

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<sup>2</sup> 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 causality<sup>3</sup> 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."<sup>4</sup> This refers to the same type of thing.

2. Present Kawamata, Fuse, Higashi-ōsaka-shi 東大阪市布施川侯。

3. 因緣。

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 Pagoda<sup>1</sup>*

Niu no atae Otokami 丹生直弟上<sup>2</sup> was a man of Iwata district, Tōtōmi province 遠江國磐田郡.<sup>3</sup> 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*,<sup>4</sup> 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<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup> 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<sup>1</sup>*

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, villagers of Mikami, Nagusa 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.

tract, Kii province 紀伊國名草郡三上村,<sup>2</sup> organized a devotees' association to rotate the medical fund<sup>3</sup> of Yakuō-ji 藥王寺,<sup>4</sup> (now called Seta-dera 勢多寺). At Okada no suguri Obame's 岡田村主姑女<sup>5</sup> this medical fund was used to gain profits in a brewery.<sup>6</sup>

One day a brindled calf came to the temple and lay at the pagoda. The men 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 物部麿<sup>7</sup> of the village of Sakura 櫻村.<sup>8</sup> (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 salt<sup>9</sup> 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<sup>10</sup> 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 和歌山縣海草郡.

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,<sup>11</sup> a monk in charge of the temple household,<sup>12</sup> 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<sup>13</sup> 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<sup>1</sup>*

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?  
Namu, Namu.  
Mountain ascetics inhale the breath,  
Chanting formulas  
Amashini, amashini.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> Kagamitsukuri no miyatsuko 鏡作造<sup>4</sup> 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 (Keiun 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 shōkai*) 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 *miraji* was conferred on the Kagamitsukuri-no-miyatsuko family in 683. See Aston, "Nihongi," II, 361.