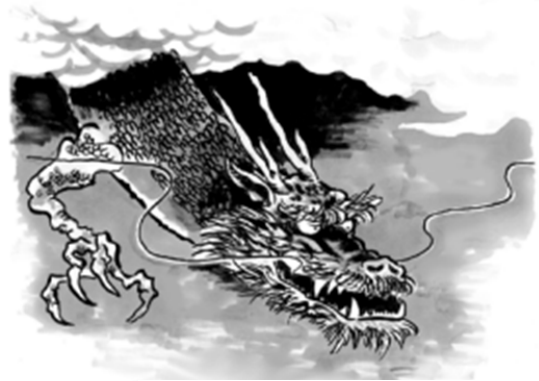


Biwa Lute Floating in the Pond

A long time ago there was a Biwa playing Buddhist walking in the land of Shinano. One day, he sat down next to a pond, deep in the mountains called Asahi-yama and started playing his biwa lute. When he was done playing a song, he heard a voice say, "Please, let me hear one more song. I will tell you a secret to thank you". So the priest played one more song on his biwa. Then suddenly, a giant dragon appeared right in front of the priest and said, "Now let me share my secret. I am the master of this pond, and will be causing a flood from it. You should run from here quickly. If you tell this to anybody, your life will be forfeit." The dragon has vanished after leaving these words.

The scared priest ran down as fast as he could, and by the time he made it down it was morning. He was fearful for his life, so he was about to walk past the village until he thought of the villagers that were so kind to him. Then as he started to cry, the priest said, "Forgive me, I was about to lose my humanity and compassion in fear. The pond in the mountains will flood tonight. Please run away as quickly as possible." Upon hearing the priest, the villagers ran quickly to high grounds where water wouldn't reach them. As waters withdrew, the villagers returned and the village was saved. "Thanks to the priest, all of us villagers were safe." As these words were uttered, there was a thunderous sound from the mountain and black clouds reigned upon the village. By the time the villagers have come out of hiding, the priest was nowhere to be found.

"That was the dragon..." The village men ran to the mountains without any second thought. When the villagers arrived at the pond, all that was found was the biwa floating on the surface of the pond. The priest has been killed for breaking the promise with the dragon. Since this day, the pond has been called Biwa Pond.



The Dragon (image)

<Reference> Takuo Segawa / Miyoko Matsutani (First published 1957, 2015 New edition) : Shinano-no-minwa, Miraisha