

Household things from long, long ago

- Tales that tell of another life -



Household things from long, long ago

- Tales that tell of another life -

Writing and Editing	OZAWA Hana
Illustration	SEKI Etsuko
English Translation	TAMAMUSHI Renate

Foreword

Long, long ago there was an old man and an old woman....

Everybody has at least once heard a story, that begins this way.

In the evening, when people sat around the fireplace (*irori*), the grandfather or the grandmother would tell stories, and the children listened excitedly with their heart throbbing.

Such tales, sometimes enjoyable, sometimes scary, sometimes sad or mysterious, are collected here.

They are set against the background of a bygone time, when people thought and felt differently.

In Nihon Minkaen (Japan Open-Air Folk House Museum) there are 25 buildings mostly from the eastern parts of Japan, that have been taken apart and reassembled here. Some of these houses also brought old tales with them. These stories center around household beings or household things.



Contents

Part 1: Stories handed down from long ago

Zashiki-Warashi

- Iwate prefecture p.6

The Kappa, who lived at the bend of the river

- Chiba prefecture p.10

The tale of the fox who failed to bewitch someone

- Kanagawa prefecture p.14

The wife who did not eat

- Nagano prefecture p.18

Dandarabôshi

- Mie prefecture p.22

Part 2: Old stories from Kawasaki city

How sericulture began

- Asao ward p.28

The Jizô who helped by leading the horse

- Takatsu ward p.36

Part 3: Wellknown stories

The crane's gift of gratitude

- Yamagata prefecture p.40

The Jizô and the bamboo hats

- Fukushima prefecture p.44

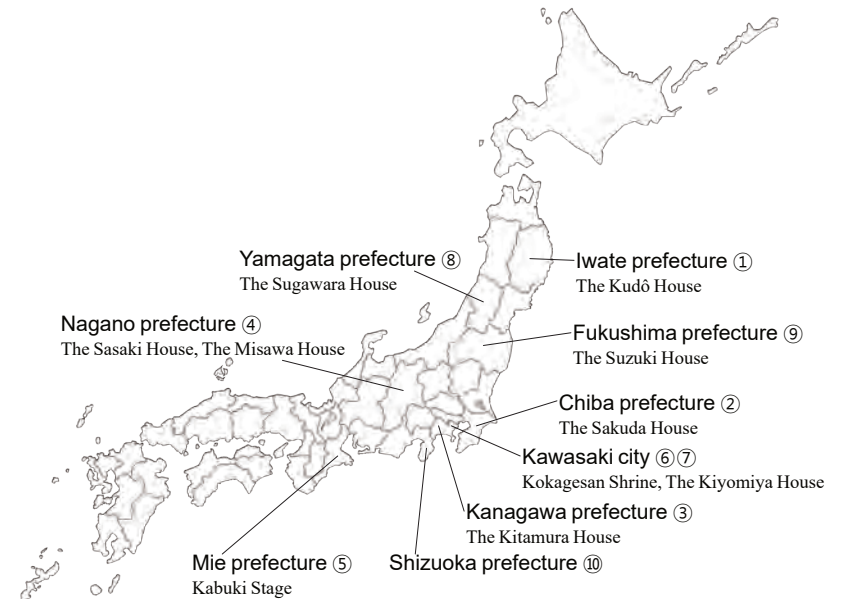
Part 4: Stories from School textbooks

The racoon dog and the spinning wheel

- Shizuoka prefecture p.48

A map of the places from which the stories are introduced

Stories connected to the houses that are re-constructed in Nihon Minkaen



- ① *Zashiki-Warashi*
- ② *The Kappa, who lived at the bend of the river*
- ③ *The tale of the fox who failed to bewitch someone*
- ④ *The wife who did not eat*
- ⑤ *Dandarabôshi*
- ⑥ *How sericulture began*
- ⑦ *The Jizô who helped by leading the horse*
- ⑧ *The crane's gift of gratitude*
- ⑨ *The Jizô and the bamboo hats*
- ⑩ *The racoon dog and the spinning wheel*

A tale from Iwate prefecture

Zashiki-Warashi



In a certain rich family, so the legend goes, there lived a household spirit called a *Zashiki-Warashi*. One day when the grandmother was sitting in front of the family altar, she saw a *Zashiki-Warashi*. It had a red face like a monkey.

In another family a *Zashiki-Warashi* tickled a person sleeping in the room in front of the *tokonoma* (a ceremonial alcove), and threw cups and wooden soup bowls from the ceiling and did all kinds of naughty things. If such a thing

were to happen, misfortune would befall the family, the house would burn down or a family member would die. In another house there was also a *Zashiki-Warashi*. When a group of young men stayed overnight, one of them decided to sleep in the guest room, where a *Zashiki-Warashi* was said to live. Just as he was falling asleep, a child came out of nowhere and jumped about the room and over his sleeping mat. The young man became frightened and ran away. This *Zashiki-Warashi* looked like a human child.

SASAKI Kizen, "The story of *Zashiki-Warashi* in Ōshu", 1920

Tableware of long ago



Individual box type tray with tableware

At meal times the lid was reversed to form a tray. This was used from the Edo period up to the Meiji period.

Most people today sit at the table at meal times. But in olden times each person had a box table, that also served as a container for their tableware.

Zashiki-Warashi in the Kudô house



The veranda of the Kudô house

Before the house was removed to the Nihon Minkaen, the outer doors of the veranda were closed and the space was used as storage room. The room on the inside was a guest room.

According to the people who had lived in the Kudô house, the steps of little children were sometimes heard on the veranda (*engawa*) and somebody heard noises like the winding-up of an old-fashioned gramophone.

What are Zashiki-Warashi?



They lived in the *tatami* rooms of houses long ago and acted as protective spirits. Tales of *Zashiki-Warashi* were told in the prefectures of Iwate, Aomori, Akita and thereabout. They looked like little children with a pageboy haircut. They liked practical jokes but were not malicious. Families that had a room with a *Zashiki-Warashi* in it, were said to prosper. But one day the *Zashiki-Warashi* might suddenly disappear.

A tale from Chiba prefecture

The Kappa, who lived at the bend of the river

A long time ago there lived a *Kappa* (a mythical water creature) in a bend of the Sakuda river, who used to pull the “pearl of life” (i.e. the soul) out of the behind of swimmers. One summer morning a man sat fishing when something tapped his shoulder, *ton ton*. The man turned around and there was a *Kappa*, who told him: You come and wrestle with me. If you win, I’ll give you all my fish, but if I win, you leave all the fish you caught behind. Though the man was not very



confident of winning, and was wearing only a loin cloth, he started to wrestle with the *Kappa*. Despite his small stature the *Kappa* was very strong. When the man tired, the *Kappa* started to pull him into the river. But after a while the man let out a big puff of breath and swam towards the river bank. When he came home, the people were surprised by his story and told him that he was lucky to have survived. What the man did, was to take the lid of a tea kettle and put it over his behind, so the *Kappa* could not pull out the man’s “pearl of life”, and thus he was saved. Now the river has been straightened, and the *Kappa* lost his home in the bend of the river. There are no *Kappa* tales told any more.

“The history of Kujukuri town, specific topics vol.2”, 1992

***Kappa* live in the muddy backwaters of a river**

When a river has many windings, there will be muddy backwaters at the bend that are deep and may have whirlpools. And if there are bamboo groves near the river bank, the fallen leaves may cover the water and it becomes quite an eerie place. Here *Kappa* dwell and one should not go into the water there.



A creel (wicker basket) and a fishing rod
The caught fish are put into the creel.

Kappa used to pull the life force out of a human being's behind. In Japanese this life force was called *shiriko* or *shiriko-dama*, a mythical globe or pearl inside the body, that is sought after by *Kappa*. This "pearl" is inside the human body and if it is removed, the person dies. Therefore it was considered very important. But those once so terrifying *Kappa* are nowadays considered cute and popular figures.

What is a *Kappa*?



Picture of a *Suiko* or "Water Tiger"

An Edo period picture from the now Oita prefecture of a captured "water tiger" (*Kappa*).

Kawasaki City Museum collection

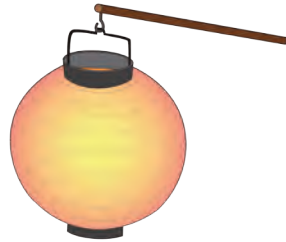
A mythical creature, a kind of goblin, found at the river bank, was generally called a *Kappa*, written with the characters for river [*kawa*] and children [*wappa*] and pronounced *kappa*. It was also called a water deity and sometimes there were even special celebrations for it. Its body was green, it had a plate-like indentation on top of the head, and it was known to like cucumbers. Sometimes it was not green but looked like a monkey.

As mentioned in the tale, it liked to wrestle in the style of a *Sumo* wrestler, and displayed great strength in its small body. But at times it was caught by humans and punished.

A tale from Kanagawa prefecture

The tale of the fox who failed to bewitch someone

A long time ago an old woman happened to go out to visit her grandchild. When she went home again, it was getting dark and the people were afraid a fox might try to bewitch her.



But the grandmother was a strong-minded person. In her right hand she carried a lantern and in her left hand a stone and she went back alone. When she had walked as far as the Zôrin-ji temple, she noticed that somebody with a flickering light was following her. The grandmother thought “A fox is following me” and walked very cautiously, when the light was suddenly extinguished. When she arrived home

and told her family what had happened, they said: “Grandmother, because you acted so courageously, the fox was not able to bewitch you.”

Again, when somebody went to the mountain to work, the weather which until then had been fine, suddenly turned dark. “This is doubtlessly the doing of a fox”, the man thought. “I don’t have time to be fooled” and he sat down and had a smoke. When he was done, suddenly the weather was fine again. He had remembered that when he was a child his grandfather had told him: “When going to the mountains, always carry your smoking things along. And if the fox is trying to bewitch you, the right thing to do is having a smoke.” Therefore he always carried his pipe when going to the mountains.

“The history of Hadano city, extra issue folklore”, 1987

Foxes bewitch humans

Foxes in fairytales often seem to do mischief to people. Compared to other animals, foxes lived relatively close to human dwellings.

Also fox images are seen in *Inari* shrines and there they are worshipped as the fox god, a deity you pray to for a good harvest.

In the second story the man was not fooled by the fox, and the smoke of his pipe served as a charm against evil spirits.

In this connection it should be noted that the town of Hadano, where this story was told, was a region that had become prosperous by the growing of tobacco leaves.



kiseru (a pipe)

It is stuffed with finely chopped tobacco and lit for just a few puffs.



Pipe and box for tobacco



Nights in old times

In Japan electric light only became popular about a hundred years ago. In the times before electricity, once the sun went down, it became completely dark. If one wanted to go out, a lantern was necessary. Inside the house people had standing lamps called *andon* (a paper covered wooden stand with a light inside) or similar lamps. Inside the lanterns candles were used, and inside the paper covered lamps were plates filled with oil or a special oil filled bowl.



Oil filled plate and bowl

A special kind of rush, called *igusa*, was used as a wick. By moving the wick holder, the length of the wick could be adjusted. Compared to the plate, the bowl held much more oil.



Lantern and candles

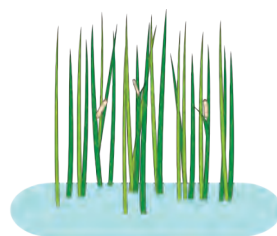


Two types of andon

A tale from Nagano prefecture

The wife who did not eat

A long time ago there was a very stingy man. Once, as he was going to work in the mountains, he said to himself: I wish I had a wife who worked a lot and ate very little. Going home again, he met a woman just like that and he married her. The man thought happily: This way I can save a lot of rice. But one day he noted that the rice bin was almost empty. That is peculiar, he thought, and the next day he pretended to go out, but went to the upper floor and looked down through a hole in the ceiling. The wife started a fire in the cooking stove (*kamado*) and put rice in a pot and began to cook it. When the rice was done, she let down her hair and on top of her head a huge mouth appeared into which the rice disappeared. When the wife realised that the man had seen her, she became



furious and turned into a witch (*onibaba*), threw the man into the bath tub, and ran away to the mountains. She came to a place with a lot of sweet flags and mugwort, and realised that this was Sword Mountain, a poisonous and scary place for her and she took a long detour around it.

The man climbed out of the bath tub and started to run away. When the witch saw him, she started to follow him. The man hid among the sweet flags. When the witch got there, the sharp leaves of the sweet flags pierced her eyes and when she fell into the mugwort, it made her body melt and she was dead.

The man was saved and with his head covered with sweet flags and mugwort he arrived home again. The day happened to be the fifth day of the fifth month, the day of the boys' festival. From this day on people began to decorate the eaves of their houses with sweet flags and mugwort to keep away evil spirits.

INADA Kazuko et al.,
"Children's Stories from Japanese Fairy Tales vol.3", 1996

Cooking rice on a cooking stove



kama
Pot for cooking rice

In old (farm) houses one can still find a *kamado* or cooking stove. About 60 years ago a special pot for rice cooking, called *kama*, was used on a *kamado* for preparing meals, for stewing vegetables and for cooking rice.



kamado
Cooking stove in an old house

Taking a bath



Bath tub
Unlike modern bath tubs, the old ones were made from wood. The heating device was attached to the tub.

Today every house has a bathroom, but in olden times only very few houses in a village had one. They would heat up the water in the tub and their neighbours would go there to take a bath. This was called “borrowed bath”.

The seasonal festival of the fifth month



Two-mouthed woman
Kawasaki City Museum collection

In olden times, people believed that strange and frightening creatures lived in the mountains. They were a bit different from the one which appears in this tale, but in the Edo period there were pictures of creatures like that.



Sweet flag (shôbu) and mugwort (yomogi)



Sweet flag leaves hung from the eaves

The leaves of sweet flags are sword-like. Also sweet flags and mugwort have a strong smell, and in the past were used as medicine or as a charm to drive away evil spirits. Nowadays many people put sweet flags in their bath on the fifth day of the fifth month, or Boys' Day (now *Kodomo no Hi* or Children's Day). Originally the seasonal festival of the fifth day of the fifth month was introduced to Japan from ancient China and the present day custom of carp streamers or *koinobori* as a sign for the Boys' Day is a product of the Edo period.

A tale from Mie prefecture

Dandarabôshi

Long ago there lived a giant called *Dandarabôshi* on an island called Daiôjima. He had only one eye and one leg and he was ten meters tall. *Dandara* used to produce thunderstorms to harass the villagers, so they prayed to the gods to drive him away.



One day a beautiful young woman appeared, sitting on a headland on the island, weaving a straw mat. *Dandara* went up to her and asked her: “What is that?” The girl answered him: “It is a straw sandal for our strong village headman.” Hearing this, *Dandara* became frightened, thinking that here was someone with even larger sandals than his own.

Next he met fishermen on *Dandara* island repairing their sardine dragnets and asked them: “What is that?” The fishermen answered: “This is the loin cloth of our strong village leader.” Next he saw a big basket two meters wide and he asked again: “What is that?” “That is our village headman’s lunchbox”, answered the fishermen. *Dandara* was even more surprised and scared and he ran away across the ocean and never came back.

Actually the young woman and the fishermen were messengers of the gods. Thereafter the sea became more quiet and day after day the villagers hauled in a big catch.

At *Dandara* island the two meter footprints of *Dandara* remained, but when the harbour was built, they were covered up by concrete.

“The history of Daiô town”, 1994

In olden times everything was made by hand

In these tales from long ago we hear about straw mats and straw sandals. After the rice was harvested, mats were woven from the straw. The straw was also used to make sandals and people used them to walk long distances. Now we buy things in shops, but at that time you had to make everything yourself.



How to weave straw mats
 (1) On a straw mat loom, the straw is woven between vertical strings.
 (2) A weaving shuttle is moved between the strings to form the mat.



How to use the tool to weave straw sandals

The maker of sandals sat on the long arm of the tool. Then thin straw ropes were put among the teeth of the tool (people also used their toes) and were woven together to form sandals.



A tool for making straw sandals



Straw sandals

Dandarabôshi



The legend of *Dandarabôshi* spread to Kantô and central Japan. It belongs to a group of giant-stories. The stories as well as the giant's name differ according to the region. Our story is a version connected to people living by the sea and the name of Dandara may be an onomatopoeic word for thunder or thunderstorm.

Life in a fishing village

Daiôchô is a village on the Shima peninsula, which is also called Sakishima peninsula, in the Pacific ocean. The village consists of four parts: Nakiri, Funakoshi, Nata and Azena. It has been a fishing village from times immemorial.

The god that appears in the tale is worshipped in the Nakiri shrine and is called Iya-gongen. Every year in September, a festival is held in this shrine to pray to the god for safety on the ocean, and a huge straw sandal is thrown into the sea. The festival is called the Sandal Throwing Festival.



hara-ami
Net for catching fish (mostly sardines) from the boat



bote
A huge basket with bait for catching fish

A tale from Asao ward

How sericulture began

A long time ago there lived in the village of Okagami a family of three people, father, mother and daughter. One day around the end of autumn, the father went out to work, and mother and daughter went to plough the rice field with their horse. When the father did not come home for a long time, the daughter said to the horse: "If you go and look for father and bring him home, I will be your wife."



The next day the horse ran off through fields and over hills searching for the father and at the end of the third day he returned with the father on his back. The three were very happy until the daughter confessed what she had promised. Then the father became extremely angry and killed the horse

and threw his hide over a mulberry tree. As he did this, a strong wind sprang up suddenly and the skin wrapped itself around the girl and she was whirled up high into the sky. The daughter was gone and her mother and father became terribly sad.

Some time later the daughter appeared to the father in a dream and told him: On the morning of the sixteenth day of the third month you will find small worms in the mortar that stands on the *doma*, (the earthen work place inside a farm house). You must feed these worms with the leaves of the mulberry tree over which you threw the skin of the horse. The worms will pupate and turn into cocoons. These you must sell to make a living. Having said that, the girl disappeared.

They did as she said, and when they sold the cocoons of the worms, they were able to live happily. This was the beginning of sericulture.

HAGISAKA Noboru, "Kawasaki Fairy Tales", 1970

From silkworm eggs to cocoons

To take care of silkworms until you get the raw silk thread from the cocoons, that is called sericulture. Silkworms hatch from eggs and feed off mulberry leaves. In their life time they shed their skin four times, each time growing larger. After shedding their skin for the last time they use their thread to pupate and turn into a chrysalis or cocoon.



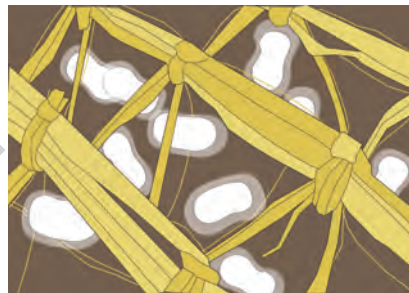
(1) Feeding on mulberry leaves



(4) Before the insects can fly off, the cocoons have to be heated



(2) Sloughing off the skin 4 times



(3) Making cocoons

The tale of the Golden Princess

There is another tale about the origin of sericulture. A long time ago there lived in Tenjiku, as India was then called in Japan, a princess, called the Golden Princess. The princess had a bad step-mother and had to suffer four kinds of hardships, finally reaching Japan in a boat made of mulberry wood. There the princess died, and from her remains emerged the silkworm. The princess became the goddess of silkworms and thus started the cultivation of silkworms or sericulture.

The four carvings in the Kokagesan shrine



(1) The princess is left in a valley of *shishi* (mythical animals, resembling lions).



(2) She is abandoned among hawks on a mountain.



(3) She is left to float away in a boat.



(4) The princess is buried alive.

The festival of Kokagesan shrine

The Kokagesan shrine used to stand in the Tôkô-in temple area. Its festival was around the 23rd of February or March and lasted two to three days. In the morning some appointed people put up banners and lanterns in front of the shrine. People arriving for the festival brought silk cocoons tied to threads and hung them up. They also brought red and white dumplings as offerings. Food stalls were put up. Outside the immediate area crowds of people gathered to get a look.



Statue of the Golden Princess



Statue of the Bodhisattva Memyô

The Golden Princess is an incarnation of the Bodhisattva Memyô.



Festival of the Kokagesan shrine

At festival time banners and lanterns are displayed in Nihon Minkaen



Hanging scroll
depicting the Golden Princess riding
in a boat.



Votive paper



Wooden board
used for printing
the papers.



Amulet paper
Horse carrying mulberry leaves.



Amulet paper
Woman carrying mulberry
leaves and riding on a horse.

A tale from Takatsu ward

The Jizô who helped by leading the horse

A long time ago in the village of Kamisakunobe, there lived a hardworking father and his son. Because their rice paddy was known for yielding an especially tasty rice, a village official wanted to get it for his own, but the father and son did not want to sell their precious field. It was the end of the month of May, and the official told them that they had to finish the rice planting by June first. If they could not do so, the field would be taken away from them. The father and son were greatly troubled by this, because to do the planting in so short a time seemed almost impossible to them. The next morning the official lent them a horse that was very unruly and the son



who was leading it, could not control it. He was almost crying with frustration when a cute boy monk appeared and took over leading the horse, which became at once very docile and worked so hard that the father and son could soon finish preparing the field for planting. They asked the young monk to stay, but he went away without saying a word.

The next morning the priest of the Enmei-ji Temple noticed that the *Jizô* statue in the temple ground had muddy feet. It was therefore understood that the helpful young monk had in reality been this *Jizô*.

From that time on the village people called that *Jizô* the Horse-leading-*Jizô*, or *Hanatori Jizô*. From horse breeding regions like Iwate or Aomori, farmers and horse breeders came to worship the *Jizô* of the Enmei-ji Temple.

HAGISAKA Noburo et al., "Kawasaki Fairy Tales", 1970

Preparing for the rice planting

To prepare for the planting of the rice seedlings the field has to be ploughed. Once the earth has been turned, the paddy is flooded, and then the earth is broken down and smoothed with a harrow. In former times a horse or ox was used to pull the harrow. The animal was led by a long rod that was fixed to the animal's nose. Thus in Japanese leading a horse is called *hanatori* or pulling the nose. This was usually done by young boys.



A field being prepared for rice planting
Noborito in 1953. Here nobody is leading the horse. The man behind the horse uses a harrow. (Kawasaki City Museum collection)



manga
A harrow, called *manga* or *maguwa* in Japanese

Worshipping the Jizô

Jizô is a buddhist deity who was worshipped by people in need. He would help people who were in difficulties, or even take on the hardship of people to make life easier for them. He was a Bodhisattva, or enlightened being, who since olden times helped humans in the difficulties they encountered in their everyday lives. In the story he is helping by leading the horse, but he also might help with the rice planting.



The Enmei-ji Temple



The Jizô of the Enmei-ji Temple

A tale from Yamagata prefecture

The crane's gift of gratitude

A long time ago there lived a man called Kinzô in Urushiyama in the province of Yamagata. One day Kinzô rescued a crane, that was being tormented by children. That same evening, a beautiful girl came to his house. This girl had injured her leg, and Kinzô took care of the wound and let the girl spend the night at his house. The next day the girl said, that as a thank-you-gift she would weave something for Kinzô. She told him: "Now you must not peek for seven days", and closed the doors to the room and started weaving. Kinzô waited for quite some time, but when the girl went



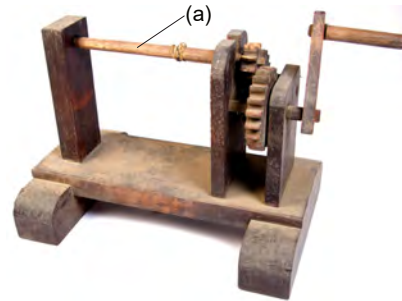
on weaving without eating or drinking, he became concerned and opened the door. There he saw a crane, pulling out one feather after the other and using them in her weaving. When the crane realised that Kinzô had seen her, she said in a sad voice: "Since you have seen me in my true shape, I can no longer stay here." The crane had woven a *Mandala*. She handed it to Kinzô and disappeared. So the girl was the crane whom he had helped.

Later Kinzô built a temple, and named it Kinzô-ji or Kinzô's temple. In this temple the very special cloth-*Mandala* that the crane had woven was kept. The temple became known as the Kakufuzan Chinzô-ji or Temple of the Rare Crane Cloth.

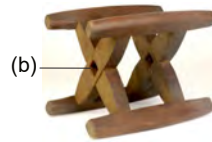
YAMAJI Aiko, "It happened a long, long time ago - 100 stories from the home of the Evening Crane (*Yuzuru*)", 2011

Weaving

Everybody probably has heard of this story, but what makes this story special is that it originated in and is connected to a temple. Weaving was traditionally women's work, and as women spent many days weaving, it was thought of as a sacred task.



zaguri (reeling machine)



kowaku (reel)

The reel is attached to the reeling machine by the detachable rod (a). The rod is put through the hole in the reel (b) and fixed inside the reeling machine. Then several threads from the silk cocoons are fixed as a strand to the rod. By slowly turning the handle, the silk threads are wound around the reel.



hi (shuttle)

Inside the shuttle the weft (horizontal) thread is tightly wound. The shuttle is then passed over-and-under the warp (vertical) threads of the loom, like in the picture on p.43.

takabata

Typical looms: the low type (*jibata*) with a strap to pull the warp threads tight and the tall type (*takabata*). Both types arrived from the continent (China), where they had originated about 1500 years earlier. The low loom used for weaving hemp came first and was used in various places. The crane in the illustration on this page is using a low loom. High looms on the other hand were used for silk weaving, which ordinary people were not allowed to do in the early days. They only started using high looms from about 300 years ago.

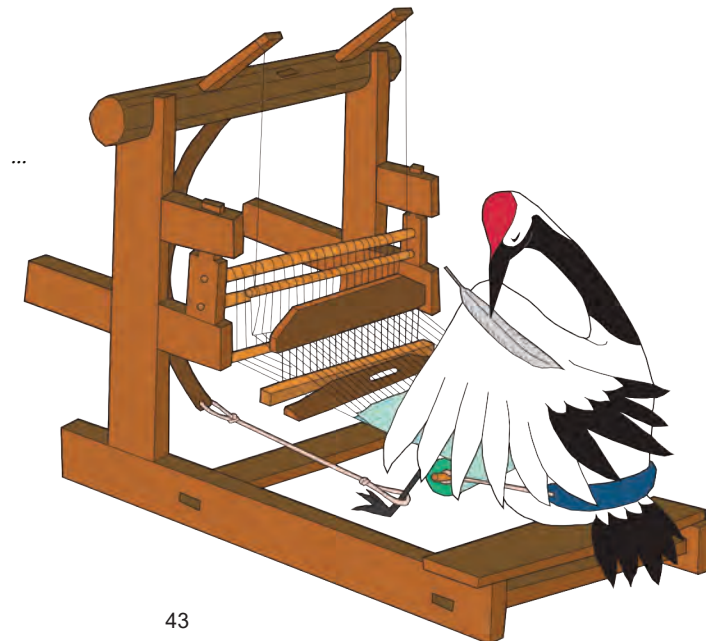


oboke (hemp thread container)

The hemp fiber was torn into narrow strips and twisted into threads. This was put into a tub-like container, called *oboke*.

kikkon ...

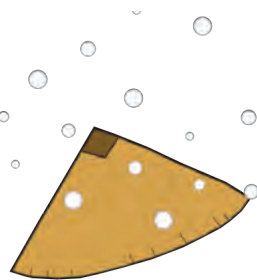
patan ...



A tale from Fukushima prefecture

The Jizô and the bamboo hats

Long ago in a certain place there lived a poor old man called Rokubê and his wife.



Soon it would be the New Year, but their rice box was completely empty and they had nothing prepared. The old man took some rough hemp cloth that the old woman had woven, and was going into town to sell it. When he came to the border of his village, six *Jizô* statues were standing there almost buried in the snow. The old man told them: “When I come back, I will have something to cover you”, and turned to go to town. But as it was very rough cloth the old man was selling, he had to sell it very cheaply.

With the money he could only buy five

bamboo hats. When he came back, he put them on five of the *Jizô*, but for the sixth he took off his own hat and put it on the *Jizô*'s head. At home he told his wife immediately what he had done, and the old woman praised him happily: “That was a good deed you did!” And after a very scanty supper the two old people went to bed early.

In the night they were woken by a noise. It sounded like the voices of five or six people pulling a sled. The sled stopped in front of the house and they heard heavy packages being unloaded. When the noises subsided and they opened the door, they saw the six *Jizô*, wearing their bamboo hats, going back to their places. In front of the house were loads of rice bags, sticky rice cakes, rice wine, fish, clothes and money. From that time on the old people live happily without any care.

INADA Kazuko et al.,
“Children’s Stories from Japanese Fairy Tales vol.1”, 1995

Vehicles for the transportation of goods

To thank the kindhearted old man for his gift of protective hats the *Jizô* brought him a sled laden with wonderful things. Sleds with which to transport, for example goods or wood, were pulled by men or horses and came in different styles. Songs were often sung while pulling a sled.



Sled



Rice bales

Rice bales

Among the things the *Jizô* brought were also rice bales. The harvested rice was packed into straw containers so it could be easily transported. The bales could also be carried on the shoulders of people. The weight of one bale differed according to the times, but usually one bale was 60 kilograms.

Winter clothes

When one has to go through deep snow, like Rokubê, kneehigh boots, a cape and a wide hat, all made from straw or bamboo, are very necessary and helpful.



Bamboo hat, cape (*bandori* or *mino*) and boots

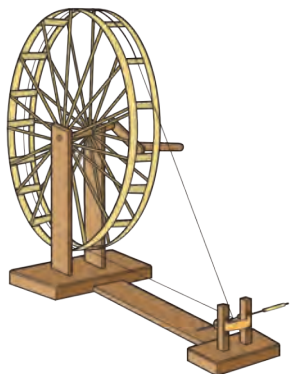


A tale from Shizuoka prefecture

The racoon dog and the spinning wheel

Deep in the mountains of Amagi in the Izu peninsula, lived a couple, who were woodcutters. Every night a racoon dog came to their hut and did all kinds of mischief, so finally the man set up a trap.

One night as the wife was working on her spinning wheel, she noticed the eyes of the racoon dog peeping through a hole in the *shoji* paper. He was mimicking the turning of the wheel. Seeing this, the wife thought that was very cute. This behaviour of the animal went on for several nights, but one night the racoon dog was caught in the



trap. The wife felt sorry for him and set him free, and with many backward looks he ran home into the woods. After some time winter came and the couple went down from the mountain to their village, where they stayed until spring when they returned to their work in the mountains. Opening the door to their hut, the wife was much surprised seeing many skeins of white thread lying on the floor of the room. And then she suddenly heard the noise of a spinning wheel going *kii karakara, kii kurukuru*. The wife looked quietly in the next room and there the racoon dog was sitting at the spinning wheel and was skilfully spinning thread. When he saw the woman, he jumped up with joy. While she had been away, the racoon dog had spun a lot of thread for her.

KISHI Nami, "Folktales from Izu", 1957

People who live and work in the mountains

Woodcutters used to cut trees in the mountains and bring them down. In this story the woodcutter is also a charcoal maker, burning wood to make charcoal. In old times there were many people like that working in the mountains. They also put up traps and caught animals.



torabasami a heavy steel trap, literally Tiger Shears
A hole was dug in the ground, the trap was put in and covered with leaves.



A cotton striking bow (wata-uchi yumi)
An instrument for untangling the fibre



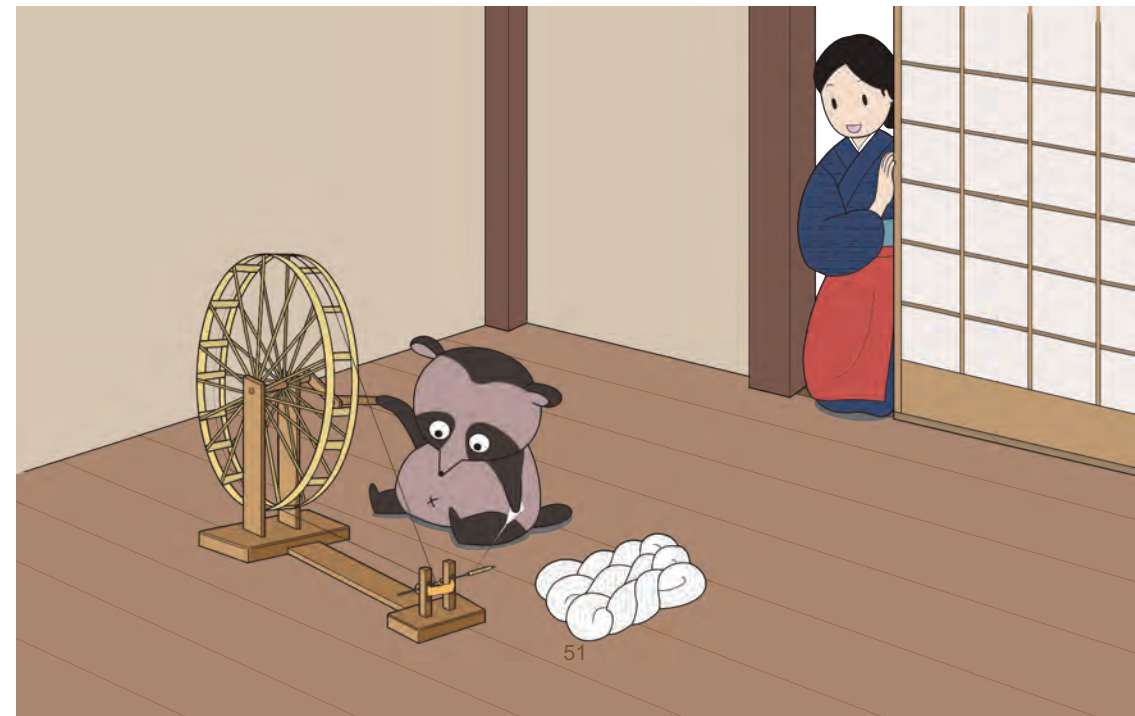
A cotton ginning machine (watakuriki)
The seeds are removed by rollers



A spinning wheel (ito-guruma)

Making thread

Like foxes racoon dogs could bewitch people, but they were also thought to be lovable animals. Here the work of the wife is spinning cotton thread on her wheel. In the cotton ginning machine the seeds were removed, and the “cotton striking bow” was used to untangle the fibre. After that the left hand took the raw cotton and the right hand turned the spinning wheel, and then the thread was rolled on a spindle. The racoon dog learned all this by watching intently, but actually it is quite difficult to do for somebody who has not been taught.



Afterword

In this book we introduce ten old stories. Of course there are many more stories like these in Japan. In many of these stories we learn a lot about life in Japan in former times. Maybe you can find similar stories in your own country and culture.

The End

This book is an English translation of the catalogue of the special exhibition "Household things from long, long ago - Tales that tell of another life - " (2015.7.1 - 11.29).

All of the folk tools shown in this book are from the Nihon Minkaen collection.

The photographs in this book belong to the Nihon Minkaen, except where a different source is cited.

All illustrations in this book belong to the Nihon Minkaen.

Unauthorized reproduction of both photographs and illustrations is prohibited.



Household things from long, long ago

- Tales that tell of another life -

Japanese Version 2015

Writing and Editing OZAWA Hana

Published by Nihon Minkaen

© Nihon Minkaen 2015

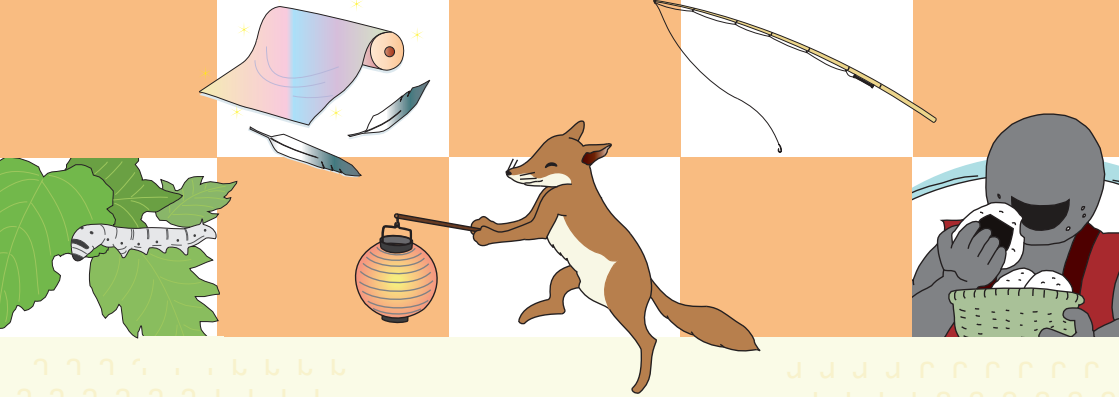
7-1-1 Masugata, Tama ward, Kawasaki city,

Kanagawa prefecture, 214-0032

Tel. 044-922-2181

English Version 2021

English Translation TAMAMUSHI Renate



Zashiki-Warashi
The Kappa, who lived at the bend of the river
The tale of the fox who failed to bewitch someone
The wife who did not eat
Dandarabôshi
How sericulture began
The Jizô who helped by leading the horse
The crane's gift of gratitude
The Jizô and the bamboo hats
The racoon dog and the spinning wheel



Nihon Minkaen

