

Report: ~ceremony to drive out evil sprits in Nara~In the case of Kofukuji-temple and Horyuji-temple Part 2

■■■Horyuji-temple 's case

2. Horyuji-temple's case

Introduction

□Horyuji-temple is in a slightly remote place from the center of Nara. The nearest station is “Horyuji station” (JR line). It takes about 10 minutes from Nara by train. From Osaka, it takes about one hour. But, unfortunately, this station is far away from the temple (about 1.5 kilometers. It takes eight minutes by bus, over 20 minutes on foot), besides, the bus does not run after about 5 pm. The event begins at 7:30 pm every year. If you want to watch only this event, you should use the next station “Ouji” and you should take a bus.



Horyuji station



around the temple

□In this season, when it passes 5:00 pm, the sun goes down. When you arrive at this temple, you will stand in deep darkness without many people. There are several Buddhist monasteries and long wall.

□When I arrived there past 6:30, I saw that scene. I felt

lonely, I thought I had better return. Because I guessed that probably the ceremony would not to be performed for some reason that day. When I decided to return, I saw that several people came there. They seemed a family. So, I turned back and walked little and then several more people came in sight. They seemed to be waiting for somebody. It seemed there was a misunderstanding. This temple looked very quiet. The state was greatly different from Kofukuji-temple. I presumed the reason there was no ceremony. Of course, nobody got gifts. Perhaps this temple in a remote place. I didn't know whether this was right or not.





Ogres and Bishamonten come out

□The event was held in front of “Seien-do hall □□□”. This hall is on the left side of the main hall and Five Storeyed Pagoda.
□After 7:00, it was not crowded. A fence was built sorounding the hall, people had been waiting in front of it. Just before it start, people finally gathered. There were fewer it than I expected. At 7:30 pm, it started.





Ogre



Bishamonten

□Three ogres and Bishamonten got on the stage. This style was the same as Kofukuji-temple's. A defferent is that the ogres and Bishamonten did not fight each other. Basically, nothing much happened. Ogres came out one by one from the right side of the hall and took torches. An ogre swung the torch and it powerfully to the fence. He did this three times. The next ogre did the same action.







□After the third ogre, Bishamonten came on a stage, he stuck a long sword out powerfully severasl times, shouting “Yah, Yah, Yah”. This action meant throw out evil spirits. They went around 3 times.





□When the sparks spread, people cheered. Sometimes, a torch

flew over the fence. However, generally it was silent without the voices of cheering and Bishamonten. No announce, no commentary, no noise. There was only some cheering and the sound of fire sparking.

□Before 8:00, the event was over. As soon as the ogres and Bishamonten left, several fireman got on stage.







□When I turned back on my way to the gate, only the Five Storeyed Pagoda soared high in the soundless night like an illusion.

Report: ceremony to drive out evil spirits in Nara~In the case of Kofukuji-temple □□□ and Horyuji-temple □□□

about two famous temples

□In Japan, there is a ceremony called “Tsuina-shiki □□□” or “Oni-yarai □□□□”. 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 □□□”and “Horyuji-temple □□□”.



□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 興福寺



Horyuji-temple 法興寺

□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.

□□n 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 orher 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 □□□□ 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 cas, 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

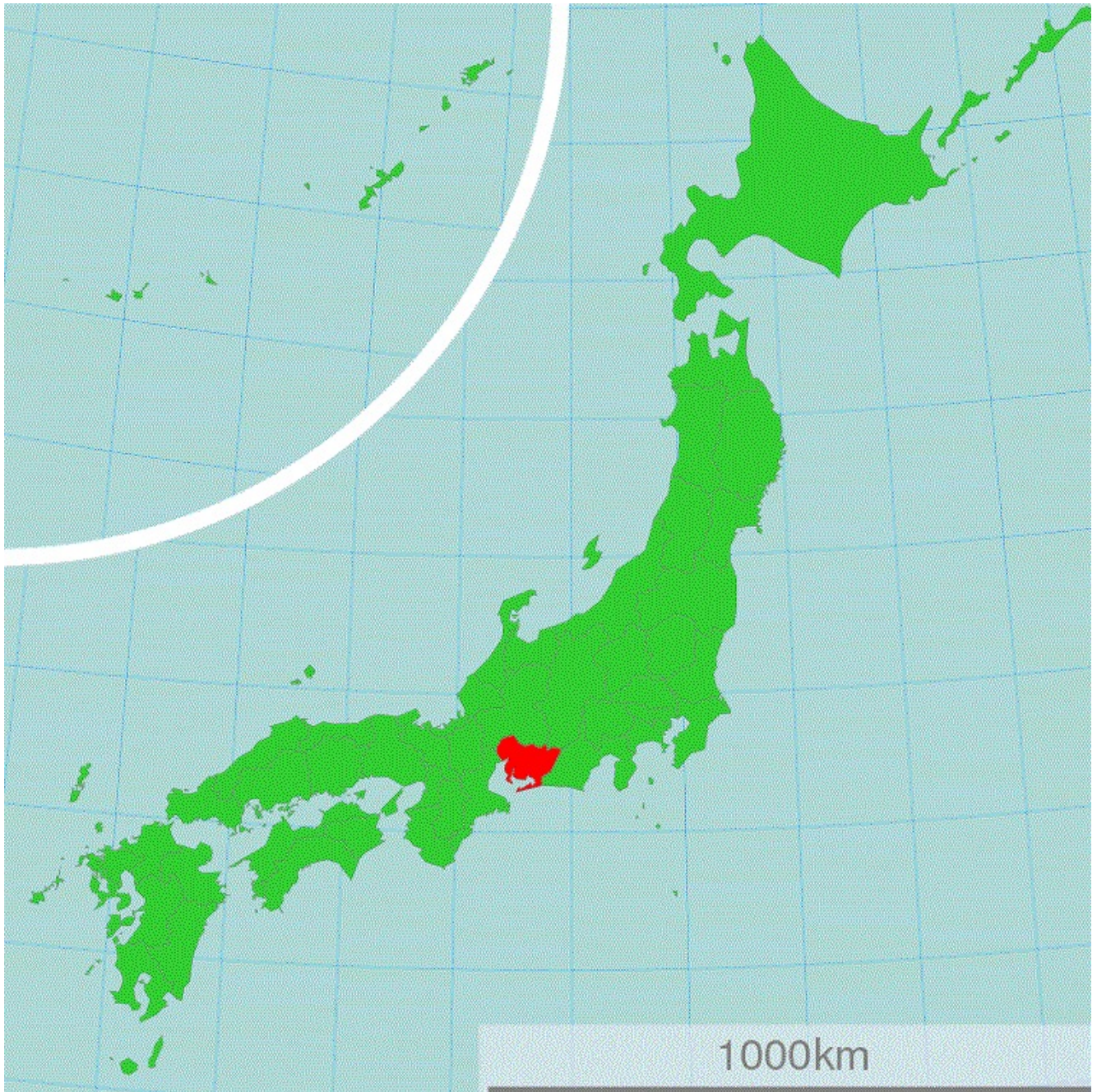
Report: ~It is just 10 minutes but, those 10 minutes will remain in the memory forever~Ogre fire festival in TakizANJI -temple □□□□□□□□



Date; the nearest Saturday to the old calendar is New Year holiday of the 7th of January (about 1 month later than the present calendar, 15th February 2020)

Location; Takizan town komo 107, Okazaki city, Aichi prefecture

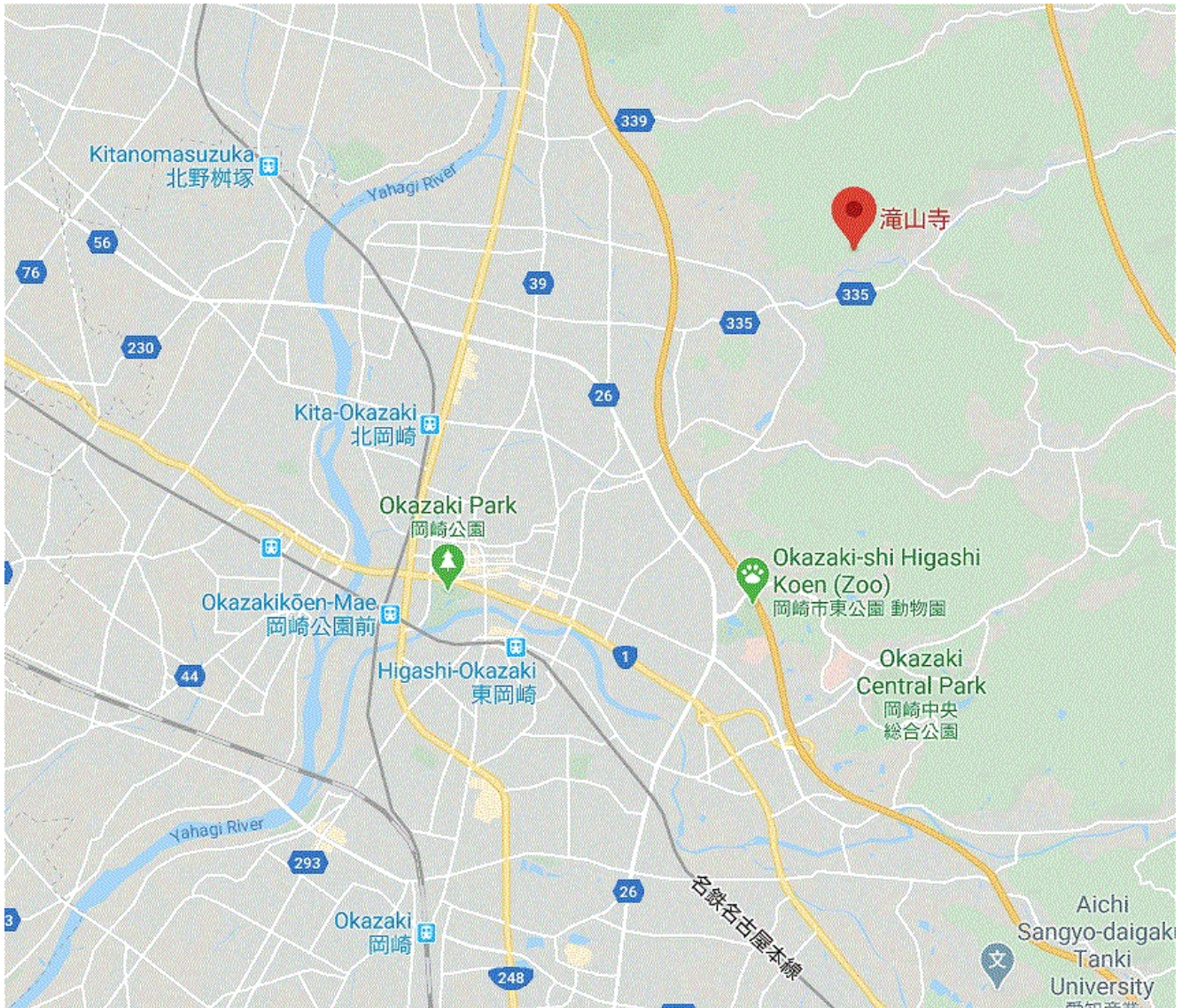
Access; about 30 minutes by bus from Higashi Okazaki station (Meitetsu line). Higashi Okazaki is about 45 minutes by train from Nagoya



Aichi prefecture



Okazaki city



Takizansi-temple (red point)

Introduction

□This time, an event we introduce is “Takizansi no oni matsuri” (Ogres fire festival in Takizansi-temple). It is held in Aichi prefecture. The climax of three ogres emerging around fire is really awesome. This event starats at 4:00 pm, but the time the ogres emerge is at the very end only 10 minutes before the end. It will be at about 7:45 pm. So, you must wait for 2 to 3 hours, if you see it from front. But, lot of people still go. They say it’s worth waiting for long time.



Higashi Okazaki station



Okazaki is the place first Shogun of Edo shognate was born

□I went there 2020, so I write this article based on that time. But, the flow of the festival is the same every year.

□On the day, the bus leaves every 30 minutes from Higashi Okazaki (□□□) station (Meitetsu line). If you go by car, there is a park in a place little far from the temple . A shuttle

bus goes from there.

□When I arrived there at 5:00 pm. You get off a bus, you go up the long stairs.





several street stands open



long stairs

at the temple



The main hall (Honden 本堂)



left side



front



right side

□You see a big main hall in front when you finish going up the last stairs. The beam of the roof greatly protrudes from main hall. The roof which covers the stage is large and imposing. People had already lined in three rows around the main hall (Honden) and camera tripods were lined, too. I guess they had waited from around noon.

□There are several big barrels filled with water to the beam and in front of th main hall, and the firefighting team stands by, too.

□On the left of me, there is another 2 story building, it is already full of guests. They are visitors who reserved special dishes (\4,000 as of 2020). 2 big torches which are set at the entrance are waiting to be lit to signal the start. In an average year, they say that it smows, that day was comparatively warm.



big barrels



Junininshu 〇〇〇〇

〇I will write mostly about the climax, but I'll example the flow for the time being. If you want to Jump to the climax, scroll to the end, please.

〇This temple was built in 686 AD. At the end of the 12th C, the temple had accepted it's faith from Minamoto-no Yoritomo who established his Shogunate at Kamakura, so this temple ushered in the golden age. Following a decline from 15 C~16 C, it was revived by the protection of the Tokugawa (Shogun of Edo shogunate 17 C~19 C) and continues up to the present day.

〇People who are called "Junininshu 〇〇〇〇(12 people) manage the whole festival. They are the people who inherit this role from generation to generation, And a person who is called "Taiyaku (it means general manager) gives instructions.



Taiyaku 〇〇



a chief priest

□At 4:30 pm, they beat Taiko (Japanese drum), and at 5:30 pm, the chief priest enters the temple, Buddhist memorial service begins.

It usually gets dark at around this time.

□Juninin-shu group starts to go around the temple for the purpose of purging noxious vapors.





3 people as roll of the ogres

Meanwhile, a program host introduces the 3 people, 2 adults and 1 child, who play the leading parts of the ogres. They must purify themselves for 1 week. They can't eat any meat, and can't accept help from women. So, fathers offer their dishes to the children.

□In this festival, 3 ogres emerge. They are called “mask of grandfather”, “mask of grandmother”, and “mask of grandson”. Why are there not “mask of father” and “mask of mother” ? There is a mysterious legend. Once upon a time, two priests visited this temple and they said “Shall we wear masks ?”. They wore masks without purifying themselves. They could not take off the masks and they had just died. People who felt pity kindly buried them. A grave remains now in this temple, so the group goes to the place to pray.



□At 6:30 pm, people throw beans and rice cakes for good

fortune.

□At 7:00 pm, two young people get on the stage and wield long swords, “Naginata □□” for purging noxious vapors in the east and west. After this performance, two of the Juninin-shu perform a play of imitation of farming. They use words from the Kamakura period which even few modern Japanese can understand.



Juninin-shu sing a song



fire and ogres~climax of the ceremony

□Finally they sing a song. By this time, the precincts would be overflowing and crowded with people. After they get off the stage, a young person holding a long sword gets on the stage again. He wields it, and in the end, he swirls it around and slams it down against the floor, making great noise. This abruptly signals the start of the main event.



□ Many people holding a big torch (about 2.5 meters long) with fire emerge. They shout in a loud voice “Wah, Wah, Wah !”. Fire alarm bells resound intensely. They wore a white towel covering their heads and cheeks and were dressed in all white. A fire blazed as if it reaches the roof. Sounds of fire alarm bell gave the audience great surprise making them feel uneasy at first, but later shout for joy. The area is instantly thrown into a commotion. The scene is amazing and fantastic.

□ They emerge from the right side and enter the left side of the main hall. The ogres still do not emerge. From the next lap, the ogres finally appear.



Grandfather ogre



Grandmother ogre

□At first, the grandfather ogre, second, followed by grandmother ogre and at last, the grandson emerges.



grandson ogre



□Ogres siddled along between a big fire. Only grandson walks on the handrail held by people beside both side. There are about 30 torches is almost like a fire. This building is an important cultural property, so I was afraid of it burning down. But the people almost seemed as if they did not care about that, and they swung the torch up and down.



□sparks were scatterd intently, the fire blazed mor and more.

Halfway during the lap, the grandson ogre was held high at the corners and at the front.



□He totally looked like king of demons. But these ogres are not demons. They held a big rice cake in their hands, because they are ogres giving fortune to people. And a rice cake is a symbol of New Year's fortune.







□They went around the hall 3 times and it suddenly finished.

□Time goes by frantically.



□They were left stupefied for a while, and before long they returned to reality. and begin getting ready to go back home.

□There is an open space on the way out as the audience go down stairs where buses waited for them. The bus to the station from next line to the row of buses going to the parking lots. The buses depart in order as soon as it become full.

□I think that this event is worth going despite the long waiting time. The experience of the ogres fire festival at TakizANJI-temple, Lasts only 10 minutes but will remain our memories forever.