The Exiled Warrior and the Hidden Village

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FOR my last Presidential Address I present you with an enigma, a puzzle in Japanese folklore for which so far no satisfactory solution has been found. The most that I can give is a clue or two.

The problem is this. All over Japan, with the exception of the northern island Hokkaidō, villages and communities have been discovered whose inhabitants claim to be descended from a fugitive warrior, fleeing for his life after the defeat of his family in a sea battle in the late 12th century. Most of these villages have been found in isolated and inaccessible spots; on islands, for example, or on the ends of capes, or tucked into inlets of the sea. But the majority lie deep in mountains, in valleys so remote that they appear to have been cut off from the world until their discovery sometime during the last couple of centuries.

The villages are known in general as Heike-dani, or ‘valleys of the Heike,’ after the surname of the vanquished clan.

A map giving the distribution of these communities shows them to be scattered in a wide double curve from the far north of the main island down to the semi-tropical Ryūkyū islands. Their greatest concentration seems to be to the west and south. In Kyūshū, for example, there are thirty-six, in Shikoku twelve, while the mountainous Kinki district has revealed to date at least nineteen. There is an odd cluster of fourteen more in the Ryūkyū islands. Further north but still west, along the coast of the Japan Sea, at least a dozen more have come to light, while still further north another two dozen are to be found. It is only in the eastern district known as the Kantō, much of which is flat plain, and the urban sprawl of Tokyo, that the numbers fall to a mere seven.¹

In all, more than a hundred of these strange enclaves have been discovered, many of them hundreds of miles from the scene of the battle from which the warriors are believed to have fled. This took place in the year 1185 in a bay at the western end of the Inland Sea known as Dannoura.

Although these villages tend to be in isolated spots, cut off from each other as well as from the rest of the world, they are said to preserve certain curious customs in common. Most of these appear to hark back to the aristocratic origin of the warrior ancestor, and are hence jealously preserved by the communities as proof of their heroic lineage. All are said to observe in common, for example, a taboo on the colours red and white, the colours of the rival clans in the last battle. All are believed to preserve a certain antiquated mode of speech. Their songs and dances are held to betray an unmistakable elegance and refinement, and their women are believed to be paler skinned than their neighbours. Finally, their pride in their aristocratic blood forbids them to marry outside the community.
Some of the families preserve a tangible relic of their mysterious noble forebear. This sometimes takes the form of a cup, sometimes of a sealed box which must on no account be opened, on pain of the ancestor's luck or virtue being squandered.²

A few accounts of such communities have come down to us from the last century. A traveller from Niigata prefecture, one Suzuki Makiyuki, has left an account of an intrepid journey into the mountains in 1828 to a place called Akiyama. Here he discovered one such lost hamlet. He was astonished by the conditions of life, which seemed to him not only desperately poor and primitive, but at the same time quite unfamiliar, as though he had walked into a foreign country. He found a night's lodging in one of the better houses, and was shocked to see that when night fell the entire family slept together on the bare boards of the floor, without a single blanket or coverlet despite the cold. The women wore rough homespun garments, and were quite shameless in pulling up their skirts to their thighs to catch lice and fleas. He was served boiled millet, mushroom soup and a bean soup with grey pellets in it too hard to swallow. Also a paste made of horse chestnuts boiled, skinned and mashed. The old patriarch of the family, Ichiemon by name, told him that the village was proud of its ancient customs, and in no circumstances permitted any boy or girl to marry outside. Should any girl do this, she was irrevocably cut off from her family, whom she could never hope to see again. There was no crime in the village, and no gambling. Unfortunately the traveller does not tell us the name of the warrior whom they claimed as an ancestor.³

Again, Ernest Satow, one of the early English scholars of Japanese whose distinguished work laid the foundation for those coming after, was given permission in 1878 to make a journey into the mountainous region of Tateyama and Hida Takayama. 'Foreign travel' into the interior of Japan was still much restricted, and Satow, then a secretary in the British Legation, may well have been the first foreigner to penetrate this unfamiliar region. The weather was atrocious, and the steep mountain paths so deep in mud and slush that he found himself more than a week overdue. On July 27th he wrote from the foot of Tateyama to Sir Harry Parkes, the British Minister in Tokyo, to apologise for his late return.

Part of our route has lain through a country where distances are estimated only by guesswork, and concerning which it was impossible to obtain any information in Yedo. We have heard of an interesting community of people who inhabit a region called Arimine to the south of Tateyama, twenty miles from their nearest neighbours. They have inter-married for several centuries past, in fact ever since they were heard of first, and live in patriarchal style, three or four married couples under one roof, but with separate households. Like other secluded communities, they are said to be descendants of the Heike fugitives. If we had a few days to spare, I should certainly have visited them, in order to learn more with my own eyes and ears . . . ⁴

Had the rains lifted by the end of July, and had Sir Harry Parkes been less of a martinet, we might have had a full description of a Heike community from this remote part of Japan, by so acute an observer as Ernest Satow.

Concerning the discovery of these lost villages by the outside world an odd story, clearly a legend, is cited in several cases. From what were believed to be unexplored heights, the story runs, a red lacquer cup was found floating down the river. Scouts were sent upstream to investigate and came upon the hidden hamlet. The apparition of the cup was explained by the fact that the village included families of the wood carvers known as kijya, who made wooden cups and bowls with a device called a roko or potter's wheel, said to have been revealed to them by their founding ancestor. They were a 'special' people, different from the agricultural folk below, who were reputed to
have been travellers, moving like gypsies from place to place until they eventually chose to settle down.\textsuperscript{5}

Let us now return to the circumstance of the last battle, in the year 1185, and of the flight of the defeated warriors. The Heike family first rose to glittering power and wealth in the middle 12th century. Its sons occupied the highest positions in the land. One of its daughters was married to an Emperor, and became the mother of another Emperor. But eventually the family overreached itself, became arrogant and proud, and at last reaped the Buddhist reward of arrogance and pride in a disastrous fall. Another clan, the Genji, set itself to overthrow the Heike, and by and by, after a long civil war, pressed them so hard that they were forced to flee from the capital eastwards. They took with them in their flight the child Emperor Antoku, then only seven years old, his mother the Lady Kenrei-monin, and the whole retinue of the Court.

These elegant people were finally compelled to take refuge on ships, in a bay in the inland sea called Dannoura. And there, in the year 1185, the clan was finally and irrevocably defeated. The nurse of the child Emperor Antoku took the little boy in her arms, and saying to him, 'There is a wonderful city at the bottom of the sea called the Pure Land of Bliss. That is where I am taking you,' she leapt with the child over the side of the ship. Both were drowned, and with them the holy and precious imperial regalia, the sword, the mirror and the curved jewel, were cast into the sea, where the sword was lost for ever.

This tale of the rise, the glory and the final ruin of the Heike family is recounted in a work called the \textit{Heike Monogatari}, or 'Story of the Heike,' compiled sometime during the 13th century. For centuries this work was transmitted by a school of blind chanters, in minor Buddhist orders, who recited the tale according to a particular musical mode to the accompaniment of a lute. The opening words proclaim the theme:

\textit{The proud shall not live long, no longer than a dream on a spring night. The mighty shall eventually perish, like dust before the wind.}\textsuperscript{6}

Sure enough, the Heike warriors became fugitives, fled from their pursuers deep into the mountains and across the sea to islands, coming to rest at last, so the tales run, in the distant spots where even now the villages still stand.

That we are here in the realm of legend rather than of history is beyond reasonable doubt. A few Heike warriors may have fled into mountain fastnesses, to settle down among woodcutters and charcoal burners. But the contention that nearly a hundred communities could have been founded in this manner, some of them hundreds of miles from the scene of the last battle, cannot stand up to serious examination.

How then are we to account for the odd phenomenon that the inhabitants of these villages believe themselves to be descended from a fugitive Heike warrior?

So far not even Japanese folklorists have supplied a convincing explanation. The great pioneer Yanagita Kunio himself accomplished considerable research among the villages in question in the Aizu district, and in consequence devoted two or three monographs to the problem. But not even he was able to offer an entirely satisfactory solution. All that has been suggested is that villages in such isolated spots would naturally have remained cut off from the outer world, and would hence naturally have preserved language and customs from an earlier period. The only people to venture to visit such remote valleys would have been wandering ascetics. Many of these wandering ascetics took to being strolling minstrels, chanters and reciters of battle tales. The ascetic minstrels who pushed their way so far into the mountains as to reach
the isolated villages might well have included the special blind chanthers of the Heike Monogatari.7

But this theory goes no further than telling us that the communities might have listened to recitation of the story of the ruin of the Heike family. It does not explain why the audience should at once decide that certain of the characters in the story, seizing particularly on to those who were stated to be defeated or killed, should be their ancestors.

But at least, if history cannot reasonably be called upon for an explanation, we can see what methods of Folklore can do. Folklore deals with the patterns through which we tend to see reality. Katharine Briggs used often to remind us of how the human memory tends to gravitate towards these patterns, which we call Types and Motifs. A dramatic event in a village, a murder or a jilting or an elopement or the apparition of a ghost, would very soon be remembered, not for what actually happened, but according to the Type called forth by the event.8 The story would soon be told entirely in terms of the appropriate Type or Types, and those who dared to recall the more humdrum events which had actually occurred, would be dismissed as ignorant simpletons.

These are the methods which may supply pointers to a solution to the puzzle of the Heike villages. The treatment I suggest is to explore two of the principal motifs or images which occur in the legends and see where they may lead us. Images are the components of Types, the basic elements in the language of symbol which the human mind superimposes on historical events. By exploring the ramifications of such images we may find clues to our problem.

The two images I propose to explore are the Hidden Village and the Noble Exile or Stranger.

First, the Hidden Village. The word in Japanese used to denote a village hidden or lost in the mountains is kakurezato, and the Heike villages are often designated by this term. But kakurezato has another meaning, very different from the poor and primitive hamlet described by Suzuki. This is a hidden paradise, an ‘other world’ altogether, a miraculous realm of treasure and limitless wealth, a source of magical prosperity. This other world is situated underground, and is to be reached by means of certain entrances, which are usually watery in nature. A pool or a lake or a well carries the legend that once, long ago, it was a gate into another world of wealth and bliss. Dry entrances are also to be found, usually in old tombs, mounds and caves.

The paradise to be reached through the pools or old tombs is often thought to be an underwater one, and is given the name Ryūgū or the Dragon Palace. Now there are folktales about Ryūgū, which usually follow the type designated by Yanagita as ryūgū-iri, or ‘Visits to the Dragon Palace,’ which are relevant to our theme. These tales tell of a man who by chance or accident finds himself a guest in a dazzling underwater palace, with shimmering pillars of jade, gates of pearl and carpets of sealskin. The beautiful woman who presides over this elysium makes him welcome, and he passes a blissful interval of time with her. On his return to his own world she makes him a gift of power, which through greed or laziness he invariably misuses. All the wealth which at first the gift had bestowed, at once vanishes.9

But in addition to the folktales about kakurezato and Ryūgū there are also legends. Here we have, not a dream-like story set out of specific time and space, but tales concerning a precise pool, lake, cave or tomb, address given, which was known once to have been an entrance to the paradise. In these legends, no one actually visits the underwater paradise, but the entrance to it, the pool or lake, is guarded by a nushi or Warden.
This Warden, who is often believed to be a snake, used obligingly to lend cups and bowls to anyone who wished to borrow them and who asked for them in the right way. Hence the legends go by the name of *wankashi-densetsu*, bowl-lending legends.

In Hyōgo prefecture, for example, there used to be a celebrated bowl-lending pool, *wankashi-buchi*. If you needed cups and bowls, say for a wedding party, all you had to do was to go there the previous night, state the number of bowls you wished to borrow, and the next morning you would find them neatly ranged on a rock in the middle of the pool.

In the mountains near Toyama there was a bowl-lending lake where the service was even quicker. You stood on the shore and stated the number of bowls required, and immediately there would float to the surface of the water, and presently be washed ashore at your feet, bowls of superior red lacquer exactly to the number ordered.

Always, however, it was necessary to return the borrowed vessels as soon as one had finished with them, in perfect condition and exactly to the number lent. One cup returned damaged or short, and the Warden would never again lend a single vessel. At the sites of these legends human frailty has again, just as in the folktales, proved unequal to the magic gifts from the world below. Always someone, sometime in the past, broke a cup or refused to return a bowl, so that the lending has always ceased.

With the 'dry' entrances, the old tombs and caves, the legends follow much the same pattern, save that the *nushi* is not a snake, but a fox or badger, and that visitors are able occasionally to find their way inside. On Sado Island, for example, Yanagita tells us that there is a hole which led to a fairy underworld where the *nushi* was a badger called Danzaburō. Once or twice a man made his way down the hole, to find himself in a magnificent royal palace, where the badger family, attired in gorgeous robes, were eating delicious food. The badgers again were very obliging in lending cups and bowls, until people failed to return them.

And in Noto there was a hole in the side of the mountain which led to a fairy world within the hollow hill. A priest once squeezed through the hole, to find a glittering palace inside. And hunters likewise who stumbled on the entrance found inside a dazzling realm of treasure and wealth.

In 1954 Kitami Toshio discovered and analysed as many as 150 places in central and south-western Japan where bowl-lending legends survived. The majority he found in the mountainous region of Nagano prefecture, by rivers, lakes and deep pools. His analysis shows how remarkably constant the motifs remain, with very little variation among all 150 examples. But always, alas, the lending has stopped because someone broke or stole a cup. Indeed, Yanagita tells us that several times he came across a family who preserved a beautiful bowl of red lacquered wood, which they believed an ancestor to have acquired from the local bowl-lending pool, and refused to return to its rightful owner.16

The cup here seems to represent one of those threshold objects, which can pass intact from one world to another. As in other traditions with no known connection with Japan, it seems to symbolise the magic gift of wealth and bliss. In the folktales concerning the underwater paradise, the hero is presented with a magic gift which through greed or folly he invariably misuses. In the bowl-lending legends the magic gift has become a mere empty vessel, in which power was perhaps originally contained, but which is now no more than a useful receptacle. Nor is it any longer given; it is lent only, for a short season and under strict conditions. The legends therefore seem to represent a later stage than the folktales, a stage where the two worlds have drawn further apart.
But still the cup is a magic bestowal, and the place whence it comes is a source of vitality, prosperity and help in time of need. Yanagita tells us that the village of Tono believed a kakurezato called Mayohiga to lie nearby, and that any gift brought back from this fairyland conferred inexhaustable riches on its owner. A man was once known to have been given a cup which had made him rich and respected for the rest of his life. And in Fukui prefecture there was a cave, with a rock door blocking the entrance which no man could move. But in time of crisis the door would open, and the Heike warriors would come out to bring help and succour. Everyone knew that twice within living memory the rock door had stood open, once during the war against China in 1895, and again during the war against Russia in 1904.11

It will already be apparent that the entire structure of the kakurezato legends has been projected onto the Heike villages. Their hidden isolation, and the fact that lacquer cups were often actually made in such villages, invite the projection so strongly that we even hear of lacquer cups floating downstream to apprise the world below of the existence of the hidden villages above. It is no great step from these lacquer cups to those so obligingly lent by the Warden of the pool.

The villages thus blur into a notion of paradise, from which gifts come, and from which help in time of trouble proceeds. The Heike invisibly emerging from the cave in Fukui remind us of the sleeping heroes of Celtic, Teutonic and Slavonic legend, who will emerge from their vaults or hollow mountains in time of crisis to save the world, of King Arthur in Craig-y-Ddinas, of Barbarossa in the Kyffhäuser, of Ogier the Dane in a vault under Kroberg Castle.12

We turn now to the second principal image in the Heike-dani stories, the Noble Exile or Stranger, the aristocratic warrior defeated in battle, driven from the bright world of his native capital into wild woods and mountain valleys. Why should the inhabitants of these villages feel impelled to claim such a person as their ancestor?

First, the figure of the wandering stranger is in Japan invested with a special magic. The Stranger or outsider, who arrives from some mysterious limbo ‘outside’ the familiar world, is a figure not of human society. He is not fully human. But at the same time he contains a strange ambivalence. He is either above the human state or below it, either a divinity or a polluted outcast. Hence he is either a source of supernatural help, or he is unclean, taboo, laying those with whom he comes in contact open to supernatural attack.

The image of the Stranger from outside contains both these faces simultaneously. He is at the same time a saviour and a threat. Hence, as the image refracts, he can with bewildering suddenness shift from one face to the other. He can fall from the saviour to the outcast, or rise from the outcast to the saviour. Many foreigners in Japan have since the 16th century been puzzled, flattered or dismayed to find this image projected onto them. One moment they are treated as superior beings and begged for blessings, the next they are driven out with curses.

Now the bright face of this ambivalence, the face of the potential god, derives from the strong tradition in Japanese folklore that certain benevolent divinities come into the land from outside at certain seasons, infusing it with blessings, energy and cheerful prosperity. These divine visitors, who are in fact the ancestral dead, arrive in boats from a paradise across the sea called Tokoyo, and confer their blessings through magic dances and songs. Paradoxically, therefore, the dead become bringers of life. The distinguished Japanese folklorist Origuchi Shinobu called them marebito or ‘guests,’ from the manner in which they are feasted, welcomed and even given a wife for the night, ichiyazuma. (They are impersonated by certain people wearing masks and the
guise of a traveller.\textsuperscript{13} The notion of power and energy coming from outside is reinforced by the further belief, based on the vertical cosmology derived from the Asian continent, that a god may descend from another world, choose a suitable human being as his vessel or vehicle, and cause that person to wander over the land, perhaps for years, until he or she arrives at the spot where the god wishes to settle down. The goddess Amaterasu is said to have chosen a woman called Yamato-hime, and made her wander over the land for nineteen years before finally coming to rest at the place which is now the Ise Shrine.\textsuperscript{14}

Now if a god travels, and if he is liable to choose any man or woman as his vehicle or carrier, it follows that any wanderer may be the carrier of a god. The figure of the wandering god may therefore be easily projected onto other travellers. Any traveller could in theory be a god in disguise. But the evidence of legend shows that in fact the image tends to be projected on to certain particular kinds of travelling people. To put it differently, there are certain categories of people who appear in legends in a role which was clearly originally that of a wandering god. Of these we can distinguish four. The first are Emperors who are believed to wander about the country on what are called senkõ or secret progresses. Now Emperors do not as a rule travel about the country at all. The very ancient ones, according to the Chronicles, are supposed to have made occasional journeys, for hunting or for inspecting the country. But usually the Emperor is a static figure, who resides in his palace in the capital, in the centre of his realm like a queen bee in her hive. If he travels at all, something unusual must have happened. He must have been exiled, or he must be wandering the land to escape from enemies when all the world believes him to be dead. Hence the stories of Emperors on secret progresses or incognito journeys are nearly always attributed to Emperors who were either in fact exiled, or who died violent or mysterious deaths.

One of these is the child Emperor Antoku, whom we saw earlier drowned in the sea after the battle of Dannoura in 1185. Numerous legends allege that the boy was in fact not drowned, but was rescued, taken on board a boat bound for China, and driven back by a storm onto the coast of the Japan Sea. There he began a long wandering journey, leaving marks and signs of his passage wherever he went. These marks and signs we will examine in a moment.

Other Emperors commonly cited as wandering over the land on secret progresses are Go-Daigo, who was exiled from the capital in 1331, and Chôkei, who reigned for four years during the split in the Imperial House in the mid-14th century, and whose claims to the status of Emperor have only recently been recognised.\textsuperscript{15}

The next category of traveller on whom the image of the wandering god tends to be projected is an exiled prince. He is usually a royal prince who owing to base intrigues has been passed over in the succession and exiled from the Court. Legends report these princes in the most unlikely parts of Japan, as having passed through a village or over a mountain pass or along a stretch of coast, again leaving unmistakable signs of their passage.

An example is Prince Koretaka, the eldest son of the Emperor Montoku, who in the 9th century was passed over in the succession by a younger brother, owing to a base intrigue at Court. He thereupon retired from the world, journeyed into the wilds of the Omi mountains, and pushed his way up the river Aichi until he reached a remote community called Ogura. There, as we shall later discover, he became the founding Ancestor of the very \textit{kiyaja} woodcarvers whose bowls we have seen floating downstream to the world below. Another such prince was the unfortunate Prince
Mochihito, who was tempted to join the first uprising against the Heike in 1181, and who perished at the battle of the Uji bridge. But again, numerous legends allege that he was not in fact killed at the Uji bridge, but escaped and made his way with a retinue of faithful followers through Nara, Ōmi and the mountains of Shinano, all the way to Aizu.

This prince also left marks and signs of his passage wherever he went, and some of these, Yanagita observes, are to be found among those same kijiya woodcarvers who believe themselves to be descendants of the Heike. Yanagita met several such families who boasted a relic of the prince’s visit as he passed through. These were red lacquered cups, no less, with a poem or emblem said to be inscribed by the prince’s own hand.\(^\text{16}\)

The third figure onto whom the image of the wandering god has been projected is an eminent priest or monk. Kōbō Daishi, the brilliant and powerful Buddhist priest who first introduced esoteric Buddhism into Japan, is frequently encountered in this role. So is Shinran Shōnin, the founder of the Jōdo Shin sect of Buddhism, and Jikaku Daishi, another eminent exponent of esoteric Buddhism. We shall see in a moment in what form they make their appearance, but suffice to say now that they are always seen in the guise of a beggar.

Our last category is, needless to say, the defeated warrior who is wandering over the land, often in disguise, to avoid his pursuers. Often he is stated to be a retainer of the exiled Emperor or prince, and therefore shares the fate of his unfortunate lord. The Heike warriors are by far the most conspicuous in this category, but the countryside in Japan abounds with signs and marks of other fugitives besides the Heike, of a similar kind to those left by the Emperors, the princes and the eminent priests.

We can now ask what are these signs which betray or commemorate the passage of one of these people. There appear to be roughly three different types.

First, all over Japan there is an extraordinary profusion of special trees, stones, wells, bridges, mounds, which are believed to have been associated with the exalted wandering figure as he passed through, and to which a special name has in consequence been attached. A cherry tree, for example, on the branch of which a fleeing warrior hung his armour while he rested. It goes by the name of yoroizakura, ‘armour cherry tree.’ Or a pine tree on which a warrior hung his helmet while he went into a nearby temple to say a prayer. It is called kabutomatsu, or ‘helmet pine.’ Or a persimmon tree on which he hung his saddle, or to which he tied his horse or his boat, or under which he simply sat and rested. Or again, when the eminent priest Kōbō Daishi stopped to eat a meal, he thrust his chopsticks into the ground. At once they took root and became the great tree which is now called ‘chopstick tree.’

Or stones. There are stones to which the traveller’s horse was tied, or his saddle placed, or on which the priest stood to preach a sermon, or which bear mysterious hoofmarks, bateiseki, which indicate the passage of the exalted traveller’s horse.

Or again, wells and springs. There are innumerable springs said to have been caused by Kōbō Daishi, or a wandering Emperor, striking the ground with his staff, the miracle said to be the most frequently reported of any all over the world.

Occasionally these simple acts are elaborated into more circumstantial tales. But the end result is the same: yet another mark on the face of the countryside which seems to commemorate the fact that once, centuries ago, a stranger passed through whose passage it would not do to forget. It is as if, all over England, Wales and Scotland, there were trees and stones and wells with special names indicating that the Knights of the Round Table, who after all had not been killed at the last battle, passed through briefly and mysteriously, leaving a token behind them.\(^\text{17}\)
A second category of sign is a tomb. All over Japan there are tombs of the drowned child Emperor Antoku and of the exiled Emperor Go-Daigo. There are tombs of the defeated warrior Minamoto Yorimasa, who did not commit suicide after all in 1181, but wandered over the land. There are mysterious groups of mounds, usually in clusters of seven or thirteen, shichinin-zuka or jūsannin-zuka, which are said to be the tombs of the faithful followers of the exiled prince or the defeated warrior. Most curious of all is perhaps the case of the Emperor Chōkei, who as we have seen reigned briefly during the mid 14th century. It was not until 1926 that this Emperor was officially recognised as belonging to the Imperial line. When in that year the Kunaishō or Department of the Imperial Household, in according him formal recognition, came to designate his tomb so that the correct memorial services could be performed, the office was bombarded by no less than 123 petitions from villages claiming that they, and no other, possessed the true tomb of the Emperor Chōkei. After 1926 the number rose even higher, so that in all more than two hundred places, ranging from the eastern districts of the main island up to Aomori in the north, claimed ownership of the tomb of this shadowy Emperor.  

A third category of sign marking the passage of the traveller takes the form of the legend known as Kōbō densetsu, or 'legends of Kōbō Daishi.' The tales run thus. A dirty beggar arrived at a village and begged a cup of water from an old woman. The village had few wells, and it was a long walk to find good water. But the old woman nevertheless put herself to the trouble of fetching the beggar the cup of water he requested. Whereupon, lo, the beggar struck his staff into the ground, and a spring of pure water instantly bubbled up. In the next village the beggar likewise asked an old woman for a cup of water. But although this village possessed excellent wells, the old woman rudely told the beggar to be off. Whereupon the beggar again struck his staff into the ground, and instantly the wells became brackish and sour.  

In many parts of the country it is Kōbō Daishi who is the disguised beggar. But other names, belonging to our other categories, also appear. In Tottori prefecture, for example, it is the exiled Emperor Go-Daigo who asks for the cup of water, and rewards the kind village with a new and pure spring.  

But it is in the Ryūkyū Islands, where many legends and customs still survive in what is believed to be an earlier, purer form than those found in Japan proper, that we get a true pointer. There the version of the story plainly states that a god comes ashore from the sea, in the guise of an old man. One man threw stones at him. Another fed and welcomed him. The family of the first man soon died out, while that of the second multiplied and prospered.  

We conclude therefore that the original version of the legend ran on the following lines: a visiting divinity arrives in Japan from a realm outside, and wanders about in disguise. In the villages where he is kindly treated as he passes through, he causes water to spring up where none was before, and fruitfulness to burgeon where barrenness was before. Where he is rudely treated he turns fecundity into barrenness; springs dry up or turn sour, fruit and vegetables turn hard and uneatable. He leaves minor tokens of his passage amongst trees, stones and mounds, which are named accordingly.  

These two faces of the god, the benevolent saviour dispensing prosperity and fecundity, and the dangerous cursing destroyer of fruitfulness, reflect the two ambivalent faces of the Stranger of which we earlier took note.  

The figure of this anonymous disguised divinity tends to be projected onto certain 'carriers,' notably exiled Emperors, banished princes, eminent priests and defeated
warriors. The noble disguised wanderer is now seen as the Emperor Antoku, the Prince Koretaka, the priest Kōbō Daishi, or a Heike warrior. It is only the ending of the legend which tends to differ according to the ‘carrier.’ In its original form, the wandering god at the end of his journey settles down, shizumatta, at a particular spot which is henceforth holy, as Amaterasu settled down at Ise. The exiled Emperors, after years of unhappy wandering, eventually die, and their tombs are shown all over the country. The priests appear to be undying, for no tombs of Kōbō Daishi are claimed or shown, as in the case of the Emperors; on the contrary legends abound that he is still alive, and still wandering about the country in disguise. The princes and the warriors, again after years of miserable wandering, either die, and their tombs are shown, or they settle down and become Ancestor to a family line. More often than the prince, it is the warrior who tends to be come an Ancestor. The Heike villages survive to this day as testimony to the power of the legend.

Two points still remain for comment.

First, why should three out of four of the noble figures who are the carriers of the myth be tragic ones? Why should the Emperors, princes and warriors all be exiled, banished, defeated, pursued by enemies? And second, why should certain people believe themselves to be descended from such legendary figures?

To the first point, it is relevant to note that the figure of the hero in the Japanese heritage is always a tragic one. Heroes in Japan are always heroic failures, dying bravely in noble but hopeless causes. Loyalty, courage and sincerity they all have in large measure, but for these virtues to be revered they must die violent deaths. Thus Kusunoki Masashige was killed in battle in the mid 14th century, supporting the hopeless cause of a foolish Emperor. Saigo Takamori fell in the valiant but hopeless rebellion he himself had raised in 1877 against the new Meiji regime. Yoshida Shōin was executed in 1859 for fomenting opposition against the dying feudal regime.

Such are the figures who are revered as heroes. Successful rulers, who warded off the Mongol invasions, who won battles and lived to a ripe old age, remain mere names in history books. They never command reverence or gratitude; they are never heroes.

It is this special power which surrounds the brave man who dies a violent death that we see reflected in the noble exile who wanders the land. Have the noble tragic hero and the wandering god become somehow conflated?

Second, why should the exiled warrior, and occasionally the exiled prince, be claimed as an ancestor? Here it is relevant to recall that certain peoples in Japan whose craft involves a special skill frequently invoke an Ancestor who has taught that skill. Such people include the matagi or hunters, the tatara or smiths, and the kijiya, those very woodworkers whom we have already seen connected with the Heike legend, making the wooden lacquered cups which float down the river.

All these peoples believe themselves to have sprung from an Ancestor, who gave them the skill by a magic gift. Their sense of special identity, of separateness from other folk, derives from this conferment of skill.

With the kijiya, the Ancestor they claimed was Prince Koretaka, whom we saw earlier to have been passed over in the succession to the Throne in the 9th century and banished to the wild mountains of Omi. There, the legend runs, he pushed his way up the course of the Aichi river, higher and higher into the mountains until he reached a place called Ogura. There the prince settled down and became a Buddhist priest, and through reciting roll after roll of the Lotus Sutra, lighted upon the idea of the rokuro or potter’s wheel. This ingenious invention he communicated to the inhabitants, and this was the beginning of the kijiya as a people with a craft.
THE EXILED WARRIOR AND THE HIDDEN VILLAGE

The version of the tale with Prince Koretaka as the hero is the one most commonly found. But other versions, similar save that the name of the hero is different, are also to be found all over Japan. In Echigo, for example, the hero is not Prince Koretaka but Prince Mochihito. In Shinano it is Prince Yukiyoshi. In Yamato it is Prince Daito no Miya. Elsewhere, significantly enough, the hero is a warrior. In Echizen the warrior Akugenda Yoshihira is found. In Aki and Hyuga it is the doughty archer Nasu no Yoichi, whose arrow hit the fan from afar at the battle of Yashima. Elsewhere again, it is an anonymous Heike warrior.24

Do we see yet another conflation? Has the image of the wandering god been assimilated not only to the tragic hero, but also to the founding Ancestor, who confers not only fruitfulness but also ingenious skills such as the rokuro?2

I warned you at the beginning that I could offer no solution to the mystery of the Heike villages. All I have done is try to put the legend and its ingredient images into a context such as a folklorist can ponder on. I have tried to show how the component motifs of the legend interlock and inter fuse, and how the images and symbols, with their ambivalent faces, melt into one another. If the puzzle is ever to be satisfactorily solved, it will be by the methods of folklore. Folklore deals with the tendency of the human mind to create patterns by which it can understand and remember historical reality. The folklorist learns to distinguish these patterns, to analyse their component symbols, to give them names and recognise them when they are confused with history. This is the work which, taken to a stage further than I have done here, remains to be done for the puzzle of the exiled Heike warrior, the hidden village and the red lacquered cups.

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NOTES

1. Takeda Seichō, in his study of the legends surrounding fugitive warriors, Ochiudo densetsu no tabi (Tokyo 1969), appends some useful maps showing the distribution of the Heike villages throughout the Japanese archipelago.


4. MS letter from Ernest Satow to Sir Harry Parkes in the Parkes Papers, Cambridge University Library.

5. The legend is by no means confined to kijiyya villages. Takeda, op. cit., p. 43, mentions an example in the Chichibu mountains, said to have been discovered in the 1730s through the appearance of lacquer cups floating downstream. Another called Okukōnami, north of Lake Biwa, was discovered by the same curious means to be composed of descendants of a fugitive warrior from the battle of Sekigahara. Ibid., p. 41.

6. The battle of Dannoura, the drowning of the child Emperor and the loss of the holy regalia, are described in Book 11 of the Heike Monogatari of which a rather insipid translation by H. Kitagawa and B. Tsuchida appeared in 1975 under the title of The Tale of the Heike. Concerning the loss of the regalia, more than one account exists, but the version generally accepted is that although the Sword was lost, the Mirror and the wooden casket containing the Jewel floated to the surface of the sea and were subsequently recovered. See D. C. Holtom, The Japanese Enthronement Ceremonies (Tokyo 1972; 1st ed. 1928), pp. 41-2.

7. Yanagita Kunio, op. cit., and the chapters in Hitome kōzō sono ta entitled ‘Nagasare-O’ and ‘Kakurezato,’ in Vol. 5 of the collected works. The article ‘Heikendan’ in Shinwa densetsu jiten offers no explanation save this one.

8. See for example Katharine Briggs, ‘Tradition and Invention in Ghost Stories,’ in The Folklore of
9. Yanagita Kunio, 'Kaijin Shōdō,' collected works Vol. 8, p. 37. See also Seki Keigo's Nihon Mukashibanashi Shūsei, Vol. 2, pp. 997-1034, for the types and motifs which deal with the communication between the water world and the world of men. Also Hiroko Ikeda's useful Type and Motif Index of Japanese Folk Literature (Helsinki 1971), Types 470A and 480C.
The motif of the cup borrowed or stolen from a fairy otherworld is remarkably widespread throughout the world. The Lucks or magic chalices from the north of England are one and all 'robberies from fairyland.' Cases of beautiful drinking horns, sometimes with the names of Melchior, Balthazar and Caspar engraved on silver bands, are found in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and North Germany, reputed to have been stolen from their fairy owners. They are sometimes presented by the robbers to a church, where they are used as chalices. See E. S. Hartland, The Science of Fairy Tales (2nd ed., 1925), pp. 135-160. Benjamin Thorpe, Northern Mythology (1861), vol. 2, pp. 14-5, 142-8; vol. 3, p. 128. Also Marjorie Rowling, The Folklore of the Lake District (1976) in the Batsford series, The Folklore of the British Isles, ed. by Venetia Newall; chapter 5 discusses the Lucks or magic chalices of Cumbria. See also the comparative material on stolen cups collected by Minakata Kumagusu, Kyōdo Kenkyū, Vol. 1, p. 297.
13. Origuchi's theory of the marebito is developed in his 'Kokubungaku no hassei,' Part 3, Origuchi Shinobu Zenshū, vol. 1, pp. 3-62. Also in his 'Tokyo oyobi marebito,' Minzoku, vol. 4, no. 2 (1929), pp. 1-62. Oka Masao, Nihon Minzokugaku Taikei, vol. 2, p. 7-9, believes the marebito to be of Melanesian origin, and to have reached Japan as early as the third millennium B.C. from the south Pacific. See also the extensive writings of Gorai Shigeru on the subject of the wandering god and the religious figures who 'carry' the myth.
14. The story of the long journey of Yamatohime as the mitsushiro or vehicle of the goddess is to be found in Kātai Jingū enrei gishikichō quoted by Horii Ichirō, Waga kuni mikan shinkō shi no kenkyū, vol. 1, p. 402. The goddess is said to have 'sat down' in twenty-four different places in the course of the nineteen years, allowing Yamatohime to rest. In many of these sites a shrine still exists which is a small replica of the tease Shines. Horii appends a map of the journey on p. 403. For the various cosmologies found intermingled in Japanese myth and legend, see my Catalpa Bow, 1975, chapter 4 passim.
16. Hashimoto Tetsuo, Rokuro, vol. 31 in the series Mono to ningen no bunkashi (Tokyo 1979), pp. 41-2. Yanagita, ibid., pp. 194-6. Horii, ibid., pp. 525-46, also cites the marks left by Prince Yamato Takeru on his journeys east and west to subdue aboriginal barbarians.
Prince Koretaka is the subject of a further legend of the 'contest' type. The Heike Monogatarî, book 8, Natara no koto chapter, relates how the contest between the two princes for the succession was resolved by a horse race and wrestling match, and how two powerful Buddhist priests were employed to recite spells for the respective champions. The priest Eryō, acting for Koretaka's opponent, went to the lengths of cracking his skull, taking out some of his brains and burning them as an offering to the divinity Daiitoku Myōō. As a result, Koretaka's wrestler lost the match.
17. A comprehensive list of such sites, with legends cited and correct addresses given, can be found in Nihon Denetsu Meit, edited by Yanagita (Tokyo 1950).
18. Ibid., section on Mounds, tsuka. Also Horii, op. cit., p. 557.
21. So powerful is the image of the tragic noble personage banished from his world into wild and strange places, and so often does it occur in literature, that Origuchi Shinobu specified the genre by the name kishu-ryūitan, 'tales of the wanderings of a noble person,' which has since become an accepted term in literary criticism. See Nihon bunkaku no hassei: josetsu, Origuchi Shinobu Zenshū, Vol. 7, pp. 242-6. Also the illuminating discussion by Jacqueline Pigeot in her Michiyuki-bun: poétique de l'itinéraire dans la littérature du Japon ancien (Paris 1982), pp. 281-312.
23. Hashimoto Tetsuo, Rokuro, pp. 37-44.
24. Ibid., pp. 46-7.