

# Report: ceremony to drive out evil spirits in Nara~In the case of Kofukuji-temple 興福寺 and Horyuji-temple 法興寺

## about two famous temples

□In Japan, there is a ceremony called “Tsuina-shiki つかいしき” or “Oni-yarai 鬼払い”. This is the ceremony to drive out evil spirits. In many cases, it is performed by throwing to send ogres away. People had originally performed this ceremony at the end of the year, it gradually changed to a day “Setsubun”. Setsubun’s “Setsu” means seasons, and “bun” means separate in Japanese, so a day of Setsubu originally came four times in a year. But today, “Setsubun” is the beginning of spring. It is on February 3rd. On this day, we can see many ceremonies all over Japan. In these events, ogres often appear. People throw beans at ogres to drive out evil spirits, shouting “in with fortune! out the demon!”. This time, I will introduce two temples’ ceremonies of Setsubun in Nara. These are “Kofukuji-temple 興福寺”and “Horyuji-temple 法興寺”.



□These temple are the most famous sightseeing sots and represent the old building of Nara. Of you open some guide books about Japan, you will see these names by all means. These two temples seem to similar, but their characteristics are considerably different.



## Kofukuji-temple



## Horyuji-temple

The Kofukuji-temple was built over 1,300 years ago by the Fujiwara clan. The Fujiwara clan had monopolized an aide of the Emperor from generation to generation, and had continued ruling this country for 1,000 years. This temple was to protect the Fujiwara clan. So, it had very large territory and vast property for a long time. They sometimes refused the demands of the government. KOfukuji-temple is such a temple.

On the other hand, Horyuji-temple is about 100 years older than Kofukuji-temple. The Buddhism is ardent, without a Buddhist transmission interval, it was built for the intention of believing in "Shotoku-taishi" (he was a cousin of the Emperor and assisted her. At that time, the Emperor was a woman). Even if there was a fire afterwards, it was reconstructed by stubborn faith and continued up to the present day. Above all, it's story Five pagoda is said to be the world's oldest wooden building.

□These temples each have the ceremony of “Tsuinashiki”, that styles are quite different. One is flamboyant and noisy, the other is calm and quiet. I have seen both, Kofukuji-temple in 2018, Horyuji-temple in 2020. I will report about these based on those, but each program is the same year.

## **Kofukuji-temple's case**

□The ceremony starts at 6:00 pm every year.

□Kofukuji-temple is located near Near Nara station. It takes five minutes from Kintetsu Nara 近鉄奈良 station (20 minutes from JR Nara station). Nara is about one hour from Kyoto by train. If you want to watch the ceremony from start to finish , you must arrive at least one hour before at least. In my case, when I arrived at 5:00, there were already approximately 3 lines of people nearby the center, and approximately one line on right and left. Many people came early because they wanted to get lucky beans or rice cakes. At the end of the ceremony, the chosen people threw many beans and ricecakes with lucky numbers. If you are lucky, you can get a ticket for the gorgeous hotel and so on. When you arrive in front of main hall, you get a ticket for entrance into the area partitioned ropes. An area is provided for the prevention of danger. The main hall is big. If you are behind ropes, you can watch the ceremony.





□When it is 6 o'clock, priests entered the hall and the ceremony started. However, the audience only heard the voices of the sutra-chanting. A person came out before long and explained the flow of the event. He made the audience laugh using witty talk. H said, for example, "some people are laud to cheer up ogres, but don't cheer for ogres please. You will

support a bad in yourself because ogres represent evil spirits. The audience laughed. Yes, he was right.







□At 7:00, three ogres got on the stage holding long sticks. It seemed their mask were rather new looking. They walked around the stage crying loudly and sometimes threatened the audience with by leaning over the banister.



□It was a very attractive scene of ogres rushing wildly against the backdrop of the Five Story Pagoda.





□They sat down when they acted violently and they were tired. It was here, a commentary explained without interval. "They required some liquor." Three people carried sake bottles. The ogres drank with joy, and walked around the stage again.







□This time, a commentator talked to the audience to call a “Bishamonten □□□□”. And people joined in, so he got on the stage. Bishamonten is a deity of battle who protects Buddha. He wears armor and holds a long sword.







□On the stage, the fight began with Bishamonten and the ogres.





□I felt it was like a stunt show for adults. They seemed like children's popular characters on TV. Bishamonten was overwhelmingly strong. If the ogres attacked all at once, Bishamonten pushed back them lightly. Still the ogres challenged to fight many times without being discouraged. I understood the feeling that people wanted to cheer up the



ogres in this situation.



**Ending (Daikokuten) of Kofukuji-**

# temple's ceremony

□After about 10 minutes, the ogres gave up finally and they prostrated themselves before Bishamonten. So, Bishamonten drove them away and they left.



□Then, Daikokuten □□□ (he is a deity giving fortune) got on

the stage. He held a mallet. People know this mallet will bring fortune good. So, the audience called for him to give a fortune. Daikokuten walk around the stage, he swang a mallet everywhere to give a fortune.

□After Daikokuten left, people began to throw-beans at the stage. These people were born in a year with the same sign of the Chinese zodiac as the current year\*.After this portion, you can choose to stay or leave. Me ? I left quickly.

□This is all of the state of the ceremony at Kofukuji-temple.

\*The twelve zodiac signs of Chinese astrology make a circuit by 12 years. The 12 zodiac signs are represented by 12 animals. The order is as follows, the Rat, the Ox, the Tiger, the Rabbit, the Dragon, the Snake, the Horse, the Ram, the Monkey, the Rooster, the Dog, and the Boar. 2020 is the year of the Rat.

□□□□This article continues with Part 2 Horyuji-temple case