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In Hell the One Without Sin Is Lord:
Sino-Japanese Tales of Descent into the Underworld

by
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In Hell the One Without Sin Is Lord: Sino-Japanese Tales of Descent into the Underworld

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Part One

An intelligent hell would be better than a stupid paradise.
--Victor Hugo, *Ninety-three,* 1874

Introduction

The genre of *Jigoku meguri* or "tours of Hell" in Japanese literature has been little studied by scholars outside Japan, yet the theme is ubiquitous in the medieval *setsuwa* collections. The motif is listed as number 470 in Hiroko Ikeda's pathbreaking work *A Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk-Literature,* where she remarks "In Nippon Ryooiki, 822 A.D., there are 12 versions.... In Konjaku, ca. 1050 A.D., I find 84 versions.... These early versions appear time and again in later Buddhist literature, but are unknown in oral tradition."[1] Ikeda also offers a general outline of the development of a typical *Jigoku meguri,* which runs as follows:

> I. The Visit. A Buddhist priest (courtier, layman) who during his life has done some good and some evil deeds, dies suddenly. The body is not cremated, but is attended and a watch kept by the family or friends.
>
> II. The Journey. Two (five to ten) messengers come to take him to Hell (Paradise).

[1] Hiroko Ikeda, "A Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk-Literature," in *FF Communications* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1971), v. LXXXIX, No. 209, p. 119.

(1) On the way a deep river has to be crossed. (2) At one point the road divides into three; one is wide and straight, another passable with some weeds, and

the last is overgrown with weeds. He is made to take the first or the second depending on how good or bad he has been. (3) He sees a tall golden palace, which is explained as being the future dwelling of his friend (wife), a devout Buddhist.

III. Mediator. At the court of judgment, a Buddha appears and acts as a mediator, making him promise to make amends for his evil deeds, or to finish his uncompleted "good" deeds.

IV. The Return. He comes back by the same road and revives after one, three, or nine days, and finds he has been away that many years.

V. Death. He tells people what he has seen, fulfills what he has promised to do (copying the Lotus Sutra, etc.), and dies at the end of the alotted time.[2]

While no purely oral tradition in the folkloric sense exists for these stories, Barbara Ruch has documented the practice of picture storytelling through so-called *etoki* scrolls by medieval jongleurs starting in the Kamakura and continuing through the early Edo periods. While reciting a well-known story from a written text, the storyteller would occasionally gesture to an illustration on a painted scroll depicting scenes from the narrative in vivid detail as the plot progressed. Professor Ruch traces the origins of the practice as follows:

> The performance of emaki emerged during the twelfth century in major shrines and temples through an activity known as *etoki,* or "picture explanations," performed by *etoki hōshi* or "picture explaining priests," who were sometimes also simply called *etoki,* "picture explainers." *Engi emaki* (illustrated histories of shrines and temples and of the origins of the deities worshipped there) and *kōsōden emaki* (illustrated biographical works depicting events in the lives of important priests and founders of sects) were displayed in temples on certain occasions and an etoki hōshi would give an

[2] Ikeda, pp. 118-119.

> etoki performance by providing a narrative for the viewers. The practice of etoki must have had a long history in Japan. Since the etoki of wall paintings and scrolls was a Buddhist activity known in China, it seems probable that priests imported the practice to Japan along with many other religious customs sometime after the introduction of Buddhism.[3]

We must also agree with Ruch that "surely Hell is a peculiar place to want to visit: people are being slashed by knives, torn limb from limb, boiled in molten metal, and beaten with scourges by monsters."[4] Yet the undeniable fascination these accounts held for Japanese readers, and for the audiences who flocked to see the performative art of *etoki,* suggests that these stories fulfilled an unconscious need based on commonly held beliefs in the accessibility of separate realities, whether while waking, dreaming or in heightened psychological states of ecstasy. Hayao Kawai has reflected on Hell stories in the thirteenth century *setsuwa* collection *Uji Shūi Monogatari* (*Stories Gleaned at Uji,* ca. 1190-1242) and offers the following insights, interspersed with examples from the collection:

> The land of death is easily entered in the dreams of medieval Japan.... Whether such stories are "real" is not our concern. What is important is that through them we can learn about the kind of cosmos the people of that period lived in.
>
> What we have seen so far is that their cosmology included the land of death, or life after death. In order to really think about our lives I feel that it is important to take a standpoint which encompasses both this world and the next.
>
> ...The remarkable synchronicity of events in dreams, this world, and the land of death was not considered unusual.... I began to feel the people of that time believed that reality had many layers, and that its appearance differed

[3] Barbara Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs and the Making of a National Literature," in *Japan in the Muromachi Age,* John Whitney Hall and Toyoda Takeshi, eds. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 295-296.

[4] Barbara Ruch, "Coping with Death: Paradigms of Heaven and Hell and the Six Realms in Early Literature and Painting," in *Flowing Traces: Buddhism in the Literary and Visual Arts of Japan,* James H. Sanford, William LaFleur, and Masatoshi Nagatomi, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 117.

greatly according to the layer being seen.[5]

This study introduces stories from several Chinese and Japanese sources about descents into the underworld. In so doing, it will be necessary to combine the data on the folktale motif provided by Ikeda with Barbara Ruch's performance-based perspective, and to interpret these two elements in light of Kawai's epistemological observations. Examining the data in this light, it is my intent to explore (if not finally to delimit) the cosmos experienced by the tellers of the tales and their audiences. I hope to gain short-term access to their method of navigation through these multiple layers of psychological "reality," which bordered so closely to each other in story and song.

There is another, more historically determined purpose to the inquiry, however. It has long been thought that many Japanese *setsuwa,* particularly *Jigoku meguri,* originated in T'ang dynasty Chinese *pien* or *pien-wen* (so-called "transformation texts") and other types of popular narratives, but very little documentation of the phenomenon exists, none at all in English. Barbara Ruch has speculated that "the genre surely entered Japan from China, where T'ang-period Tun-huang *pien wen* materials make it clear that such stories were performed using illustrative paintings,"[6] but she also cautions that "To date there is no evidence that Japanese texts are translations of *pien wen,* but the practice of using illustrated texts for oral performances had been observed by Japanese priests in China (Ennin saw such a performance in Ch'ang-an, for instance) and the possibility of direct influence is great."[7]

One such influence would almost certainly be in the area of performance, for as Victor Mair points out:

> We know that transformations [i.e., *pien*] were performed in secular settings by professional entertainers, some of whom were women. Picture scrolls were an important part of the performance. Distinguished poets were familiar with transformations and referred to them to make fun of each other. High-ranking officials and even emperors enjoyed transformation

[5] Hayao Kawai, *Dreams, Myths & Fairy Tales in Japan* (Einsiedeln, Switzerland: Daimon, 1995), pp.16-19.
[6] Ruch, "Coping with Death," p. 118.
[7] Ruch, "Medieval Jongleurs," p. 296.

> performances, in spite of the fact that they were not "proper literature." Transformations had tremendous crowd-drawing power in spite of the fact that they were denounced by righteous monks. This may be due in part to the perceived cultic, risqué, and magical or illusionary qualities of some performances and derivative texts.
>
> ...In sum, transformations were a form of Buddhist-influenced prosimetric storytelling (normally associated with pictures) that enjoyed broad currency, particularly among the lower strata of society, from the middle of the T'ang period to its end.[8]

The research presented in this paper seeks to demonstrate that, while Ruch is no doubt correct in her assertion that no Japanese texts are translations of *pien-wen* like those found at Tun-huang, there is evidence that certain Japanese *setsuwa* are linked thematically to Chinese transformation texts or closely related genres. In part one, I will consider one of the best arguments, originally advanced by Kawaguchi Hisao.[9] It concerns the relationships between a Chinese folktale found at Tun-huang entitled *The T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung's Descent into Hell (T'ang T'ai Tsung ju ming chi,* S. 2630) and a number of *setsuwa,* most famously the story of the monk Nichizō's trip to the Tuṣita heaven and to Hell, contained in the thirteenth century work *The Origins of Kitano Tenjin Shrine (Kitano Tenjin Engi).* The *engi* itself relates the virtuous life, betrayal and death of the ninth century courtier Sugawara no Michizane (845-903). This is followed by his revenge from beyond the grave and subsequent apotheosis as the God Tenjin. The text relates many miracles worked by the god after his spirit is pacified through the establishment of the Kitano Tenjin Shrine for his worship. In critiquing Kawaguchi's work and analyzing his argument, I have also made many translations from the primary sources cited by him. Many of these have not been translated previously, while others are only available to scholars in Japan through manuscript editions.In this way, I hope to bring them to the attention of a wider audience. I also offer a complete translation of the story of

[8] Victor Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts: A Study of the Buddhist Contribution to the Rise of Vernacular Fiction and Drama in China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 170.

[9] Kawaguchi Hisao, "Tonkō Henbun no Sozai to Nihon Bungaku: Tō Taishū Nyūmyōki to Kitano Tenjin Engi," in *Bukkyō Bungaku Kenkyū*, Bukkyō Bungaku Kenkyūkai, eds. (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), Vol. 5, p. 7. Kawaguchi considers the story about the Emperor T'ai Tsung a *pien-wen,* but according to Mair's definition it would not be eligible, since the term "pien" does not appear in the title, and would properly be called an "account" or "record." It certainly belongs to a closely related genre. See Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts,* p. 14 for his definition.

Nichizō from *Kitano Tenjin Engi.*

The story of Nichizō occurs at the break in the text between Michizane's exaltation and the miracle tales. As we shall see, Nichizō meets Tenjin in Paradise, following which he visits Hell and meets the Emperor Daigo (r. 897-930), who has been cast into Hell for his betrayal of Michizane. He bids Nichizō relax and act informally with him, remarking "In Hell the one without sin is lord, and there is no talk of noble or common."[10] This motif of the emperor himself being unable to escape the judgment of the King of Hell goes back to the Tun-huang *pien-wen* story of *The T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung's Descent into Hell.* The idea of the Emperor having fallen into Hell for his mistreatment of Michizane reversed the usual hierarchy and raised Michizane as Tenjin above the level of the imperial household itself. We can conjecture that the T'ai Tsung story had a similar effect on its listeners, by humanizing a ruler whom they had been taught to regard as divine. It is important to take note of these themes of the inversion of hierarchy and resistance to the idea of divine right in the stories. As should become clear, one major attraction of the *Jigoku meguri* genre was its way of pointing out that death is the great equalizer and of poking fun at the aristocracy, who sometimes must have seemed oblivious to that fact. Thus, combining vernacular storytelling and theatrical elements, it was the perfect vehicle for the propagation of Buddhism (albeit a Buddhism heavily flavored by its journey across the Silk Road to Japan; a Buddhism, indeed, that continued to take on added characteristics upon its arrival, never ceasing to evolve).

At any rate, the story of T'ai Tsung continued to be anthologized throughout later Chinese literary history, and a cult evolved around the pivotal character Ts'ui Tzu-yü, who mediates between our world and the underworld as Emperor T'ai Tsung's judge in the story. In fact, the Emperor Jen Tsung (r. 1023-1064) is said to have styled him "Ts'ui The Immortal." Themes and characters derived from the story made their way to Japan as well, as evidenced by the existence of a tale cycle about the descent of a character named Ono Takamura into Hell. There, he visits the court of King Yama, as well as having many other supernatural adventures. The story was widely retold and elaborated throughout the Heian period. The interesting thing about this *setsuwa* is that the character of Ono Takamura shows clear areas of overlap with Ts'ui Tzu-yü in the folktale regarding Emperor T'ai Tsung, as should

[10] Hagiwara Tatsuo, ed., "Kitano Tenjin Engi," in *Jisha Engi* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Nihon Shisō Taikei, 1975), p. 161.

become evident later in the paper. Several stories about him have been preserved in the twelfth century Japanese setsuwa collection *Tales of Times Now Past (Konjaku Monogatari).* Finally, Kawaguchi also draws parallels between the Taoistic cult of Ts'ui Tzu-yü in China and the Tenjin cult in Japan.

I. The Folktale on Emperor T'ai Tsung's Descent Found at Tun-huang

The most well-known edition of this tale is in the Stein collection at the British Museum, and another has been reported in the Leningrad collection. For the purposes of this paper, however, I will be relying on the Stein text. Arthur Waley published a translation based on this edition in his *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang.*[11] Because of certain differences between Waley's translation and Kawaguchi's interpretation, however, I am including the following brief summary for reference purposes. The summary has been augmented by material that Kawaguchi pieced together from other sources, as well as information drawn from a reading of the original text:

1. Due to his numerous crimes committed during wartime, the newly departed soul of the T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung (r. 627-650) is met by a messenger from Yama, the king of Hell, and led to the gates of the underworld.

2. The Emperor sees King Yama approaching and demands that he perform an obeisance before him. King Yama grows angry and puts the Emperor on trial.

3. The judge in the underworld courtroom is the Emperor's former retainer Ts'ui Tzu-yü. Ts'ui Tzu-yü performs an obeisance before the Emperor suited to his former role as retainer.

4. The Emperor hands Ts'ui Tzu-yü a letter from his best friend Li Ch'ien-feng (also referred to as Li Ch'un-feng).

5. The Emperor expresses his concern for the safety of the Crown Prince left behind in Ch'ang-an and requests that Ts'ui Tzu-yü allow him to return to Ch'ang-an for a while.

6. Ts'ui Tzu-yü takes the Emperor on a tour of the underworld, showing him the sobbing figures of his brothers, the princes Chien Ch'eng and Yüan Chi, whom

[11] See Arthur Waley, trans., *Ballads and Stories from Tun-huang* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), pp. 165-174. See also P'an Ch'ung-Kuei, ed., *Tun-huang pien-wen chi hsin shu* (Taipei: Wen-chin Ch'u-pan-she you-hsien kung-szu, 1994), pp. 1095-1102.

T'ai Tsung had eliminated from his path on the way to the throne. Ts'ui Tzu-yü informs him that the two still feel great bitterness toward the Emperor. If he were brought together with them, he would be forced to face his accusers, and it would no longer be possible to return him to the world of the living. Thus, he does not meet his brothers.

7. Ts'ui Tzu-yü calls over a divine youth and asks him to report on the meritorious acts of the Emperor during his life. The youth reports that while he never had any sutras copied or statues made, he did order general amnesties three times, releasing 36,000 prisoners.[12]

8. The Emperor is informed that there are three scrolls on which his fate is inscribed. Ts'ui Tzu-yü writes in one, "Ten years as Emperor; to go back again to the world of the living."[13] The grant is made on condition that within the first five years after he is returned to Ch'ang-an he must reward Ts'ui Tzu-yü richly with money and material goods. Further, within the following five years he is expected to promote Ts'ui Tzu-yü to a high ministerial position.

9. The Emperor promises to reward Ts'ui Tzu-yü richly, but remains evasive about promoting him to high office. Ts'ui Tzu-yü judges that the Emperor is begrudging him the ministership and threatens him with a demand to respond to the written question "His Majesty T'ai Tsung, Emperor of T'ang, is asked why, in the seventh year of Wu-te, he slew his brothers in front of the palace and imprisoned his loving father in the women's apartments? An answer is requested!"[14] Thereupon Ts'ui Tzu-yü receives a number of titles and more cash.

10. Ts'ui Tzu-yü urges the Emperor that if he returns to Ch'ang-an, he ought to declare another general amnesty, and sponsor readings of and lectures on the *Great Cloud Sutra (Ta-yun ching)*[15] at the Hsi Pien Temple in the capital, as well as copying and distributing it widely.

11. The Emperor tells Ts'ui Tzu-yü that he is hungry, and Ts'ui Tzu-yü leaves to find some food to give him.

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[12] Waley does not translate the section about the amnesty for the prisoners, although this knowledge seems necessary for a well-rounded understanding of the tale. See P'an Ch'ung-kuei, *Tun-huang pien-wen chi hsin shu,* pp. 1097-1098.

[13] Waley, p. 170.

[14] Waley, p. 172.

[15] Listed as *Ta-fang-teng wu-hsiang ching* in the Taishō canon. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 387, Vol. 12, pp. 1077c-1107b.

Between the years 620 and 622, T'ai Tsung defeated four enemies of the throne in succession, and his father Kao Tsu (the founder of the T'ang dynasty) began treating him with increased favor, in recognition of his prowess in battle. T'ai Tsung's elder brother Chien Ch'eng grew concerned about being passed over and plotted with his younger brother Yüan Chi to remove him, but the plot failed and T'ai Tsung killed his brothers. He became crown prince in 626. These events formed the historical background for the story of Emperor T'ai Tsung.

II. How Chinese Tales of the Underworld Evolved

Kawaguchi points out that stories of trips to Hell developed quite early in the history of Chinese inspirational folk literature. One apparent motive for creating such tales is the urge to be reunited with someone who has passed on previously, a feeling common enough among peoples of many cultures. Thus, a fantasy or a dream in which the bereaved get to travel to the underworld and meet their loved ones again is a natural development. Further, as Hayao Kawai suggests, the cosmology itself rendered this possible, through a multi-layered conception of numerous worlds in juxtaposition that were accessible to the dreamer and believed to be as "real" as any waking experience (though waking experience itself would have seemed dreamlike from the Buddhist point of view). In this way, although people in medieval Japan realized that they were undergoing constant shifts in their perception of lived experience, they did not necessarily pause in the course of their daily activities to discriminate among varied states of consciousness the way that we moderns (or post-moderns) are apt to do.

Analogous tales exist where the departed is encountered again near the front gate of a temple. Or else, peeking into one room of the temple, the bereaved sees his loved one being forced to drink molten copper until her liver bursts. As the genre developed, the story would run that someone dies suddenly, and the body is let alone for a period of time. Finally, the deceased starts to breathe again, and begins telling stories about Hell, reporting on the various tortures inflicted upon the souls there. As a result, this revivified protagonist decides to conduct a ceremony to pray for the salvation of the souls suffering in Hell and their future good fortune. This more developed plotline is representative of the fully matured *Jigoku meguri* genre.

In the Six Dynasties, Sui and T'ang periods these sorts of inspirational folk tales proliferated in China. A collection called the *Records of Supernatural*

Retribution (*Ming pao chi,* completed between 653-655) contains the story of a monk who descends into Hell with the desire to meet up with a schoolmate of his there and encounters the god of the T'ai Shan Temple. The god then acts as his guide, remarking "His sins are heavy and you won't be able to meet with him. But I can take you to see Hell."[16] Afterwards, the two share various adventures in the underworld. The author, T'ang Lin (ca. 600-ca. 659), is said to have recorded the story as he heard it in the early T'ang period. In *A Record of Essentials Concerning Redemption through the Three Treasures (San-pao kan-ying yao lüeh lu),* a woman who falls into Hell comes back to life thanks to the merit acquired by her worship of the Diamond Realm Mandala during her lifetime. The story was taken down by the monk Fei-cho during the Liao Dynasty (907-1119), based on an earlier version in the *New Record (Hsin lu).*[17]

In addition to stories of Hell, there are also accounts of those who glimpsed the Heavens and returned to tell the tale, or of someone who fell into the Red Lotus Hell but looked upon it as though it were the Flower Storehouse World, effecting an immediate transformation. Or again, there is a story of someone travelling to King Yama's palace to hear a sutra lecture as the King's guest.[18] The story of a man named Li Shan-lung, who dies and receives a tour of Hell from King Yama's messenger, appears in the *Record of Karmic Retribution in the Underworld.* Tales with this pattern of a tour of Hell, an account of its tortures, a meeting with the dead, and a miraculous revivification are so numerous that the seventh chapter of the story collection entitled *The Jeweled Forest of Dharma Extracts* (*Fa-yüan chu-lin,* ca. 668), consisting of tales of the six realms, alone contains four.[19]

[16] *Ming pao chi. Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2082, v. 51, p. 791b3-4.
[17] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," pp. 16-17.
[18] A *Jigoku meguri* story on this theme involving the monk Jishinbō Son'e, who attends a sutra reading in Hell, occurs in *The Tale of the Heike.* The tale is evidently intended to demonstrate that, despite his apparent wickedness, Taira Kiyomori is actually the reincarnation of the holy Archbishop Jie, who teaches humanity by showing the negative consequences of evil deeds. See Kajihara Masaaki and Yamashita Hiroaki, eds., *Heike Monogatari* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei, 1991), v. 1, pp. 350-354. See also Helen Craig McCullough, trans., *The Tale of the Heike* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 213-215.
[19] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," p. 17.

III. Origins of the Story of Emperor T'ai Tsung

The present edition of the T'ai Tsung story is in fragmentary condition and thus there is no way of verifying the outcome. But Kawaguchi suggests that since a scene occurs where T'ai Tsung is taken to Hell after his death and put on trial there, it is likely that there was originally a scene where he comes back to life, dedicating himself to promulgating belief in the *Great Cloud Sutra.* He bases this on the widespread existence of similar stories in the literature starting from the Six Dynasties, which must have served as a template for the creation of the T'ai Tsung story.

In addition, there is a story in the *Comprehensive Record of the T'ai-p'ing Era* (*T'ai-p'ing kuang chi,* 981) called "The Judge of the Underworld" (Shou-p'an ming jen kuan), which originates in an earlier T'ang collection called the *Complete Record of Court and Common Stories (Ch'ao-yeh ch'ien-tsai),* compiled by Chang Wen-ch'eng (ca. 657-750). Copies of the latter text made their way to Japan.[20] The story says:

> The T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung was in the best of health. The Chief Astrologer Li Ch'un-feng went to see him, and began to cry suddenly, refusing to speak. The Emperor asked him about this, and he replied, "Your majesty will die this evening." The Emperor said, "this is the fate of all men. Why should I grieve?" He put Li Ch'un-feng on duty. The Emperor passed away[21] during the night. A man appeared and said to the Emperor, "please come with me briefly. We will return again." The Emperor asked, "who are you?" The man replied, "I am attached to the court in Hell, which judges the fate of the living." T'ai Tsung entered [the courtroom] and saw the judge, who questioned him concerning the incident on the fourth day of the sixth month.[22] Then he was returned [to the world of the living]. The man who had appeared earlier met him and guided him back.
>
> Li Ch'un-feng had been making astrological readings. He forbade anyone at court from crying over the Emperor. Then the Emperor suddenly awoke, as

[20] Although only one chapter of this currently circulates in Japan, the twenty-chapter version is catalogued in the "Nihon Kenzaisho Mokuroku." A six-chapter version is attested in the "Hōgandō Hikyū." See Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," footnote thirteen p. 40.
[21] Literally, "entered samādhi."
[22] When he killed his brothers in 624.

day broke. He sought for the man he saw the previous evening. He gave him an administrative position. He was put in charge of providing help to travellers on the roads in the Szechwan region.

The Emperor asked about this wonderingly.[23] He selected an official to report to him about it. The official entered and spoke with the man about it. But the Emperor still did not remember. The bystanders all remembered having heard him make the proclamation, however. Then the officials knew that heaven had sent the man to the Emperor.[24]

Surely this sort of legend provided the framework for the T'ai Tsung story, Kawaguchi reasons. However, in this story the guide proves to have been an inhabitant of the world of the living, and the nameless judge a resident of the underworld, while in the later version the judge proves to be the Emperor's retainer Ts'ui Tzu-yü. Li Ch'un-feng (a.k.a. Li Ch'ien-feng), meanwhile, has been relegated to a role as Ts'ui Tzu-yü's best friend.

The author of *The Complete Record of Court and Common Stories,* Chang Wen-ch'eng, was active during the reign of Hsüan Tsung (r. 713-742), and so Kawaguchi postulates that the composition of the T'ai Tsung story took place not long before or after that.

Also interesting are the references made to reading and copying the *Great Cloud Sutra* in the T'ai Tsung story. The *Great Cloud Sutra* is an apocryphal text thought to have been composed by a group of ten monks during the reign of Empress Wu (r. 684-705), in order to propagate the notion of the Empress's divine authority.[25] Thus, the T'ai-tsung story must have been composed after this. In addition, the reverse of the Tun-huang manuscript of the T'ai-tsung story bears the date 906, and so doubtles it originates before this. It must have taken shape during the mid-T'ang dynasty.

[23] I.e., he did not remember what had taken place.
[24] Li Fang-teng, ed., *T'ai-p'ing kuang chi* (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chu, 1961), v. 3, pp. 1050-1051. See also Chang Wen-ch'eng, *Ch'ao-yeh Ch'ien-tsai* (Shanghai: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1938), p. 85.
[25] For more information on this sutra, see Antonino Forte, *Political Propaganda and Ideology in China at the End of the Seventh Century* (Napoli: Instituto Universitario Orientale, Seminario di Studi Asiatici, 1976).

IV. The Lighter Side of Hell

One interesting observation that Kawaguchi makes is that numerous such stories appear in the comedic Japanese *kyōgen* literature as well. In these dramas, the characters of King Yama, the departed person, and goblins all appear. Just as in a *kyōgen,* he points out, the story of T'ai Tsung seems to be profound and serious on the surface. But the closer one looks, characters like the judge Ts'ui Tzu-yü, who only wants to be bribed with wealth and position, alternately flattering and threatening T'ai Tsung, seem rather entertaining. The Emperor blusters foolishly at King Yama, and Yama feels childlike embarrassment at being shown up in front of his multitude of retainers. There is a certain charm to the story that Kawaguchi likens to *kyōgen.* The structure is quite sophisticated for a folk tale, approaching that of a novel, with the action taking place on a sweepingly broad scale. In addition, the story's place in Chinese literary history is assured based on its use of vernacular plain prose, with dialogue in the common language playing an important part in the plot narration.[26]

In fact, judging from the historical record, it seems to be somewhat difficult to take Hell all that seriously. Barbara Ruch has noted that *Jigoku meguri* stories in time gave birth to a related genre, *Jigoku yaburi* or the wrecking of Hell. She traces the earliest example of this motif to a story in the *Azuma Kagami (Mirror of the East Country),* where in an entry for the sixth month of 1203, she says:

> Nitan no Shirō Tadatsune finds a cave at the foot of Mount Fuji (then still an active volcano and under which at least some of the vast number of Buddhist hells were said to be located). Instead of contenting himself with just going down for a look around, he enters with six armed men and does battle with Hell's demons, resulting in casualties on both sides. The age of resisting the disgraceful proceedings in Hell had started, and with it emerged a new theme in Jigoku literature and painting known as Jigoku yaburi or "The Wrecking of Hell." By the Muromachi and early Edo periods, Japanese writers were even rather enjoying the burlesque of Hell.[27]

She adds that "The parody of Hell.... makes clear the sentiment that without

[26] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," p. 19.
[27] Ruch, ***Coping with Death,*** pp. 119-120.

the help of priests and sects, by our own strength, we can defeat the strange, non-Japanese likes of Emma Daiō and his *oni* and get to Paradise on our own after we die."[28] Or else perhaps more than just a Japanese response to the exotic foreign cosmology posited by Buddhism, the parody of Hell was implicit in the *Jigoku meguri* genre all the time, as Kawaguchi suggests. And along with the parody of Hell, in the T'ai Tsung story, came a parody of the aristocracy. Again, as mentioned earlier, this theme is expressed in *The Origins of Kitano Tenjin Shrine,* where there occurs a reversal of social hierarchy and a rejection of divine right in the figure of Emperor Daigo cast down into Hell for his persecution of the courtier Michizane.[29]

The story of T'ai Tsung continued to be anthologized throughout later Chinese literary history, and the Emperor Jen Tsung (r. 1023-1064) was said to revere Ts'ui Tzu-yü, calling him "Ts'ui The Immortal." The story is taken up in the text of the *Hsi you chi yen i* (the popular, expanded version of *The Journey to the West*). And the plot of *The T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung's Descent into Hell* has been scavenged repeatedly to provide threads of other narratives, either in summary form or as stories concerning the judge Ts'ui Tzu-yü. Kawaguchi cites the Yüan dynasty *Drama of Judge Ts'ui Overcoming the Unjust Landlords (Ts'ui Fu-chün tuan-yüan chia-chai-chu tsa-chü)* by Cheng T'ing-yü as one such text.[30]

V. Japanese Stories With Textual or Thematic Links to the Tale of Emperor T'ai Tsung

Legends about the descent of a character named Ono Takamura into Hell, where he visits the court of King Yama, were widespread in Japanese society throughout the Heian period. The interesting thing about this *setsuwa* is that the character of Ono Takamura shows clear areas of overlap with Ts'ui Tzu-yü in the Emperor T'ai Tsung tale from Tun-huang. A story in the early twelfth century setsuwa collection called *Stories of Ōe (Gōdanshō)* contains an early reference to this character. It runs:

When Ono Takamura was the Middle Counselor and Lord Takafuji was

[28] Ruch, ***Coping with Death,*** p. 120.
[29] This tale, which begins to be written down in the early eleventh century, will be discussed in section VI of this paper.
[30] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," p. 20.

the Middle General, they encountered one hundred goblins wandering at night in front of the Suzaku gate. As Takafuji dismounted from his carriage, the one hundred wandering goblins saw Takafuji and immediately began chanting the great victory dharanī. Takafuji did not know it at the time, but within his clothes the dhāraṇī was stored away inside his nipples.[31]

The story continues in the following manner:

It is said that Takamura purposely brought Takafuji to meet the goblins out of his desire to protect him [through the chanting of the dharanī]. Five or six days after that, when Takamura was on his way to attend to matters of state, he cut the curtains and the harness from Takafuji's carriage for him in front of the Yōmei gate. At that time Takamura was the Left Middle Controller.

After that, Takamura went to the winter residence of Takafuji's grandfather, and while he was explaining these circumstances to him, Takafuji suddenly died. Takamura immediately took Takafuji's hand and pulled it, whereupon he was revivified. Takafuji came down into the garden and performed a full obeisance [before Takamura]. When he had suddenly arrived at King Yama's palace in his unconscious state, this Middle Controller Takamura had been enthroned as the second of Hell's judges, and so when he returned and saw Takamura, he prostrated himself before him.[32]

Another version occurs in the late Heian dynasty *Old Setsuwa Collection (Kohon Setsuwa Shū),* where it is called *The Young Lord of the Nishisanjō Palace Meets One Hundred Goblins Wandering at Night.*[33] But the story is best known from its appearance in the *Tales of Times Now Past (Konjaku Monogatari, ca. 1120).* This version relates that "He was bound by King Yama's messenger and upon arriving at the castle of King Yama, he was charged with his sins, and there seated

[31] Yamane Taisuke, Ikegami Junichi and Gotō Akio, eds., *Gōdanshō*, *Chūgaishō* and *Fukego* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei, 1997), p. 87.
[32] Gotō, Ikegami and Yamane, pp. 87-88.
[33] See Miki Sumito, Asami Kazuhiko, Nakamura Yoshio and Kouchi Kazuaki, *Uji Shūi Monogatari* and *Kohon Setsuwashū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei, 1990), pp. 458-460.

among the assembled officials was Ono Takamura."[34]

Takamura is dressed in majestic judges' robes and carries a mace of authority. He appeals to the king to allow him to pardon Takafuji's sins this once, remarking that "The Ministers of Japan all have honest hearts and perform virtuous acts for people."[35] At the moment that King Yama orders the messenger who bound Takafuji and brought him down to the court of the underworld to take him back and release him, Takafuji revives. Since it becomes known through this that "Takamura travels back and forth between King Yama's palace and this world as his Minister,"[36] people are said to live in fear of him.

In the *Tales of Three Nations (Sangoku Denki)* edited by the monk Gentō during the Eikyō era (1429-1441), the character of Takafuji is replaced with Fujiwara Tadamori, while Takamura is referred to as "The life-transforming third judge of King Yama's palace," and as such, "His body serves at court but his soul travels to the underworld."[37]

There are nine stories of descents into the underworld in the *Miraculous Stories of Karmic Retribution of Good and Evil in Japan (Nippon Ryōiki, ca. 823),*[38] one of which relates the adventures of a man who slaughters several oxen to appease a Taoist deity and goes to the underworld.[39] There, seven ox-headed subhumans seek to slaughter him in return for what he did to them when they were oxen. However, because he had later sought to atone for the sacrifices he performed by setting free animals which were marked for slaughter, ten million men appear and beseech King Yama to judge the man innocent and return him to the world of the living.

The tale purports to explain why one would be the recipient of suffering and fall into Hell, as well as how to go about reviving from the dead. There are many stories that make the differences between good and evil karma clear and preach the

[34] Komine Kazuaki, ed., *Konjaku Monogatari Shū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei, 1994), v. 4, p. 310.
[35] Komine, p. 310.
[36] Komine, p. 311.
[37] Ikegami Junichi, ed., *Sangoku Denki* (Tokyo: Miyai Shoten, 1976), v. 1, p. 228.
[38] These include Volume I number 30, Volume II numbers 5, 7, 16, 19, 24 and 25 and Volume III numbers 9 and 23. See Izumoji Osamu, ed., *Nihon Ryōiki* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei, 1996), pp. 44, 65, 69, 85, 90, 97, 100, 141 and 161. See also Kyoko Motomochi Nakamura, tr., *Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 143, 164, 167, 182, 186, 192, 194, 233 and 252.
[39] This is Volume II, story number 5. See Izumoji, p. 65 and Nakamura, p. 164.

path of virtue, at the same time providing us with a glimpse of Hell to put us in contact with the sufferings of the dead, also containing a scene of judgment in the palace of King Yama.

Often the protagonist meets with a goblin at a point midway between this world and the underworld, bribing the goblin and escaping from the necessity of touring Hell. Or else the goblin becomes hungry in the course of the long journey and eats the food offerings left by the departed at the gates of Hell and in return seeks out a woman with the same name as the departed, taking her to Hell instead, where the trial becomes a comedic burlesque.

While the story of Emperor T'ai Tsung was indeed a bit humorous in parts, here the tale turns into a full-blown farce. The notable thing is that the messengers from the underworld seem to experience almost exactly the same emotions and sense of obligation as people in the world of the living. The themes of these tales from the *Miraculous Stories of Karmic Retribution of Good and Evil in Japan* were picked up and developed by later compilers and included in many other *setsuwa* collections, such as the *Tales of Times Now Past.*

Later, stories began to proliferate in which the underworld ceases to be a separate place to which departed spirits proceed, but comes to be conceived as existing in a far-off region of this world, such as Mt. Tateyama in Etchū province, or an island in the remote western reaches of the Gotō archipelago. There, it was believed, one could meet with the departed once more. In addition, stories grew up in which the tours of the six realms and of Hades become ever more elaborate. It is thought that works such as the *Essentials of Rebirth in the Pure Land (Ōjōyōshū)* of Genshin (942-1017) and other works treating the afterlife and rebirth in the Buddhist Heavens (and Hells) played a role in the elaboration of these legends.[40]

These *setsuwa* all represent themselves as being stories originating in Japan, but it is beyond doubt that the *Miraculous Stories of Karmic Retribution of Good and Evil in Japan* was written under the influence of story collections originating on the Chinese continent. Kawaguchi believes that the appearance of these stories of descents into Hell in Japan can certainly be attributed to this source, making Japan more or less an offshoot of a larger East Asian folk tale region.

Further, he points out that stories of journeys to Hell as adapted in Japan are usually variations on the theme of Indian or Chinese people falling into Hell, and indicate first, that Hell was conceived of as a universal phenomenon, and second,

[40] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," pp. 22-23.

that insofar as the Japanese nationality of the individual in question was stressed in these stories, the consciousness of "Japaneseness" as a national identity seems to have entered a formative stage in the early Heian period.

For example, he points to the story in the *Tales of Times Now Past* entitled "A Monk Arrives at Tateyama and Meets a Young Girl," which contains the line "It is said that ever since the distant past Japanese people have committed sins and fallen into the Hell at Tateyama."[41] Even in Hell, remarks Kawaguchi, there seems to be a section reserved especially for Japanese citizens. The belief in Hell seems to accompany the growth of the cults of the Bodhisattva Kannon (Skt. Avalokiteśvara) and the Bodhisattva Jizō (Skt. Kṣitigarbha) as saviors who will succor the souls of the departed even in the abyss. At times, says Kawaguchi, King Yama himself is even referred to as Jizō. Further, as demonstrated by the stories of the miraculous powers of Jizō in chapter 17 of the *Tales of Times Now Past,* the fear of Hell plays a large part in the rise of belief in the salvational powers of Jizō. The beatific expression of Jizō Bodhisattva seems to provide the necessary counterbalance to the gruesome images of the hell realms in the unconscious mind of the reader. In this way the story of Jizō came to accompany tales of journeys to Hell and subsequent resurrection, and this is the influence that is thought to have produced the intertwining of the Jizō cult with the story of Takamura in Hell. One result of this was the following story of the foundation of Yada temple:

> Once there was a wise man at court named Ono Takamura. He followed a holy man named Manbei, who had been a teacher for a long time. Although the body of Minister Ono was at court, his soul was at the palace of King Yama. The emperor and the ministers decided that he should receive the Bodhisattva vows. Takamura said innocently, I have a teacher, and he gives the vows in all purity. I have visited him for a long time, and he can act as the priest to administer the vows. So they dispatched him as a messenger to the underworld, and he gained an audience with Manbei. He then mounted the platform of the masters and disciples, and received the Bodhisattva vows. Since there had been a bad atmosphere in the imperial palace, the lord and the ministers both rejoiced. The emperor said that he would give alms liberally on account of Takamura's receiving of the vows and that all beggars

[41] Ikegami Junichi, ed., *Konjaku Monogatari Shū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei, 1993), v. 3, p. 299.

> could rely on him for charity. The holy man said, in order that he [Ono Takamura] might come to despise the painful results of the cycle of birth and death, he wished that he might see the great valley of Hell. Accompanied by King Yama and the holy man, they went to perform righteous deeds in the Avīci Hell.[42]

In this way they proceed to take a tour of Hell and meet up with the Bodhisattva Jizō. A picture scroll exists depicting the meeting between the holy man Manbei and Ono Takamura. In the scroll, the meeting takes place right after Manbei has come back to life.

These kinds of stories about Ono Takamura moving back and forth between this world and the hell realms persisted, and in the middle ages the northeastern corner of Shinkō temple at the foot of Higashiyama in Kyoto was said to contain a "pond where Ono Takamura travelled back and forth from the underworld." Takamura was supposedly able to commute to the underworld from this pond which lay at the crossroads of the six realms. Kawaguchi believes that these tales of Ono Takamura moving freely between the worlds of darkness and light are the result of a synthesis between Buddhism and Taoism, in imitatio of such texts as the *Lao Tzu hua hu ching (The Scripture on Lao Tzu's Conversion of the Barbarians)*[43] and similar texts. The *Lao Tzu hua hu ching* appears in lists of texts imported to Japan during the Heian period.[44]

It is interesting to note in this regard that the edition of the *Hua hu ching* found at Tun-huang contained a section in which it was claimed that Mani, the founder of the Manichaean religion, was actually an incarnation of Lao Tzu. Since Manichaeism, in common with many Mesopotamian religions, posited a fundamental dualism between light and darkness in its theology, it may be that Taoist/Buddhist hybrid stories about heroes like Ono Takamura contain a healthy

[42] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," p.24. The story originates from a handwritten scroll kept at the Yada temple in Kyoto.
[43] Written by Wang Fou in the late third or early fourth century. *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2139, Vol. 54, pp. 1266a-1270b.
[44] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," pp. 24-25.

dose of Manichaeism as well.[45] In part two of this paper, I shall examine the question of Manichaean influence on the well-known *Jigoku meguri* story of the Bodhisattva Maudgalyāyana's descent into Hell to save his mother. Iwamoto Yutaka believes that Manichaean influence on East Asian concepts of Hell and tales of journeys to the underworld has been greatly underestimated.[46]

A legend also persists that in the vicinity of Yasaka in Kyoto, centering on the Aitō temple, there was a crossroads of the six realms, and it is from this region that the Tenjin faith originates as well as the *setsuwa* relating the tour of Hell taken by the monk Nichizō recorded in *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine (Kitano Tenjin Engi).* According to Kawaguchi, the Shinkō temple, which was located in Higashiyama in Kyoto, was said to contain one such crossroads of the six realms, and such a crossroads was also believed to exist at Kitano. These crossroads of the six realms were not only said to exist in Kyoto but also at Hakusan in Kaga (near the Shirayama Shrine in present-day Ishikawa prefecture) and at Tateyama in Etchū (present-day Tōyama prefecture). There was also thought to be a "place of miracles" at Misaki on the Nōtō peninsula, which was originally a penal colony. Kawaguchi speculates that this was also thought of as a place where Takamura descended to the underworld. In any case, there would seem to be a clear connection between the story of Takamura and the later tale of the monk Nichizō's descent into the underworld.

[45] See Samuel N.C. Lieu, *The Religion of Light* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1979), pp. 25-26, and also Iwamoto Yutaka, "Mokuren 'Jigoku meguri' Setsuwa no Genryū," in *Bukkyō Bungaku Kenkyū,* Bukkyō Bungaku Kenkyūkai, eds. (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), where he demonstrates that the well-known story of the Bodhisattva Maudgalyāyana's descent into Hell, in which the East Asian *Obon* festival of the dead originates, was heavily influenced by Manichaean cosmology.

It is also interesting to make a comparison between Hiroko Ikeda's "A Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk-Literature" and Ting Nai-Tung, "A Type Index of Chinese Folktales in the Oral Tradition and Major Works of Non-religious Classical Literature," in *FF Communications* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1978), v. XCIV, No. 223. As his title indicates, Ting chose not to include works from Buddhist or other traditions of Chinese religious literature in this masterly reference work. Cross-referenced to Hiroko Ikeda's "Index," it is easy to tell at a glance that the *Jigoku meguri* theme is missing in Chinese secular folk literature. The likelihood that it arises from Manichaean influence would thereby seem to increase. See Ting's Appendix II, p. 251.

[46] See Iwamoto Yutaka, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" mentioned in the previous footnote.

VI. The Story of Nichizō: A Japanese Emperor in Hell

The *setsuwa* describing Nichizō's descent to the underworld appears in *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine.* However, it also appears in other settings.[47] The most detailed of these is the version contained in the "Eikyūjibon," so-called because the manuscript originates from the Eikyū temple. A colophon on the back bears the date 1851, but Kawaguchi deduces through text critical methods that this is the earliest known version of the Nichizō story. These will be described at the end of this section. The title of the text has been eaten away by insects, but Kawaguchi suggests that like other early versions, it may have borne the title *Dōken Shōnin Meidoki (Record of Saint Dōken's Trip to the Underworld).* Since this likely forms the basis for the story as it appears in other variants of *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine,* it would be worthwhile to summarize the plot here.

1. The birth of Dōken (the lay name of Nichizō prior to his taking orders). He enters the Kinpusen monastery (in Nara) at the age of sixteen, in 917. He practices Buddhist austerities at a branch temple for six years. But due to his mother's illness he gives up his practice and returns to Kyoto. For sixteen years after this, he returns to the Kinpusen monastery once a year to practice austerities.

2. Dōken enters a small rock cave on the Kinpusen monastery property named *Shō* (for a small reed instrument) and maintains a vow of silence, refusing to eat. While engaged in this practice, he dies on the first of the eighth month, 941.

3. A Zen monk (who is actually a deity) appears and gives Dōken a drink of the mountain waters, and a great number of divine youths appear bearing food and drink.

4. The Bodhisattva Zaōgongen[48] appears in the west on top of a boulder, in the guise of the simple monk Isshukutoku. He leads Dōken to the top of the mountain, where a pure land exists. He tells Dōken that he was a peacock in his former life, and urges him to follow the dictates of the Bodhisattva Protector of the Law.

5. The Prime Minister Dignified Moral God (Daijōitokuten, the exalted form of Sugawara no Michizane) appears from the skies to the west and prostrates before Zaōgongen. A host of the Dignified Moral God's retinue parades past.

[47] For example, see Royall Tyler, *Japanese Tales* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 144, for a translation from the *Tales of Times Now Past.*

[48] A deity who begins to be worshipped in Japan around the ninth century, said to have been first apprehended by worshippers at the Kinpusen monastery. He is especially prominent in the Japanese mountain religion Shugendō. See also note 53, below.

6. The Dignified Moral God invites Dōken to visit his palace.[49] The palace is on a great island in the sea. The Dignified Moral God says that he wants to destroy Japan and then rebuild it eighty-four years later so he can live there. But there are some in Japan who practice esoteric Buddhism and since this is entertaining for him, he won't destroy it just yet. He will answer the prayers of those who invoke his name and make images of him. He remarks that Dōken bears the signs of someone who will have a short life, but predicts that he will live to be eighty-one years old. Finally, he changes Dōken's name to Nichizō.

7. Zaōgongen gives Nichizō a tour of the Tuṣita heaven. In the Southwest corner there is a forest of jeweled trees, and a tall building with a garden and pond, where heavenly beauties sing and dance, and numerous couples are joined in connubial bliss. A god appears from the west, saying that he is the crown prince of the eastern palace of Japan's Engi era (901-923),[50] who was reborn in heaven. Nichizō is led along by numerous monks, who give him a tour of the Tuṣita heaven.

8. Zaōgongen gives Nichizō a tour of the northern portion of King Yama's palace. There are several thousand guards to the underworld palace, and to the left and right sides of a great road hundreds of thousands of sinners are shackled together groaning. There are hundreds of imperial guards before the gate, while within the gates there are hundreds and thousands of women who greet Nichizō. King Yama salutes him and reads from the *Lotus* and *Nirvana* sutras.

9. Nichizō says that he wants to see Hell, so King Yama dispatches one of his retainers, dressed in red, to show him the Mountain of Knives and the Forest of Swords. The retainer shows him eighteen different places of torture one after another. Among these, he is led to the red-hot steel cave where the Engi Emperor (Daigo)[51] is suffering torture and being made to feel remorse. After touring Hell, they emerge at King Yama's palace once again. King Yama puts his hands together in

[49] It is worth noting that Dōken was actually the son of Michizane's scholarly rival Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki, and thus a relative of Fujiwara no Tokihira, who many believe was responsible for setting in motion the court intrigue against Michizane, that resulted in his banishment. What his motivation might have been for reporting to the court about his vision of Michizane as Tenjin we can only speculate, but perhaps his shame at his family's involvement intensified the devotion that went into his spiritual practice, resulting in an unusually clear vision. Again, the vision took the form of a familiar template for such experiences -- the tour of Hell/Heaven, locations which Kawai reminds us were more or less right next door in the medieval consciousness. See Robert Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1986), p. 315.

[50] Michizane was exiled and died during the Engi era. The Crown Prince is the later Emperor Suzaku (r. 930-946).

[51] Emperor Daigo was responsible for Michizane's exile.

prayer, and sees him back to the Kinbusen monastery.

10. Next, Zaōgongen takes him to the Completely Moral Dharma Lord's Heavenly Palace in the east. The Dharma Lord of Heaven turns out to be Zaōgongen himself (remembering that up until this point he has disguised himself as the monk Isshukutoku), who says that he is the lord of all Japanese monks, slated to be born in the heaven of immeasurable pleasures. But because of the wrath of Japan's Prime Minister Dignified Moral God, the third messenger of that heaven, the Lightning Spirit Poison King, caused widespread purification and rare calamities to occur,[52] murdering Tadakane and Munehito. In order to seek forgiveness he is stuck in a second-rate pure land like Kinpusen. He establishes small shrines for the worship of Tenjin in the capital and all the provinces, and on the fifteenth of the fourth month and the fifteenth of the tenth month he prays to obstruct evil and protect the country. On the first of the first month he counsels all and sundry to practice the realization of the essence of the *Lotus Sutra.*

11. Nichizō crawls into a hole in a rock and is reborn. It is now the thirteenth of the eighth month, and thirteen days have passed. This concludes the story. Certain textual references, however, indicate that the story was originally much longer and was abridged in the Eikyū edition. Be that as it may, the depiction of the palace of the Dignified Moral God seems to have been largely adopted from the *Amitābha Sutra.* Kawaguchi feels that this would indicate that the story was originally an oral transmission that was later written down for evangelical purposes. Further, depending on the context it was also abbreviated and summarized in *setsuwa* form for popular consumption.[53]

The story also appears in the *Brief Records of Japan* (*Fusō Ryakki,* ca. 1093)[54] in shortened form and in the Kenkyū era (1190-1199) edition of *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine.* This latter version is the most well-known and runs as follows:

> In those days, there was a man named Saint Nichizō. His name was originally Dōken, but through his practice of the teaching of the Bodhisattva

[52] The purification would seem to have taken place through the means of this destruction.
[53] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," pp. 25-29.
[54] See Mozume Takami, ed., *Fusō Ryakki* (Tokyo: Kōbunkō Kankōkai, Kōgaku Sōshō, 1925), v. 6, pp. 285-289.

Kongōzaō,[55] he received the new name Nichizō. Beginning on the sixteenth day of the fourth month 934, this man shut himself up in a rock cave (which was named *Shō*) at the Kinpusen temple, and as a result he died on the first of the following eighth month. Yet, he revived on the thirteenth. By virtue of the expedient means of Kongōzaō, there was nowhere in the three worlds[56] and the six realms[57] he did not see. He also saw where Tenjin (the Sky-filling Self-sufficient Heavenly God) was located, as well as the inner and outer palaces of the Tuṣita heaven,[58] and the palace of Yama, in addition to viewing the various hells. The thrust of what he wrote down describing the nature of the pleasures and sufferings undergone by the body-mind in its inward and outward aspects[59] in Hell and the Tuṣita Heaven is not at all different from what is related by the holy sutras.

Tenjin is also called Daijōitokuten (Prime Minister Dignified Moral God).[60] All about him there were comings and goings in the ten directions as though for the celebration of a great king's enthronement. Pardon me for not further describing his glorious appearance. The number of his varied retainers and followers was uncountable. There were Deva Kings, Thunder Gods, Goblin Kings, Yakṣas and Rākṣasas.

As he looked about him at the vicinity, he saw a large pool of water. He could not make out the extent of its banks; it was like the four great seas. In the midst of the pool was a large island. The magnificence of its flowers, birds

[55] A Bodhisattva depicted in the retinue of Kokūzō (Skt. Ākāśagarbha) in the Matrix Realm Mandala. The monk Seihō worshipped him at the Kinpusen temple (in the present Yoshino district of Nara prefecture) from the ninth century, and he grew ever more popular along with the growth of the mountain religion known as Shugendō, according to which he is worshipped as the god Zaōgongen. He is famous for appearing as an angry figure in portraits and wall hangings.

[56] The world of desire, the world of form and the formless world.

[57] The hells, the realm of the hungry ghosts, the animal realm, the human realm, the realm of warring titans and the heavens.

[58] The fourth of the six heavens of the desire realm. The inner palace is where all the Bodhisattvas dwell, as well as where Śākyamuni Buddha practiced before being born on the earth, and where Maitreya Buddha is said to be preaching now, as he waits to be born. The outer chambers are where the heavenly host dwells, and the life span there is said to be four thousand years. One day and one night in the Tuṣita heaven is said to equal four hundred of our years.

[59] This refers to the body-mind complex being formed as the result of past karma, as well as the environment in which it functions and to which it relates.

[60] This is an honorific title derived from the court rank of Daijō Daijin or Prime Minister (given posthumously to Michizane) coupled with the name of one of the five Buddhist Guardian Kings. It is an interesting example of the borrowing in general that went into the compilation of the Tenjin legend.

and forests was no different from the descriptions of paradise in the *Amitābha Sutra.* In the middle of the island was a twelve foot square platform. A lotus flower grew in the middle of the platform, and above the flower hovered a jeweled pagoda. Within the pagoda were numerous jeweled scrolls with "Homage to the *Lotus Sutra*" inscribed on them in golden letters. Enclosed within them was a Tendai temple. There, the Diamond Realm and the Matrix Realm mandalas were hung on the eastern and western walls. If one proceeded roughly one mile to the north there was a large castle. It was magnificent in its gleaming beauty. Now he was at Tenjin's dwelling.

"This island is a place where your needs are always taken care of," he said. He also said to Saint Nichizō, "At first I had thought to let the flow of the tears shed during my lifetime run over, laying waste to the nation of Japan with their flooding, and become a great sea. And then eighty-four years later I would establish my land there, a country where the teachings of Samantabhadra and Nāgārjuna are spread, and love of the Buddhist teachings is not taken lightly.

By virtue of the holy exoteric and esoteric teachings, the bitterness that I previously felt in my heart subsided about one-tenth. Further, the Tathagatas of old and the great immortal adepts, by virtue of their prayers for humanity, bestowed on me the name of a virtuous deity whose spirit filled all the land, and then calmed and consoled me with their varied forms of wisdom -- so the hurt I suffered has ceased to pain me. However, as for my followers the 168,000 malevolent Gods, the damage they cause in certain places is difficult for me to prevent."

When Nichizō heard this, he said in awe and reverence, "In the nation of Japan, both high and low revere the name of the Fire and Thunder God Tenjin[61] as equal to ten Buddhas. Why should you speak of your bitter heart?" When he said this, the Great God replied, "The entire country shall feel my wrath. Will there be those who respect me then? If I am not made a Buddha, how can I forget this bitterness? However, if people have faith, making images of me, chanting my name and praying to me with every thought, my divine response shall be like an echoing voice," he vowed. When Nichizō

[61] Tenjin acquired a reputation as a thunder god in 930 when lighting struck the palace, killing four courtiers, including Kiyotsura, who years earlier had reported to the court a spurious "confession" made by Michizane. See Borgen, p. 308.

reported this exchange to Kongōzaō, the Bodhisattva said, "I thought that by means of you I might come to know the origin of the plagues sweeping through society, and I dispatched you to see Tenjin."

This Saint Nichizō, enabled by the magic powers of Kongōzaō, arrived at the domain of King Yama, where he was met by the king's messenger, and toured all the hells. Thereupon he saw one hell called the Steel Cavern Torture Chamber. There were four people inside. It was filled with glowing embers. One person had a robe thrown over his shoulder. The other three were naked, squatting down over the glowing coals. There was no place on the floor to stand comfortably, and they were all weeping bitterly. King Yama's messenger informed him, "This is your country's emperor of the Engi era.[62] The other three are his ministers. Lord and subjects alike suffer this persecution." At that point the Engi Emperor gestured Nichizō forward, and as he humbly stepped forward in awe and reverence, the emperor said, "There is no need to hold me in reverence any more. In Hell the one without sin is lord, and there is no talk of noble or common. I am a son of the Great Diamond Wisdom Emperor.[63] Yet I fell into the Steel Cavern Torture Chamber. I held a high position for a long time, carrying out good deeds as well as causing evil. I have first felt the retribution for my evil actions, with no relief from suffering. But because of my deep love for the good law, I will next be born in the heaven of delight.[64] The one they call Daijōitokuten burned and destroyed the [scrolls of] Buddha's law, with his heart full of anger, harming the masses of sentient beings. But the evil karma for those actions came to me.

"During my life I committed five crimes of the greatest magnitude. These all resulted from the affair regarding Tenjin. The first is that I caused my father the retired emperor to walk up a steep path, making his spirit suffer greatly. The second is that while I was comfortably seated in the Great Hall, I allowed my father the retired emperor to sit on the ground, shedding tears of

[62] The Engi era lasted from 901 to 923.
[63] A posthumous appellation of Emperor Uda (867-931; r.887-897).
[64] The fifth of the six heavens of the realm of desire. Those born into this heaven spontaneously experience unlimited delights and are also constantly entertained. Eight hundred human years equal one day and one night here. A lifespan lasts eight thousand years.

> frustration.[65] The third is that I committed a sin against this sinless wise minister. The fourth is that, having long been greedy to rule the country, I trampled many of the Buddhist laws under my feet. The fifth is that, because of the enmity directed against me, countless others were harmed. Because of these five sins during my life, I received this intense suffering after death in reprisal." Nichizō instructed him on how to cultivate the roots of goodness and escape from suffering.[66]

In examining these principal texts as well as other existing variants, Kawaguchi comes to the following conclusions: of all the texts still available for scrutiny, the most popular motifs, which in all cases are preserved in some form, are first, that of the depiction of Michizane's palace (after his death and rebirth as Daijōitokuten) in the same terms as the pure land of Amitābha Buddha. Next, there is the conversation between Nichizō and Emperor Daigo concerning the emperor's punishment in the Steel Cavern Torture Chamber. Given this situation, says Kawaguchi, the story's interest for the critic as a *setsuwa* can be confined to these two sections. Especially important is the latter section, he says, which often appears as an independent motif.

Given the information on variant editions which Kawaguchi compiles, he analyzes the source of the primary Eikyū version in the following manner. As mentioned above, the story of Nichizō's descent into Hell is recorded in the *Brief Records of Japan.* It also appears in the *Legends of Japanese Wizards* (*Honchō Shinsen Den,* ca. 1097) of Ōe no Masafusa, where it is recorded in the section on Saint Nichizō that "Long ago at Kinpusen he entered deeply into meditation, and saw Kongōzao and the Minister Sugawara. In regard to this matter, see the separate record."[67] The separate record in question, says Kawaguchi, is most certainly the Eikyū edition of the story of Nichizō's descent into Hell, and this places it prior to either the *Abridged Stories of Japan* or the *Legends of Japanese Wizards.* The Eikyū

[65] This all refers to an incident at the time of Michizane's banishment in 901. When Emperor Daigo, here spoken of as having fallen into Hell, believed his advisor Fujiwara no Tokihira's slanders about Michizane and had him exiled to Tsukushi, the retired Emperor Uda rushed to the palace to speak for him but was barred from admittance by the guards. He then rolled out a grass mat and sat all day by the east gate to the palace. He finally gave up when it grew dark and returned to his own residence. See Borgen, p. 278.

[66] Hagiwara, *Kitano Tenjin Engi,* pp. 158-161.

[67] Kawaguchi Hisao, ed., *Kohon Setsuwashū* and *Honchō Shinsen Den* (Tokyo: Asahi Shimbunsha, 1967), p. 392.

text also mentions the burning of the Enryō temple in 935, and the Masakado Rebellion which took place in 941, indicating that it must have been written after these events. Within the same period stories of descents into Hell by Japanese emperors, heroes and monks proliferated, including one involving this rebellion, which shows that the Tenjin faith became widespread at this time among the populace at large, and Kawaguchi concludes from this that the story was first written down during this period.

The account in the *Legends of Japanese Wizards* goes on to say, "The High Priest Ninkai practiced the esoteric teachings; he went to Nichizō's hermitage, and Nichizō said he should go back immediately, and not stay there, but regard him [Nichizō] as a warning."[68] The significance of this passage is that the tale of Nichizō's travels might have first been adapted for evangelization by the selfsame High Monk Ninkai. Ninkai belonged to the Mandara temple, which is associated with the Ono Takamura legend. Thus, a line of descent can be hypothesized running from Ts'ui Tzu-yü through Ono Takamura to Nichizō, all of whom travel back and forth between the worlds.

Further, a long tradition of depicting reincarnation through the six realms on standing screens also exists in Japan, which seems to have found suitable subject matter in the legends of Nichizō and of Sugawara no Michizane's apotheosis as the God Tenjin, so that screens depicting scenes from these tales begin to appear throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries.[69]

Finally, Kawaguchi concludes from a textual comparison of variants on the section of *Kitano Tenjin Engi* dealing with Emperor Daigo in Hell that the Eikyū version is indeed the original from which the others sprang.[70]

VII. Conclusion: *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine* and its Chinese Predecessors

The Chinese roots of *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine* extend beyond the story of Nichizō, according to Kawaguchi. For instance, tales in which someone is

[68] Kawaguchi, *Kohon Setsuwashū* and *Honchō Shinsen Den,* p. 392.
[69] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," p. 34
[70] These include the *Fusō Ryakki* version, the Kenkyū (1190-1199) edition, the Toyomiyazaki Bunkō version, The Jōkyu (1219-1222) edition, The *Genkō* (1321-1324) *Shakusho* version, and the "Nichizō Muki" ("Dream Record of Nichizō") version contained in the *Umejiro Roku,* among others. See Kawaguchi's comparative textual analysis, pp. 29-37.

struck by lightning from heaven due to a grudge and dies, thus completing the injured party's revenge, were not uncommon in China. *The Melody of Earl Ts'ai (Ts'ai-po chieh)* a Chin dynasty (1115-1234) work, as well as the Sung dynasty (960-1126) tale of *The Chao Virgin and Ts'ai Erh-lang (Chao chen nü Ts'ai Erh-lang),* were originally declaimed on the roadside by itinerant blind storytellers beating time on drums hung around their necks. The protagonist of these tales is struck down by lightning from heaven due to his disloyalty and immorality. Clearly, this is not far from the motif which appears in the Tenjin legend of Sugawara's enemies being struck down by lightning cast by the vengeful God.[71]

Further, it is Kawaguchi's view that variant versions of the story also contain influences traceable to Taoist texts. For instance, there are versions in which Zaōgongen presents Nichizō with a short tablet containing six words, which Nichizō in turn presents to Tenjin who is able to interpret it, telling Nichizō that he ought to change his name to obtain a longer life.[72] Or else there are variants in which Nichizō receives a poem from the heavenly beauties of the Tuṣita heaven.

Again, the later Han Dynasty (25-220 C.E.) historian Pan Ku comments on the necessity for a true Taoist wizard to make no distinctions in his view of life and death, saying "A wizard is one who maintains within himself the basis of his own existence, while externally wandering in quest [of perfect freedom]. By cleansing his thoughts and pacifying his mind, he views with equanimity the realms of death and life. But his heart remains fearless."[73] The very fact that Nichizō makes the journey to the world of death and returns again is reminiscent of the wizard in "The Song of Everlasting Sorrow" (Ch'ang Hen Ko), as he also makes this sort of trip to the afterlife to meet the departed spirit of Yang Kuei-fei. This resemblance tends to leave us with the impression that Nichizō is also a wizard of sorts. When looked at in terms of its Buddhist content, the story is a *setsuwa* related to rebirth, but when seen as a Taoist story, it takes on this further meaning of the oneness of life and death.

In addition, this Taoist influence is traceable to the Tun-huang story of Emperor T'ai Tsung's descent into Hell, where the character of Ts'ui Tzu-yü again

[71] Kawaguchi, p. 37. See also T'an Cheng-pi, *Hua-pen yü ku chu* (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh ch'u-pan-she, 1957), pp. 226-227 and Wang Kuo-wei, *Sung-yüan hsi-ch'ü shih* (Taipei: Taiwan shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1968), p. 73.

[72] For this, see Tyler, *Japanese Tales,* pp. 144-149.

[73] Pan Ku, "Yi-wen chih" in *Han shu* (Taipei: Chung-hua shu-chu), v. 6, p. 1780. Kawaguchi interprets the passage to mean that the wizard seeks for perfect freedom. See Kawaguchi Hisao, ed., *Kohon Setsuwashū* and *Honchō Shinsen Den*, p. 207.

plays a role similar to that of the wizard in *The Song of Everlasting Sorrow.* As noted above, the *Great Cloud Sutra,* which can be regarded as a syncretic Buddho-Taoist text, is praised and recommended for study and worship in the Tun-huang folktale.[74]

The story of Emperor T'ai Tsung being condemned to Hell for the murders he committed during his lifetime is undeniably similar to the sufferings Emperor Daigo must undergo due to his wrongful banishment of Michizane in the Nichizō story. Again, both stories stress the fact that the absolute power enjoyed by the Emperor in the world of the living does not extend to the underworld.

Further, the mediation of the figures of Ts'ui Tzu-yü and the monk Nichizō in the stories must also be pointed out, with the function they perform of travelling back and forth between the worlds of darkness and light, banishing the sins and relieving the sufferings of others through the worship of sacred texts. The story of Ono Takamura is also a case where a relationship with Ts'ui Tzu-yü can be seen, and its Taoistic elements show parallels with the story of Emperor T'ai Tsung. Noteworthy as well is that Michizane as the god Tenjin has unrestricted freedom of action, as demonstrated by the way in which his 160,000 retainers visit his revenge on the world of the living. Michizane is a mystical superman, transcending even Ono Takamura, Li Ch'un-feng and Ts'ui Tzu-yü in his powers.

As mentioned above, the story of Nichizō draws on a number of previously existing stories of descent into Hell and rebirth for its background material, as well as visual depictions of the hell realms on standing screens and in scrolls for the purpose of story recitation *(etoki).*

Against this background also appears the pre-existing belief in the power of departed spirits. This provides the mythological structure for the establishment of the Kitano Tenjin Shrine, as rendered possible by evangelization via the preaching of the Nichizō story. Nichizō emerges from this analysis looking something like a proselytizing Buddho-Taoist wizard-monk.

We have seen that tales about "Judge Ts'ui" and "The Immortal Ts'ui" proliferate all over China, in which he is granted titles and empowered by the issuance of edicts, being worshipped afterward at Taoist shrines. Michizane is also exalted as the Prime Minister Dignified Moral God (Daijōitokuten), as the Great Self-Sufficient God, and as the Sky-Filling Heavenly God, and shrines for his worship are established in the towns and in the countryside. While this resemblance may seem

[74] Kawaguchi, "Tonkō Henbun," p. 38.

accidental, they appear to play a similar religious role. Finally, another similarity can be seen in the proliferation of dramas such as the "Drama of Judge Ts'ui Overcoming the Unjust Landlords" by Cheng T'ing-yü during the Yüan dynasty in China, as compared to the evolution of the Tenjin legend into dramas such as "Sugawara's School of Calligraphy" (Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami) in Japan.[75]

With these clear parallels now established between the T'ai Tsung story, the cycle of tales about Ono Takamura and the story of Nichizō as outlined by Kawaguchi, let us now reexamine the critical notions advanced at the beginning of the paper. First, although Hiroko Ikeda states that no purely oral tradition exists in the transmission of *Jigoku meguri* stories in Japan, it is noteworthy that, as Barbara Ruch points out, there was always a storytelling tradition involving medieval jongleurs from at least the Kamakura period onwards. This is mirrored by Victor Mair's findings for China and, indeed, for most of the Eurasian continent in his works.

Next, while intended to inspire audiences with a healthy respect for the torments of Hell, the stories often tried not to take themselves too seriously -- witness Kawaguchi's comparison of the T'ai Tsung story to Japanese *kyōgen* and Barbara Ruch's comments on the later development of *Jigoku yaburi* literature in which Hell is laid waste by Japanese warriors and even parodied as time goes on. As I have demonstrated, the Nichizō story in *The Origins of Kitano Tenjin Shrine* represents an inversion of class hierarchy and a subversion of the notion of divine right, specifically in the section where he meets Emperor Daigo in Hell, and hears him remark that "In Hell the one without sin is lord."

But perhaps the most striking feature about the *Jigoku meguri* genre for a contemporary reader is that at the time these stories were composed, as Hayao Kawai points out, "The remarkable synchronicity of events in dreams, this world, and the land of death was not considered unusual."

[75] Kawaguchi, pp. 38-39. There are two different Edo-period Jōruri dramas referred to as "Sugawara's School of Calligraphy." The first, by Namiki Sōsuke (1695-1751), was composed in 1746. The second, also composed in 1746, was a joint effort by Takeda Izumo (d. 1747) and his disciple, Takeda Izumo II (1691-1756). The two plays, written for rival troupes, are sometimes called "Terakoya" due to a famous scene taking place in a temple school.

Conán Dean Carey, "In Hell the One Without Sin Is Lord"
Sino-Platonic Papers, 109 (October, 2000)

Part Two

I suspect that primary peoples all know that their myths are somehow "made up." They do not take them literally and at the same time they hold the stories very dear. Only upon being invaded by history and whipsawed by other and unfamiliar values do a people begin to declare that their myths are "literally true."
-- Gary Snyder, Remarks at the Dōgen Zenji Symposium, Stanford, Oct. 1999[1]

Introduction

In part one of this paper, I have offered evidence derived from work done by Kawaguchi Hisao on the parallels between the *pien-wen* entitled *The T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung's Descent into Hell (T'ang T'ai Tsung ju ming chi)* and a number of *setsuwa,* most famously the story of the monk Nichizō's trip to the Tuṣita heaven and to Hell, contained in the thirteenth century work *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine (Kitano Tenjin Engi).* The title of the paper takes its rise from an encounter Nichizō has with the Emperor Daigo (r. 897-930) in Hell, where he has been condemned to torment in the Steel Cavern Torture Chamber for his betrayal and exile of the courtier Sugawara no Michizane (845-903). He bids Nichizō relax and act informally with him, remarking "In Hell the one without sin is lord, and there is no talk of noble or common." In the stories of T'ai Tsung and Nichizō, these themes of the inversion of hierarchy and resistance to the idea of divine right are of great importance.

In this second part of the paper, I would like to discuss the even more pronounced textual affinities between the Muromachi period *otogi zōshi* story *The Book of Maudgalyāyana* (*Mokuren no Sōshi,* 1531) and the transformation text *The Great Maudgalyāyana Rescues His Mother from Hell* (*Ta Mu-ch'ien-lien ming-chien chiu mu pien-wen,* S. 2614, ca. 800). I will then consider Iwamoto Yutaka's fascinating demonstration of the influences on the text from Manichaean thought and Mesopotamian religion in general, as well as Taoistic elements in the text. No doubt it is this sort of influence that led Victor Mair to write about the perceived cultic, risqué, and magical or illusionary qualities of some transformation

[1] The papers given at the symposium have been collected in Sōtōshū Shūmuchō, eds., *Dōgen Zen and Its Relevance for Our Time* (Tokyo: Sōtōshū Shūmuchō, 1999).

performances and derivative texts, as quoted in part one.

In addition, this section of the paper will reinforce the theme of the first half by pointing out how the sinlessness of the Bodhisattva Maudgalyāyana allows him to command the minions of Hell to do his bidding, thus establishing himself as its lord. This should become clearer as we see how King Yama places himself at the Bodhisattva's disposal, assigning his administrative assistant to guide him through Hell, as well as how he is able to gain access to the sealed inner torture chambers and remote corners of Hell through the Buddha's supernatural powers. Finally, through his practice of the provision of the purgatorian feast of *Obon,* his purity of purpose allows him to throw open the gates of Hell and free his mother completely.

I. The *Book of Maudgalyāyana*

The transformation text on Maudgalyāyana has already been translated into English by Victor Mair and does not need to be summarized here.[2] A quick review of *The Book of Maudgalyāyana* (hereafter, the *Book*) might be advisable, however, for reference purposes.

The *Book* begins by portraying the Bodhisattva as a prince of Kuśinagara[3] in India named Mokuren,[4] who is greatly doted on by his parents. But hearing that there is no path of greater merit than to become a monk, he takes orders at the age of twelve. His mother dies when he is fifteen, and this spurs him on to greater exertions in his spiritual practice, such that he becomes one of the Buddha's ten principal disciples at the age of twenty-seven. Not long after, he is recognized as the disciple with the most advanced supernatural powers.

But strangely, while he is performing Buddhist ritual practices in the castle at Kuśinagara on the twenty-fifth of the third month, he suddenly passes away. When Maudgalyāyana descends to the underworld he comes before King Yama, who invites him to perform Buddhist rituals in Hell for a period of seventeen days. After the rituals have ended, Maudgalyāyana refuses the offerings made to him and instead asks to see his mother.

[2] See Victor Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 87-121.

[3] Originally, the city where the Buddha Śākyamuni is said to have passed into *parinirvāṇa.*

[4] This is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese Mu-lien, originally a transcription of the Sansrit name Maudgalyāyana.

King Yama, touched by Maudgalyāyana's filial piety, directs an administrative assistant to guide Maudgalyāyana to the Black Rope Hell to which his mother has been condemned. When they pry open the door to the Black Rope Hell, flames erupt from behind it, scorching the earth for a distance of 5,800 *li.* Maudgalyāyana's robes are completely vaporized, except for a pocket where he keeps a small memento from his mother. The Jailer on duty produces a small black lump of charcoal from inside a large vat, and informs the Bodhisattva that this is his mother. His mother says, "...When you secluded yourself in the mountain forest, and your knowledge grew beyond that of the people of the world, imagine how happy I was! But then, alas oh Prince! I ardently wished that you should become the lord of the Sacred Mountain Pure Land, honored as the greatest teacher in the three worlds; and that a thousand arhats, that five hundred great arhats might die, so that my price would stand alone in the world, surrounded and admired by a thousand kings, by the ten elders and by all manner of people. The nephew to King Jōbon, Śākyamuni's cousin, and grandson of the wheel-turning king, I thought there was none in all India who could rival you. My sin of pride was heavy, and I could not avoid the torments of this demon realm...

Of all the sacred teachings of the honored Śākyamuni, none are to be taken lightly, as they express the thusness of the one vehicle. Accordingly, you should copy the Lotus Sutra every day, character by character and section by section, and make of this a devotional offering. In that way, perhaps I will eventually be spared."[5]

Maudgalyāyana is revivified on the first of the fourth month, and performs a ritual of worship for the eight thousand arhats on behalf of his mother. Following this he copies the *Lotus Sutra* and carries out more rituals, upon which his mother is at last rescued from Hell.

Further, the *Book* states that Maudgalyāyana's scorched robes made their way from India to China, and when Kōbō Daishi [Kūkai] returned to Japan from China he brought them with him, and presented them to Emperor Saga, who had them stored in the treasury at Mount Hiei. But they were later moved to the Byōdōin temple by Fujiwara Yorimichi, who allowed them to be viewed on the day of the

[5] Iwamoto Yutaka, *Jigoku Meguri no Bungaku* (Tokyo: Kaimei Shoin, 1979), pp. 124-127.

Sutra Festival, every third day of the third month.[6]

The main line of transmission in Japan for the story of Maudgalyāyana saving his mother from Hell stems from the late third century *Obon Sutra* of the festival of the dead, or *Urabongyō (Ch. Yü-lan-p'en Ching),*[7] but was popularly known through its inclusion in *The Three Treasures* (*Sanbōe,* 984).[8] Later it appeared in the illustrated scroll entitled the *Book of the Hungry Ghosts (Gakizōshi)*[9] and in the *Collection of One Hundred Karmic Links Between Self and Others* (*Shijū Hyakuinenshū,* 1257). All of these texts, however, center on Maudgalyāyana's efforts to save his mother from the realm of the hungry ghosts.

But by contrast with these texts, in the *Book* we find his mother in a Hell reminiscent of the Avīci hell where she appears in the transformation text. This is no accident, since a Chinese work from the common literary *(su wen-hsüeh)* tradition entitled *The Sutra on Maudgalyāyana's Rescue of His Mother from Hell (Mu-lien Chiu Mu Ching),* with textual links to the transformation text, arrived in China from Japan in the latter half of the fourteenth century. Following this a Japanese version was set down in the early Muromachi era *Tales of Three Nations (Sangoku Denki)*[10] under the title "The Matter of the Honored Maudgalyāyana's Salvation of His Mother from Hell" (Mokuren Sonja Kyūboji), and it was from this that the *Book* drew its material. However, it must certainly be admitted that many of the motifs in the story do not occur in the transformation text, such as Maudgalyāyana's sudden death and transit to Hell, and for this we must look to the influence of the larger *Jigoku meguri* genre, as represented by the *Miraculous Stories of Karmic Retribution of Good and Evil in Japan (Nippon Ryōiki).*[11]

[6] See Iwamoto Yutaka, *Jigoku Meguri no Bungaku* (cited above), where he reprints a fully edited version of the text on pp. 81-134. See also the *kana* version in Yokoyama Shigeru and Ōta Takeo, eds., *Muromachi Jidai Monogatari Shū* (Tokyo: Inoue Shobō, 1962), V. 2, pp. 413-429. Recently, a full English translation by Hank Glassman has become available. See Hank Glassman, "Mokuren no sōshi: The Tale of Mokuren" in *Buddhist Literature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), v. 1, pp. 120-161.

[7] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 685, v. 16, p. 779a-c. For a full translation of this and related texts, see Stephen Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

[8] For this, see Yamada Yoshio, ed., *Sanbōe Ryakuchū* (Tokyo: Hōbunkan, 1951), pp. 347-354. See also the authoritative English translation by Edward Kamens, *The Three Jewels* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1988), pp. 337-338.

[9] Contained in Kadokawa Shoten Henshūbu, eds., *Jigoku Zōshi, Gaki Zōshi* and *Byōzōshi* (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, Nihon Emakimono Zenshū, 1965).

[10] The earliest edition of this is dated 1637, but Iwamoto dates it back to the early Muromachi (1392-1568).

[11] For a fuller account see Iwamoto Yutaka, "'Mokuren no Sōshi' no Haikei," *Bungaku,* Vol. 44, September (1976), pp. 86-97.

The analysis given above has demonstrated that there is a clear break in the development of the story of Maudgalyāyana's trip to Hell to save his mother between the time the story is written down in the mid-thirteenth century *Collection of One Hundred Karmic Links Between Self and Others* and the late fourteenth century *Tales of Three Nations.* Another key point is that especially in the *Tales of Three Nations,* the *Book,* and the later dramatic piece the "Record of Maudgalyāyana" (Mokurenki), there was a separate development of Maudgalyāyana's tour of Hell *(Jigoku meguri)* which did not exist in the story as it was originally known in Japan. This clearly betrays the influence of the transformation text.

Further, in its final development the story emerges as a *kojōruri bonodoriuta* script[12] called *Maudgalyāyana's Tour of Hell (Mokuren Jigoku Meguri). Jigoku meguri* stories like the *Book of the Rebirth of Hirano (Hirano Yomigaeri no Sōshi)* continued to emerge throughout the Muromachi period. While these provide valuable evidence of the importance of the theme to contemporary readers, their influence does not even begin to approach that of the Maudgalyāyana story, in terms of its transmission and spread. And the reason for this is that the story provides the scriptural basis for the practice of the *Obon* festival.

This discrepancy between the early transmission of the Maudgalyāyana story to Japan, in the version which was known up through the thirteenth century, and the story as it appears in later versions indicates that the source of the story is different in each case. And the latter transmission, with its inclusion of the story of Maudgalyāyana's tour of Hell, is clearly related to the transformation texts on the same theme unearthed at Tun-huang.[13]

II. The Transformation Texts on Maudgalyāyana

Although over ten variants of the material related to Maudgalyāyana were found at Tun-huang, it is thought that of these various editions, there are three complete versions, and the others form groups centered around one or another of

[12] The script of a special kind of drama performed with puppets during the *Obon* festival of the dead every year on the fifteenth of the seventh month.

[13] For this summary of Iwamoto's views on the *Book of Maudgalyāyana* see Iwamoto Yutaka, "*Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri' Setsuwa no Genryū,*" in Bukkyō Bungaku Kenkyūkai, eds., *Bukkyō Bungaku Kenkyū* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1967), v. 5, pp. 43-44.

these "primary" texts. The three texts in question are those reprinted in the *Tun-huang pien-wen chi hsin shu* collection, namely:

1. *Ta Mu-ch'ien-lien ming chien chiu mu pien-wen* (S. 2614)
2. *Mu-lien yüan-ch'i* (P. 2193)
3. *Mu-lien pien-wen* (Peking edition number 96)

However, these three versions are not the same, and show considerable differences in content and structure, suggesting that they originate from different textual traditions, and the story was clearly transmitted via a number of different routes. Of these three, Iwamoto concludes from textual evidence that the latter two are of later vintage, citing their predominantly Confucian overtones and stress on the importance of filial piety as indicators that Chinese society had had its chance to work with the theme and remake it in its own image. In addition, of the three works in question, the greatest elaboration of the *Jigoku meguri* theme occurs in the first. Thus, the present paper will concern itself primarily with this text.

Turning to this text (hereafter referred to as the *Maudgalyāyana pien-wen*), then, it is first interesting to note that two separate interpretations of the term *Urabon*[14] are both justifiable based on sections of this text.

The first interpretation is based on a section of the text where Maudgalyāyana has finished begging for food to give his mother, who has been reborn in the realm of the hungry ghosts, and has brought it to her in his begging bowl. But refusing to let go of her stingy ways, which were the cause of her falling into Hell in the first place, his mother, fearing that "it might be snatched away, raised her eyes and looked about continuously on all four sides. She shielded the bowl with her left hand and scooped up the food with her right. But, before it entered her mouth, the food was transformed into a fierce fire."[15]

Iwamoto points out that almost the identical phrasing is used for the last two sentences of this passage in the *Urabongyō*, the orthodox Buddhist rendering of the Maudgalyāyana story, and it seems likely that the *pien-wen* version was based on this.[16] Again, the Buddha enjoins Maudgalyāyana to annually observe, "on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the provision of a purgatorian feast on a grand scale."[17] At least, this is the clearest possible translation to convey the general sense

[14] The formal Japanese term referring to the festival of the dead.
[15] Victor Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, p. 119. P'an Ch'ung-kuei, p. 714.
[16] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 685, Vol. 16, p. 779b3-4. See also Teiser, p. 49.
[17] Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, p. 119.

to an English language readership. However, it is also possible to render this passage "Make a wide bowl (Ch. *yü-lan-p'en;* Jpn. *urabon*) on the fifteenth of the seventh month," where the "wide bowl" in question refers to the three Chinese characters with which the name of the *urabon* festival is written. Of these three characters, two literally mean "a bowl"; they were originally employed to transliterate the Sanskrit term *ullambana,* meaning deliverance.

In other words, there seems to be a pun on the characters used to transcribe the Sanskrit here; the verb translated by Mair as "to observe" (Ch. *tsao*) means literally to make or to construct.[18] Perhaps the author of the *pien-wen* was thinking of the festival of the dead as literally involving the making of a large bowl to use for ceremonial purposes. From the beginning of the sixth century, this interpretation is evident in works such as the *Jeweled Forest of Dharma Extracts* (*Fa yüan chu lin,* ca. 668).

But turning to the prologue of the text, we find the phrase "Therefore, a purgatorian feast is spread before the Three Honored Ones who, through the grace of their welcoming the great assembly, put a priority upon saving those who are distressed by hanging in limbo."[19] This shows the author's awareness of a second interpretation of the meaning of the *Obon* festival, where *Urabon* (Ch. *Yü-lan-p'en*) is interpreted as "to hang upside down," which is how it was understood by the mid-seventh century monk translator Hsüan-ying.[20]

Further, the *Maudgalyāyana Pien-wen* was certainly composed after Hsüan-Ying's time. One text (S. 2614) bears the colophon 921, and the date of its original circulation has been estimated at ca. 800.[21] Most *pien-wen* were composed starting around the first half of the eighth century, following the inception of the T'ang dynasty, but the date 921 is interesting in terms of the *Jigoku meguri* motif. Iwamoto points out that the names Turnip (Ch. *Luo-pu*), by which Maudgalyāyana was called as a child, as well his mother's name, Ch'ing-t'i, first appear in the seventh century

[18] Mair's translation is fully warranted as an extension of this concept, however. Many Chinese verbs carry the dual sense of "to make" and "to do/observe." I am simply trying to bring out an added dimension of the term.

[19] Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives,* p. 87. P'an Chung-kuei, p. 685.

[20] Hsüan-ying was the author of a linguistic treatise on the translation and transcription of Sanskrit into Chinese entitled *The Meanings and the Sounds in All the Sutras* (*I-ch'ieh ching yin-yi, Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2128, v. 54, pp. 311a-933b). The meaning "to hang upside down" would appear to result from the idea of the inversion of the bowls. This interpretation of the etymology of *Urabon* is from Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku meguri,'" pp. 50-51.

[21] See Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives,* p. 11.

Chinese work the *Pure Land Obon Sutra (Jpn. Jōdo Urabongyō, Ch. Ching-t'u yü-lan-p'en ching).* However, this work merely contains the phrase "now his mother has died and gone to the realm of the hungry ghosts" but does not contain any further description of Maudgalyāyana's tour of Hell. And this indicates that the *Jigoku meguri* section of the story was composed after this sutra.

The story of Maudgalyāyana's descent into Hell was transmitted long after this, for example in the Ming dynasty works *Treasured Scroll in which Maudgalyayana Saves His Mother and Releases Her from Hell, Ascending to Heaven (Mu-lien chiu mu ch'u-li ti-yü sheng-t'ien pao-chüan)*[22] and also "The Drama Counseling Good in which Maudgalyāyana Saves His Mother and Acts with Filial Piety" (Ch'üan shan Mu-lien chiu mu hsing-hsiao hsi-wen), in which Maudgalyāyana's tour of Hell forms the basis for the plot. The first half of the former has unfortunately been lost, but the second half begins from where Maudgalyāyana has arrived at a certain Hell called the Bowl of Fire Hell, but does not find his mother there, and learns that his mother is in the Avīci Hell which lies before him, ringed by giant mountains of steel.[23]

Maudgalyāyana proceeds forward to the Avīci Hell, but "There were no gates or roads to the Avīci Hell, and no matter how loud he yelled a thousand voices only came echoing back to him."[24] He is instructed by the Jailer of the Bowl of Blood Hell that "If you want to set her free, it's difficult! So difficult! How small and insignificant are teachers and the dharma! If you want to open this Hell, ask the Buddha, who is without fault."[25] Upon receiving this advice, Maudgalyāyana proceeds to Mt. Ling and pleads with the Buddha, receiving from him his robes, begging bowl, and priest's staff, following which he returns to the Avīci Hell. At this point, references to invoking the Buddha Amitābha appear in the text, implying a relationship with the pure land sutras.[26]

When Maudgalyāyana shakes the staff (which is ringed with gold) three times, letting out loud cries, the gate of the Avīci Hell creaks open. Maudgalyāyana steps in and states his business to the Jailer:

[22] Cheng Chen-tuo, *Chung-kuo su-wen-hsüeh shih* (Ch'ang-sha: Shang-wu yin-shu-kuan, 1938), pp. 318-327.
[23] Cheng Chen-tuo, pp. 318-320.
[24] Cheng Chen-tuo, p. 320.
[25] Cheng Chen-tuo, p. 320.
[26] Cheng Chen-tuo, p. 321.

> When the Jailer finished listening to Maudgalyāyana, he entered the interior of the prison and called loudly for Ch'ing-t'i. When he had called out several times, a half-hearted voice answered faintly at last. The Jailer asked, "I called out several times, why have you only just now answered?" The woman replied, "I was afraid that you would move me to some other place for torture, and for this reason I did not dare to answer." The Jailer said, "You have a son, he follows the Buddha way and has left his home to become a monk. His name is Maudgalyāyana, and he has come especially to seek you out." The woman told him, "this sinner has but one son, he did not leave home to become a monk, and his name is not Maudgalyāyana."[27]

At this point, Maudgalyāyana explains the situation, and mother and son meet at last, just as in the *Maudgalyāyana pien-wen.* Again, just as in the *pien-wen,* Maudgalyāyana implores the Buddha to save his mother from Hell, but due to the weight of her negative karma, she can only manage to be reborn in the realm of the hungry ghosts. Maudgalyāyana returns to petition the Buddha again.[28] The Buddha replies:

> If you commence the provision of a purgatorian feast on the fifteenth of the seventh month, Śākyamuni Buddha will manifest his jewel-like radiance, the world-honored one will teach the dharma, and he will deliver the multitudes from torment. Ch'ing-t'i, fourth daughter of the Liu family, will recognize her true nature; she will forever return to the true path and be able to be born in Heaven.
>
> Maudgalyāyana practiced filial piety, so his mother was born in Heaven. The multitude of Buddhas came and gathered, and she forever earned a true golden form.[29]

"The Drama Counseling Good in which Maudgalyāyana Saves His Mother and Acts with Filial Piety" also mentions that Ch'ing-t'i's family name is Liu. But in the text *Treasured Scroll in which Maudgalyayana Saves His Mother and Releases Her from Hell, Ascending to Heaven,* the section in which his mother is born in the

[27] Cheng Chen-tuo, p. 323.
[28] Cheng Chen-tuo, 323-324.
[29] Cheng Chen-tuo, p. 324.

animal realm as a dog does not appear.

Turning to "The Drama Counseling Good in which Maudgalyāyana Saves His Mother and Acts with Filial Piety," a new plot wrinkle develops in the person of Turnip's fiancée. It is likely that this influence arises from *The Journey to the West,* or else the drama known as "The Tale of the White Rabbit" (Pai-t'u Chi).[30] In the drama, Hell is composed of ten sections. The first section is the mountain of knives and the forest of swords, the second is the pounding mortar and pestle, the third is the steel-floored lake of blood, and in this way the tortures mount ever higher. Finally the souls of the departed arrive at the tenth Hell, where they are born into the bodies of animals and informed that they will be reborn into the animal realm.

Maudgalyāyana searches for his mother in the first through the fifth Hells, but it is only when he is sent to the Avīci Hell that he implores the Buddha, saying "Even though I reached the place ringed by mountains of steel, she had gone farther. I don't know when we can be reunited."[31] The Buddha gives him his begging bowl, filled with black rice (nothing here about the Buddha's staff), and Maudgalyāyana proceeds to the tenth section of Hell. It happens to be the eighth day of the fourth month, and the Dragon Flower Festival is about to begin. A meeting between mother and son similar in most ways to the preceding descriptions takes place. Rather than a Jailer, however, Maudgalyāyana is aided by one of King Yama's goblin messengers; further, Ch'ing-t'i answers his call immediately, rather than hesitating out of fear of further punishment. Maudgalyāyana feeds his mother the black rice, but his mother again behaves selfishly, like a hungry ghost; the distinctions between Hell and the hungry ghost realm have clearly collapsed. However, the reunion between mother and son is brief, and his mother is taken away again, this time to the tenth section of Hell. There, she receives word that she is to be reborn into the animal realm, and her spirit takes on the body of a dog. Maudgalyāyana finds her at the hunting grounds and takes her back home, where neither has been for sixteen years. He celebrates the last day of the *Obon* festival for his mother there, and due to the merit accrued through this practice, his mother is born into Heaven at last.[32]

In this way, the story of Maudagalyāyana's descent into Hell was transformed into a tale of filial piety in China, as the plot of this drama would suggest. This trend

[30] One of the "Four great southern plays" *(szu ta chu'an ch'i)* collected in the late Yüan to early Ming dynasties.

[31] Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" p. 53. Iwamoto is working here from a manuscript in the possession of the Chinese Literature Research Center of Kyoto University.

[32] Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" p. 53.

in interpretation is most visible in the works of the monk-scholar Tsung Mi (780-841), who bases his viewpoint in his *Commentary on the Obon Sutra (Ch. Yü lan p'en ching shu; Jpn. Urabonkyōso)*[33] on this idea. However, as indicated above, the translation of the Sanskrit term *ullambana* as *urabon(Ch. Yü-lan-p'en)* was inaccurate from the start, no matter which Chinese interpretation one subscribes to, since the original word meant deliverance. Thus, the nature of the *Obon* festival and the story of Maudgalyāyana was strongly Chinese from its inception. In addition, the centerpiece of the tale was undoubtedly intended to be Maudgalyāyana's filial action in rescuing his mother from the hungry ghost realm.[34] But which is the original line of transmission of the Maudgalyāyana story?

III. Chinese Wizards Who Journey to Hell in the Buddhist Canon

It is known that there were stories involving trips to the underworld circulating in China even prior to the seventh century. According to Iwamoto, the first of these was a story about an underworld governed by the god of T'ai Shan, which grew out of a particular folk religion. But during the Sung dynasty (420-479), Buddhist concepts of Hell entered China, and the belief in a Hell ruled over by the T'ai Shan God faded. As an example of a story of the underworld from this transitional period, there is the T'ang dynasty *Apologetic* (*Pien Cheng Lun,* 624)[35] of Fa-lin, the seventh section of which contained a story taken from "The Record of the Worlds of Dark and Light" (Yü ming lu), concerning K'ang A-te and Chao T'ai. "The Record of the Worlds of Dark and Light" was written by Liu I-ch'ing (403-444), and although originally comprising twenty fascicles, these are now lost. But the journey to the underworld it describes has survived elsewhere and provides excellent material for the study of this genre.

The plot starts with the death of K'ang A-te, following which he is seized under the arms by two men who take him to see the lord of the underworld. They conduct an investigation and find that K'ang A-te still has thirty-five years of life left to him. He is returned to the world of the living by order of the lord, and on the way

[33] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 1792, Vol. 39, pp. 505a-512c.
[34] Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" pp. 53-54.
[35] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, pp. 489c-550c.

they take him on a tour of the underworld.[36]

> They proceeded to the Northeast, for how many *li* he did not know. He saw a castle 10 *li* square. The castle was full of rooms. And so he saw his dead uncles and their wives, who had not served the Buddha. They were all in fetters, their clothes were in tatters and their bodies were covered with bloody pus. As they moved forward once more he saw another castle. Inside of this were people lying on steel beds. The beds were roasting hot and glowed red. In all, he saw ten hells, each with its torments and poisons. The names of the hells were red sands, yellow sands, white sands, and so on. There were seven in all. There was a mountain of knives, a forest of swords and a hell where the sinners were bound to glowing hot red copper pillars. Thereupon he returned to the surface.[37]

On his way back to the surface, K'ang A-te catches a glimpse of the Shed of Bad Fortune. Those with good fortune are reborn in Heaven, he learns, while those whose fortunes are poor must reside in this shed. Following this, K'ang A-te is reborn three days after he died.[38]

Chao T'ai, on the other hand, was a native of present-day Shantung province, and lived just west of T'ai Shan.[39] He never served as an official, but concentrated on scholarship, and was highly praised by his fellow villagers. In the middle of the night of the third day of the seventh month, during the fifth year of the Ta-shih reign of the Chin dynasty,[40] he died suddenly at the age of thirty-five, and revived ten days later. After this, he told the following story.[41]

Two men on yellow horses followed by two retainers came riding to meet him, and the two retainers grabbed him under the arms and supported him, following which they walked eastward. He did not know how many *li* they had

[36] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.538a27-38 (the print in this section is smaller than normal and the lines have been doubled).
[37] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.538a38-42.
[38] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.538 a42-b2.
[39] The location given in the text is Ch'ing Ho District, P'ei Ch'iu Prefecture. See *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.53846b.
[40] In fact, there was no Ta-shih reign of the Chin dynasty. Could this be a scribal error for T'ai-shih (265-275)?
[41] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.538 b46-c3.

travelled, but he glimpsed a great castle of pewter and steel looming up before them. Chao T'ai and his escort entered through the west gate of the castle. Inside there were twenty or thirty tile-roofed houses. There were fifty or sixty men and women within them, and they were being guarded by five or six guards dressed in light black summer robes. Each was called inside in turn and interrogated, and Chao T'ai was number thirty. After a while he was called inside. The lord was seated facing the west. When they had found out his name and information, they marched him off to the south, and he entered a black gate. Within the gate was a large room, and a man dressed in red sat in one corner, calling the dead forward one at a time and asking about their occupations, sins, merit and good deeds during their lifetimes.[42]

It is interesting to note here that the story does not say who this man in red is. All the attendants in this Hell appear to be workers under the direction of the god of T'ai Shan, whose task is merely to carry out their appointed duties, such as verifying the names of the dead. They do not act as judges.

Nonetheless, Chao T'ai is at last judged to have no guilty karma, and he is made overseer of waterworks, then promoted to director of the water bureau, and becomes one of the managers of Hell:[43]

> He was marched off to the east, into Hell. Then he passed through the Hell where people plow mud. There was a tall tree fifty paces in diameter and six hundred and six rods in length. There were swords sticking out of it in all directions. On top there were people, and the whole thing was aflame. Beneath it were dozens of people spitted together on the swords, with sparks falling down on them. These people were all cursing and shouting imprecations. They had stolen others' property and harmed good people. Chao T'ai saw his mother and father and his two younger brothers. They were weeping in the midst of this Hell.[44]

Following this, Chao T'ai sees the Shed of Bad Fortune and the Castle of Metamorphosis, and at last is reborn into the world above.[45]

In stories of descents to the underworld like "The Record of the Worlds of

[42] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.538 c3-c10.
[43] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.538 c10-c16
[44] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.538 c17-c20.
[45] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2110, Vol. 52, p.538c20-c36.

Dark and Light," we can detect elements of other tales of trips to foreign countries, miracle stories, tales of wizards and so on, and this trend continues in the other stories included in the seventh chapter of the *Apologetic*. However, no consistent motif related to spiritual salvation occurs in these stories. There is a part in the story of Chao T'ai where he sees the dead souls suffering in the Shed of Bad Fortune and saves them, causing them to be reborn in Heaven, but this is merely an episode and does not constitute a major theme.

In the Hell stories contained in chapters 49 and 50 of a text entitled *Extraordinary Phenomena of the Sutras and the Vinaya (Ching lü yi-hsiang)*[46] edited during the Liang dynasty, in 516, there are numerous lengthy and detailed quotations from the *Great Tower of Coal Sutra* (*Ta Lou T'an Ching,*[47] translated by Fa Li and Fa Chü, ca. 290-306), and from many other sutras and treatises dealing with Hell-related themes and beliefs.[48] But there are no *Jigoku meguri* stories in this text. Again, there are no stories or themes related to salvation from Hell. Further, there are no *Jigoku meguri* motifs or talk of salvation in the Hell stories contained in the seventh chapter of Shih Tao-shih's *Jeweled Forest of Dharma Extracts,* either.[49]

Again, while it is true that Buddhist discourses repeatedly focus on the fear of Hell, there are very few which talk about salvation from Hell with the same intensity as the *Maudgalyāyana Pien-wen.* Given this fact, we ought to go back and revisit this text.

Certainly, salvation from Hell is the principal theme of the *Maudgalyāyana pien-wen.* The *Jigoku meguri* theme is also prominent. Another feature of the text is that a scene in which Maudgalyāyana speaks to his father in Heaven plays a significant role. Let us take up the third point first.

Maudgalyāyana's father in the *Maudgalyāyana pien-wen* is named Fu-hsiang, and it is said that "He committed many acts of good karma from the time he was born, and after he died he was born into Heaven." In the prologue, it also says:

...Having inherited the good deeds of his former lives, he [Turnip]

[46] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 2121, Vol. 53, pp. 1a-268c.
[47] *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 23, Vol. 1, pp. 277a-309c.
[48] For example, there are the *Sutra of Questions about Hell (Wen ti-yü ching), The Sutra of the Samādhi of Crossing to the Pure Land (Ching-t'u san-mei ching), The Names of the 30 Hells and their Jailers (San-shih ti-yü chi yü-chu ming tzu),* and the *Images of the 64 Hells and their Karmas and Torments (Liu-shih-szu Ti-yü chü in shi k'u hsiang).*
[49] Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" pp. 56-57.

actualized these inherent causes by paying heed to the law and attaining arhatship. Whereupon he sought his mother in the six paths of transmigration with his unlimited vision, but nowhere did he see her.

Maudgalyāyana awoke from meditation full of sadness. "In which place is my dear mother enjoying happiness?" he inquired of the World-Honoured.

The World-Honoured then informed Maudgalyāyana: "Your mother has already dropped down into the Avīci hell, where she is now undergoing much suffering. Although you have attained the fruit of the saintly life, your knowledge will be to no avail. You can save her only if you employ the might of the assembly on the day when the companies of monks in all directions disband at the end of the summer retreat." Therefore, the Buddha in his compassion instituted this expedient method. This, then, is the story of how the purgatorian offerings were founded.[50]

The following section contains a poem composed of lines of seven characters each, describing how Turnip leaves home and becomes a monk following his parents' deaths, achieves arhatship and so on, summarizing and amplifying the preceding prose passage. This is followed by a sentence asking the audience, which is listening to the story, to look at the corresponding illustration. An explanation of the illustration ensues. After this he goes deep into the mountains to a remote and quiet place, where he sits in meditation contemplating the sky. The beauty of the scene is described in stirring terms through verses varying between five and seven characters in length. Suddenly, he is transported to heaven and meets an old man in the following manner:

With his supernatural power, he gained freedom,
So he hurled up his begging bowl and leaped into space;
Thereupon, instantaneously,
He ascended to the heavenly palace of Brahmā.[51]

After Maudgalyāyana introduces himself as the old man's son Turnip, the other questions him closely to make sure of his identity, and then asks him how he has been getting along. Then, the formalities over with, Maudgalyāyana asks him

[50] Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives,* pp. 87-88. P'an Ch'ung-kuei, p. 685.
[51] Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives,* pp. 90-91. P'an Ch'ung-kuei, p. 688.

the whereabouts of his mother. When his father explains that his mother has fallen into Hell, he descends again via the road to the underworld, asks King Yama about her, crosses the Wathellwedo River,[52] passes through the Knife Hill and Sword Forest hells, continues on past the Copper Pillar and Iron Bed hells, and at last, learning that his mother is in the Avīci Hell, appeals to the Buddha to help him with his powers.

The section where Maudgalyāyana asks his father his mother's whereabouts occurs in the version of the story presently housed in Peking, the *Mu-lien pien-wen,* as well. This version reads:

> First he found out his father was in the heavenly palace. He knew that his father was in heaven, but he had not yet investigated in what world his mother had been born. He rose up into the heavens and arrived at where his father was, saying 'may I ask you where mother has gone?'[53]

But the Pelliot edition, the *Mu-lien yüan-ch'i,* renders this:

> Then his clairvoyant powers discerned his two parents, perceiving which places they had been dispatched to be born. His compassionate father was born in heaven, every morning he is happy and at leisure; but his mother fell in the Avīci hell, and all she knows every day is torment.[54]

Following this the Buddha confirms that his mother is indeed in the Avīci hell. In this way, both variants of the *Maudgalyāyana Pien-wen* mention his father, although the Pelliot edition does not portray the scene of their meeting. Clearly, the motif of the father is important to the story. Here we can ask, what is the reason for this? According to Iwamoto, the stress on the trinity of father, mother and son is due to the influence of Manichaean doctrine.

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[52] This innovative translation by Victor Mair is intended to capture the irony of the original Chinese *"nai ho,"* literally "what shall we do?"
[53] P'an Ch'ung-kuei, pp. 736-737.
[54] P'an Ch'ung-kuei, p. 670.

IV. Manichaean and Dionysian Echoes in the Maudgalyāyana Cycle

Manichaeism is a Mesopotamian religion founded by Mani (216-276), and constitutes a fusion of Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Christian, and ancient Babylonian religious teachings, combined with a healthy dose of Gnosticism. The essential teaching emphasizes the interplay of forces of light and darkness, making for a dualistic theology. Mani was suppressed by the Persian Sassanian Empire, which revered Zoroastrianism, and died of torture in prison. After his death, many of his disciples moved eastward, crossing the Oxus River, and escaped into Central Asia. But although Buddhism began to flow into China from India from about the fourth century onward, Manichaeism did not move that quickly. According to official records, the first religious texts were brought to the T'ang court by a certain Persian named Fu To-tan in about 694, during the reign of the Empress Wu.[55] The practice of Manichaeism was prohibited for Han Chinese in 732, with an edict which read, "Manichaeism is fundamentally an evil view, which is foolishly called Buddhism."[56]

However, from the eighth century onwards the Uighur peoples converted to Manichaeism in large numbers, and insofar as the Uighurs were in a favorable political position with the T'ang dynasty at the time, it became convenient for the rulers to permit its dissemination. In 768 a Manichaean temple called the Great Cloud of Brightness temple was established, and in 771 temples were built in spots all along the Yangtze River.[57] In 807 further temples were established.[58] It is known that the teaching then spread to northern China and south into present-day Hupei, Chiangsu, Kuanghsi and Chechiang. At the same time, many kinds of texts were translated into Chinese.

Among the Manichaean texts brought to China by Turkish followers were some editions of Aesop's fables, and it is easy to imagine from this the breadth and depth of cultural activity within the community of believers, above and beyond simple religious practice. Manichaeism was again prohibited in 843, and the open

[55] This is according to *The Unified Chronology of the Buddhist Ancestors (Fo tsu t'ung chi)*, chapter 39. See Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" p. 59.
[56] According to *The Unified Chronology of the Buddhist Ancestors*, chapter 54. See Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" p. 60.
[57] According to *The Unified Chronology of the Buddhist Ancestors*, chapter 39. See Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" p. 60.
[58] Iwamoto cites the *Old T'ang History (Chiu T'ang shu)*, chapter 14. See Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" p. 60.

spread of the religion did not exceed a period of about 150 years total.

However, as mentioned above, the Uighur peoples living in the northern desert converted in great numbers throughout the eighth century, and this trend continued unabated until the tenth century. Further, the gateway to the western reaches of China was Tun-huang, the meeting point between China and Turkestan. Manichaean activity in Tun-huang was heavy from the seventh until the tenth centuries, and naturally there were quite a few Manichaean texts among those discovered at Tun-huang, such as *The Compendium of the Doctrine and Styles of the Teaching of Mani the Buddha of Light (Mo-ni kuang fo chiao-fa yi lüeh).*[59] In addition, it seems reasonable to conclude that there was significant Manichaean influence on the *pien-wen* transformation texts composed there from the eighth century on, and in the case of the *Maudgalyāyana pien-wen,* this would mean that the father, mother and son triad likely correspond to The Father of Light, The Mother of Life, and the light essence (as personified by the Bright Son) in Manichaeism.[60] This family triad is often found in Near Eastern religions, and in the case of the Syriac *Song of the Pearl* the son who takes the role of savior is portrayed as a young noble. This is clearly the model for the son in Manichaeism, who is symbolized as a young man. This "child" is the primal human being in Manichaeism, the "redeemer who is himself redeemed," and this salvation from darkness is actually the doctrinal basis of Manichaeism. If the influence of Manichaeism on the *Maudgalyāyana pien-wen* is admitted, then the stress on the theme of salvation becomes much more readily understandable.[61]

The *Maudgalyāyana Pien-wen* has always been considered to expand upon the story of how he saved his mother from Hell in the *Urabongyō*. And Iwamoto remarks that this theme in the *Urabongyō* itself grew out of a Sarvāstivādin[62] story

[59] "From the so-called *Compendium of Mani, the Buddha of Light,* a Chinese text recovered from Tun-huang, we learn that the Manichaeans did not permit their priests to reside in the temple precincts unless they were ill. A complicated network of Hearers evolved to provide for their priests in terms of food and lodging. While the priests would lead a life of contemplation and abstinence, the Hearers would carry on with normal life save for having to look after the priests occasionally. This would inevitably lead to increased contact between the believers and the common people which helped the religion to spread as well as to adapt to the social and cultural conditions of China." From Samuel N.C. Lieu, *The Religion of Light: An Introduction to the History of Manichaeism in China* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1979), pp. 21-22.

[60] See Samuel N.C. Lieu, *Manichaeism in the Later Roman Empire and Medieval China: A Historical Survey* (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 1985), pp. 5-24.

[61] Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" pp. 59-61.

[62] One of the original Theravāda Buddhist sects.

of Maudgalyāyana saving a hungry ghost. But he considers that this theme of Maudgalyāyana saving a hungry ghost is itself already somewhat atypical for a Buddhist scripture. Of course, Maudgalyāyana was from India, and hungry ghosts belong to the Indian cosmological system. But regardless of this, it does not seem out of place to point out that this theme of personal salvation is not particularly associated with Buddhism. The meanings we generally associate with the concept of salvation in Indian Buddhism are those of liberation through self-power or else achieving rebirth in the Pure Land, what the Japanese would refer to as liberation through other-power. Although it is almost certainly the case that the concept of personal salvation did exist in Indian Buddhism from a very early period, the fact that this theme comes so prominently to the fore in a Chinese transformation text found at Tun-huang on the Silk Road, where Manichaean activity was at its height, may still have been due in part to the stimulus provided by exposure to this Western Asian religion.

If so, the salvational content in the story of Maudgalyāyana saving the hungry ghost could even be construed as a result of this stimulus. The concept of salvation existed in Western Asia even before the establishment of Christianity, and Manichaeism developed it further.

Again, it is known that the Sarvāstivādin sect was strongest in the area around Mathura, and that it maintained a strong religious presence in Northwestern India up until the second century C.E., when it received the patronage of the Kushan Empire. At that time, the Greeks and Iranian peoples such as the Shakas, the Parthians and the Kushans had considerable influence in that area. It is open to question, given this situation in the area at that time, whether these peoples may also have influenced the development of the stories and teachings of the Sarvāstivādin sect.[63]

Thus, the salvific element in the story of Maudgalyāyana and his mother may have received a boost from the doctrine of salvation as it had existed from time immemorial in Western Asia, and in this way this element of the tale would have received further elaboration in China than it had in India, where it had been a simple story of Maudgalyāyana saving a hungry ghost. Again, the notion of filial piety which implicitly underlies the story is reminiscent of Chinese ethical philosophy, and this also could have received a boost from the Manichaean doctrine of "salvation from darkness" in the T'ang dynasty. This then associates itself with

[63] Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" pp. 61-62.

the teachings on Hell being refined and developed in various Buddhist groups, and through association with the doctrine of salvation from Hell the theme of redemption is reinforced, which in turn bolsters the Chinese ethical underpinnings.

Victor Mair has noted that transformation texts are listed among those considered by T'ien-t'ai monks to be tainted with Manichaean doctrine and thus heretical in the *Unified Chronology of the Buddhist Ancestors* (1237) under the year 649, and from this it seems evident that Manichaean influence on the stories was well known. He writes:

> The note continues with an exposition of the confusing similarities in both doctrine and practice that debased Manichaeism holds with Buddhism. On the basis of this note, we may observe that, around the year 1237, transformation texts (such as were known at that time) were identified as heretically (to the Buddhists) Manichaean. What is worse, this was Buddhicized Manichaeism and, hence, the distinction between it and Buddhism was insufficiently marked for the comfort of purists such as Tsung-chien. It also was a source of trouble for the Buddhists, since the lack of a clear-cut distinction between the two religions caused proscriptions and persecutions of Manichaeism to spill over into the Buddhist camp. It was, therefore, in the vital self-interest of orthodox Buddhists to delineate as sharply as possible the dividing line between themselves and Manichaeans. For this very reason, a sutra lecturer (T464.10 and 12) criticizes Persians (that is Nestorianism), Manichaeism, and Zoroastrianism. He is at pains to make explicit the distinction between Buddhism and other religions that entered China from the West.[64]

But in fact the Manichaeans proved perhaps the cleverest of all these sects at adapting themselves to Chinese soil, as Samuel N.C. Lieu points out:

> The style of the Chinese Manichaean texts are by no means elegant but their contents can easily be understood by anyone who has some familiarity with reading Chinese Buddhist literature. The Nestorians, on the other hand, through their refusal to accomodate with Buddhism resorted to translating

[64] Victor Mair, *T'ang Transformation Texts*, p. 165.

> their religious texts direct from Syriac into colloquial and unpolished Chinese. In doing so they made such howlers as transliterating the name of Jesus as I-shu (a rat on the move), whereas the characters for transliterating the name of Mani by the Manichaeans are the same as those used for the Buddhist Sanskrit word of *mani* meaning bright pearl.[65]

Another source of the Maudgalyāyana legend is the *Divyāvadāna* (ca. first century C.E.), but Iwamoto points out that the account in this text as well may have been influenced by non-Buddhist sources, based on the following analysis. First, he notes that this is the only Buddhist text in which a discussion of Maudgalyāyana's mother appears. Further, the pretext for the creation of this story was likely Maudgalyāyana's reputation as the disciple of Buddha with the greatest supernatural powers. But what is the origin of this reputation? Iwamoto starts by noting that the *Divyāvadāna* is a Sarvāstivādin text, and once again laying stress on the time and place of the development of the Sarvāstivādin sect, attributes it to cultural exchange within the Kushan Empire. In other words, here also there may be traces of Western Asian religious beliefs.

It is true that myths and legends centering on a son rescuing his mother from the underworld were plentiful in that region. One of these was the Greek myth of the fertility God Dionysus' extraction of his mother Semele from the underworld. He then re-christens her Thyone and lifts her up to live in heaven. It is also said that Dionysus conquered Western Asia all the way to India, but this legend likely grew up after the age of Alexander. Nonetheless, the existence of the legend indicates that faith in Dionysus was strong throughout that region, and as a god of cultivation and wine his worship spread along with symbols and devices bearing grape vines throughout India and Central Asia.

In India, a silver-embossed crown worked with grape vines for Dionysus' head has been found at Takishila, and it is also known that the town of Nagarahara near Jelalabad in eastern Afghanistan was referred to as "Dionysus Polis" in ancient times. Clothing worked with grape vine motives is occasionally seen in Gandharan art, also betraying a Dionysian influence. When this historical and cultural background is understood, it can be speculated that the legend of Dionysus was adapted for Buddhist uses around the first and second centuries C.E. and grafted on to the legend of Maudgalyāyana, already considered the foremost adept among the

[65] Lieu, *The Religion of Light*, p. 22.

Buddha's followers. The case is somewhat similar to that of the Western Asian influences in the story about Maudgalyāyana saving a hungry ghost.[66]

The *Jigoku meguri* motif is more than likely due to Manichaean influence. It is true that as far as we know from the Manichaean texts surviving today, there are no myths or legends dealing specifically with tours of Hell or descents into the underworld. But Mesopotamia, where Manichaeism was born, is the fountainhead of this type of story. According to the Sumerian legend of the goddess Inanna's descent into the *kur* hell, the love goddess Inanna passed through seven doors and at last filed naked past Ereshkigal, the queen of Hell, where she received a sentence of death. Her body was hung on a hook. Three days and three nights later, Inanna's minister Ninshubur went searching for Inanna and descended into Hell, where he served Inanna the food and drink of life following which she revived.[67]

A version of this myth was also told in Babylonia, where it became the story of Ishtar's descent to the underworld.This version runs as follows:

> In the numerous Tammuz liturgies, we find preserved the myth of the descent of Tammuz into the underworld, the mourning of Ishtar for her brother-spouse, the descent of Ishtar into the underworld in search of Tammuz, and the triumphant return to earth of the two divinities, bringing back joy and fertility with the spring. It is clear that Tammuz plays the part of a vegetation-god, dying with the dying year and reborn with the spring flowers and the young corn. In the later development of the cult in Babylonia, the myth and ritual of the dying and rising god became stereotyped as the great Babylonian New Year Festival...[68]

While details may vary, the theme is clearly ubiquitous in Mesopotamian religion. Again, in regard to the symbolism of the seven doors, the number seven

[66] Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" pp. 63-64.

[67] For an English translation of this story, see Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer, *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1983), p. 51. Tellingly, the relevant section is titled *The Descent of Inanna*. See also Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" p. 64.

[68] S.H. Hooke, *Babylonian and Assyrian Religion* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), pp. 22-23. Interestingly, there is a native Japanese tradition in which the god Izanagi descends to the underworld in a failed attempt to rescue his wife, Izanami. This would seem to invert the Babylonian pattern while retaining the emotional content of a spouse distraught at his/her partner's death. See Kawai's discussion of this tale from the *Kojiki* in *Dreams, Myths & Fairy Tales in Japan*, p. 111.

was considered to be evil in this context because it could not be divided evenly. But seven was also thought to be the number of years between famines and abundant harvests in the Old Testament and in Ugaritic records. Further, the number seven was viewed as divine throughout the Near East, and ziggurats were constructed with seven stories and seven doors. The seven days of the week were established according to the Babylonian calendar, and these were transmitted to China via Manichaean texts written in Sogdian. Certain diarists in Japan during the Heian period had the habit of abbreviating the word for Sunday with the character for "honey," which is apparently held over from the Chinese translations of these Sogdian texts. When we consider this symbolic framework emphasizing the number seven, the adventures Maudgalyāyana meets with in the seven hells also take on a Manichaean cast, with their origin in Mesopotamia.[69]

V. Conclusion

In parts one and two of this paper I have attempted to show that the tradition of picture storytelling by medieval jongleurs documented by Barbara Ruch in her essays on the subject takes its rise, as she herself speculates, from the long tradition of picture storytelling as it existed in T'ang China. This tradition, documented by Victor Mair along with translations of representative texts from the archives uncovered at Tun-huang, found its audience in pre-modern individuals for whom these stories seemed plausible because, as Hayao Kawai states, "...people of that time believed that reality had many layers, and that its appearance differed greatly according to the layer being seen."[70]

The specific examples discussed in this second part have been the Chinese *Maudgalyāyana pien-wen* (ca. 800 C.E.) and its influence on the Japanese *Book of Maudgalyāyana* (1531), as well as the Manichaean origins of the cosmology observable within the former text, stretching back at least to third century Mesopotamia.

In addition, the inversion of social hierarchy and challenge to the notion of divine right exhibited by the transformation text on *The T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung's Descent into Hell* as it influenced *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine* has been discussed in the first half of the paper. The second half has focused on the peaceful

[69] Iwamoto, "Mokuren 'Jigoku Meguri,'" pp. 64-65.
[70] Kawai, p. 19.

conquest of Hell and its denizens made by the Bodhisattva Maudgalyāyana in the numerous stories bearing his name, which proliferated throughout East Asia during the middle ages.

As we have seen, in *The Origin of Kitano Tenjin Shrine* Nichizō visits Hell and meets the Emperor Daigo, who bids Nichizō relax and act informally with him, remarking "In Hell the one without sin is lord." This motif of the emperor himself being unable to escape the judgment of the King of Hell may stretch back as far as the Tun-huang folktale depicting *The T'ang Emperor T'ai Tsung's Descent into Hell.* The idea of the Emperor having fallen into Hell for his mistreatment of the courtier Michizane reversed the usual hierarchy and raised Michizane as Tenjin above the level of the imperial household itself. We can conjecture that the T'ai Tsung story had a similar effect on its listeners, making their supposedly divine ruler seem more human. And the sense of hope for divine justice this granted the lay audiences attending performances of these stories should not be underestimated.

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