

## THE TEMPLES OF KAMAKURA

### IV\*

Kamakura has always been associated with religion and it has been a stronghold of Buddhism. The sects which have had most influence and power are Zen and Nichiren, but other schools of Buddhism are also represented. The Daibutsu in Kōtoku-In and the Kwannon-do at Hase belong to Jodo. There are other temples belonging to Jodo, others to Shingon, besides many Shinto shrines which have affiliations with Buddhism, for they were founded in the days of Ryōbu Shinto when Buddhism and Shinto stood religiously close together.

One of the most ancient fanes is the Sugimoto-no-Kwannon which was founded by the priest Gyōgi Bosatsu in the year 734 c. e. It belongs to the Shingon sect and was founded before the days of Yoritomo and Zen influence. The chief object of worship is the Eleven-faced Kwannon (Kwanzeon Bosatsu) and is said to be by the hand of the great sculptor Unkei and was presented to the temple by the celebrated Shōgun Yoritomo.

There are many forms of Kwannon, but the most frequently seen are:—1. The Shō-Kwannon (the Wise). This Kwannon is represented standing or sitting but generally in the former position, holding a lotus flower. 2. Juichimen Kwannon (the Eleven-faced). On her head are eleven faces. 3. The Senju Kwannon (Thousand-handed) has in reality forty hands but these are supposed to stand for the thousand. In each of these hands she holds various Buddhist emblems, the lotus flower, rosary, the wheel of the law, rope, begging bowl, vase, the sun, the moon, pagoda, etc., and in her head are images of the Buddha. 4. Batō Kwannon (Horse-

\* This concludes the series of articles on "The Temples of Kamakura." For previous articles see *Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. III, Nos. 2 and 4, and Vol. V, Nos. 2-3.

headed) has three heads, above the central one being the image of a horse and six pairs of arms each hand holding emblems. 5. The Nyoirin Kwannon (the Jewel) is seated with one knee elevated and resting her head upon one hand. This Kwannon has as a rule two arms but sometimes more. The representation of many heads and arms is to show that Kwannon is ever ready to see and hear distress and having seen and heard to succour.

“When the love of Kwannon is made concrete, it expresses itself in various forms according to the needs of circumstance. In the *Pundarika Sutra* Kwannon is described as incarnating herself in many different personages. For instance, when she sees it most expedient to save a certain class of people through a certain mode of expression, she will assume the special mode and exercise all her influence in that capacity. She will be a philosopher, or merchant, or man of letters, or person of low birth, or anything else as required by the occasion, while her sole aim is to deliver all beings, without exception, from ignorance and selfishness. Therefore, wherever there is a heart groping in the dark, Kwannon will not fail to extend her embracing arms.”<sup>1</sup>

The Eleven-faced Kwannon seen here is the All Looking One who turns her head in all directions in order to see those who need her help. Kwannon in Japan is generally represented as feminine, although in reality sexless, but as compassion is so often associated with women, the Japanese love to picture her as a beautiful, stately, and graceful woman.

The Kwannon temple is reached by a steep flight of steps. It is a simple straw-thatched building standing in a quiet spot amidst the trees, but it shelters a number of fine pieces of statuary, some of them being National Treasures. One is the large gilt statue of the altar carved by Unkei, another also of the Eleven-faced deity is from the hand of the well-known priest Jikaku who died 867 C. E.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. Shaku Soyen—*Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot*.

There is a story that Jikaku found a piece of wood floating in the sea which gave out a bright light. He used this wood to carve his Kwannon out of and it is said that the statue always emitted a soft luminous aura. Another story tells that when the temple was once burned the statue left the altar and took refuge under a great cryptomeria tree.

Another statue of the Kwannon and also a National Treasure is the one carved by the priest Eshin by the command of Emperor Kwazan. The third statue is the most ancient and was chiseled by the famous priest Gyōgi of Ryōbu Shinto fame.

This little temple therefore is truly a sanctuary of Kwannon. Almost deserted now except for the care-taker the effigies of the Bodhisattva stand in peace. Once a year in August the festival takes place, when the country people crowd up the steep steps to the sacred place to give reverence and homage to that most popular of all the holy ones—Kwanzeon Bosatsu.

Gokurakuji is another ancient Shingon temple in Kamakura—the temple of Paradise, but it is practically ruined now since the great earthquake of 1923, only one little building remaining of its former importance and beauty. It was founded by Hōjō Shigetoki whose tomb is at the back of the temple grounds, (he died in 1527 c. e.), and it was made fine and splendid by his two sons in memory of their father.

Gokurakuji is noted for its first Abbot Ryōkwan Ninsho Rishi who was a true Bodhisattva. Here, he built a hospital for lepers and engaged in all kinds of charitable work for the sick and poor and also constructed shelters for animals, and had a special hospital for sick horses. He was noted for his effective prayers for rain. In Shingon Buddhism there is a special ritual or service for causing rain to fall and cease, and according to historical accounts Ryōkwan was most successful in these prayers and was held in great veneration and esteem on account of them.

A story is told that at one time when Ryōkwan was praying, a snake appeared in front of him and remained quiet evidently listening to the prayers. Soon after rain began to fall.

Besides caring for the poor and sick and alleviating distress, Ryōkwan erected temples, bridges, roads, dug wells, built bath houses. He established sixty-three places where no killing was allowed and it is said that in twenty years, he helped 57,250 persons. He seems to have been an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara (Kwanzeon Bosatsu).

Gokurakuji was destroyed twice by fire and after a severe earthquake in 1433, it gradually declined until now almost nothing is left. But there is an old map which can still be seen showing how in its early days of religious prosperity it was also a ministering angel to the sick and the poor, for the map shows that there was provision on the ground for buildings devoted to sick patients, lepers, animals, and stables for horses. The last great earthquake of 1923 laid its destroying fingers on the little that was left of Gokurakuji so that now only a few statues are to be seen on the altar of the small building. There is an ancient statue of Fudo said to have been brought from China by Kōbō Daishi in 807 C. E. There are two fine statues of Shakamuni and one also of Ryōkwan called popularly Iwō Nyorai (the Buddha of Healing), because he helped people so much. His tomb near that of Hōjō Shigetoki is in the rear of the grounds and marked by an enormous Gorinto monument.

The *Gorinto* is a stone monument composed of five parts representing the five elements: the cube symbolising the earth; the ball water; the pyramid fire; the crescent air; and the jewel ether. These monuments inscribed with sacred Sanskrit characters are often used as tombstones.

It is claimed for this *Gorinto* that it is the largest in Eastern Japan. It is a fitting monument for the saintly and charitable Ryōkwan, the first Abbot of Gokurakuji.

Even if his beloved temple entirely disappears as it now seems fated to do, his benevolent deeds will ever be recorded in the annals of Japanese history.

Kakuonji is another ancient Shingon temple, now only a shadow of its former self. It was founded by Hōjō Sadatoki on the site of an older edifice. The present building is one of the oldest in Kamakura having been carefully repaired during the centuries succeeding its erection.

Kakuonji sets in a quiet, almost deserted valley surrounded by hills. The main building is spacious. The Buddha upon the altar is that of the healing Yakushi said to be carved by Takuma. Yakushi (Sanskrit, Bhaishajyaguru) is the Buddha of Healing. His healing powers are used not only for physical but also for mental ills. He is represented either standing or seated—generally the latter, and holding in his hands a jewel-like vase. He is often spoken of as the God of Medicine, but this is not quite correct. Yakushi is often revered for his answer to prayers for healing from disease, but like the other great Buddhas he is thought to be one who heals the mind, assists meditation, and leads the aspirant to spiritual enlightenment. On each side of Yakushi stand the Bodhisattvas representing the sun and the moon, Nikko and Gwakko Bosatsus. All three of these statues are large and majestic, yet of exceeding grace, and remarkable for the fine open-work mandorlo of the tapering oval form called *funa-goko* or “boat shaped” by the Japanese. Below him sits a statue of the Buddha Amida, a creation of great beauty from the Ashikaga days by an unknown sculptor. Guarding the main Buddha are the statues of the twelve followers of Yakushi who assist him in succouring the sick and distressed.

In a small shrine near the main temple is the black Jizo, a statue carved in the Kamakura era and a National Treasure. This statue was very famous and supposed to work miracles, and the reason for calling it black is because in his many descents to Hell to rescue unhappy beings there,

the body of the compassionate Bodhisattva became blackened from the fire, in which he stood in the place of those who called upon him for aid. Like Kwanzon, Jizo (Sanskrit, Kshitigarbha) is the Bodhisattva of compassion.

He is represented both standing and sitting and is distinguished from Shaka or Amida by his shaven head. In one hand he carries a staff which has six rings on the end symbolising the six Pāramitās; in the other hand he holds a jewel. Jizo is the friend of children, of pilgrims, of women, and indeed of all who need his pity. His face and attitude are marked by gentleness and generally a soft smile is on his lips.

Lafcadio Hearn writes:

“Little piles of stone are placed upon his pedestal. It is said that these little towers of stones are built by child ghosts for penance in the Sai-no-Kawara, which is the place to which all children after death must go. And the oni (demons) come to throw down the stone piles and to frighten and torment the children. But the little souls run to Jizo, who hides them in his great sleeves and comforts them. And every stone one lays upon the knees or at the feet of Jizo with a prayer from the heart helps some child soul to perform his long penance. . . . The real origin of this custom of piling up stones before the images of Jizo is not known to the people. The custom is founded upon a passage in the famous sutra, *The Lotus of the Good Law*: ‘Even the little boys and girls who in playing erected here and there heaps of sand with the intention of dedicating them as stupas (dedicatory mounds or monuments) to the Buddhas, they have all of them reached enlightenment’ . . . . The stones heaped about the statue are put there by the people for the sake of the little ones, most often by mothers of dead children.”

Near the temple among the woods are other shrines, one to Fudo Myōo, one to Kōbō Daishi, one to the Thirteen Buddhas worshipped by Shingon believers and a series of

caves, eighty-eight in number, each containing an image of Kōbō Daishi is to be found on the way to the summit of the mountain behind Kakuonji, and at the top itself is a statue of the great Shingon saint. From here, there is a fine view of all the surrounding country. A visit to Kakuonji can be made a pleasurable excursion, combining as it does the delights of nature and of religion.

The Jōdō sect is also represented at Kamakura and Kōmyōji is the largest and finest of its temples. It was founded by Hōjō Tsunetoki, 1243 c. E., and is still well preserved, not having suffered from fire and earthquake as have other Kamakura temples. It was patronised by both Emperors and Shōguns and is still flourishing as a leading temple of the Jōdō sect in Eastern Japan. As we enter the gate we see on the right the Zendōzuka (the Hill of Zendo).

There is a fine Sammon (great gate) built in 1533, containing as is usual in all Sammon the Buddha Śākyamuni with Monju and Fugen, the Sixteen Rakans and the Four Heavenly Kings. The main temple large and finely constructed enshrines the first Abbot Ryōchin (Kishu Zenji), a pupil of Hōnen Shōnin's disciple Shōko. He was Abbot here for over forty years and his tomb is on the hill behind the temple. There is also a statue of Amida traditionally ascribed to Shōtoku Taishi and in the neighbouring Amida Hall, the Buddha upon the altar is from the hand of the famous sculptor, Unkei, a bone of whose very hand is preserved as a sacred relic.

This temple of Kōmyōji was specially supported by the Naito family whose tombs are in a special burying ground within the temple compound. There is a charming garden, a splendid old bell, and in the Nisondo are statues of the Goddess Benzaiten and of the Chinese sage Zendo, one of the patriarchs of the Jōdō sect.

The image of Zendo, legend says, was miraculously borne on the sea from its shrine in Kyūshū to Kamakura

and that it landed by itself. The people devoutly installed it in the Kōmyōji garden. As to the statue of Benten, the story goes that the statue of the goddess was found floating near Kōmyōji and returned to her original home on Enoshima. But when this had happened many times the people came to believe that she wished to remain at Kōmyōji, so her statue was enshrined here beside that of Zendo.

Kōmyōji is noted for its picture rolls of the Taema mandala illustrating the story of the Princess Chūjo-Hime who wove a picture of paradise with the help of Amida and Kwannon. These picture rolls are of great beauty and justly admired. They are said to be painted by the Tosa artist Sumiyoshi Keion (13th century).

On the 13th of October the annual festival Jāya is held, "Ten Nights of Prayer" which in these modern days have become three. The custom originated in the days of Emperor Gotsuchimikado under the Abbot Yushu Shōnin, later well known as Jikaku Daishi. Even now the celebration of three days is held with great earnestness and enthusiasm. Crowds come to attend the services which consist of sutra-reciting and sermons. Many priests take part clad in their robes of beautiful colours to minister to the worshipping people. The candles gleam, the incense rises, and the murmurs of Namu-Amida-Butsu echo through the building. When one attends such a service as this, it is not easy to believe that Buddhism, as some would have us think, is dead or even dying, but very much alive and very vital and moving.

Kōmyōji stands by the sea with wooded hills at its back. It is a worthy edifice to shelter the representation of the Buddha Amitābha and to house the statue of its first Lord Abbot whose saintly life is still remembered by the devotees of Kōmyōji.

There is one temple left for us to visit and that is Kōsokuji, the temple of the Cheek-branded Amida, belonging to the Ji sect, founded by Ippen Shōnin. Ji is also an Amida sect and lays stress, as do Jōdō and Shin, upon the



repetition of the Nembutsu. But his followers formed a separate school and its headquarters are at the temple of Yugyōdera in the town of Fujisawa very near Kamakura. The priests of Yugyōdera are noted for their power of healing the sick and for their custom of travelling about the country, healing, praying, and comforting. Yugyōdera means "Temple of the Wanderer" and the abbot of this temple does not remain at home, but is ever itinerant just as was the founder of the sect, Ippen Shōnin.

The Amida statue said to be carved by Unkei is of wood, gilded, and is three feet two inches high. His face is serene and kind, a gentle smile upon his lips. His left hand stretched down shows that he wishes to relieve all beings who come to him, and his right hand held up shows that he is blessing them while the circle made with thumb and forefinger is a sign that he will come for them at the hour of death. On each side of him stands Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Kwannon and Seishi).

There is an interesting story connected with this statue. According to tradition the statue of Amida was carved by Unkei at the request of Machi-no-tsubone, a court lady. In the household was a priest named Manzai and he was accused of theft and other bad actions to such an extent that in Machi-no-tsubone's absence the priest was taken by the enraged neighbourhood and branded on the cheek with a hot iron. Just as the brand was applied Manzai cried, "Buddha, help me." It was noticed that after the brand was applied no marks were left upon the priest's face which was smooth and unharmed as before. Again the brand was applied but with the same result. That night Machi-no-tsubone had a dream in which the statue of Amida came to her and said, "Why did you brand my face?" and he pressed his hand to his left cheek as if in pain. She was astonished, at once returned to Kamakura, and on inspecting the statue found to her horror that on the left cheek of the statue was a deep brand. She was startled and contrite, felt that the priest

had been falsely accused and called in a sculptor to repair the statue. In vain! Although many attempts were made and the face of the statue regilded, the mark of the brand re-appeared. From that time on, the statue was called Hōyake or Cheek-branded Amida.

Machi-no-tsubone had it enshrined in a temple, became a nun and died as she was entering Samadhi before the statue of this Amida. Whether Manzai was an evil character or not is not clear, but the compassion of Amida is said to be directed not only towards the good but towards the evil. In any case, Manzai devoted the rest of his life to good works, a living witness to prove that those who call upon Amida with a believing heart will not do so in vain.

We have now spoken of all the well-known Buddhist temples in Kamakura, but there are many others, smaller or less important or new ones which we have not time to visit. Besides the Buddhist temples there are many Shinto shrines of interest such as Hachiman whose history is closely connected with Buddhism and the Kamakura-no-Miya which is dedicated to the spirit of Prince Morinaga, the son of Emperor Godaigo, who met a tragic death here. There are also shrines to the Goddess Benten (strictly speaking, the Bodhi-sattva Benzaiten) and to the God of the rice Inari whose messenger is the fox, as Benten's is the serpent. There are the tombs of famous men such as the Shogun Yoritomo and the poet Tamesuke. There are in the vicinity of Kamakura many temples, shrines, caves, and monuments all having religious or historic interest. Besides, at Kamakura nature is most lavish and beautiful and most of these shrines and temples are set in most charming wooded surroundings, many of them with fine views of the sea.

The little fishing village became the great capital of the Shōgun. In these days it is neither of these but a modern town possessing a comfortable western-style hotel, inns, shops, sanitariums, and a beach which is famous throughout Japan. It is now both a summer and a winter resort,

a residential town, a fishing village and a centre of religion all in one. And near Kamakura is the fairy island of Enoshima sometimes called the City of Mother of Pearl, one of the most picturesque anywhere in the world and sacred to the lovely Goddess Benten who is said to have married the fierce dragon king thus putting an end to trouble. Now she smiles upon the fair region of Kamakura with its interesting historic remains, and its strongholds of religion, the Buddhist temples.

BEATRICE LANE SUZUKI