

# Japan's 'killing stone' splits in two, releasing superstitions amid the sulphur springs

Legend has it there is an evil spirit trapped in the Sessho-seki stone, so what happens now that the stone is broken?

Predictions of dark forces being unleashed by an evil vixen hung over social media in [Japan](#) on Monday after a famous volcanic rock said to kill anyone who comes into contact with it was found split in two.

According to the [mythology](#) surrounding the *Sessho-seki*, or killing stone, the object contains the transformed corpse of Tamamo-no-Mae, a beautiful woman who had been part of a secret plot hatched by a feudal warlord to kill Emperor Toba, who reigned from 1107-1123.

Legend has it that her true identity was an evil nine-tailed fox whose spirit is embedded in the hunk of lava, located in an area of Tochigi prefecture, near Tokyo, famous for its sulphurous hot springs.

Its separation into two roughly equal parts, believed to have occurred within the past few days, has spooked online users who noted that, according to folklore, the stone continually spews poisonous gas – hence its name.

While the stone was said to have been destroyed, and its spirit exorcised by a Buddhist monk who scattered its pieces across [Japan](#), many Japanese prefer to believe that its home is on the slopes of Mount Nasu.

Visitors to the area, a popular sightseeing spot, recoiled in horror at the weekend after witnesses posted photos of the fractured stone, a length of rope that had been secured around its circumference lying on the ground.

“I feel like I’ve seen something that shouldn’t be seen,” one Twitter user [said](#) in a post that has attracted almost 170,000 likes.

While others speculated that the demon spirit of Tamamo-no-Mae had been resurrected after almost 1,000 years, local media said cracks had appeared in the rock several years ago, possibly allowing rainwater to seep inside and weaken its structure.

The stone, which was registered as a local historical site in 1957, was mentioned in Matsuo Basho’s seminal work *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*, and has inspired a Noh play, a novel and an anime film.

Masaharu Sugawara, the head of a local volunteer guide group, told the *Yomiuri Shimbun* it was a “shame” the stone had split because it was a symbol of the area, but agreed that nature had simply taken its course.

Local and national government officials will meet to discuss the stone’s fate, according to the *Shimotsuke Shimbun*. The newspaper quoted a Nasu tourism official as saying he would like to see the *Sessho-seki* restored to its original form – presumably with its demonic inhabitant sealed within.

