

A Collection of Tales About the Awakening of the Heart (Hosshinshū) in the Setsuwa Tradition

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Abstract

The hermit poet Kamo-no Chōmei compiled a collection of tales about the awakening of the heart (*Hosshinshū*, c. 1216), continuing and updating the tradition of *setsuwa* collections of didactic tales. The peculiarities of the collection can be explained on the basis of the changes in the life of the Japanese Buddhist community that took place at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries. The main characters of the tales are hermits, “escapees from the world,” and different aspects of their lives are discussed in the thematic sections of the collection. In addition to the tales, the book contains discussions of difficult questions of Buddhist preaching: how to treat death and love, one’s own body, the poetic word, and what a person can rely on if he or she wants to try to follow the Buddha’s path in the “evil age”. In addition to the *Lotus Sutra*, which gave the book its title and one of its narrative forms, the sources of the *Hosshinshū* include the sutras about the Pure Land and Genshin’s *Ōjōyōshū*, as well as several other sutras and treatises that were common property of various schools in Japan. Chōmei includes both good and bad examples from the life of the Japanese Buddhist community in his book, with only occasional reference to India and China, and confines himself mainly to events recent and contemporary.

Keywords: Japanese Buddhism, Amidaism, Lotus Sutra, Kamo-no Chōmei, *Hosshinshū*, hermitry.

I thank Lyubov Borisovna Karelova for the rare gift of an edition of *Hosshinshū* which became the basis for this study.

Kamo-no Chōmei 鴨長明 (1153/1155–1216) is famous above all as a poet and a connoisseur of verse. For many centuries, from his *Untitled Notes*¹, readers of Japanese poetry learned to understand the *waka* “native songs”. His *Account of the Ten Foot Square Hut*² paints a picture of the disasters of the “last age” and the joys of the lonely life of a hermit. Another of his books, *Hosshinshū* 発心集, is not so well known, and I would like to introduce it to readers.

It is believed that Chōmei worked on it in the last years of his life, in the mid-1210s. He must have collected the tales before; in several places, he admits that he “heard but forgot” the names and other details and could not ask the tale-tellers again (tales 5-2, 8-6,³ etc.). However, we may consider that here we are facing a convention of genre: the book needs to be connected with the tradition of didactic tales 説話, *setsuwa*, transmitted by word of mouth. At the same time, the narrative in *Hosshinshū* is closer to book narrative: compared to, for example, the *Tales of Times Now Past*,⁴ it is much more concise, without repetition and other features of oral tale-telling.

The collection contains 102 short tales, a preface and an afterword. If one divides the *setsuwa* tradition into “Buddhist” and “secular” branches, *Hosshinshū* is undoubtedly a Buddhist collection. Its main theme is set by a quotation from the *Sutra on Nirvana* in the first lines

¹ 無名抄, *Mumyōshō*, for the Russian translation by M.V. Toropygina, see: [Kamo no Chōmei 2015].

² 方丈記, *Hōjōki*, for the Russian translation by N.I. Konrad, see: [Kamo no Chōmei 1988].

³ Here and hereafter, in references to *setsuwa* collections, the first digit is the number of the section or scroll, while the second is the number of the story within it.

⁴ 今昔物語集, *Konjaku monogatari shū*, early 12th century.

of the preface: “Become a teacher to your heart, but do not let your heart become your teacher.”⁵ Then Chōmei writes that he will rely mainly on his own experience, both lived and literary: “Whenever I looked at the wise, I tried to make a connection with them, even though it was difficult to compare with them; when I looked at the foolish, I wanted to correct myself by their examples.” From these good and bad examples, he compiles a book: he retells in a new way cases from the lives of famous monks and laypeople of the past centuries and adds to them tales about his contemporaries.

The starting point of Chōmei’s reasoning is this: honoring the Buddha, his teachings, and community, following the accepted rites, and even becoming a monk and going through the stages of a monastic career do not mean entering the Buddha’s Path. One must “awaken with the heart” 発心, *hosshin*, to have the experience of going beyond the ordinary way of thinking. Such an experience may not contain anything miraculous (encounters with buddhas, etc.): one simply feels disgusted with the usual life in the world, decides to flee from it, but, at the same time, sympathizes with and helps fellow sufferers – other inhabitants of a world full of suffering.

The collection survives in several closely related manuscripts and old printed editions, such as [Kamo-no Chōmei 1651]. References to the *Hosshinshū* can be found already in monuments of the late 13th century, in the *Collection of Stone and Sand* in particular.⁶ The collection was also known outside the *setsuwa* tradition, primarily as the work of a famous poet. Since Japan began to publish scholarly editions of the national classics in the modern sense, *Hosshinshū* has been published several times, together with other *setsuwa* collections [SHH 1913] or with other works by Chōmei [Shōchū... 1952; Kamo-no Chōmei 1956]. Yanase Kazuo translated *Hosshinshū* into modern Japanese [Kamo-no Chōmei 1975], and other translations, complete or selective, were published. A new collection of Chōmei’s works was prepared by Ōsone

⁵ 涅槃經, *Nehangyō*, TSD 12, № 374, 534a.

⁶ 沙石集, *Shasekishū*, story VII–2.

Shōsuke and Kubota Jun [Kamo-no Chōmei 2000]. Miki Sumito then published the *Hōjōki* and *Hosshinshū* in a separate edition with two levels of commentary: detailed page-by-page notes and brief explanations between the lines with variant readings of difficult passages [Kamo-no Chōmei 2016]; I use this edition. A detailed overview of the “world” of the collection and commentary is given in [Yamamoto 2018].

Hosshinshū was introduced to Western readers by Marian Bloom Ury, who translated the first section of the collection into English [Ury 1972]. I am not aware of a complete English translation. Individual tales were published as part of research papers; there is also a French translation by Jacqueline Pigeot [Pigeot 2014]. In Russian, brief references to *Hosshinshū* are included in review studies [Sviridov 1981; Goreglyad 1997] and in publications on other works by Chōmei, but no more than that.

Historians of Japanese Buddhism note an important shift that occurred at the turn of the 12th and 13th centuries: the main role in the Buddhist community began to be played not by serving monks 官僧, *kansō*, as before, but by hermits 聖, *hijiri*, anchorites, and wanderers, “escapees from the world” 遁世, *tonsei* [Matsuo 1997; Matsuo 2010].⁷ *Hosshinshū* elaborates on what the path of hermitage is, and the book is generally interesting as a reflection of the events of the early Kamakura era. If one looks for signs of a Buddhist “reformation” (somewhat similar to the later Christian reformation) in Japanese thought at that time, one will find many in *Hosshinshū*. Chōmei is not an innovator or a rebel, but, for him, faith is more important than the performance of rituals, and even more important is the determination to put faith into practice; a sacred text should not just be honored, but understood and followed, etc. However, in *Hosshinshū*, as well as in other collections of *setsuwa*, one can find arguments in favor of any of the points of view on the so-called “Kamakura question”: whether in the 12th – 13th centuries all the

⁷ The word *hijiri* occurs 159 times in the text of *Hosshinshū* (total number of characters is just under 131,000), *tonsei* in the titles of six stories, and five more times as *yo-o nogaru*, “to flee from the world.”

former traditions of Japanese Buddhism came to a complete decline and whether it was radically renewed by the forces of new movements – “exceptional” Amidism, Zen, Hokke – or whether the old traditions remained viable, and new movements took the place of marginal ones, or whether the decline took place, but the old schools themselves, as well as rebels, tried to overcome it in various ways; see: [Trubnikova, Babkova 2014].

The task of building a complete picture of the worldview of the author of *Hosshinshū* is set by Thomas Hare, who comes to the conclusion that there is no “positive program” in the book, but only “a great variety of religious and quasi-religious experiences, some of them contradicting others” [Hare 1989, p. 211]. Still, the general theme in the collection is traceable: what the human consciousness and one’s thinking “heart” is focused on, and what consequences this has in terms of getting rid of illusions or sinking even deeper into them. It is as if there is no single Buddha’s Path here – in each case, the path depends on the disposition of a person’s “heart.” Those Japanese scholars who correlate the worldview of the narrator of *Hosshinshū* with influential traditions of the 12th and 13th centuries, the doctrine of “native enlightenment” of the Tendai school [Tsujiimoto 2019] or the unity of “the Buddha’s Law and the sovereign law” [Tanaka 2006] would disagree with Hare.

In Rajyashree Pandey book [Pandey 1998], the tales from *Hosshinshū* are placed in the same lineage as the tales about poets from *Mumyōshō* and are explored in the context of the medieval book tradition. Of particular importance to Pandey is the image of a *sukimono*, a person far removed from ordinary human concerns, who despises social conventions but who can subtly sense the beauty in everyday life and respond to it with poetry or music without seeking fame or worldly success. The “disinterested responsiveness” to everything that a *sukimono* observes around them is thought not only as a condition for creativity, but also as the basis of asceticism, aimed at liberation – of the person themselves and their neighbors.

In recent years, more and more Japanese works have been published that use the *Hosshinshū* as a source to explore some concept in Japanese

thought or some phenomenon in the life of the Buddhist community, such as the study [Munehika 2020] of the “wise friends” 善知識, *zenchishiki*, or people who help each other to follow the Buddha’s path and face the hour of death with right thoughts. There are also published analyses of individual tales in the context of the tradition to which they refer; for example, an article [Tabata 2021] on tale 7-12 in relation to the Buddhist view of voluntary passing away.

I translate the title of the book as *A Collection of Tales About the Awakening of the Heart* (Сборник рассказов о пробуждении сердца).⁸ The concept of 発心, *hosshin*, serves as shorthand for 発菩提心, *hotsu bodaishin*, Sanskrit *bodhichitta-utpada*, “awakening thoughts of enlightenment”: it is not yet *bodhi* enlightenment itself, but the first decisive step towards it. Short *hosshin* – “awakening of thoughts” (which were not there before) or “awakening of the heart,” the transition of the thinking heart from the slumber of ignorance to wakefulness, the readiness to begin to think for real. The concept of *hosshin* is frequently encountered in the Buddhist canon,⁹ but it becomes especially important in the Lotus Sutra¹⁰ [Digital Dictionary...]. In it, three main contexts for *hosshin* can be distinguished.

1. The Bodhisattva, the merciful ascetic, not only saves sentient beings from harm, but also in various ways “awakens in them

⁸ Other translations of the title are *Collection on Spiritual Insight* (Собрание о духовном прозрении) [Sviridov 1981, p. 34], *Collection of Stories About Spiritual Awakening* (Собрание рассказов о духовном пробуждении) [Goreglyad 1997, p. 269]. In English – *Tales of Awakening* (in Wiki), *A Collection to Rouse the Mind* [Hare 1989, p. 206], etc.; the most successful one seems to me to be the *Tales of Pious Resolution* in Robert Morrell’s book, which raised the “Kamakura question” anew in Western Japanology and initiated the study of old traditions of that time [Morrell 1987, p. 137].

⁹ 18836 times in the electronic edition of the TSD.

¹⁰ Also referred to as the *Sutra on the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma*, Chinese *Miaofa lianhua-jing*, Japanese *Myōhō rengekyō*, Sanskrit *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, 妙法蓮華經, TSD 9, no. 262.

thoughts of enlightenment”¹¹ (chapter *Calm and Joyful Acts*, TSD 9, no. 262, 38a). Here, we see *hosshin* in connection with the concept of *hōben*, “tricks,” “skillful ways;” one can understand this place to mean that it is the “power of the Other” that can or should awaken a person’s heart. Chōmei, however, writes in the preface to *Hosshinshū*: “The Buddha understands how diverse the hearts of living beings are, and guides and instructs us with tales and parables... If we cannot receive wisdom from the heart of another, we understand only the basics that have come to us, and no tricks can enlighten the foolish.” This point of view – that man cannot be awakened and liberated apart from his will, that whatever benefits the sutra promises, its help must be accepted by one’s own willful effort – is very characteristic of the *Hosshinshū*.

2. In order to say who the bodhisattvas are, it is necessary to find out: “Who preached the Dharma to them, || Taught them, converted them, and led them to perfection? || Who, following whom, first awakened in themselves || Thoughts of enlightenment? || What teachings of the Buddha do they praise? || What sutras do they keep? || What path of the Buddha do they follow?” (chapter *Emerging from the Underworld*, *ibid.*, 40c). In the sutra, these questions are not rhetorical: they are about ancient ascetics whom the Buddha’s listeners are seeing for the first time. The Buddha answers twice, in prose and in verse, in order: I preached to them, I taught and converted them, they followed me – etc. (41b, 42a). This list of questions can be thought of as a rough outline that Chōmei follows in his tales: discipleship, awakening of the heart, turning to the Lotus Sutra or other books, the choice of the Path and its outcome. In this way, the sutra sets the form for the description of new heroes – hermits whose destinies do not fit into the framework of a monastic biography, chronicle or school biography¹², whose path is not easy to describe,

¹¹ Hereinafter, the sutra is quoted in A.N. Ignatovich’s translation from the edition [Sutra..., 1998].

¹² On the biographies of monks in Japanese chronicles see: [Rodin 2014]; on school biographies [Kochetova 2010; Trubnikova, Gunskey 2019].

since these people themselves did everything to hide from the world [Hare 1989, p. 211].

3. In the sutra, the awakening of the heart means the beginning of an active life, of difficult asceticism, of self-sacrifice (chapter *The Former Acts of the Bodhisattva Named King of Healing*, 54a), a place that Chōmei cites in the tale 3-7 when he speaks of people who chose the most radical way of leaving the world, a suicide.

The Buddhist canon contains several texts with 発心 in the title, including *A Collection of Examples for Awakening the Enlightened Heart*.¹³ It includes excerpts from sutras and treatises useful for those preparing to take the first step on the Buddha's Path. In Japan of the 12th – 13th centuries, this work was relied upon by monks of the old schools who believed that even in the “last century” asceticism according to the precepts of the Buddha was possible [Trubnikova, Babkova 2014, p. 55]. The title *Hosshinshū* can also be understood in the sense that it is a collection of tales not about *hosshin*, but **for** *hosshin*, a collection of examples that can awaken the reader's heart [Hare 1989, 207].

The concept of *bodaishin* at the turn of the Heian and Kamakura eras is found in the controversy surrounding “exceptional” Amidism. Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) seemed to believe that people of the “last age” no longer had and could not have “thoughts of enlightenment,” and that therefore no instruction and no means of asceticism would work, only prayer¹⁴ and hope in the “power of the Other” – Buddha Amida. Meanwhile, if it were impossible to awaken people's hearts, both prayer to Amida and hope for rebirth in the Pure Land would be meaningless. Myōe 明恵 (1173–1232) argued¹⁵ that it was wrong to reject the heritage of the old schools, all their rituals and theoretical

¹³ 勸発菩提心集, Chinese *Quan fa putuxin-ji*, TSD 45, no. 1862, compiled by Hui Zhao 慧沼 (648–714).

¹⁴ “To remember Amida Buddha” 念仏, *nembutsu*, that is, to recite the words 南無阿弥陀仏, *Namu Amida-butsu*, “Glory to Amida Buddha.” These words are called “prayer” later in the article.

¹⁵ In the work *The Wheel of Refuting False Views* 摧邪輪, *Zaijarin*, 1212.

works. Later Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263) objected¹⁶: the Amidists do not deny “thoughts of enlightenment” at all, they just do not consider them “their own,” for the human heart is the heart of Amida Buddha, and, through *bodaishin*, the saving “power of the Other” works from within the imperfect human heart [Trubnikova, Babkova 2014, pp. 84, 137–138]. Chōmei encountered similar arguments, and echoes of them can be found in *Hosshinshū* [Morrell 1987, p. 137]; see tale 7-4.

Chōmei himself, judging from his *Account of the Ten Foot Square Hut*, is an adherent of the old schools, and, like many of his hermit contemporaries, he does not choose the one and only tradition, but takes from each what he considers appropriate for himself. Like Myōe, he is an Amidist, but by no means “exceptional.” He combines prayer and belief in the Pure Land with other rites and teachings, with the conviction that revival is not just a matter of revival (“the Pure Land is the long way off,” as Margarita Bushueva aptly put it in one of the discussions at the conference “History and Culture of Japan” in Moscow, in 2022): even in this world, in the “evil age,” one can do much for oneself and for one’s neighbors.

At the same time, for the compiler of the *Untitled Notes*, belonging to another tradition is important – if Chōmei was inclined to a certain path as “exclusive” for himself, it was the “path of native songs,” thought as a kind of Buddhist asceticism. There was already a work in Japanese diction with a title very similar to the *Hosshinshū*, *The Collected Songs on the Awakening of the Heart* (発心和歌集, *Hosshin Wakashū*, 1012), a cycle of *waka* songs on the Lotus Sutra and other sutras especially revered in Japan. The songs were composed by Princess Senshi 選子内親王 (964–1035), aka Grand Priestess of Kamo Shrine; they were rediscovered in the early Kamakura era – and some of them are included in the *New Collection of Old and New Songs*¹⁷; see: [Trubnikova 2021]. Chōmei came from Kamo’s priestly lineage, although he did not receive

¹⁶ In the treatise “Teaching, Asceticism, Faith, and Testimony” 教行信証, *Kyōgyōshinshō*, TSD 83, no. 2646, section “Faith,” part 1.

¹⁷ 新古今集, *Shinkokinshū*, 1200s.

a priestly position himself; he was close to the circle of compilers of the *New Collection*, and, in the collection of tales, he discusses themes that were already heard in the songs of the Great Priestess. For example, the question of whether one has companions on the Buddha's Path, or whether it is essentially a path traveled alone.

In the afterword, Chōmei speaks of his “residual attachment from the past” 昔の余執, *mukashi-no yoshū*,¹⁸ explaining why the book has accumulated quite a few tales about the *kami* gods, even though, at first, he intended to tell only about the affairs of men. These words, it seems to me, summarize *Hosshinshū* as a text that is Buddhist in its effect: not merely entertaining and instructive, but producing a kind of change in man. By collecting the tales, organizing and arranging them, Chōmei rethought his experience and selected his own path from the variety of paths, the path that suited him. The book promises the same to its readers, whose paths will probably be different, but just as *tanomoshi*, or giving hope.

The **composition** of the book, unlike many other *setsuwa* collections, varies relatively little from manuscript to manuscript. The 102 tales are organized into eight sections. The sections do not have thematic headings; often the first tale of the next section continues the idea from the final tale of the previous one. Nevertheless, the themes of the sections can be formulated.

1. What does it mean to be a hermit: to “flee from the world,” to cut ties with everything one was previously attached to, to hide under a beggar's cloak. However, sometimes hermits, for the sake of their neighbors, reveal their scholarship and deep understanding of the Law.

2. How do hermits live: not only meditating in solitude, but also talking with fellow hermits, tending to the needs of the community, composing poetry. Some people need nothing but prayer to be reborn

¹⁸ In *Untitled Notes*, Chōmei says: the fact that the “New Collection of Old and New Songs” included my poem “makes me so happy that it seems to be enough for the next life” (this joy will create a “residual attachment” for the future) [Kamo-no Chōmei 2015, 66], translated by M.V. Toropygina.

in the Pure Land, but a life of constant prayer is also active in its own way.

3. What is the purpose of hermits: they are concerned “for the future age,” for a better posthumous share. To be reborn in the Pure Land one needs neither great intelligence nor knowledge, the path is available to a warrior, a woman, a child – only the attitude of the heart is important. Sometimes people tried to voluntarily leave life while the attitude is right, but their attempts not always lead to success.

4. The hermits are helped by the deities, the guardians of the Buddha’s Law, but the demons also pursue them, leading them astray by various intrigues. Nearby people can also create obstacles to asceticism, but can, on the contrary, help them as well.

5. Worldly ties (with relatives, lovers, lords) cause suffering and thus lead to the realization of the insignificance of earthly happiness and to the awakening of the heart. It is difficult to break these ties, because they originate in previous lives.

6. When a person realizes the insignificance of their share, they are able to sacrifice it – to die for the sake of their loved ones, or to give up ordinary worldly goods for the sake of music or poetry (such are the “people of fine taste,” *sukimono*), or something else.

7. Encounters with wise guides, revelations of the gods, and books of the Law can awaken one’s heart and become one’s support in asceticism. None other than oneself, one’s own “body” 身, *shin/mi*, can and should be one of the main supports for everyone.

8. It is up to each individual to choose which of their inclinations and how exactly they will follow; success depends on determination, but failures are also possible on the chosen path.

Usually, *Chōmei* includes one tale with one main character. There is no uniformity here: there are detailed biographies, close to the genre of “legends about worthy monks” 高僧伝, *kōsōden* (tales 1-5, 1-6, 2-2, 2-3, 7-12, etc.), and there are brief episodes – meetings that changed people’s fates, each of which could well have been performed as a play on the stage of the *Noh* theater (3-12, 7-2, etc.). There are also exceptions: tales composed of several tales with different characters (1-10, 6-9, 7-4, etc.).

About a third of the tales (33) end with the hero's demise. Devotees die sitting upright, facing the west, palms joined; in prophetic dreams or by some signs (scarlet clouds, fragrance, sounds of music) people learn that the deceased has been reborn in the Pure Land. This brings *Hosshinshū* closer to collections of "revival lore" 往生伝, *ōjōden*. The book is partly similar to such collections – first, the tales about famous monks, then, about obscure ones, about nuns, then, about laymen, and, finally, about laywomen; or the tales of nuns and laywomen are placed at the end; see [Petrova 2022; Trubnikova, Gorenko 2021]. It is true that the first step in this series – tales about bodhisattvas and/or rulers – has no correspondences in the *Hosshinshū*. Chōmei follows the scheme of *ōjōden* not strictly and not throughout the whole book but starts anew in each section.

In several tales, in addition to the tales themselves, we find discourses similar to sermons in the genre of 仮名法語, *kana-hōgo*. Such are tales 3-7 and 3-8 (about suicide); 4-6 (about the uncleanness of the human body); 4-8 (about preparation for the death hour); 4-9 (about calamities for which one cannot prepare); 5-2 (about love as a hindrance and as a support); 5-4 (on "determination" 志, *kokorozashi*, readiness to carry out one's thoughts in practice); 5-6 (on not understanding the causes created in past lives and determining the present life); 5-13 (on the futility of all worldly desires and worries); 6-2 (on gratitude for mercy); 6-9 (on the usefulness of poetry for purifying the heart and on "fine taste"); 6-13 (on the various paths of asceticism and especially the Pure Land path); 7-3 (on the Buddha and the Lotus Sutra); 7-4 (again on the legacy of former lives and how the path that suits one person is not always suitable for another); 7-12 (on determination to follow the Law and one's attachment to one's own body); 8-1 (on demons and gods in the "last age"); 8-7 (again on "determination" – futile or fruitful). These passages allow us to consider *Hosshinshū* as an intermediate link between *setsuwa* collections of the Heian era, where the narrator's conclusions are absent or very brief (such are the *Ancient Tales*), and collections of the second half of the 13th century, where there are discourses in the volume of a small treatise (as in the *Collection of Sand and Stones*).

A notable feature of *Hosshinshū* is that, along with the narrator's musings, there are several large monologues of the protagonists, and, in them, the characters do not so much retell some events as present their understanding of life. Chōmei gives the floor not only to hermits (as in tale 3-1), but also to women, noble and common (1-11, 6-2, 6-13, 8-9), an official ignorant of the Buddha's Law (2-10), a woodcutter (3-9), and others. One of the distinctive features of Kamakura Buddhism – the dramatic expansion of the circle of people whose views come within the purview of Buddhist verse – is expressed here particularly clearly.

It is natural to expect a book by a poetry connoisseur like Chōmei to contain poems. And they are to be found here, albeit in small numbers. The 15 Japanese five-line *waka* poems almost all belong to the tradition of “songs about the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha” 釈教歌, *shakkyōka*, as do the songs of the Great Priestess from the *Hosshin wakashū*. In addition, there are two *kanshi* poems, both by Ōe-no Sadamoto 大江定基 (d. 1034), a poet who took up monasticism and died while wandering in China. There are references to other famous *waka* and *kanshi* in the text of the *Hosshinshū*. Perhaps it is these places that most clearly show to whom the book is addressed: to a person who has read and heard a lot, not necessarily a fine connoisseur, but who is ready to think again about what well-known lines mean, what their “essence” 心, *kokoro*, is.

Sources. As is usually the case with monuments of the *setsuwa* tradition, it is only possible to indicate the source of each of the tales only approximately: it is not clear whether the compiler referred to an earlier collection known today, or to another that contained the same or similar tale but has not been preserved. However, it is possible to indicate the sources of the quite numerous quotations from the texts of the Buddhist canon and some other monuments.

In the preface, Chōmei writes: “In this book I do not include tales that have come down from India and China, for they are distant from us. The tales of buddhas and bodhisattvas are inexhaustible, and I also leave them aside. I record only tales about the people of our country, especially recent ones.” Thus he intends to avoid tales in the genre of 靈驗記, *reigenki*, “notes on miracles”, although, in fact, the book does contain

such tales – about the miracles of the Lotus Sutra (4-1, etc.), the Buddha Amida (2-13), the Luminous Sovereign Fudō-myōō (6-1, 8-6), and others. Chōmei could not do without foreign lore either: the book contains two Indian tales (2-12, 7-12) and six Chinese tales (2-13, 6-4, 7-3, 7-4, 8-3, 8-5). At the same time, in the afterword, Chōmei bitterly admits that Buddhism no longer exists in India¹⁹: “Where in ancient times there was Gridhdakuta, the Holy Eagle Mountain, it is now a haven for tigers and wolves, where in the old days there was Jetavana, the abode of the Garden of Earth Gods, now there are only ruins. China and the three states of Korea – Silla, Goguryeo, and Baekjae – had once provided models for the Japanese community. But now, in the “evil age,” only in Japan – in the “marginal confines” of the Buddhist world 辺鄙, *hembī*²⁰, – do the Buddhas and bodhisattvas still keep the Law, “for the sake of the ruler appear as supreme great gods, for the sake of the people become humble roadside deities,” and, under their protection, the Buddha’s teachings are alive. Therefore, we can and should discuss the examples of Japanese righteous and sinners.

Another peculiarity of *Hosshinshū* is that, here, not one time of action is given (“now is the olden time” 今昔, *ima wa mukashi*, as in *Olden Tales*), but three: “in olden times” 昔, *mukashi* (16 times), “in recent times” 中ごろ, *nakagoro* (25 times), and “in modern times” 近ごろ, *chikagoro* (13 times); the other tales do not begin by stating the time, but the name of the hero or the name of the place of action. By “recent times” is meant the interval from the end of the 11th century to the middle of the 12th century, the time of sovereign Shirakawa and his successors;

¹⁹ Here Chōmei disagrees with Myōe, who hoped to visit the Buddha’s homeland and join the undistorted Law there, though he did not fulfill this intention.

²⁰ The designation of Japan as a “small country in the outskirts” 小国辺鄙, *shōkoku hembī*, also occurs in stories 5-12, where a monk compares the high rank available to him in the Buddhist community of such a country to the greatness of the gods in heaven. On *hembī* and related concepts see: [Meshcheryakov 2012].

everything before that is antiquity, everything later is modernity. If all the tales are categorized by time, based on the time, dates of characters' lives or events mentioned, the picture is as follows: "old times" – 28, "recent times" – 39, "modern times" – 27, time unknown – 8.

The sources are also categorized by time. For the "olden days" they are the most numerous: sutras, treatises, chronicles, and collections of tales.

Of the books of the Buddhist canon, the Lotus Sutra takes precedence. It is quoted eight times and mentioned even more often: it is read by the heroes of tales 1-12, 3-12, 5-2, 6-12, 7-4, 8-1; its characters act in tales 4-1 and 7-2. In tale 5-14, the origin of the ritual of "friendly octave readings" 同法八講, *Dōbō hakkō*, one of the ways of reading the Lotus Sutra, is mentioned, and tale 7-3 describes the memorization of the sutra "from the voice", *kuchimane* (the hero of the tale teaches his children, who cannot yet read, in this way). In at least three tales (7-2, 3-11, 5-2), what the sutra predicts to its "guardians" 持經者, *jikyōsha*, comes true in the characters' lives. Here, however, there is no deliberate effort to prove that one fulfills the words of the sutra with one's entire life; later, such an attitude would be followed by Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282).

Other sutras in *Hosshinshū* are the *Sutra on Nirvana*, usually studied in tandem with the *Lotus Sutra* (it is quoted by Chōmei in the preface and honored by the heroine of tale 7-4); the three sutras on the Pure Land²¹ (their teachings are briefly summarized in tale 6-13); *The Sutra on Vimalakīrti*²² (its title character appears in Japan in tale 1-6), *The Sutra on Human-Loving Sovereigns*²³ (quoted in tale 7-12), and *The Prajñā-Paramita Heart Sutra*²⁴ (discussed in tale 8-14). All of them

²¹ *Sutra on Amitabha* 阿彌陀經, *Amidakyō*, TSD 12, no. 366; *Sutra on a Buddha Named Immeasurable Longevity* 無量壽經, *Muryō Jukyō*, TSD 12, no. 360; *Sutra on Contemplating the Buddha Named Immeasurable Longevity* 觀無量壽經, *Kan Muryōjukyō*, TSD 12, no. 365.

²² 摩訶經, *Yuimagyō*, TSD 14, no. 474–475.

²³ 仁王經, *Ninnōkyō*, TSD 8, no. 245–246.

²⁴ 般若波羅蜜多心經, *Hannya-haramitta-shingyō*, TSD 8, no. 251.

constituted the common heritage of different traditions in Japan. There are references to other sutras as well, but, in their case, it is difficult to tell whether the passages discussed are taken directly from the sutras or from some selection of quotations. Also mentioned are the *Treatise-Vibhasha on the Ten Levels*²⁵ (6-13) and the *Mahayana Treatise on Cessation of Ignorance and Realization of the Essence*²⁶ (in tale 2-3, the hero tries to study it, but tears get in the way – so touching to the heart is the reading of this book, which seems to be addressed not to the senses at all, but to the reader's mind). “Spells” 真言, *shingon*, learned in the “mysteries” – one of the most influential of the old traditions – are mentioned in tales 1-7, 2-1, 6-9, 8-6, but, once again, not as being available only to dedicated experts, but as being widely used in the Buddhist community.²⁷

The source to which Chōmei refers as often as to the Lotus Sutra (eight citations and several other references) is the *Collection of the Principal Information on Rebirth*, compiled in Japan in 985. In the *Hōjōki*, Chōmei mentions it as one of the few books he keeps in his cell. In *Hosshinshū* in tale 7-1, the *Collection of the Principal Information...* is mentioned as the most important book for all those who hope for rebirth, for in it “abhorrence of filthy lands and striving for the Pure Land are put in the first place.” The compiler of the book, the monk Genshin 源信 (942–1017), one of the founders of the Japanese Pure Land tradition, honored also in the new Amidist movements of the 13th century, acts as a character in the same tale. It is noteworthy that Chōmei names as Genshin's teacher, whose precepts are also reflected in the *Collection of the Principal Information...*, a hermit named Kūya 也 (903–972), who carried the message of Buddha Amida's saving vow to all people, from the noble to the most ordinary. “From the years of Tenjō [938–947]

²⁵ 十住毗婆娑論, *Jūjū bibasharon*, attributed to Nagarjuna, TSD 26, no. 1521.

²⁶ 摩訶止觀, *Maka shikan*, Chinese *Mohe zhiguan*, by Zhi-yi 智顗 (538–597), TSD 46, no. 1911.

²⁷ Among the texts conventionally considered “secret,” the “Section on the Basic Essence” 理趣分, *Rishubu*, from the *Great Sutra of Prajña-paramita* (TSD 7, no. 220, 986a sll.) is also mentioned in story 7-10.

in Japan, where few people prayed in remembrance of the Buddha, people, following the prompting of this hermit, everybody to the last one of them began to say the prayer. Kūya himself was always wandering about, invoking the name of Amida, and so people in that age nicknamed him “the Amida hermit.” At times, he lived in the marketplace and encouraged people to do all kinds of buddhahood, and for this he became known as the “bazaar hermit.” He also built bridges where there had been no bridges, dug wells in counties with little water where there had been no wells.” This view of the origins of Amidism distinguishes *Hosshinshū* from many *setsuwa* collections, including the *Ancient Tales*, where the ancient prince Shōtoku-taishi is credited as the first Japanese worshipper of Amida. The example of the “Amida hermit” shows that the all-embracing pursuit of the Pure Land does not at all require confining oneself to prayer.

The sources of the *Hosshinshū* in the *setsuwa* tradition should be discussed with great caution. It is known that not all collections of cautionary tales have survived, and none in a completely unchanged form, so the presence of common tales in different collections does not mean that the later one borrowed the tale from the earlier one. If a tale appears in our collection for the first time (or only in it), it does not mean that it was first recorded for it; it is quite likely that it had a written source that did not survive. Yet, to some extent, the number of such previously unknown tales speaks to the degree of originality of the collection. According to Mika Sumito’s commentary, there are 38 of them in *Hosshinshū* (the number is not final; it may decrease as we study the Buddhist literature of Japan). Almost all of these tales Chōmei refers to “our days,” although some of them are quite imaginable in any country at any time (for example, tale 3-9, where the woodcutter argues about the likeness of people to tree leaves).

Eleven tales the collection has in common with the *Collected Old Narratives*. Here we can add about a dozen more brief references to the tales that are included in the *Tales of Times Now Past*; Chōmei mentions them as widely known. It is true that this huge collection itself (over 1,000 tales) includes, in whole or almost in whole, several earlier corpora.

Of these, the best known are *Japanese Legends of Miracles*, *Japanese Notes on Rebirth in the Land of Supreme Joy*, and *Notes on the Power of the Lotus Sutra in the Great Land of Japan*. Whether Chōmei relied on these compilations themselves or on the *Ancient Tales* is debatable [Yanase 1958].

Among the collections of the “recent times,” of special importance for *Hosshinshū* are the *Continuation of Our Country’s Revival Traditions* (five shared tales), *Selected Revival Traditions* (seven shared tales), and *Continuation of Selected Traditions...* (two shared tales). These or similar texts are referred to by Chōmei when he concludes his tale with the words: the rest of the details can be “seen in the tradition” (five such references in all). Chōmei’s abbreviations are precisely what the *ōjōdan* emphasize: the signs of rebirth in the Pure Land. For the *Hosshinshū*, it is the life of the ascetic, not the miracles at his demise, that is more important.

Other collections include *The Collection of Jewels and Conversations on the Affairs of Antiquity* (14 and 13 shared tales, respectively), but they appeared almost simultaneously with *Hosshinshū* and here we can rather speak of common sources than of the influence of one collection on the other.

For both the *Hosshinshū* and the *setsuwa* collections in general, oral tradition is considered to be the basis: in one way or another, all tales go back to it, whether they are taken from earlier books or directly from the tale-tellers. In our case, the “oral transmission” 口伝, *kuden*, is especially significant, since Chōmei retells tales from recent times. As with other monuments, it is difficult to say for *Hosshinshū* what this tradition represented. The interlocutors from whom he heard this or that tale are almost never named, but sometimes he indicates that, at a certain temple (or in a certain area), it is still easy to find eyewitnesses of the event under discussion or people who knew the hero personally (7-13, etc.).

Kamo-no Chōmei’s *Collection of Tales about the Awakening of the Heart* can serve as a source for a wide variety of studies: on the history of Buddhist thought, Buddhist preaching, the mores and life of the

Buddhist community, and others. In the tradition of *setsuwa* collections, the book by Chōmei is something between comprehensive collections of tales about everything in the world (*Tales of Times Now Past*) and thematic collections of legends about rebirth in the Pure Land, the miracles of the Lotus Sutra, and the like. At the same time, *Hosshinshū* also provides something new in comparison with them. Only what the fugitive hermits leave themselves from the large and variegated world is left here, and their choice is not so easy to describe as in the case of ascetics who have chosen one path once and for all. The life of a hermit turns out to be very diverse in its own way, success on this path is not guaranteed, and the greatest attention is focused precisely on what kind of tasks one sets oneself, how one deals with other people, with buddhas and gods, and how one deals with the fruits of one's decisions.

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This article was originally published in Russian. The reference for primary publication is:

Trubnikova N. N. *Hoshinshū* in the Tradition of Setsuwa Collections. *History and Culture of Japan. Issue 15, Orientalia et Classica Series. VII (LXXVIII)*. Moscow: HSE University, 2023, pp. 244–258.