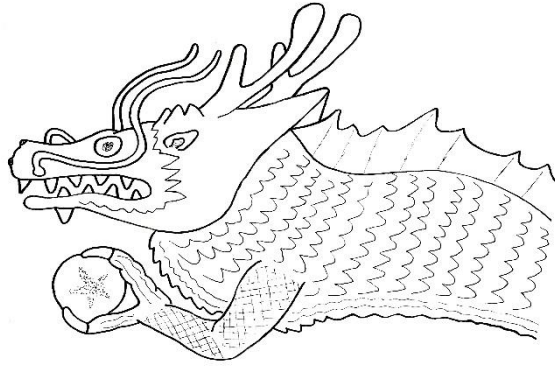


The Dragon of Inba Marsh



Once upon a time, long, long ago, a dragon came to live in Inba Marsh. This dragon was young and inexperienced, but very friendly. He loved the people who lived in the small villages around the marsh.

The dragon especially enjoyed the village festivals. He wanted to join in

the fun and dancing, so he tried to shapeshift into a human. Too bad, he always forgot to hide his tail! The villagers thus knew he was a dragon, but they were kind to him anyway.

One year there was a long drought. The spring showers never came, and even during the June and July rainy season the skies were bright blue. The sun shone hot day after day.

By August the water in the rice paddies was almost completely dried up. The villagers were terrified. If the rice crop wilted, they would all starve to death during the coming winter.

The dragon was worried too. "My friends are in big trouble." He thought. "I have to do something to help them."

With a great splash the young

dragon rose out of the marsh and shot straight up into the sky. The villagers gazed in wonder as their dragon friend flew higher and higher. Soon he was just a tiny black speck way up in the blue.

Suddenly there was a great explosion high in the sky, and the rain soon began pouring down. The villagers danced with joy. "Hurray! Hurray!" They cheered. "Our dragon friend has saved us!"

But their joy was short-lived. Soon three large objects came crashing down to the ground. When the villagers ran to see, they found their dragon friend lying there dead. His body was broken into three pieces.

The dragon had saved his friends, but he had acted alone without permission from the Dragon King. As punishment his body was shattered.

The villagers sadly dragged the three pieces of the dragon's body over to their temples. Even today the local people still give thanks to, and honor the spirit of the faithful dragon that gave up his life to save their ancestors.

The dragon's head and horns are enshrined at the Ryukakuji Dragon-horn Temple in Sakae Town; his torso at the Ryufukuji Dragon-torso Temple in Inzai City; and his tail at the Ryubiji Dragon-tail Temple far away in Sosa City.

Once upon a time 昔々
Inba Marsh 印旛沼
inexperienced 経験不足
friendly 人懐こい
shapeshift 化ける、変身する
join in 仲間入りする

thus それ故に、だから、結果として
be kind to 優しくする
drought 日照り、雨不足
spring shower 春のわか雨
June and July rainy season 梅雨
rice paddy 水田
terrified おびえている
wilt 立ち枯れする
starve to death 餓死する
splash しぶきがはねるパシャパシャの音
gaze in wonder 驚いて見つめる
tiny speck 小さな粒のように見える
explosion 爆発
pouring rain どしゃぶりの雨
Hurray! 万歳!、やった!、喜びの声
short-lived 長く続かない、すぐ終わる
acted alone 自分勝手に行動する
without permission 許可なし
as punishment 罰として
shattered 砕かれる

give thanks 感謝の気持ちをささげる
honor the spirit 魂を供養する
gave up his life 命を投げ出す
ancestors ご先祖様
enshrine 奉納して祭る
far away 遠く離れた



アナザーストーリー

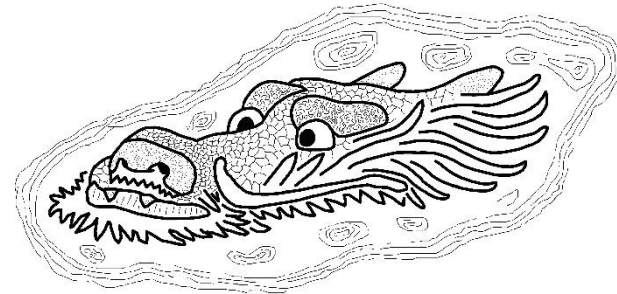
むかし、若い竜神が印旛沼に棲んでいた。この竜神は、村人と仲がとても良かった。ある年、日照りが長く続いて、村人たちは困ってしまった。そこで、若い竜神が空に飛びあがって、雨を降らせて皆を餓死から救ってくれる。しかし竜王の意思に逆らって勝手な行動をとった竜神は罰として体が三つに切り裂けられてしまう。

似たような「人々を助けた竜神」の話は、細かいモチーフを変えながら千葉県北部に広く継がれている。例えば、白井市には、日照りが続いているところに、どこかから現れてきた老齢のお坊さんが竜神に雨を降らせるように頼んだ、というバージョンも残っている。

また、東京湾の主であるホラ貝が印旛沼の竜神と戦ったという伝承も、三浦半島に継がれている。強い貝神が力不足の若い竜

神を振り回せて投げてしまった。落ちた竜神が猿島になったという、興味深い話が伝えられている。

愛しい仲間のために命を自ら犠牲にする竜神は、印旛沼周辺の地域にとってかわいそうなヒーロー。竜神を描いた彫刻やオブジェが至る所に施されている。白井市桜台の一本松公園には、水から飛び立とうとする竜神がとってもダイナミックに描かれている。



Various versions of the young dragon legend are told in the region surrounding Inba Marsh.