

***Honyarado* Snow Huts**

This structure is called a *honyarado* in the local dialect. Traditionally, these snow huts were constructed for a winter event called *torioi*, or “bird chasing.”

Torioi has long been a significant tradition for Tokamachi’s agricultural communities. Traditionally held on January 14, the custom is a ceremonial expulsion of birds that might eat the crops. Children parade through town, singing the *torioi* song and clapping wooden blocks together. Residents reward them with mochi rice cakes and other sweets. The children play late into the night inside a *honyarado*, where a small charcoal stove provides warmth.

Similar snow huts are known as *kamakura* in other snowy areas of Japan. The local name likely comes from the *torioi* song, which expresses shooing off birds in a rice field with the onomatopoeic word *honyara!* Loosely, one might translate the name *honyarado* as “shoo-shoo huts.”

While no longer so tightly tied to agricultural life, *torioi* and *honyarado* remain a beloved part of the winter calendar in Tokamachi—one of the many ways residents turn the region’s heavy snowfalls into a source of fun and community building.