

Tanuki Raccoons at Moonlit Night

Long, long ago, there was a temple called *Syojiji* in a lonely place a little far from the village. Trees and bushes grew thickly around the temple. Foxes and tanuki raccoons showed up even daytime.

The priest in the temple was very fond of music, especially liked playing the samisen. He chanted sutras as his work every morning and evening in the main hall of the temple. After chanting sutras, he used to play the samisen. When he was playing, he was entranced by his own music. So eventually he spent a lot of hours in the main hall keeping playing it.

One day in autumn, he worked as usual and played the samisen until the bright moon appeared over the mountain. Then he went to bed. But he woke up at midnight at some strange sounds. "What's going on outside?" saying, he listened to the sounds very carefully and noticed that they were coming closely. It sounded like a flute-and-drum band.

"That'll be youngsters in the village who were coming here to have fun," he said to himself. He got up and opened a slide door a bit to look out at the ground of the temple. What he found there were not youngsters he was expected but tens of tanuki raccoons, big and small, beating drums and dancing all over the ground.

The biggest one was leading the others beating a drum, 'Rub-a-dub! Rub-a dub!'

A couple of them were playing the reed pipe, 'Peep, peep! Peep, peep!'

Little ones were drumming in concert, 'Rap, rap! Rap, rap!'

In fact they were beating their own bellies with their forefeet!



Come, come, everybody.
How do you do, and how are you?
Won't you have some candy,
One and two and three, four, five?
Let's all sing a happy song.
Sing tra-la la la la.

Won't you talk and sing with us
Make friends in the world?
Come come, come
Come come, come
And have dancing tra la la
Good-bye! evrybody.
Good night, until tomorrow.
Monday, Tuesday Wednesday,
Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday.
Let's all come and meet again.
Singing tra la la.

The priest, at first, was surprised, soon enhanced with their music. He thought that might be so called 'tanuki raccoon music.' He opened the door, stepped down the ground with his samisen in his hand, and joined the dancing tanukis with playing the samisen. They all were playing and dancing merrily. Then he started singing. His voice became bigger and bigger. And the tanuki-music also became much bigger. Then the priest sang at the top of his voice and the tanukis desperately beat their bellies. The music was going to reach a climax.

Before long day broke, and the tanuki raccoons disappeared somewhere one by one. The same went on the following night, and one more night.

Then the priest, who was taking a nap to prepare for the night's festivities, began to wonder why the night was so quiet. No tanukis came at that night. He was worried about them. At dawn, he started searching in every nook and cranny, and then he found something at the back of the main hall. It was the big tanuki fallen on the ground. It was already dead for his belly torn open. Maybe it beat its belly too much. He felt so sad. After spending those enjoyable nights with them, he felt as if the tanuki had been his friend. The carcass of the tanuki raccoon was buried there with respect by the priest. (2003.3.1 With Itaya and Mazuka)

Syojoji is in Kisarazu, Chiba Prefecture. It was built in Keicho period(1596-1615)

In 1919(8 year of Taisyo) Noguchi Ujo(lyricist) visited the temple and heard the temple's legend. It inspired him so much that he made a nursery rhyme. It was made public in 1924 (13 year of Taisyo) with music composed by Nakayama Shinpei. 'The Tanuki-Raccoon Song at Shojoji', has become popular and spread nationwide.

証城寺の狸ばやし

むかし、むかし村から遠く離れたさびしいところに証城寺というお寺がありました。お寺の回りには、木や藪がうっそうと茂っていました。

お寺の和尚さんは大の音楽好きで、特に三味線を弾くのが大好きでした。朝に、晩に、お寺の本堂でお経を唱えたあとは、三味線を弾くのが日課でした。三味線を奏でているときは何もかも忘れて、ついつい何時間も本堂で過ごしてしまいました。

秋のある日のことです。いつものようにお経を唱え、三味線を弾いていると、いつの間にか、まん丸なお月様が山の上に出ていました。夜中のことです。和尚さんは聞きなれない物音に目が覚めました。

「何事だ？」と聞き耳を立てると、音がこちらの方へ近づいてくるではありませんか。それは笛と太鼓の音です。

「きっと村の若い衆が騒いでいるんだろう」と思い、寝床から出て、引き戸を少し開け、お寺の庭を見てみました。何と、そこにいるのは若い衆ではなく、何十匹もの狸が、大きいのも小さいのも一緒に、太鼓をたたきながら踊っているではありませんか。

一番大きな狸が太鼓のリズムをとっていました。「ドンドンドン」

二匹の狸が笛を吹いていました。「ピーヒャラピーヒャラ」

子狸はかわいくみんなで太鼓をたたいていました。「ポンポコポン」



証 証 証城寺

証城寺の庭は

ツ ツ 月夜だ

みんな出て 来い来い来い

おい等の友達ア

ぽんぽこ ぽんの ぽん

負けるな 負けるな

和尚さんに負けるな

来い 来い 来い

来い 来い 来い

みんな出て 来い来い来い

証 証 証城寺

証城寺の萩は

ツ ツ 月夜に 花盛り

おい等は浮かれて

ぽんぽこ ぽんの ぽん

(作詞：野口雨情 作曲：中山晋平)

でも本当は狸は前足でお腹をたたいていたのです。

和尚さんも、最初は驚いていましたが、すぐに狸の音楽に聞きほれてしまいました。これがあの「狸ばやし」かもしれないと思い、戸を開けると手に三味線を持って庭に降りていきました。そして三味線を弾きながら狸の踊りに加わりました。みんな楽しく演奏したり踊ったり、ついには和尚さんが歌い始めました。和尚さんの声が大きくなると狸の音も一段と大きくなりました。和尚さんは声を限りに、狸はここぞとばかりに必死にお腹をたたきました。今や踊りは最高潮を迎えました。

やがて日が昇り、狸はどこへともなく消えていきました。

次の晩も、その次の晩も、狸はやってきて歌って踊ると朝かえっていきました。

和尚さんは、次の日はちょっと昼寝をして、夜、狸ばやしが始まるのを今か、今かと待っていました。でもその晩はとても静かなので不思議に思い始めました。狸は一匹も来ません。和尚さんはとても心配でした。夜が明けるのを待って和尚さんはあちこちを探してみました。そしてお寺の本堂の裏に、何か倒れているを見つけました。それはあの狸でした。お腹が大きく破れてすでに息絶えていました。おそらくお腹を叩きすぎたのでしょう。和尚さんはとてもかわいそうになりました。楽しい狸ばやしの夜を一緒に過ごした和尚さんは、その狸を身内のもののように思いました。狸の亡がらは丁重な弔いのあと庭の片隅に埋められました。(kudo)