

Rice from the Mouth of Kannon

Suketou Honchou, Tokushima City

This story happened around the time that Tokushima was known as “Awa Province”. In Suketo, there was a temple called Guseiji Temple. It was very poor, and the wall that surrounded the temple was broken in a few areas. The priest of Guseiji only chanted the nenbutsu (a type of prayer) all day long. However, the temple continued to become increasingly poor because he was only dedicated to chanting the nenbutsu. One day, the young monk of the temple asked “Priest, we don’t have any rice for breakfast. What shall we do?” “When we run out of rice, there is still potatoes. And if there are no potatoes, we will not eat anything and chant the nenbutsu.” the priest responded. Many of the young monks left the temple, then finally, there was only one monk.

His only option was to sell all of the items in the temple that seemed worthy of selling, and buy rice. “The last thing left is the Kannon statue that you pray to every day. Shall we sell it?” he asked. The priest responded with anger “What type of bad luck nonsense are you speaking of? If you worship with all your heart, you will see the path. Sit down and pray.”

“That would be too easy. If we could eat rice just by praying.” the monk murmured to himself. Then, he started to chant the nenbutsu. As they continued to pray “Namuamidabu, Namuamidabu…”, they started to hear a strange sound. “Pitter patter, pitter patter, pitter patter…” When they opened their eyes, the Kannon figure in front of them began to spit out grains of rice from its mouth. There were enough shimmering grains of rice to feed the both of them. This became the rumor of the town and many people came to see this. The offerings to the temple increased, and life at the temple became a little easier. However, the monk was greedy enough to think that if Kannon could spit out more rice, they could profit even more.

One day as rice started to pour out from the mouth of Kannon as usual, the monk took a red-hot metal charcoal chopstick and put it in the mouth to widen the size. “Let’s make your mouth larger so you can spit out more rice.” However, after this Kannon no longer spit out rice. Guseiji Temple then turned back to its poor state. It is said that the monk was kicked out of the temple or cursed by Kannon and died. Nobody knows exactly what happened to the monk.

