

## **The Origin Myth of the Caldera**

### **Kicking the landscape into shape**

In the distant past, the Aso caldera contained a lake. The caldera only became habitable and amenable to farming when part of its outer wall collapsed, allowing the lake water to flow out. According to local myths, the collapse was the work of the deity Takeiwatatsu no Mikoto, who first attempted and failed to kick down the wall at Futae Pass, about halfway along the eastern side of the caldera. A little further south, at Tateno, he gave the wall a second mighty kick, and there he was more successful. The wall crumbled, the waters flowed out, and the caldera was drained.

The place where the Shirakawa and Kurokawa rivers converge and flow out of the caldera today is called Tateno. This name (which means “unable to stand up”) is said to derive from the story that Takeiwatatsu no Mikoto lost his balance and fell over after his second kick. By draining the lake, Takeiwatatsu no Mikoto made it possible for people to live and farm inside the caldera. For this reason, he is regarded as the “father of Aso” and the most important of the 12 deities associated with the Mt. Aso volcano.