**Local Legend: Meeting and Marriage of Sarutahiko no Mikoto and Ame no Uzume no Mikoto**

(A *kami* deity of the heavens marries a *kami* deity of the earth)

(Overview)

Japanese mythology states that the *kami* deity Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, whose dance helped restore light to the world, was sent as a representative to confront a massive earth *kami* deity named Sarutahiko no Mikoto at a crossroads in the heavens. She was in the entourage of Ninigi no Mikoto, the child of the *kami* of the heavens, descending to rule the islands of Japan. Takachiho legend says that Ame no Uzume and Sarutahiko married once all arrived safely to earth, and that they built a residence together near Kushifuru Peak. Today, Aratate Shrine honors them as *kami* deities of matrimonial happiness and fulfilled wishes.

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**Journey of the Descent**

It is written in both the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon Shoki*, two ancient texts recording the origins of Shinto, that as Ninigi no Mikoto descended to take up rulership of the islands of Japan, he and his procession came upon a massive *kami* deity at a vast intersection in the heavens. This *kami* was illuminating the heavenly realm above and the islands below. At the sight of the deity, Ninigi turned to Ame no Uzume no Mikoto. She is the deity whose dancing helped return light to the world by luring Ninigi’s grandmother, the sun *kami* deity Amaterasu Omikami, out of hiding.

**Confronting the Earthly Guardian**

Ninigi said to Ame no Uzume, “You may be delicate, but you can face down any deity. That is why I bid you to approach that deity there and ask, ‘Who is it that stands in our way?’” Heartened by Ninigi’s words, Ame no Uzume confronted the large *kami* deity and asked his name. The deity answered, “I am an earthly *kami* named Sarutahiko no Mikoto. I am here because I heard a child of the heavens would like to descend to earth, and I thought I would serve as a guide.” Ninigi accepted the offer and, with Sarutahiko’s guidance, all arrived safely at Kushifuru Peak.

**Marriage of Heavenly and Earthly Deities**

According to Takachiho legend, this meeting was a once-in-a-lifetime encounter for the heavenly deity Ame no Uzume and the earthly deity Sarutahiko. As soon as they reached earth, the two married with the blessing of Ninigi, and in a great rush gathered any wood they could find from the surrounding area to build a home. Today the Aratate Shrine, whose name references the raw, unseasoned timber (Japanese: “ara-ki”) from which their home was built (Japanese: “tate”), venerates them and their relationship.

Ame no Uzume is known as a *kami* deity of song, dance, and the performing arts. She is celebrated fondly in Takachiho through *kagura*, the Shinto theatrical dance said to originate with her. Sarutahiko is known as a *kami* deity of guidance in travel and education. Together, she and Sarutahiko are *kami* deities of matrimonial happiness, fulfilled wishes, and creative pursuits.