

Horror Stories of a Real-Life “Hell”

There are numerous terrifying stories related to Beppu’s *jigoku*, or “hells.” One account, believed to date to the Edo period (1603–1867), states that the sulfuric winds of hell blew out from the *jigoku* pools and instantly killed cows and horses passing by. Local residents responded by holding religious ceremonial sumo wrestling matches every year to appease the gods and prevent future hell winds.

Other stories are more gruesome. According to the eighth-century *Bungo no kuni fudoki* (Record of Bungo Province), two cows fell into a *jigoku* pool. Only their bones floated back to the surface.

The 1694 *Hokoku kiko* (Toyo Province Travel Account) contains an even more shocking story, told countless times by Beppu residents over the years. After a heated argument with her husband, a woman threw herself into a *jigoku* pool, and only a bit of her hair was ever found.

True or not, these accounts remind locals of the dangers that come with having hell as a neighbor.