

## The History of Uranai-ba, Divination Spot

Towada Shrine is the center of Towada spiritualism, a belief system common in the Tohoku region of northeast Japan. The worship of dragon *kami* (deities) is key to Towada belief. According to local legend, Nansonobo, a devotee of the Kumano Sanzan Three Grand Shrines of Kumano, fought against a monstrous serpent with eight heads which was threatening the guardian goddess of Lake Towada. The battle raged for seven days and nights. Nansonobo eventually won and he joined the dragon goddess as a protective deity of the lake.

Located 150 meters up the mountain from here is a flat area with an iron ladder leading down to a place known as Uranai-ba. It is here that Nansonobo is said to have first entered the waters of the lake. By throwing white rice wrapped in white paper, or “*oyorigami*”—paper blessed by priests from the shrine—into the lake, you can make a wish to the deities. If the paper sinks the wish will come true, but if it floats, it will not. It is said that trying to influence the result—like by wrapping a heavy item in the paper—will not work, and that the paper will be carried away by waves.

Please note that at present you cannot descend to the Uranai-ba via the ladder.