

Aspects of Buddhist Practitioners in the *Konjakumonogatarishū*

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The *Konjakumonogatarishū* deals with various types of Buddhist practitioners. In this article, I have focused on those Buddhist practitioners connected with the miracle tales of the *Lotus Sutra* and the tales of birth in the Land of Bliss recorded from volume 12 to volume 15.

In the first chapter, I have discussed the seventy-seven Buddhist practitioners appearing in connection with the miracle tales of the *Lotus Sutra*; among them are (A) those who practice in temples (23), (B) those who practice in mountain forests (29) and (C) those who practice in the secular world as well as those whose places of practice are not known (25).

Types (A) contains many Buddhists who recite the *Lotus Sutra* day and night. However, there are five examples of those who suffer from sins and bad karmas, for example, as possessing a serpentine body because of their sins. Most in type (B) lead a strict life of practice in mountain forests far from secular world; many relate how they attained miraculous or magical powers through such austerities as fasting. Many of those who practice in mountain forests are called “secluded *hijiri*”. Type (C) contains various types of Buddhists. Of particular significance are several wandering *hijiris* roaming the country side without permanent residence. Many of them (15) live in provinces.

In the second chapter, I have discussed sixty-one Buddhists appearing in the tales of birth in the Land of Bliss. Among them are (A) those who practice in temples (23), (B) those who practice in mountain forests (6) and (C) those who practice in the secular world and those whose places of practice are uncertain (32).

Many in type (A) are depicted as engaging in such practice as *nembutsu* or the recitation of the *Lotus Sutra* to be reborn in the Land of Bliss. Most of them reside in temples in Nara or Mt. Hiei. There are few examples of the type (B) of Buddhist practitioners, but it is noteworthy that many are 'bait-hunting priests' (*etori hoshi*) at Kitayama and Chinzei. They lead a life of flesh-eating and marriage, in outward violation of the commandments, but who inwardly are very noble priests who humbly lament their own sinfulness. In type (C), there are several kinds of Buddhists. It includes the *hijiri* who, though ordained (at Mt. Hiei for instance), leaves the temple after realizing the ephemerality of the world and leads a wandering life of practice. There are also examples of a flesh-eating married priest (like *etori hoshi*), reading the *Lotus Sutra* and reciting *nembutsu* in shrines at midnight. There are also cases of the evil man who has committed the sins of killing living creatures and stealing who attained birth in the Pure Land after repenting or that of nuns and women who attained birth through *nembutsu* recitation.

Through this article I believe I was able to classify the various types of the Buddhist practitioners and give a clear summary of the contents of their faiths.