

Report: Would you mind spending a calm day at a place away from urban noise ? ~4 kaguras in Kanto area in spring~ vol.1

□Today, I'll introduce 4 kaguras which is held in the most beautiful season of blossoming cherries within 2 hours from Tokyo introduce.

introduce four kaguras (Japanese traditional folk performing art) in cherry blossoms blooming season

□If you ask some Japanese which season is the best to visit, most people will answer that it is for the blooming cherry blossoms.

□In this season, cherry blossoms begin to cover Japan starting from the south region and moving up north for two months. The blossoming status in each region is reported on TV or radio. Many people go out, dressed a new in spring clothes upon hearing such.

□The mountains, the rivers, the towns all views change from dark color to pale pink.



a shrine with cherry blossoms in Kamakura



cherry blossoms cover Tokyo

□Through out history, people have loved cherry blossoms. One famous poet composed the poem (waka □□) which reads “Hopefully, I will die under the blossoms in the spring time.” And another poet said;
 “If it were not for/ cherry blossoms in the world/ How peaceful and calm/ The heart in spring could be.”
 □confer ;

<http://dharmaechoes.blogspot.com/2010/04/heart-in-spring.html>

□The cherry trees has had strong influence on Japanese lifestyles. The cherry trees represent, so to speak, Japanese culture itself. In this season, if you see traditional kagura □□, you can grasp the whole Japanese culture in one day.

□The following 4 kaguras will be taken up here today. Every kagura is held in April.

□**Fuji sengen shrine Daidai Kagura** on the 1st Fujioka city, Gunma prefecture

□**Iidama shrine Daidai Kagura** on the 2nd Maebashi city, Gunma prefecture

□**Yamanashi oka shrine Daidai Kagura** on the 4th Fuefuki city, Yamanashi prefecture

□**Kamiyamakawa Daidai Kagura** on the 5th Yuki city, Ibaraki prefecture

□I guess that each kagura is worth watching. You can feel Japanese culture, besides you can get a lot of good luck fortune. This is not metaphor. Of course, you can get a mystical feeling in a shrine. Moreover, you can get many “good luck” items. This is why “mochimaki” is held while kagura’s at all these shrines. What is “mochimaki” ? Please read the following text if you wish know more about it.



Modoki (Hyottoko) and Sarutahiko

□These two people seem ready to guide you, this time. Then, could you two introduce yourselves, please ?

Sarutahiko is my name, from Ohmiya sumiyoshi kagura in Sakado city, Saitama prefecture. And let me tell you first of all , I am not human being, I am a deity, OK?

My name is Modoki, sometimes I am called Hyottoko. I am often called the comic or clown in festival.

□Well, let's go to watch kagura with them.

1. Fuji-sengen shrine Daidai kagura

Date; 1st, April

Location; Fujioka town 1152, Fujioka city, Gunma prefecture

Access; 10-minutes walk from Fujioka 駅 (JR line), To get to Fujioka from Tokyo, you take Ueno-Tokyo line (JR line, bound for Takasaki), and change at Kurakano 駅 for Hachiko line 駅. It takes about 2 hours.



Gunma prefecture



from Tokyo to the shrine

□*This article is written based on the experience when the writer visited the place in 2016. The program procedures are basically the every year.



Fujioka station





How beautiful the cherry trees are!

There are few cherry blossoms trees in the precinct Shinto shrine..

Why?

People often plant evergreen trees because these are thought to live forever just like deities. But, in this shrine, the entrance area has many cherry blossoms, the beauty of which delights visitors.

So I guess the cherry trees were thought superior to faith?



the view from the Hon-den

First half



the Hon-den

□The precinct is wide. Main hall (Hon-den 本殿) is at the center. This building is on a hill which overlooks the view of whole precinct. This hill is old grave. This kagura-den 神楽殿 (hall for playing kagura) is right in front of the main hall. This building has two stories, the stage is on the second floor. You can watch from under the hall or from the main hall. which is a little away.

□The kagura starts at **11:30** am on schedule.

Quite a few people gathered more than I expected. Especially the number of children stood out.

I guess the reason is because they are in spring holiday.

Spring holiday? We, all deities, work without holiday.





□First program is “**Omoikane**”. The player white cloth dances

alone, holding a bell and staff of pleased paper stream.

What is the thing the player holds?

This is “Gohei (paper streamer)”, which Shinto priests often use at ceremonies. We can often see this from. They that the deity lodges in these things temporally.

And players take the same action at four corners. Why?

It means that it is significant to appease the earth. The feature of this kagura is very ritual and hardly any dramatic elements. So, players sometimes turn back to the audience because they play not the audience but for the deity.

I’m sorry to say there is no part for me in this scene.

□Second program is “**two Koyanes**”. Two players are on the stage. They were white and black mask of old men. They dance bisymmetrically with paper streamer and bells, too.







How are programs named?

The names of programs are named on each deity. For example, "Koyane" is named after the called "Ameno Koyane".

□Third program is "**three deities of Sumiyoshi**". Three players appear on the stage who each wear cloth of different colors, white and yellow. They dance symmetrically with great skill amis falling of paper of pale pink prtals.



Look at that. I think that you can feel fundamental elements

of Japanese culture. Cherry blossoms falling and watching kagura. It is hard to get such feeling from another event.

I see.

□Every program is short which lasts within 10~15 minutes.

□Toward the end of this program, people gather around the kagura-den.

More people have gathered. Do they love this program?

No. They are human as well as you.

□Many people appeared on the stage, and began to throw many things.



What is going to be?

This is “mochinage” ceremony. “Mochi” means originally Japanese rice cake. But, recently, “mochi” changed to various other things, like sweets. This is a congratulation present. Of course, all are free. Most of the audience gather to get

this present. Anybody can get this. There is no limit numbers.
You can get many sweets by yourself.

That's good.

But what you must not forget is that these are presents of
fortune for everybody. Not only for you? OK?

I see, I see.





□After the ceremony of mochinage, the program starts again.

□Next program is “**Miko mai**”. “Miko” is a shrine maiden consecrated to deity. Miko-mai is a type of dance performed by “miko”. The way to dance is different in every region. Here, four elementary school girls are performing. This is shorter than other programs which lasts within 5 minutes.

□“**Sarutahiko**”. One player wears red and long-high nose mask and holds a bell and long sword in his hands.



Oh, he is my colleague. We are proud guides for our fellows

deities. (Reference/Japanese mythorogy)

He looks more powerful and stronger than you.

Darm it. Your eyes are kortholes.





□ "Miko-dance" again.





□ **"Iwatobiraki"** → please refer to "Reference" → "Japanese mythology"

□ One player wears black clothes red "hakama" and holds gold folding fan. "Hakama" is Japanese skirt for formal wear. He is deity named "Tajikarao 太玉命". He plays the role of removing "Iwato". In this kagura, a blackboard represent it. He takes it off, exposing a little girl traditional wear of "miko". She represents "Amaterasu".



□After the first player leaves, “Miko-mai” plays again. And

two players wearing black and white clothes and mask of old man bisymmetrically. At last, the first player "Tajikarao" appears again.





□At last, mochinage ceremony is held again, and there is a lunch break. It is about 20 minutes.

Second half

Hey, get up. Kagura started again.

?? Oh, I seemed to have dozed off without realizing. Spring weather makes us sleepy.

Stop being so idle and get to work !



□ "A sword dance" One player has a mask of surprising and long

hair. He walks powerfully swinging a sword.

His action signifies cutting evil. We can usually see the action in kagura.

You know so well.

That's because I am a deity !



"Miko-dance" one player.

It's beautiful !

It looks like spring of cherry blossoms come together to make one female figure.

You sometimes are so poetic despite your appearance, aren't you?

Hey, don't judge people by appearance.



□"Ryujin (deity of dragon)"

□Mochinage again.





□"Hachiman" This is a deity of battle and war. He drive out

evil spirits to shoot a bow.



Sago-mai

After "Sagomai" and "miko-mai", 15 minutes intermission



Miko-mai

It is getting cool. I feel the cold wind.

Three more programs. Be patient.

Aren't you feel cold?

Noway, I am a deity.





□"Hakuhatsu (deity with white hair)"



I guess that this program is to wish for longevity. He has long white hair and wears mask of old man.



□"Ebisu"

I like this program.

Why?

He is fishing. And this program is often the sign of mochinage voming.

You are so greedy !

But, it os one of the most popular programs from old times.
Hey, mochi is falling down again.

□Ebisu finally caught a sea bream as expected and got off.
□Finally, people were throwing sweets splendidly and all programs ended. It was **5 pm**.



Ending



This kagura went on schedule. I think it is rare.

Yes, I hardly see something like this.

I am pleased to get many sweets. Let's visit here again.

□to be continue to vol. 2