

YOSHINO

FOLKTALE WALKING MAP

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Yamato Kamiichi Station

Yoshino Jingu Station

Yoshino Station

Yoshinocho City

Archives for History of Yoshino

3 The Village Where Nobody Keeps Dogs
Kubogaito



Shiono

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Atarashi

Kogurisu

Takamigawa River

Kuzu

4 A Grateful Wolf
Washika



Nageishinotaki Waterfalls

Higashiyoshinomura Village

Village Office of Higashiyoshinomura
Niukawakamijinja Shrine

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Otocho in Gojo City



1 The Man Who Became a Frog
Mt. Yoshinoyama



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Mt. Yoshinoyama



Yoshino Mikumarijinja Shrine

Seireinotaki Waterfalls

Kinpujinja Shrine

Hermitage of Saigyo

Mt. Yoshinoyama



Odaigahara Forest

USING THE NUMBERS FROM THE MAP, ENJOY READING EACH SPOT'S FOLKTALE.

1 The Man Who Became a Frog

From the mountain opening on the 3rd of May to the 23rd of September, a number of men climb Mt. Omine for pilgrimages to Omimesanji Temple. They don't climb in winter because of heavy snow. Consequently, pilgrimages are made in summer only.

The path leading to the temple is very steep, and the deeper into the mountain, the steeper the path. Once, one man became so tired from climbing that he began to complain. He said "It is impossible to receive any grace in such a steep place even if we listen to a sermon and pray" and hurt other pilgrims with mean words. Then, probably by divine punishment, he slipped and fell from Nozoki Cliff ("looking down cliff").

Fortunately, he was not killed. However, there were no helicopters and such like in those days, and nobody could go down to rescue him. Therefore, priests were assembled and talked over what they could do for him. At last, they said to the man, "If you want to be saved, we can transform you into a frog. Will you be a respectable man after this?" He replied, "I'm sure I will be a respectable man!" Then, the priests transformed him into a frog. Therefore, the man, in his frog form, jumped up the cliff and his life was saved.

The priests took him to Zaodo Hall. They said to him, "You have to endure considerable penance for gaining back your human form," and recited long sutras. The priests were gathered from all over the Yoshino area and prayed for him. Thanks to them, the frog regained human form and was reborn as a respectable man.

It is said that since then, the religious ceremony of "Kaeru Tobi (frog jumping)" has been performed in Zaodo Hall of Kinpusenji Temple on the 7th of July.



2 Yoshitsune's Kakure-To (Hiding Pagoda)

Minamoto no Yoshitsune was a young brother of Minamoto no Yoritomo and they used to be very close.

However, Yoshitsune was so active and energetic that Yoritomo became afraid that his brother might murder him if he was unprepared. At last, Yoritomo ordered his men to kill Yoshitsune.

Yoshitsune ran away to Mt. Yoshino and sought shelter in Yoshimizu Shrine. Then a priest called Yokawa no Kakuhan of Zaodo Hall attacked the shrine. Yoshitsune, helped by Sato Tadanobu, ran away to Okusenbon together with Benkei. There, was a pagoda built by En no Gyoja as a place for ascetic practice. So then they ran into the pagoda which is why the pagoda is called as Kakure-To (Hiding Pagoda). However, as the enemies surrounded the pagoda and began to attack it, Yoshitsune kicked and broke the pagoda from inside and ran away. Accordingly, the pagoda is also called as Keyaburi-no-To (Kicked and Broken Pagoda).

Then, Yoshitsune and Benkei passed through Ataka no Seki (Ataka Barrier) and ran away as far as Hiraizumi (in Tohoku district).

As Yoshitsune's Kakure-To was the place of ascetic practice, the pilgrims of Omimesanji Temple still enter the pagoda and perform ascetic practice.

They chant the following mantra three times and pray:

Kakure-To in the depth of the deep Mountain of Yoshino
Was originally inhabited by Ku (nothing)

On abira unken sowaka



4 A Grateful Wolf

Wolves used to live in Yoshino in olden days.

It is said, on one moonlit night, a wolf came to a village and began to howl. Since it howled and howled, at last a villager came out to see what was wrong. He saw the wolf suffering a lot. Therefore, he opened its mouth and found a tusk stuck in its throat. Probably, the wolf ate a wild boar and its tusk got stuck.

The villager said, "Well, I'll pull out the tusk from your throat. Promise you never bite or hurt me." The wolf promised and he pulled out the tusk. The wolf was relieved and went home.

The next day a carcass of a huge boar was found in front of his house. "This must be a gift from the wolf," said all the villagers.



5 Aridoshi Myojin Shrine

Once upon a time, a feudal lord said to his men, "As old people eat and don't work, abandon them in a mountain!"

There, lived a son, and he hated the idea of abandoning his parent in a mountain. So, he dug a pit (*imoana*, pit for storing potatoes etc.) in his house and hid his father in it. Everyday he brought food for his father and took care of him.

One day, a lord of a neighboring country sent difficult questions to answer to the lord, but nobody could solve them. One of the questions was about threading a ball through which a lot of holes were made.

Furthermore, the son asked his father in the pit about the question. His father said to him, "Well, tie a thread to a leg of an ant and put it in a hole of the ball. Then, put honey on the other side of the hole. Because ants love honey, it will go through the hole to the other side, and the ball will be threaded."

The second question was to guess the base side and the end side of a rectangular wooden block. The father said to him, "Well, you can tell that if you dip the wooden block in water. Because the base side is heavier, it will slightly sink."

The last question was to make a rope of ash. Therefore, the father said, "Well, it's easy. Rub salt on a rope and burn it. The ash will be left in the shape of the rope."

Consequently, the son went to the lord's castle right away and taught him the answers. The lord was very glad and offered him a reward for that. The son said to him, "To tell the truth, I am hiding my father and taking care of him. He taught me how to solve all three questions. Please permit me to live with my father in our house until he dies."

After that the lord then realized the wisdom of the old people and stopped abandoning them in the mountain after that. Therefore, Aridoshi Myojin Shrine is a place where this dutiful son was enshrined.



7 Kobo Shimizu (Kobo Spring)

Unokawa, in Yoshino's Kawakami Village, is located on the height of the mountain.

Some say that, because there was no well in the village long ago, the villagers had to go down the mountain to a stream in order to fetch water.

It is said that, on one hot summer day, Priest Kobo Daishi came to Unokawa on his journey and dropped in at one house. He asked from the outside of the house, "I am very thirsty. Please give me water." Hearing his call, an old woman came out and said, "Please wait for a moment. We have no water here. Please wait for a while." Then, she picked up a pail and went down to the stream below to fetch water. After a long time, she came back and gave him water.

Kobo Daishi said to her, "You are so kind to fetch me water from such a distance and you are covered in sweat. Now, I'll make water spring up from this place." With that being said, he tapped on a rock three times with his pilgrim's staff and made a wish. Suddenly, cool water gushed from the rock at once.

Since then, the villagers can take sweet and cool water from the spring without going down the mountain. Therefore, they have no more trouble with water.

The spring is called Kobo Shimizu (Kobo Spring) and water still gushes from such a high place.



8 One-legged of Mt. Obagamine

A long time ago, there used to be a rumor that a huge wild boar haunted Mt. Obagamine, and it attacked and devoured people.

Once, a samurai (warrior) made up his mind, saying "I'll kill the boar," and he went into the mountain with his dog to do so. When they were deep inside Mt. Obagamine, the dog began to bark loudly, because he saw a bamboo grass bush shaking greatly. The next moment, he saw a wild boar with lots of bamboo grass growing on its back dashing by and running away across the ravine. Therefore, the dog chased the boar. The boar, being hunted down, countered the dog with clattering tusks. Consequently, the *samurai* aimed a gun at it and shot it. The bullet hit the boar and it became mad with pain. At last, its strength gave out and it fell dead.

Several days after that, a wandering samurai with his leg injured came to Yunomine Hot Spring in Kishu for hot-spring cure. He said to the innkeeper, "Rent me a quiet detached room." Then, he added, "When I sleep, nobody is allowed to enter my room or to look in." He persisted so severely that the innkeeper thought something was strange about him. So, he peeped into the room. What he saw in the room was a sleeping wild boar with bamboo grass growing on its back. Therefore, he was so shocked by the sight that the boar woke up.

"Even though I warned you not to look in so strictly, you dared to see me. I am a ghost of Izasao who dwelled in Mt. Obagamine. I am very mortified because I was shot by a *samurai*. Get me his dog and gun."

It is said that because the innkeeper got him neither the dog nor the gun, that the ghost of Izasao became a one-legged *oni* (ogre) and began to attack people passing by Mt. Obagamine.

After a while, a priest put a stone statue of Jizo and made a sutra-mound, where he buried a sutra on Mt. Obagamine. Accordingly, the ogre was contained, and travellers were able to travel in the mountain again. However, the priest said to the ogre, "You can do what you like only on the 20th of December every year." So, the day called "Hate no Hatsuka" (the 20th of the end of the year) is an evil day of Mt. Obagamine. It is said, if anybody travels in the mountain, he will be devoured by the ogre. It is also said that the gun with which Izasao was hit perspires for no reason only on the night of the day. Therefore, the gun is said to be dedicated to a small shrine in Amagase.



3 The Village Where Nobody Keeps Dogs

Long time ago, Oama no Miko (Prince Oama) ran away from Mt. Yoshino to Kubogaito Village because of conflict with Otomo no Miko (Prince Otomo).

When Oama no Miko arrived at Babakawara Shore, he came upon an old man and his wife. They were holding a religious service with a papermaking vat that they had washed. The prince then said to them, "Please help me, as the enemies are chasing me."

Therefore they turned over the vat at once and hid him under it. Then, they put acorn powder on the vat as an offering and continued the service.

There, arrived two dogs of the enemies. They went round and round the vat, sniffing it. The wife said angrily, "They are greedy dogs. They bark because they want to eat the offering." The enemies caught up to their dogs, said to them, "Stop such a bad behavior!" and killed them there, so the prince could survive.

It is said that because of this event, the people of Village Kubogaito decided not to keep dogs.

Inuzuka, in which the dogs were enshrined, is still seen in the garden of the former Kuzu Primary School in Kubogaito Village.



6 Well of Ihika

A long time ago, it is said that, in advancing eastward from Kyushu, Emperor Jimmu went over to Mt. Yoshino.

On the way, there was a large cedar tree on the side of the mountain, and a well at the root of the tree. When Emperor Jimmu passed by the well, a tremendous light radiated from inside. While everybody was amazed at the sight, a man with a tail came out from the inside of the light and groveled before the emperor. Emperor Jimmu then asked, "Who are you?", and the man said to him, "I'm called Ihika and live in this Mt. Yoshino. I have been waiting for you, Emperor, to guide you."

Emperor Jimmu was pleased to hear that. So then, he advanced further eastward with Ihika as his guide.

The well can be still seen today, and there is a temple called Ibikarisan Temple and a tiny shrine called Ikari Jinja Shrine nearby.



9 Medicine given by Gataro

Long ago, there was a huge pool behind Gamo in Tsujido, and a *gataro* (water sprite) lived there.

Once, when a priest in charge of a temple went to the lavatory at night, the *gataro* stretched its hand from below. The priest cut off the hand with a sickle and left it there.

The next night, the *gataro* came to the temple and said, "Give me back my hand," and added, "if you give the hand back to me, I'll give you wonderful medicine." The priest returned the hand to the *gataro* in exchange for the medicine.

The medicine is Kinso, and I heard that they still sell the medicine at the store Gamoya.

