



遠野物語拾遺

# FOLK LEGENDS FROM TONO

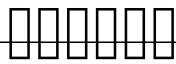
Japan's Spirits, Deities, and  
Phantastic Creatures

Collected by YANAGITA KUNIO and SASAKI KIZEN  
Translated and Edited by RONALD A. MORSE

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JAPAN'S SPIRITS, DEITIES, AND PHANTASTIC CREATURES

*Collected by Yanagita Kunio and Sasaki Kizen Translated  
and Edited by Ronald A. Morse Illustrations by Marjorie C.  
Leggitt*

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD  
*Lanham • Boulder • New York • London*

Published by Rowman & Littlefield

A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

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4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706

[www.rowman.com](http://www.rowman.com)

Unit A, Whitacre Mews, 26-34 Stannary Street, London SE11 4AB

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Photograph of Sasaki Kizen provided by the City of Tono.

This 1935 supplementary collection of 299 tales is referred to in Japanese as 常盤川( *Tono monogatari shui* ). In English, the translator has titled this supplementary collection *Folk Legends from Tono: Japan's Spirits, Deities, and Phantastic Creatures*.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Available

ISBN 978-1-4422-4821-2 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-1-4422-4822-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN 978-1-4422-4823-6 (electronic : alk. paper)

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

*This translation is for my son Randall and my grandson Cameron.*

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# PREFACE

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For modern Japanese, *Tono monogatari* (Tales of Tono) represents a cultural snapshot of what village life was like for their grandparents and their great-grandparents. As such, current-day Japanese approach these stories with a sense of nostalgia as representing a time and place with warm rural community ties, a strong religious sensibility, and a tradition of making a living from the soil—world totally different from their fragmented urban industrial lifestyles. This is the only way to explain why this work has been so popular in Japan and has gone through so many different editions and continuous updates, as well as cartoon (manga), animated, theatrical, and movie renderings.

*Tono monogatari* has a strong international following as well. It has been translated into half a dozen foreign languages, and the town of Tono has become a “must-see” for foreign tourists visiting Japan. Scholars around the world have also written extensively about the significance of the work to a better understanding of modern Japanese history.

With the translation of the tales you are about to read, we finally have a complete version of the two collections of tales that make up the Japanese book *Tono monogatari*. The first collection of 119 tales was published in Japanese in 1910, and the second collection of 299 tales—the collection translated here—was added in 1935. The two collections of tales in *Tono monogatari* were published under the name of Yanagita Kunio (1875–1962), even though his Tono informant and storyteller, Sasaki Kizen (1886–1933), was the source of most of the tales.

I translated the 1910 version of *Tono monogatari* in 1975 as *The Legends of Tono*, which has been available from Rowman & Littlefield Publishers in a hundredth anniversary edition since 2008.

The second collection of 299 tales in Japanese was compiled by Sasaki Kizen, who, because of his vast knowledge of local tales and legends, is often compared to the brothers Grimm in Germany. Sasaki lived most of his life in Tono surrounded by the storytellers, friends, and family members who pop up in the tales throughout this book.

Yanagita Kunio used his formidable literary skills to shape the style and presentation of the 1910 edition of *Tono monogatari*. But it was Sasaki Kizen’s talent as a storyteller that gave shape to the 1935 collection of tales that is translated here.

By the time these tales were put down on paper in 1935, Japanese memories of both the feudal era (lasting up to 1868) and the modernization and enlightenment euphoria of the Meiji era (1868–1912) were quickly fading. By 1935, Japan was clearly in transition to becoming a modern state, and the flavor of that transformation is captured in the tales recorded here.

Even though the 1935 collection of tales was originally conceived of as a companion volume to the 1910 *Tono monogatari*, it reflects a different era with its own personality. To be sure, this sequel collection of 299 tales is focused on the same rugged, mountainous terrain of Tono in northern Japan as were the 1910 tales, but there the similarities end.

The legends published in 1910 were more narrowly sourced from Tsuchibuchi village in Tono, and they were written in a polished literary style by Yanagita Kunio. The 1910 book also had what might be called an “editorial vision”—it was crafted by Yanagita as a piece of literature and was quite different from what a local storyteller might have told. This difference in Yanagita’s and Sasaki Kizen’s styles of tale documentation was captured in a letter from Sasaki to Yanagita on June 18, 1910, in



which Sasaki expresses his shock at Yanagita's polished collection of Tono tales. After reading the copy of *Tono monogatari* that Yanagita had sent him, Sasaki replied, "The tales are not like anything that I remember telling you."

American folklorist Richard M. Dorson, in his foreword to my translation of *The Legends of Tono* argued that pioneer tale collectors like Yanagita judged "oral tales by the yardsticks of written literature and felt a responsibility to 'improve' the rough and un-polished specimens of the peasant delivery. Sasaki was not a good storyteller, wrote Yanagita. Today, we would disagree. . . . Today folklorists recognize that oral style differs greatly from literary style and needs to be considered in terms of its own aesthetic, on the basis of faithfully reproduced verbal texts."

The style of the 1935 collection of tales is closer to what folklorists call "memorate," remarkable and extraordinary experiences told in the first person. The tales are less polished than the 1931 material and include a considerable amount of local Tono dialect. Also, because the 1935 supplement includes newspaper accounts and more recent stories, it often has the flavor of "urban" legends.

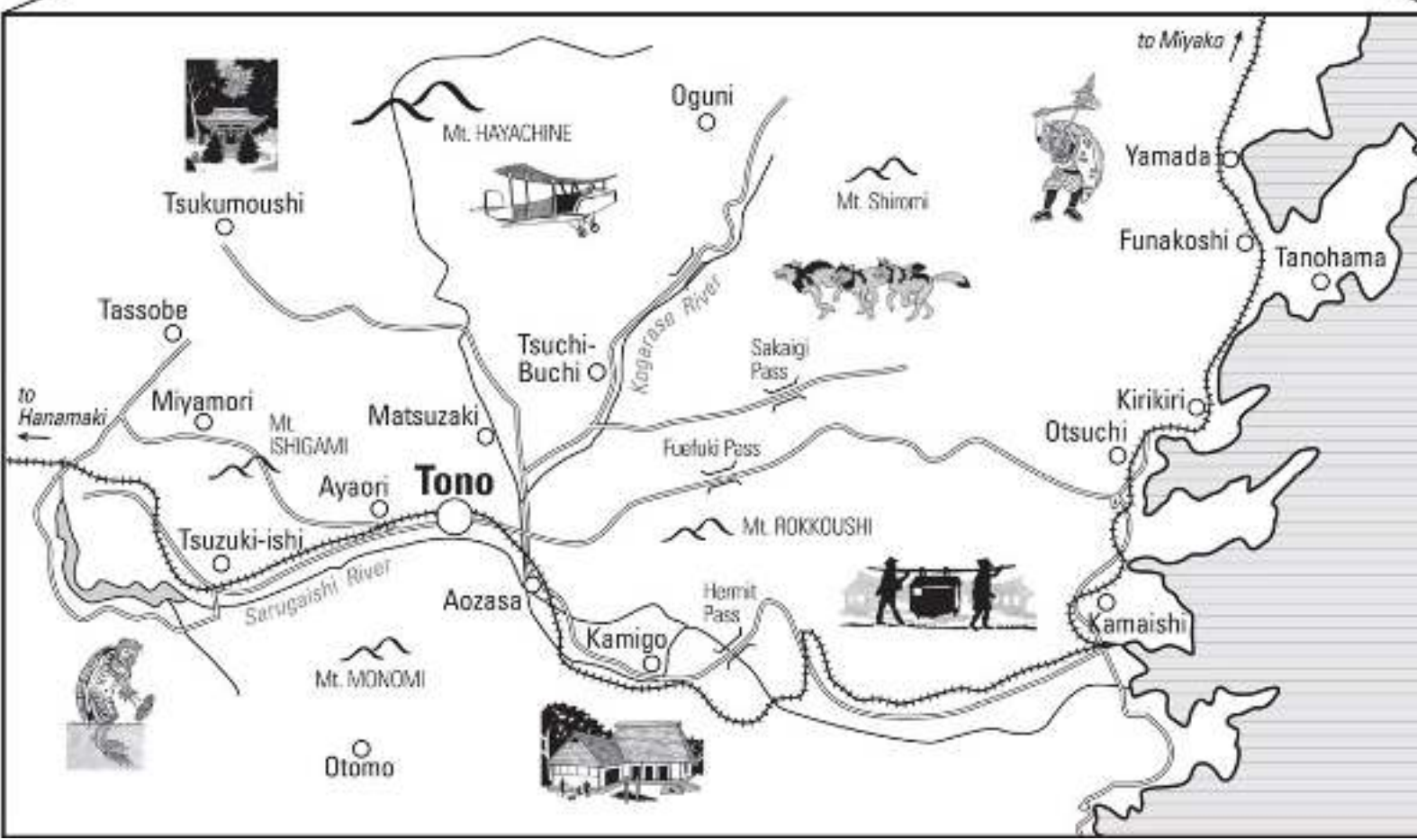
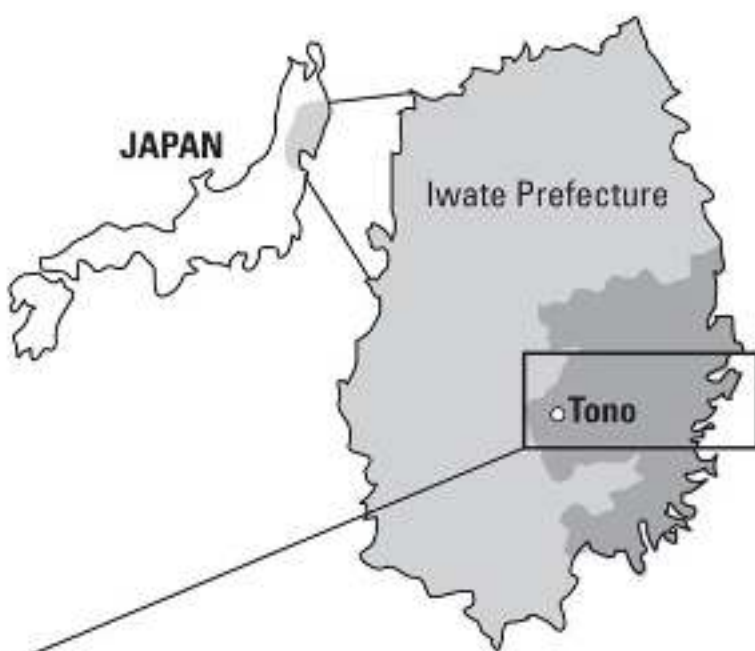
For those interested in the background of this 1935 collection of tales and how I have reenvisioned the text, please see appendix B.

While there is a growing scholarly secondary literature in English about Yanagita Kunio and Japanese folklore studies, unfortunately there are too few translations of important Japanese primary sources. Hopefully this translation will contribute to correcting that imbalance. For those wanting a up-to-date guide to the secondary literature on these topics, there is an open source e-book available for download that details these writings: *Yanagita Kunio and Japanese Folklore Studies in the 21st Century*, edited by Ronald A. Morse (Kawaguchi: Japanime, 2012) <http://www.japanime.com/yanagita>.

Getting these tales into a format for a non-Japanese audience was quite a challenge, and doing so would not have been possible without the assistance of many people. In particular, I would like to thank Miyuki Kobayashi for checking the accuracy of my translations and suggesting changes. Doreen Connors, Christian Goehlert, Saori Maekawa, Oda Tomihide, Glenn Kardy, and Louis Gwen provided valuable editorial advice early in the project. Susan McEachern, the editorial director for Rowman & Littlefield, and her assistant Audra Figgins provided valuable assistance at several stages. The artwork for the book was designed and created by Marjorie C. Leggitt.

Needless to say, in the end, I alone am responsible for what is presented here. My hope is that the reader enjoys reading the stories as much as I enjoyed translating them.





# JAPAN'S TRADITIONAL SPIRIT WORLD

The legends you are about to read will take you on a journey through the imagined belief system “spirit world” that was a vibrant part of Japan’s oral folk tradition for hundreds of years. Told, embellished, and retold by storytellers and others, these tales reflect how townsfolk and peasant farmers living in a remote northern mountainous region of Japan perceived, discussed, and made sense of the world about them. These legends take us into their universe of magical folk traditions.

As magical as they might be, these tales are believed by real people in a specific community: Tono. As a local transport center for a variety of goods moving between inland farming villages and coastal fishing ports, the town of Tono was where stories and gossip about experiences along the path through the mountains and along the coast were exchanged. The many hills, passes, and valleys surrounding the Tono region served as the spiritual sanctuary for a wide range of deities—both good and evil—and provided the backdrop for the tales recorded here.

The cast of characters crisscrossing the Tono hills is remarkable: *yokai* monsters, shape-shifting foxes, witches, grave robbers, ghosts, charcoal makers, hunters, miners, medicine men, packhorse drivers, the police, traveling merchants, roaming priests, shamans, social outcasts, criminals, drifters, disenfranchised samurai warriors, and specific Tono residents. Mix in the quasi-human *yama-no-kan* (mountain spirits and deities) and the wild animals inhabiting the area, and you have the psychological ecosystem where peasants tried to eke out a precarious existence in the lowlands of the Tono basin. Welcome to their rich and mystical world.



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# BIOLOGY AND HUMAN EMOTIONS

*We start with a focus on the most basic unit of culture, the individual human being. Then we expand further and further into other areas of Tono life. The tales in this chapter are related to basic human biological instincts—doing what it takes to survive economically, protecting one's family and property, maintaining social relationships, and being creative. All of the tales in this section relate to the fragility of accomplishing these goals. By way of example, Yanagita Kunio, the founder of Japanese folklore studies, was personally motivated to study rural economic issues because of his concern with the causes of infanticide, the theme of the first legend.*



In Tono, the selective disposal of newborn babies (*mabiki*, or infanticide) during times of famine and hardship was widely practiced. The bodies of strangled newborns were usually buried in the dirt floor of the house so that their souls would be close by.

In Tsukumoushi village, there was an old woman known as Hokkaeshi (rising from the soil). When Hokkaeshi was born, her mother thought she had strangled her and buried her in the dirt-floor kitchen area where they kept the stone for grain grinding. It is said that right after the infant was buried, her delicate hands emerged from the soil. It had somehow come back to life. They dug her up and raised her as a member of the family.

The child was called by the nickname “Hokkaeshi,” and her real name was never used. Also, when she was buried at birth, one eye was crushed, and she remained blind in that eye for life. She died at an old age about ten years ago. (1-246)\*



In Wasedochi, there is a small persimmon tree that never bears any fruit. Sometime in the 1150s there was a battle between the Minamoto and Taira family clans, and many warriors died. It is said that this persimmon tree was planted on top of the mound where the corpses of the soldiers were buried. Legend has it that this is why, even though the souls of these soldiers make the tree's flowers bloom, there is never any fruit. (2-18)



In Otabeeshi, there was a house where a mother and son lived together. The mother was over sixty years old and could not work, so the son took care of her. In 1615, the son went off to fight in the Battle of Osaka. The villagers, concerned about the old woman remaining alone, would sometimes check on her, but she always seemed to have food. Thinking this strange, one person peeked in and saw that she was eating dirt. Even today, this spot is called “*bakuchi*,” which means “old woman (ba) eating (*ku*) dirt (*chi*).” (3-6)



In the village of Aozasa, there was a boy who was a stepchild. He was sent into the hills to put the horses out to pasture. They built a fire all around him and he burned to death. The youth liked to play the flute, and he continued playing it while the fire consumed him. Where he died is now called Flute Blowing Pass. (4-2)



In the past, when people reached the age of sixty, they were sent off to the *dendera-no* communal grave site to die. This practice was quite common. The villages of Kamigo and Aozasa and the hamlets of Nitakai, Ashiaraigawa, Ishida, and Tsuchibuchi all sent their old people to die at *dendera-no* in Aozasa village. It seems that there were areas in various villages designated as *dendera-no* locations. At Takamuro in Tsuchibuchi village, there was a location called *dendera-no*. It is reported that this is where old people were sent from the following hamlets: Tochinai, Yamazaki, Hiishiro, Wano, Kude, Kakujo, Hayashizaki, Kashiwazaki, Mizunai, Yamaguchi, Tajiri, Ohora, and Marukodachi. (5-268)



Legend has it that *ikusa-ba* (the battlefield) was a village where the lords of the Usu and Iio fortresses had a battle. Late at night, it is said that one can sometimes hear the shouting of the soldiers and the neighing of their horses. (6-267)



The patch of land on the border between Nukamae and Zennoji Temple is called *dendera-no* or *rendai-no*. It is a graveyard. The Juodo Temple is surrounded by a mixture of trees. At one time, when this temple was burned in a forest fire, the statue of the Juodo deity flew out of the temple and found refuge in the branches of a nearby tree. Even so, because the fire was so intense, the statue was scorched.

Sasaki Kihei's house is nearby, and he is the caretaker of the temple. Whenever someone is about to die in the village, he seems to have a precognition of it happening because of what is called *omaku shirumashi*. This is when the feelings of the living or dead congeal into a walking ghostly form visible to humans. Some refer to this escape of the spirit (soul) from the body as an out-of-body experience.

There are also songs sung or noises made by these souls or ghosts before the individuals die. If it is a man dying, he takes a horse to *dendera-no* at night and sings a mountain song or makes noise with the horse harness. If it is a woman dying, she sings a well-known song in a low voice, sobs, or talks in a loud voice. She keeps moving until she reaches *ikusa-ba* (the battlefield) and stops. Or when some women die, there is the sound of pounding rice in a mortar. In this way, people pass through *dendera-no* in the dead of night. In Kihei's house, when they talk about who will die next, before you know it the person is dead. (7-266)





The following took place well into the Meiji era (1868–1912). It seems that a young man and a woman, who were being chased by someone, came to Tsuchibuchi village from Oguni. A man with a sword was tracking them and caught up with them in the rice fields of Hayashizaki. He killed them without the slightest resistance by either of them.

What led to this is unclear. With tears running down his cheeks, the man who cut them down buried their bodies beside the road. He placed a decorative hairpin from the woman's hair as a marker on the burial site. It is said that he then returned to where he had come from. Whenever the old women who saw the whole thing talk about it, tears come to their eyes. (8-233)



In a swamp deep in the mountains of Takanosu, all of the large round leaves of the herbal butterbur plant have small holes in them. A long time ago, a princess from somewhere ran away and hid in the mountains. A man who longed for her came after her with his soldiers. They followed her trail and came to this swamp but had no luck finding her.

Discouraged, the man turned to his troops and asked what he could do to get his mind off of the princess. They answered that since there was really no way to end his yearning, he should just enjoy the leaves of the butterbur plants that were there. Even today the leaves of the butterbur in this swamp have small holes in them. (9-17)



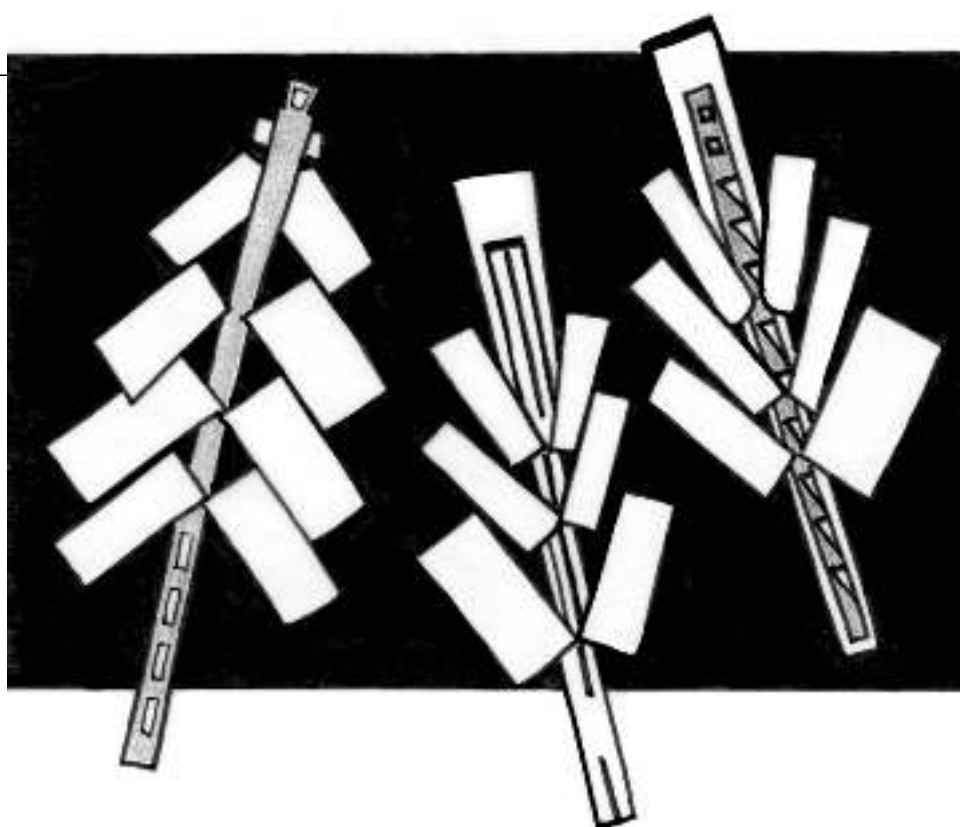
The grandmother of Mr. Iwaki was a friend of Sasaki Kizen. She was a wet nurse servant to the samurai Kange family in Tono when she was young. Once, late at night, she thought she would give

the baby some milk and headed for the straw cradle that the baby was in. She saw a lovely girl about thirty years of age staring fixedly into the cradle. Surprised, she called out to the master and his wife in the next room, but the girl had already disappeared. In this family, the master from two or three generations back had a child with a maidservant. At that time, the master's wife, angry with jealous poisoning the maidservant. The maidservant had a husband, who was also despised by the master's wife, and she worked him mercilessly as well. Rumor has it that the girl Mr. Iwaki's grandmother saw was probably the ghost of the poisoned and bitter maidservant. Sometimes, when the grandmother went to shut the storm doors to the house, it is said she would see the girl sitting close by. (10-169)



Since the eighth century, the highly contagious smallpox virus has periodically ravaged Japan, but not much is heard about it these days. In the past, when someone came down with smallpox, the first thing the family would do is decorate the Shinto altar with sacred straw ropes and prepare a tray with an offering of food to placate the evil smallpox demon (*hosogami*). They did this in the hope that the demon would go away. Smallpox was called the red plague because of the red rash and blisters it created on the skin. Since the smallpox demon does not like red, the person with smallpox would wear a red cap, put on red socks, and put red sheets on the bed.





They thought that by doing these things, they could fully recover in just three weeks. To celebrate recovery, they prepared a hot bath with rice wine in it. Friends and relatives would come together to offer the smallpox demon rice with red beans in it. A Shinto offering of red paper strips (*heisoku*) was also set up. They also prepared a straw doll with straw sandals, balls of red bean rice, and some coins for the smallpox demon to travel back to the other world. This is how they send off the smallpox demon. The straw doll is taken to a village crossroads where it is left. People who have been spared contracting smallpox are happy to see those who have had only a mild case of smallpox sending away the smallpox demon. (11-262)



A long time ago in Wasedochi, there was a woman named Oben. She was washing some Japanese radishes in the Sawa River near her house when she saw something glittering in the water. When she scooped it up, she saw that it was gold. She figured that if she went upstream there might be a gold mine since Tono had a number of gold mines. There is also the tradition of *mayoiga* (lavish vanishing houses) found in the mountains.

Sure enough, she went upriver, and at Mt. Mukurami, just as she had thought, there was a gold mine. But there was a nasty man there who wanted to keep the gold for himself. So when he heard about Oben's interest in it, he killed her. Later, the villagers, to show their appreciation for her goodness, worshiped Oben at a Benten Shrine, located at what is today Mt. Benten. It is said that if a man climbs Mt. Benten, it will surely rain. (12-39)



A long time ago, a blind couple were walking with their small child named Tanzo. They came to Wasedochi in Kuribashi village, and the child Tanzo took a wrong step and fell from the bridge into

the river. He died. Not aware of what had happened, the blind mother and father called out over and over in all directions, “Tanzo, Tanzo,” but there was no reply.

As soon as they realized that their child had died, they felt that without their “precious treasure” there was no reason for them to go on living. They thought that they should all be together again, so they jumped off the bridge into the river. Out of compassion, the villagers set up a small shrine for them by the river and prayed to it. The shrine is called *mekura-gami*, meaning “guardian spirit of the blind.” Even now, people with eye problems say that praying at the shrine helps their condition. Many people scoop up water from the marsh near the shrine and rinse their eyes with it. (13-27)



A horse trader named Tokuya lived in Hashiba. One year there was flooding, and the river rose close to the houses. So Tokuya went out and said, “River Spirit, River Spirit, I will give you my daughter if you will shift the river in a different direction.” With this, the river flowed off in a different direction.

Tokuya was agonizing over what he had just promised and didn’t want to kill his beloved daughter. Then along came two beggars, a mother with her daughter. The girl was eighteen, the same age as his daughter. Tokuya explained what he had promised to the river spirit and asked the girl if she would take the place of his daughter. Since the mother and daughter were poor beggars, they agreed to do it.

That evening, a large number of people from the village gathered together and provided a large feast for the mother and her child. The next day, when they were sent off to the river spirit, they waded into the deep Yagen River pool in front of the house. The mother went in first, and then she took her daughter’s hand and pulled her in. At first the daughter refused to go under, but eventually she sank and disappeared. It is said that because of a curse by the beggar’s daughter, no girl child in the Tokuya household ever lived longer than eighteen years of age. (14-26)



There was a house called Satoya near the deep pool of Noboto in Matsuzaki village. At one time, the Sarugaishi River flowed right up to the front of this house. The people in the house always worried about flooding when the river surged. So one day the master of the house went to the bank of the river and called out, “River Spirit, River Spirit, I will offer you my only daughter if you can make the river flow in a different direction.” When he woke up and looked the next morning, the river had moved from the front of the house and was flowing far away. Now, concerned about his promise, he had to figure out what to do.

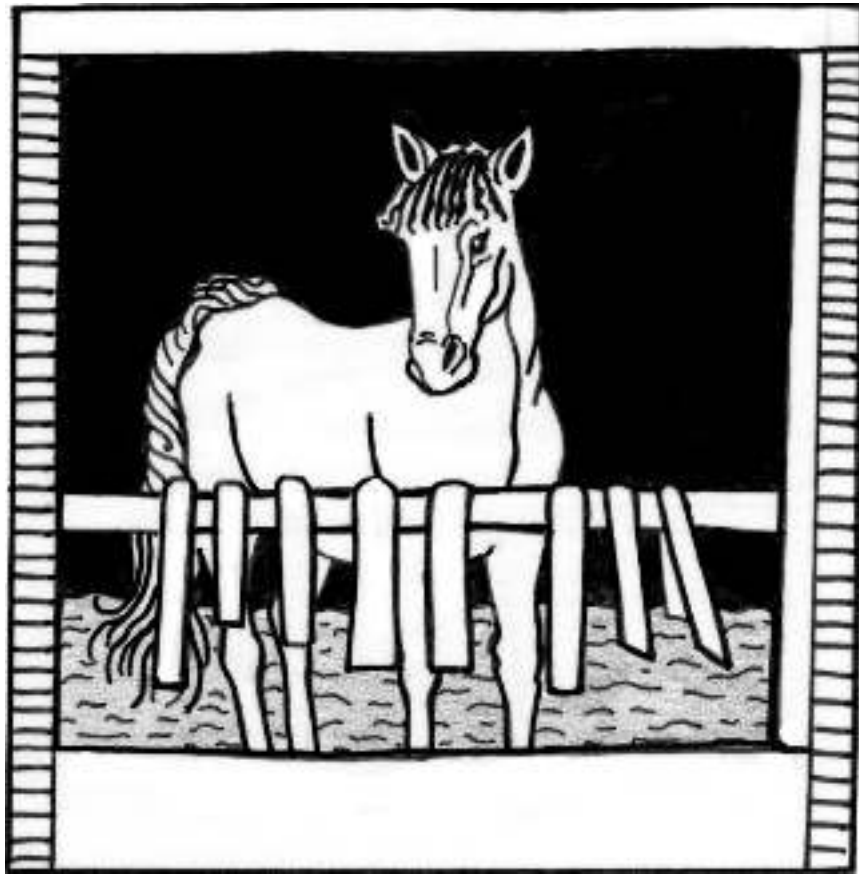
His decision was to push an unsuspecting female servant, who had come to the river pool to do some laundry, into the river. She sank into the water. Then she resurfaced in the middle of the river, made an angry face, and shouted, “I hate men. For that reason, you will never be able to raise men in your house.” After that, whenever a male child was born into this family, it died before reaching twenty years of age. Ito Eiichi (1883–1956), a local Tono researcher and friend of Sasaki Kizen, said that he heard this story directly from a member of the family. (15-25)



The grandfather of the Abe household in Tsukumoushi village learned the art of deception and stealing from a traveler and became a skillful crook. He would never do anything wrong in his own village area but was always busy in places far away. When he got old, he returned to his native village but with nothing to do, he found life boring. So he would go to where the young men in the area were

busy making straw products and take pleasure in telling them colorful stories about his exploits.

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One evening, after the old man finished telling his tales, there were loud noises from a nearby stable. One of the young men looked and saw that there were a few loincloths, like the ones the men were wearing, hung across the horizontal poles blocking entry into the stable. Frightened by the loincloths, the horse was neighing. The young man thought it was strange, but when he looked around, he saw that the loincloths they had been wearing had been removed and hung in the stable without their even noticing it. The old man might have aged, but he was still a master thief!

Another time, the old man stood up some bamboo poles about a meter apart in the front yard. He would jump over the first pole and then balance himself on the next one. He was good at such stunts. The bamboo pole was fairly high and very narrow, but the old man could do this despite his age. One of his favorite comments was that humans could transform into spiders and frogs.

As he approached the end of life and went blind, he reflected on the fact that he deserved being blind because as a thief he had tricked people about what they had perceived, and he was now being repaid for what he had done. He died about seventy or eighty years ago. The written scroll that he had been given by the traveler, which explained the art and techniques of stealing, is said to be buried somewhere in the nearby Kumano Shrine. (16-227)



The main item of worship at Rokkoshi Shrine in Akazawa is a copper religious statue. At one time there were two statues. For a long time, it was said the quality of the metal was exceptionally good. At some point, one image was stolen or it disappeared, and only one was left. Another time, someone

stole the remaining statue and tried for seven days and nights to melt it down in the Sabinai mi furnace, but it wouldn't melt. The thief was frightened and is said to have returned the statue to the shrine. That is what they worship at the shrine now. (17-129)



In Senai of Nakazawa, there was a family with seven children, all boys. Three of them went off to other areas of Japan, and nothing is known about what became of them. The eldest son drifted around the capital in Edo before returning to the mining area of Mt. Akazawa. Legend has it that he made counterfeit (*ohazama*) gold coins and became wealthy overnight. (18-226)



It was in the early days of the Meiji period (1868–1911) that two brothers from Nishinai took three horses to the mountain bordering Komaki to gather reeds used for roofing. Suddenly, two wolves appeared. There was no time to pull out the sickle in his packsaddle, so the younger brother picked up a dead branch of wood on the path and confronted the wolves.

At that moment, the older brother gathered the three horses together, jumped onto one of them, and rode off, returning home. When he got home, if he had immediately informed family members or the villagers about what had happened, they might have been able to go and save the younger brother. But for some reason or other, the older brother didn't tell anyone anything. The younger brother, who was barely fifteen years old, returned home in the evening seriously injured and barely alive. It is said that he died just as he put his hand on the front porch of the house. (19-213)



The carpenter Kikuchi Isezo of Kamitoshi was building a storehouse in Nitakai. There was a frame-raising ceremony for the storehouse with a great deal of drinking and eating. The ceremony was one of several rituals performed for safety during the construction of a house or building.

Isezo was drunk, and on his way back from the ceremony with his friends, as he passed Mt. Hachiman, he shouted out, "I heard for a long time that there has been a clever fox in this area. If you are really here, let me hear your voice. If you are here, I will give you this fish from the ceremony attended." He waved the fish.

Then a fox cried out three times from the woods beside the road. Isezo went on saying, "You are there, but I won't give you the fish. You have to come and try to take it from me." He kept walking. Old Masakichi and the others with him worried that Isezo shouldn't be saying these things, but he went on boasting, "I won't be tricked by a fox. If I take this fish home, it will feed the entire family."

They came near to where the Shinto *torii* gate at Hachiman Shrine is now, and Isezo asked the others to let him go off and relieve himself. His friends thought that since they were in town now, it was probably safe, so they let him go off by himself. Isezo staggered into a rice field beside the road and never came back. Thinking it strange, the others traced his steps, and they found him half dead in the rice field irrigation pond, still in his special ceremonial clothes. This story was told by old Masakichi who had been there. (20-205)



This event took place fairly recently. Mr. Kikuchi's dog was stretched out on its side under the eaves of the shed. Kikuchi's chicken started fighting with the neighbor's chicken. The dog was watching

them fight, but as soon as it saw the chicken from its house losing the fight, it jumped up, grabbed the neighbor's chicken by the neck, and killed it. (21-217)

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In Yasaki, there is a small shrine called *bonari-do* (the mother shrine). Once there was a *miko* (maiden assistant at a Shinto shrine) in the area who came from Miyanome. She didn't like the man her only daughter had married, but since the couple got along so well, she waited patiently for a good chance to do something about him.

Around this time on the Sarugaishi River, there was a defective water intake lock used to regulate the water flow into the rice fields. Three or four times every year the intake gate collapsed, causing flooding in the fields. Troubled, the villagers considered several different solutions to the problem but couldn't decide what to do. Finally they consulted with the wise shrine *miko* about what to do.

She told them that there was only one solution. "At dawn in two days a man with white robes riding a white horse will come by. If you grab him and throw him into the water intake gate, you can have him become its guardian spirit and then it will function properly." At the arranged time, men and women from the village came out and waited at various locations for a person dressed in white on a white horse.

The *miko* also realized that this might be the right opportunity to get rid of the son-in-law that she didn't like. She got up early that morning and dressed the son-in-law in white, put him on a white horse, and sent him off on an errand to the nearby Tsukumoushi village.

Then, at the designated moment when he came by the water intake, the villagers grabbed him and asked him to become the guardian spirit of the intake. He replied, "If this is a request from the gods, I'll gladly do it. But human sacrifice should be both male and female. My wife should sink into the water with me." He called out to his wife who just happened to be nearby. She said, "If I am to join him, I should wear white clothes as well." They mounted the white horse, rode into the river, and disappeared. Then the sky clouded over, the thunder roared, and it rained heavily for three days and nights. On the fourth day as the river subsided, the deep water became shallow and a large rock appeared in the intake gate.

The villagers used this rock as the foundation for building a new intake gate. For several hundred years after that, the village was safe from flooding. Because the husband and wife and the horse were sacrificed, a shrine was set up near the new water intake gate to worship *seki-gami-sama* (the spirit of the water gate). Even now, every year there is a festival at this shrine.

Things didn't turn out exactly as the mother (*miko*) had carefully planned, and she ended up losing her dear daughter. Saddened, she killed herself by plunging into the water at the same spot. It is said that *bonari-myojin* (mother deity) is the shrine for worshipping the mother's (*miko*) spirit. (22-28)



A long time ago, a man from Tsukumoushi was traveling in Arami Province. As he was walking, he noticed that the rice plants on both sides of the road were heavy with grain. He thought that this grain would be good as seed stock for his next year's planting, so he broke off a few stems and put them in his pocket.

The next spring, he planted the grain in the seedling area. It turned out that this variety of rice was not the usual variety for daily household use, but was for boiling and making rice cakes (*mochi*). Thinking how good the rice cakes would be, he planted all of his fields with the young seedlings.

Then one day a man from Arami came by and said that last year the head of a house in Tsukumoushi had stolen some rice stems from his fields and then used them to plant his own rice. The two men argued about this, but the man from Tsukumoushi denied he had done anything wrong. The man from Arami left, warning that he would be back at harvesttime and use the rice grains as proof that the rice had been stolen.

Worried, the Tsukumoushi farmer thought that the god of Mt. Hayachine might help him if he made an appeal. Rumor had it that the deity of Mt. Hayachine sometimes answered prayers even when wrongdoing had taken place. So he climbed the mountain, paid his respects, and prayed. At harvesttime, the man from Arami came again and said he wanted to go into the fields to inspect the rice plants. So they went into the fields together.

Surprisingly, until the day before, the rice plants were rice cake (*mochi*) rice, but now they seemed to be just regular table rice. Embarrassed, the man from Arami apologized and headed off home. This happened clearly thanks to the help from the deity of Mt. Hayachine. The rice was really *mochi* rice but it appeared as regular table rice. This *mochi* rice, called Oide-mochi, can still be found in the village. The female deity of Mt. Hayachine is said to help worshippers even if they steal something. She has a large following. (23-69)



There was a man in Sekiguchi who went every day to enjoy himself in the pleasure quarter (*uramachi*) of Tono with its restaurants and brothels. The brothel he frequented was named Sankoro (the sun, moon, and stars brothel). So the locals called him Sankoro. Eventually, Sankoro became the family name, and it remains that way even now. (24-252)



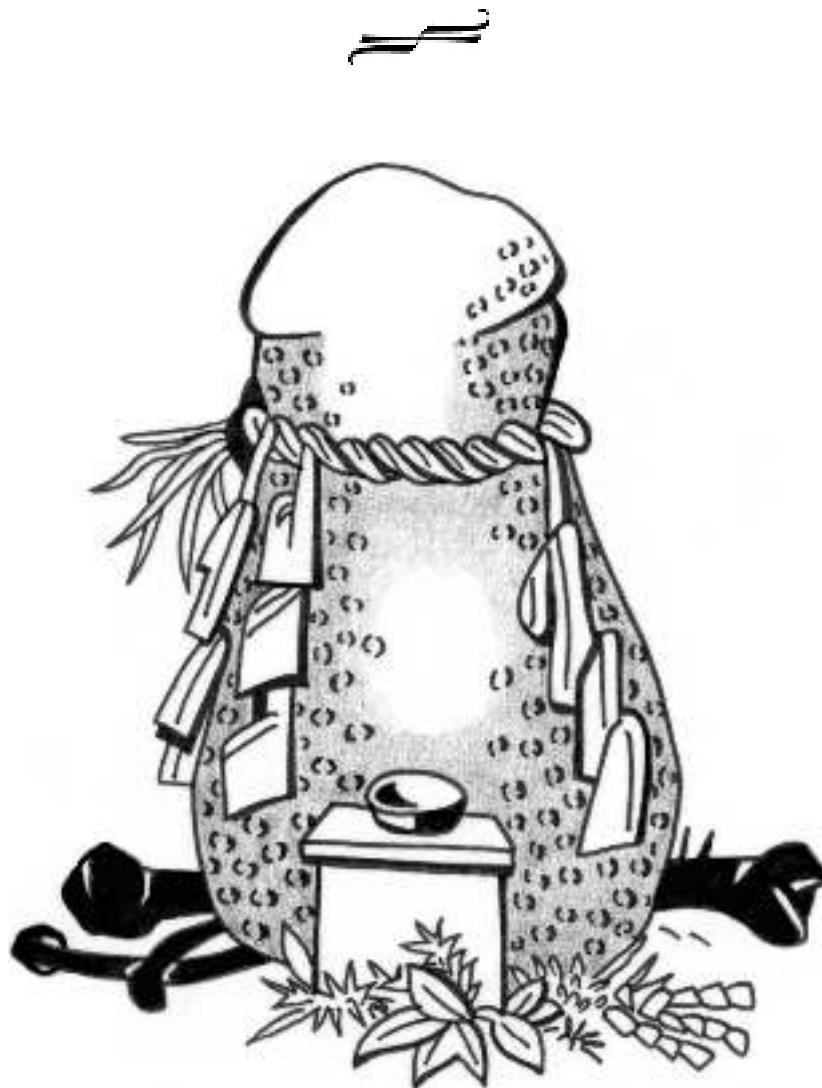
This story dates from around the 1870s. A woman from Tono showed very unusual behavior. Since her late teens, she had tried to convince every man she had a relationship with to commit double love suicide. This didn't just happen once or twice. Even when she married, she tried to get her husband to commit double suicide. They divorced, and she returned home. After trying this ten or more times, she became the mistress of a samurai warrior in Ishikura-machi. Even with him, she proposed double love suicide, and they went to the Hayase River to throw themselves into it. It is said that she died first, and the man had a change of heart and returned home. (25-230)



As you go along the road to Nakasai, there is a stone that is the guardian spirit of abundant breast milk (the protector of birth and nurture). There is the story that, for some reason or other, a Buddhist nun was transformed into this stone. (26-13)



Komagata (guardian deity) Shrine was an *ishi-gami* (stone spirit) locally known as Okoma-sama. Worshippers offered it objects shaped like a male phallus. The origin of this shrine goes back to the rice-planting season. A single traveler, carrying what seemed a strange child on his back, passed by young women of the village who were planting rice. The childlike object had a red hood, a blank facial expression, and no eyes or nose. The traveler came to the location of the present Okoma-sama shrine and rested. Or, it is said, this is the place where he died. Talk has it that this was why the shrine was



At the top of Tachimaru Pass, there was once an *ishi-gami* (stone spirit). Now there is an outline of a male phallus carved into a large tree. There is the story that Tachimaru Pass is related to the origin of the fertility god Konse-sama. There are similar stories about *ishi-gami* in other places as well. The stone deity (*ishi-gami*) of Wano in Tochinai is a round, short, pole-like stone placed vertical in a rice field. This *ishi-gami* is said to relieve pains that women have in the pelvic area.

The owner of this rice field felt that this *ishi-gami* interfered with his rice planting and wanted to move it elsewhere. But when he dug up the dirt below it, a large number of human bones were found. Afraid of being cursed for moving it, the *ishi-gami* was left in the original spot.

According to the Tono ethnologist Ino Kanori (1867–1925), who did research with the Russian scholar Nikolai Nevskii (1892–1937), a large number of human bones were also found when digging under vertical stone pillars in the Emishi (Ezo) mounds in Otomo village. The Emishi or Ezo people lived in northeastern Japan before the fifth century AD. They are thought to have been related to the Ainu people. These were probably burial sites. There are two similar stories in Ayaori village. (28-16)

At the base of Mt. Atago in Tono, there is a shrine to the spirit of love and relationships (*unedori*). At a small pond off to the side of the shrine, one-sided leaf reeds grow. A long time ago this was a large



water pool. If a request was made to the spirit of the water pool, then in some mysterious way, a man and woman would come together in love or marriage. It is said that sometimes the spirit of the water pool would allow himself to be seen by faithful and sincere believers. (29-35)



This is an animal-human love story from a town over on the coast. A young man from the hamlet of Ando went into town on business one evening and came across an old woman standing alone at the approach to the Otsuchi River bridge. She said, "I am very sorry to bother you, but I have a request. Please make for my daughter who is sick. Could you please buy a certain medicine at the drugstore in town?" He thought she was probably just a beggar from somewhere. Even though he didn't recognize the old woman, he willingly agreed to do it.

The old woman was very happy when he purchased the medicine and brought it to her on the bridge. She said, "My home is nearby. Why don't you drop in?" Wondering what kind of dwelling it might be and curious to see it, he went with her. They entered a fairly large room through an opening in the rocks. As modest as it was, it was neat, with straw mats on the floor and furniture. The daughter who was supposedly sick was sleeping in a corner of the room. When the young man entered, she woke up slowly and greeted him. She was indescribably delicate. Her skin was pale and her eyes were bright. She was a beautiful small woman. Entertained that night, he enjoyed himself and went home. After that, as hard as he might try, he could not forget the girl. He went to see her every evening.

As their love deepened, he became weak and sickly. His friends noticed this and asked him about it. He told how he had become friendly with a beggar girl. Once they found out about the girl, they said they would do what they could for him and asked him to take them to see her. The young man had no choice but to take two or three friends to the rock cave. The mother and daughter were troubled by this, but even so, they welcomed them, serving tea and cakes. One friend, who thought there was something unusual about the home, secretly put a cake in his pocket to examine later. It turned out to be a perfectly normal cake.

The next night, when the young man went to see the girl, she looked at him and explained her true identity. She said, "We are not really humans. We are foxes that once lived inside the Myojin fox shrine. My father was killed by someone years ago, and we have been living together like this since then." With tears in her eyes, she said, "Hearing this, you are no doubt upset." Nevertheless, the man thought that even if she was not a human being, he would not give up. She said that since her health was failing and he would no doubt have some bitter memories, it was better for them to part ways. She pushed the young man out of the room. After that, he could not forget her. He went back to the rock area a number of times but couldn't find the entrance to their room. It is said that the daughter probably died and the young man grieved. The person who told this story said it happened around 1915. He was an ex-soldier who visited Tono frequently. (30-200)



A man from Hashino village took someone with him to Mt. Hajikami to make charcoal. One of the men had a girlfriend in the village, and he always bragged about her when working around the kiln. One evening, the girl came to their hut in the mountains with soybean curd (tofu) wrapped in a square striped cloth. She stayed overnight, sleeping between the two men. At night, after her boyfriend had fallen asleep, the other man reached out to touch the girl's body and was shocked to find that she was covered with thick hair. He observed her for a while, got up, grabbed his hatchet, and started to kill

her. As she died, she murmured, "What on earth made you do this?"

Of course the boyfriend was upset and said, "Why did you kill my girlfriend?" The boyfriend said he was going to leave the mountain and report the murder, but the other man said that the girl was not human and that he should wait until noon of the next day before doing anything. But because she still had the body of a human, the other man was worried and concerned.

The next morning, the first rays of light came into the hut. But the girl still had a human form. The boyfriend again said he was going to report the incident, but the other man again restrained him, pleading to wait just a little longer. Sure enough, the dead woman began to transform into an old fox. After waiting so long, they were both shocked. They went to the village to see if they could find the owner of the square, striped cloth that the girlfriend had brought with soybean curd wrapped in it. They found that the night before there had been a wedding where the custom was to bring soybean curd as a present. The soybean curd brought by one of the guests had disappeared, and the people wondered what had happened to it. No doubt, it was the soybean curd that the fox had taken to the mountain. This took place about fifty or sixty years ago. (31-207)



The deep pool of water called *onabe-ga-fuchi* (cooking pot pool) in Masuzawa village is on the Sarugaishi River. The story is that during the feudal days of the Asonuma family (around 1600), a concubine learned that her master had been killed in battle, so she drowned herself in this pool of water clutching her baby.

There is a large white rock in the middle of the water pool. Before a flood, a woman wearing a white dress and combing her hair has been seen on top of this rock. About twenty-five years ago during a flood, two or three people saw her. (32-29)



Most people usually sleep together completely naked at night. If they don't sleep naked, sleep is supposedly not satisfying. Sleeping is distasteful if even one item of clothing is on the body. It is said that it is the start of a separation if a husband or wife sleeps with underwear on. It is also considered a bad omen to do this. (33-258)



When a boy reaches adulthood or is ready to wear a loincloth, he has his aunt (in place of his mother) buy some bleached cotton cloth to make the loincloth. Also, the first pubic hairs that come out on the boy must be pulled out. It is said that by doing this, symbolically the "founder of the family" is removed, and this will allow the pubic hair to grow in thicker. (34-253)



It is said that if a girl's waist sash comes untied by itself, that evening the person she loves will visit. It is also said that if a man's loincloth or a woman's underskirt gets loose by itself, something very good will happen. Also, if a man's eyebrows itch, he will meet a woman. (35-254)



Several years ago, in the hamlet of Kuribashi, a young daughter in the Hiraguzo household w

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