

On an Evil Man Who Was Negligent in Filial Piety to His Mother and Gained an Immediate Penalty of Violent Death¹

In Sou upper district, Yamato province 大和國添上郡,² there once lived a wicked man whose identity is lost except for his nickname, Miyasu 瞻保. In the reign of the emperor residing at the Palace of Naniwa,³ he became a student of the Confucian classics,⁴ but he attained merely book knowledge and did not support his mother.

His mother had borrowed rice from him and could not return it. Miyasu angrily pressed his mother for payment. His friends, who could no longer endure the sight of the mother seated on the ground while the son sat on a mat, asked him, "Good man,⁵ why are you not respectful? Some people build pagodas, make Buddha images, copy scriptures, and invite monks to a retreat⁶ for their parents' sake. You are rich and fortunate enough to lend much rice.⁷ Why do you neglect your dear mother and contradict what you have studied?" Miyasu ignored them, saying, "That's none of your business." Whereupon they paid the debt on her behalf and hurried away.

His mother, for her part, bared her breasts and, in tears, said to her son, "When I reared you, I never rested day or night. I have seen people repaying their parents for their affection,⁸ but, when I thought I could rely on my son, I incurred only disgrace. I was wrong in relying upon you. Since you have pressed me for repayment of the rice, I will now demand repayment of my milk. The mother-child tie is from this day broken. Heaven and earth will take cognizance of this. How sad, how pitiful!"

Without a word Miyasu stood up, went into the back room, and,

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XX, 21).

2. See I.10, n. 2.

3. See I.9, n. 5.

4. 學生 *gakushō* is in this case a student of a state college (*daigaku*) who prepares for a career as a government official by studying the Chinese classics. See I.12, n. 3.

5. A respectful address which his friends must have used to ridicule him.

6. 安居 *ango*; see I.11, n. 6.

7. 貸稻 *irashi no ine*; see below, n. 9.

8. 恩 *on*; see Chap. II(2)a.

returning with the bonds,⁹ burnt them all in the yard. Then he went into the mountains where he wandered about not knowing what to do, ran wildly this way and that with disheveled hair and a bleeding body, and could not stay in his home. Three days later a fire broke out suddenly, and all of his houses and storehouses in and out of the premises burned. Eventually Miyasu turned his family into the streets, and he himself died of hunger and cold without any shelter.

Now we cannot help believing that a penalty will be imposed, not in the distant future, but in this life.¹⁰ Accordingly, a scripture says, "The unfilial are destined to hell; the filial, to the pure land."¹¹ This is what Nyorai 如來¹² preaches, the true teaching of Mahayana tradition.¹³