

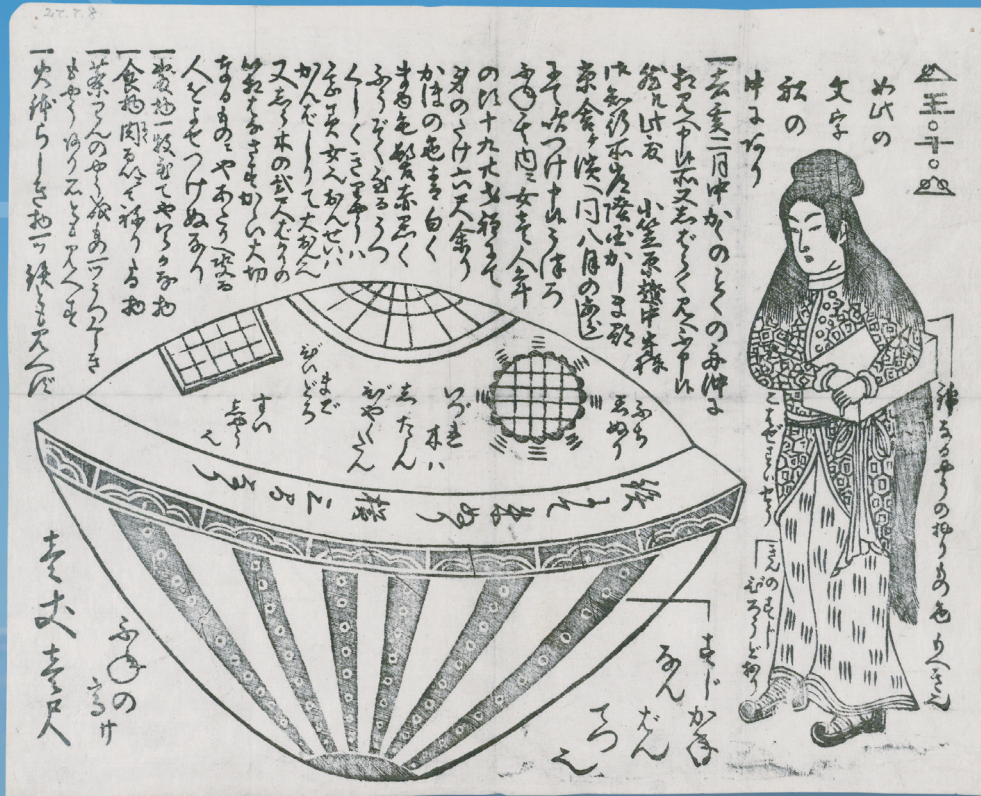


Kamisu Discovery

Feature article

Sharihama beach & Utsuro-bune boat

UFO mystery of the Edo period



Funabashi Print (A kind of a newspaper in Edo period) owned by Funabashi Nishi Library



Toen Novel owned by SHOWA WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.

Kamisu Discovery

Feature article

Sharihama beach & Utsuro-bune boat

UFO mystery of the Edo period

Do you know the mystery story “Hitachinokuni Utsuro boat-bune Strange story” that is originated in our city? In recent years, new historical materials have been discovered one after another and are drawing attention. We will focus on an attractive strange story whose mysteries still remain unsolved no matter how much research is done.

A real UFO mystery

During the Edo period, a UFO carrying an alien came to Kamisu Beach. It may sound absurd. However, the “Hitachinokuni Utsuro-bune boat Strange story”, which is the basis of this UFO legend, is well known in the field of folklore, as there are many old documents made in the Edo period. For example, Bakin Takizawa wrote about it in his “Toen Novel”, Kunio Yanagita wrote an essay on it, and Tatsuhiko Shibusawa used it as a motif in his novels. This strange story continues to attract many mystery fans up to date. Although there are subtle differences depending on the literature, the summary of Toen novel is as follows.

In 1803, a disc-shaped boat appeared off the beach called “Harayadori” in Hitachinokuni (present Ibaraki Prefecture). There was a window at the top of the boat, and strange letters were written inside the boat. A woman who looked like a foreigner and could not understand the language was there alone, holding a box as if it were important to her.

From now on, 14 volumes with 13 types of ancient documents (many more if unidentified manuscripts are included) have been discovered. They all have a common depiction of a disc-shaped boat, strange letters, and a picture of a mysterious woman.

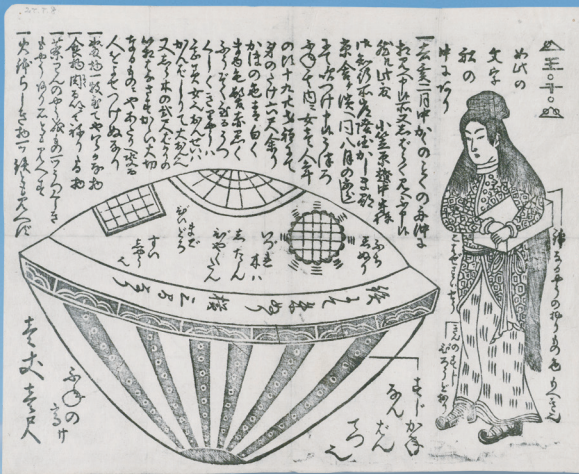
Regarding this strange story, Kazuo Tanaka, Professor Emeritus at Gifu University, who is a leading expert on Utsuro-bune boat research, describes it as “as far as I know, the only real UFO mystery in the world.” This is because there is physical evidence in an old document from the Edo period, written a long time ago, in the form of a “picture of a vehicle that looks just like a UFO.”



Mr. Tanaka



Sanreison (Golden princess Statue) and Zushi (Buddhist utensils)



Funabashi Print (A kind of a newspaper in Edo period) owned by Funabashi Nishi Library



Hyoryuki-shu owned by IWASE BUNKO LIBRARY



Mito Documents (Private collection)

Mito Documents and the Golden Princess, a surprising discovery

Mr. Tanaka, who has visited Kamisu City many times for research. What has he discovered in our familiar place and how to get closer to the mystery of the Utsuro-bune boat? Let us introduce you to some exciting episodes.

Mr. Tanaka began researching Utsuro-bune boat Strange story around 1998. The more he investigated, the more he became fascinated by the fun of solving mysteries, and in 2009 he published “Edo Utsuro-bune boat Mystery.” Then, the following year, in 2010, he received a call from a reader living in Mito city who owned related ancient documents. This was the “Mito Documents,” which would later lead to surprising discoveries.

He immediately went to Mito City to investigate the actual item, and on his way back, he stopped by Shofukuji Temple in Kamisu City. His purpose was to confirm the woodblock prints of amulets of the sericulture faith at Shofukuji Temple Bakin Takizawa had written.

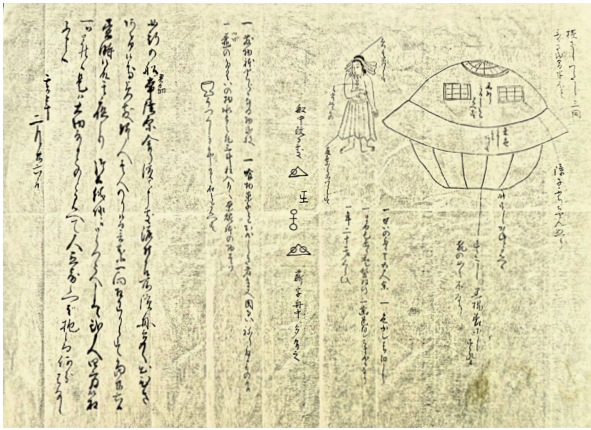
“At that time, I was allowed to take a photo of the Sanreison (Golden Princess Statue), but I did not think yet that Utsuro-bune boat Strange story was related to the Golden Princess Legend, so I did not investigate it in detail.”

Nikkawa area of Kamisu City is said to be the birthplace of sericulture in Japan, where Golden Princess introduced from Tenjiku (present India) in the mid-6th century. The legend of the Golden Princess, which is passed down at Sanreison Senjuin Shofukuji Temple, is that in 584 (the 13th year of Emperor Kinmei’s reign), the Golden Princess washed up on driftwood in the Nikkawa river, and was raised by a fisherman who discovered her. It is said that she later changed into white silkworms and introduced sericulture to people.

Then, after back to Gifu Mr. Tanaka looked at the photos of the Silkworm Reison and the Mito Documents, he couldn’t help exclaiming in surprise.

“I noticed that both costumes had the same two-tiered bow on the front. The two female statues have the same keyword “Utsuro-bune boat” and even have the same unusual front band design. I thought it couldn’t be a coincidence.”

I also found a number of other similarities, such as their eyes being crescent-shaped like Otafuku, and their heads decorated with



Banke Documents owned by Mr. Jinichi Kawakami, photo provided by Mr.Tanaka



hawk-like decorations.

“This is the first discovery with academic value that suggests a connection between Utsuro-bune boat Strange story and the Legend of the Golden Princess, so I was excited. This also proves the correctness of the hypothesis of the late Tsugio Sato, a local historian of Ibaraki Prefecture.”

The beach Utsuro-bune boat drifted was found to be Sharihama!

After that, mysteriously, new historical materials related to “Hitachinokuni Utsuro-bune boat Strange story” were discovered one after another. Of these, the one that has a deep connection to us is the Banke Documents, which were discovered in 2014. “For many years, local historians and UFO fans have searched with enthusiasm to find out exactly where is “Harayadori”, written in Toen novel where the Utsuro-bune boat washed ashore, but they couldn’t find out. People thought to be a fictitious place name. I was surprised to find that the place where they were washed ashore was written as “Hitachi-hara Sharihama beach” in the Banke Documents. If it’s a real place name, we can investigate the local history of the area and try to unravel the mysteries of the strange story.” Hitachi-hara Sharihama beach can also be found on Ino Tadataka’s map, and corresponds to present Sharihama beach at the Hasaki area of Kamisu city. According to the history of Hasaki Town (present Kamisu city), people began to settle in Sharihama in 1872 (Meiji 5) when seine fishing developed. Back to the Edo period there were no people living there and the sand dunes had spread out. “So far, I have visited Sharihama beach, Shofukuji Temple, and Sanrei Shrine about eight times for research and TV program coverage. Most recently, in the summer of 2022, I participated in reporting at Sharihama Beach for a UFO program on the American video streaming service Netflix(Netflix,inc®)”.

In 2019, the English version of Mr. Tanaka’s book was published, and Utsuro-bune boat Strange story has become known overseas as well.



A bold hypothesis and the biggest mystery

In addition to the Banke Documents, Mr.Tanaka classified the New Kozakki and the Ibunzakki into the three early documents that contained legends close to the original. He built a bold hypothesis: “The depiction of a woman common to all of them may represent a growing silkworm.” For example, the pale face is the color of a silkworm larva, the dark red eyebrows and hair are the color of a chrysalis, the thin white teeth are the color and surface pattern of a cocoon, and the white veil is the color of raw silk. If the mysterious woman in the Utsuro-bune boat is an incarnation of a silkworm, then the connection with the Golden Princess legend becomes even stronger.

Although research is progressing with the discovery of new historical materials, Mr.Tanaka says that there are still many mysteries left.

“The biggest mystery is how the people of the Edo period, who probably didn’t know about modern UFOs, were able to draw a picture of a hollow boat that looked so much like a UFO. Why do so many documents that tell strange stories remain? Could it be that some kind of incident actually happened? And why did similar stories of “visitors from another world riding UFO-type vehicles” emerge in places so far apart in time, place, and culture, such as the United States in the 20th century and Japan in the

Edo period? These mysteries continue to arouse the curiosity of people around the world.”

How does the mystery stage change now, comparing to the past?

So, how did Mr. Tanaka feel when he stood on Sharihama beach, the setting for Utsuro-bune boat Mystery?

“When I read Toen novel, what came to my mind was a green pine forest, a wide white sandy beach, and a shallow blue sea that stretched out to sea. A fisherman was pulling out a small boat toward a strange boat floating off the beach, and he was thinking, “What is that?” A scene reminiscent of an animated movie came to mind. However, what I saw at Sharihama beach was a little different from what I expected, such as the industrial complexes of the Kashima waterfront industrial area seen in the distance. Despite, as I looked far offshore, I felt the atmosphere that Kunio Yanagita said, “The Hitachi-hama seems to have had a strong spirit of talking about these kinds of wonders both now and in the past.”

It is true that now headlands have been built to protect the sandy beach, and huge wind mills can be seen in the distance, so of course things have changed from the Edo period. If you look at the scenery of Sharihama beach, popular for us, remembering the story of the Utsuro-bune boat story, you may feel different from usual.

On the other hand, there are also things that have been passed down from the Edo period. It’s the Tori Festival at Sanrei Shrine. Until the separation of Shinto and Buddhism during the Meiji period, Sanrei Shrine and Shofukuji Temple were one, and the Tori Festival was held grandly for three days until the end of the Meiji period. Even today, it is still cherished and passed down by local residents, and is held on the first day of Tori in November.

Lastly, Mr. Tanaka gave a message to everyone in Kamisu City.

“There is no doubt that the Hitachinokuni Utsuro-bune boat Strange story is a folklore asset of Kamisu City that is unique worldwide. This strange story has the fun of imagining and guessing. While thinking about various possibilities, why not visit Sanrei Shrine and Shofukuji Temple, think about UFOs and the legend of the Golden Princess at Sharihama beach, and think of ideas for solving mysteries! ”



Sanrei Shrine



Tori Festival



Sanreisan Senjuin Shofukuji Temple

Founded in the 13th year of Emperor Kinmei.

There is a stone tablet next to the main gate of Shofukuji Temple that tells the story of the Golden Princess Legend. It is written that “The mulberry Utsuro-bune boat was drifted in Toyoraura, Shioji Hitachi, depending on its fate. It was also the 13th year of Emperor Kinmei (584).” Furthermore, according to Chief Priest Koujun Masuda, it is said that “the main hall was built at the beginning of the Edo period as a place of prayer for sericulture, and it was filled with pilgrims.”



A woodblock for printing amulets of Sanreison



Imitation of the Sanreison (Golden princess statue) (20cm height)