

Tower of the 23rd Night

Eyes Wide Open

The kanji characters on this little rock, which is balanced on top of a larger rock next to an elegantly twisted pine tree, say, “The 23rd night.” The phrase refers to a folk tradition followed by the local population, that calls for them to stay awake on the 23rd day of the lunar month to pray for a bountiful harvest. (We do not actually know how many months a year they actually did this.) These traditional tower-like structures are also known as “o-tachi machi,” places where people “stand and wait” for the moon to appear on the 23rd day of the month. There is a *shukaijo* meeting house just down the road where people could gather to drink sake. Whether this helped them to stay upright as they waited for the moon (or not), we do not know.