

## IN BUDDHIST TEMPLES

### IX. KYŌDŌGOKOKUJI (TŌJI)

When visitors approach the city of Kyoto by train from Ōsaka or Kōbe the first prominent feature of the landscape is Tōji's five-storied Pagoda rising up 183 feet, the tallest in Japan.

Tōji is situated in the extreme southern part of the city. It belongs to the Shingon sect and has many subordinate temples. Crowds of people gather here on the 21st of each month to do honour to the founder of the sect, Kōbō Daishi.

Tōji dates from 796 A.D. when the Emperor Kwammu built two temples, one to the left and the other to the right of the Rashōmon, the south gate, with the idea of protecting the city. In 823 Emperor Saga gave the temple to Kōbō Daishi as the chief centre for the propagation of the Shingon teaching. Two years later Emperor Junna ordered the *Kōdō* built. Other prominent persons associated with the building or reconstruction or upkeep of the temple in ancient times were Mongaku Shōnin connected with the sad story of Kesa Gozen, Yoritomo, the first Minamoto Shogun, the Emperor Gouda, Emperor Godaigo, Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu and Tokugawa Iemitsu. Hideyoshi rebuilt the pagoda in memory of his mother. At the time of the restoration Tōji became the main temple of the Kogi Shingon sect.

In the beginning, Tōji was not a Shingon temple, so the buildings are arranged according to the ancient Nara style, in imitation of the T'ang period in China. It is the only temple now standing in Kyoto that was erected at the time of the founding of the city. Some of the buildings or parts of buildings are national treasures. The south gate called Nantaimon has beautiful carvings. The Rengemon (lotus gate) dates from the Kamakura period and its style is very fine. When Kōbō Daishi left Tōji for Kōyasan, he went out by this gate and it has never been opened since.

Both the Hōzo (Treasure Godown) and the Daishi Dō are national treasures. The former erected by Mongaku Shōnin in 1197 is built in what is called the *Azegurazukuri* style, some of the tiles on the roof having floral scrolls thus showing that they were used when Tōji was first built. The *Daishidō* is not only the hall where the statue of Kōbō Daishi is enshrined but also the place where he resided. This hall is an example of a typical dwelling house of the middle ages. The style of the *Kwanchi* is also a typical *Shoinzukuri*, showing the home of a samurai in mediaeval times.

There is a famous story connected with the Rajō Gate which formerly stood in the south.

Terrible ogres were in the habit of entering the city by the Rajō Gate and capturing young maidens whom they bore away to their caves among the mountains. Raikō, who belonged to the Minamoto family, was very desirous of putting an end to these ravages. One of his retainers, named Tsuna, volunteered to guard the gate. One stormy night he was unable to overcome a feeling of drowsiness. Leaning against one of the posts he was soon fast asleep, when one of the ogres, who had been sitting on the timbers overhead watching an opportunity, grabbed the sleeping warrior by the helmet and was about to bear him off through the air, when Tsuna suddenly drew his sword and cut off one of the ogre's arms. The monster, howling with pain, vanished from sight leaving behind him the severed arm which Tsuna took to his master. It is said that, if an ogre thus wounded can within a week recover the amputated limb, it will easily re-unite itself to the body. Tsuna, having been warned to take good care that nothing of this kind should happen, procured a heavy stone box which he took into his house. Having tightly locked the doors, he put the ogre's arm into the box, and replacing the lid sat upon it; resolving that for seven days and nights he would watch against the ogre's wiles. Late on the last evening he heard a feeble knock at

the door. In reply to his inquiry he was told that his aged aunt had come from her distant country home to congratulate him on his heroic deed. He at first refused to admit her, but when she pleaded that he would not be so cruel as to keep her out in the cold and darkness when in all her feebleness she had come so far to see him, he finally yielded. The old lady soon asked to see the ogre's arm. At his refusal she shed tears at his unwillingness to gratify her, until at last he consented to her taking one peep. No sooner was the lid lifted than all disguise was thrown aside and the ogre, who had assumed the old lady's form, seizing the arm vanished from sight.

This story has been made into a Nō play called *Tsuchigumo* where the demon is really a terrible spider which was later killed by the hero of the story, Watanabe-no-Tsuna.

There are three principal buildings in Tōji besides the *Daishi Dō*. These are the *Kondō* or Golden Hall, a double-roofed massive structure, a mingling of Indian and Chinese architecture, 114 by 62 feet, containing a great statue of Yakushi flanked by Nigwatsu, the Bodhisattva of the Sun and Gekko the Bodhisattva of the Moon. The Twelve Followers of Yakushi supposed to have been carved by Kōbō Daishi stand in this hall. In the *Jiki-Dō* or Kwannon Hall is a very large and majestic statue of Kwannon 18 feet high, a fine example of the Fujiwara period. Unfortunately it was badly damaged in the fire of 1932. It is the form of Senju Kwannon with her many arms, each one containing some symbolic object, reaching out to save those whom she pities. Temporarily, a smaller statue stands in her place.

In the *Kōdō* there are great statues of Dainichi the central Buddha of Shingon, surrounded by his manifestations of the Buddha, Amida, Shaka, Ashuku and Hōjō. There are a number of other striking sculptures here, among them the four deva kings attributed to Kōbō Daishi.

The five-storied pagoda is 32½ feet square at its base

and 174 feet in height, not including the bronze spire. It is one of the most graceful of Japan's pagodas.

In the *Kwanchō In* are many treasures, chief among which are the series of wooden statues called Godai Kokuzō. It is one of the oldest series of wooden statues to be seen in the Orient, showing the art styles of both the Southern and Northern schools of sculpture. They are supposed to date from 589–617 A.D. Each image is about two feet four inches in height and is seated upon the back of a bird or animal, a peacock, garuda bird, horse, elephant and lion. As Mr Fenollosa says "These retain all the quality and feeling of bronze, recalling the early Southern animal sculptures in clay and metal." As to the human figures he says, "Here we have the very type of a North Chinese Warrior."

They are five forms of the Bodhisattva Kokuzō (Akāṣagarbha) who is a Bodhisattva representing compassion and wisdom. He is generally represented seated upon a lotus, adorned with jewels. He holds in the right hand the holy gem, the Cintamani, or a lotus, and in the left hand, the sword of wisdom.

In the *Daishi Dō* is a sacred and beautiful statue seldom shown of Kōbō Daishi; it was carved by Koshō Hōgan at the command of the Emperor Shijō. Recently I was permitted to see it. Before the altar stands a very splendid candelabra containing many lights. The effect of these candles illuminating the rich altar setting and behind it sheltered by curtain and doors within a rich lacquer shrine sits the stately black statue of the Shingon saint.

Many emperors are associated with Tōji. The esoteric doctrines appealed to the court and we find the names of a number of emperors who helped Tōji from its establishments up to fairly modern times. When Kōbō Daishi, then called Kūkai, returned from China, he brought with him many religious objects given to him by his master Keikwa. Kōbō Daishi himself was a wonderful sculptor, painter and calligrapher and made copies of many famous Chinese works.

of art. In this way the art of the middle T'ang period was introduced into Japan.

In the early ninth century, Chinese influence was strong not only in religion and the fine arts but in general culture, for example, the writing was in the Chinese style, poems were read in the Chinese way, costumes were of the Chinese fashion, and houses and streets were built after Chinese copies. The city of Kyoto itself was laid out on the model of the T'ang period.

Among the treasures of Tōji are the paintings of the twelve Heavenly Kings among which Suiten, the water god and Fūten, the wind god are the most notable. The portraits of the seven Shingon patriarchs are all National Treasures and in the case of four outstanding for their spirituality and power, the others being much faded. That of Amoghavajra by the T'ang artist Li Chen is the best. Mr Garrett Chatfield Pier says of this picture:

“This portrait of the Indian missionary and Buddhist teacher, together with the other paintings of the series, is of great interest to students of Japanese art. The set has served as models to many a later Japanese artist. Li Chen has represented Amoghavajra as a rather coarse-featured man of the coolie type. There is little of the priest about him, other than his black *kesa*, bald head and clasped hands. The heavy lines of his face, his large nose and the blue-black line of his close-shaven beard, so truthfully indicated by the T'ang artist, but serve to impress one with his uncouthness, yet, like others in this series, his quiet air of introspection does much to offset this impression of unrefinement. A brilliant note of color is struck by the Coromandel-red (lacquer?) of the central part of the dais upon which he sits, the lower part being black (lacquer?) and his robe a deep full black of the richest quality.”

There is a wonderful screen here which Mr Pier thinks an ancient copy of one actually brought from China and which Fenollosa attributes to Kanaoka's son Kanetada.

There are many other beautiful paintings at Tōji but it would take many pages to describe them. Mr Garrett Chatfield Pier in his instructive book "Temple Treasures of Japan" describes many of them. There are two very lovely Kwannons, one the *Jūichimen* (Eleven-faced) and the other the *Shō*. As Kwannon has many arms to help so she has eleven faces to look in all directions upon the suffering and unhappy. The twelve devas are among the treasures of Tōji. They are from the brush of Takuma Shōga and are exquisite. I quote again from Mr Pier:

"Tōji possesses numerous examples of this new style of art, notably in her famous set of twelve kakemono, now screen-panels, embellished with the figures of the twelve devas or Juniten. The most beautiful of the set are Surya and Chandra, the Sun and Moon goddesses. The latter is illustrated in Figure 131. Painted by Takuma Shoga in 1191, the series represents what may be called the style of the Sung-derived Takuma School at its best. This is evinced in the tender poses; in the calm beauty of the pure faces; in the charming arrangement of the robes—where intricate and detailed ornament is happily considered a non-essential—above all, in the deft and varied brushwork, as seen in Shoga's readiness and ability to depict the delicate features of her charming subjects, or the grandly sweeping curves of their costumes, now heavy, now light.

"The long slim forms are naturally modelled, and about them gauzy veils fly out from the semitransparent and tightly clinging folds or their softly shimmering robes. Chandra the Moon, perhaps the most charming of these *devaraja*, is thus daintily rendered. Upon her lovely face, a pure Hindoo profile, is seen an expression of the utmost tenderness and purity. Her softly rounded arms are outstretched before her, and in the hollow of her supple hands she supports the silver cup of a gleaming crescent-moon. Above its rim peeps a tiny rabbit, a white bunny, all velvet ears and fluffy downy jacket.

“The Sun-goddess Surya, for freedom and grace of pose, closely rivals her sister *devara*. The brilliant but mellowed colors too, have been laid on with all the fluency and variety of brush-stroke that speaks so strongly of the Sung style, as affected by artists of the Takuma School, to which this series belongs.”

I myself saw these paintings in a most unusual and auspicious setting, at a special, semi-secret service when in a darkened hall, lighted by candles, they hung as a background to the esoteric proceedings. The paintings enhanced the beauty of the service as the service brought out the interest of the paintings, for were not the devas spectators of the rituals which were taking place?

Tōji, like Kōyasan, breathes of Kōbō Daishi. Of the treasures, preserved here some are from his hand as well as others from eminent artists of the T'ang court. Kōbō Daishi was a man of genius and excelled in everything he undertook. He was so skilled a chirographist that he was admired by all the Chinese scholars of his time. He was a great sculptor and a great painter. In fact he was a man of the highest endowments, of remarkable skill and possessed of religious fervour and discernment. Moreover he was a philosopher, a scholar and writer of books and poems. His versatility was wonderful. Added to his gifts and accomplishments was a vivid personality which impressed everyone with whom he came in contact, whether emperor or plebeian, priest or layman, scholar or ignoramus.

No wonder that his memory is still fragrant in Japan and that at many places, the visitor has the sensation of walking in the great saint's footsteps. I know that when the other day I walked in Tōji, and paused for a moment in the shadow of the great pagoda or knelt before his statue in the *Daishi Dō*, I felt that I was contacting a great personality, one of the most arresting that Japan has given to the world. As at Kōyasan, so here in Tōji, these footsteps of Kōbō Daishi's are deep and firm. The debt of Japan's

culture to the efforts and achievements of Kōbō Daishi is great and can never be forgotten. And Tōji is one of the best places in which to remember him.

SEIREN (BLUE LOTUS)