

The next morning he discovered a skull with a bamboo shoot growing up through the eye socket. He pulled out the bamboo, releasing the skull from suffering, and offered it his dried rice, saying, "May I attain good fortune."

At the market his shopping proceeded as he had wished. He wondered if, in response to his prayer, the skull was repaying his kindness. On the way back from the market he stayed overnight in the same bamboo grove. Then the skull appeared as a live being, saying, "I am Ananokimi no Otogimi 穴君弟君⁷ of the village of Yanakuni, Ashida district 葦田郡屋穴國郷,⁸ and I was killed by my wicked uncle Akimaru 秋丸. Whenever the wind blew, my eye would hurt terribly. Thanks to your compassion, my suffering has been removed. I have attained immense joy, and I will never forget your kindness. Being overcome with happiness, I would like to repay you for your kindness. On New Year's Eve⁹ will you visit my home in the village of Yanakuni where my parents live? That night is the only time I can repay your kindness."

More and more Makihito's wonder increased, and he kept it a secret. On New Year's Eve he went to the house. Taking his hand, the spirit led him into the house where they shared the offerings made there and ate together. The spirit wrapped the rest of the offerings and gave them to Makihito, together with some treasures. Then the spirit suddenly disappeared.

When the parents, who had come to the place to worship the spirits, saw Makihito, they were surprised and asked him why he had come. Whereupon he told them the whole story in detail. They seized Akimaru and asked why he had killed Otogimi, saying to him, "According to your story, on the way to the market with our son you met a creditor and forsook our son because that man pressured you for the return of the debt. You asked, 'Did he come home?' We answered, 'Not yet. We haven't seen him.' Why does the story we have heard differ from your story?"

Shaken to the bottom of his heart, Akimaru the robber could not conceal the facts, and he eventually said, "Toward the end of last year, I went to the market with Otogimi in order to shop for New Year's Day. He brought a horse, cloth, cotton, and salt with him. As it got dark on the way, we stopped at the bamboo grove, where I killed him in secret and took his belongings. I went to the Fukatsu

7. *Kimi* is an honorific title.

8. Unlocated.

9. For cosmic renewal rites at the end of the year, see Chap. II(1)a.

market to sell his horse to a man from Sanuki province 讃岐國,¹⁰ and now I am using the rest of his things myself."

Having heard this, the parents said, "Ah! Our dear son was killed by you and not by robbers!" Since sons of the same parents are as close to them as a reed to a rush, they concealed the brother's sin, banishing him but not making it public. They thanked Makihito and offered him more food and drink. When he returned, he related this story.

Even a skull exposed to the sun is like this! It repays a food offering with good fortune and benevolence with benevolence. Therefore, how could a man forget benevolence? This is what the *Nehan-gyō*¹¹ means when it says: "Man repays benevolence which he has received with benevolence."¹²

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On an Extraordinary Sign Shown by the Sixteen-foot-high Image of Miroku, the Neck of Which Was Bitten by Ants¹

In the village of Kishi, Nagusa district, Kii province 紀伊國名草郡貴志里,² there was a temple, called Kishi-dera 貴志寺. It was so named because villagers of Kishi had built it with their donations.

In the reign of Emperor Shirakabe,³ a lay brother lived in this temple. Once he heard groans and a voice saying, "What pain! What pain!" It sounded like it was an old man. Early in the evening⁴ he thought that a traveler had come to stay at the temple because of illness. He got up to make the rounds of the temple, looking for the person, but he could not find him. At that time there was timber for a pagoda, but it had never been used. It had been left to lie on the ground and decay for a long time. The lay brother wondered whether what he had heard had been the groaning sound of the spirit of the

10. Present Kagawa-ken 香川縣.

11. Unlocated in the *Nehan-gyō*.

12. 受恩報恩.

1. Similar to II.17, 22, 23, 26; III.17.

2. In the present city of Wakayama.

3. Emperor Kōnin.

4. From sunset to about eight o'clock.

pagoda, and the painful groan was heard every night. When he could endure no longer, he got up to look for the sufferer, but there was still nobody around. At dawn, however, the groaning was far more intense than usual, echoing through heaven and earth. He wondered again if it were the spirit of the pagoda.

When he arose early the next morning and looked around the temple, he discovered that the head of the sixteen-foot image of Miroku 彌勒⁵ had been severed and had fallen to the ground. About a thousand large ants were gathered there, devouring the head. Having seen this, he reported it to the patrons of the temple. In grief, they repaired the image and held a dedication ceremony with reverence.

It is said that the Buddha statue is not alive, so how could it suffer and be sick? Indeed, we learn that this was the manifestation of the Buddha's mind. Even after the death of Buddha, the dharma-body always exists, eternal and unchangeable. You should not doubt any further.

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*On the Immediate Penalty of Violent Death Incurred
by an Ignorant Man Who Broke a Wooden Buddha Image
a Village Child Had Made in Playing¹*

In the village of Hamanaka, Niki, Ama district, Kii province 紀伊國海部郡仁嗜濱中村,² there was an ignorant man whose name is unknown. Born ignorant, he did not know the law of causation.

There was a path running along the mountain³ between Ama 海部 and Ate 安諦.⁴ It was called Tamasaka 玉坂.⁵ If one climbs the mountain from Hamanaka, traveling due south, he will reach the village of Hata 秦里.⁶ Once a child of that village went into the mountain to collect firewood and played by that mountain path, carving a piece

5. Maitreya; see Chap. II(3)b, n. 131.

1. Probably written as an illustration for the second chapter of the *Hoke-kyō*, "Hōben-bon" 方便品 (Kern, *Saddharma*, Chap. II, "Skillfulness").

2. In the vicinity of present Shimotsu-shi, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣下津市.

3. One of the Nagamine Mts. 長峰山脈, forming the boundary between Kaisō-gun and Arida-gun.

4. See III.10, n. 4.

5. Unidentified.

6. Present Hata, Shimotsu-shi 下津市畑.

of wood into a Buddha image and piling stones into a pagoda. He placed the image in the stone pagoda and occasionally played there, making offerings.

In the reign of Emperor Shirakabe, an ignorant man laughed at the statue carved by the child in his play, chopping and breaking it with an axe. Hardly had he gone any distance when he threw himself on the ground, bleeding from the nose and mouth with both eyes plucked out, dying in an instant like the disappearance of an illusion.

Indeed, we learn that the Guardian of dharma⁷ is present. How could we not revere it? The *Hoke-kyō* explains it thus: "If children draw an image of Buddha with a twig, brush, or fingernail in their play, they will all attain Buddhahood. Or if they raise one hand and bow to worship a Buddha-image, they will attain the supreme stage of Buddhahood."⁸ Therefore, be pious and faithful.

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*On the Monk Who Accumulated Merits by Making
Buddhist Images and Showed an Extraordinary
Sign at the End of His Life*

Elder Master Kanki's 觀規 secular name was Mimana no Kanuki 三間名干岐.¹ He was from Nagusa district, Kii province 紀伊國名草郡.² He was naturally gifted in carving. He was such a learned monk that he fulfilled the role of a speaker in a ceremony³ and was influential among the people. He supported his family by agricultural work.

In the village of Noo 能應村⁴ in Nagusa district, there was a temple which his ancestors had built. It was formerly called Miroku-dera 彌勒寺,⁵ but popularly referred to as Noo-dera. In the reign of Em-

7. 護法 *gohō*.

8. See Chap. II(1)c, n. 53; also, Katō, trans., *Myōhō-rence-kyō*, 57-58.

1. Mimana 任那 is the name of the estate held by the Yamato court from the fourth century to 562. Kanuki is a popular name for ancient Korean royal families. Cf. *Nihon shoki*, XVII (Keitai 23:4); Aston, "Nihongi," II, 19: "Konomata Kanki 己能未多干岐, King of Imna, came to the court."

2. Present Kaisō-gun, Wakayama-ken.

3. 得業 *tokugō*; monks who have accomplished the task in one of the three great ceremonies of the southern capital, that is, Yuima-e and Hokke-e of Kōfuku-ji 興福寺維摩會, 法華會 and Saishō-e of Yakushi-ji 藥師寺最勝會.

4. Present Yamaguchi-mura 山口村.

5. Although the temple is named after Maitreya, it does not seem to be dedicated to Maitreya. However, it may have enshrined Maitreya when founded.