

shreds by them. She then learned that the released crabs had come to repay her kindness to them.

Even an insect which has no means of attaining enlightenment returns a favor. How can a man ever forget kindness he has received? From this time on, people in Yamashiro province have honored big crabs in the mountain streams and, if they were caught, set them free in order to do good.⁸

I 3

On Lushful Love for the Image of Kichijō-tennyō Which Responded with an Extraordinary Sign¹

In a mountain temple of Chinu, Izumi district, Izumi province 和泉國泉郡血津,² there was a clay image of Kichijō-tennyō 吉祥天女.³ In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, a lay brother⁴ of Shinano province 信濃國⁵ came to live in the temple. Attracted to the female image, he felt desire, fell in love with it, and prayed six times a day,⁶ saying, "Please give me a beautiful woman like you."

Once he dreamed of lying with the female deity and the next morning discovered a stain on the skirt of the image. Seeing this, he repented, saying, "I prayed to you to give me a woman like yourself, but what a sacrifice you made to give yourself to me." He was too ashamed to tell others of the event. One disciple, however, heard about it in secret. When he was scolded and expelled from the temple because of disrespect for his teacher, he spoke ill of his teacher and revealed the whole affair. Villagers went to the temple to verify the rumor, and they discovered the stain on the statue. The lay brother could not deceive them and described in detail what had happened.

Indeed, we know that deep faith never fails to gain response. To this effect the *Nehan-gyō* 涅槃經⁷ says: "A lewd man feels desire even for a woman in a picture."

8. See Chap. II(2)a, n. 73, for the Kaniman-ji cycle and the grateful crabs.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVII, 45).

2. See II.2, n. 3.

3. Or Kichijō-(Kishshō)-ten, a Hindu female deity adopted into the assembly of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. See Chap. II(1)a, n. 6.

4. 優婆塞; see Chap. I(1)d, n. 91.

5. Present Nagano-ken 長野縣.

6. The twenty-four hours are divided into six units, four hours each, and a service is held in each unit; therefore, six times a day.

7. 多淫之人畫女生欲, unlocated in the *Daihatsu nehan-gyō*.

I 4

On the Immediate Reward of the Destitute Princess' Devotion to the Image of Kichijō-tennyō¹

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, twenty-three members of the imperial family² agreed to give banquets and provide entertainment by turn. There was a poor princess³ among them. She had no means to give a banquet when the rest of the group had already done so. Being ashamed of her poverty, the effect of her past deeds, she went to Hatori-dō on the East Side of Nara 諸樂左京服部堂⁴ to worship the image of Kichijō-tennyō.⁵ In tears she said, "As I planted the seed of poverty in my former existence, I reap the fruit now. I went to the banquets, and, after consuming the food of others, I have no means to invite them in return. I implore you to bring me a fortune."

At that moment her child ran to her in haste and said, "A great amount of food has been sent from the former capital."⁶ She ran out and found her former wet nurse saying, "I heard you had received guests and brought you food." The food and drinks were incredibly delicious and fragrant. Nothing was missing. The metal tableware⁷ was carried by thirty men.

All the princes invited to the banquet came and were delighted. There was twice as much food as for the preceding banquets, and she was praised as a rich princess. Each one said, "If she were poor, how could she prepare such an extravagant banquet? It is better than the one I made before." The songs and dances were as extraordinary as the heavenly music.⁸ Some gave away their robes, some their skirts, and others coins, silk, cloth, cotton, etc. The princess, in her joy, gave the robes to her wet nurse to wear, but later, when she went to the temple to worship the sacred image, she found the statue wearing

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (XVII, 46). A similar story is found in II.34.

2. 王宗 or 王衆.

3. 女王 *nyōō* or *ōkimi*.

4. Kichijō-tennyō-dō was in Kichijōji-machi, Nara 奈良吉祥寺町. See Fukuyama, *Narathō jin*, 304-307.

5. See Chap. II(1)d, n. 91.

6. 散京; see I.1, n. 15.

7. Rare and expensive in those days.

8. 鈞天樂 *Kinten no gaku*; the music played at the palace of Shang-ti 上帝, Supreme Lord, located in the center of heaven.