

GONGORO JINJA, OR GORYO-SHA

A few steps beyond the southern gate of Hase-Dera a path leads to an adjoining small temple, proved by ancient records to have been in existence in the pre-Yoritomo days. The dedication is to Gongoro Kagemasa, a hero possessed of exceptional valour and strength. At the age of sixteen, in a fight waged by Yoritomo's ancestors he took part in an expeditionary force under Minamoto Yoshiie (1091): ancient popular history states that during a fierce battle Kagemasa was shot by an arrow in the right eye. Without stopping to draw out the weapon the valiant youth rushed upon his antagonist and despatched him with a fatal wound. Hence this shrine is credited by the superstitious with the power of healing eye-diseases. The date of its foundation is unknown, but in recent years it has been restored and rebuilt,—the former building being still preserved in the lower courtyard.

On the right of the temple an enclosure contains two large circular stones: according to tradition the deified hero played at ball with the smaller one, while the large stone he brought back from the north in his *tamoto* or sleeve! Behind this memorial to the physical feats of the departed warrior, *torii* lead to a small shrine supposed to be possessed of curative qualities: the ancient stone at the rear was taken from the sea at Yuigahama by fishermen. Facing the temple, the barren trunk of



Shrine of Gongoro Jinja.

Dedicated to Gongoro Kagemasa, a hero of the 11th century possessed of exceptional strength and valour.

what was once a venerable tree is protected by a roof; legend asserts that Kagemasa supported his bow against this almost fossilised survival.

Every year in July and September quite an elaborate festival is celebrated in connection with the shrine of Gongoro Jinja, when the neighbourhood is gaily adorned and many curious old customs are revived: the buildings on the left of the temple enclose the *mikoshi*, or decorated sacred cars that are used on this occasion.

