

【Ōnuma Pond and the Daija Festival】

The famous cobalt-blue waters of Ōnuma Pond are caused by copper sulfate runoff from nearby Mt. Akaishi. The red *torii* gate visible on the shore belongs to Daija-jinjya Shrine, dedicated to Daija, a dragon seen in this area as a guardian spirit.

According to one version of a local legend, every spring Daija used to transform into a man and go to see the cherry blossoms in the mountains. One day, he met a woman named Kurohime sitting by herself under the trees, and they immediately fell in love. Daija asked Kurohime's father for her hand in marriage, but her father was opposed. He eventually agreed to a race for his daughter's hand, but Kurohime's father hid swords in the grass that lacerated the dragon's body. Enraged, Daija summoned a great storm to flood the region. Kurohime was heartbroken to see her home washed away, and she threw herself into the pond and drowned. The remorseful Daija dispersed the storm and returned to live in Ōnuma Pond.

Every August, the local people remember this story with the Daija Festival. On its opening day, they cross the pond in small boats while carrying colorful dragon puppets. This is followed in the afternoon by a procession of portable shrines and a fireworks display in the evening.