



Akamono 赤物

Akamono is one of many traditional toys that have been produced in Konosu over the past 250 years.

In 2011 it was the first traditional toy in Japan to be designated as a national significant intangible folklore property.

“Akamono” literally means “things in red”. All the products are colored red, because people in the old days believed the color red had the power to protect children from evil forces, especially ones which caused smallpox.

In those days parents were extremely fearful of the disease because it was often fatal for babies. And even if the child recovered, they usually suffered terrible marks all over their bodies. So parents put red Amamono products close to their children to act as lucky charms.

You might see Japanese torii (Shinto gateway) also painted in red. This tradition started after many smallpox outbreaks in the 17th century.

Currently, Akamono makers produce many kinds of lucky charms colored red, such as “Darma dolls” “Lion masks” and “Twelve animals from the Chinese zodiac”. Today, people buy these lucky charms for special occasions like New Year's celebrations.