



The Story of Kijo-Momiji

Long time ago, there were an old couple. They prayed to the spirit in the heaven for giving them a baby. And they had a girl, who was named Kureha. She was so beautiful and clever. When she came of age, her family moved to Kyoto and opened a shop. Kureha changed her name to Momiji and started practicing the Koto (a Japanese harp).

One day, lord Minamoto-no-Tsunemoto and his wife heard Momiji's playing Koto and invited her to their home. Her beauty fascinated Tsunemoto. They began to love each other and Momiji got pregnant. She wanted his love all to herself and tried to kill his wife. However, it was not succeeded. She was arrested and banished from Kyoto to Minase in Shinano, Nagano prefecture.

When she arrived at Minase village, she told people that she was banished because Tsunemoto's wife felt jealous of her. People felt sorry and built a house for her. She was pleased and used her witchcraft for giving a cure to the sick people in the village. Still, she missed Kyoto so much and she named neighbor villages as same as Kyoto, such as Higashikyō, Nishikyō, Nijo and Sanjo.

Momiji had a baby boy and she wanted her son to see Tsunemoto. In order to make money for going back to Kyoto, she robbed and took money for many villages by force. Her criminal act came to the Emperor's notice. The Emperor gave a command and let General Taira-no-Koremochi attack her.

The war began. However, because of Momiji's witchcraft, Koremochi's army were made themselves powerless. Koremochi prayed to the god for help and was given a sword. The sword made her magical power ineffective. She got on a cloud and running away. Koremochi released the sword from a bow. It stuck in her chest and she died. She was 33 years old. It was a very beautiful day in autumn.

After that, people began to call this village "Kinasa", which means a village without evil spirit.

(from a folktale in Kinasa)

