

宇治拾遺物語

二口 静観僧正、雨を祈る法験の事

今は昔、醍醐天皇の御代に日照りが起つた。六十人の首僧を招いて、大般若経を読ませられた。僧たちは護摩をたき思煙をたて、効験を現わそうと祈ったけれども、空はますますからりと晴れまきり、日はかんかん照りつけるが、醍醐天皇をはじめ、大臣公卿、百姓人民は、これを悩みの種とした。天皇は蔵人頭を呼び寄せて、静観僧正に仰せ下されるには、格別におぼし召はれる子細がある。御覽のまうに方々のお祈りなどをさせるが、たいした効験がない。そなたは座を移して、別に塀際に立て祈りませよ。おぼし召す子細があるが、特別に仰せつける事もあるという事である。静観僧正はその時はまだ律師で、上に僧都、僧正、上臈などの高位の僧たちがおいでになつたが、面白くの上、紫宸殿の階段を下りて、塀のもとに北向きに立て、香炉を置き、かり握りしめて、額に香炉を置いて祈願するさまは、見ている人までも息苦しい。炎熱の日差で寸時外に出られないほどであったが、静

観が涙を流して、黒煙もたてて祈願している。香炉の煙が空へ上がり、やがて扇ほどの黒雲になった。上達部は紫宸殿に並び、殿上人は弓場殿に立ち並んで見、上達部の先駆けの者たちは美福門がらのぞいている。そうして見ているうちに、その黒雲は一面にひろがって大空をふさぎ、竜神が震動し、稲妻の光が地上にぱいに駆けめぐり、車軸のような大雨が降りだした。こうして天下はたちまちに、アウラおい、穀物は豊かに実り、万木は果実をつけた。これを見聞する人たちはみなみな感服した。かくして天皇、大臣、公卿たちも随喜し、静観を僧都になされたのであった。

あまりにも不思議なことで、末の世の物語にこうして書きつけたのである。

一五九 水無瀬殿のむささびの事

後鳥羽院の御時、水無瀬殿に夜ごと山から傘
ほどの大きなものが光りながら御堂へ飛び込むことがあ
つた。西面や北面の警護の武士たちの面々が、この正体を
見破って手柄を立てようかと心に掛けて注意していたが、そ
のかいもなく過ぎ去っていった。

ところがある夜、景かたが、ただ一人で池の中島に痛
待っている時、例の光るものが山から池の上を飛んで来たので、
起きるものもどかしく、あおむけに寝たまま、弓を十分に
引きしぼって射ると、手止めたえがして何が池に落ち込
んだ。それから人々に知らせ、火を灯しておのおのが見る
と、薄気味の悪いほど大きなむささびで、年々とり、
毛などもはげ、一たたかな恰好で、たやつであった。

二九 吾妻人、生贄をとどむる事。

今は昔、山陽道美作国に中山、高野と申す神が祭
られていた。高野の祭神は蛇、中山は猿でいらしやる。その
神には毎年の祭りに必ず生贄を捧げる。娘の申から
器量がよく、髪が長く色白で、体つきが端正で、かわいらし
い姿の者を探して選んで奉っていた。昔から今にいたるまで、
その祭は途絶えたことがない。さて、ある人の娘が、その生贄
になる番に当てられてしまった。親たちの泣き悲しみようと
いっただらない。人が親となり子となることは、前世からの約
束であるから、醜い子でさえもおろそかに思うことはない。
まして、この娘は何から何まですぐれていたから、わが身にも
まぶさていておしく思うが、さりとて逃れることはできないの
で、嘆きながら月日を送っていたが、次第に娘の命
は縮まってくる。親子と一緒には暮すのも、あとどれ
ほどもないと思いつけ、残りの日数を数えては、明け
ても暮れてもただ声をあげて泣いていた。

こうしているときに東国の者で狩というのだけ
を仕事にしていて猪というものが腹を立てて怒り狂う
のは実に恐ろしいものだが、それをさへ何とも思わ
ず、思いのままに狩り殺し食うことを職業とする男が、
ものすごく力が強く、気性のはげしい恐ろしいほどの荒武
者がたまたまやってきました。その付近を巡り歩いているうち
に、たまたまこの娘の父母のもとに立ち寄り、

話のついでに娘の父が言うには、私には娘がただ一人お
ります。これがこれこれの生贄に振り当てられました。た
だ、思い暮し、嘆き、明かして月日を送っています。世間には
こんな悲しいこともあるものです。前世にどのような罪
をつつて、この国に生れ、こういつらい目をするのでし
ょう。あの娘も、思ひも寄らず、あまりにも情けない死に方
をするようになりますのね、と申します。まことにかわい
そうで悲しくなりません。こう申しますのは、自分の娘だか

らというわけではありませんが、たいへん美しい子
なのです。と申す。

それを聞いて東国の男が、さうは、その娘さんには
うまもなく死ぬことに決まっています。死ぬのです。人
間にとて命にまさるものはありません。わが身のため
にこそ神も恐ろしいのです。今度の生贄には出さず、
その娘さんを私に預けてください。死んでおしまいになる
ことを思えば、同じことではございません。ただ一人お持
ちにならうとおられる娘さんと、目の前で生きながら脅に
つくりばらばらに切り刻ませるわけにはいきません。た
だその娘さん、私にお預けください。と熱心に言ったので、
父親は、いかにも目の前で、無惨なさまで死ぬのを見るより
は、と、言って、娘を男にゆだねることにした。

こうして東国の男がその娘のもとに行くと見ると、容
量もよく姿も美しく、魅力的である。いかにも憂いに沈んで

いる様子で、守りかかって手習いをしていたが、涙が袖の上にかかると濡れている。そのうちに人の気配に、髪を顔に振りかけてうつむくのと見ると、髪も濡れ、顔も涙に洗われて思い沈んでいる様子であるが、人が来たのでいっそう気取すか、そうなる具合で、少しくわきま向いた姿がまことにかわいらしい。およそ気高く上品なその美しさは、とても田舎の人の子とは見えぬ。東国の男はこれを見ると、もういとおしくてならない。

男は「このうちは、わが身などはもう死ぬなら死んでもかまわぬ、ただこの娘の身代りにならう」と思つて、この娘の父母に向つて「ひとつ計略があります。もしそのことによつて、この家が滅ぶようなことになったら、つらうと思われませんか」と聞くと、父親は「そのために、自分は死ぬなら死んでもかまわぬ、いづれに何でもない。どうせ生きていても何にならずに死なすか。ただあなたのお考えのとおり、どうぞどうなり」と計略を進めてください」と答える。

男は「それでは、この御祭のお清めをするのだと言つて注連縄を引きめぐらして、何とかして絶対に人を近寄らせないようになりてください。またここに私がおりますことは、決して人にお知らせにならないでください」と言う。そこで男は何日か家にこもり、この女とむつまじく暮らしていた。こうしている間に、長年山で使ひ慣れた犬のうち、働きの良い犬の中から特に賢いのを二匹選んで、それに生きた猿を手えて、明け暮れもばらは事としてそれを食ひ殺す訓練をさせた。それでなくても猿と犬とは敵同士であるのだから、えんふうにして慣れさせれば、猿を見ると躍りかかて、容赦もなく食ひ殺すのであった。一方、男は毎日鏡い太刀を磨き、小刀を研ぎ、剣の準備をしながら、この女君に向つて口癖のようになつて「ああ、前の世でどんな約束をしておいて、あなたのお命に代つて死のうと、いふことになつたのでしよう。——か、あなたのお命に代つて死のうと、いふことになつたので

惜しくはない。ただあなだとお別れする事になるのかと思
うと、何とも心細くつらいのです。などと話す。女も「まじ
にどういう因縁のある方がこうしておいでになす情けを
かけてくださるのでしようか」と言い続けて、ひどく悲しく哀れ
な様子なのであった。

こうして何日かが過ぎ、その祭の日になす、宮司をはじめ
としてあらゆる人々がみんな集まる大騒ぎで迎えにやそ
来た。新しい長櫃をこの女のいる家に差し入れて、「例のように
これに入れて、その生贄を出してください」と言う。この東國
の男が「ただこのたびのことは、私の申すとおりにしてください
と言って、この櫃にひそかに入り込んだ。左右のわきにあの犬
どもを抱き入れて、「おまえら、この日ごろ大事に飼ってきたか
いを見せて、このたびのわが命に代れ。おまえら」と言てな
けると、犬どもは低くうなづいて寄り添って、そらそら身を伏
せた。また常日ごろ研ぎ磨いていた太刀や刀をみな取り

入れた。そりして櫃の蓋をかぶせて布でしばって封さし
て、自分の娘を入れたように思わせて差し出した。ぞ、梓
神、鈴、鏡などを振り合せて、先払いして大騒ぎで運
んで行く。その様子は、まさにもって物々しい。

さて一方、女はこれを聞くと、「自分に代ってこの男がこうい
て行くことは、本当に気の毒だと思いが、また思いがけ
なくむすかしいことになつたらば、自分の親たちはどう
いうことになるのかと、あれこれと考へては嘆息していた。
しかし父母は「わが身のためこそ神も仏も恐ろしいのだ。
どうせ死ぬぞあれば、今はもう恐ろしいともない。同じ
ことなら、やるだけのことをやして死のう。今はわが家の
滅びるのもつらいとは思わな」と言て落ち着いていた。
こうして一行は生贄を御社に運んで行き、神主が
祝詞をおごそかに唱えて、神の御前の戸を開けて
この長櫃を差し入れて、戸ももとのように閉めて、それ

から外の方に、官司をはじめ、かかるべく次々と役人たちが順番に並んでいた。

その間にこの櫃を刀の先でひそかに穴を開けて、東国の男がのぞいて見ると、まさしく何とも言えないほど大きな猿が、身の丈は七、八尺はともあり、顔と尻とは赤く、むした綿を着たようにきわだつて白い姿で、毛は逆立て生えているようなのが、主座に着いている。次々に猿どもが左右に二百ばかり並んで、さまざまに顔を赤くし、眉を上げ、声々にやかましく鳴き叫んでいる。ずいぶん大きな板に長々と包丁を添えて置いてある。周りには、酢、酒、塩の入った瓶かと思えるような物が、どっさり置いてある。

さてしばらくらくそろうているうちに、この横座にいた大猿が寄ってきて来て、長櫃の結びを解き蓋を開けようとしたので、連なる猿どももみな近寄りうとうとした。その

時にこの男が、犬ども食いつけ。それと言つと、二匹の犬が躍り出て、中でも大きな猿にかみつくと、倒して引っぱり合ひ、食ひ殺そうとした。この男も髪を乱して櫃から踊り出て、氷のような刀を抜いて、その猿をまな板の上に引き据えて、首に刀をあてて、こやつめ、人の命を絶ち、その肉を食ひなごする者は、こうだぞ。おまえら、もし耳を持ってゐるなら、よく聞けよ。確かにその首を斬り落して犬に食わせてやろうぞ」と言う。すると猿は顔を赤くして目をぱちぱちさせて、歯で真白にむく出て、目から血の涙を流してまことに情けない顔つきのをして、手をすり合せて悲しむが、男はいっこうに許さず、いよいよ、何年という長い間、人間の子どもを食ひ、人の種を滅ぼす代りに、その首斬り捨て捨てるのは、今この時だ。それともきかすま、本当に神ならばわけて殺してみろ。少しもかまわぬぞ」と言いながら、それでもやほり首をばすぐには斬り落さない。そうこうするうちにこの二匹

の犬どもに追われて、多くの猿どもはみな木の上へ逃げ登り、あわて騒ぎ、叫ぶわめくので、山も響き、大地もひっくり返り、そのような状態である。

こうして、あるうちに、一人の神霊がより憑りて言うには、「今日からは、もう決してこの王贄はとるまい。未長くやめてしまおう。人を殺すことは、よすだくりじりだ。命を絶つことは、これからは永えにやめることにする。また自分も、今日からといそ、この男下とやかくし、また今日の王贄に当った人の親類縁者も、悩ますたり苦めたりという報復は、決してしない。逆に、自分はその人の子孫の末々にいたるまで守り神となろう。ただ一刻も早く、このたびのわが命をいそいでくれ。よすことにせつない。わしを助けよ。この仰せに、宮司や神主をばじめ多くの人たちが驚いて、みな社の内に入り込んで、騒ぎあわてて男に手をすて頼み、道理はまたたくおこしやるとおりです。ただ神様に免じ

て許してください。神様もよく詫びておられませう」と言うが、この東国の男は、「そう簡単に許されるものか。人の命を絶ち殺すやつだから、あいつにそのつらさを思い知らせやろう」というのだ。あが身はどうなるでもない。いま殺さぬれようといこうじか、あはわな」と言つてながなが許さない。こうして、あるうちに、この猿の首は斬り落されて、さういふところに見えらぬので、宮司もあわていたが、よすだくりじり、うもないため、たいそうな誓いの言葉とあれこれ立てて祈った。また、「これからは、こういふことは、決して決してしません」と神も言うので、「それならばよいよい。これからは、えんごはするぞ」と言ひ合めて許した。さてその後は、またたく人も王贄に出はなぬことになった。さてその男は家に帰り、よすだくりじりした女と仲よく思い交して、未長く夫婦となす過じりた。男はもともと由緒ある人の子孫で、世間からおこしめられないような人物である。

た。その後、その国では猪や鹿を主として食すとい
う話である。

一三三 海賊、発心出家の事、

今は昔、櫻津国にひどく年をとら入道が熱心に修行をしていたが、ある人が「海賊に出遭った」という話を聞いた折に、その入道がこう語った。

——実は自分は若かた時分は、実に裕福に暮らしていた身の上だった。着る物、食べ物も飽きるほどに満ち足りて、毎日海に浮んで世を送っていたのだ。淡路の六郎追捕使と呼ばれていた。さて、ある時、安芸の島の辺りではかの船も別になかった時に、船が一艘近くへ漕ぎ寄せて来る。見ると二十五、六ばかりの男で、さぼりした様子の者が、その主人とみえて乗っている。そのほかは若い男が二、三人ばかりで、人少なに見える。それからされいな女たちがいるようだ。たまたま簾すきまから見ると、革張りの行李の類などがたくさん見える。荷物ほどより積んでいるが、これという頼もしい護衛の者もない様子で、ただこの我々の船について動いている。屋形の上に若い僧が一人いて、経を讀んでいる。こちらの船

が進むと同じように進み、島に寄ると同じように寄って来る。よめるよめた上よまなどするところからみると、この船が海賊船だとは気づいていないふうである。

おかしな事だ、聞かぬふうと、いいたいのですが、この船は京へ行くので来られるのは、どこへ行かれる人か、と尋ねると、「周防国から急用があるから出て来たのです。が、これという頼みになる人も連れていないので、恐ろしくてこちらの船を頼りにして、こうしてついでに京へ行くので」と言う。「おんと思つたか」と思つて、「この船は京へ行くのではない。ここで人を待つのです。待ち受けてから、周防の方へ下ろすつもりですぞ。どうして連れ立てなどと云われるのが、京へ上るような船にこそ、ついでにおいでなさい」と言う。「それでは明日になったら、おしやるように伺ひたいです。今宵ばかりはおそばに停泊させてください」と言つて、島陰になる場所についで行つて泊つた。

仲間の者どもが、「ただ今うこそどうやらよい時分ぞ。さあ、あの船の物もこちらへ奪ひ取つてしまおう」と、その船にみな乗り移ると、相手はもう呆然としてあわてふたぐはかり。積荷はあり、ただ自分の船に運び込んだ。乗っていた人々は男も女もみな海にはうり込んだが、船主は手懸命にすり合せ、水晶の数珠の緒が切れた水晶の粒のような大きな涙をばらはらとこぼして、「何でもある物はみなお取りください。ただ私の命だけは助けてください。京にいる老親が今を限りの重病で、日もう一度会いたいと申して、いと、夜を日に継いで知らせによこしたぞ、急ぎで京へ上るところです」と言い終りもせず、自分を見つめて手を切るさきは必死である。「いつめにえな泣き言を言わせるな。いつものように早く投げ込め」と言う。目を見合せ、泣き騒ぐ船主の様子は何ともいたさず、気の毒だ、残酷だとは思ったが、かと言つてどうなるうかと思ひあつて海に

投げ込んだ。

また、船の屋形の上で、経巻を首にかけて夜昼経を読
んでいた二十ばかりの華奢な僧をつかまえて海に投げ入れた。
その時に僧はうろたえて経巻を取り、水の上に浮かぶながら
手下差し上げてこの経を捧げ、ぶかりぶかりと浮き漂っている
ので、不思議な坊主め。まだ死なぬわいと言って、船の櫂で
頭をぶつんと打ち、北背中を海に突っ入れなごするが、やはり
心かりぶかりと漂いながらこの経を捧げている。合点がい
かぬと思つてよく見ると、この僧の水に浮んでいる前後に
みずらに髪を結い、白い笠のような細枝を持つてゐる美し
げな童子が二三人はどいる。僧の頭に手をかけ、一人は
経を捧げた腕をつかまえてゐるように見える。そばの者ど
もに、「あれを見よ。この僧に付いている童子は何だ」と言う
と、「どいかにどいかに。どいにも人などいなぞ」と言う。しかし、
私の目には確かに見える。この童子が付く添つて、決して海

に沈むことなく浮んでいる。不思議なので確かめようと思ひ、
これに取り付いて来い」と言つて、棹を差し出してやると、僧
が取り付いたのを引き寄せた。仲間の者どもは、「なぜこんな
ことをするのだ。つさらぬしとする」と言うが、「よあまあ、
この僧一人は生かそう」と船に乗せた。その若い僧が近く
に来ると、「この童子たちは見えなくなつた。」

この僧は、「おまえは京の人か。どこへ行かれる」と聞くと、
「田舎の者です。法師になつて、長い間、まだ戒を受けられ
なかつたので、何かかして京に上り戒を受けたい」と申しま
した。この船主が、「さあ、私と一緒に来なさい。比叡山に知
り合ひがあるから、その人に頼み込んで受戒させてやろう」と
の語りで、京へ上るところです」と言う。

「おまえの頭や腕に取り付いた童子たちは誰だ。何者だ
と聞くと、「いつそんな者がおりましたか。よるで覚えがあ
りません」と言う。さうしてまた経を捧げていた腕にも童子

が付き添っていたらうい。どう思つて、ただ今にも死のうといふのに、この経袋を捧げていたのだ」と聞くと、「死ぬだらうとは覺悟していたことで、命は惜しくもありません。私は死んでも、しばらくの間だけでも経を濡らすまいと、捧げておりましたところ、腕はだるくもなく、かえり前より軽くなり、腕も長くなるような感で高く捧げられました。それで、これこそ御経の御利益と、今にも死にしような気持ちの中で思いました。こうして命を生かしていただくのは、うれいことです」と言つて泣く。

それを聞いて、このやうな外道の心にも、ありがたく尊く思われて、これから国へ帰らうと思ふか。あるいは京にとて受戒下遂げようという心があるなら、送つてやろう」と言ふと、「もう今は受戒の気持ちはありません。田舎へ帰りた一心です」と言ふ。「ではここから帰してやろう。それにしてもあるやうに美く見えた童子は、何者だう

たのだらう」と語ると、この僧はありがたく尊く感じ、はらはらと涙を流して、「七歳から法華経をお読み、毎日ごちも他念なく、恐ろしい思いに駆られたやうな時にも読み続けておりましたので、十羅刹がおどいてきたぞ」と言ふので、この外道のやうなやうの心にも、さしては、仏経とはすぐれて尊くおわすものだ」と思つて、自分はこの僧につけて山寺にでも籠り住もうという気がなだ。

そこで、この僧と二人連れ立ち、糧食を少し持つて、残りの物などはすべてかまわず、みな仲間の者どもに預けて出かけるやうとしたので、仲間たちは、「正気なのか。いったいどうしたのだ。にわかで道心など、長続きはすまい。憑き物でもしたのか」と押しとどめて、この者は聞かずに、弓、箆、太刀、腰刀もみな捨てて、この僧につけて、この僧の師匠のいる山寺へ行つて法師になり、そこで法華

經一部を讀みあげて、修行して歩くことになった。
いま話したような罪ばかりつくっていたのが残酷な思
われてきた矢先、例の船主が手をすそ、はらはらと泣き
わめいたのを海に投げ込んだ時から、少し道心が起つ
て来た。それに加えて、この僧に十四羅刹が付いた
ておいていなくなったのだと思うと、法華經がありがた
く、それを讀みたいと、急にこんな入道の身となった
次第だ——と語ったのであった。

一三七 達磨、天竺僧の行ひを見らる事。

昔、天竺に或る寺があった。そこに住む僧もきわめて多かつた。達磨和尚がこの寺に入ると僧たちの修行の様子とかがい見えてみると、ある部屋では念仏し、経を讀み、また修行している。また別の部屋で御覧になると、八九十歳はどいなる老僧がただ二人いて碁を打っている。仏像もなく経典も見えない。ただ碁を打っているばかりである。達磨がその部屋を出てはかの僧に尋ねると、答えて言う、「この老僧二人は、若い時から碁のほかには何もしてせん。およそ仏法の名をうき聞いたことがないのです。それで寺僧たちが卑しんで、交わることもありません。むだに供養の物を受け持っているす。みな外道のように思っています」と。

和尚はこれを知りて、「きこわげがあらう」と思え、この老僧たちのわきにきて彼等が碁を打つありさまを

見ていると、一人は立っており、一人は坐っているを見らう
ちには、たちまち二人とも消えてしまった。不思議に
思っている時、立っていた僧が帰って来て坐ったと見るう
ちに、またその坐っていた僧が消えてしまった。見るを
また現れるのだった。「やはりそうか」と思つて、「因基
のはか何事も無い」と承つておりました。立派に悟
り下得られた上人でいらしたのですね。そのわけを
お聞かせくださいと仰せられると、老僧が答えて、
「長い間、これ以外には別に何事もありません。ただ
黒の勝つ時は、自分の煩惱が勝つたと悲しみ、白の勝つ
時は、悟りの心が勝つたと喜びの事です。打つに從つて煩
悩の黒がだんだん失われ、菩提の白の勝つことを願ひ
ます。この功德によつて証果の身となつたのです」と言
う。

達磨和尚が部屋を出て、このことをほかの僧たちに

話されたので、長い間憎み卑しんで来た人も後悔
して、みな尊敬するようになったのだと云う。

THE TALES OF UJI SHŪI





Introduction

The *Tales of Uji Shūi*, which are thought to have been completed in the first half of the thirteen century include 197 stories from India, China and Japan. The tales comprise long and short stories with widely diverse themes, covering Buddhism, miracles, legend and humorous stories (Yasushi Murashige 2008).

The *Tales of Uji Shūi* was also known as the *Tales of Uji Dainagon* (*Uji Dainagon monogatari*). Uji Dainagon, Chief Councillor of State, Minamoto no Ryūkoku (1004-1077) had a summer house in the suburb of Kyoto called Uji, a summer resort used by the aristocracy of medieval Kyoto. Ryūkoku served the Regent and Chief Advisor to the Emperor - Fujiwara no Yorimichi. Yorimichi had a magnificent summer house at Uji, which was converted into the famous Byōdō-in temple in 1052. It is said that Ryūkoku invited people to Byōdō-in temple and wrote down their stories (Yasuharu Kobayashi 2008). The area of Uji was also famed for the beauty of the cherry trees which attracted visitors from afar. The cover flap of this book shows the Byōdō-in temple.

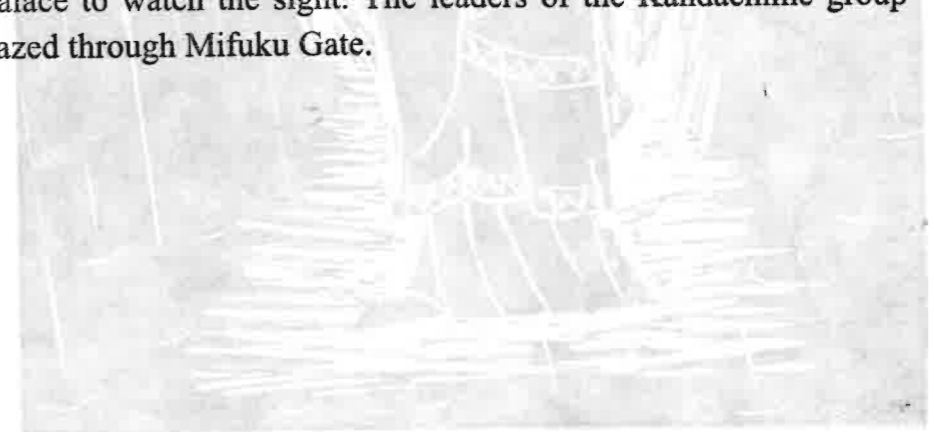
This book's stories are based on one of the editions of the *Tales of Uji Shūi*. The original stories comprise a single hand scroll in the collection of Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland. According to researchers, the scroll was made in the Kanbun era (1661-1673) and the selected 5 stories out of 197 illustrate the taste of the samurai class; the heroes of these stories resolve social or individual difficulties restoring peace and stability using extraordinary powers bestowed upon them by divine protection. Reading these stories we marvel at the incredible and strange events. Having read them, this sense of marvel changes to relief or sympathy, which is to say that these stories have the true charm of fables (Yasuharu Kobayashi 2008).





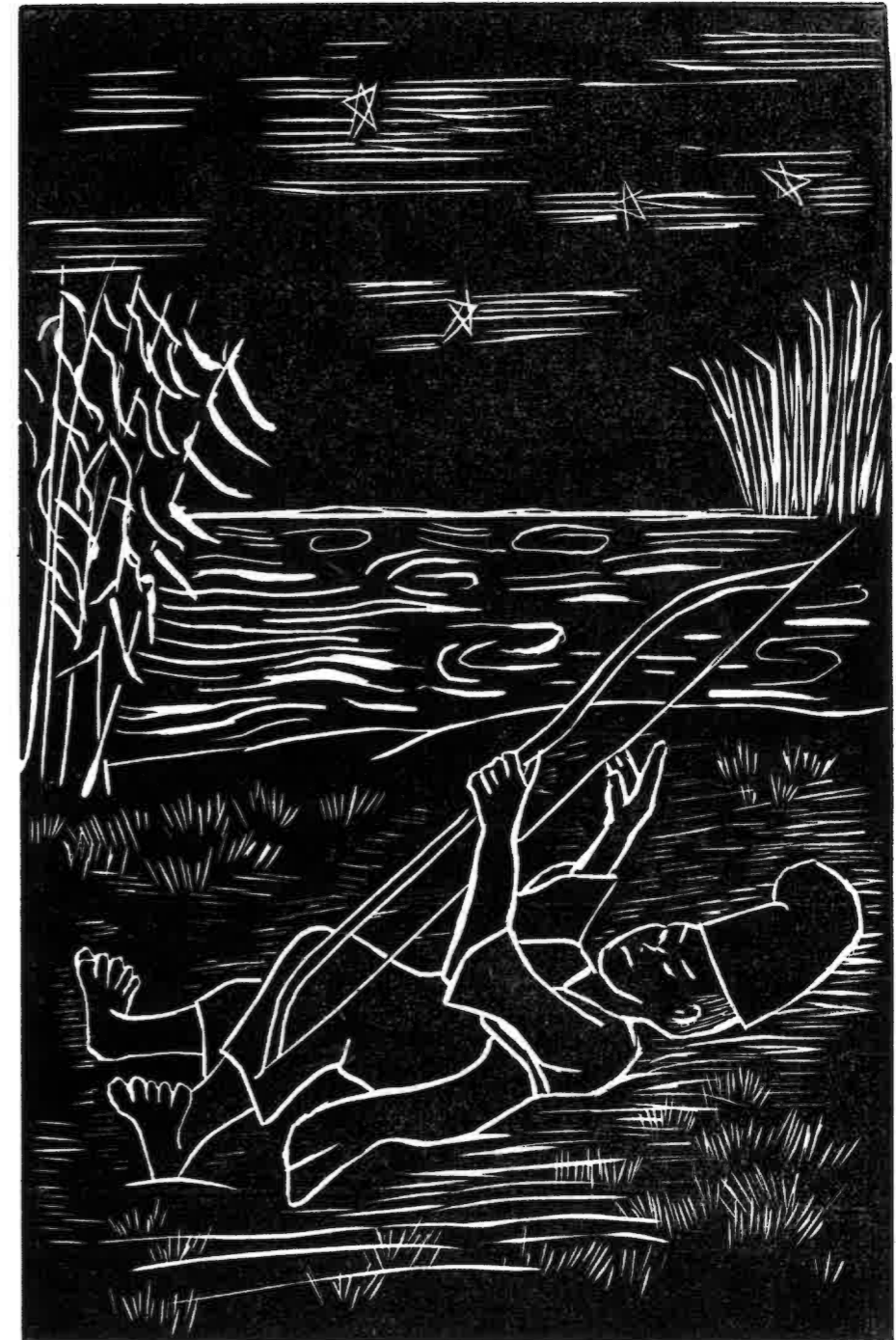
Once upon a time during the reign of the Emperor Daigo, there was a prolonged spell of dry weather. Sixty of the highest-ranking Buddhist priests were invited to the palace to recite the Great Hannya sutra. The priest burnt small pieces of wood on the altar to invoke divine help. Despite these offerings, the weather turned much brighter, much clearer and much drier. As the sun blazed down, the emperor, ministers, nobles and peasants worried about how to deal with the situation. The emperor called the head of his close advisers and ordered him to summon Seikan, a high-ranking Buddhist priest. The emperor believed that only Seikan, with his mysterious secret power, could resolve the situation. It was apparent that although the highest-ranking priests had recited the sutra, this was not enough. Seikan was asked to stand against a wall and pray. He was at that time a Ritsushi priest, lower in status than the other priests who had been summoned, including Sōzu, Sōjō and Jōrō, and he considered it a great honour to have been chosen. He stepped down the staircase of the Shishiden Palace, went to the wall and stood against it facing north. He held his incense firmly to his forehead and prayed. The audience was mesmerised.

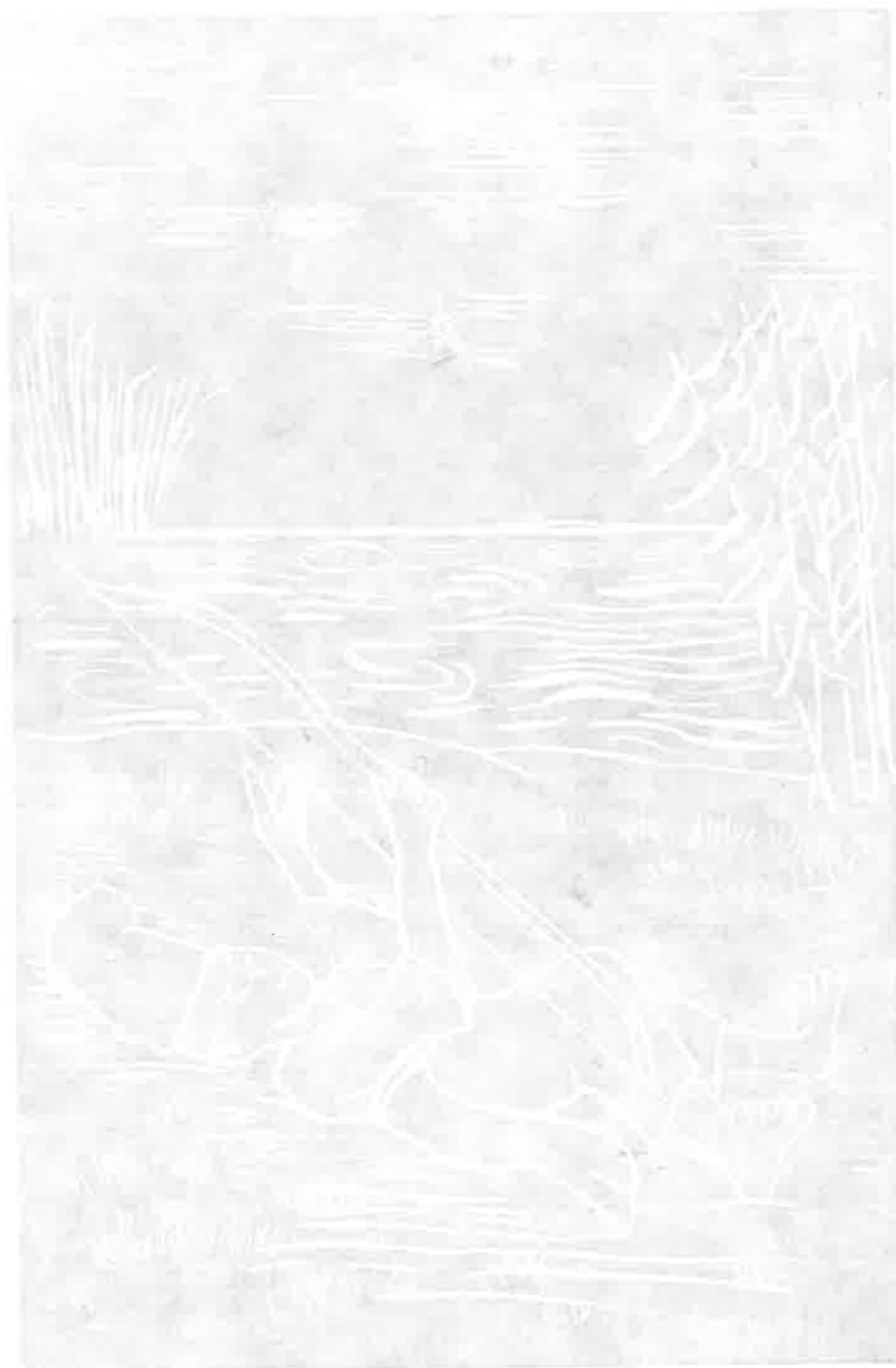
The sun was blazing so hot that it was impossible to go out. As Seikan prayed, tears rolled down his cheeks and black smoke rose from his incense to the sky. The smoke spread into a great dark cloud. The Kandachime nobles stood in a line at the Shishinden Palace while the high ranking nobles stood in the Yubadono Palace to watch the sight. The leaders of the Kandachime group gazed through Mifuku Gate.





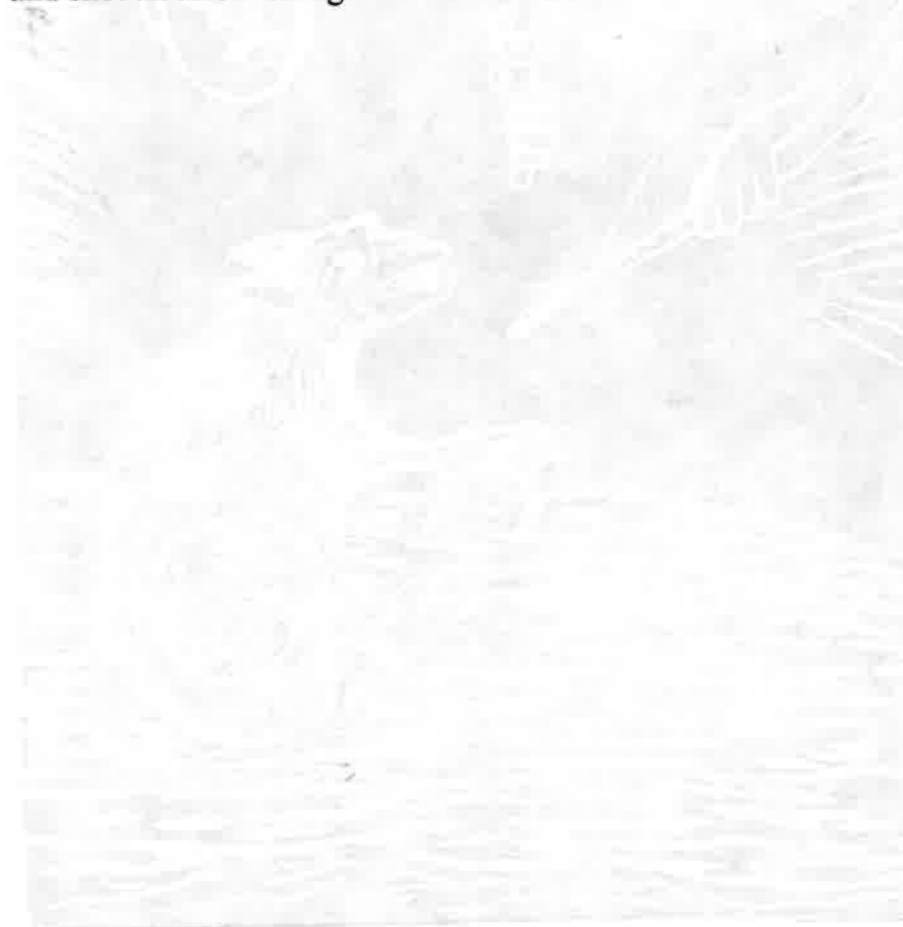
Soon, they observed that the dark cloud was spreading in all directions, covering the sky. From the massive cloud, the roaring Dragon God appeared in the sky shaking his body. Then a flash of lightning shuddered through the earth and the rain began to pour. As the earth was moistened, rich fields of grain ripened and thousands of trees brought forth fruit. The people who saw Seikan's miracle stood before him in amazement. The emperor, ministers and nobles rejoiced at the miracle, and bestowed on Seikan the highest priestly rank. The story of the miracles was written down for the generations to come.





After the retirement of the Emperor Gotoba, a shining object about the size of an umbrella began appearing from the mountain every night and flying into the Minase Palace. The soldiers who guarded the west and the north of the palace paid it special attention for they aspired to perform great exploits, but in spite of their efforts, nothing happened.

One night, on a small island in a pond as Kagekata lay alone in wait, he saw the shining object fly over the pond. Being too impatient to get up he drew his bow while still lying on his back and shot an arrow straight at the creature.





The arrow hit the target and down it fell into the pond. Kagekata called the other guards and they lit torches to see what it was. What they saw was an extraordinary giant flying squirrel. Although it was old and bald, it was sturdy and vigorous.

119 A Hunter from the East Prevents a Sacrifice





Once upon a time, gods called Chūzen and Kōya were deified in San's yōdo, Mimasaka County. In fact, Kōya, was a serpent and Chūzen was a monkey. Every year, a sacrifice was offered to one of the gods at the annual festival. A fair-skinned, beautiful girl with long hair was chosen for the sacrifice. No one had ever put a stop to this, so this year, a girl was chosen as usual. Her parents wept unendingly. Since parents and children are linked together by karma, parents would never neglect their children even if they were ugly. This all the more so if the children were superior to others. Thus, the parents loved the girl very much and considered her life more important than their own. But it was inevitable that they should have to offer her to the god. They grieved over her misfortune every day. They cried their hearts out all day long at the short time she had to live.

One day a rustic from the east called at the house of these miserable parents. He was a fierce and brave hunter who had been travelling around the country. Even an enraged wild boar was nothing to him, though it would be terrify us. A powerful man like him could have killed it and eaten it up.



While entertaining the hunter, the father of the girl confided his trouble to him. 'We have an only daughter, but she has been chosen as a sacrifice for the god. We have been spending our remaining days with her in grief. How sad! The miserable plight we are in may be punishment for sins we committed in a former existence. My daughter sighs saying over and over, "it is quite unexpected that I should die so miserably". Poor thing! She is so lovely and beautiful!'

The hunter sympathised with him and made a proposal. 'So your daughter is going to die soon... There is nothing superior to life for a human being... The gods are fearful for us because we want to save our own lives. You will not offer her as a sacrifice but leave her in my care. On the assumption that she will die, what difference does it make? Trust me. It would be unbearable and cruel to see your daughter being killed and chopped into pieces to make a special dish soaked in vinegar for the god. Please entrust her to my care!'

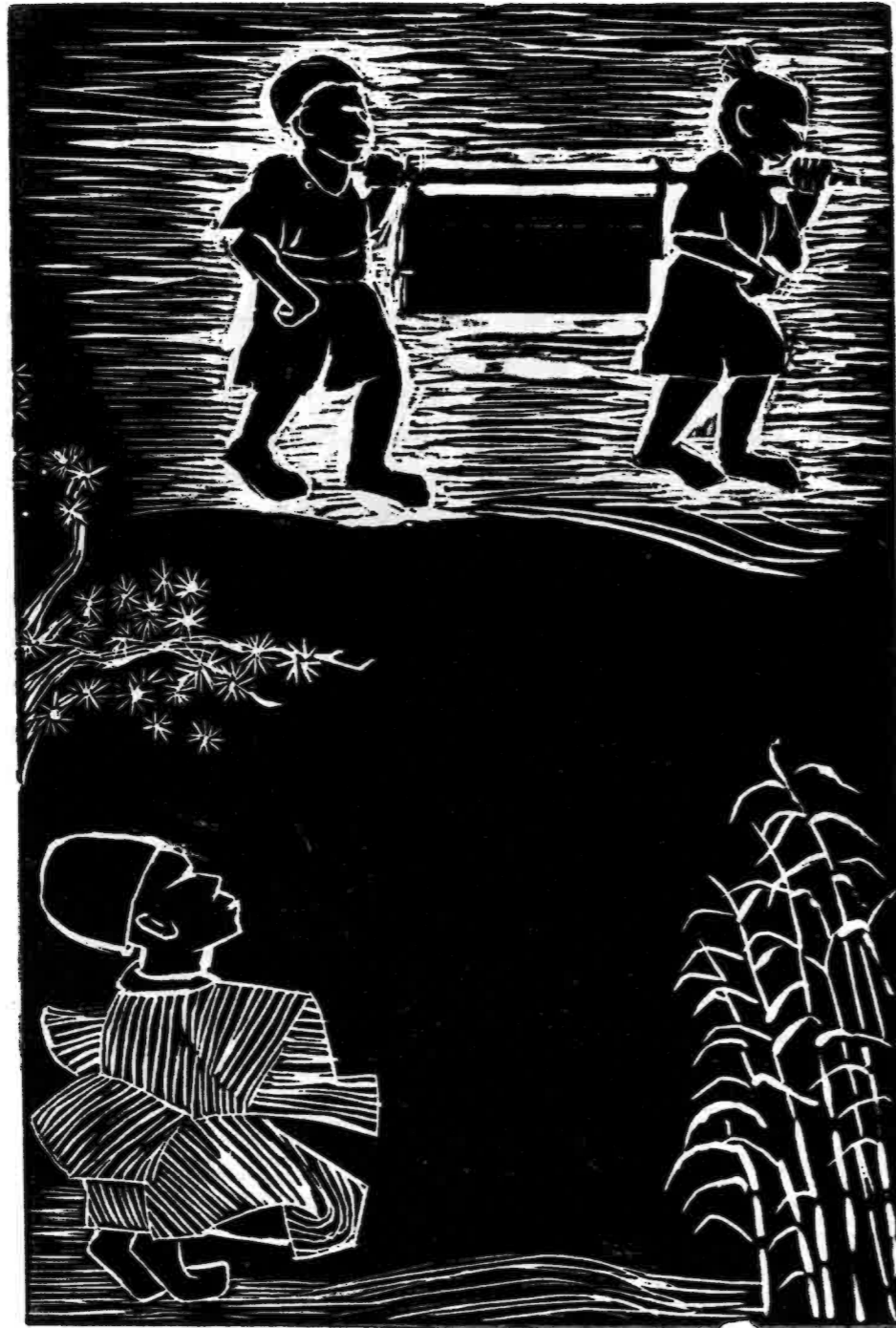
Since the hunter spoke so earnestly the father decided to leave her in his care and the hunter went to see the girl. She was indeed a charming girl who had good looks and a graceful figure. But she had a look of distress on her face. She was practising calligraphy leaning against a wall. Her sleeve was wet from the drops of her tears. When she noticed that someone was approaching, she hung her head and cast her eyes down. Her beautiful face was wet with tears and covered by her long black hair. When she knew that the hunter was coming into her room, she became even more embarrassed and looked aside. Her posture was so elegant, and her beauty so great she did not look like a country girl at all. He fell in love with her at first sight.



'For her I would even give my life! I will act as her substitute.'
The hunter went back to talk with her parents. 'Listen. I have a plan, but I must first prepare you for the worst. Do you think that it would be hard to bear if your family were to be blamed for saving your daughter and destroyed?' Her father replied, 'I do not mind if I have to die for my daughter. I will gladly do so. I expect nothing from the remaining years of my life, and I will follow your plan.' 'Thank you. Let us begin. In order to keep everyone away, you must enclose the house and the property with a purified barrier: a straw rope to separate the sacred Shinto precincts from the unclean outer world. If you are asked by the villagers, just explain that you are purifying the house for the festival. And tell nobody I am here.' The hunter stayed inside the house for some days and lived on friendly terms with the girl.

During his stay the hunter selected two of his closest cleverest hunting dogs. He trained them to kill and eat monkeys, giving them actual monkeys everyday. Dogs and monkeys do not like each other, as the old Japanese saying goes. The dogs got used to fighting monkeys as a result of their training and now, whenever they saw a monkey they would kill it without hesitation.





The hunter prepared his arms, sharpening his long and short swords, and saying to the girl, 'I know not by what destiny I come to die as your substitute but I care not for my life; Only for my final parting from you.' The girl responded sadly: 'I wonder who you are and what karma made you come here to save me.'

Time passed and the day of the festival came at last. The chief priest of the Shinto shrine and a crowd of other villagers came down in a frenzy to the girl's house to take her. They carried a chest into the house and ordered her to be put in it for the sacrifice. 'All you have to do is remember what I have told you', said the hunter to the girl's parents as he secretly got into the chest, holding the two dogs in his arms. 'In return for the favour I have always shown you, you must fight for your lives and if necessary die for me!' he told the dogs, patting their heads. Growling low, they snuggled up to him and lay flat. Taking his swords, recently whetted and sharpened he allowed the chest to be closed on him and bound up with cloth as a seal. With the girl supposedly inside the chest was handed over and carried to the shrine. Heralding the coming of the chest, the people shook pikes, sacred twigs, bells, and mirrors in ritual. The procession was carried out in a solemn and stately manner.



Meanwhile, one of the priests became possessed by the spirit of the giant monkey and through him made a promise: 'From now on, we will never take another sacrifice. We will cease forever. We have learned the cost of killing mankind. We will never kill again. Even though he has punished us we will take no revenge on this man, this girl or on her family. Instead we will be their guardian even down to their remotest descendants. So, dear priest, please plead for my life. It is painful. Save me!' Hearing this, in wonder the chief priest and others made their way to the sanctuary of the shrine and implored the hunter to release the giant monkey: 'Your demands are reasonable, but please this time, out of respect for our god be merciful. Our god has made a profound apology to you.' But the hunter would not relent. 'Do not forgive so easily! It has killed many people, I must punish it to avenge our pain. I care not for my life. I am content to die even at this very moment.'





By now the girl knew the plan and worried that the hunter had taken her place. 'What will happen to my parents if it all goes wrong and the unexpected happens?' But her parents spoke to her calmly: 'The gods are fearful for us because we want to save our own lives. We are going to die in the end, so there is nothing for us to fear. It makes no difference when we die, therefore let us trust in his plan, and if it goes wrong, we will be ready.'

Meanwhile, the chest was carried into the shrine. The priest solemnly recited a Shinto ritual prayer and opened the door to the sanctuary, into which the chest was now placed. Then the door was closed. Outside the shrine the chief priest and civil servants stood by.

Unnoticed, the hunter carefully made a hole in the side of the chest with the point of his sword. Looking through the hole he saw an enormous monkey sitting in the best seat. The monkey was over two metres tall, and its face and its bottom were red. Its fur was bristled and remarkably white, as if it wore newly plucked cotton. On both sides of him, about two hundred smaller ones were crying noisily making their faces red, and raising their eyebrows. In front was a huge cutting board with a long butcher's knife, and around the board bottles of vinegar, Japanese sake, and salt.

After a short time the giant monkey approached the chest and untied the cloth to open the lid. The other monkeys were approaching too. At that very moment, the hunter ordered the dogs: 'Go bite them and kill them all!' The two dogs jumped out of the chest and viciously attacked the giant monkey. The hunter, his hair bristling with anger sprang out of the chest, drawing his ice-cold sword. He seized the giant monkey and held it to the cutting board. Holding his sword to its neck he warned: 'Man-eating monkeys like you shall be killed with this sword. Listen if you have ears. I will behead you and feed your head to my dogs.' The giant monkey flushed red and blinked his eyes in astonishment. Showing his white teeth, he cried out in misery, pleading for his life and rubbing its hands together. But the hunter was unmoved: 'You have been eating children for a long time. Now I shall stop the killing by chopping off your head. If you really are a god, then kill me if you can. I do not mind at all'. Meanwhile, pursued by the fierce dogs, the rest of the monkeys ran away in panic, climbing the trees for refuge. Their shouts and screams echoed through the mountains so loudly it could have overturned the earth.

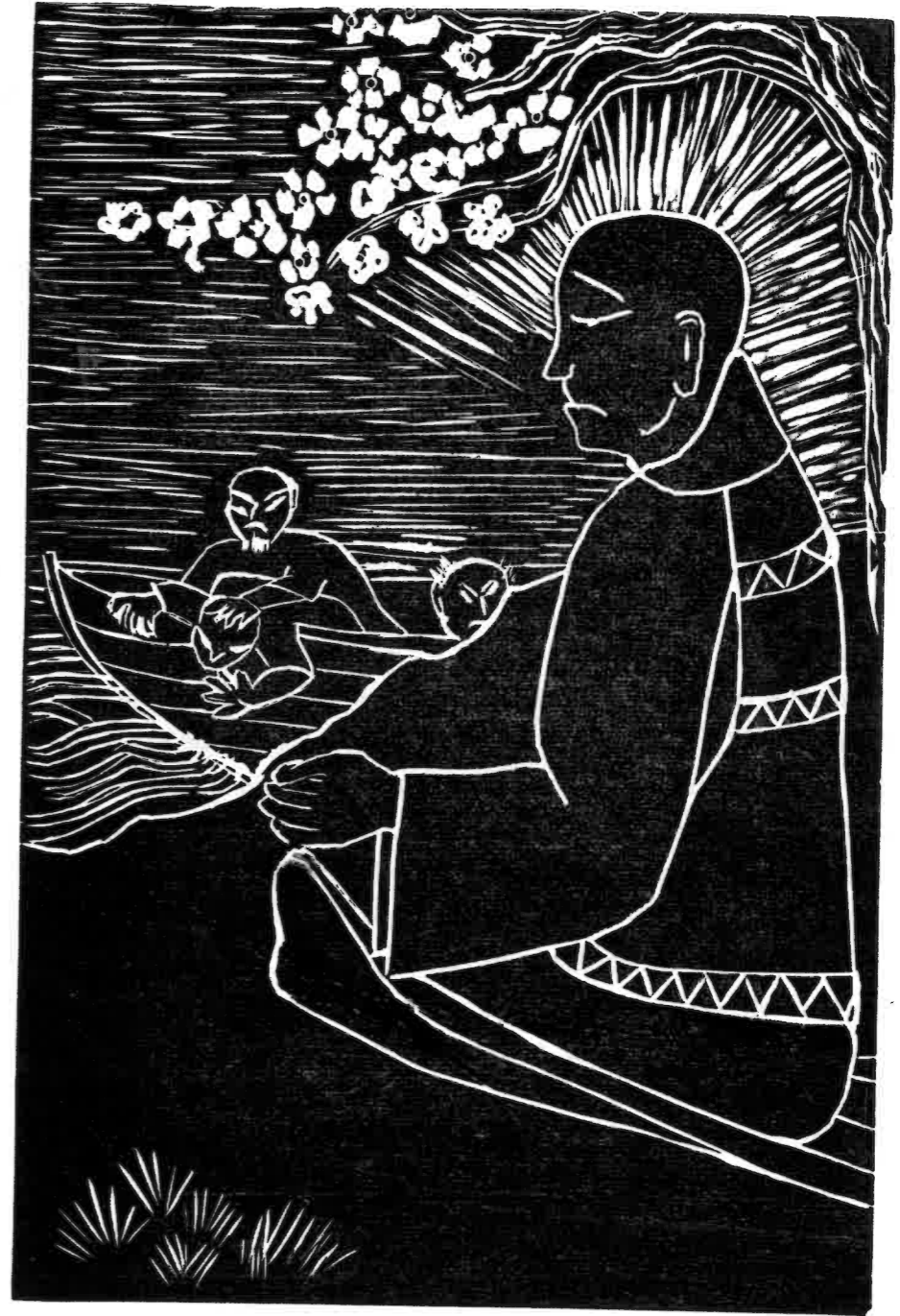
As it seemed the monkey's death was imminent, the chief priest became greatly vexed. He could do nothing but pray and swear oaths. Then the god spoke: 'We will never, ever, kill again!' Hearing this the hunter at last relented: 'Very well; let it be so. Never again!'

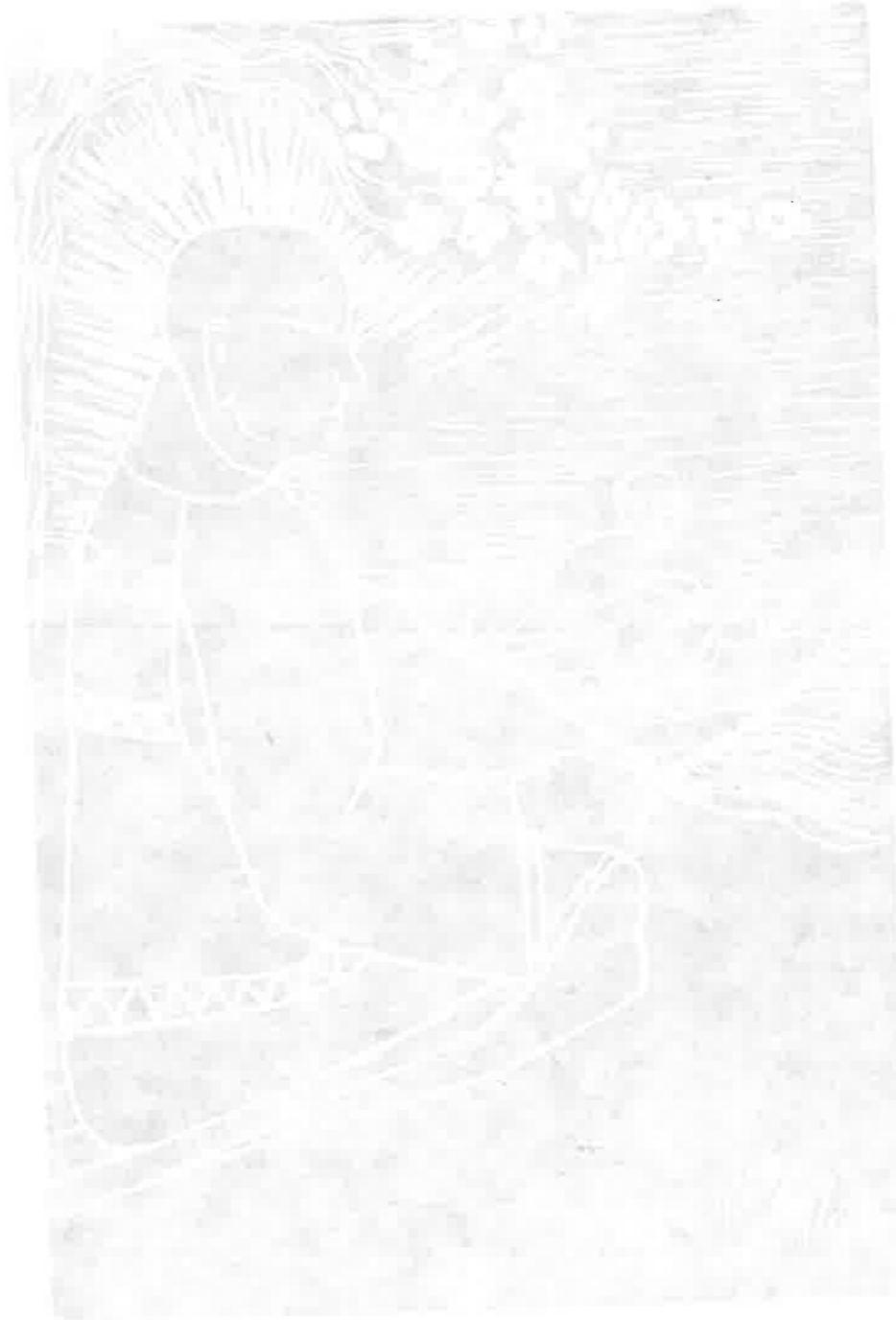
The god kept its promise and never took people as sacrifice again. Now the hunter could return to the girl in safety. They loved each other deeply, and as man and wife lived happily ever after.

There are two more things to say: Firstly, as it turned out, the hunter was from a family of good and noble lineage and so was looked up to by all.

And finally it is said, that ever after in that country they offered in sacrifice not people but wild boar and deer.

123 A Pirate Who Become a Monk





Once upon a time in the country of Settu, there was a very old monk who practiced asceticism. One day he got talking to a man who told him that he had met some pirates and they fell to talking:

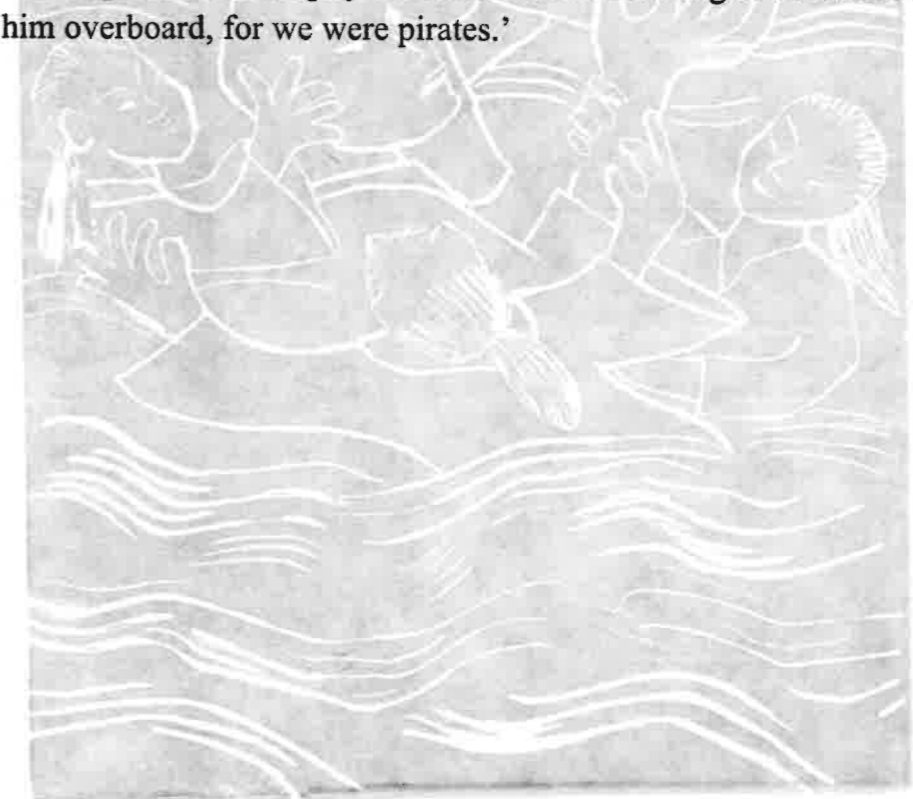
‘When I was young I was rich and had plenty of clothes and all the food I could wish for. In fact, I was the notorious pirate Rokurō Tsuibushi of Awaji and very much satisfied with my life at sea.’

‘It happened one day at Aki Island, when there were no other ships in sight, that a lone craft approached my own ship. In it I saw a young man of about twenty-five, who appeared to be her captain. There were also a couple of young men and some beautiful ladies aboard. I noticed a large number of gorgeous leather boxes on the ship, and no strong men to guard them. On the roof of the ship a young Buddhist monk sat reading a sutra. The ship followed as we moved. It seemed they had no idea we were pirates.’

‘I was curious to know who they were, so I hailed a man on the boat: “Who are you and where are you going?” “We sailed from Suō Country on urgent business, but ran into difficulties and are looking for help. As we felt helpless and uneasy, we followed your boat, trusting you”, he replied. How careless and ignorant I thought and advised him as follows: “We are not bound for Kyoto. We are waiting here to rendezvous with some others before going down to Suō County together. You should not stay here with us; you must find other ships bound for Kyoto and follow them.” “We will try to do that tomorrow. But since we strangers here would you remain alongside us tonight?” the young man asked, and followed us to shelter in the lee of an island.



"Now's the time!" we cried. "Let's take everything from that ship!" When we jumped onto the ship, everyone aboard her was shocked and terrified, and unable to do anything to stop us. We took as much as we could, and tossed all the people into the sea without caring whether they were male or female. The young ship-owner begged for mercy, shedding tears as large as the crystal beads of a Buddhist rosary. "Take everything you want, but spare my life for I am on my way to see my parents in Kyoto. They are old and very ill and I had an urgent letter from them, saying that they would like to see me again before they die." "Silence. Throw him into the sea." I ordered. He howled hysterically and shedding big tears wildly tried to cling to us. Although I had some pity for him, it meant nothing to us to throw him overboard, for we were pirates.'





'There was a slender young monk of about twenty on the roof of the boat. He was carrying a sacred bag of sutras and had been chanting all day and all night. We threw him into the sea as well. The young monk took the sacred bag from around his neck and lifted it above him. Somehow he seemed to float lightly on the surface of the sea. "What a strange monk! He is still alive!" I hit him over the head and poked him in the back with an oar, pushing him under the water. But still he was afloat, holding up the sacred bag. Puzzled, I looked again at the monk. In the water in front of him and behind him I saw two or three beautiful children with their hair tied up, each holding a white twig. One put his hand to the monk's head while the other two supported his arm which was holding up the sacred bag. I called to my pirate crew and said, "Look at that! Who are those children clinging to the monk?" "Where? We cannot see anyone" they replied doubtfully. But I could see the children. They were with the monk and they floated on the sea. It was so strange, I wanted to know what was going on. "Hold onto this pole!" I called as I stretched to help the monk. When he had hold of it, I pulled him closer to the ship. "You're wasting your time!" my fellows objected. "Take it easy men; I'd like to save the monk." I pulled him aboard. The children disappeared just as they reached the boat.'

'I asked the monk: "Are you from Kyoto? Where are you going?" He replied, "I am from the countryside but I am on my way to Kyoto. Since becoming a monk I have had little religious instruction, it's been a long time since I received any religious precepts. I told the owner of this ship that I wanted to go up to Kyoto to receive some. He kindly offered me a passage to Kyoto. He knows someone who belongs to the head temple of a Buddhist sect on Sacred Mount Hiei in Kyoto. He was to have asked his acquaintance to give me religious instruction there." "Who were those children holding onto your head and arm in the water?" I asked "When did you see them? I am afraid I have no recollection of them." "What? You don't remember the children holding on to your arm? What made you hold up the sacred bag of sutras when you thought you were about to die?" "Since I had already prepared for death I did not care about my own life. I held the sacred bag above the water to keep it dry for a time, even after I had drowned. My arm never tired of holding up the bag; actually I felt my arm become lighter and lighter. I thought that it was divine help. I am very happy that you saved my life." He cried. Though I was a brute and an outlaw, somehow I felt grateful and glad to hear his words.

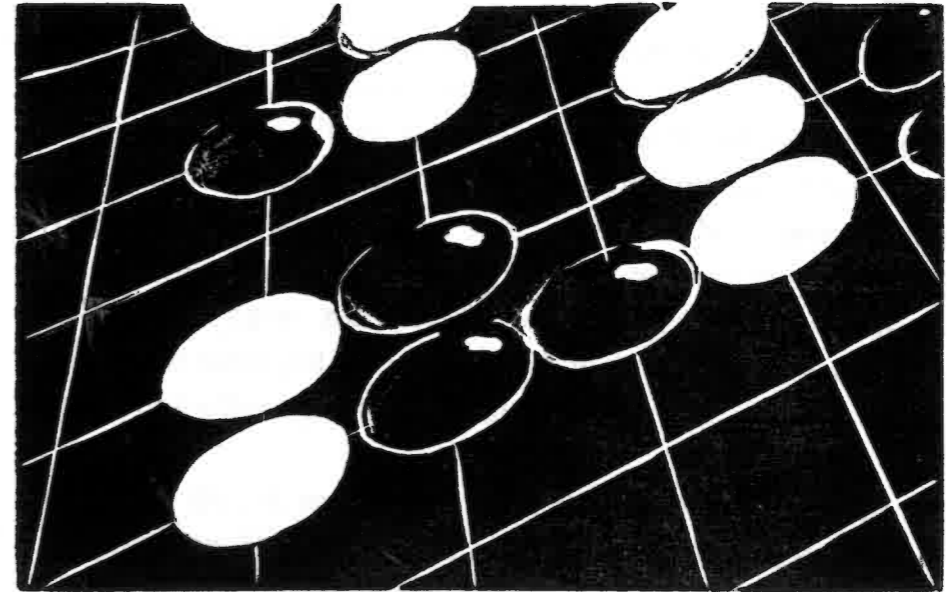
"Do you want to go back home or up to Kyoto? If you still want to receive instruction there I will take you all the way." "I am afraid I do not feel like going up to Kyoto any more. I am eager to go back to my village in the country." "Then I shall take you there. By the way, what do you think about those children who appeared so miraculously?" With tears trickling down his cheeks the young monk said, "Those were the Ten Sacred Guardians of the Lotus Sutra. They came to save me and I am so grateful. I have read and recited the sutra from the age of seven, even at times of great suffering."

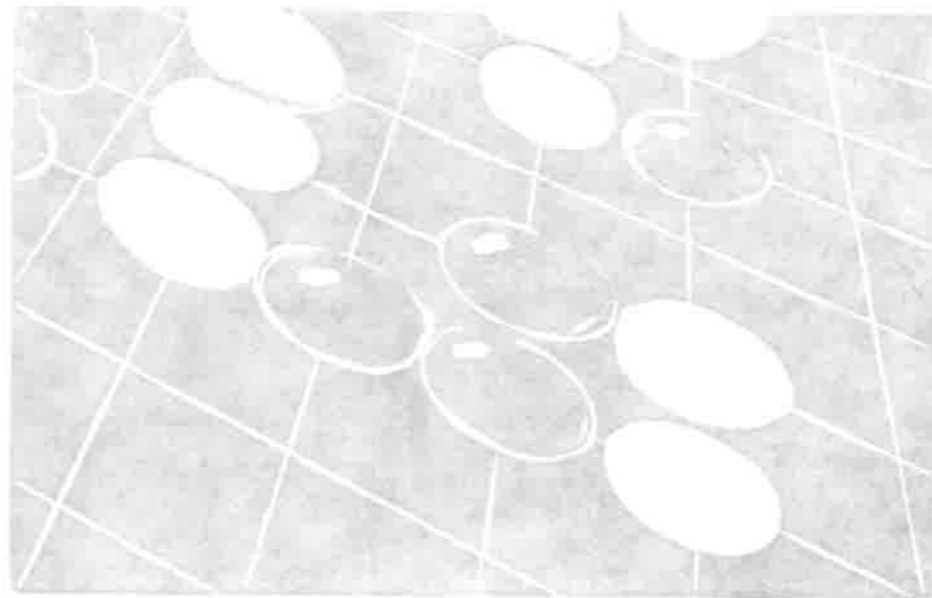
This made me realise that Buddhism was truly sacred. I made up my mind to follow the monk and hide myself away in a temple on a mountain.'

'I put some food in a bag for my journey and left everything in my house to my former shipmates. But as I was about to leave with the monk, my fellows tried to persuade me to stay. "You are out of your mind! What has happened to you? A sudden conversion like this cannot last. Have you been possessed by an evil spirit?" But their words were in vain. I left my bows, my bow-holder, my long and short swords and everything else I had. Following the monk, I went up to the mountain temple where his master dwelt. I became a student of the Lotus Sutra and later become an ascetic monk, travelling around the country.'

'In my younger days, I committed many sins and realised I had been cruel and inhuman. But when I threw that ship-owner with the big tears into the sea my conscience started to trouble me. When I saw the Guardians with the young monk I realised that the Lotus Sutra is truly sacred. I became eager to study it and so here I am. That is the story of my sudden enlightenment and how I became a monk.'

**137 Spiritual Enlightenment:
Bodhidharma Observes the Path of Priests in India**





Once upon a time, there was a temple in India with more priests than any other. Bodhidharma went to this temple to observe their rituals. He saw one priest intoning the name of the Pure Land Buddha, 'Namu Amida Butsu', another reciting sutras and still others engaged in other devotions. Presently he looked into a room in which he saw two old priests of eighty or ninety playing the game of *go*. There were no statues of the Buddha to be seen, nor any sutras. Bodhidharma asked a priest outside the room about them. The priest answered him, saying: 'Those two old priests have done nothing but play the game of *go* since they were young. They have never received the teachings of Buddhism. We look down on them and do not associate with them. It is pointless their receiving offerings. We think they are heretics.'

Hearing this, it seemed to Bodhidharma that there must be an explanation. He went and sat with the priests to see them play. As he watched, he noticed a strange thing. One priest would be standing in the room while the other sat on the floor. Suddenly they would both disappear. Lost in wonder at this mysterious sight, Bodhidharma now saw the priest who had been standing reappear and sit down, before vanishing again. Then, as Bodhidharma gazed at the place where the seated priest had been, he suddenly appeared.





'I guessed right', thought Bodhidharma and he addressed the mysterious priests saying: 'I hear that you do nothing but play this game, yet you are holy priests who have attained spiritual enlightenment. How is this possible?' One of the old priests replied, 'Indeed we have done nothing but play *go*. We see the game as a metaphor for human life. When the black stones win we are sad. We see them as representing worldly desires. When the white stones win, we are happy because for us they represent spiritual awakening. The more we play the game, the more we wish for the triumph of the white stones over the black. Thus we are praying for spiritual awakening through the game, and by these virtuous deeds we attain enlightenment.'

Bodhidharma went out of the room and told the other priests this story. All the other priests in the temple, who had looked down upon the two old priests, regretted what they had done, and came to respect them.