

## YUGYODERA

“Thou must yield to me even as the rush bends to the wind. I am earnest to serve thee in all things.

We shall surely be united at last, whatever chance may separate us at the beginning. I yearn for thee even as the stag for his mate in the autumn.

Even though long kept apart we shall meet, as meet waters of a river divided in its upper course into two branches.”

(Letter of Oguri Hargwan to Teruté-Himé)

The main road to the left of the *Daibutsu* leads straight to Fujisawa, a small town that was formerly of much more importance than at the present day: it is situated upon the main line some four miles from Kamakura, with which it is also connected by electric car. Fujisawa is noted for its *Shojokoji*, or ‘Temple of Clear Light,’ popularly known as *Yugyodera*—the headquarters of the Jishu sect of Buddhism and which is moreover associated with an interesting and universally known legend of the 15th century. From ancient times the priests of this temple have been accredited with special powers of healing the sick: they travel all over the country during the course of their ministrations to the poor and the afflicted—the name *Yugyodera* signifying ‘Temple of the Wanderer.

Dating from the year 1225, this foundation was

originally of imposing proportions, but on more than one occasion havoc and desolation have been wrought by calamitous fires—the last of these catastrophes occurring as recently as some thirty years ago (1880). However thanks to the enthusiasm of faithful supporters the temple has been resurrected from its ashes, and the present building is well worth inspection—with its beautiful sweeping roof of elaborate grey tiles and its interior gay with a host of glittering decorations and coloured carvings. The buildings on the left of the main temple, approached by a tiled gateway, are the guest-rooms: these are of recent construction and are connected with the temple by a long covered passage. Various other vassal edifices are scattered around the precincts; the foreign-style building at the rear being a theological college for the training of priests.

Immediately behind the main temple is a graveyard containing circular monuments of vast size. This is the cemetery for the head-priests of *Yugyodera*: beneath these massive tombs the ashes of no fewer than sixty of those pious functionaries repose in peace. A path to the left leads up to an eminence beyond this graveyard. Here is found the small temple—so well known in popular history—that was formerly the *Enma-do*, or hall dedicated to the Judge of Souls, wherein is enshrined the famous statue of the hero of the legend, Oguri Hangwan. Beyond is the gate giving admittance to the enclosure wherein are the tombs of Oguri, surrounded by his ten followers; Teruté-Himé, his faithful wife; and also a monument marking the burial place of Onikagé, the fierce horse that played a part in this thrilling drama.

According to tradition, during the reign of the

Emperor Go-Komatsu (1393-1433) Oguri was the lord of a district in Hitachi; a samurai of exalted qualities famed for his great physical strength as well as for his brilliant powers of horsemanship. Through the treachery of an enemy Lord Oguri became an object of suspicion to the *Shōgun* at Kamakura: he was falsely accused of attempting to raise a rebellion, and an armed force was despatched to attack his castle. Summoning all the followers he could muster, Oguri and his little band made a brave resistance, but the enemy being strengthened by reinforcements and hopelessly out-numbering the defenders, the lord realised in time that discretion was the better part of valour. Assisted by ten of his loyal retainers they managed to secretly escape from the castle in the disguise of merchants, and with the intention of taking refuge in the province of Mikawa until the innocence of Oguri could be proved.

Toward nightfall the fugitives were crossing the province of Sagami in the vicinity of Fujisawa, and were compelled to request shelter at the best house they could find—a fatal choice, for this proved to be the head-quarters of a notorious bandit-chief named Yokoyama. The latter, scenting rich prey, welcomed the party cordially and feigned great hospitality, while in reality casting about in his mind for the easiest method of despatching his guests and securing their possessions. In the yard of the robber's house, chained to an ancient cherry-tree, was a majestic and beautiful stallion, but whose malignant and untamable disposition had given him the name of *Onikage*, or the 'Demon Chestnut'. Perceiving the interest that this fierce animal awakened in the Hangwan, the robber-chief thought here lay an

easy means of compassing the doom of his victim—and with all politeness requested the new-comer to give an exhibition of his skill.

Oguri gladly assented. Unchaining the furious beast, whom none other dare approach, he performed marvellous feats of horsemanship—even compelling his wild steed to balance upon a chessboard! Yokoyama and his band, deeply impressed by the strength and bravery of the Hangwan, deemed it inadvisable to attempt to exterminate the new arrivals by force—so another scheme was resolved upon. A banquet was prepared containing rare delicacies 'with all strange flavours of mountain and sea'; dancing-girls were summoned, and during the course of the entertainment the guests were to be served with wine mingled with a rank and deadly poison, brewed from the venom of the centepede and the blue lizard.

Now amongst the handmaidens in attendance at the banquet was one of exceeding beauty known as Teruté. She was the daughter of a samurai who had long been without offspring, but in response to ardent and incessant prayers to the goddess of Mercy this child had been granted them, and Teruté was considered to be under the especial protection of Kwannon. However this had not averted misfortune; her parents had passed away, leaving the poor child to battle with the world alone, and by degrees the samurai's daughter had drifted downwards to the position of maid-servant in the bandit's house. Teruté's heart was melted with pity at the doom that was hovering over this brave and splendid young lord, and as the banquet proceeded she managed to secretly convey a warning. Oguri, feigning

sudden sickness refused to drink the toast at first, but on being pressed in an ominous manner he raised the cup to his lips in simulation, without touching the liquid. However the fumes of the venom were so potent that his body was paralysed; he fell to the ground unconscious and apparently lifeless. At the same moment the ten followers, who had responded to the toast without suspicion, all fell dead as a single man, blood gushing from their lips.

The evil heart of the robber was rejoiced at this dreadful scene: after seizing all the garments and property of his victims, he gave orders for the stripped corpses to be collected and cast into a waste moorland known as Uenogahara.

Now it happened that upon the night of the crime the learned and pious Daiko Shōnin, 14th Lord Abbot of Yugyodera, was visited by a strange dream. In this vision a spectral messenger delivered to him a document sent by Enma, Prince of the Underworld, wherein the circumstances of the tragedy were related. The ten retainers had been foully slain and were beyond hope; but the Lord Oguri was merely numbed, lying in death's semblance, and could yet be restored to the world of living men. Moreover if escorted to the hot springs of Kumano (Province of Kishū), the far-famed healing properties of the water would render his recovery a certain fact.

The good priest awoke, and considering this dream of extraordinary significance, repaired without loss of time to the wilderness of Uenogahara—some two miles distant from the temple. In that desolate spot the pale light of dawn revealed the ghastly scene—the ground

was strewn with corpses, with the wild dogs and ravens feasting upon their prey. However the body of the Hangwan was untouched and life was not yet extinct, as the fingers of one hand appeared to be slightly moving. The rescuer caused the unconscious form to be carried to the *Enma-do* at *Yugyodera*, where all restoratives were applied: when the Lord Oguri was sufficiently revived the Abbot caused a travelling vehicle to be constructed, by which means the sick man, under the care of two priests, was transported to the famous hot springs of Kumano, where in due time he was mercifully restored to health and strength.

Meanwhile the maiden Teruté experienced deep distress that her efforts to save the life of the brave and handsome Lord Oguri had proved all in vain. She managed to escape from the robbers' den in the hope of reaching Kanazawa in safety, but ill-fortune again pursued her. She was caught by two ruffians who had been despatched by Yokoyama to track the fugitive—ill-treated, stripped of her garments, and thrown for dead into a river. However in these dire straits the child of Kwannon earnestly besought the aid of her patron deity: veiled in celestial radiance the goddess from the nearby temple of Senkōji appeared, and Teruté was rescued. This miracle was witnessed by a fisherman living at Nojima saki (Kanazawa), who, taking compassion upon the afflicted girl, took her to his own home, thinking she might render assistance in the household. But the worthy fisher had reckoned without the jealousy of his wife. In this world of misunderstood endeavours the best intentions have ever been productive of the worst results: the advent of this young and

beautiful maiden aroused her worst instincts. The infuriated woman, a prey to degrading suspicions, resolved upon the death of her supposed rival: to that end, securing Teruté to a tree, the old hag piled around her victim large boughs of burning pine, intending that she should be suffocated by the dense smoke. Again the divinity came to the rescue. A strong wind arose, and wafting the smoke in a contrary direction Teruté was enabled to escape from death.

The old woman then resolved upon less drastic methods of scattering the enemy, and managed to dispose of Teruté to a trafficker in human beings, who carried off his unfortunate purchase to an establishment in Shinano. There, to his great wrath, she steadily refused to obey the commands of the wicked master of the house, and so came to be employed as a serving-maid to attend upon the other inmates; at first she was forced to work severely, and experienced much harsh treatment. But again her guardian deity came to her assistance in the impossible tasks assigned to her, so the cruel master, realising that Teruté must be under divine protection and was no ordinary woman, began to treat her with more consideration.

Meanwhile the lord Oguri, having been completely restored to health, returned to his original destination of Mikawa. From there he issued an appeal to the Emperor at Kyōto pleading that he had been falsely accused of treason by the Kamakura Government—his case was investigated, his innocence established, and he returned in triumph to his castle at Hitachi. By order of Kyōto, on his return journey the Hangwan captured and punished the evil bandit Yokoyama and his gang:



Tomb of Lord Oguri, surrounded by his ten loyal retainers.

(Above is seen the New Year Decoration.)



afterwards repairing to the temple of Yugyo in order to express his gratitude to the benevolent Daiko Shōnin for the preservation of his life. On that felicitous occasion Oguri carved a wooden statue of himself, depositing it at the Enma-do as a memorial of his return from death: this effigy, professing to be the identical image, is exhibited and venerated in the same spot today. On his return to the castle the lord's first action was to send for the beautiful Teruté, to whose timely warning he owed his life: their union was celebrated with great rejoicing, and utmost happiness ensued.

The death of Oguri Hangwan took place on March 16th 1426. His son Sukeshigé bore the remains to Yagyodera, and there, beside the *Hattoku-ike*—or 'Pond of eight virtues'—erected his parent's tomb, surrounded by the ten loyal retainers who had so treacherously met their fate while in the service of their master. The same year the faithful Teruté cut her hair and became a nun: her name on entering religion being *Chosho-Bikuni*. She built a small hut in close proximity to the Enma-do, dedicating the remainder of her life to meditation and prayers for the welfare of her husband's soul. It is recorded that at daybreak she would seek in the meadows for wild-flowers pearly with the dew of their morning freshness to offer at the tomb of her lord: fourteen years later (Oct. 24th 1440) her spirit tranquilly departed this life while in the attitude of prayer, facing the west. The little house she tenanted was after her death converted into a vassal temple of Yagyodera and is known as *Chosei-in*, in her memory.

Various versions are extant of this well-known and popular legend. One aspect of it represents the lady

Teruté as the daughter of Yokoyama, the robber chief, Oguri Hangwan being allured by the spell of her beauty, the nuptials are secretly celebrated without the consent of her parent. Yokoyama's fury knows no bounds when he discovers what has happened, and he vows summary vengeance on the newly-wedded pair. Meanwhile he dissembles. The great poisoning scene then takes place with great effect at the wedding banquet:—

“Their bones burst asunder by reason of the violence of that poison, their lives passed from them quickly as dew in the morning from the grass.”

The bridegroom and his party disposed of, the outraged parent turns his attention to his daughter. He commands two of his servants—brothers, with the suggestive names of *Oniō* and *Oniji*\*—to strip off her robes and tie her up in a package of rush matting. When it grows dark they must deposit their human freight in a boat, and rowing out into the Bay of Sagami cast the victim overboard into the deep waters. These malignant orders are carried out, but when the time is at hand to consign the piteous bride to the dark waves, compassion pierces the hearts of the two rough brothers. In spite of their inauspicious names, they are human. They deliberate, casting about for some means of averting her doom. At that moment the gleam of light shed by the vessel's lantern falls upon a small empty boat drifting towards them—presumably the agency of Kwan-non. Overjoyed at this solution the brothers carefully place their young mistress within it, and then return to report her death to Yokoyama. However dangers still beset the path of the unhappy castaway. Terrible

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\* *Oniō* = Prince of Devils, *Oniji*, Second Devil.

storms arise; the frail craft tosses on the billows for many a day and night. When at last a party of fishermen draw near, they manifest alarm; imagining the evil spirit of the tempest has assumed the guise of a young and beautiful maiden to lure them to their doom, they propose to dash her to pieces with their oars. But one amongst them was a kind-hearted man who, being childless, had long desired to adopt a successor into his family. Entertaining the idea that this maiden might have been sent by the gods in answer to his prayer, he averted their evil intentions and took poor Teruté to his home. But this shelter proved elusive: the wife's jealousy was aroused, and during the fisherman's absence sold her to a procurer whose vessel had just arrived in the bay.

From that time the harrowing account of the heroine's sufferings and distresses would fill a volume. She escapes from no fewer than seventy-five houses of ill-fame with purity unsullied; finally falling into the hands of a man named Chobei, the keeper of a notorious establishment in the province of Mino, where she is made to work as a maidservant and treated with great severity. However when the agony has been sufficiently piled up, rescue is at hand from an unexpected source.

Although her lord, Oguri, had quaffed the cup of venom, and his lifeless body had been cast away with his retainers, yet he was miraculously resuscitated in the following manner. One evening, as the worthy Daiko Shōnin, Lord Abbot of the great temple of Fujisawa, was returning from his ministrations in a distant part—he marvelled to behold a grave in the wilderness of Uenogahara covered with myriads of birds. Flitting about between them was a

weird apparition, formless and featureless, hovering and fluttering amongst the dilapidated tombs in the rank grass and bushes of that deserted spot. At first the good priest was at a loss to explain the phantom; but he soon recalled a strange tradition, according to which certain souls cut off prematurely by violence from their earthly career were permitted to return to the world in the form of *Gaki-ami*. Becoming convinced that for this reason the ghost had returned from Purgatory, the benevolent abbot determined to render it all possible aid. He caused a little wheeled cart to be constructed for the *Gaki-ami*, and placed within the vehicle a notice-board whereon the circumstances were recorded: all charitable persons were invited to assist in the good work by drawing the cart a short distance towards its destination, the famous Hot Springs of Kumano. The characters were as follows:—

“ Take pity upon this unfortunate being, and help it upon its journey to the Hot Springs of the Temple of Kumano.

Those who draw the cart even a little way, by pulling the rope attached to it, will be rewarded by great good fortune.

To draw the cart one step shall be equal in merit to feeding one thousand priests, to draw it two steps shall be equal in merit to feeding ten thousand priests.

And to draw it three steps shall be equal in merit to causing any dead relation—father, mother, or husband—to enter upon the way of Buddhahood.”

Thus, by reason of this inscription many kindly wayfarers came forward to help the *Gaki-ami* on its way, hoping by this act of charity to benefit the souls of their own relatives in the underworld. In due time the little vehicle reached the province of Mino, and, as chance

elected, was left standing in front of Chobei's house, where it attracted the notice of Teruté.

All unknowing of her close connection with the phantom occupant, the unfortunate girl felt deep commiseration for its pitiful condition, and perceiving in this a means of aiding the spirit of her lost husband, she managed to extract permission from her master Chobei to draw it for three days; leaving the cart in the town of Ōtsu, on Lake Biwa. There she bade farewell to the *Gaki-ami* with much sorrow, for as it came from the Land of Shades she felt sure it must have seen her beloved lord in those dusky regions, and great would have been her joy could she have questioned it regarding his condition. But that being impossible, she wrote upon the board a little note below the inscription, signed with the name she had assumed, and begging the *Gaki-ami* when it should be restored to its former shape to visit the house of Chobei in Mino, where she would fain ask certain information in return for the service she had rendered.

By degrees the shape at last attained its destination. There, at the Spring of Healing compassionate sick persons took pity on the wretched *Gaki-ami*: after fourteen days the features and limbs had reappeared, a week later the transformed and resurrected Oguri Hangwan appeared before them, valiant and imposing as in the days of yore! According to the virtue of this miracle achieved by the august god of Kumano, the young lord was restored to youth and health after having wandered as a formless spectre for the space of three years. The Emperor, taking interest in his wonderful case, granted a free pardon; and moreover conferred upon

Oguri Hangwan the lordship of two more provinces in addition to his original domain of Hitachi—Sagami and Mino.

It happened that while Oguri was making an official tour in his new dominion he arrived at Mino, and decided to take this opportunity of calling at the house of Chobei to express gratitude to his unknown deliverer, who had rendered such good service in his former unconscious state. Chobei was overwhelmed by the honour, entertaining the Lord Oguri with all possible ceremony; but when the august visitor requested an interview with *Kohagi* (clover), the proprietor of the house took exception to the indignity of introducing a poor servant-maid to the honourable presence of such an exalted personage.

At the recital of Teruté's woes the Hangwan was justly enraged, and resolved to punish the cruel Chobei by death. However he was spared at the intercession of Teruté, who had vowed that owing to the permission of five days' absence to draw the *Gaki-ami*, she would be willing to lay down her life for her master. But due vengeance was wreaked upon the perfidious robber and his band, while the brothers Oniō and Oniji were appropriately rewarded for the humane part they had played in this harrowing drama. Robed in rich garments befitting her altered status, Teruté-Himé was escorted to the castle of her lord, and sorrow having thus been changed to happiness "their reunion was beautiful as the blossoming of spring."

Within the enclosure dedicated to these memories there exists a small museum containing various relics connected with the legend. These include the iron bit and stirrups that Oguri is supposed to have used in

subduing the demon steed Onikagé: a tinted effigy of the Abbot of Yugyodera Daiko Shōnin, who played such an effective *rôle* in the rescue of Oguri: a statue of the Goddess of Mercy who so repeatedly saved Teruté from death; her metal mirror, and a coin said to have been given Teruté by her inhuman master Chobei, with the command to purchase seven times its value.

A personal link with both hero and heroine of this vivid tradition is preserved in two poems, traced with faded ink, and alleged to have been inscribed with their own hands. The little verse written by Oguri runs as follows:—

“ Uchi muko o  
Kokoro no kagami  
Kumorazuba  
Geni Mikumano no  
Kamiya mamoran ”

‘If thou searchest the mirror of thy heart and clouds obscure it not, the august deity of Kumano will protect thee in safety.’

While Teruté expresses herself thus:—

“ Yono usao  
Minishi tsumazuba  
Tsuini kor.o  
Hotoke no michimo  
Shirade suguran ”

In this human life unless the cup of sorrow is drained to the dregs one may pass without knowing the path of the gods.’