

安岐のむかしばなし



発行にあたって

地域に古くから継承されている当該地域の文化遺産を活用した取組みということで、阿木に古くから伝えられている昔話の代表的な話をまとめてみました。

物語にある地域、滝など実際に出かけて往時に思いをはせながら執筆を行いました。「阿木にはこんなおもしろい物語があるんだ」と新たな魅力が発見できれば幸いです。

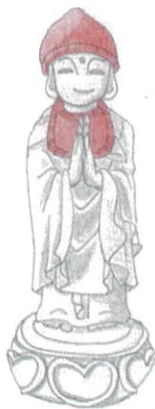
また、「安岐の文化財」を利用しながら読んでいただければ地域の文化財に対する認識がさらに向上すると思います。

阿木地域伝統文化継承事業実行委員会 事務局
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ほおじろ おんがえ

頬白の恩返し

昔、阿木のある所に心掛けのよいお爺さんじいと意地の悪いお爺さんが住んでいました。よいお爺さんは、今日も畑に出てセツセと働いていました。すると一羽の頬白ほおしろが猫に追われて来て

「どうぞお爺さん 私をお腹の中に隠して下さい。きつと何かよい知らせがあるはずです。」

と言います。仕方なくその頬白の言う通り丸飲みにしてしまいました。所が不思議な事に、しばらくするとお臍へそから鳥の尻尾が出て来ました。試しに一寸引つ張って見ると頬白ほおしろの声で

「チンチン カラカラ ブイブイブイ 黄金も小粒もザンブラリ」



とさえづります。

その頃、岩村の殿様は、藩中で何か珍しい芸をする者に褒美ほうびを下さるとの知らせが出ていました。お爺さんは何とかして殿様に近づく方法を考えました。

次の日、お城の裏の藪やぶで竹を一本切りました。するとお城の中から

「殿様の藪やぶで竹を切る者は誰だ。」

と声がします。お爺さんは今だと思い

「いつでも屁へそこき爺やぶでございます。」

と返事をしました。すると

「そんなら殿様の前で屁をこいて見よ。」

と言われました。お爺さんは殿様に一礼をして、恐る恐るお腹を出して、臍へそから出ている鳥の尻尾しっぽを引っ張ると鳥の声で

「チンチン カラカラ ブイブイブイ黄金も小粒もザンザラリ。」

と尻尾を引つ張る度ごとに鳴きました。殿様は

「なるほど、これは珍しい。」

と大層喜んで小判とか珊瑚とかの褒美ほうびをたくさんくださいました。

その噂を聞いた意地の悪いお爺

さんは、尻をこいて褒美ほうびが貰える

のなら俺もやってみようと思ひ、お

婆さんにお芋や香煎こうせんを沢山たくさん作らせ

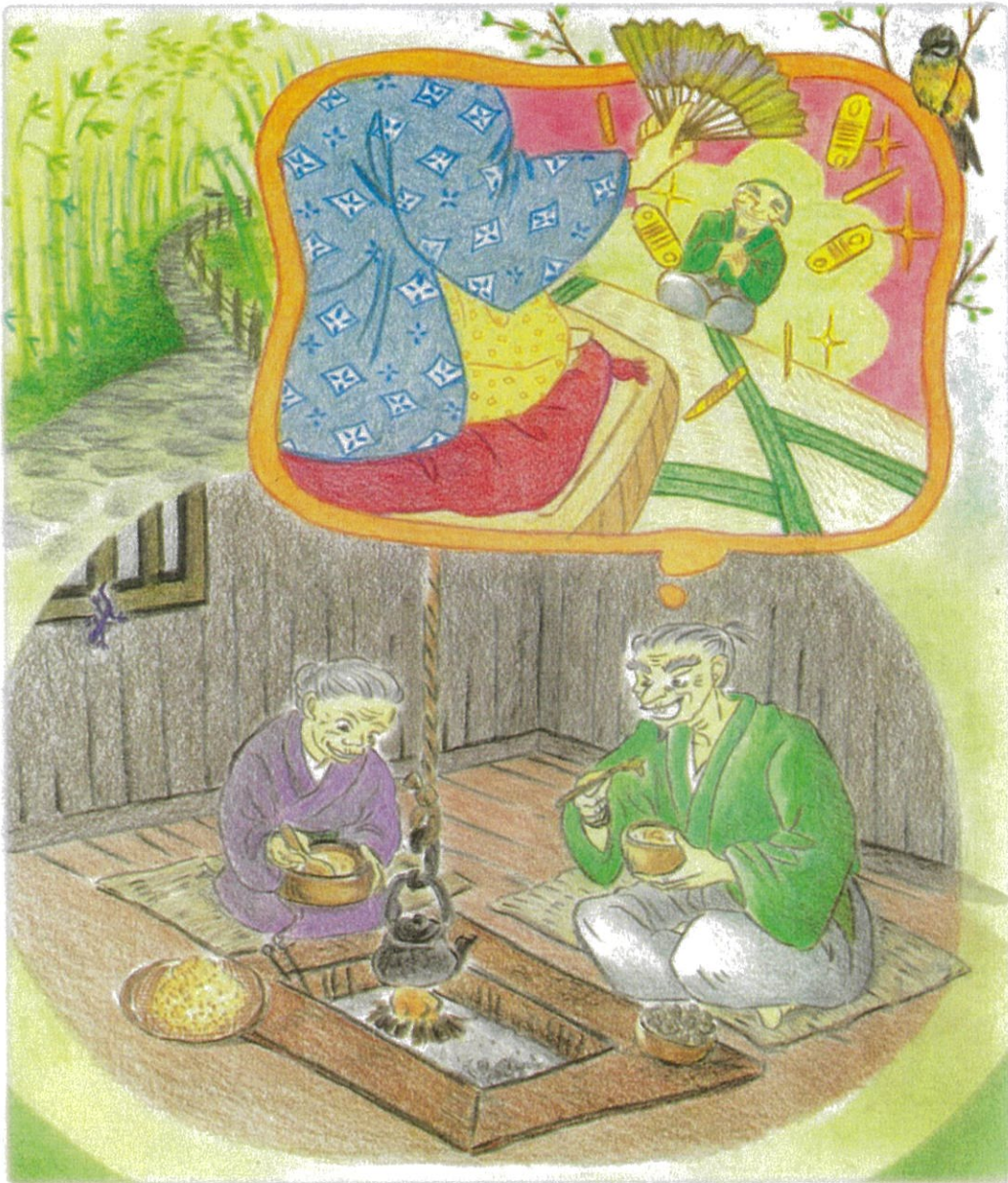
腹一杯食べて、例の藪やぶで竹を切って

いました。殿様は、今一度あの鳥の

鳴き声が聞いてみたくなり、お爺さ

んを呼び寄せました。

お爺さんはしめたと思ひ、殿様の前



香煎：大麦を煎って粉状にした食べ物

に出てお尻を向け、家からしてきた栓を抜くと

「ブー。」

と言って屁と一緒に汚い物がたくさん出て、殿様の顔にかかりました。殿様は大層怒って

「無礼者。」

と言いながら、刀でお尻を切り付けました。

一方お爺さんの家では、お婆さんは褒美ほうびが待ち切れず、屋根へ上って遥かに岩村の方を見ていました。お爺さんが四ツ這よっぱいになり、後から赤や白や黒い馬がついて来ます。沢山の褒美ほうびで一人では持ち切れず、馬に積んでくるところだと思っていました。家に着いて見ると大層な傷をしていて、馬に見えたのは、大きな犬が傷口を舐なめながら付いて来たのでした。びっくりしたお婆さんは屋根から転がり落ち、またお爺さんは、傷が原因で二人共死んでしまいました。

文 秋山 一男

絵 関山 智子

妻さいの神

むかしむかしの話。天文のころというから、今から四百五十年も前のことだ。室町幕府むろまちばくふの勢がだんだんおとろえてきたので、地方では豪族ごうぞくが力をほしのままにして、国々が乱れはじめていた。が、ここ美濃の国の阿木のあたりは、まだ平和でのどかな日々がつづいていた。

ある日、阿木から岩村へ超える坂のあたりの道端みちばたに、一人の娘が倒れるように休んでいた。上州安中の豪族あんなかの娘で、関東かんとうでも大乱が起って、安中もその戦にまきこまれ、豪族は土地も家も失い、家族もほとんど亡なくなった。難なんをのがれてただ一人生き残った娘だった。長い間、音さたなかったが、一人の兄が京に上って修行していた。その兄を頼たよろうと、ようやくここまで来たが、病弱の上に慣れない一人旅の疲れで、もう歩くこともできなくなっていた。

娘は、安中によく似た、静かで平和そうなこの阿木の山里を見ながら、「さて、これからどうしたものか。」と、思案しあんにくれているところだった。すると、野良帰りの老夫婦が通りかかって、

「もし、どうかなされたか。」

と、声をかけてくれた。娘はようやく体を起こしながら、事の次第しだいを話した。

「それはお気の毒な。心は先へ急ぐでしょうが、体が何より大事。少しここで休んでゆきなされ。」

と言って、小屋をかしてくれた。娘は親切な老夫婦に助けられて、しばらくここで暮らすことにした。それにしても、知らない土地での一人暮らしは、大変だった。

寒い風の吹く夜など、楽しかった安中の暮らしのこと、戦に亡くなった父母のこと、京に上つて帰らない兄のことなど思い出されて、早く病気をなおして京にのぼりたい、そして兄に会いたいと、しきりに思うのだった。

そんなある晩、とんとんとと戸口をたたく者があつた。こんな夜更けに誰だろうと思っていると、

「お頼たのみ申す。お頼たのみ申す。」

と言う。戸を少しあけてみると、一人の旅人たびびとが立っていて、

「旅の者だが、一晚の宿をお頼み申す。」

と、言った。娘は、あまり突然のことであり、粗末そまつな小屋だし、困っていると、また、

「ご迷惑ごめいわくでしょうが、お頼み申す。実は、京からの急ぎの旅で、疲れはててしもうた。一夜の宿を、」

と言う。「京からの旅」と聞いた娘は、「ひよっとしたら京の話が聞けるかも知れない。」と、思ったのでしよう。

「こんな粗末な小屋ですが、よろしかったら。」

と言って、とめてやった。

翌日になって、娘はゆうべから考えつづけていたこと、京のことを尋ねようと思った。

「京からの旅とお聞きしましたが。」

と言いかけると、男は、

「さよう、拙者せっしゃは上州安中の者だが、長いこと京で修業しゆぎょうしておった。風のたよりに、関東で大乱が起こり、安中

も戦場せんじょうになったと聞きましてな。急いで帰るところや。やっかいをおかけ申したな」

と言う。

「それでは、もしや兄さんでは。」

娘は思わず口走った。そして、よくよく話してみると、幼いとき別れたままの兄だった。娘は、安中の戦のこと、

兄を頼ろうと思って、京へ上る途中、病気にかかり、やむなくここで暮らしていること、一部始終しじゆうを話した。

兄妹は、夢のような思わぬめぐりあいを喜びあった。そして、早く安中に帰り、家の再興さいこうをはかろうと誓ちかいあ

った。だが、思いがけない兄との再会に、安心したのでしようか。娘は、
急に病やまいが重おもくなつて、亡くなつてしまつた。兄もまた、旅の疲れや氣
づかれに、妹の死の悲しみが重なつたのか、つづいて亡くなつた。

村の人たちは、遠い故郷の安中へ帰ることもできず、また家の再興さいこうを
夢みながら 遂はたに果すこともできず、若くして亡くなつた兄妹を哀あわれん
で 二人を同じところに葬ほうむり、小さな祠ほくらを建てて祭つた。これが今の
妻の神やしろの社だ。

黒田川にかかる塞さい之神橋のかみはしを渡つて 坂道を少しのぼると、右側さいに妻の
神の社がある。この社に願ねがいごとをかけてお参りすると、靈驗れいげんがあると
いうことで、今でもお参りする人が多いということだ。

文 大島 虎雄
絵 柴田 美雪



おやまさそこりか

その頃の山野田原やまのたはらは広い原っぱでした。ある山伏やまぶしが通りかかりま

すと大きな石のそばに一匹の狐が寝ていました。山伏は面白半分に驚かしてやろうと思い、手に持っていたほらがいを狐の耳元でブーッと大きな音で吹きました。

すると狐は大層驚いて山の方へ逃げて行きました。

そのうちに日もとつぷり暮れてしまい、泊る所に困った山伏は、遥か彼方はるかなたに明りのもれている一軒の家を見付けました。

早速その家をたずねて、一夜をお願いしようと思すと、何やら家の中にはぎわしくて、出てきた主人は

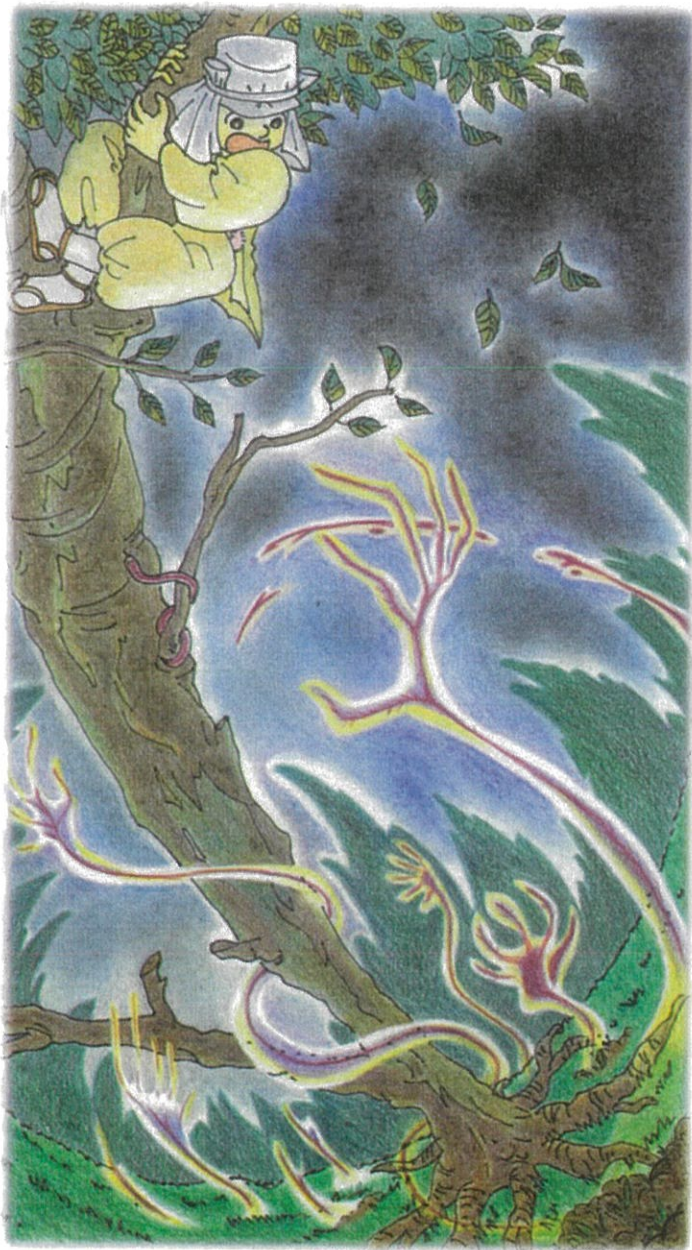
「今晚は子どもが死んで、これから葬式そうしきを出す所で泊めるわけには行かない」



山伏：深い山に入って修行する者

と言って断られてしまいました。仕方なくまた、トボトボと当てもなくでかけますと、すでに葬式の支度が出来ていたとみえて、出棺の様子です。しゅつかんところが、不思議なことにその山伏の行く後からついて来ます。どちらへ向きを変えてもちやんとついて来ます。何だか気味が悪くなつてしまい、ふと見ると元から枝のある一本の木がありましたので、その木に登って様子を見ていました。すると葬列の一行は、その木の根元を掘ってひつぎを埋めて帰りました。

しばらくすると、その土がムクムクと盛り上がって、青ざめた手がニュッと出て山伏をつかもうとします。仕方なく一枝上へ上りますと、死人は三角の紙を額に当てたまま出て来て「おやまさそこりか」（山伏さんはそこに居ますかの意味）



と言いながら木に登って来ます。又一枝上りますと、続いて

「おやまさそこりか」

と言いながら木に登って来ます。もう恐ろしくなって段々と上へ上り、もうこれ以上は木が細くなって上がれませ
ん。仕方なく下をめぐけて、目をつむって飛び降りました。とたんに目が覚めて、見ると先程狐をおどした石にも
たれて、今まで寝ていたのです。

その石は今でも山野田原にあつて、その上に腰を下ろすと痔じが悪くなるという言い伝えがあります。

文 秋山 一男
絵 関山 智子

猿の尻ぼ

昔ある所に仲の良い猿さると狐きつねが住んでいました。今日も猿は狐の所へ遊びに行き、沢山のごちそうを出され喜んで食べていました。その出された魚が大層おいしくて、猿はそのとり方を狐にたずねました。ところが、狐は本当の事を話せば魚を取られてしまうと思い、口から出まかせにいい加減の事を教えました。

それとも知らない猿は、狐に習った通りろぼうに落ちている古い馬の沓くつ（蹄鉄ていてつのなかつた時代に、馬の脚にはかせた履物）を沢山拾い集め、寒い冬の晩、自分の尻ぼに縛り付けて、近所の淵ふちに沈めていました。少し経ってから引つ張ってみますと多少魚がかかったか、少しは重くなっています。が、まだまだもう少したくさんと思ううちに、夜も段々と更

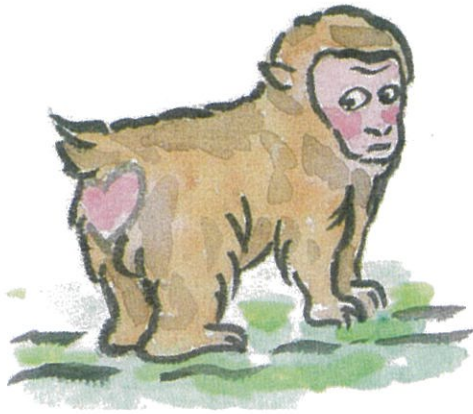


ていてつ
蹄鉄：馬のひづめの底に打ちつけ、ひづめがすり減るのを防ぐための鉄の金具

け、そのうちに東も白みかけました。

もうこの位でよかろうと引っ張ってみましたが、あまり沢山とれたのか、どうしても上がりません。そのうちに人の気配がするので、見つかっては大変と顔を真っ赤にして力一杯引きますと、自分の尻ぽが根元から切れてしまいました。それもそのはず、魚がかかったのではなく、馬の靴が厚い氷に凍りついていたのでした。

それ以来、猿の顔は赤くなり、しつぽは短くなってしまいました。その淵が、今は河川改修のためなくなってしまうたさくらぶちふきん附近だという話です



文 秋山 一男
絵 三宅 かつ枝

消えた滝

むかしむかしの話だ。吉野朝のころのことだと言うから、今から六百年も前のことだ。

そのころ、ほうおうそいち峰翁祖一おしよという和尚さんがいた。岩村の大円寺だいえんじを開いた和尚さんで、京都の有名な和尚さんで、京

都の有名な和尚さんと並ぶほどの高僧こうそうであった。

この和尚さんが、阿木の行事岳ぎょうじだけのふもとに、大禪寺だいぜんじという寺を開いた。徳とくの高い和尚さんだったので、説教せつきょうを聞きにくる村人は、いつも堂どうにいったばいだった。

ところが、この寺にも困ったことが一つあった。それは、この寺をめぐるように流れている川だ。急な流れで、本堂の前のあたりには滝もあって、激はげしい水の音が寺にひびいて、和尚さんの話も聞きとれないほどだった。

「今日も、いいお話だったなあ。ありがたいことだ。」

「そうか、わたしはうしろの方だったんで、よく聞けなんだわ。」



「そうや、わしもや。川の音が苦くになつてなあ。」

こんな話が、村人の間にひろまっていた。

うわさを聞いた和尚さんも、

「そうに違ちがいない。話をしているわたしでさえ、苦になるんだからなあ。」

と言いながら、滝のほとりに立って、しぶきをあげて激しく流れ落ちる水を見つめて、「何とかならぬものかなあ。」
と考える日が多くなった。

そんなある日、一人の見知らぬ老人が、村人にまじって、祖一和尚の説教を聞いていた。説教が終ると、

「和尚さん、よいお話を聞きました。それにしても、川の音がじやまになりますなあ。」

と言う。祖一和尚は、

「そうなんですよ。何とかならぬものと、毎日思案しあんはしますが、この滝の音ばかりはねー。」

と、困りはてた表情ひょうじょうだった。老人は、

「和尚さん、よいお話を聞いたお礼に、わたしが川の音を消してあげましょう。」

と、言った。和尚さんは、老人の言葉に驚おどろきながらも、「無理なことだ。とてもそんなことはできるものではない

い。」と言った顔つきで、老人を見ていた。

しばらくすると、突然、空が曇くもってきて、あたりが暗くなり、激しい雷かみなりがなりわたったかと思うと、老人の姿は竜に変わって、ちょうどその時、稲妻いなずまに光りながら天にのぼっていった。それから大雨が降り出して、三日三晩降りつづいた。

和尚さんも、村の人たちも、どうなることかと、気が気でなかった。

四日目、降りつづいた雨が止んだと思うと、さわやかな朝になった。空の色は、もう秋かなと思わせるほど澄んでいた。祖一和尚が、いつものように庭に下りて、滝の方へ行こうとすると、滝の音が聞えない。静かなものだ。

不思議ふしぎに思いながら、川のそばまできて驚おどろいた。激しい水音をたてて、流れ落ちていた滝がなくなっている。さらさらと静かな流れが、朝の光に輝いてるではないか。「これは、どうしたことだ。」と思つて、川そに沿つてくたつていくと、一キロほどしたところに滝がうつっていた。三日三晩降り続いた雨で、滝はそのまま一キロも川下へ流され



ていたのだった。

和尚さんは、「不思議なこともあるものだ。さてさて、あのご老人はいったい何者だったろうなあ。」と不審ふしんに思
いながら、「それにしてもありがたいことだ。これからは、みんなに静かに話が聞いてもらえるなあ。」とよろこん
だ。

集まってきた村人たちも、あまりの変わりように驚きながら、

「これはきつと、神様のしわざだ。」

「和尚さんがりっぱな和尚さんだから、和尚さんの願いを、土地の神様がきいてくださったのだ。」

「そうだ、そうだ。それに違いない。」

などと、話しあった。

今も行事ぎよつじ岳だけのふもとの林の中に、村人たちが龍泉寺りゅうせんじ趾あととよぶところがある。大禪寺はここにあったということ
だ。

文 大島 虎雄
絵 柴田 美雪

雷石（かみなりいし）

むかしむかし、いつのころやらはつきりせんほど、むかしのこと。今と変わらぬ山あいの小さな村であったが阿木は青野村とよばれておった。山にはでかい良木が、空をおおうばかりにそびえたっておった。山一面の大木が立ちならんでおる様は、まことに立派なもんであった。

ところが困ったことに、夏になると毎度、毎度、夕立つゆうだ様がその大木の間をとび歩いて、雨をふらし、はた畠を流し、山を崩くずして、大暴れおおあばをするのであった。

村の人は、今度夕立つゆうだ様がおいでたら、存分ぞんぶんにこらしめたいが、なんかいい方法はないものかと集まった。みんなでひたいをよせあつて、ああだ、こうだと相談してみたが、いっこうによい考えはうかんでこない。村の人達が困った、困ったと思案していると、力持ごうりきちの剛力がおつて、

「今度、夕立つゆうだ様が暴あばれたら、おらあがひつとらえてくれるに。」
とえらいに張り切りようで、待ちかまえていた。

その年の夏がきた。ある日、突然空が暗くなつたかと思うと、またたくうちに真つ黒な雲があらわれ、そして



ひどい雨が降り出した。雨はななめに降り、横に走り、かと思うと、地面に落ちた雨が、空まではねあがるほどの暴れようであった。その雨と共に、ものすごい稲妻が、空を駆けまわった。

「そら、おいでたぞ。」

剛力は勇気がわき起こった。待ちに待った夕立っ様のおいでだ。

剛力は、ぷるっ、ぷるっと体をふるわせるとかつと目を見ひらき、

口を一字にひきむすんで、夕立っ様のあとを追いかけた。ところが

夕立っ様は、なかなかすばしこかった。剛力があとを追うのでお

もしろがって、うしろをふりかえり、ふりかえりしながら、広い空

をピカピカ、ゴロゴロ、キヤアキヤアとはしゃぎまわった。ドカー

ンと大きな音がしたかと思うと、大木がパリパリと音を立てて、ま

つぶたつにさけてとんだ。「いくらな夕立っ様だって、もうかんべん

できん。ひつとらえてくれるに。」 剛力は激しく怒って、腕をぶん

ぶんふりまわした。そして大きく息を吸い込むと、いつきに暴れる夕立つ様にとびかかった。(自由に空をかけるおらあに、とびついてくる剛力は、まさかこの世にはいないだろう) と思っていたから、夕立つ様はおどろいたのなんのつて。

「おらあを、とりおさえようなんて、なまいきな。」

「なんの、おらあは、音に聞こえた剛力だ。青野村の人々が困っておるに、毎年毎年、よくも思いっきり暴れてくれたな。おらあが、さんざんいたためつけて、もう空にやかえれんようにしてくれろぞ。」

剛力が思いっきり腕に力をいれて夕立つ様をしめあげると、夕立つ様はひいひい声をあげて、

「すまん、すまん、すまんこつてす。もう二度とこんないたずらは、いたしません、どうか空へかえしてください。」と、ぺっこりぺっこり、頭をさげた。

「ならん、ならん。」

剛力が言うど、

「どうかお許しを、どうか、どうか。」

夕立つ様は、いかつい顔して、ぽろぽろ涙を流してあやまるもので、剛力はなんだかあわれになってきた。

「おらあ、許してやりたいが、許してやってまたまた、あは暴れだしたら困るで……、二度とあは暴れんという証拠しやうこになるものを、おいていけ。」

ごうりき剛力の言葉に、ゆうだ夕立つ様はさまびたりと涙をとめて

「証拠しやうこといつても、おらあごらんのようにすつばだか裸で、なんにも証拠しやうこに残すようなものがない。」

ゆうだ夕立つ様は、首をひねりひねりしておったが、パンと両手をたたくと

「そうだ、いい考えがある。おらあの手あとの跡を証拠しやうこにおいていこう。」

そういうと、すぐあしもとにある大きな石に、ぴたんと手をあてた。するとなんと、石に深々と夕立つゆうだ様の手跡てあとがついた。

「それじゃあ、これでおらあ、空にかえらせてもらいます。」

そういって、ごうりき剛力に頭を一つ、ていねいにさげると、みるみる間に空高くのぼっていった。

それ以来、どれだけ夕立つゆうだ様さまがなつても、音だけで、青野村にはけつして雷は落ちてこなくなったということだ。

青野上の田んぼの中にある、雷石とよばれている大きな石がそれだ。雨にさらされ、風にふかれて、手跡てあともすこしばかりうすくなった。

今は、この手跡は阿木川ダムの底に沈んでいる。せつかくの夕立っ様の証拠品だから、流されることもなく、ダムの底でどっしり座りこんでいてくれるだろう。

文 三戸 律子
絵 三宅 かつ枝



すりこぎかくしのだんご

むかしむかし、恵那山のふもとに、阿木というところに、じいやんとかよという女の子が、二人つきりで住んでいた。

じいやんは若いころ、思わぬやまいにかかって、左の足首から先が、げっぼりくさって、とれてしまった。その足が、まるですりこぎのようであったから、村の衆は、じいやんのことを「すりこぎ足のじいさま」とよんだ。そして、

「業病いんびょうだでうつるぞよ。」

といいあった。じいやんとかよは、とうとう人里はなれた山の中でひっそりくらすこととなった。

じいやんは不自由な足で、朝から晩まで畑をたがやし、菜っ葉や豆などを作ろうとした。ところが、じいやんのだがやす畑は、山のすそにあったから、一日じゅう日あたりがわるくて、恵那山からふきおる風は、一年じゅうつめたい。

じいやんは、どっころせとーん、よっころせとーん。と、くわをふりあげて畑をたがやした。

業病：悪い行いの報いとしてかかるとされた
なおりにくく、つらい病気

よいせ、よいせと肥こえをかつぎあげ、あせふきながら、草もぬいた。

けれど、せっかく芽を出した菜っ葉や豆などは、恵那山から、ビュービューうなり声をあげてふきおりの風におどろいて、首をすくめるしまつだ。そうして、一日じゅうまんぞくにお日さまの顔を見ないもんだから、葉はしおしおとしおれ、根は水をすいあげる力がなくなって、いつのまにやらかれ死んでしまう。

「あーあ、ほんのちよっぴりでええから、おらのほうの畑に、おてんとさまがあたってくれたらなあ。」

じいさんは、こしをのばして山をあおぐと、

「あーあ。」

と、でかいためいきをついた。

小さなかよは、じいさんのためいきを聞くと、なんともせつなくて、なきたいようであった。肥こえをかつぎあげるには、かよはまだ小さすぎた。かよにできることといったら、せいぜいのびた草をむしるぐらいだ。それとてじいさんの、半人前にもまだたりない。

「おらはまだ役立たずやで、早くあの山ぐらい大きくなって、すりこぎ足のじいさんをたすけてやらな。」

そうつぶやいて、かよは山を見上げた。山は、空をおおいかくし、畑とかよをおしつぶすようにつつ立っていた。

あつちの山から山すそへ、あつたかそうな日があたっておるといふに、
こつちの山すそは、年がら年じゅう真つ暗けだ。

「おてんとさま、こさま。

あつちばつか照らさんと、

こつちもちよつとは照つとくれ。

こつちの畑が泣くで、

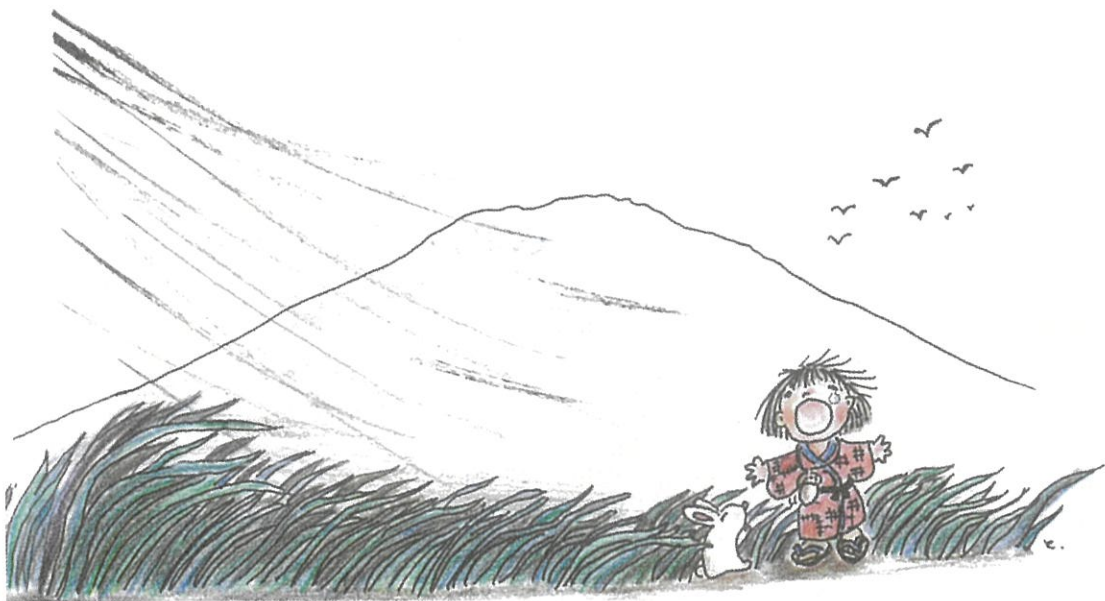
すりこぎ足のじいさん、泣くで、

おーらも泣くで、

照つとくれ、照つとくれ」

かよは、でかい声をはりあげて、うたった。

けれども、かよの声は、おてんとさままでは、なかなかとどかんようす
であった。そのしょうこに、毎日毎日、かよが大声をはりあげるのに、
いつこうにじいさんの畑には日がささん。



「じいちゃん、正月はくるやろか？」

かよがしんばいしているのを、じいちゃんは、

「正月さまあ、どうせんでもいらっしやるで。あんじゃない、あんじゃない。」
と何度も言っていた。

くれもおしつまった二十一日のことだ。その日もかよは、空あおいで、

「おてんとさま、こさまあー。」

とうたっていた。おてんとさまはでるどころか、空はうすぐらくなくて、ちらちら、ちらちら、ごみつぶのような雪がまいおりてきた。

それでもかよはうたった。

どうしたわけだか、その声がしだいにかすれ、のどのおくがやけつくようにからからになった。からだごととあつくなくて、そうして、あっと思う間に、ひやひやーとつめたくなって、二つの足は、かよの小さなからだをようささえんようになった。

「じい、や、ん。」

かよは、ありつたけの声でじいやんをよんだ。

じいやんは、わずかに畑にのこった青物を、お正月用にあるだけ抜いているところであった。

「ん・・・？」

と、ふりかえったじいやんは、

「かよ、どうした。」

と、あとのことばがでないまま、かよを背中におしあげた。ちいさなかよだが、すりこぎ足のじいやんが背中にせおって歩くのは、なかなかたいへんなことであった。

ようやく草ぶきの家に転げこんだじいやんは、かよをふとんにねせた。そうして、うつすら目をとじているかよに、

「このくれに、かぜんぞひきこんで・・・。」

と言った時だ。じいやんは、

「ひゃあー！」

と、たまげた。かよの顔にポツリ、ポツリと、あかいはんてんがみえた。ふとんの中の手も足も、小ゆびの頭ほど

のはんでんが、いくつもみえていた。

じいさんは何十年前か前、じいさんがまだ若かったころのことを思いだした。

それは、もういつつかわすれていた遠い遠いむかしのことだが、それでも、自分のすりこぎ足を見るたびに、いやでも思い出す、つらい話であった。

ちょうど、いまのかよのように、あかいはんでんが体にできたと思ったら、足の先がしびれ、間もなく左の足首から先が落ちてしまった。

……かよまでが、おらとおんなじすりこぎ足になるんじゃないやろな……。

「かよ、おんしはまた、どうしてそのようなことになったよ。」

かよは、なんにも知らぬげに、目をつぶっていた。そのかよが、なにやらぶつぶつ口をうごかした。じいさんが耳をよせてみると、

「あっち山かげれ

おてんとさま、こさま、

こつちもちいと、照つとくれ、

照つとくれ。」

と、小さな口をあけてうたっていた。

・・・なにがおてんとさま、こさまじゃ。のんびりうたなんぞうたって・・・。

じいさんは、はらだたしいほどであった。けれど、かよがのんびりうたっているのではないことを、じいさんはよく知っていた。

じいさんは立ちあがると、畑でとってきたばかりのハウレンソウとダイコンをきざんで、なべにいれた。それつきりで、いくらせまい台所を見まわしても、なべに入れるものはみあたらなかった。

「ここに、ひとにぎりのコメがあったらなあ。おじやでもにてやれるものを。」

じいさんは、

・・・たとえ十つぶでもええ、コメつぶがほしい・・・。

と思った。

かよがねむっているのをたしかめると、じいさんは、夜の山をくだっていった。

村の家の戸口に立つと、じいさんはえんりよしながら、声をかけた。

「おらの家のかよが熱出してなも。おじやでも食わせてやりたいと思うて、ねだりにきましたで。」

「そりゃきのどくなこつちやが……。」

顔をだしたこの家のかみさんは、ほんとうにきのどくそうな顔をして、じいちゃんを見たが、その目はすぐに、すりこぎ足の上に落ちた。

「おらのほうでも、ことしは不作でなも。これつきりにしておくれんさい。」

おかみさんは、おくへひっこむと、わずかなコメをふくろにいれてもどつた。そして戸口の外へそのふくろをおくと、ぴしゃりと戸をしめた。つぎの家では、

「コメがほしいのは、こつちのほうだ！」

と、どなられた、つぎの家でも、そのつぎの家でもことわられた。じいちゃんは、かよに精せいをつけてやるには、もう少しコメがほしいと思った。

……あつたかいおじやでも食わせたら、かよは、すりこぎ足にならないですむだろうに……。

じいちゃんは、またちらちら降りだした雪の中を、庄屋さまの家めがけて歩いた。

「そうだ、庄屋さまの広い田んぼには、まだまだ落穂おちぼがあるだろう。こんな時やで、きつとほとけさまもゆるして

くださるやろ。なさけあるなら、降りだしたこの雪も、やむようにおねがいしたいもんだ。」

じいやんがつぶやくと、そのねがいがつうじたのか、やがて雪がやんだ。

じいやんは田んぼにはいると四つんばいになって落穂をおちぼひろった。落穂は思いのほかたくさんあった。じいやんは大よろこびで落穂をおちぼかかえると家に帰り、さつそくあったかいおじやをにて、かよに食わせた。

「じいやん、うまいなあ。じいじいやんも、少し食べばいいに。」

「おらはもうはらいっぱいだ。かよ、たくさん食べ。」

じいやんは、目を細めていった。

つぎの朝、じいやんはドーン、ドーンと戸をたたたく音で目がさめた。

「庄屋さまの田んぼをあらしたのは、おまえだな。ちゃあーんと、田んぼにすりこぎの足あとがのこっておったわい。すぐさま庄屋さまのやしきまで出頭しゅつとういたせ。」

庄屋さまの使いは、大きな男が二人であった。使いの男は、長い棒でじいやんのからだをこずきながら山をおりていった。

「じいやーん、じいやーん。」

かよはなきながら、じいやんのあとをおったが、ふりかえり、ふりかえりしていた
じいやんのすがたは、じきに見えなくなった。

それからじいやんがどうなったのか、村の人はだれも知らない。あれつきり、
小さなかよのすがたを見たものもない。

日がたつにつれ、村の衆は、^{しやう}じぶんたちがそのとき、たとえびんぼうであったにせよ、
「あんなにそっけなくあしらうんではなかった。」

と、つらい思いをするようになった。

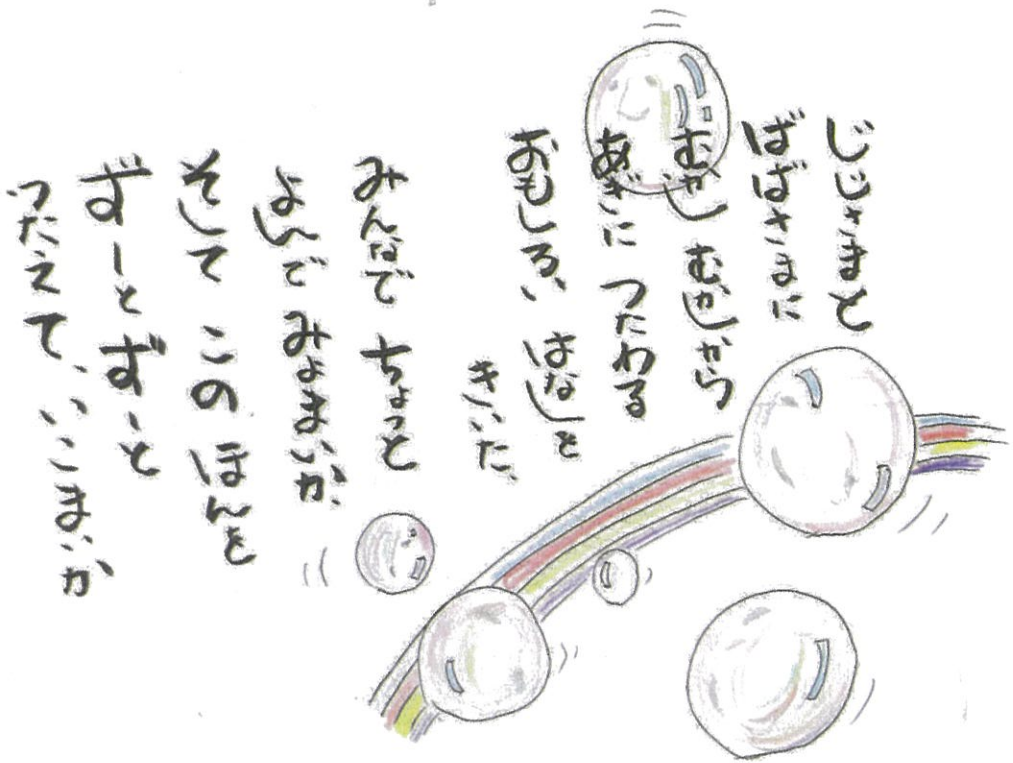
そして、いつのころからか、くれの二十一日になると、すりこぎかくしのだんごを
作るようになった。

「あんどき、雪がどつどと降って、すりこぎ足のじいさまの足あとをかくしてくれたらう……。」
そういいながら、まるいおだんごのまん中に、人さしゆびでおしたほどの
あなをあけるといふ。

文 三戸 律子

絵 片桐 トミ子





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おやすみ

おはよう

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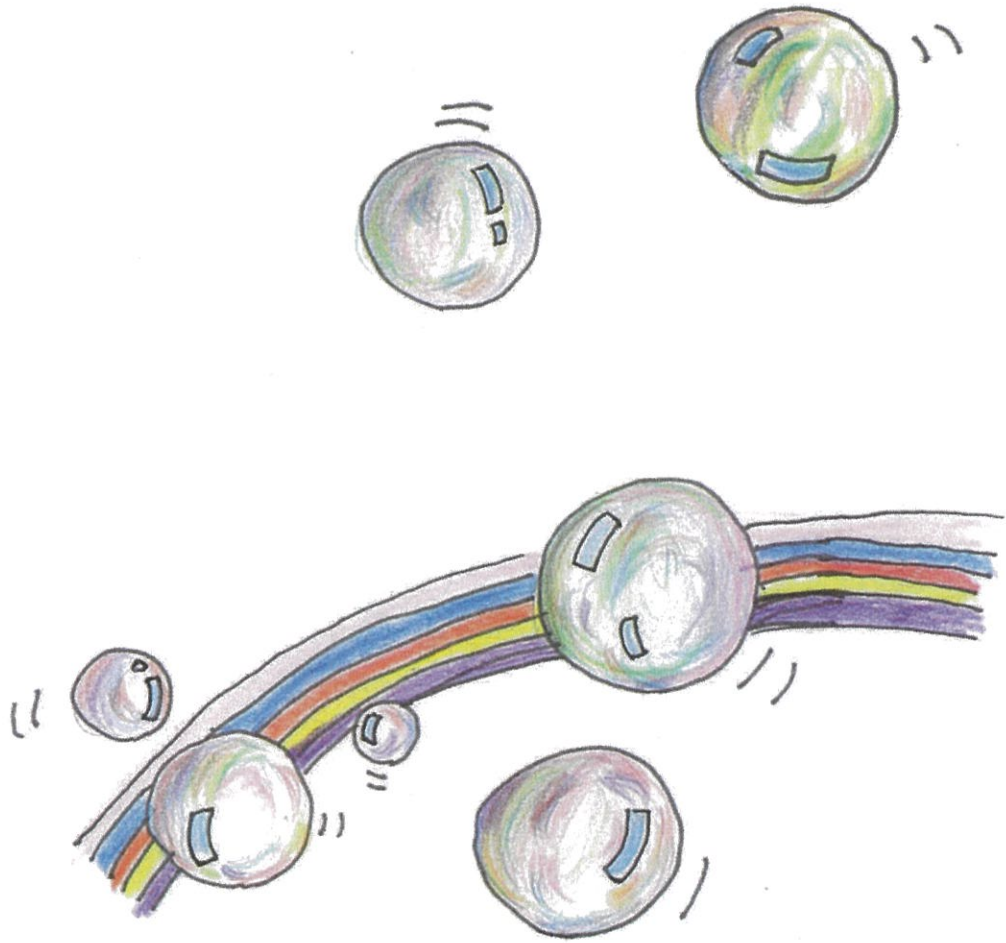
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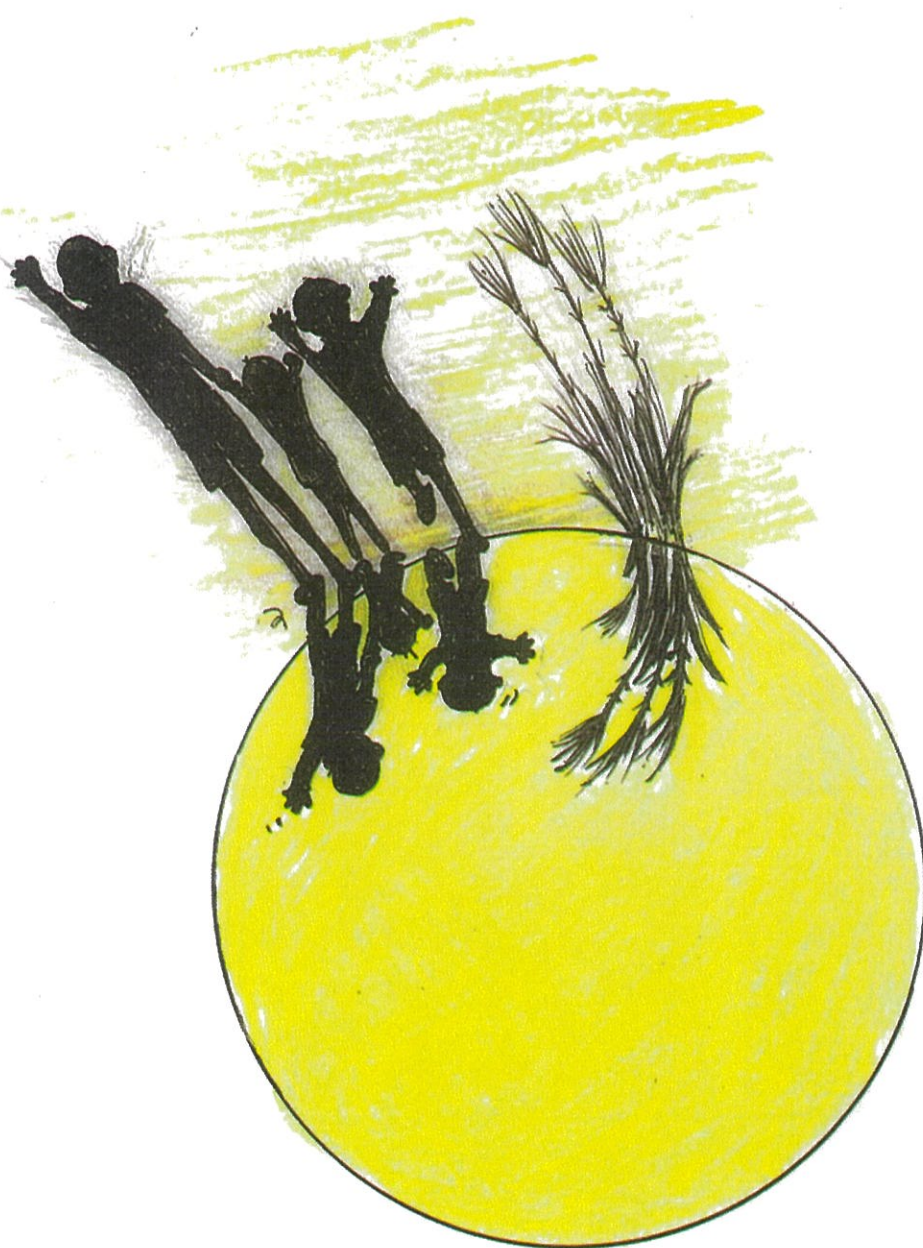
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Agi Tales and Legends



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The Meadow Bunting Repays Its Debt

Long ago in a certain part of Agi, there lived a good-natured old man and a stubborn, mean old man. The good natured old man went out one day to work diligently in the fields, and there he saw a meadow bunting being chased by a cat. The bird said to the nice old man, "Grandpa, please let me hide in your belly! If you do, I'm sure you'll get rewarded somehow!"



The old man had no other choice. The meadow bunting flew into the old man's mouth and was swallowed whole. But strangely, after a while, the bird's tail feathers started to pop out of the man's bellybutton. And when the old man gave the feathers just a little tug, he heard meadow bunting singing in a joyful voice, "Cheen cheen, kara kara, vivivi gold and grain, overflowing!"

At that time, the lord of Iwamura put out a call with a reward for people who could demonstrate some kind of unusual talent for entertainment. So the old man figured out a way to get the lord's attention. The next day, he cut a single bamboo stalk from a thicket behind the castle, and a voice from the wall cried out, "Who is cutting our lord's bamboo in that thicket?!"

The old man, seeing his chance, called back, "Why it's just your average, everyday old fart!"

"If that's the case, then you'll face our lord and do your old fart!" the guard said.

With that, the old man was brought before the lord, and after he bowed as low as he could, he timidly bared his belly, reached into his belly button, pulled the bird's tail feathers, and the bird burst out into song, " Cheen cheen, kara kara, vivivi

gold and grain, overflowing!" It sang the same song each time the old man pulled the feather.



The castle's lord was overjoyed with it, and he said, "Indeed. This *is* a rare thing!" So he gave the old man a *koban* gold coin and coral and many other rewards.

Hearing the rumors of the event, the stubborn, mean old man thought, "Well if a fart can gain a man a reward, then I can do it too!" So he had his wife cook up a whole load of tubers and roasted barley flour, ate it all until it filled his stomach to overflowing, then he went to that same thicket and cut a bamboo stalk.

The lord of the castle wanted to hear the birdsong from the old man again, so he invited this old man to see what he can do.

And so the mean old man figured this was his moment, he turned to face away from the lord, dropped his pants, pointed his rear end at the lord, and uncorked an enormous "Braaaaaap!" Unfortunately it wasn't just the sound. Along with the wind came the foul remnants of that dinner of tubers and roasted barley flour catapulting to his lordship's face.

Of course the lord was enraged and cried, "How dare you!" Then he took a *katana* sword and sliced off the mean old man's rear end.

Meanwhile the mean old man's wife couldn't wait for the reward, so she climbed up on her house's roof, and peered off into the distance toward far-off Iwamura. And she saw the old man on all fours with what looked to her like red, white, and black horses following after. She figured that her husband was so loaded down with rewards that he couldn't carry it alone, and he needed pack horses to bear it all.

But as he got closer and finally reached home, she realized that he was gravely wounded, and what she thought were horses were actually dogs, following him to lick his wounded rear end. The shock sent the mean old man's wife tumbling from the rooftop and crashing to the rocks below. Both the mean old man and his wife soon died from their wounds.

As told by Kazuo Akiyama

Art by Tomoko Sekiyama

Translated by William Flanagan

Sainokami

Long, long ago, some four hundred and fifty years ago in the Tenbun era (1532-1555), the power of the Muromachi Shogunate was growing weaker, so people in the hinterlands looked for help from the great clans, and the lands were dissolving into chaos. Still deep in the Mino region the area around Agi was still spending its days in peace.

One day on a sloping road that stretched between Agi and Iwamura, there was one young girl resting by the roadside, looking as if collapsed. She was of a clan from Annaka in the Joushuu region, and since the Kanto plain had dissolved into chaos, the clan of Annaka had not only lost all its land in the wars, but most of the clan itself had perished. Still she had escaped, the last survivor of her clan in the region.

He had one brother who had gone to the capital of Kyoto for training, but she had not heard from him in a very long time. She had come all this way, hoping to obtain help from him, but she was not a strong girl, and the long, unfamiliar efforts of a journey had taken its toll. So she wound up exhausted and unable to walk anymore. This girl saw the quiet, peaceful, mountain village of Agi that so reminded her of her home in Annaka, but she asked her self, "Well, what do I do now?"

It was then that an elderly couple, returning from work in the fields, walked the road, and seeing her, stopped and asked, "Excuse me, but what is the matter?"

The young lady picked herself up and told them of her plight.

"You poor thing," they said, "We know your heart longs to go on, but you must care for your body! Why don't you rest here a while before heading on?" And with that, they allowed her to stay in a small cabin of theirs.

Saved by the kindness of the elderly couple, she stayed with them for a while, but even so, she was in an unknown land living alone, and such is not an easy life. Cold winds blew at night; she recalled memories of the happy days she spent her father and mother on land in Annaka, all of them taken from her by the wars; and she was faced with the realization that her brother in the capital could never return there again. All of this led to the feeling that she must soon heal from her illness, make her way to the capital, and meet the brother who she missed so much.

One night, there came the sound of a knocking on her door. She had no idea who might it be so late at night, but she heard the sound of, "Please! I beg of you, please!"

She opened the door slightly and saw a traveler on the other side of the door. "I'm on a journey, and I came to beg shelter from you for the night," he said.

It was so sudden, and the young lady's cabin was so run-down that she was unsure.

"I realize this is a grave imposition," he said, "but please! I'm from the capital on an urgent journey, but I've pretty much worn myself out! I beg of you, just one night!"

When she heard that he was from the capital, she thought to herself that perhaps he may have news from the capital. "This place is a run-down hovel, but if you are all right with that, then please..." she said and allowed him to stay.

The next morning, she resolved to ask him the questions that had been welling up within her all night. She started to ask, "You said you were from the capital, but..."

"It is as you say," he replied quickly. "However I am in reality from Annaka lands in Joushuu, and I've been training in the capital for a very long time. But now I've

heard that the Kanto plain has erupted into chaos, and the Annaka lands are caught up in the wars there. I must hurry, but I thank you for taking me in."

"Could it be that you are my brother...?" The words slipped out of her mouth before she even realized it.

And so, after long discussion, they learned that they were brother and sister who were separated at a very young age. The young lady told of the battles fought in Annaka, how she made her way toward the capital hoping to rely on her brother, but fell ill on the road and had to stay in the cabin until she recovered. She filled him in on all the details.

It was like a dream. The brother and sister felt great joy at their reunion, and they resolved to return to Annaka and rebuild their house and clan.

However, although she must have felt great relief at the unexpected reunion with her brother, her illness unfortunately took a turn for the worse, and the young lady passed away.

And the brother's exhaustion from the journey combined with the boundless sorrow of losing his sister caused his health to deteriorate, and he soon followed her.

The people of the village, sorrowful that they weren't able to return to their homeland, nor were they able to rebuild their clan. Instead they died at too young an age, so the people buried the two in the same plot of land and erected a shrine there at which to worship. That shrine is now the Sainokami Shrine.

If you cross the Sainokami bridge that stretches over the Kurodagawa river and climb the slope a little way, you'll see the Sainokami Shrine on your right side. Worshipers who make a wish at the shrine are said to be able to witness miracles, and even now, the shrine has quite a lot of visitors.

As told by Torao Ooshima

Art by Miyuki Shibata

Translated by William Flanagan



Oyama-saso Korika



At the time, Yamanotahara was a very wide plain. And as a certain Buddhist monk passed through, he saw a fox sleeping near a large rock. Half in jest, the monk thought to surprise it a little, so he took a conch shell that he had in his possession and blew a trumpet sound near its ears. The foxes were extremely

shocked by the sound, and it fled scurrying into the mountains.

Before long, the sun set, and having no place to stay, the monk spied the light of a house far off in the distance. The monk resolved to visit the house and ask for lodgings for the night, and when the owner came to the door, the house seemed noisy and crowded.

"I'm sorry, but my child has died, and tonight is the night of the funeral. I can't put you up," the owner said and turned the monk away.

Realizing he couldn't ask any further, he turned and plodded on with no real direction. But soon he saw the funeral preparations were done, and the casket was being carried. And strangely, the funeral procession was going in the same direction as the monk. No matter where he turned, the procession turned with him.

Getting a creeping feeling, he spied a tree with many low branches, and so he climbed the tree to watch. With that, the procession stopped right at the roots of the tree, buried the casket there, and returned home.

After a short time, the ground above the casket began to buckle and a hand sprouted on the surface, reaching up to grasp at the monk. With no other place to go, the monk climbed one branch higher, and with that the corpse, with a

triangular sheet of white paper at its forehead, climbed fully out of the grave and cried, "Oyama-saso korika?" (meaning "Is the monk here...?"), and it started to climb the tree.

The monk climbed another branch, but in doing so, the corpse also climbed a branch crying, "Oyama-saso korika?" and climbed up too. In deadly fear the monk climbed and climbed, until the branches and trunk were too thin to climb any more. With nowhere left to run, he turned toward the ground, closed his eyes, and jumped from the tree.



With that, he awoke, and he was leaning against the same rock where he had played the trick on the fox, and he found he had been sleeping there all this time.

The rock is still there in Yamanotahara plain, and if you are unlucky enough to sit upon it, the legend has it that you will be struck with painful hemorrhoids.

As told by Kazuo Akiyama

Art by Tomoko Sekiyama

Translated by William Flanagan

The Monkey's Tail

Long ago there was a place where a monkey was friends with a fox. One day, the monkey went to the fox's home, and the fox served up an enormous feast for him. The monkey ate it all with relish. The fish the fox served was exceedingly delicious, and the monkey asked how the fox caught it. But the fox, realizing that if he told the monkey the truth, the fish might all go to the monkey, so instead he told the monkey the first random thing that came into his mind.

And the unsuspecting monkey did as the fox said. He searched the roadside for old horseshoes (this was before the iron horseshoes, and they were more like clogs strapped to the horse's legs), and he gathered up many of them. On a cold winter evening, he tied the horseshoes to his tail, and sunk them deep into a nearby pool. After a little while, he'd lift his tail and find it was a bit heavier than before, and the monkey assumed he had already caught a few fish. But he waited, thinking that he'd get more and more fish out of it. The night got later and later until he began to see glimmers of light in the east.

Finally he felt that he had caught enough, so he pulled on his tail, but he had caught so many fish that he couldn't lift his tail anymore no matter what he did. Soon he sensed humans nearby, and he knew that he'd be in trouble if they caught him. Red faced, he put all his strength into lifting it, but instead his tail suddenly ripped off at its roots. Not only that, but the horseshoes were not filled with fish like he thought, but rather it had been coated over with heavy layers of ice instead.

Ever after that, monkeys' faces were red and their tails became very short. And the deep pool doesn't exist any more because of dams and other river improvements, but they say was in the vicinity of Sakurabuchi.

As told by Kazuo Akiyama

Art by Katsue Miyake

Translated by William Flanagan



Vanishing Waterfall

Long, long ago, during the Yoshinochou period, so it was some six hundred years ago, there was a priest by the name of Houou Soichi. He was a famous priest in Kyoto, and he founded the Daienji Temple in Iwamura. In fact, he was so famous in Kyoto, that he could be listed among the most famous priests the capital city can boast of. He also opened a temple named the Daizenji in Agi at the foot of Gyoujidake.

Because he was such a high-ranking priest, the people of the village would always fill up the temple hall in order to hear his sermons. But there was one thing that was a problem for the temple. There was a stream that seemed to wind about the temple. When it flooded, it caused a waterfall near the main hall to let out a loud roar that reverberated all through the temple grounds causing the faithful to be unable to hear the great priest's words.

"What a magnificent sermon today! I'm grateful to have heard it," one temple-goer would say, but his neighbor might reply, "Really? I was at the back, and really couldn't hear much at all." And an old man might add, "Me too. The sound of that river drowned out everything!" Such conversation was normal for the people of the village.

When the priest heard the rumors, he would say, "It's absolutely true. I am the one speaking, and even I have trouble making out the words sometimes." There were many times when he would stand on the bank near the waterfall staring at the spray from the torrents plunging down the waterfall and think, "I wonder if it's possible to do anything about it...?"

One day an elderly man of the village came to the temple to hear one of Houou Soichi's sermons. After the sermon, he said to the priest, "I really enjoyed your sermon, Houou-san, but I must say, the roar from the waterfall truly made it difficult to hear!"

And the priest had a troubled look on his face, saying, "Exactly, sir! I keep trying to think up a solution, but this waterfall has me baffled..."

"Well, then," said the old man, "as thanks for the wonderful sermon, why don't I make the sound of the river vanish?"

The priest was surprised by the old man's words, but his facial expressions conveyed the thought, "Impossible, I'm afraid. To be honest, I don't think anyone could do that."

After a little while, the skies began to cloud up, and as it threw the entire area into a gloom, the sound of roaring thunder began to be heard in the region. The old man changed his form into a dragon, and illuminated by flashes of lightning, he rose into the skies. With that massive amounts of rain fell that lasted for three days and three nights.



Both the priest and the people of the village were terribly worried and wondered what they could do about it.

By the fourth day, the rain had let up, and then a beautiful new day had dawned. And the sky was so clear, it would remind you of the finest Autumn day. As he did every day, the priest entered the temple garden and, like he always did, headed toward the waterfall. But the sound of the waterfall had vanished. It was so quiet, that the priest thought it very odd, so he went to the riverside, but the massive amounts of falling water that made the waterfall roar had completely vanished. And the smoothly flowing stream that remained reflected the brilliance of the morning sun.

"What could this be?" thought the priest, and as he ran along the banks of the

river. And there, he finally found where the waterfall had moved, about a kilometer downstream.

During the three days and nights of rain, the waterfall had moved, almost intact, about a kilometer downriver from where it had been.

The priest thoughts were confused. "I know that there are mysterious things that happen in the world, but now I truly wonder who that old man could have been!" And even though he did not pretend to understand it, still he rejoiced in the idea that from now on, the people could have silence around him to listen to the speech of others. He accepted that with gratitude.

All the gathered villagers were so shocked at the change that they were sure it had to be the work of the Gods. "Our priest is such a fine and upstanding priest that the Gods of the Earth listened to his wish and granted it!" they said.

"That has to be it!" and "I agree!" chimed in other voices.

Even now, at the foot of Gyoujidake in a wooded area, there is a place the villagers call Ryuusenji-ashiyubi (Toes of the Dragon Spring Temple). That is where the Daizenji used to be.

As told by Torao Ooshima

Art by Miyuki Shibata

Translated by William Flanagan



Kaminari Ishi (Thunder Stone)

Once upon a time...there's no telling exactly when, but at the very least, a long time ago, there was tiny village in a valley between mountains that is today called Agi, but then called Aono Village. But it was pretty much the same village it is now. In the surrounding mountains there were huge, wonderful trees that blanketed the mountains and seemed to scrap the sky. To see these enormous tree trunks covering the mountainside was a breathtaking sight indeed.

But it had a drawback too. With each Summer evening came Yudachi, the spirit of summer squalls, and he would tear up the area between the trees, cause torrential rain that washed the fruit away, crumble the mountainsides, and make a mess of everything.

The people of the village wanted to catch Yudachi at unawares, hoping to finally teach him a lesson, but they could not think of any method they could use. They put their heads together and thought of this idea and that idea, but no actual useful method ever came up. And while deliberating their troubles, a very muscular man, nicknamed Burly, said, "The next time Yudachi goes on his rampage, I'll catch 'im." And with great determination, Burly found a spot to lay in wait for Yudachi.

It was the summer of that year, and one day, just as the villagers were noticing how dark it was getting, they saw black clouds suddenly blanketing the sky, and they burst out with a torrential downpour. The rain came down at a slant, and moved to flying sideways, and those drops that hit the ground did it with such force they would send splashes back up to the sky again. And amidst the torrential rains, lighting also pierced the sky.

"See, there he is," said Burly with towering bravery. He was waiting for Yudachi, and Yudachi had appeared. With rippling muscles, flashing bright eyes, and a mouth flattened to a straight, determined line, he chased after Yudachi, but

Yudachi was quicker than Burly had counted on. Yudachi seemed to be having fun being chased as he caused flashing lighting and roaring thunder. He laughed heartily as he craned his head again and again to see if his pursuer still followed.



There was a loud boom nearby,

and Burly saw a huge tree pierced giving off a great cracking sound. It had been struck directly through the middle by lightning.

"You may be a honored spirit, Yudachi, but I won't let you keep doing this any longer! I will catch you!" said Burly in a violent rage. As he waved his arms in circles and drew deep, ragged breaths, he made one great leap at the rampaging Yudachi.

Yudachi was shocked, never thinking that anyone in the mortal world would have the strength to jump and catch a being who could race across the sky at will. "Who is this upstart who thinks he can restrain me?" Yudachi said.

"You want to know who? I am Burly, the man everyone talks about! You've been ravaging Aono village every single year, and we're sick of it! So it's my job to repay the pain you've inflicted so you never come back to our skies again!" And with that, Burly flexed his muscular arms squeezing Yudachi around the middle.

Yudachi let out a yell. "I'm sorry! So sorry! Really, really sorry! I'll never do anything bad ever again! Just send me back to the sky, please?!" And he bowed over and over.

"Nope. Can't." said Burly.

"Please? Please, isn't there some way?" Yudachi's face looked so grim with

tears overflowing from his eyes, sliding down his cheeks.

Burly couldn't help but feel a little bit sorry for Yudachi. "Look, I'd like to let you off, but I just can't have you running on a rampage again. Is there some proof you can leave me that you won't go running amok anymore?"

When Yudachi heard that, his tears instantly dried. "Proof? Look at me? I'm always naked. There's nothing I can leave behind as proof," Yudachi said as he tilted his head over and over in thought, but suddenly his hands came together with a thunderous clap! "Hey, I've got a great idea! I can give you a stamp of my hand, and that can serve as proof of my agreement!"

With that, Yudachi found a huge rock near where he was standing, and with enormous force, he left a deep, deep impression of his hand. "See? Now you can send me back to the sky," Yudachi said.

With a single deep bow to Burly, Yudachi went high, high up into the sky again.

And ever after, even when Yudachi went on his rampages, naught but the sound would ever reach Aono Village. They were never bothered by the lightning again.

And in a rice field in Aono Village, there was a huge rock called Kaminari Ishi, "The Thunder Stone," and even given the ravages of rain and wind, the stamp of the hand of Yudachi has only worn down but little.

With the building of Agi Dam, the stone has been sunk deep under water, but since it is still the proof of Yudachi's promise, it was placed where the Agi river can not budge it. It likely still remains deep under the dam's waters.

As told by Ritsuko Santo

Art by Katsue Miyake

Translated by William Flanagan

The Pestle-Hiding Dumpling

Once upon a time, there was a place called Agi in the foothills of Ena-san Mountain, and there lived a little girl named Kayo and her grandfather. They lived all alone. When the grandfather was very young, he was unexpectedly struck by an illness that wasted his left foot away from the ankle down until he lost the foot completely. Since his leg looked like a wooden pestle, many of the people of the village called him, Pestle-leg Grandpa. And because the people were afraid that the disease was contagious, the grandfather and Kayo finally went into the mountains far from where the people were, and lived quietly like hermits.

Even though the grandfather's leg was lame, he still tended the vegetable garden from morning to evening, trying to grow leafy vegetables and beans for the two of them to eat. And since that place was on a mountainside, they didn't receive much sunlight during the day, and the cold winds coming down from Ena-san Mountain blew on them all year.

With an "Oomph!" and a "Hyah!" the grandfather would till the soil with only a hoe. Then with a huff and a puff, he would trudge, weighed down by large bags of fertilizer or break out in sweats pulling out the persistent weeds.

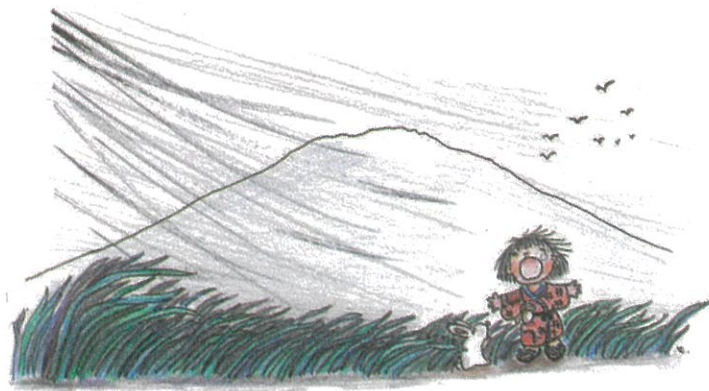
But even when the vegetables and beans he took so much trouble raising would finally sprout their leaves, they'd be startled by the roaring and chill of the constant wind coming down from Ena-san Mountain, and pull their leaves back in. They could not see enough of the sun's rays during the day, their leaves wilted, and their roots didn't have the strength to drink the water out of the ground, so before the grandfather knew it, they would dry up and die.

"Aww... I wish the sun would come, even just a little, and warm the farm land that I work," he cried. And stretching his weary back, and looking at the mountain, he let out a long sigh.

Little Kayo would hear her grandfather's sighs, and they seemed so painful that it would make her want to cry. She was still too little to help carry the fertilizer, but she thought that at least she could help pull out the weeds. But when she tried, she found she couldn't pull even half as many weeds as her father. "I'm so useless," she whispered to herself, "If only I could grow as big as that mountain! Then I could actually be of some help to Pestle-leg Grandpa!"

Kayo looked up at the mountain. It hid most of the sky, and was so big as to make it seem like it could just crush little Kayo and their farm with its size alone. Down in the foothills, the sun fell on the fields warming them, but up on the mountainside, it seemed to be suspended in a year-long shadow.

Kayo sang out to the sky with a loud voice, "Mr. Sun! Mr. Sun! Don't just shine way down there! Share your light and warm our air! Our fields weep their morning dew! Pestle-leg Granpa cries out for you! And even I shed a tear or two. Shine your light! Shine your light!"



But it seems that her voice never managed to be heard by Mr. Sun. She'd sing that song in a loud voice everyday, but as if proving how stubborn it was, day in and day out, the sun refused to shine on her grandfather's fields.

In a worried voice, Kayo said, "Grandpa, will New Years even come this year?"

And he'd reassure her with, "New Years comes no matter what. We'll see it. We'll see it." He would say that over and over.

It was on the twenty-first, just before New Years, when Kayo lifted her voice up to the sky again and sang, "Mr. Sun! Mr. Sun!" But not only did the sky refuse to brighten, instead it darkened and like tiny bits of ash, snow started to waft down from the sky. Even so, Kayo kept on singing.

Who knows why, but soon her voice became hoarse and gravelly and dry like something had burned the back of her throat. Her body seemed ready to burst into flame, but before she knew it, she felt a terrible chill. Kayo's legs could no longer support even her tiny body.

"Gra...nd...pa..." Kayo strained to speak, but voice was almost inaudible.

Her grandfather was picking the little remaining greenery he could find to prepare for New Years. "Hm?" he said as he turned around. "Kayo, what's wrong?!" But he was struck speechless at the sight of her. He asked as he lifted her up to his back. Kayo was very little, but an old man with a pestle-like leg found it very difficult to carry her.

Finally Kayo's grandfather was able to get her into their straw-roofed hut, and he laid her to sleep under her futon covers. And as Kayo was just closing her eyes to go to sleep, her grandfather said to himself, "So she caught a cold at a time like this..." But he suddenly shouted out with a start. He saw red spots appear on the skin of Kayo's face. Then he noticed the spots on the arms and legs that weren't covered by the futon comforter. They all were the size of the tip of his little finger, and he saw many of them.

The old man remembered when he was young, decades ago. It was a time so long in the past that he had forgotten it, but now seeing his pestle-like leg, he remembered it all...and regretted the memory. Back then, he was covered in red spots, just like Kayo, and the disease led to his leg withering and eventually

being taken from him.

"Will Kayo be forced to suffer a pestle leg as I have," he thought. But instead he asked her, "Kayo, how did you catch the disease?"

But Kayo looked as puzzled as he was, then she shut her eyes, and soon she was mouthing something that he couldn't hear. He put his ear close to her mouth.

"Don't just shine way down there!" she whispered quietly. "Share your light and warm our air! Shine your light! Shine your light!"

"To tarnation with Mr. Sun! There's no time for songs!" The grandfather felt anger growing inside him, but he knew well that the anger was not over Kayo's slow song. So he stood and started cutting the spinach and daikon radish that he had just harvested from his field. He put it in the pot, but even though his kitchen was small, he could find no trace of anything else he could add to the pot.

"If only I had even one small handful of rice! I could make her up some nice rice porridge!" he thought. He decided that even ten grains of rice would do. He just wanted a bit of rice...

He checked to be sure that Kayo was sleeping peacefully, then he made his way down the moonlit mountain. When he reached the door of the first house he saw in the village, he said in a humble voice, "My little granddaughter Kayo has a fever, and I thought that a bit of rice porridge would help. I beg of you, can you spare a handful of rice?"

"I'm very sorry to hear that, but..." said the woman of the house who opened the door a crack. And she truly did have pity in her eyes, as she looked at the old man. But soon her gaze fell to his pestle-like leg. "We had an especially poor harvest this year, and this is all I can spare." The woman of the house put a few grains of rice into a bag, opened the door a crack, and set the bag on the ground

before slamming the door after her.

The old man went to the next house, but in answer to his queries only came a voice shouting, "You want rice?! So do I!" The next house and the house after that both turned him down too. The old man despaired. He only needed a little more rice to be able to make Kayo the porridge she needed to get better.

"If only Kayo was able to eat some rice porridge, she might be able to get over the disease without having her leg turned into a pestle..." The old man walked amid the lightly falling snow toward the house of the village headman, but then he was hit by an idea. "The headman's rice fields are vast, so there should be some grains of rice just left behind from the harvest. And given the time of year and the hour, even the Buddha wouldn't begrudge me a few fallen grains! But if the Buddha has any pity in his heart, I beg that the snow stop falling for a while." And just as the old man whispered this, as if in answer to his wish, the snowfall lightened and then stopped.

The old man entered the headman's fields, got on all fours, and picked up what fallen grains he could find. There were even more grains there than the old man expected, and with joy welling up in his heart, he picked up all the grains and hurried home, cooked up the porridge and fed it to Kayo.

"It's sooo good, Grandpa!" she said, "you have some too!"

"Oh, but I'm completely full, Kayo! Eat it all up, now," he said with a smile.

The next morning the old man awoke to the sound of a banging on his door.

"You're the one who made a mess of the headman's fields, aren't you?! We found marks in the field that looks like someone dragged a large pestle over it! Well, now you're coming with us to confess your crime at the Headman's home!" said the rough voice of one of two big men who worked for the village headman. They had long poles, and they used them to poke and prod the old man down

toward the village.

"Grandpa! Grandpa!" cried Kayo, and she tried to run after them, but she could only see her grandfather twist and turn to get a last look at her before he vanished from her sight. After that, no one in the village ever found out what became of the old man. And they also never saw little Kayo again either.

As the days passed, the people of the village slowly realized that it was their fault. Even if they were poor, they should never have treated the old man so coldly. And they greatly regretted their actions.

Eventually, no one seems to know when the tradition started, but they started to make a rice-paste dumpling that was called a Pestle-hiding dumpling. They thought, "If only the snow had fallen fast and deep, it would have hidden his pestle-leg, and they might have treated him better." And so they made thick, round, white, rice-paste dumplings, and with their index fingers, they push a hole into the dumpling to hide the pestle.

As told by Ritsuko Santo

Art by Tomiko Katagiri

Translated by William Flanagan



あ と が き

阿木（安岐）には、古くからの言い伝えや昔話がたくさんあります。今回、文化庁の文化遺産総合活用推進事業（文化芸術振興費補助金）の交付金をいただくことができました。

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末筆となりましたが以下に参加されました方々の名前を記し、ご協力、ご指導をいただいたことに感謝申し上げます。

【あいうえお順】

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阿木公民館

安 岐 の 昔 話

平成 29 年 12 月 8 日印刷

平成 29 年 12 月 15 日発行

編集・発行 阿木地域伝統文化継承事業実行委員会

岐阜県中津川市阿木 33 番地 阿木公民館内

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印刷・製本 株式会社 協和印刷工業

中津川市中津川 2190-1

電話 0573-66-3788 FAX 0573-66-7035

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