The Kokuzo Priest Chased after by a Serpent

Once upon a time in Japan, when the Buddhist Saint Kokuzo was a young monk, he traveled on foot to practice mendicancy. When he was traveling the Ise region, a young girl saw him and fell in love with him. Although the monk tried to ignore her courting and to concentrate on ascetic practice, he was a young man made of flesh and blood. Actually hot blood coursed through his young vein and he, too, was attracted to the girl. However, he said to himself, " I am a monk who renounced the world. I have to control myself and avoid indulging myself in passion. "

Then he left Ise and hurried on his way. The girl was deeply in love with him so she could not give up. Her passion made her transform herself into a serpent just like an old saying that women's zeal can move mountains. She started to chase after the monk.

Now the monk was rested by the roadside, feeling fatigue out of the long travel, and felt like urinating. He could not hold it so he urinated into a crump of grass, where the serpent happened to be sleeping. The big snake jumped up as his urine sprinkled over her. The snake got mad and sprang at him.

The young man ran away at full speed. But the big snake persistently chased him so the monk had to keep on running breathlessly.

His throat became extremely dry so he stopped at a private house asking for a cup of tea. The resident, however, refused to offer any drink, saying that they had no tea to serve the beggar monk. So, the monk drank water from a natural spring and kept on running away. He finally reached a hilly area called Akasakayama. He hid himself in a grotto in the backyard of the main temple of the present Myojorin-ji Temple.

It is said that the place the Kokuzo monk took off his woven hat was the present Kasanui-cho and the place he drank water from a natural spring later became the present Gama-cho, both in Ogaki City. And the serpent later became worshipped as the guardian God called Jaoh Gongen* (Zaoh Gongen) at the village shrine.

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*"Ja" of Jaoh Gongen is a meaning called a snake.