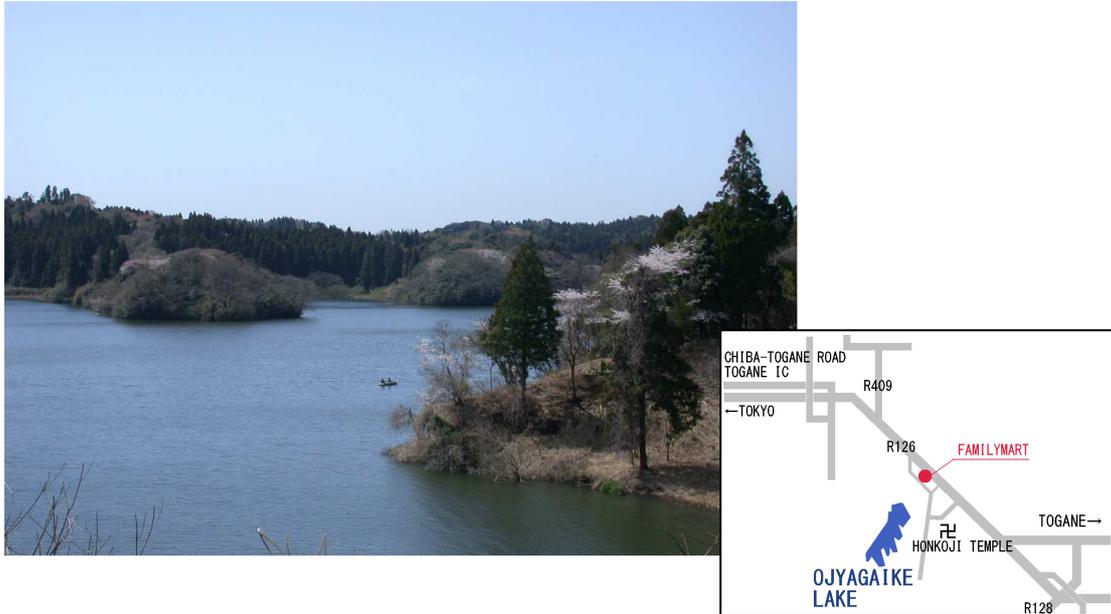


## Togane`s Stories: Ojyagaike Lake

Hidden legends from the lakes water.



Ojyagaike Lake is located in North West Togane near the Chiba/Togane interchange. The lake is 4km in circumference with a walk path. You can enjoy walking and bass fishing or simply enjoy the beautiful view of being surrounded by nature.

Because of the beauty of the lake it is also called “Towadako Lake of Boso Peninsula”. This name was created by a famous Togane born poet Suzuki Masaryushi.

Ojyagaike Lake is a man made lake which originally had the purpose of securing water for rice growing to the Kujuukuri region which at that time was not so blessed with food plains. If the sun continued to shine there would be draughts, if rain continued to pour there would be floods. These tragedies bought great hardship to the people living in the area, so the idea of constructing a lake was thought of. In the Keichokyu period (1604) the deputy Shimada Shigetsu ordered the construction of the lake. At that time the land was called “Onjya Valley”. It was a valley that could lure out fresh spring water.

The construction process was extremely difficult. The village in the area revolted against the authorities that were forcing them to relocate to another area. From the start of construction to the following year the area was struggling to produce rice crop. The villagers living there were offered an exemption from paying the annual rice tax.

A man named “Shitou Gyobu” killed the person in charge of the rice storage and opened it for everyone in the town. Times were hard and actions like this happened quite regularly. Never the less Shigetsuku continued to silently progress on the construction of the lake. He always worked with the future of the territory in his mind and heart. It wasn't before long neighboring territories people lent there hand and co-operated in helping to build the lake. Shigetsukus leadership abilities were growing day by day.

10 years had past since the beginning of construction (1614), It would also be Tokugawa Ieyasu`s first visit to Togane. Ojyagaike Lake had been completed and the surrounding villages finally had enough water to live. This was all thanks to Shigetsuku.

The north side of the lake is called “benten no hana” The small peninsular there has a gateway and shrine. Who does the shrine pay homage to? “Shimada Shigetsuku”. People call this shrine the god of water. In this year Shigetsuku quit his post of acting governor and with the passing of his father he went back to “Musashi Country” modern day Saitama Prefecture. He then changed his name to “Ihaku” and became a Buddhist priest.

There are many secret legends. Ojyagaike`s name is said to of originated from the area “Onjya Valley”. Near this land is also a place called “Snake Head”. It was said that Shigetsuku hesitated about the construction because of the expected difficulties and in his dreams the snake god would appear and cheer and urge him on. Another legend states that if you walk seven and a half times around the lake a huge white snake will show itself. Young local children of the area are often told this story.

There are many legends about Ojyagaike Lake. For example, there is a story about a young village girl falling in love with a government official. She became worried about her low status and flung herself into the lake. It was said that this girl then changed into a male snake and chased other government officials around the lake. Another folk story is a wife who flung herself into the lake after being heckled by her mother in law. Some say you can still hear the sound of the wife knitting from the bottom of the lake. The stories continue and the myths about the lake grow. A lake so full of hardship and stories.

## Enjoy all the Seasons

The Ojyagaike Lake is a very peaceful place.

In the spring you can see the cherry blossom, beginning of the summer we can enjoy wild flowers of wisteria and lotus, and in the autumn there are colorful leaves. In the winter there are many seasonal birds, for example, coot, tufted duck, smew, etc.



Full bloom of cherry blossom in OJYAGAIKE

There are no shops or stalls just pure nature. It doesn't matter if the weather is sunny, cloudy or raining, Ojyagaike Lake is a great place to relax and enjoy a quite time.

## Togane's first visitor was Ieyasu Tokugawa?



Ieyasu Tokugawa(left) & Nichizen Shonin

1614 January 9<sup>th</sup>, Tokugawa Ieyasu visited Togane for the first time. He loved to hunt with his eagle. In this period hunting was a form of training for the samurai. Women were forbidden to participate in any form of samurai activity, but in Tokugawa's party there were more than 20 ladies including concubines. For Ieyasu hunting was recreation. Tokugawa has left many stories in Togane. The Togane Palace was completed in 1613. Hakkakuko Lake was built for Togane palace's garden. There is a mandarin tree that was hand planted by Tokugawa Ieyasu himself. A cedar tree near Hiyoshi shrine which is also roughly 400 years old was ordered to be planted by Tokugawa

A new road "Onari" road, presently called "Sunaoshikendo" there is a bridge which still olds its traditional name "Mikaribashi". The town right next to Togane "Gumyo" received its name when Tokugawa passed through and asked where he was. 求- Search(Gu); 名-name (myo). At the beginning of Onari road there used to be a pine tree

with lanterns indicating the start point where Tokugawa used to walk. This point is now commemorated with a stone. Saifukuji temple was gifted 30 lots of rice harvests directly from Tokugawa. The head priest of the temple and Tokugawa's meeting was engraved as a memorial. Togane Palace was taken down in the Kanbun period. The land is now used by Togane High school, there are no remains left from the old palace. However, In Fukutawara a temple named "Honryu temple" used some of the Palace's materials to make a gate. Presently however the gate's materials seem to be different. It's a pity that so little remains from that period, but from what we know Ieyasu Tokugawa spent a fulfilling time in Togane. Incidentally, Tokugawa's favorite hunting game was the crane. In 7 nights and 8 days he caught 112 cranes. So Tokugawa's reason for visiting Togane could be put down as for his love of hunting.



Hakkakuko Lake night view with cherry blossom

## Is Masakado Still Alive?

The vengeful spirit of the hero. Was "Taira Masakado" born in Togane?



Myosenji Temple (the land of "Mikado")

On the east side of Togane there is land which is named "Mikado". This land is connected with the borders of "Kujukuri". Other areas around this piece of land have mysterious names like 宮(Miya) and 殿廻 (Tonomawari). Actually these lands were

formally meant for “The New Independent Country” for commemorating the birth of a Bandou Samurai. That samurais name was “Masakado”.

Taira Yoshimasa, Masakado`s father was informed by a fortune teller that he would be the father of a rebellious child. Taira Yoshimasa sent his pregnant wife into the sea on a small raft. The raft eventually ended up in Kujuukuri beach. Upon arriving at the beach Yoshimasas wife looked for a place to hide. While she was walking she suddenly realized she was going into labor. She was helped to a near by river by a stranger. The two of them took bamboo that were near by and weeded them together the bamboo was then placed on the surface of the water and covered by a white cloth. This would be the baby`s newborn bath. The birth was a success, but she was at a loss of what to do next. At that time a man named “Shichirobei” passed by. He took the new born baby and wrapped it in his sleeveless shirts. He took the child back to his house and took care of him. This child would then grow up to be “Masakado”. In the second year of the “Tengyo” period (939), Masakado led a group of men to Kanto. There he was able to fight and stop the control of the imperial court over the country. The hero Bandou samurai who proclaimed “I am the new Emperor” was born in Togane.

Masakado gave thanks to his town that raised him by changing his name to “Furukawa”. The bridge that over hangs Masakado`s birth place was called “Sanmaebashi”. The river is called “Jyumouji” river. These stories about the birth of Masakado are still left in Myousenji temple, the temple that was built by Masakado. The surrounding areas also have many connections with Masakado. There is still a custom for mothers and fathers to cradle their new born babies with sleeveless shirts. There were many “Furukawa” families in the land of "Mikado". "Furukawa" families would never visit Shinshoji temple in Narita City because this temple was built by the Imperial court to control Masakado`s army. Even though Masakado`s era is now more than 1000years behind us his name and his legend continue today.

Matsunogo Grape Yards



## Togane`s Flavor

Togane is noted for its “Matsunogo Grape”. There are eleven different grape

plantations in Togane and each city has their own unique flavor and taste. Some plantations offer BBQ's or their original wine. These plantations are close to Tokigane Lake and Hakkako Lake so we can enjoy our time there while eating the delicious food. The plantations usually open at the beginning of August and stay open until the end of September. We can eat "Himlod" or "Buffalo" in the beginning of August, and September we can enjoy "Bloom" the king of grape which is very popular to buy as gifts. There are also many other kinds of grapes to test your taste buds with. At some plantations you can buy pears, kiwi fruit and dragon fruit.

You also cannot forget the plum which is most popular to eat during the summer time. There are now 10 distribution outlets near the exit of the Chiba-Togane toll road. These outlets are now promoting themselves as a great market place to buy some of the best fruits in the area.

Near Ojyagaike Lake there is the famous "Ino Strawberry Farm" which uses a special method to raise their strawberries by using organic fertilizer and oxygen water. From January to May you can also enjoy strawberry picking. The amount of strawberry farms are always increasing in Togane so please find your favorite taste and treat every occasion like its your last.

Nishikawaen Tea shop



## Various other tastes of Togane

There are many other stalls in Togane selling traditional foods based on the mandarin tree that Tokugawa Ieyasu hand planted. Traditional tastes such as sweetened bean citrus jelly and desert mochi. Soybean paste "Kinzanji" is very popular souvenir too. Such rich deserts are recommended to eat while drinking green tea. Togane was originally famous for tea. The Imperial family "Arisugawa" granted the name "Tokaen" for the famous tea farm used to export tea leaves to America.

## Toganes Cherry Blossom

Chigo gyoretsu



In Togane we can enjoy various cherry blossom trees. The first Sakura trees to bloom are called the “Chinese Primrose”. These trees can be found at Shin-Chiba Golf Course entrance. The flowers are small and have a scarlet type color. The next cherry blossom tree is called the “Weeping Cherry” and can be found at Matsunogou and Ganjojijy temple. When in full bloom the tree looks like a huge pink cloud. A huge weeping cherry tree can be seen at “Hanmatsu Temple”, it is a beautiful site and should definitely be checked out. One week after the Weeping cherry tree reaches full bloom the Yoshino cherry tree and the Oshima cherry tree can be seen blossoming at Hakako Lake and Sannoudai.

Sakura watching at Hakkako Lake at night is a beautiful scene. Money raised by the Togane citizens has been used to build a new lighting system for Sakura viewing at night. The new system is called “Sakulight” and it brings out all the colors of the sakura at night. If you want to take a break from the hustle and bustle of the city and take a relaxing walk surrounded by nature and cherry blossoms take the walk from Maruyama Park through Izumigaike Lake and on to Togane`s Cultural Center. Pass down the hill and walk on to "Iwakawaike" Lake. If you feel energetic enough walk up to Sannoudai Park. From there you can relax amongst the cherry blossom trees and have an amazing view of Kujoyukuri.

Another type of cherry blossom can be seen in Yamada, it`s called the “Dieing Black Cherry”. It is a little darker than the usual cherry blossom but looks just as beautiful. Also if you are shopping in Togane and are close to Sunpia shopping center then you can walk out to the Chuo Park which is located on the east side of the station.

Recently this spot has become very popular for photographers taking pictures of cherry blossoms. Even though most cherry blossom trees have finished blooming by April you can still see the “Japanese Garden Cherry Trees” in bloom at Iwakawaike Lake. The final cherry blossom tree can be seen from Sanoudai Park. First walk to Sanoudai Shrine, there you can see light yellow turmeric cherries and pink Japanese Garden

Cherries. These colors mixed together have great contrast and blend well together.  
So, which is your favorite cherry tree?



chuo park



Saifukuji Temple