

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 Hiromushime 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.

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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 備後國鞆田郡大山里,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.

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

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

2. 778, in Emperor Kōnin's reign.

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

4. Present Ashina-gun, Hiroshima 廣島縣産品部.

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

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

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

28

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.