

Magic vengeance in old Japan

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MAGIC VENGEANCE IN OLD JAPAN

1. *The Temple Dōjōji and the Tragedy of Anchin and Kiyohime*

2. *Ushi-no toki mairi - Worshipping at the Hour of the Ox*

BY U. A. CASAL

KOBE [JAPAN]

[with 3 plates]

ANCHIN AND KIYOHIME

Not far from Gōbō, a flourishing country-town on the rocky coast of Kishū, stands the ancient temple of Dōjōji, some parts of which date from the 8th century. Through that district go several very frequented roads leading to the most holy shrines of the Three Gods of Kumano, and to the Thirtythree Places dedicated to Kwannon. Kishū, the Land of the Trees, is full of sanctuaries; dedicated in oldest times to the divinities of Shintō, and later remodelled and baptized in honour of divine Buddhas ...

The origin of Dōjōji is typical of many other legends dealing with the founding of a temple to a miraculously-found small image. The image is usually one of Kwannon, the Merciful, the Bringer of Good Fortune and of Children.

At the time of the fortysecond sovereign, Mommu Tennō, tradition has it that the temple Dōjōji was built by order of this emperor, in the first year of Taihō (A. D. 701), because of a most marvellous happening. Not long before, a fisherman, diving as usual into the sea for shells, found a fearful commotion under the water, while a light like a fiery flame shone up to the sky. Afraid and awed, he returned to the surface, and then in the supernatural illumination he noticed that a tiny figure of some divinity had caught in his hair-knot ... The image was only 1 *sun* and 8 *bu* high (54 millimetres), but it glittered like gold and was certainly

unearthly ... He took it home reverently, gave it a place of honour in the poor hut, and together with his good wife, worshipped it devoutly.

That same night the fisherman had a dream in which the deity appeared to him and announced that she was Senjū Kwanzeon, the "Thousand-Armed" Buddha come to save the world. (In popular belief, Kwanzeon or Kwannon is a "Mother"-goddess.) She would grant any wish the fisherman might have. But the fisherman did not want riches or honours. His and his wife's great sorrow was the extreme ugliness of their only child, an adolescent daughter. They had entreated all the gods to grant her better features, but in vain. His most fervent desire was to see her made beautiful, and he asked the goddess, if it were at all possible, to bestow this gift on her ...

With that he awoke, and he naturally could not sleep any longer, but eagerly awaited daylight to see whether the goddess had been kind enough and powerful enough to make his daughter more pleasant-looking. Perhaps even now she had not changed at all ... But lo! when morning came, he found the girl to be a most beautiful maiden, with glossy hair down to her heels (a principal sign of loveliness) and a radiant and delicate face; so he knew that the goddess had spoken truly and was a mighty deity – and he and his wife and their daughter gave thanks to the little image and rejoiced with tearful countenances.

It happened one day that Fujiwara Fubito¹, passing through the Southern Gate on his way to the Palace, saw a sparrow fly down from the sky and enter its nest beneath the gate. Fubito had the nest removed – birds always soil the beautifully carved buildings – and in the nest was found a woman's hair, black as a raven's wing and fully seven feet long ... Fubito thought this extraordinary enough to mention it to the Emperor; and the latter became so interested in the person who must evidently own such marvellous hair that he instructed Awata Mabito

1. 659–720. Son of the powerful Nakatomi Kamatari, founder of the Fujiwara clan. Fubito himself was not only Emperor Mommu's father-in-law, but also his Minister.

to make a "countrywide" search for her. And at last Mabito found a girl with hair seven feet long in the Yada-no shō (= *mura*, village) of Hidaka-gōri (county) in the Ki-no-kuni (Kishū).

As was to be expected, the Emperor desired the girl for a concubine; but because of her lowly origin he had Fubito first adopt her as a daughter, a move which would give her the necessary rank. Thus she received the name of Miyako-hime, Lady Shrine-Child, and in due course was introduced into the Imperial Palace². The girl was naturally very happy at her advancement, yet she lovingly remembered her old home and parents, and wondered especially also about what would happen to the Kwannon idol to which she owed all her good fortune. It was not long before the emperor heard of her anxiety, and, appreciating her loyalty, he instructed the Governor of Kii (Kishū), Ki-no Daijin Michinari, to build a temple to the image. He also charged Abbot Gien to have a standing statue made of wood, a Senjū Kwannon 1 *jō* and 2 *shaku* tall (twelve feet), in which the original tiny gold image should be enclosed as the "embudakon"³. So the temple was built and declared to be the one protecting the good fortunes of the country, and it became very important.

Two centuries later, in the 6th year of Enchō (928) in the reign of Emperor Daigō, it so happened that Anchin, a priest of Shirakawa in Ōshū, came to Kishū on his annual visit to the Kumano Gongen, famous for the blessings which its three deities bestow on people. By chance this time he asked for a night's lodging at the house of Shōji Kiyotsugu of Masago village in Muro-gōri, who welcomed him kindly and made him

2. Historically, a Miyako-no Iratsume (young lady) figures as the eldest daughter of Fujiwara Fubito; she became Mommu's Empress and the mother of Emperor Shōmu.

3. Correctly, *En-bu-dan-kon*, now interpreted as "Gold (*kon*) found at the Sea (*dan*) -washed foot of a (mysterious) *enbu*-tree". It is possibly but a phonetic transcription of some Sanskrit term, since f. i. Nan-embudai is the Japanese transliteration of the Skr. Jambudvipa, the "continent of the South" of Buddhism, where grows the *jambu* (*enbu*) tree; but the name may also be occultly linked to some older phallic worship (*dankon sōhai*).

comfortable. In the middle of the night the daughter of his host, the beautiful Kiyohime, came to his room, saying: "Never before has any traveller asked us for lodging, and your coming here must surely be due to some promise made in a previous existence. Please stay with us for a long time, and let me enjoy your company." But the priest, on a sacred pilgrimage as he was, could only refuse the tempting invitation. "I regret I cannot stay with you," he said. "As you know, I may only approach the Three Gods of Kumano while quite pure, and I feel that I cannot postpone my visit. However, if I return in safety I shall stay here for a few days, as you desire." So the girl assented and was pleased and promised to wait ... Their "agreement" was pledged in two verses: she pleaded,

*Saki-no yō ni Chigiri-no hōdō wo Mi-Kumano no
Kami-no shirube mo Nado nakeru beki –*

"It is not necessary to enquire from the Three Kumano Deities about what is evidently a promise made in an earlier world (= life)"; to which he answered,

*Mi-Kumano no Kami-no shirube to Kikareshi ni
Nao yuku sue mo Tanomoshiki kana –*

"Will not our later happiness be all the greater if we ask the Kumano Deities first?" Both verses are full of *double entendre*, but seem to show the girl's anxiety to resume intimate relations with the lover of a former life (*karma*), while he, considering his priestly state, more or less advises her to seek happiness in the future instead of in a resumption of the past.

Kiyohime waited and waited, and in the end thought it was high time for Anchin to return. She went out to ask some neighbours if they had by any chance seen a priest whom she described in detail, and was told that someone like that had just passed a short while ago. This made the girl most angry. "The faithless wretch!" she exclaimed; "he is not going to escape so easily! I shall follow and catch up with him, be it at the end of the world!" So, with hate in her eyes and a consum-

ing fire in her breast, she hurried along the road he had taken and overtook him at Uyeno. And she gave him a lashing of her tongue for being a deceiver – and suddenly her mouth spit flames, and her neck and head became transformed into those of a huge snake, which continued to send searing flames in his direction. No wonder that Anchin became very frightened, and fervently prayed to the Kumano Gongen and the Senjū Kwannon to protect and rescue him! And by their help, probably, he managed to run away from Kiyohime; and throwing down his staff and his hat and his *se-oi-bitsu*⁴, he ran faster and faster, for a full *ri*, until he reached Shioya – all the time invoking his guardian-gods.

At Shioya is the Hidaka-gawa and there he found the ferry-man ready to ferry him across this rather wide river. “For the sake of all the gods, hurry,” he told the man, “and do not tell the goblin which is pursuing me whither I have gone! I am frightened to death, and I shall take refuge in the temple of Dōjōji.”

Although she had lost ground, the girl continued her angry chase. When she reached the Hidaka river, the boatman, faithful to his promise, refused to take her across, pretending, it is said, that no woman was allowed to be ferried over: *nyōnin kinsei*, “female taboo”!⁵ But she, without a moment’s hesitation, threw off her clothes and hung them on a near-by willow-tree (!) – and her whole body became that of a tremendous, fearful dragon-serpent which swam across the river ...

Other “official” versions seem to relate this first stage of the legend with slight discrepancies. The father’s name may be Shōji Kiyoshige, for instance. One has it that the priest travelled clad as a Yamabushi⁶,

4. A kind of upright trunk carried on the back by priests and laymen on pilgrimages. It usually contained the image of a deity in its central section, with sundry needed things in various compartments.

5. In Japan, as in ancient Greece and elsewhere, women were often barred from using ferry-boats, because of possible danger of sudden storms and whirlpools should they be in their *menses*.

6. A peculiar, fanatic brotherhood of mountain-climbers, avowedly Buddhist yet fully believing in Nature-spirits, and Sun-worshippers.

and was in the habit of staying regularly at this Kiyoshige's house when he made his annual *Kumano-mairi* pilgrimage. Ever since the child could talk, Anchin had told her as a joke that some day she would grow up just suited to become his wife, and that then he would come and claim her. And the girl, unfortunately, believed him.

So on this occasion, when she was about thirteen years old and had grown into a lovely maiden, Kiyohime became rather insistent that he should at last take her to his home in Ōshū and make her his wife. She did not want to be left behind indefinitely, and she thought she had now waited long enough.

In order to quieten her, Anchin promised to call for her on his return; he would first have to visit the gods of Kumano. He knew that this would have to be the end; he would have to take some other itinerary in future. But human nature is frail; Kiyohime, more ardent than ever because of Anchin's promise, crept into bed with him. And Anchin forgot his priestly vows.

The next morning she accompanied him to the corner of her home, and there they composed the two poems cited. They are here given with slight variations which, however, impart to them a more positive sense. Kiyohime says:

*Saki-no yō no Chigiri-no hōdō wo Mi-Kumano no
Kami-no shirube to Nao hakakuran –*

“Even for the next world (life) will our pledge hold, through the favour of the Three Gods of Kumano – such is my conviction”; to which Anchin replies:

*Mi-Kumano no Kami-no shirube to Kiku kara ni
Nao yuku sue no Tanomoshiki kana*

“If this be through the favour of the Three Gods of Kumano, may our future be happy!”

So every day after that she waited where she could overlook the road – but no Anchin came ... There is a little interlude, typically Japanese, of how one day she meets two *jūrei*, pilgrims who wander

from holy place to holy place for their salvation or some special vow: she asks them if perhaps they have encountered a young priest in black over-robe, in the company of an elder one. (Anchin might wear a black mantle; but he, of course, was alone and she knew it.) These scoundrels had stolen her 'hand-box' (with valuables), and wherever they might be she was going to catch them. "No," answered one of them, "they had not seen such a pair; but they had met a young priest some two miles back." "Oh, far more than that!" his companion interposed; "it must be at least three or four miles!" "Never mind how far it was," Kiyohime rejoined; "I shall get him for sure!" – and the pilgrims noticed how her hair "stood up" on her head, and how her face had taken on a terrible look. And, without further ado, the girl started to run so that her straw-sandals flew ... "Hey! what is the matter?" they called after her, but she never heard them and she never stopped.

It is said too that before getting to Uyeno, Kiyohime had to cross the Kirime-gawa, which happened to be extremely swollen at the time; but she just plunged into it "even at the risk of her life". When she caught up with Anchin, she called out to him to stop and wait for her; scared, he looked back and became red in the face: "You must be mistaken in the person," he shouted back – which of course gave him away and made her more enraged than ever. "Why, I can see you with my own eyes!" she retorted – and began spitting fire in her fury ...

If he did get a moment's respite enabling him to race for the Dōjōji and apparent safety, it was because he fervently stammered a few "Namu Daiji Daihi Gon!", "Hail! Great Helper, Great Merciful God!", and four invocations from the *Inga-kyō*, the Karma Sutra. This stopped Kiyohime ... For some time she could see nothing, and had to sit down on a stone ... But when she recovered her senses, her fierce hatred had changed her head and shoulders into those of a *daija*, a "big snake", a fearsome dragon.

Anchin at last reached the Dōjōji sanctuary, where the priests, hearing his stammered story, took pity on him. But where could they hide him? In their excitement they could think of no better place than the great bronze bell; and this they proceeded to let down from its tower, over Anchin, so that he was completely covered by it. They also unsheathed some big swords, and promised that they would defend him in every way, so that he need not be afraid of even the devil himself.

But when they saw the dragon-horns of the Big Snake appear over the temple's stone-wall, their hearts sank, and one and all they took to their heels ... The horrible snake-Kiyohime looked everywhere for her prey; and when she found the bell let down to the ground, she "smelled a rat". So she wound her body around it, seven and a half times, and she beat it with her flaming tail for six hours, until it became fiery, and soft like pulp. Then, convinced that Anchin was now dead, she streaked away and hid herself somewhere between the Dōjōji and the Yawata (or Hachiman) Mountain, never to be seen again by living eye.

Others say that she went into the sea, in the West, and there died. But to this very day people visit the Hebi-zuka, the Snake-mound of Kiyohime, with its rock marker under a tree, and its stone enclosure to keep the venerable spot from desecration.

At last the priests found enough courage to return. The bell was still hot, so they poured water over it until it had cooled sufficiently to be overturned. They found Anchin burnt to a crisp skeleton, an uncanny coal-black object. They could only stand around the little heap of misery, bewailing Anchin's lamentable fate, and offering prayers for the welfare of his soul ...

But the souls of Anchin and Kiyohime ascended to Heaven in the shape of two small snakes.

Some time later the old chief priest of the temple had a dream. He was visited by two serpents, who declared to him that because of their sins during their earthly life they had been condemned to "the way of

snakes". They begged the old *ōshō* to help them, and felt certain that they would be delivered if he prayed to Buddha (Kwannon) and entreated him on their behalf. And as the old priest was a kind and merciful man he promised to do so. Indeed he prayed often and fervently, and offered the temple a *Hokke-kyō* (the Sutra of the Lotus of Good Law, which the *Nāga* serpents especially venerate) at a grand *Hokke-kyō Han-nya Kuyō-no hoe*, a High Mass connected with the highest of the Six Cardinal Virtues – the Perfect Intelligence which is the principal means of attaining Nirvâna.

It was not long afterwards that this same priest again had a dream, in which he was visited by two *Tennin* ("heavenly people" who very much resemble our angels), who thanked him in utter gladness of heart for his kind help. By the mercy of Kwannon they had not only been released from their ophidian incarnation, but had been re-born as celestial beings. Anchin was now *Tōsotsu-ten* (= Eloquence Guardian) and Kiyohime was *Tōri-ten* (= Beauty Guardian)⁷. And "having made this announcement", they flew back to their Buddhist Paradise.

The legend undoubtedly suggests a nexus, based on the Buddhist theory of re-incarnation, between Emperor Mommu and Anchin, and between Miyako-hime and Kiyohime. But I have found no direct indication, nor is any reason given why both individuals should suffer the punishment of being, temporarily at least, changed into one of the lowest and most disreputable existences, that of reptiles.

The story of Anchin and Kiyohime is commonly given in a somewhat different, more humanly humdrum way, dealing with the ordinary passion between a good-looking girl and a young acolyte of the *Dōjōji*, who cannot withstand the lure of carnal love but afterwards regains his

7. The title "*Ten*" is applied to many guardian deities who are clearly Brahmanic, although taken over by Buddhism. The special characters of these two are among the Six Desires which the human heart should avoid, although at the same time they are the most estimable ones. It is not always easy to differentiate ... The Six Desires are: Love, Beauty, Appearance, Eloquence, Smooth Skin, Pleasant Features.

religious conscience. This naturally leads to tragic jealousy, the furious revenge of the girl who transforms herself into a demon-dragon, and the final burning of both the acolyte under the bell and the dragon coiled around it. But the foregoing must be the true version of what actually happened ... It cannot be otherwise, the priests say, because it is so recorded (if in a more elegant style) in a fully illustrated "History" of the Dōjōji written by Emperor Go-Komatsu (1393-1412), presumably after his abdication. The History is contained in two scrolls which together measure sixty feet in length – and which are still kept as most venerated treasures at this temple.

And so it comes that to this very day every year thousands of pilgrims visit the Dōjōji, in memory of Anchin and Kiyohime, and hoping to help some other poor souls burnt by fiery love, through their prayers and a slight obolus to the priests. Perhaps, also, many a girl and many a youth hopes to find a partner as beautiful as Anchin or Kiyohime, without the drawback that fate would not permit them to be happy together. Somehow the temple also acquired the reputation of almost always curing the most serious diseases. When the doctor has abandoned hope, the patient will go to the Dōjōji to perform a *hyaku-do mairi*, walking a hundred times around the main building's platform, of course with the appropriate prayers. Better still, he or she will do it a thousand times, the *sen-do mairi*; but as this takes time, some friendly neighbour, or even several, may assist by doing part on behalf of the patient, the total counting ...

Behind the *hondō* or main hall there is a *toyu* or roof-gutter which in good weather will give an omen, and this the patient will then visit for confirmation. If he may expect to recover, nothing happens, and he can go home contented and full of hope. But if the gods decree his sickness to be fatal, the gutter will drip water even in hottest sunshine ... Then there is no doubt that within two or three days the man will be dead.

USHI-NO TOKI MAIRI

In the more popular versions of the Dōjōji tragedy, the girl does not transform herself into a dragon spontaneously, but has to make certain "magic" to enable her to do so. Full of vengeance, she goes night after night to the shrines of Fudō or of Kompira, shaking with hate and asking for the powers of transformation and revenge⁸. The belief in the acquisition of such powers was general, but certain formalities had to be observed, else the "magic" might turn against the petitioner. As the story has it, Kiyohime practically followed the formalities prescribed for the *Ushi-no toki mairi*.

This is probably the most terrific "spell" which the Japanese have discovered, ages ago, and if they have more or less forgotten it in the hustling cities, they still occasionally remember and practise it in the farming settlements off the main roads. It is one of the many practices known to us as *envoûtement*, whereby a certain treatment – painful or even deadly – is given to a puppet representing one's enemy. It is an incantation, with morbid rituals, whereby a person is to be punished through the maltreating of his "effigy".

The idea that an image, whether painted or formed of some material, can with proper spells be made to replace a living being, is universal. The image need not be a recognizable likeness, provided it "represents" the being intended, and is magically endowed, in the mind of the performer, with the individuality contemplated. It may stand for a human or for an animal, but must assume the character of one distinct being. Such "impersonations" we currently find with all savages, where they may help in curing a body by transferring illness, or in killing an enemy, or even in obtaining the love of some other person. We

8. Fudō Myō-ō (Skr. Acala), the immovable God of Wisdom who masters the evil passions by subjecting the unregenerate Desires of mankind to the sway of Reason, in the popular imagination is rather the god of Fire, of fiery Love, and of Revenge. Kompira, possibly the Nāga-king Kumbhîra but much transformed by Shintō, is a general protector, and also the Avenger of Wrong.

had exactly the same superstition in ancient Greece and Rome, and it continued very much in vogue in all of Europe throughout the Middle Ages, while remnants may still be found here and there among the superstitious peasantry, exactly as they are found in Japan. The puppets, with us generally made of wax, were either buried or burnt after having been cursed and execrated under the name of one's enemy, and the enemy wasted in the same way and died, unless saved by strong counter-magic at the last moment. We still often enough "burn somebody in effigy", and hope that the same destruction will befall him ... The topic of such affinity-sorcery is quite a vast one.

Since the earliest days, Japan has known many kinds of magic puppet-substitutes for sundry purposes: beneficent ones like those "scape-goats" that were rubbed over one's body and then thrown into running water, to carry away one's illness and "impurity"; others that could bring rain and fertility by taking, in a way, the place of spirits; and others again which could be worked upon to cause harm to some detested person. The most efficacious yet most dangerous of the latter kind figured in this *ushi-no toki mairi* bewitching.

The *ushi-no toki mairi* was exclusively practised by women, and almost always for revenge of spurned love, to destroy an unfaithful *galant* or husband, or sometimes the latter's *paramour*. If nothing interfered, the person was expected to die without fail as soon as the spell had been completed.

Mairi more or less corresponds to "visit", "make a pilgrimage", and a *miya-mairi* is to worship at a Shintō shrine. *Ushi-no toki* is "the hour of the Ox": in old Japan, as in China, the day was divided into twelve hours, six of daylight and six of night, each one governed by an animal of the Zodiac; and the *ushi* hour, lasting from about 1 to 3 a. m., was the darkest and weirdest one. It was in every respect the most "spooky" hour, and it needed a stout heart even to go out at that time of night, since the evil ghosts and goblins were then most active. A woman who decided to make a *miya-mairi* at the hour of the Ox must have

been desperate indeed – suffering from a sort of wild madness. No sane person would willingly be out of doors at the *ushi-no toki*; if nothing worse befell, at least there would be a witch-fox abroad to deceive one.

The *ushi-no toki mairi* demands some weird preparations. The woman must go to bed as usual; but her head must not rest on the normal pillow – she must so arrange her bedding that the head will lie on the *shiki*, the slightly elevated threshold with two grooves in which the *fusuma* slide. If such a *shiki-makura* (pillow) arrangement is not possible, the head must lie on the black border-bands of two parallel *tatami*⁹.

The woman will probably at once fall into a deep sleep. But towards the Ox hour, just before 1 a.m., she will have a horrid dream, an incubus which wakens her at 1 precisely. She will then get up, tense and strong-willed, and dress in a thin white *kimono* or underdress – white is the colour of mourning – bound with only a soft string around her loins, not with the usual *obi*. The *kimono* is also folded the wrong way, right side over left, as is done when dressing a corpse ... She will hang a bronze mirror on her bosom (like a Siberian Shaman!), and leave her hair loose and streaming down her back. Under her feet she will wear the highest clogs that she has¹⁰. Her most powerful weapon, however, is the small tripod which she places on her head, upside-down, like a crown, the three prongs bearing three burning candles ...¹¹

Thus equipped, the vengeful woman will go on her errand. In her left she carries a straw-puppet, the embodiment of her unfaithful lover or of

9. The *tatami* straw-mats are bordered with cloth bands (usually black) about an inch wide on their longer sides. The rooms all have 3, 4½, 6, 8 etc. mats, of standard size (about 3 × 6 feet), and they are laid over the rough planks in a corresponding "pattern". Nobody will ever sleep in such a way that his pillow will lie on two parallel cloth-borders, as this is bound to bring illness or misfortune! Rooms are separated by the wooden *shiki*, in which move the screen-like paper-doors.

10. *Geta*, wooden clogs, are of various heights, those worn in bad weather having two tall slats across the underpart. Ordinary *geta* have broader but much lower blocks.

11. The Japanese commonly use *hibachi*, charcoal braziers, in their rooms, with often a three-legged iron ring, the *gotoku* or trivet, over the fire, on which to place the water-kettle for tea.

the hated mistress whom she wants to destroy. In her right she carries a hammer. Between her tightly-closed lips or snarling teeth she holds a long nail or spike – the longest one she can obtain. Or several of them.

Everybody in the house and the village is asleep, and yet she will take the greatest precautions not to be seen or interrupted; because, if that should happen the entire magic will be reversed, and whatever ill effects she has created on lover or rival will fall on herself. Hence it is said that if one should have the misfortune to encounter a woman on her *ushi-no toki mairi* it will be as if one met a tiger: she will use the most violent language, act as one demented, become really dangerous. A woman on her *ushi-no toki mairi* has such a “strong spirit” that she may cleave holes into a rock ... Any late wanderer who sees from a distance something like a burning candle will therefore make haste and silently disappear into a side-lane.

The jealous woman in her weird attire makes her way to a shrine – preferably one to Fudō, because he is the god of burning love and revenge – but any shrine to a Shintō *kami* will do as well. At every shrine will be found an ancient and venerable tree, especially sacred to the deity, and to this she goes. Muttering imprecations, she nails the puppet to its trunk. Then she goes to the sanctuary itself, and prays for the destruction of her faithless lover or husband or antagonist, vowing that if her petition be heard she herself will thereupon pull out again the nails, which now hurt and offend the god by wounding his mystic tree. And she returns as secretly as she came – her heart afire with hate ...

The performance must be repeated for at least three nights, one or several nails being driven in each night. Every nail will shorten the enemy's life. But the surest way to succeed (this I have been told by an old matron of the *inaka*, who assured me that the *ushi-no toki mairi* was not yet quite forgotten in her district) is by using only one nail each time, and repeating the operation for forty-nine consecutive nights! (Forty-nine is a Buddhist death-number, 7×7 , and on the 49th day after death the soul is in some manner released from its earthly con-

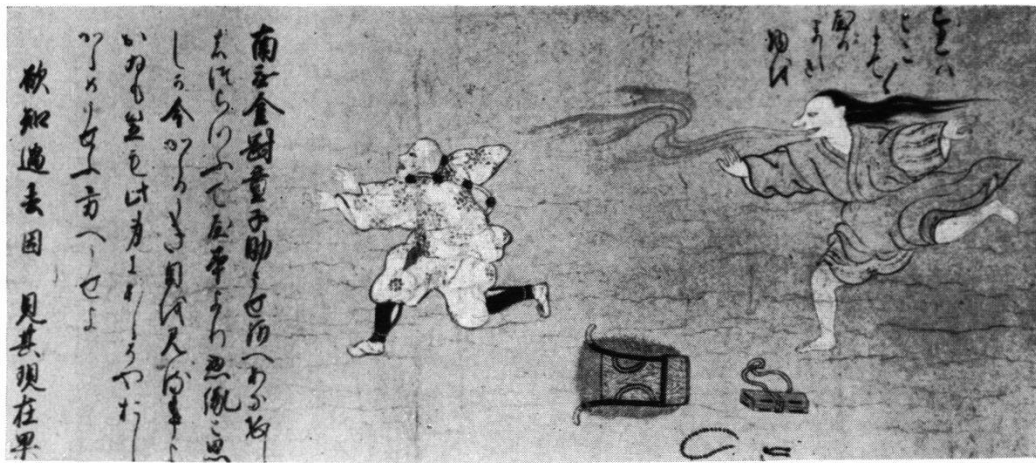
nection.) Each night, of course, the same precautions must be taken, and the same mummary gone through. The danger to the performer increases with every night, too, because if she should be seen, the accumulated evil so far produced will fall on her. On the 49th night she will find an enormous black ox lying in front of the shrine, and over this she must jump – else again it will become a *jibun-no bachi*: a divine punishment falling on oneself ... But when the 49th nail is driven in, and the 49th invocation said, the traitorous man or woman is virtually already a cold corpse ...

Apart from the power of the spoken word, especially if uttered as a curse and under strong psychical agitation, a power in which all races believed, the underlying idea is that the divinity, in order to save his beloved tree from such painful treatment, will grant the woman's wish and strike her enemy dead. That, again, is a universal conclusion. At the same time, of course, the puppet logically suffers from the wounds, and if it does not bleed, at least it loses "vitality" – and so does the person which it symbolizes.

Such is the *ushi-no toki mairi*, and there are many recorded stories confirming that spurned women have successfully taken this terrible revenge. Sundry other legends have it that after such pilgrimages the woman herself, full of evil thoughts of retribution, will suddenly change into a serpent or dragon, and pursue the man¹². She either succeeds or is killed by his attendants ... Sometimes, if the hate in her breast burns too fiercely, she herself may perish together with her victim, as is said of the beautiful Kiyohime.

12. There is a worldwide mysterious nexus between woman and snake, which manifests itself in various manners. The oriental dragon is mainly an elaboration of the Big Serpent conception.

It is of some interest to note that "Christian" people have evolved a somewhat different "religious" method of punishing an enemy by casting a curse on him. While uttering the imprecations, pins are stuck in a candle which is then offered to some Saint's image in the church. The enemy is expected to waste away in the same degree as the candle burns down. The Saint presumably helps ... Such sorcery is by no means extinct even in our time.



4



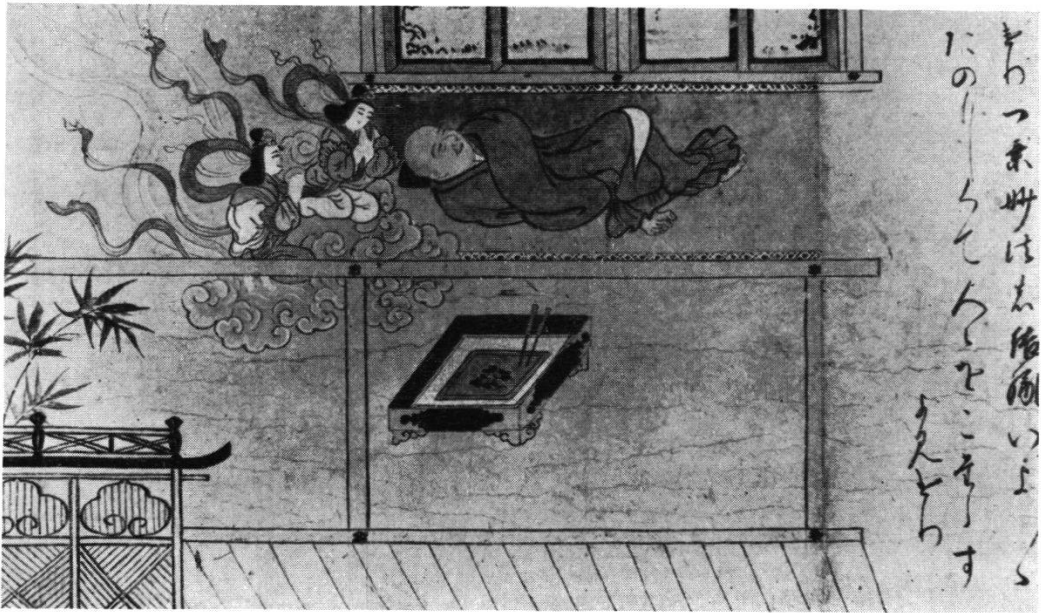
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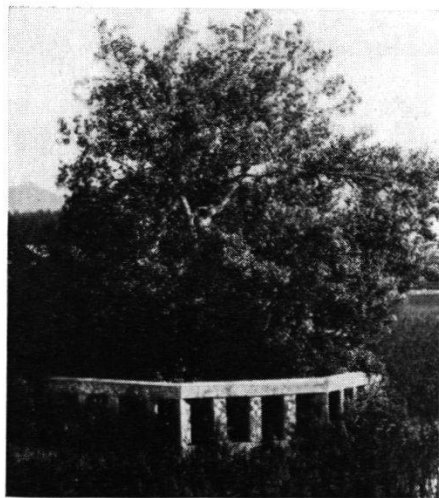
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9

But I have been told by the same old lady that an *ushi-no toki mairi* may also be undertaken for a more loving purpose, a case in point being known to her. A doctor was condemned to a long term in prison because of some accidental death for which he was blamed. His wife felt that he was innocent, so she decided to make a true *ushi-no toki mairi*, except that she did not use the straw-puppet. She simply hurt the tree with long spikes, under observance of the correct ritual. "If you want this pain to cease," was her request to the god in the shrine, "release my husband. I shall then not only stop the nailing process, but extract the nails already in, so that your wounds may heal." And the god acknowledged the reasonableness of her attitude, and did as she wished. The doctor's case was reviewed before a higher court, he was found innocent, and freed shortly afterwards.

Is it any wonder that people still cling to their old gods and old beliefs?

ILLUSTRATIONS

The Anchin and Kiyohime Story – From the *Dōjōji Engi Emaki* (Historical Scroll of the Temple Dōjōji). Written by Emperor *Go-Komatsu* and illustrated by *Tosa Mitsushige* in the Ō-ei Era (1394–1428).

- 1 Part of the main text.
- 2 Anchin and Kiyohime talk together in the house, after which (right corner) she sees him off.
- 3 Kiyohime, on the look-out for Anchin, meets a lady on horseback and her attendant who are just returning from a *Kumano-mairi*: she runs to enquire about Anchin.
- 4 Kiyohime catches up with Anchin at Uyeno; he discards his impedimenta to run away from her faster.
- 5 She becomes a dragon, or "big snake", and crosses the Hidaka-gawa.
- 6 With the help of the Dōjōji priests, and under the direction of the *ōshō* (right), Anchin crawls into the big bell.
- 7 The flaming Dragon coiled around the bell.
- 8 The *ōshō*'s second dream, when Anchin and Kiyohime visit him as newly-transformed *Tennin*.
- 9 The Hebi-zuka or Snake-mound of Kiyohime.