

Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition

The *Nihonryōiki* of the Monk Kyōkai

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temple allowed the lay brother to be ordained and to renounce the world, naming him Dharma Master Dōjō 道場法師.

This is the story of the mighty hero of Gangō-ji, renowned in later legends, whose extraordinary strength originated in the merits accumulated in his former lives. This miraculous event was witnessed in Japan.

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On Prince Regent Shōtoku's Showing Extraordinary Signs¹

Prince Regent Shōtoku 聖德皇太子 was the son of Emperor Tachibana-no-toyohi 橘豐日,² who reigned at the Palace of Ikebe-namitsuki in Iware 磐余池邊雙槻宮.³ He became Prince Regent in the reign of Empress Suiko 推古,⁴ who resided at the Palace of Owarida 小墾田. He had three names: Umayado no toyotomimi 厩戸豊聰耳; Shōtoku; and Kamitsu-miya 上宮. Since he was born in front of the stables, he was called "Umayado" [meaning "stable door"]. "Toyotomimi" [which means "intelligent ear"] originated because he was by nature so wise that he could attend to the legal claims of ten men at a time and decide them without missing a single word. He was also called "Shōtoku" [which means "sacred virtue"] because he not only behaved like a monk but was so well versed in Buddhist teachings that he could write commentaries on the *Shōman-gyō*, *Hoke-kyō*, etc., and so well versed in Chinese classics as to institute the system of court

1. This tale consists of two independent stories; the first is an anecdote of Prince Regent Shōtoku, the second concerns Ensei and Gangaku, two Buddhist monks. A common structure is found in these two stories: the beggar in the first and Gangaku in the second are sages in disguise, whom Prince Shōtoku and Ensei recognized with their penetrating eyes, thereby demonstrating their own sagacity. The former is similar to a popular legend found in works such as the *Nihon shoki*, *Jōgū Shōtoku hō teisetsu*, *Jōgū taishuden hokejutsu* 上宮太子傳補記, *Sambō ekotoba* (II.2), *Nihon ōjō gokurakuki*, *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XI, 1), etc. Also see Herman Bohner, "Shōtoku taishi," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens*, XXVIII (1936).

2. Emperor Yōmei 用明 (585-587).

3. Situated in present Ikejiri 池尻 and Ikeuchi 池内, Sakurai-shi, Nara-ken.

4. (592-628), Emperor Bitatsu's consort and the aunt of Prince Shōtoku, who appointed him Prince Regent in 593.

5. See Preface, n. 12, above.

ranks and honors.⁶ He was called Kamitsu-miya no kimi [which literally means "Prince of the Upper Palace"] because his residence was located above the imperial palace.

Once, when the Prince Regent lived at the Palace of Okamoto 鴨岡本宮,⁷ he happened to go to Kataoka 片岡⁸ and, on the way, he found a sick beggar lying by the side of the road. Alighting from his palanquin, the prince talked with the beggar, took off his cloak to cover him, and went on his way. On his return he did not see the beggar, but only his cloak hanging on the branch of a tree. The prince put it on again. One of his ministers said to him, "Are you so poor that you must wear the soiled garment once worn by a beggar?" "It's all right, you wouldn't understand," was his reply. Meanwhile the beggar died in another place. The prince sent a messenger to have him buried temporarily¹⁰ while a tomb which was named Hitoki no haka 人木墓 (Man-tree-tomb)¹¹ was built for him at Moribeyama 守部山 in the northeast corner of Hōrin-ji 法林寺¹² in the village of Okamoto. A messenger sent to visit the tomb found it too tightly closed to allow anybody to enter. Only a poem was found at the door, and it read:

The name of my Lord
Would be forgotten,
Should the stream of Tomi of Ikaruga
Cease to flow.¹³

6. The *Nihon shoki*, XXII (Suiko 11, 12, 5), gives an account of the initiation of the twelve-grade ranking system (603); see Aston, "Nihongi," II, 128. Cf. Inoue Mitsusada, *Nihon kodan kokka no kenkyū*, for the significance of this system in Japanese history.

7. Situated in the present site of Hokki-ji 法起寺 at Okamoto, Ikaruga-machi, Ikoma-gun, Nara-ken 奈良縣生駒郡斑鳩町岡本. Cf. *Nihon shoki*, XXII (Suiko 9, 2); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 125.

8. In the vicinity of present Kamimaki-mura, Kita-kazuraki-gun, Nara-ken 奈良縣北葛城郡上牧村.

9. The *Nihon shoki*, XXII (Suiko 21, 12, 1, 2); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 144-145. The difference between the *Nihon ryōiki* and the *Nihon shoki* is as follows: in the former the sage is a sick beggar while in the latter he is a starving man; in the former the poem expresses admiration for Prince Shōtoku, while in the latter it expresses grief for a dying man; in the former people do not understand what really happened, while in the latter they understand and increase their veneration of Prince Shōtoku. See Tamura Enchō, *Asuka Bukkyōshi kenkyū*, 262-278.

10. 暫 *mogari*; see Chap. II(3)a.

11. The name may have originated in the preceding passage: "he could not see the beggar, but only his garment hanging on the branch of a tree," implying that the beggar had been replaced by a tree.

12. Founded in 622 by Prince Yamashiro no Ōe 山背大兄王 for his late father, Prince Regent Shōtoku, who died in 621.

13. It is one of the three funeral songs composed by Kose no Sanjō daifu 巨勢三杖大夫 according to the *Jōgū Shōtoku hō teisetsu* (DBZ, 112, 46b).

The messenger, on his return, reported this to the prince, who was silent.

We learn that a sage 聖 recognizes a sage, whereas an ordinary man cannot recognize a sage. The ordinary man sees nothing but the outer form of a beggar, while the sage has a penetrating eye able to recognize the hidden essence.¹⁴ It is a miraculous event.

The Venerable Ensei 圓勢師, a disciple of Dharma Master Shaku 藉法師, was a national preceptor of Paekche.¹⁵ He lived in the Takamiyadera 高宮寺 at Kazuraki in Yamato province 大倭國葛木 in Japan.¹⁶ In the north chamber of that temple, there once lived a monk whose name was Gangaku 願覺, who used to go out to the village at dawn and come back at dusk. When a lay brother, a disciple of the Venerable Ensei, told his master about Gangaku, the master said "Don't say a word about him." The lay brother secretly bored a hole in the wall of Gangaku's chamber to spy on him and found the chamber full of light. Again he reported to his master, who answered, "This is why I told you to keep quiet about him." Before long it happened that Gangaku suddenly passed away. Ensei told the lay brother to cremate him and bury the ashes, and this was done. Later the lay brother came to live in Ōmi 近江.¹⁷ Once he heard someone say, "Here lives the Venerable Gangaku." At once he paid a visit, finding Gangaku exactly as he had been. Gangaku said to the lay brother, "It is a long time since I last saw you, but I have been thinking of you all the time. How have you been getting along?"

We learn that he was incarnated as a sage.¹⁸ Eating five kinds of strong herbs¹⁹ is forbidden in Buddhist precepts, but, if a sage eats them, he will not incur any sin.²⁰

14. See Chap. II(2)c.

15. In the Maeda manuscript this story is found in III, 39. The three monks are otherwise unknown: a similar story is found in Hui-chiao's *Kao-seng chuan* (X, 2, 徂暗). 百濟國之師 may be interpreted in two ways: "national preceptor of Paekche," or "monk from the land of Paekche."

16. A mountain temple in present Minami-kazuraki-gun, Nara-ken.

17. Present Shiga-ken 滋賀縣.

18. 聖反化 *hijiri no henge*; the alternate reading is *shōhenge*, meaning "sacred incarnation, Buddha incarnated."

19. 五辛 *goshin*; garlic, scallion, onion, ginger, leek; see *Ryō no gige*, "Sōmi-ryō." Article 7; Sanson, "Early Japanese Laws," Part Two, 128-129.

20. This note does not fit the story, but it may have been added to emphasize the idea that a sage is free from all precepts and conventions.

5

On Gaining an Immediate Reward for Faith in the Three Treasures¹

Lord Ōtomo no Yasunoko no muraji 大部屋柄野古連² of the Great Flower Rank³ was an ancestor of the Ōtomo no muraji Uji, Nagusa district, Kii province 紀伊國名草郡宇治.⁴ He was endowed with a lucid mind and highly revered the Three Treasures.⁵

According to record,⁶ in the reign of Emperor Bitatsu,⁷ sounds of musical instruments were heard off the coast of Izumi 和泉 province.⁸ They sounded like pipes and strings or rolling thunder. They were heard in the daytime and at night a light spread eastward. Lord Ōtomo no Yasunoko no muraji heard this tale and reported it to the emperor, who did not believe it and remained silent. When he reported it to the empress, however, she ordered him to investigate. He went to the seaside to witness the scene himself and found it exactly as reported. While there, he came upon a camphor log which had been struck by thunder.⁹ On his return, he said to the empress, "I have found a camphor log on the beach of Takaashi 高脚濱.¹⁰ I humbly request permission to make Buddha images out of it." The empress gave permission saying, "Your wish is granted."

Yasunoko was very happy and announced the imperial decree to Shima no ōmi 嶋大臣,¹¹ who, in great joy, commissioned Ikebe no

1. Cf. *Nihon shoki* (Kinmei, Bitatsu, Suiko), *Konjaku monogatari shū* (XI, 23), *Fusō ryakki* (III, IV), etc.

2. The Ōtomo family is one of the influential families mainly in charge of the imperial guards, whose ancestry can be traced to the age of kami. See *Nihon shoki*, II, III, XVI, etc. Aston, "Nihongi," I, 86, 116, 133, 403, etc. *Muraji* is a hereditary title for high ranking administrators from the end of the fifth century to the first half of the seventh century at the Yamato court.

3. 大花位 *daikeri*; the seventh of the nineteen ranks instituted in 649 by Emperor Kōtoku 孝徳 (645-654). See the *Nihon shoki*, XXV (Taika 5: 2); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 231-232.

4. Present Uji, Kimiddera, Wakayama-shi 和歌山市紀三井寺宇治.

5. See Chap. II(3)b.

6. 本記 *honki*; this story must have been quoted from a source which no longer exists.

7. According to the *Nihon shoki*, this event took place in 553 in the reign of Emperor Kinmei, not that of Emperor Bitatsu (XIX Kinmei 14 5: 1); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 68. In the *Nihon shoki*, it was Ikebe no atae 滿尊直 who was sent to make an investigation by the emperor.

8. The *Nihon shoki* gives "Chimu no umi, Izumi," 和泉津濱海 (present Izumi-nada, south of the Gulf of Ōsaka).

9. See I, 3.

10. Present Hamadera beach in Sakai-shi, Ōsaka-fu 大阪府堺市濱寺.

11. Meaning Minister of the Island, a popular name for Soga no Umako; in the courtyard of his mansion he had a pond dug with a small island in the middle. See *Nihon shoki*, XXII (Suiko 34: 5: 20); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 154. *Ōmi* is a hereditary title for high-ranking administrators.

Kusakabe no Matoji 日下部眞吉.⁴ In the reign of Emperor Shōmu he was appointed a frontier soldier⁵ at Tsukushi 筑紫 by Ōtomo 大伴⁶ (his name is unknown)⁷ and had to spend three years there. His mother accompanied him and lived with him, while his wife stayed behind to take care of the house.

Ōmaro, out of love for his wife who had been left behind, thought up the wicked idea of killing his mother and returning home to his wife, claiming exemption from duty on the pretext of mourning.⁸ As his mother's mind was set on doing good, he said to her, "There will be a great meeting for a week's lecture on the *Hoke-kyō* 法華經 in the eastern mountain. Shall we go to hear the teaching?"

His mother, deceived, was eager to go, and, devoutly purifying herself in a hot bath, accompanied her son to the mountain. Then he looked at her fiercely, as though with the eyes of a bull, and said, "You, kneel down on the ground!" Gazing at his face, she said, "Why are you talking like that? Are you possessed by a fiend?" The son, however, drew a sword to kill her. Kneeling down in front of her son, she said to him, "We plant a tree in order to get its fruit and to take shelter in its shade. We bring up children in order to get their help and to depend on them. What on earth has driven you so crazy! I feel as though the *tree* I have been depending on has suddenly ceased to protect me from the rain." He would not listen to her, so she sorrowfully took off her clothes, put them in three piles, knelt down, and told him her last wish: "Will you wrap up these clothes for me? One pile goes to you, my eldest son, one to my second son, and one to my third son."

When the wicked son stepped forward to cut off his mother's head, the earth opened to swallow him. At that moment his mother grabbed her falling son by the hair and appealed to Heaven, wailing, "My child is possessed by some spirit and driven to such an evil deed. He is out of his mind. I beseech you to forgive his sin." In spite of all her

4. Kusakabe is a family name (see I.18, n. 7), and Matoji is a given name which originated in the common noun, meaning "legal wife."

5. 前丁 (崎丁, 防人) *sakimori*, soldiers sent to Tsukushi (present-day Kyūshū) to defend the country from a possible invasion by foreign troops from Korea or China. They had three years' duty there and were not allowed to bring any family member. See *Ryō no gige*, "Gunbō-ryō," Articles 8, 27.

6. The Ōtomos were traditionally in charge of military matters and served the emperors as imperial guards. Cf. *Nihon shoki*, *Kojiki*, etc.

7. The compiler's note.

8. The mourning period for parents was one year, during which people were exempted from any labor duties. (See *Ryō no gige*, "Fueki-ryō," Article 21). However, "Gunbō-ryō," Article 28, prescribes that the mourning period should be observed after soldiers have fulfilled their tour of duty.

9. *Daihatsu nehan-gyō*, XXI (*Taishō*, XII, 493) 如人種樹 爲得儀 爲得花果 及以材木.

efforts to pull him up by the hair, he fell down. The merciful mother brought his hair back home to hold funeral rites and put it in a box in front of a Buddha image, asking monks to chant scriptures.¹⁰

How great was the mother's compassion! So much that she loved an evil son and practiced good on his behalf. Indeed, we know that an unfilial sin is punished immediately and that an evil deed never goes without penalty.

4

On a Contest Between Women of Extraordinary Strength

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu there was a woman of extraordinary strength in Ogawa Market, Katakata district, Mino province 三野國片縣郡小川市.² She was large, and her name was Mino no kitsune 三野狐³ (the fourth generation of the one whose mother was Mino no kitsune). Her strength equaled that of one hundred men. Living within the marketplace of Ogawa and taking pride in her strength, she used to rob passing merchants of their goods by force.

At that time there was another woman of great strength in the village of Katawa, Aichi district, Owari province 尾張國愛智郡片輪里.⁴ She was small (a granddaughter of the Venerable Dōjō who once lived at Gangō-ji).⁵ As she heard that Mino no kitsune robbed passersby of their goods, she sought to challenge her by loading two hundred and fifty bushels⁶ of clams on a boat, and anchoring next to the market. In addition, she prepared and loaded on a boat twenty pliable vine whips.

Kitsune came to the boat, seized all the clams, and had them sold. "Where did you come from?" she asked the owner of the clams, but she got no reply. She repeated the question, but again got no answer. After Kitsune had repeated the same question four times, the owner answered, "I don't know where I came from." Kitsune, insulted, rose

10. See Chap. II(2)b, for the significance of this story.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XXIII, 17). This is a part of the Venerable Dōjō cycle (see I.2, 3; II.27). See above, Chap. II(2)b, for the significance of women who inherited extraordinary strength.

2. According to Takeda, it is the market located at present Gifu-shi 岐阜市.

3. See I.2.

4. See I.2, n. 9.

5. See I.3, n. 3.

6. In Japanese measurement, fifty *koku* 斛 (石). One *koku* is ten *to* 斗, and one hundred *shō* 升.

to hit her. Thereupon the other woman seized Kitsune's two hands and whipped her once. The whip cut the flesh. Then she used another whip which also cut the flesh. Presently ten whips had cut the flesh.

Kitsune said, "I give up! I am sorry for what I have done." The other woman, whose strength was obviously greater than Kitsune's, insisted, "From now on you shall not live in this market. If you dare do so, I will beat you to death." Completely subdued, Kitsune did not live in the market or steal again, and people in the market rejoiced over the restoration of peace.

There has always been someone in the world with great physical power. Indeed, we know such power is attained as a result of causes in past lives.⁷

5

On Gaining an Immediate Penalty for Sacrificing An Ox to a Pagan Deity and the Merit of Good Deeds of Freeing Living Beings¹

In the village of Nadekubo, Higashinari district, Settsu province 攝津國東生郡撫凹村,² there was a wealthy householder, whose name is unknown. In the reign of ex-Emperor Shōmu, the householder, fearful of the evil influence of a Chinese deity,³ held services for seven years, sacrificing an ox each year until he had killed seven.⁴ At the end of seven years he contracted a serious disease, and, during the following seven years, neither doctor nor medicine could cure him. He called a diviner⁵ to purify and pray for him, but his disease became worse. Then it occurred to him that his serious disease must have been caused by his past deeds of killing; after that he never failed in keeping the precepts and freeing living beings on the six holy days of each month.⁶ When he saw someone killing living beings, he would buy

7. The compiler's attempt to make native legends put on Buddhist clothing is obvious in the victory of the Venerable Dōjō's descendants over the descendants of the fox, and in the ascribing of strength to the ancestor's merit.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari shū* (XX, 15).

2. Present Higashinari-ku, Ōsaka-shi 大阪市東成區.

3. 漢神

4. Animal sacrifice was foreign to Japan. See *Shoku Nihongi*, XL (Enryaku 10:9-5).

5. 卜者 *kamnagi*; see Chap. II(3)a, n. 124.

6. 六節 *rokusetsu* probably means 六吉日 *rokukusainichi*, six holy days: 8, 14, 15, 23, 29, and 30 of each month, when lay Buddhists keep the first eight of the ten precepts and devote themselves to doing good.

them without asking their price, and he would send for living beings to buy and set them free.

When he was dying at the end of the seven years, he said to his family, "Don't cremate my corpse after I die, but keep it for nine days." After his death they did as he had told them, waiting for the promised day. When nine days had passed, he came back to life and told this story:

"There were seven subhumans,⁸ each with the head of an ox and a human body. They bound me by the hair and led me along under guard. In front of us there appeared a towering palace. I asked, 'What palace is this?' but they only gave me a terrifying look and said, 'Go on quickly!'

"When we entered the palace gate, they said, 'We have brought him.' I realized that they were addressing King Yama.⁹ He asked them, 'Is this man the enemy who killed you?' In reply, they said, 'Yes, he is the one.' Presently they brought a chopping board and knife and said, 'Hurry and pass sentence on him! We are going to chop him up and eat him the way he did us!'

"At that moment ten million men suddenly appeared to unbind me, saying, 'This man is not accountable for that accusation, for he killed them to make offerings to the evil deity which had haunted him.' Thereupon the seven subhumans and ten million men fought over me every day like water and fire. The king refrained from judging me. The subhumans continued to argue, saying, 'It is evident that this person was the host who cut off our limbs, held the service at the shrine¹⁰ for his own benefit, and chopped us up to eat.' The ten million men, on the other hand, appealed to the king, saying, 'We know very well that the deity is to blame, and not this man. Remember, Your Majesty, that truth has more witnesses.'"

"Eight days passed in this way, and on the evening of the eighth day I was told to appear at court the following day. On the ninth day I went to the court as I had been told. Presently the king said to me, 'As most of our judgments are formed by what witnesses say, we side

7. Common people were buried within a day after their death. See Chap. II(3)a. Cf. *Nihon shoki* (Taika 2:3:22); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 219.

8. 非人 *hinin*.

9. 閻羅王 *Enraō*; see Chap. II(1)c.

10. 廟 *hyō* (Ch. *miao*), Chinese temple or shrine.

11. The other possible interpretation is: "We know very well that the deity is to blame, and not this man." The king thought that the truth was on the side of the majority of witnesses. 我等委曲知非此人答 說鬼神答 王自思推 理就多證.

present is an iron ball in the future."⁷ Indeed, we learn that the law of karmic causation never falls. We should be ever mindful of that and behave ourselves. Thus the *Daijiki-kyō*⁸ says: "Those who steal from the sangha commit a sin graver than the five sins."⁹

IO

On the Death Penalty for Constantly Boiling and Eating Birds' Eggs¹

In the village of Shimoanashi, Izumi district, Izumi province 和泉國和泉郡下痛脚村,² there was a youth³ whose name is unknown. Innately evil, he did not believe in the law of karmic causation and used to hunt birds' eggs to boil and eat.

In the third month in the spring of the first year of the horse, the sixth year of the Tenpyō shōhō era, a strange soldier came to him and said, "I was sent to get you by a provincial official."⁴ He had a plate four feet long⁵ fastened to his waist. So they went off together, and, when they came to the village of Yamatae in Hitada district 纒郡山直里,⁶ they made their way into a field covered with several acres of wheat two feet tall. The youth saw the field all aflame and it was too full of embers for him to put his feet down. Running about in the field, he wailed, "It's hot, it's hot."

It happened that a villager was collecting firewood on the hill. As he saw the boy running and falling down and heard his wailing, he came down from the hill and tried to stop him, but the boy resisted. Nonetheless, the villager tried hard to catch the boy until he was able to pull him out of the enclosure. The boy fell to the ground without a word.

7. See I, 30, n. 22.

8. *Daihōdō daijiki-kyō* (*Taishō*, XIII, No. 397)

9. This quotation is the preceding line of the quotation in I 20, n. 12

1. Cf. *Myōhōki* (III, On Emperor Wu of the Chou dynasty 周武帝, and on a boy), *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (IX, 24; XX, 30). This story is based on the folk etymology of the local name Anashi 痛脚, which literally means "sore legs," dressed in the Buddhist clothing of karmic retribution.

2. Present Izumi-ōtsu-shi, Ōsaka-fu 大阪府和泉大津市.

3. 中男 *chūnan*, a boy between the ages of seventeen and twenty (*Yōrō-ryō*, "Ko-ryō," Article 6); after 757, between ages eighteen and twenty-one (*Shoku Nihongi*, Tenpyō hōji 1: 44)

4. 國司 *kuni no tsukasa*.

5. 札 *fuuda*, a writ of summons on a wooden plate.

6. In present Kishiwada-shi, Ōsaka-fu 大阪府岸和田市.

After a while he woke up and groaned in pain, saying, "Oh, my sore feet!" The villager asked him, "Why did you behave like that?" He replied, "A soldier came to take me and forced me to step on embers so hot that I felt as if my feet had been boiled. Looking around, I found myself surrounded by mountains of fire without any way out and so I was crying and running about." Hearing this, the villager rolled up the boy's pants and looked at his legs. The flesh was all gone and nothing was left but the bones. He died the next day.

Now we are sure of the existence of hell in this world. We should believe in the law of karmic retribution. We should not behave like a crow which loves its own chicks and cats others. Without compassion man is just like a crow. The *Nehan-gyō* 涅槃經⁷ says: "Though there is a distinction in respectability between man and animal, they share the fact that they cherish life and take death gravely." The *Zen'aku inga-kyō* 善惡因果經⁸ contains a passage which gets right to the point: "The one who roasts and boils chickens in this life will fall into the Hell of the River of Ashes⁹ after death."

II

On the Penalty of a Fatal Disease for Abusing a Monk and Committing a Lustful Deed¹

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, nuns of Saya-dera 狭屋寺² in Kuwahara, Ito district, Kii province 紀伊國伊刀郡桑原, vowed to hold a service and invited a monk of Yakushi-ji³ on the West Side of Nara, Dharma Master Daie 題惠 (popularly called Dharma Master Yosami 依網, for his secular name was Yosami no muraji),⁴ to perform the rite of repentance⁵ devoted to the Eleven-headed Kannon 十一面觀音⁶

It happened that a wicked man lived in that village. His surname

7. *Daihatsunchan-gyō*, X (Taishō, XII, 484b), see Chap. II(2)a, 1165

8. *Zen'aku inga-kyō* (*Taishō*, LXXXV, 1381). See Chap. II(1)c, n. 61

9. 灰河地獄 *Ke-ga-jigoku*, one of the sixteen subhells that belong to the eight Hells of Heat (see II 7, n. 20), in which scorching ashes flow

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVI, 38).

2. A nunnery which once existed at present Saya, Katsuragi-chō, Ito-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣伊都郡葛城町佐野.

3. See Editor's Preface, n. 4; also Chap. I(1)c.

4. The parenthesis is inserted by Kyōkai. Although nothing is known of Daie, the *Shinsen shōjiroku* cites Yosami as a family descended from kami in the capital or an immigrant family in Kawachi.

5. See Chap. II(1)a, nn. 5, 6.

6. See Chap. II(3)b.

and lay, high and low, all gathered to hear him. One day a woman from the village of Kawamata, Wakae district, Kawachi province 河内國若江郡川派里² came to the meeting with a child to hear the teachings. The child fretted and cried so much that she could not hear, and the child could not walk although he was over ten. Fretting and crying, he drank milk and ate incessantly. The venerable master said to her, "Come, my good woman-take your child outside and throw him into the stream!" Hearing that, the congregation whispered, "What causality³ made such a compassionate sage to speak like that?" But the mother's affection prevented her from abandoning the child; still holding him, she listened to the preaching.

The next day she returned with the child to hear the teachings, and the child again cried so loudly that the audience could not hear. Accusing the mother, the venerable master said to her, "Throw the child into the stream!" Though troubled by doubts, the mother could not stand the loud cries and threw him into the deep stream. The child rose to the surface and, treading water and rubbing his hands together, he stared at her with big shining eyes and said with bitterness, "What a pity! I planned to exploit you by eating for three more years." Bewildered, the mother came back to her seat to hear the preaching. The venerable master asked her, "Did you throw away your child?" Whereupon she told him the whole sequence in detail. Then he explained, "In your previous existence you borrowed his things and did not return them, so he became your child and got back what you owed him by eating. That child was your creditor in your past life."

What a shame! We should not die without paying off our debts. Otherwise we reap the penalty without fail in our future life. Accordingly, the *Shutchō-gyō* says: "Because of a pennyworth debt of salt to the driver he was born as an ox and driven hard to carry a load of salt on his back to make up for his debt by labor.* This refers to the same type of thing.

2. Present Kawamata, Fuse, Higashi-ōsaka-shi 東大阪市布施川俣
3 因縁.

4 Not an exact quotation but a summary of a passage in the *Shutchō-gyō* (*Taishō*, VI, 425). There were two brothers; one chose to become an arhat, the other remained a layman who would never listen to his brother's preaching. Once the arhat met his brother born as an ox and loaded with burdens. The arhat told the driver of the ox that his brother had been born as an ox because of his debt of salt to the driver.

31

On the Birth of a Girl with Sari in Her Hand Owing to Her Parents' Vow to Build a Pagoda¹

Niu no atae Otokami 丹生直弟上² was a man of Iwata district, Tōtōmi province 遠江國磐田郡.³ Although he made a vow to build a pagoda, he could not fulfill the vow for many years. He always regretted this and tried hard to find a way to do it. In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, a girl was born to Otokami, though he was seventy and his wife was sixty-two. The baby's left hand was clenched. In wonder, the parents tried to open it, but it was clenched more tightly than ever and never opened. Lamenting, they said, "It is a great shame for us to have given untimely birth to a crippled baby. But you are born to us as a result of the work of causality." And they nursed her with great care and never neglected her.

She grew up with fine features. At the age of seven she opened her fist to show it to her mother, saying, "Look at this!" When the mother looked at the child's palm, she found two pieces of *sari*,⁴ the sacred ashes of Buddha. In joy and wonder she relayed the news to people everywhere. All were rapturous with joy. Provincial magistrates and district governors rejoiced, organized a devotees' association' to build a seven-story pagoda, and enshrined the *sari* in the pagoda during a dedication service. This is the pagoda of Iwata-dera 磐田寺⁶ which stands in Iwata district now. At the completion of the pagoda, the child suddenly passed away.

This is what people mean when they say that a vow once made will be achieved and fulfilled without fail.

32

On Rebirth as an Ox to Make up for the Unpaid Debt of Rice Wine for the Temple Fund'

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, villagers of Mikami, Nagasa dis-

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XII, 2).

2. Unknown.

3. Present Iwata-gun, Shizuoka-ken 静岡縣磐田郡

4. See Chap. II(2)b, n. 98.

5. 知識 *chishiki*; see Chap. I(1)d

6. Unidentified.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XX, 22). Similar to I, 10, 20; II, 9, 15; III, 26, etc.

trict, Kii province 紀伊國名草郡三上村,² organized a devotees' association to rotate the medical fund" of Yakuō-ji 藥王寺,⁴ (now called Seta-dera 勢多寺). At Okada no suguri Obame's 岡田村主姑女⁵ this medical fund was used to gain profits in a brewery.⁶

One day a brindled calf came to the temple and lay at the pagoda. The mm of the temple chased it away, but it came back again to lie down and would not leave. In wonder they asked people, saying, "To whom does this calf belong?" But no one claimed it as his own. Therefore the monks caught, tied, and kept it. After it grew up it was driven into the fields of the temple.

After five years, Okada no suguri Iwahito 岡田村主石人, a patron of the temple, had a dream in which he was chased, thrust down, and trampled by the same calf. He screamed in terror. Then the calf asked, "Do you know me?" He answered "No." The calf released him, stepped back, and knelt, saying in tears, "I am Mononobe no Maro 物部磨⁷ of the village of Sakura 櫻村.⁸ (He was popularly called Shio-tsuki 鹽春. When he was alive, he shot at a boar and thought he had hit it, though he had missed. Therefore, he ground salt⁹ and brought it to the spot to find not a boar but an arrow stuck in the ground. Laughing at him, villagers named him "Shio-tsuki" [salt grinder], which became his popular name). In my previous existence I borrowed ten gallons of rice wine from the medical fund of the temple and died without repaying it. Because of that I was reborn as an ox and driven hard to atone for my debt. My service was set for eight years. As I have worked for five years, I have three more years to go. Men of the temple have driven me so mercilessly, whipping my back, that I have suffered greatly. I am telling you of my sad plight, for you are the only one who has shown me mercy."

Iwahito asked, "How can I know if your story is true!" The ox replied, "Please inquire of Ōomina of Sakura 櫻大娘¹⁰ to find whether or not my story is true. (Ōomina was Iwahito's sister, a mistress in charge of the rice wine brewery.) In great wonder he visited his sister to tell her the whole story in detail. Then she said, "That story is true.

2. Present Kaiso-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣名草郡.

3. 藥分 yakuhun; the fund used to distribute medicine to people. Capital was accumulated from the proceeds of rice and wine loans.

4. Judging from the name, it may have served as a medical center.

5. Since the title *suguri* was often conferred on immigrants, the Okada family may have emigrated from the continent.

6. The temple made loans of rice and had the people brew wine, which was loaned again to gain interest for medical expenses.

7. Unknown.

8. Unlocated.

9. He prepared the salt for the curing of the boar's flesh.

10. Meaning "Lady of Sakura village."

He did borrow ten gallons of rice wine and died without repaying it." When Jōtatsu 淨達,¹¹ a monk in charge of the temple household,¹² and patrons of the temple heard the story, they recognized the law of causality, and, moved by compassion, they held a service to recite scriptures for the ox. It disappeared at the end of eight years, and no one ever knew where it had gone; nor did it appear again.

We should remember that failure to pay debts will surely incur a penalty. Can you dare forget that? This is what the *Jōjitsu-ron* 成實論¹³ has in mind when it says: "If man does not repay his debts, he will be reborn among such animals as oxen, deer, donkeys, and sheep in order to atone for his debts."

33

*On a Woman Devoured by an Evil Fiend*¹

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu a popular song spread all over the country:

Who asked you to be a bride,
Yorozu-no-ko of Amuchi-no-komuchi?
Natnu, Namu.
Mountain ascetics inhale the breath,
Chanting formulas
Amashini, amashini.²

At that time there was a wealthy man who lived in the eastern part of the village of Amuchi, Tōchi district, Yamato province 大和國十市郡菴知村.³ Kagamitsukuri no miyatsuko 鏡作造⁴ was his surname. He had a daughter whose name was Yorozu-no-ko. She neither married nor made love. She was a beautiful girl, but, though men of

11. See *Shoku Nihongi*, III (Keian 4: 5: 28); Snellen, "Shoku Nihongi," *JASJ*, Second Series, XI (December 1934), 239. A student monk who came back from Silla in 707.

12. 知寺僧 *chiji no sō*.

13. *Jōjitsu-ron*, VIII (*Taishō*, XXXII, 301).

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XX, 37).

2. This song is hard to interpret, particularly the second half. Our translation depends on the *Nihon ryōiki* (NKBT). Its most interpretive and sensible explication is given by Kimoto Michifusa (*Jōdai kayō shūkai*) and quoted in the *Nihon ryōiki* (NKBT, 489).

Namu, namu

The bridegroom came with decorated horses and oxen loaded with wine.

If Yorozu no ko had been wise, she would not have incurred her death.

3. Present Nikaidō, Tenri-shi Nara-ken 奈良縣天理市二階堂.

4. See *Nihon shoki*, XXIX (Tenmu 12: 10: 5). The title *miyatsuko* was conferred on the Kagamitsukuri-no-miyatsuko family in 683. See Aston, "Nihongi," II, 361.

rich neighbor standing there. She had brought a big chest full of all kinds of food and drink, fragrant delicacies with nothing missing in metal bowls and on lacquered plates. She offered it to the wife, saying, "As we heard you have a guest, our master has prepared a present for you. Only please return the vessels when you have finished."

Greatly rejoicing, she was so overwhelmed with happiness that she took off her black robe to give to the messenger, saying, "I have nothing to offer you except my soiled clothes. Please accept this for your use." After the messenger put it on and left, she served the meal. At the sight the man wondered and looked at her face rather than at the feast.

After he had left the next day, ten rolls of silk and ten strawbags⁶ of rice were sent from him with the following message: "Make your clothes out of the silk and wine out of the rice promptly." The girl visited the rich neighbors to thank them for their kindness, but the mistress said, "How funny you are! Or are you possessed by a spirit?⁷ I do not know what you are talking about." The messenger, too, said, "I do not know either." Scolded by them, she went home and entered the hall to pay homage to the image as usual, and found her black robe draped on it. It was evident that this was a miracle of the Kannon. Therefore, she believed in the law of karmic causality and revered the image with increased faith. After that she gained a fortune as large as before and suffered from neither hunger nor sorrow. The couple enjoyed a long and happy life. This is a miraculous event.

35

On the Penalty of Immediate Death from a Bad Disease for Hitting a Monk¹

Prince Uji 宇遲王² was innately evil and had no faith in the Three Treasures. In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, this prince was traveling in Yamashiro 山背³ on an errand, accompanied by eight attendants.

6. 俵, one *hyō* contains 2.5 bushels of rice

7. 鬼 *mono*.

1. Cf. *Genkō shakushū* (XXIX, 3)

2. Dates unknown. See *Shoku Nihongi*, XII (Tenpyō 9:9-28, 12:28); XIII (10:12, 4). 從五位下宇治王爲中務大輔

3. Present Kyoto-fu; see I, 12, n. 6.

On his way to the capital of Nara, in I Suzuki district 綴喜郡,⁴ the met Taikyō 諱鏡,⁵ a monk of Shimotsuke-dera 上野寺,⁶ who had been traveling from Nara to Yamashiro. Taikyō happened to come upon the prince so suddenly that he could not find any place to which to retire and stood by the road, hiding his face with a hat. Seeing this, the prince stopped his horse to have him whipped. Although the monk and his disciple ran into the rice paddy to escape, the attendants caught them and broke open the chests⁸ they were carrying. Whereupon, the monk cried, "Why is there no guardian of dharma?"⁹

The prince had hardly moved on when he was attacked by a serious disease. He groaned loudly and leaped several feet off the ground. Seeing the prince suffering, the attendant asked Taikyō to cure him, but Taikyō would not listen to them. They entreated him three times in vain. The monk asked, "Does he have pain?" To which they replied, "Yes, he is in great pain." Taikyō then said, "Let the unworthy prince suffer a thousand times, ten thousand times!"

At this, relatives of the prince addressed the emperor, saying, "Dharma Master Taikyō has cursed Uji," and they wanted to catch and kill him. Learning of their intention, the emperor did not allow them to do so. In three days the prince died, his body as black as ink. Again his relatives went to the emperor, saying, "An eye for an eye. We would like to take revenge by killing Taikyō, since Uji is already dead." The emperor addressed them, saying, "I am a monk, and so is Taikyō. How can a monk kill a monk? Taikyō is not responsible for Uji's incurring a calamity." Since the emperor had shaved his head, had been ordained, and followed the path of Buddha, he sided with the monk and would not let him be killed.

The insane Prince Uji was so evil natured that the guardian of dharma punished him. The guardian of dharma is always present. How can we ignore this?

4. Present Tsuzuki-gun, Kyoto-fu 京都府綴喜郡

5. Unknown.

6. An unlocated temple in Nara; it may be a family temple of the Shimotsuke family. See Fukuyama, *Narachi jin*, 194-198. See also II, 26, n. 3.

7. The *Sōm-ryō*, Article 19, states that monks and nuns must hide themselves when they meet a person of the Third Rank or higher on the road: they must stop their horse, salute, and pass on in case of meeting a person of the Fifth Rank or above or, if on foot, hide themselves. Monks were considered equal to persons of the Sixth Rank. Since Prince Uji had the Junior Fifth Rank, Lower Grade, Taikyō had to cover himself.

8. 藏; the place to store valuables, or, in this case, Buddhist scriptures.

9. 護法 *gohō*; see II, 1, n. 11.

10. Emperor Shōmu received the Mahayana bodhisattva precepts from Ganjin at the newly constructed ordination platform of Tōdai-ji and abdicated in 749. His clerical name is Shōman 勝滿.

Ama district 海部郡濱中郷⁷ in the same province. Kinomaro no asomi 紀萬侶朝臣⁸ lived at a port in Hidaka district 日高郡⁹ in the same province, using a net to catch fish. Umakai and Ojimarō were given an annual payment for their labor by Maro no asomi, and both were driven hard day and night to catch fish by net.

In the reign of Emperor Shirakabe, on the sixth of the sixth month in the summer of the second year of the hare, the sixth year of the Hōki era,¹⁰ it suddenly blew hard and rained in torrents, so that the water flooded the port and floated various timbers and logs into the sea. Maro no asomi sent Umakai and Ojimarō to collect driftwood. Both man and boy made the collected timber into a raft on which they rode, trying to row against the current. The sea was extremely rough, breaking the ropes that held the raft together, and immediately the raft broke apart and drifted out of the port into the sea. The man and the boy each got hold of a piece of wood and drifted to sea on it. Both of them were ignorant, but they never ceased wailing, "Śākyamuni Buddha, please deliver us from this calamity!"

After five days, the boy was eventually cast by the waves onto the beach at a salt makers' village, Tamachino no urn, in the southwestern part of Awaji province 淡路國田町野浦,¹¹ in the evening. The other man, Umakai, was cast onto the same spot early in the morning on the sixth day. The local people, having asked them why they had been cast by the waves onto the shore, learned what had happened and took care of them out of pity, reporting it to the provincial magistrate.¹² When he heard, he came to see them and gave them food because he was sympathetic.

In grief, the boy said, "As I have followed a man who kills, my suffering is immeasurable. If I go home, I shall be driven to begin killing again and never be able to stop." Thus he stayed at the provincial temple in Awaji province 淡路國,¹³ becoming a follower of the monk of that temple.

Umakai, however, went home after two months. When his family saw his face and protruding eyes, they wondered and said, "He was drowned in the sea. The seventh seventh day¹⁴ has passed, and we

7. Present Shimotsu-chō, Kaisō-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣海草郡下津町

8. Unknown. For the Ki family see n. 2, above.

9. Present Hidaka-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣日高郡.

10. 775, in Emperor Kōnin's reign.

11. Takeda and Itabashi read this "Minami omota no ura, Awaji province" 淡路國南面田野浦, while Endō and Kasuga suggest that 三原 might be replaced with 南西

12. 國司 *kokushi* or *kuni no tsukasa*.

13. Located at present Mihara-chō, Mihara-gun, Hyōgo-ken 兵庫縣三原郡三原町.

14. セク日, that is, the forty-ninth day, the last day of the funeral rites

have already offered a vegetarian feast¹⁵ to thank the Buddha for his benevolence. How could he come back alive so unexpectedly? Is it a dream, or is he a ghost?" Thereupon, Umakai told his family in detail what had happened, and they were sorrowful as well as happy. Awakened and disillusioned with the world, he entered the mountains to practice dharma. Those who saw or heard of him could not but marvel at the event.

The sea being full of danger, it was owing to the power of Shakanryō¹⁶ and the deep faith of those who drifted on the sea that they could survive the peril. The immediate repayment of our deeds is as sure as in this instance, and how much more certain repayment in future lives will be!

26

On Receiving the Immediate Penalty of Violent Death for Collecting Debts by Force and with High Interest¹

Tanaka no mahito Hiromushime 田中真人廣虫女² was the wife of Oya no agatanushi Miyate 小屋縣主宮手,³ of Outer Junior Sixth Rank, Upper Grade, a governor⁴ of Miki district, Sanuki province 讃岐國美貴郡.⁵ She gave birth to eight children and was very rich. Among her possessions were cattle, slaves, money and rice,⁶ and fields. However, she lacked faith and was so greedy that she would never give away anything. She used to make a great profit by selling rice wine diluted with water. On the day when she made a loan, she used a small measuring cup, while on the day she collected, she used a big measuring cup. Or, when she lent rice, she used a lightweight scale, but, when she collected it, she used a heavyweight scale.⁷ She did not

15. 齋食 *saiki*, see I 24, n. 3.

16. 釋迦如來, Śākyamuni Tathāgata.

1. Similar to I 10, 20; II 9, 15, 32, the motif of rebirth in the form of an ox or a cow as a penalty.

2. Unknown.

3. Unknown. *Agatanushi* is a title.

4. 大領 *dairyō*.

5. Present Miki-chō, Kita-gun, Kagawa-ken 香川縣木田郡三木町.

6. 稻錢 loaned with interest.

7. 小斤 *shōgon*, 大斤 *daigon*; see I 23, n. 9; I 30, n. 10.

show any mercy in forcibly collecting interest, sometimes ten times and sometimes a hundred times as much as the original loan. She was strict in collecting debts, never being generous. Because of this, many people worried a great deal and abandoned their homes to escape from her, wandering in other provinces. There has never been anybody so greedy.

On the first of the sixth month in the seventh year of the Hōki era,⁸ Hiramushime took to her bed and was confined there for many days. On the twentieth of the seventh month she called her husband and eight sons to her bedside and told them about the dream she had experienced.

"I was summoned to the palace of King Yama, and told of my three sins: the first one consists of using much of the property of the Three Treasures and not repaying it; the second, of making great profits by selling diluted rice wine; the third, of using two kinds of measuring cups and scales, giving seven-tenths for a loan and collecting twelve-tenths for a debt. 'I summoned you because of these sins. I just want to show you that you should receive a penalty in this life,' said the king."

She passed away on the same day she told of the dream. They did not cremate her for seven days, but called thirty-two monks and lay brothers to pray to Buddha for her for nine days. On the evening of the seventh day she was restored to life and opened the lid of the coffin. When they came to look in it, the stench was indescribable. Her body above the waist had already turned into an ox with four inch horns on the forehead; her two hands had become ox hooves, with the nails cracked like the insteps of an ox hoof. The lower body below the waist was human in form. She did not like rice but grass, and, after eating, ruminated. She did not wear any clothes, lying in her filth. Streams of people from the east and west hurried to gather and look at her in wonder. In shame, grief, and pity, her husband and children prostrated themselves on the ground, making numerous vows. In order to atone for her sin, they offered various treasures to Miki-dera 三木寺,⁹ and seventy oxen, thirty horses, fifty acres of fields, and four thousand rice bundles to Tōdai-ji 東大寺.¹⁰ They wrote off all debts. At the end of five days she died after the provincial and district magistrates had seen her and were about to send a report to

8. 776, in Emperor Kōnin's reign.

9. Since the temple was named after the local name, it might be founded by local magistrates. She is said to have used the temple property, which may belong to Miki-dera.

10. See Chap. I(1)c.

the central government. All the witnesses in that district and province grieved over and worried about her.

She did not know the law of karmic retribution, being unreasonable and unrighteous. Thus we know that this is an immediate penalty for unreasonable deeds and unrighteous deeds. Since the immediate penalty comes as surely as this, how much more certain will be the penalty in a future life.

One scripture¹¹ says: "Those who don't repay their debts will atone for them, being reborn as a horse or an ox." The debtor is compared to a slave, the creditor to a master. The former is like a pheasant, the latter a hawk. If you make a loan, don't use excessive force to collect the debt, for, if you are unreasonable, you will be reborn as a horse or an ox and made to work by your debtor.

27

*On an Extraordinary Sign of a Skull Shown to the Man
Who Removed a Bamboo Shoot from Its Eye
and Prayed for It¹*

In the reign of Emperor Shirakabe, at the end of the twelfth month in the winter of the fifth year of the horse, the ninth year of the Hōki era,² Homuchi no Makihito 品知牧人,³ from the village of Ōyama, Ashida district, Bingo province 備後國粟田郡大山里,⁴ traveled to the Fukatsu Market, Fukatsu district 深津郡深津市⁵ in the same province, to shop for the new year's celebration.

Since it grew dark while he was still on the road, he slept in the bamboo grove at Ashida in Ashida district.⁶

In the place he chose to spend the night, he heard a plaintive voice say, "How my eye hurts!" Hearing it, he could not sleep all night, though he lay curled up on the ground.

1. A summary of a passage from the *Jōjitsu-ron*. See II.32, n. 12.

2. Similar to I.12, III.1, the motif of the "grateful dead." See Chap. II(2)a.

3. 778, in Emperor Kōnin's reign.

4. Homuchi is the family name; Makihito, the given name.

5. Present Ashina-gun, Hiroshima 廣島縣蘆品郡.

6. Present Fukayasu-gun, Hiroshima-ken 廣島縣深安郡.

7. Present Fuchū-shi, Hiroshima-ken 廣島縣府中市.