

## The Water-Throwing Son-in-Law

A farmer, on his daily patrol of his paddy field, is surprised to find that the ground has dried up. However, when he happens to look at the neighbouring field owned by his son-in-law, he sees that it is filled with water. Believing that his water was stolen by his son-in-law, he breaks down the ridge between the two fields so that the water runs into his own field. Next day the son-in-law is infuriated to find that his field has been drained, and proceeds to draw all the water back into his own field. On the following day, the father restores his field to its former state, but this time is determined to trap the culprit. When his son-in-law is caught red-handed, an argument breaks out, and they start throwing water and then mud at each other. At the height of their dispute, the farmer's daughter comes in and helps her husband to bring down her father. They then both make their escape, followed by the angry farmer.

## 'Nue' the Monster

'Nue' is a monster with the face of a monkey, the torso of a raccoon dog, the limbs of a tiger and the tail of a snake; and its terrible, eerie cry resembles that of White's Thrush (*Zoothera dauma*). Due to its appearance, it is sometimes referred to as a *Japanese chimera*.

A travelling monk, having visited three shrines at Kumano, is on his way to Kyoto, and stops *en route* at Ashiya in Settsu Province (present-day Hyogo prefecture). Asking for an overnight stay at a villager's home, he is refused as it is prohibited by law to offer lodgings to a traveller, and is advised to shelter himself from the elements in a shrine on the bank of the river. But the place is nightly haunted, as the villager warns, by some shining object which appears on the river's surface. Sure enough, in the dead of night the monk witnesses a mysterious creature rowing a hollowed-out log boat towards him. It reveals that it is the ghost of 'nue', the monster, which having nightly visited the Imperial Palace in the form of a dark cloud and tormented Emperor Konoe (1139-55) until he lost consciousness, was finally shot to death by an arrow from the bow of Genzanmi-Yorimasa (1105-80), the warrior of warriors in both the Genji and the Heike clans. While the monk is chanting the Sutra, the ghost appears before him a second time and explains that although Yorimasa had achieved fame by killing him, he himself had incurred disgrace and, shut up inside a log-boat, was thrown into Yodo river. His floating prison had drifted down the river at the mercy of the waves, sometimes remaining motionless in pools, until it was finally washed ashore on the shallows of the bay of Ashiya. Begging the monk to read prayers for the repose of his soul so that his after-life will be lit by the power of Buddhism, the ghost disappears into the dark sea.

by Takao Saijo