arguing how he should be understood (see, for example, HORI 1963, ISHII 2002 and 2003a).

Historians have been right, of course, to question the validity of the stories about Kūya that came long after his death. But because of their interest in the historical Kūya, they have failed to see how later stories about Kūya, although historically not credible, reflect the *Rui*'s representation of Kūya and perhaps were inspired by it. An example of a story that involves Kūya not found in the *Rui* that corresponds to the image of him in it is "How Sengan Naigu Forsook the World to Dwell in Obscurity," which is in the *Hosshinshū*, a thirteenth-century *setsuwa* tale collection (URY 1972, 159). In the tale we are told that Sengan was on his way home one day after giving a lecture at the court when he encounters Kūya. Sengan gets out of his carriage and asks him, "What should I do for my salvation in the next world?" To which Kūya replies, "What? You have it backwards; surely it is I who should be asking such things of you. A lowly person like me—I've wandered around, but I learned nothing. I've no ideas at all." Kūya then tries to leave but Sengan grabs his sleeve and continues to question him with increasing desperation. Kūya finally says to him, "Discard your Self in whatever way you can," then pulls himself free and leaves Sengan. We are told that it was after this encounter with Kūya that Sengan decided to go live in seclusion and achieved rebirth in the Pure Land (*Hosshinshū*, 58–59, vol 1, no. 4; URY 1972, 159–61). Although this episode is not mentioned in the *Rui*, it does in part reflect the basic image of Kūya that we can find in the *Rui*, namely that of a bodhisattva-like figure who lives a life of self disregard while reducing suffering and leading others to Buddhism.

#### *Kūya as a Buddhist Holy Man in the World But Not of It*

When scholars today familiar with popular images of Kūya read the *Rui* for the first time, they may be surprised that more is not said about his nenbutsu practice. Although the text does depict Kūya as continually reciting *namu Amida butsu* in the marketplace and when burning skeletal remains, it says little else about the nenbutsu. There is no mention of him dancing while reciting it or even of him teaching it to others. Compared with how much is said about Kūya's copying of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra*, Kūya's nenbutsu practice receives scant attention. So to argue that Kūya is represented primarily as a nenbutsu practitioner would require ignoring most of the text. How, then, does the *Rui* represent him? I think by examining the text as a whole, we can see that it represents him as a Buddhist holy man who renounces the world but serves it by striving to promote Buddhism and relieve the suffering of others.

To create the effect that Kūya is a holy man, the *Rui* employs three strategies. The first is the crudest: it consistently refers to him as such. Instead of using Kūya's name, the *Rui* frequently, more than twenty times in fact, refers to him

as *shōnin* (上人 or 聖人). He is also referred to as a *hijiri* 聖 and, in the verse section of the text, it says he acted as a bodhisattva. Second, it depicts him as receiving the support of deities. We are told, for example, how a golden figure appeared to him in dreams to explain the meaning of difficult texts and how Monjū (Mañjuśrī) appeared incarnate at the dedication ceremony for the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra* Kūya copied. Finally, and most subtly, the *Rui* represents Kūya as a Buddhist holy man by presenting aspects of his life in a way that recall the life of the Buddha. In suggesting that Kūya was born a prince, became an ascetic, meditated until he received a vision after which he went to preach the Dharma, it makes Kūya's life resonate with that of Śākyamuni.

Among Buddhist holy men, Kūya is shown to belong to the type that renounces the world. The *Rui* indicates this at the very beginning when it states that Kūya would not say who his parents were or where he came from. Then, as if to highlight the magnitude of his renunciation, the *Rui* implies that he was a member of the imperial family. Instead of living in the comforts that his birth would have afforded, Kūya decided to travel throughout the country as an *uba-soku* 優婆塞 (lay devotee) engaging in deeds that would make the lives of others easier. After age twenty he became an acolyte (*shami* 沙彌) at a provincial temple (*kokubunji* 国分寺) in Owari, far removed from the center of ecclesiastic power. He then left that temple to live an ascetic lifestyle. Much later, in middle age, he entered the ordination hall on Mt Hiei upon the urging of Enshō 延昌, who was chief abbot (*zasu* 座主) of Enryakuji. Although he received an ordination certificate there, he did not stay, thus giving up an opportunity for prestige within a powerful institutional setting. In a rhetorical move indicating that he rejected any close ties to Mt Hiei or any other religious center, the *Rui* tell us that he did not use his ordination name but kept the acolyte one he gave himself, Kūya, which literally translated is “being *sūnyata*.”

In renouncing his ties to a family and any social institution, while living most of his life without a fixed abode, Kūya was free of social constraints. Such freedom may have been attractive to some Heian aristocrats who, at least occasionally, longed to escape the world that they found themselves in, with its numerically designated social hierarchies largely determined by birth and rigorous rules of decorum. The representation of Kūya as not linked to a particular place or institution also made it easier for some later religious groups, such as *odori nenbutsu* practitioners, not closely associated with any major Buddhist institution to appropriate him as their inspiration, if not founder, to legitimate their practices. Within the *Rui*'s depiction of Kūya's life, however, such social freedom enhances the impression that he was unconcerned with social class. It also made his interaction with a variety of people—poor and rich, rural and urban dwellers, men and women, priests and lay people, the weak and the powerful—seem more feasible. By freely interacting with people in various social

positions, not favoring one above another, he was able to engage in his bodhisattva-like mission of widely promoting Buddhism and mitigating people's pain.

Kūya is shown to have promoted Buddhism first by bringing it to those who knew little about it or did not have ready access to it. After indicating how Kūya was well suited to promote Buddhism by saying that he had studied the entire Buddhist canon and had a mystical experience at the end of several months of ascetic practice, the *Rui* describes how Kūya decided to go to preach the Dharma in the far northern provinces where it was hardly ever heard. Later, after returning to the capital, Kūya brought Buddhism to prisoners. Outside the gate of a prison in the eastern part of the capital, we are told, he built a tower with a bell and a Buddhist statue. Some prisoners who saw it wept and said, "We have unexpectedly seen the face of the Buddha and heard the Dharma. Such a wonderful thing has released us from our pain."

Kūya further fostered engagement in Buddhist activities by leading construction projects. He brought people together, for example, to make statues of Kannon and pictures of Amida's Pure Land. To involve a wide range of people, we are told how he solicited donations from both rich and poor to support the projects. His most elaborate project was the copying of all six hundred volumes of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra* in gold ink. The description of how this project was completed suggests that Kūya's promotion of Buddhism was not limited to one lifetime.<sup>9</sup> After he finished copying the sutra, Kūya could not find scroll shafts for it. In search of adequate shafts, Kūya visited a temple where a monk told him that an old man who had lived at the temple had made a vow to copy the sutra but was only able to collect the scroll shafts before he died. Before dying the old man vowed to return to copy the sutra. The monk then said that perhaps Kūya was that old man in a previous life before taking him to where the shafts were buried.

Not all or even most of Kūya's deeds involve overt proselytization. Many of his actions were done out of compassion intended to relieve suffering. Kūya's work to ameliorate the physical pain of others is a motif that runs throughout the text. The *Rui*, for example, says that when Kūya traveled all over the country in his youth, he "shaved down" or cleared treacherous mountain paths to relieve the suffering of tired men and horses. After entering the capital in his thirties, we are told that he dug wells, thus allowing people to have ready access to water. In the marketplace, where he spent so much of his time that he was known as "holy man of the market" (*ichi no hijiri*), he begged for food, but instead of eating it himself, he gave it to the poor.

Kūya's concern for suffering was not limited to the living but extended to the dead. This is indicated by the passage describing him as burning abandoned skeletal remains while chanting the nenbutsu—an act that would have been per-

9. I would like to thank Charles Hallisey for pointing this out to me.

ceived by many of his contemporaries as helping the deceased and at the same time protecting the living from the wrath of angry spirits of the dead (*onryō* 怨靈). On another occasion he also tries to help a recently-deceased disciple named Fujiwara Morouji by writing a letter to the ruler of the underworld, Enraō 閻羅王, requesting that he have mercy on Morouji and understand how the demon Maō 魔王 can keep people from Buddhism.

Perhaps the most intriguing, if not enigmatic, episode in the *Rui* is one that is best for demonstrating how compassion was a supreme virtue for Kūya. We are told that, not long after returning to the capital in 938 Kūya encountered an elderly, sick woman at Shinsen'en who was unattractive. Kūya buys foul-smelling vegetables and raw meat from this woman, which he feeds her to restore her to health. Upon her recovery she expresses a desire to have sex with him. The *Rui* tells us that he thinks about it for a while, before indicating that he will grant what she wishes. At that very moment she says, "I am the fox deity of Shinsen'en. The *shōnin* is truly a holy man," then vanishes.

This episode with the old women, although rarely repeated in later accounts of Kūya, is indicative of a wider theme, namely that Kūya's actions are selfless. The *Rui*'s description of her as less than attractive leads the reader away from the idea that sex with the woman would have been for self gratification. And the depiction of him pausing to consider what to do suggests that his response was not based on passion, but rather thoughtful consideration, which can be interpreted as reflective of a bodhisattva's concern with the desires of others. By having sex with the woman, he would have opened himself to ridicule as it would have violated the precept against sexual misconduct that as an acolyte he would have vowed to observe. Yet Kūya's indication that he would consent to her wishes demonstrates that for him compassion took precedence over precepts. This episode together with others in the *Rui* serves as part of a mosaic in which an image of Kūya emerges as a holy man concerned with others, rather than with how he was viewed by a world in which he rejected any position.

If the argument I have presented here is valid, that Kūya in the *Rui* is depicted as a Buddhist holy man who is active in the world but is not of it, then why has Kūya been remembered in recent times primarily as a nenbutsu practitioner and proselytizer? A separate article addressing this question would help us understand the significance of Kūya for many after the Heian period. For any scholar interested in grappling with the question, I suggest four places to look for answers. First, the *Ippen hijiri-e* (1299), which states that "as for the *odori nenbutsu*, it was first performed by Kūya *shōnin* in Ichiya on the street corners of Shijō" (*Ippen hijiri-e*, 31) and also quotes Ippen as saying "Kūya is my guide" (p. 62). Second, the statue of Kūya at Rokuharamitsuji by Kōshō 康勝, a son of Unkei 運慶 (d. 1223), which has been copied numerous times and today is the most widely used visual representation of Kūya. The statue depicts Kūya with a gong near his midriff, a mallet in his right hand, a staff tipped with a deer antler in his

left hand, and six figures coming out of his mouth, each one symbolizing a character of *na-mu-A-mi-da-butsu* 南無阿弥陀仏 (see picture on page 307 above). A third place is the depictions of Kūya by practitioners of the *odori nenbutsu* in early modern and modern times. Finally, an investigation into the frequency with which historical overviews of religion in Japan have designated Kūya as the figure who first preached the recitation of the nenbutsu would help answer how Kūya's nenbutsu practice came to be emphasized while in the earliest account of his life he was depicted as much more than just a nenbutsu practitioner.

*A Translation of the Kūyarui*<sup>10</sup>

Kūya(rui,<sup>11</sup> one scroll with) preface. [By] Imperial University student Minamoto Tamenori

On the eleventh day (of the ninth month of the third year of Tenroku [972])<sup>12</sup> Kūya *shōnin* died at Saikō temple in Higashiyama. Oh how sad it is!<sup>13</sup>

The *shōnin* did not reveal who his father and mother were, nor did he mention his place of origin. Some knowledgeable people say that he was a scion of the imperial family.<sup>14</sup> His personal character was such that lice would not stick to him. Someone once tested this by putting dozens of lice in his clothes, (but after a short while) the lice were gone.

As a youth he was a lay devotee.<sup>15</sup> He traveled through the five home provinces and the seven circuits,<sup>16</sup> visiting famous mountains and holy grottos. When he saw a road that passed through a treacherous terrain, he would shave the face of it down with a spade, feeling sympathy for suffering, tired men and horses. By throwing his walking stick, he determined the place of water veins. Whenever there were skeletal remains in open plains and old fields, he would pile them up in one place, pour oil on them, and then burn them while reciting the name of Amida Buddha.

When he was over twenty years old, he entered the provincial temple in Owari and took the tonsure. Kūya was the acolyte<sup>17</sup> name he gave himself. At

10. In this translation of the *Kūyarui*, I use parentheses to indicate where kanji are illegible or missing in the Shinpukuji version of the text. The words translated in parentheses are based on the kanji provided in KOKUBUNGAKU KENKYŪ SHIRYŌKAN (2004, 535–38). I added the words in brackets.

11. MIMA (1979) and ISHII (2002) have argued that the text's original title was *Kūya shōnin rui*. I use *Kūyarui* because that is what is written in the Shinpukuji version.

12. The year and month given here are based on the *Roku Haramitsuji engi*. The ZGR shows the eleventh month.

13. 嗚呼哀哉. This expression is used in virtually every *rui* (INOUE 2002, 39).

14. Whether Kūya was actually of imperial descent, and if so, who his father was, has been a matter of considerable debate. For an overview of the evidence, see ISHII 2002, 150–81.

15. Jp., *ubasoku*; Skt., *upāsaka*.

16. 五畿七道 *goki shichidō*; this refers to all of Japan at the time. The “five home provinces” were provinces in the *kinai* region in the Kyoto and Nara area and the “seven circuits” indicates the seven regions that made up the rest of the country.

17. A *shami* name was taken by a novice entering a Buddhist order.

the Mineai temple in the Iiho district of Harima province, (there was) a complete collection of all the scriptures. The *shōnin* lived (for several years in the *dōjō* of the temple and carefully read all the scriptures. Whenever he had difficulty understanding a text, a golden figure would always appear in a dream and teach him its meaning).<sup>18</sup> After he awoke he would ask scholarly (colleagues) [about the text] and their answers would be just as the figure in the dream said.

In the sea between the territories of Awa<sup>19</sup> and Tosa is an island called Yushima.<sup>20</sup> The geographical features of the island are mysterious and its nature is quiet and otherworldly. People say that a statue of the bodhisattva Kannon there displays miraculous powers. The *shōnin* went all the way to the island seeking a vision of Kannon. Six times each day he worshiped at this statue. For several months he did ascetic practices, but received no vision. So the *shōnin* stopped eating all grains and burned incense on his arms while facing the statue for seven days and nights without moving or sleeping. On the last night while facing the holy statue, the *shōnin* saw a marvelous light emit from it. When he closed his eyes he could see it; when he opened them, he could not. Scars remained where he burned the incense on his arms.

The *shōnin* thought, “Mutsu and Dewa are lands of the Ezo, where the teachings of the Buddha rarely reach and the sound of the Dharma is hardly heard.” He [thereupon] loaded on his back a (statue) of the Buddha, (along with śāstras and sutras. There he blew a large) conch, and explained the most precious Dharma. Because of this, the (vulgar) indigenous people of the area (flocked together and converted to the truth).

(In the first year of Tengen<sup>21</sup> [938], Kūya returned) to the capital.<sup>21</sup> In the marketplace, he began to (discreetly beg for food. If he) received anything, he would use it for Buddhist services or give it to the (poor or sick. He was thus called) “holy man of the market.” He constantly recited without pause *namu Amida butsu* and the people called him “Amida holy man.” Where water was not available in the eastern and western sections of the capital, he dug wells. These are the wells that are now widely called “Amida wells.” In that same year [938] Kūya built a tower at the gate of the prison in the eastern part of the capital. The tower had a statue of the Buddha that shined brightly like the full moon and a bell that rang sharply in the wind. A few prisoners shed tears, saying, “We have unexpect-

18. This is taken from the *Asabashō meishōtō ryakuden*, which the *Dai Nihon shiryō* text notes here. The appearance of a golden figure in a dream that teaches the meaning of texts can also be found in the *Jōgū Shōtoku hōō teisetsu*, a biography of Shōtoku Taishi that was largely written in the eighth century (DEAL 1999, 331).

19. The kanji used for Awa in the *Dai Nihon shiryō* version are 阿婆. In the ZGR 阿波 is used.

20. The location of this island is unclear but ISHII (2003a, 69) argues that it is Ishima, which is part of present-day Tokushima Prefecture.

21. 長安 *chōan*, which referred to the western part of Heiankyō.

edly seen the face of the Buddha and heard the Dharma. Such a wonderful thing has released us from our pain.”

Long ago outside the north gate of the imperial garden Shinsen'en there was a sick woman whose beauty had deteriorated with age. Feeling pity for the woman, he visited her in the morning and evening and asked how she was doing. He hung a bamboo food basket from inside his sleeve pocket and following her wishes would personally buy malodorous raw meat and vegetables from her and then give them to her so she would get well. (After two months) the woman appeared to be recuperating. When (she) recovered, however, she looked as if she could not say anything. The *shōnin* asked her what she was feeling and she answered saying, “I am filled with (explosive) vitality. I wish to have [sexual] intercourse with you.” After thinking about it for a while, the *shōnin* finally indicated that he would allow it. At this point the sick woman cried out saying, “I am the old fox of Shinsen'en. The *shōnin* is truly a holy man.” She then immediately dis(appeared) and the mat she was lying on suddenly vanished.

The *shōnin* prayed to an image of Amida, requesting to see the next world he would be born in. That night in a dream he went to Amida's Pure Land and sat on a lotus. The place was magnificent just as is written in the sutras. After he awoke he was filled with joy and intoned, “We hear that paradise is a place far away, but by worshipping the Buddha it can be reached.” Those who heard this praised him.

In the summer of the seventh year of Tenryō [944], he invited Dharma companions<sup>22</sup> to create hanging pictures of thirty-three Kannon, Amida's Pure Land and Fudara(ku mountain's Pure Land).<sup>23</sup> These were (magnificent) and offerings were given to them.

(In the fourth month of the second year of Tenryaku [948]), he went to Tendai mountain.<sup>24</sup> There he became a disciple of Enshō, a bishop with the rank of “Seal of the Dharma.” (The bishop), impressed with [Kūya's] activities, urged him to take the precepts. He thereupon entered the ordination hall and received the Mahāyāna precepts. The name Kōshō is inscribed on his ordination certificate,<sup>25</sup> but he never changed his acolyte name.

In fall of the fifth year [951], appealing for donations to both rich and poor, he called on Dharma companions to make a gold statue of Kannon approximately three meters in height, and a statue of Bon'ō, Taishaku, and Shitennō, each six *shaku* tall.<sup>26</sup> These are now at Saikō temple.<sup>27</sup> He also copied the entire six

22. “Dharma companions” here and below is a translation of *zenchishiki* 善知識.

23. Fudaraku or Potalaka is the place where Kannon is supposed to reside.

24. That is, Mt Hiei.

25. 度縁 *dōen*; a government-issued permit to join the priesthood.

26. 六尺 *roku shaku* is about 178 centimeters in height.

27. Rokuharamitsuji claims to own this statue of Kannon, which is only made available for public viewings once every twelve years.



hundred volumes of the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* in gold ink, which is now in the Stupa Hall of Shōsui temple.<sup>28</sup>

The local place to make the crystal scroll shafts for the sutra went unsettled. He dyed the paper and ground the gold ink, but had difficulty obtaining scroll shafts. The *shōnin* visited the Hase temple of Washū where he appealed to Kannon saying, “Would you please grant a disciple of the Buddha’s request for scroll shafts.” After he made this appeal, he left. That night he stayed at the home of the monk of Katsube temple in Sōnokami district. The priest of this temple then asked him, “Why visit temples? The Tathāgata resides nowhere.” The *shōnin* replied, “Shaka is on Mt Ryōjū,<sup>29</sup> Kannon on Fudaraku. Suitable places (connected with) buddhas have existed since long ago.” The priest of the temple then asked him, “Holy man,<sup>30</sup> what are you seeking?” The *shōnin* answered, “Crystal scroll shafts to decorate and roll up the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*.”

The monk responded, “Long ago I heard from an old man that the patron who built (this) temple made a vow to copy the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* in gold ink. After a while he was able to collect all the scroll shafts, but did not have occasion to copy the sutra. When he was about to die, he put all the scroll shafts in a stone box and buried them in the ground. He then made a vow saying, ‘I will again be reborn as a human and copy the sutra.’ Perhaps the *shōnin* is the one who took this vow reborn or perhaps the *shōnin* in a previous life is the one who took this vow.” When [Kūya and the priest] together dug at the place, they found the shafts as expected.<sup>31</sup>

The crystal shafts, the purple-polished gold characters, the navy blue emerald paper, and mica cases were now ready. After fourteen years, the effort [to make the sutra] was complete. In the eighth month of the third year of Ōwa [963],<sup>32</sup> a dedication ceremony was held. So that there could be a wide (gathering) for the ceremony and there would be widespread joy, a wild field was divined southeast of the imperial palace and west of the Kamo River and a splendid (hall) was built there. In front, the waves of White Heron Lake<sup>33</sup> were replicated and the back was modeled on Veṇuvana.<sup>34</sup> Officials and commoners gathered like clouds, and aristocrats lined up like stars. The sutra was put on barges with dragon-head and waterfowl prows. As the barges (approached) each other, musical pieces played

28. 勝水寺. On the basis of the *Rokuharamitsuji engi* and other sources, Ishii believes this should be the Kōfukuji-affiliated Kiyomizudera 清水寺 (ISHII 2002, 136).

29. Skt. Rājagrha.

30. Here the word for holy man is *hijiri*.

31. A similar story to the one given here can be found in the *Hasedera Kannon genki*. See DUK-STRAS 1999, 120.

32. Miyoshi Michimune’s account in the *Honchō monzui* (p. 360) indicates this happened on twenty-third day of the eighth month.

33. 白露池 given in the text should probably be 白鷺池, the place where the Buddha supposedly gave his sermon on the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra*.

34. Veṇuvana was a monastery, known as Bamboo Grove Monastery, built by Bimbisāra, a king of Magadha in ancient India.

on jade flutes and red-stringed instruments were performed one after the other in praise of the Buddha. It was a magnificent sight for everyone.

For the ceremony six hundred virtuous elders attended. After a while, lunch consisting of many types of food was offered to the assembled elders. Among those in attendance was the virtuous Jōzō of Yasaka temple. At the ceremony, the number of *biku* who came to beg for food could be counted in the hundreds. There was one among them that Jōzō was very surprised to see. Jōzō was the eighth child of Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki and an expert physiognomist. When Jōzō saw the *biku*'s countenance, he paid him the highest respect and took him by the hand to the top seat of honor. The *biku* sat without bowing. Jōzō took the bowl of food that he received and gave it to the *biku*. The *biku* took the food and without saying a word, ate it. He was given food again and again, eating all of it. About thirty-six to forty-eight liters of food were put in the bowl, but he was again given food, which he ate. The whole time Jōzō showed the *biku* deep gratitude. After the *biku* left, all the food that he ate was [miraculously] returned to its original amount. Jōzō saw this and said, "Monju is impressed with Kūya's work."

In the final year of the Kōhō era [968] at the north gate of Sai(kō temple) a snake had a frog in its mouth and was about to swallow it.<sup>35</sup> Children who saw this at the time (threw rocks at the snake) hitting it, but the snake refused to let the frog go. When (the *shōnin*) noticed what was happening, he put his hands together, and (recited) "Poisonous beasts, poisonous dragons, poisonous insects, when they hear the sound of a priest's staff will all aspire to gain enlightenment." He then shook his staff two or three times. The snake lifted its head, listened, and appeared as if it were thinking. The snake opened its mouth and spit out the frog. The snake (and frog) separated from each other, one going east and the other going west.

A chief councilor of the third senior court rank, whose name was Fujiwara Morouji and who was the chief supervisor of Mutsu and Dewa provinces, had made a pledge [to be a disciple] of the *shōnin* in this world and the next. The Provisional Precept Master Yokei who held the rank of "Dharma Bridge"<sup>36</sup> later became Morouji's teacher. In the seventh month of the first year of Tenroku [970] Morouji passed away and was buried on a hill in Higashiyama. The *shōnin* took a piece of paper, inked a writing brush, and wrote a letter, which he sent to the palace of Enraō.<sup>37</sup> The letter stated, "A certain chief councilor of Japan in Jambudvīpa<sup>38</sup> is a patron of Kūya. There is a limit to our present reincarnation

35. The episode described in this paragraph and the one described in the next both appear earlier in the ZGR version of the *Kūyarui*, just after the making of the images of Kannon and Amida and just before Kūya goes to Mt Hiei.

36. 法橋 *hokkyō*, one of the clerical rankings (僧位 *sōi*) given by the court to a priest for his scholarship or virtuous deeds.

37. Enraō 閻羅王 is the king of the underworld who judges the dead.

38. In Buddhist cosmology, Senbushū 瞻部州, which is another word for Enbudai 閻浮提, is an island south of Mount Sumeru where the people of this world live.

and [Morouji] has gone to the other world before me. Enraō, know the circumstances of Maō<sup>39</sup> and have mercy [upon Morouji].” Yokei approached the coffin and read this. The letter was then burned, whereupon the atmosphere changed and the mourners’ spirits were uplifted.

There was an elderly nun in the western part of the capital. She was the former wife of the upper fifth rank Deputy Governor of Yamato, Tomo no Asomi Norimoto.<sup>40</sup> She practiced the nenbutsu incessantly her whole life. She had a close relationship with the *shōnin* and they called each other good friends.<sup>41</sup> (Recently), she was sewing a set of vestments for the *shōnin*. On the morning of his death, she was to bring his garments to him. The nun said to a servant girl, “Today [the life of] my master will end. Take these to him quickly.” When it started to get dark, she returned and reported that he died. The nun was not surprised or sad, which at the time greatly bewildered people.

Oh how sad it is! [Kūya lived for] seventy years and for twenty-five years after his ordination. On the day he died, he bathed, put on clean clothes, sat down, burned incense, faced towards the west, and closed his eyes.<sup>42</sup> At that moment, music came down from the heavens and an unusual fragrance rose in the room. The young and old of the town in great numbers came running. When they arrived at the room and saw incense burning and [the *shōnin*] sitting erect without breathing, they sighed deeply saying, “It is heaven. Oh how sad it is!”

The ignoble are not to eulogize the noble, nor are (children to eulogize elders). I am an ignorant (young) man. To (recollect) the life of the *shōnin* and eulogize him is in order to (truly honor his virtues). There was a saying among the ancients: “Use a rock to polish a jewel and salt to wash gold.” For bringing out the essence of something, use the inferior to reveal the superior and the ugly to make it attractive.

With this in mind, I learned the accumulated memories of [Kūya’s] life by visiting the disciples left behind at his main temple<sup>43</sup> and by collecting and putting in chronological order dozens of documents of his Dharma companions and of votive prayers. On the basis of these, although lacking ability to adequately praise him, I eulogize him with the following words:

[Rui]

A holy man of brilliance,  
 he was virtuous beyond measure.  
 Practicing the way of a (bodhisattva),  
 he began as an *ubasoku*.

39. Maō 魔王 refers to a demonic being who keeps people from following Buddhism.

40. Who this was is unclear.

41. 善友 *zen'yū*.

42. “Closed his eyes,” 瞑目 *meimoku*, is a euphemism for “died.”

43. This temple is widely thought to be Saikōji, which was later renamed Rokuharamitsuji.

Through mountain ascetic practice,  
 he drove away the six thieves.<sup>44</sup>  
 His mind abiding in the non-material,  
 he begged for food in the marketplace.  
 He saved the world from suffering,  
 and called upon Dharma companions.  
 Lice left his body,  
 and poisonous snakes sensed his virtue.  
 Because of him,  
 an ailing fox spirit rejoiced (in the garden).<sup>45</sup>  
 Monju came to him for a time,  
 and Kannon did not hide from him.

Oh, how sad it is!

Reciting the name of Amida,  
 he fixed his thoughts on Paradise.  
 In pursuit of wisdom,  
 he unified his heart with Jōtai.<sup>46</sup>  
 He met each person with sincerity,  
 and everyone received his teachings.  
 In the capital, righteous virtue was his crown;  
 high ranking nobles and officials knew his name.  
 In the ninth month as the grass faded,  
 the wind in the sky was pure.  
 The air in the room was fragrant,  
 while music came from the heavens.  
 Transcending the sea of life and death,  
 he went to the castle of nirvana.  
 At seventy years of age,  
 he was welcomed into the Pure Land.

Oh, how sad it is!

44. The six thieves, *rokuzoku* 六賊, refers to the six sense organs or *rokkon* 六根 (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind) that awaken desires that lead to wrong actions.

45. The *Dai Nihon shiryō*, *Rokuharamitsuji engi*, and ZGR all give slightly different versions here and all indicate a missing character.

46. Jōtai is a bodhisattva who protects the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā sūtra*.

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