

# Report: Shall we watch a sketch comedy in Kyoto?

## ~Senbon Enma-do Dai Nenbutsu Kyogen

This time, we will go to Kyoto. One of the most popular cities in Japan. The No.1 sightseeing place that most tourists from other countries want to go to. I guess Kyoto is a kind of symbol of old traditional Japan. There are many tourist spots, temples, shrines, castles and old streets. Today we'll talk about another special sight. This sight introduces traditional folk performing arts with masked characters.

There are three sketch comedies with masked characters, named "Nenbutsu Kyogen". "Mibu Kyogen", "Saga Nebutsu Kyogen" and "Senbon Enma-do Nenbutsu Kyogen". "Kyogen" is performed in the intermission of Noh performances. In contrast to Noh, they tend to be comedic. It means just a play, too. And "Nenbutsu" is a Buddhist invocation. So, "Nenbutsu Kyogen" is a play in which stories are based on the daily lives of average people to propagate Buddhism. Two of these, "Mibu Kyogen" and "Saga Kyogen" are pantomime, but only "Senbon Enma-do Kyogen" has dialogue.

### \*Reference

#### Mibu Kyogen

**Date:** 3rd February, 29th April~5th May, 3 days around 10th October

**Location:** Mibudera-temple

refer→<https://www.discoverkyoto.com/event-calendar/may/mibu-kyogen-mibu-dera/> discover Kyoto

#### Saga nenbutsu Kyogen

**Date:** 1st Sunday & 2nd Saturday & Sunday April, The Sunday nearest 26th October

**Location:** Seiryoji-temple

refer→<http://www.greentour-kyoto.net/events/saga-kyogen/> green tour Kyoto

**Senbon Enma-do Kyogen** 千本天竺地獄

**Date:** 3rd February & 1st~4th May

**Location:** Senbon Enma-do (another name, Injoji-temple)

refer→<https://kansaifinder.com/event/senbon-enma-do-nenbutsu-kyogen/> Kansai Finder

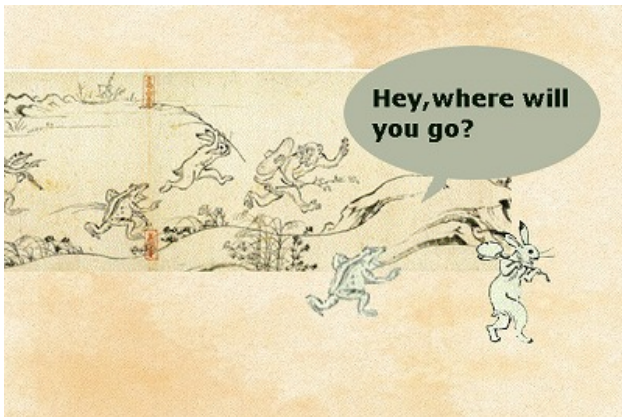
## First, let to introduce today's guide

Now, I'll call today's guides. They are the most popular characters in Japanese National artwork treasures.



a part of National treasure “Chojyu-jinbutsu-giga”

They seem to have come.



Hi, I'm a rabbit.

And I'm a frog. But, why have we come here today?

To guide “Senbon Enma-do kyogen”.

Why?

Because we are born in Kyoto. Oh, we should introduce

ourselves before we guide people. We are characters appearing in “Choju-jinbutsu-giga”. “Choju” means birds and animals. “Jinbutsu” means people. And “Giga” means “caricature” in Japanese. It has nothing to do with the capacity of a hard disk, “gigabyte”.

I didn't know that at all.

Didn't you know even though you are the important character? Oh,well. Anyway I'll teach you, listen to me carefully. This is a picture roll which was painted only Sumi (Chinese calligraphy ink) without colors. It is said that this roll was painted about 800 years ago and the painter was Toba-sojo”. But that hasn't been investigated in detail. The contents are caricatures. Especially, in the first volume, many animals are active like humans. People say this is the beginning of Japanese cartoons (Manga). So, this roll is the most popular in Japanese National art treasures. The Kozanji-temple in Kyoto stores it. So, we know most about Kyoto's history from 800 years ago. Now, let's go to Senbon Enma-do.

## □□Now, let's go to the venue

\*This article is written based on writer's experience at 4th, May, in 2018 and a booklet.



the Kamo river



the center of Kyoto city

There is the Kamo river. It always makes me feel good.

The center of the city is always crowded lately. Especially this week (from the end of April to the first of May) has consecutive holidays in Japan. There are many Japanese in addition many tourists from other countries. Hurry up. I can't stand here.

Won't you go to any sightseeing places? Kinkakuji-temple, Kiyomizu-temple, or Fushimi Inari shrine.

Where have you been? Are you a tourist? We have lived in this city for 800 years.

I think this is some nice occasion...





the entrance of the temple



the venue

This is the Injoji-temple, and another name is Senbon Enma-do.

What are we going to do? We have no money.

Don't worry. It's free.

Free? Sounds good. A little boy and a little girl are walking around people. What are they doing?

They are selling a description booklet for \ 500 (as of 2018).

I want one.

I'll buy you one.

Oh, why do you have money? Why did you pay \1,000?

The reason why I payed more than \ 500 is to make a donation. I want to support them. Oh, it's six pm. The first program will begin tonight.

This booklet has a description in English, too.

# “Dojoji-temple”



I am a monk of this temple. I shall hold a memorial service with a bell. So, I tell my apprentice monks to carry a bell here. Ichiro-bo and Dabutsu-bo, come here. Are you here?

Here we are.

Here we are. This bell is too heavy.

I'm pleased that you came so quickly. I have not held a memorial service with a bell for long time. So, I want to hold the ceremony. Then, there is something important I have to tell you. Women can't come here. Do you understand?

Yes, my master.



**Dabutsu-bo**



**Ichiro-bo**

Why did the master tell us that we must never invite any women?

I don't know. But we must be obedient to my master.



silence



**Shirabyoshi (dancer)**

Is anyone home?







Hey, Dabutsu-bo, get up. This is no time for sleeping. There is someone behind the door. Go check quickly.

Who will come at such a time? May I ask your name?

Sorry for contacting you at this late hour. I am a shirabyoshi dancer and I live near. I have heard a memorial service with a bell. I was wondering if it would be possible for you to dance for a bell?







Oh, what should I do? Hey, dear Ichiro-bo.

You are noisy. What happened?

There is a shiradofu at the door!

Shiradoufu? What?

Do you happen to know shiradofu? It's a dancer.

Stupid. If you said that, it would be a shrabyoshi.

Oh, my mistake. That is shrabyoshi. She is there.

No. We can't invite any women.

But have you met a living Amida?\*( like an angel in a sense)

Mmm...If you insist. It would be fine if dancing was all, but we have to return her as soon as possible after dancing.



**She began to dance**



**and beautiful sounds**





Oh, my gosh! What happened?

Oh, no. The bell has fallen down. Where has she gone? We have a situation! Go for Shisho-bo.





I thought so. The reason why I told you not to invite any women is that this bell is cursed by an ogre. Probably, The woman is an incarnation of an ogre. I shall break the spell.



Wow! An ogre really has appeared.

Help me Buddha!

An ogre! Drive it away!



Oh,no! An ogre has come here. Help me!





Help me!

Go away! Namu, Buddha.

Please Buddha! Namu Buddha! Namu ami dabutsu...

I won't let you go. Yarumaizo! Yarumaizo!

**“Botan-jishi” (Peony Lion)**



I am a Daimyo (Lord) living around here. Recently, I am in trouble because a Shishi (Chinese lion) has damaged the peonies in my garden. So, I will call my retainer, Taro-kaja and make him crush the Shishi. Are you here?

I am here.

I'm pleased that you came so quickly. Look at this garden.

How beautiful the peonies are.

Yes. But a Shishi came here and damaged the peonies. Catch the lion.

Yes, my lord.



This is difficult. I have to be patient.



It is stronger than I thought.





Yes. I'll try to catch the lion with this device. Oh, it is stronger than I thought. I'm no match for a Shishi.







Well, I wonder what am I going to do now? OK, I'll try to imitate the Shishi.



I wonder if he can catch the Shishi. How did it go, Taro-kaja?  
What are you doing? Why are you imitating the Shishi? Oh, no!  
Stop, this is me!

I won't let you go. Yarumaizo! Yarumaizo!

## Intermission



It has gotten quite dark. It still gets chilly at night  
although it is May.

How about the play?

Although the characters say lines, it is easy to get the basic  
idea. It is the same as a pantomime. But what does “Yarumaizo”  
mean?

This words mean “I won’t let you go” or “Anyone can catch him.”. It is set phrase in a Kyogen play.

## “Kanzaki watashi” (Kanzaki river ferry)



I am a tea house owner living around here. Would you like a cup of tea?

I would like to have a cup of tea. Anyway, is this the right way to go to Sakai?

Yes. You should take a boat on the Kanzaki river just ahead.



I have little money. How can I escape from here?



Hey! Where will you go? Wait! Yarumaizo!

I'm sorry. Please forgive me...

Do you have enough money? How will you cross the river?

I will walk around or swim across the river.

No. That river is not easy to swim across and it is very deep.  
OK. I'll teach you how to ride on the boat for free. The  
boatman loves cleverness and Waka (Japanese poems). So, you  
may say to the boatman that so and so....OK?



That's good to know. Huh? Oh no! I have forgotten the words.  
Things will work out. Hey, may I ride on the boat please.

I can't give a ride to such a poor monk.

I am with 3,000 people. Let's go! Thank you.

Are you alone? Where are the rest of the 3,000 people?

I told you that I am with 3,000 people, it means I'll pay for  
3,000 people. Right?

I see. All right.

Then, Mr. boatman. What do I see over there?

Ah, those are the human bones of people who didn't pay for the



boat ride.

I got myself into a mess...

What will happen to the little monk?

It's going to be a surprise. Please watch and see for yourself. The next program is the last.

## “Sennin-giri” (Saving a Thousand souls)



The last program is the conclusion. This is the end of this four day program.

□□Well, let's start getting ready

## to go home

It was interesting. It's already half past eight. Shall we stay in the city?

No. Don't you know how much it costs to stay in a hotel in Kyoto city this week? The capsule hotel usually costs about \ 3,000, but it costs over \ 7,000 this week.

What is a capsule hotel?

It is a kind of the lodging facility. It called a capsule hotel because the rooms are very small like capsules. Usually 2 capsule bed are loaded vertically and many of them are placed in a row. Only curtains or blinds separate the rooms from the corridor. It's a simple hotel just for sleeping.

I didn't know. Where do guests put their bags?

In the corridor in front of their bed.

Aren't their bags stolen?

No. If you worry about this, you should not stay there. Bedclothes, a light, alarm clock and radio are supplied in each capsule and the shower room is in another place, too. Anyway, if possible, I recommend you should stay in Nara city. Nara is within one hour by train from Kyoto, the accommodation cost doesn't change even in this week.

Nara! Sounds good. It's an older city than Kyoto. I want to go to Nara.

You're stupid. We live quite near. Let's go home quickly.

I think this is some nice occasion....Arrogant. Just you wait.



**a part of “Chojyu-Jinbutsu-Giga”**

Two guys!

We’re looking forward to you being our guide again if we have a chance. See you next time, bye!

☐☐\*Refer

**Kozanji-temple**

You can see the scroll “Choju-Jinbutsu-giga” (Unfortunately, it is a replica, though. The original is stored in Tokyo and the Kyoto National museum.) and you can get many copies of these paintings. And, this temple is famous for its beautiful autumn leaves.

**Access:** It takes about 50 minutes from the center of Kyoto by bus, and 15 minutes on foot from the bus stop.

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**Report: Let’s go to see the  
festival in Tokyo~Ome grand  
festival ☐☐☐☐**

**Date:**☐☐ 2nd & 3rd May

**Location:** Ome city, Tokyo prefecture

**Access:** It takes over 1 hour from Shinjuku by JR Chuo line

## The feature of Japan Festival

□Do you know how many festivals there are in Japan? In one theory, it is said there are three hundred thousands. In Japan, if you ask a Japanese what is your image of festival, most people would answer “Mikoshi” or “Dashi (or Yatai). An exemplary “Mikoshi” festival is “the Sanja festival” at Asakusa or “the Kanda Myojin festival” at Kanda in Tokyo, and an exemplary “Dashi” festival is “the Gion festival” in Kyoto or “the Nebuta festival” in Aomori prefecture.

□\*What is “Mikoshi” and “Dashi”? Both a means of transportation for a deity. Dashi is no different from Mikoshi in terms of being a vehicle. Mikoshi is a portable shrine and people carry it on their shoulders. Dashi is a float decorated with various objects for a festival.



**“Mikoshi”the Sanja festival**

<https://matcha-jp.com/jp/4257> MATCHA





## **“Dashi” the Gion festival**

<https://souda-kyoto.jp/blog/00740.html> □□□□□□□

## **Departure**

□We can often see masked characters on Dashi in festivals. So, this time, we will go and see the Ome festival in Tokyo with our guides. Oh, where have they gone? Hey, it’s your turn!





What are you carrying?

We are going to Tokyo, aren't we ? So, I wondered if I have to bring back gifts for our colleagues.

Stop being like a country bumpkin. We just get to Tokyo within 2 hours by train. (\*They live in Gunma prefecture.)

But...

No! Let's go!

\*Who are they? If you want to know about them, please confer the [article](https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/2020/04/26/part-2iidama-shrine-daidai-kagura/)  
<https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/2020/04/26/part-2iidama-shrine-daidai-kagura/>

What a surprise! There are so many people in Shinjuku station!

I can't take it. Shinjuku is the busiest station in Tokyo (and the world) ahead of Shibuya station and Tokyo station. Tokyo Metropolitan Government office is in Shinjuku, too.

## Ome is a town full of retro culture

□Ome city is located in western Tokyo and is the major gateway of excursion into the Chichibu-Tama-Kai National park.



### Ome street

Both from <https://www.japanvisitor.com/japan-city-guides/ome>

□Ome is usually a calm town. There are still quite a number of vintage houses and many vintage film billboards. But only during the two days of the festival, this town changes.



So many people!

You were right. It's better not to carry a big bag.

It is said that this festival gathers about 150,000 people.  
There are too many people that we can hardly move.

Welcome to Festival





Oh, a big vehicle is moving.

This is a “Dashi”. Each town in Ome city has a “Dashi”. There are 12 in all. There are various designs and decorations applied. These floats are so gorgeous that they are sometimes even described as a “mobile art museum”. To see each design of the Dashi is part of the attractions of enjoying this festival.





First, foxes greet us.

Even foxes come in various kinds.

Yes. We will be able to find many masked characters on the Dashi.

Can we find other animals in addition to the fox?

Maybe. Not only animals, many various masked characters will be dancing on Dashi. This is not “Pokemon Go”, it’s “Maskman Go”. How many can we find them?

You OK?

Oh, on the Dashi, several musicians are playing traditional flutes and drums.





They are playing music called “O-hayashi”. Especially O-hayashi played in festivals is called “Matsuri-bayashi”. It is designed to be performed with festival events and as such, the shape of performances and performer’s costumes can vary depending on the nature of the events. And an interesting point of this flute for festivals is that the musical scales don’t conform to either Japanese or Western music, because the finger holes are equally spaced to make it easier to make as well as to play.





With so many Dashi like this, I'm worried they might collide into each other. Oh, Dashi are coming from both sides.





People call the situation when two Dashi collide “hikkawase”. “Hikkawase”‘s “hiku” means to pull Dashi, and “awase” means to have them collide. It is the highlight of the festival. The time when more than two Dashi collide brings more excitement. This time is announced on the leaflet before hand or real-time on microphone. The leaflet is provided at the station free of charge. This leaflet tells the kind of each Dashi and where the Dashi will pass.

Battle of “Ohayashi” is worth seeing.

Let’s walk around a little.

Along the street







Many shop stalls are in a row along the road. What are they selling? Should we take a look?





### foods and toys at shop stands

<https://www.pakutaso.com/20170759185post-12354.html>

Foods, drinks, Japanese cheap sweets and toys are on the shop stands. ***“Yaki-soba”***, ***“Tako-yaki”***, ***“Okonomi-yaki”*** are traditional old-timers of all the stalls at the festival. In addition, there are grilled corn, ***“Yaki-tori”*** and so on. I guess *Yaki-tori* and *Tako-yaki* are some of the famous Japanese cheap foods. *Yaki-tori* is grilled chicken skewer, like kebab. *Tako-yaki* is a flour based snack baked in the shape of little round balls containing pieces of octopus. *Okonomi-yaki* is a dish of thinly sliced cabbage mixed with batter made of flour,



eggs and water and cooked on an iron grill. *Yaki-soba* is stir-fried noodles. *Yaki-soba*, *Okonomi-yaki* and *Tako-yaki* are added with Japanese salty-sweet sauce. Each costs about ¥4~500.

Everything looks tasty and smells good. I want to eat all of them.

Me, too.

What? Have you heard a strange voice from heaven?

...And, many toys are very colorful.

These are for children. But, most adults are excited to remember their childhood. These colors, smells, tastes and sounds. Every element enlivens people. I wonder if most festivals have such elements all over the world.

That hits the spot! Red pickled ginger goes with yakisoba and beer.



“Woo, sake tastes so good”



**"It looks great"**

You! Before I knew it. You are drinking alone.







Every “Dashi” is moved manually, isn’t it?

It is the greatest highlight scene to turn the Dashi. For example, “Kishiwada danjiri (it is held at Kishiwada in Osaka)” is famous. At this festival, the highlight is to turn the Dashi around with breakneck speed.

## Mask collection

By the way, what kind of masked characters are there?

Let’s go to look for them.

























What a great variety of masks there are. There are not only a fox but a raccoon dog and a bird.

These variety of masks all derive from Noh, Kyogen and Kagura\*,and so on. They represent a deity, people or animals.

\*Noh, Kyogen and Kagura are traditional performing arts since medieval times. Especially, Noh uses a lot of masks.

Foxes, raccoon dogs, or monkeys are active characters in folk tale. In stories, foxes and raccoon dogs bewitch people. In addition, foxes are messengers of the deity of rice planting.





**a monkey**



**a raccoon dog**



**a raccoon dog**

Hey, raccoon dogs and monkeys are looking at us. I'm worried I might be bewitched.

### **Worship at shrine**

This festival is for the deity of Sumiyoshi shrine. We go to shrines to worship.





Long steps....

How long the line is.





Hey! Don't reach for sweets. It's for children. Quit making a fool of yourself.

Sorry. I can't resist sweet things. Anyway, what is this?

This is "Ibayashi". It means they play "Ohayashi" without moving. In this period, they play and dance not only on the Dashi, but also on the stage like this. They are set along the road.

### How long is the festival?

Until what time is this festival held?

On the 2nd of May, it is held from 3 pm to 10 pm. On the 3rd, it is held from 9 am to 10 pm. On the 2nd, the Dashi only moves in each town. So, I recommend to go on the 3rd.



The festival is still going on...





**"Take care. Come back again anytime."**

I am a little tired. We are almost out of time. Let's go home.

Yes. Let's drop by Shinjuku to have a quick drink on our way home.

That's just like you I know. Let's go!

*\*Reffer <https://www.japanistry.com/event/ome-grand-festival/>*

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**Report: Would you mind  
spending a calm day at a  
place away from urban noise ?  
~Part 4 Yuki Suwa shrine**

# Daidai-Kagura~

□Finally the special feature article, “Let’s go to the city to watch local Kagura during beautiful cherry blossoms season”, this is the last of the series. Two guides who took you to various kagura till now will take and guide you this time too. Hey, two guys, are you ready? OK, let’s start!

\*If you want to know who they are, read the article, part 1.



**Date;** 3rd April

**Location;** Kamiyamakawa 160, Yuki city, Ibaraki prefecture

**Access;** about 7 kilometers from Yuki □□ station. To get to Yuki from Tokyo, you take Ueno-Tokyo line(JR line, bound for Utsunomiya. It takes 1.5 hours), and change at Oyama, for Mito line (JR). It takes 15 minutes.



**Ibaraki prefecture**



**from Tokyo to Yuki**





image is for illustration purpose

Oh,no! 7 kilometers is a long way to walk. I can't walk.

Don't worry. In this station, there is a corner to rent a bicycle. You pay \500 and \1,000 for deposit, you can rent a bicycle for a day. When you return it, the \1,000 deposit will be refunded to you. (as of 2020)

Bicycle? Certainly, it's a good deal (cheaper). But I didn't expect you to suggest riding a bicycle.

Is there something wrong for a deity to get on a bicycle? It takes about 20 minutes by bicycle.

OK,OK. Anyway let's just go.

## Introduction





Isn't this shrine cozy and modest? Cherry blossoms seem to bless the festival. The kagura-den is dressed up today. Oh, several booths by local people sell some food and drinks. Shaved ice, Yakitori (Japanese kebabs), steamed potatoes and Amazake (a sweet fermented rice drink). What time does kagura start?

You are really greedy. I wonder if it is too early to sell shaved ice. Well, the Shinto ritual starts at noon, so kagura will start in 45 minutes.



## 1. "Dance of Gogyo"







Kagura's first program has begun. The program board says "Dance of Gogyo"... What does "Gogyo" mean?



This name comes from the two principles of ancient Chinese. One is the philosophy of “Yin and Yang”, another is the thought of “Gogyo”. “Yin and Yang” is negative and positive. The ancient people thought that the universe had derived from Yin and Yang. Apart from that, they also thought that the universe consisted of five elements, that is, wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Finally, they reached the conclusion that these thoughts made it possible to explain everything. These philosophies were introduced to Japan in the 6th century, and had had a great influence. Do you understand?

I guess I understand the outline. So, black and white dancers appear in this program, don't they?

Yes. Although this story may seem difficult, this thought has affected the lifestyle of Japanese until today. For example, when Japanese decide on the date of weddings, they set a date based on this theory.

I thought better of you. You are a genuine deity guide.

Aha!

## 2. "Sarutahiko"





That's dance of Sarutahiko. I was waiting for him. It's about time!

Moves of this dancer's Sarutahiko have the same feature in Kanto area. It's a very magical action to expel evil spirits from the stage.

### 3. "An archer"





He is handsome.

He is a deity of an archer. He shoots an arrow to drive away evil spirits.





Look at the papers in front of the stage. Many names are on the papers. What do they mean?

They are the names of sponsors. They offer sweets, liquor, money and so on.

Many sweets! I can have high hopes for “mochinage (the throwing-many-things ceremony to celebrate).

I knew you would say that.

#### 4. “The old man holding a sword”



He is not an old man. His old face shows thoughtfulness and consideration. His name is “Omoikane”. Do you remember this name?

Yes. He is the most intelligent deity. When “Amaterasu” had hidden behind the Iwato, he was the key deity to devise the plan to bring her out. Is that right?

Good! →\*see “Reference”/Japanese mythology, “Iwato biraki”, please

## 5 & 6. “Inari (man and woman)”



These foxes are good looking and their clothes are classy.

They are the messengers of the deity for planting rice. They are not just foxes.



That fox is going to throw something here...Oh, no. He threw it in a different direction. He is pretty clever!







Aren't they male and female according to the title?

Maybe..This program, as you would think, took 15 minutes, nevertheless, others just took 10 minutes.

## 7. "Rice harvesting"





## 8. "Ebisu"



The audience has gathered before I knew it. That's Ebisu. He



is popular. At once, he is going to fish something.



Oh, sake! It looks heavy.







Oh, did you look at that? That's money!

That is gift money.



You only mention him getting things, but actually he does a lot of giving too. He is a deity who “gives fortune”.

He finally has fished a red snapper. Look at his triumphant expression. But why is a red snapper auspicious in Japan?

It's a simple reason. When people want to express congratulation or happiness, they say “medetai” in Japanese. “Tai” means red snapper. It's a pun or word play. In addition, this fish's color is red and looks good. Red is considered to protect us from evil.

How simple-minded Japanese are.

You, too. Don't forget that you are figments of their imagination.

## 9. “dance of Uzume”





“Ameno Uzume” is coming. When it comes to “Uzme”...

“Iwato biraki” or “Tenson-korin”. →\*please see  
“Reference”/Japan mythology

Yes. Now she comes out on the stage, Iwato-biraki is to come.

#### 10. “Tajikarao~Amano Iwato-biraki”







Here comes Tajikarao. This is the scene of “Iwato-biraki”. He took off the Sakaki (species of ever green) branches at the corner. This represents “Iwato”.

So does that mirror represent “Amaterasu”?

Yes. The direction of kagura like this can often be seen all over Japan. Amaterasu is a deity of the sun. A mirror is a symbol of the sun in Shintoism.

## 11. Ending~“Ohyamatsumi”



He has three eyes! Is he a yokai creature?

No, he is a deity named “Ohyamatsumi”. He often comes out towards the end of Kagura in the Kanto area. When it comes to Ohyamatsumi, it is the end in no time. The ending of kagura in Kanto area is....



How many things there are! People throw things which were carried in relay by humans a while ago. Those things are not only sweets but also cup noodles and some foods. It's great.

Many gifts which were piled up as a mountain are vanishing one by one. Are human beings greedy or generous? I'm not sure which is right.

That's human!

Anyway, we went around many kaguras in Kanto area. What do you think of them?

I am getting to know the form of kagura in this area a little. They have a certain form but each has different features. I want to go to many different kagura. Didn't you introduce a kagura of Ohmiya Sumiyoshi shrine you belong to?

Yes. There are many kaguras that I haven't introduced yet in this area.

I want to watch the others as many as I can.



Sounds good! But, to be honest, you just want to get many sweets, don't you?

You get it!

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# Report: Would you mind spending a calm day at a place away from urban noise?~part 3 Yamanashi Oka shrine Daidaikagura

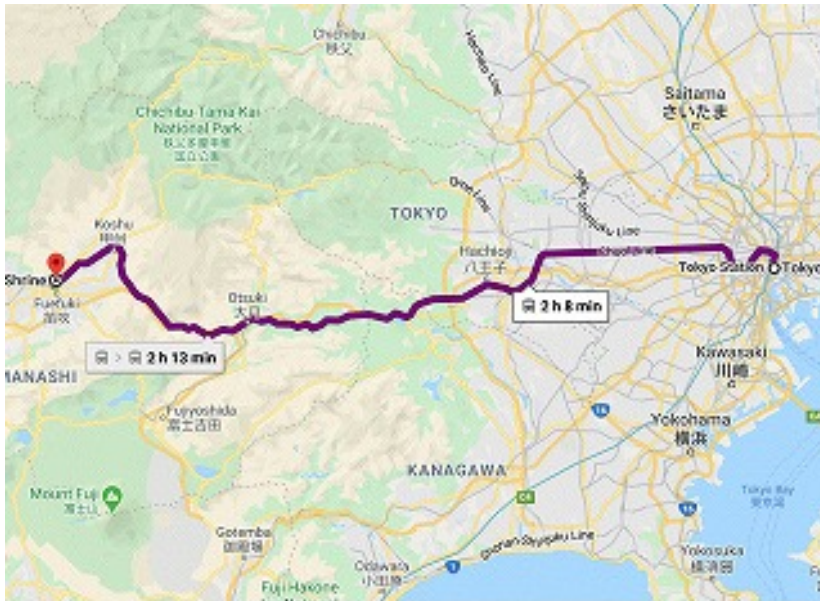
**Date:** 4th & 5th April

**Location** Kasugai town Shizume 1696, Fuefuki city, Yamanashi prefecture

**Access** It takes about two hours by express "Kaiji" (JR line) from Tokyo to Isawa onsen station. From the station, about 20 minutes on foot.



## Yamanashi prefecture



access from Tokyo

## Introduction

□ This time two guides are going to take you to the Yamanashi Oka shrine again. Yes, you are already familiar with them, Sarutahiko, a deity and Modoki, a traditional comedian.



**Sarutahiko and Modoki visit the shrine**



**Isawa-onsen station**





It takes quite some time, doesn't it?

It is about 1.2 or 1.4 kilometers from the station.

Why didn't you take a taxi. Moreover, though the station's name is hot spring (onsen means hot spring in Japan) I can't feel any atmosphere like hot springs.

Don't be winging! We came here to watch and guide a kagura, not to take a bath. This shrine has a long and distinguished history. It is said that Yamanashi prefecture's name is was taken after this shrine. Have you heard the name "Takeda Shingen 武田信玄" ?

Sorry but I don't know.

"Takeda shingen" is a famous warlord who had ruled this region about 450 years ago. People in this prefecture have respected and loved him till now. He is a kind of hero in this region.

And what?

This kagura is performed to wish for his victory when he went to war.

Oh, really? By the way, we are walking toward the mountain opposite from the town of hot springs. Is this the right way?



flags tells the festival





the Hon-den 本殿

Here we are. This is the shrine.



□The small kagura-den is the center of the precincts. This kagura-den has a corridor like a bridge between the kagura-den and a dressing room. This is the feature of this shrine.



# before midday

□first program~a deity of planting rice It starts about 10 am and is played for 20 minutes.



The mask looks old but good. I feel history and tradition.

You are getting to learn about watching a kagura. If I were to add something, dancers continue playing as long as they live, especially men. Now the group of dancers consists of about 30 people. All are volunteers. And I have to tell you at first, this kagura has no elements of comedy.

That's too bad.



Oh, talking about a deity of agriculture, here comes a fox as a messenger of a deity. Now, how energetic he is.





This fox is a very popular and familiar character in this kagura. A man who plays this role has to have acting talent.

And he has to have physical strength as much as acting talent, doesn't he?



You may be right about the point that the fox is more energetic than the player acting as a deity of planting rice at least,



□a dance of "Ameno Uzume" It starts about 10:45 for 20 minutes.



A player who plays the role as Ameno Uzume often wears a kind of "Okame" mask or something similar, but she wears nothing.

In this kagura group, the woman is called "princess". They are to graduate this group by the time they reach high school age.

□"Four archers"□□It starts at about 11 am and plays for 20 minutes.





Coming out are four men, the stage looks narrow. Why won't they bump into each other?

They have practiced extensively throughout the year, and every night before the festival. How about your case?

Me? I am always in a willy-nilly way. I play by ear.

if it's really, you are absolutely fool or genius

**□Dance of Sarutahiko It starts at about 11:30 and plays for 20 minutes**





Oh yes! Sarutahiko is coming out. But, is he really Sarutahiko? His face is not red. I have always expected Sarutahiko having a red face.

Right, he is just Sarutahiko. I guess the color of the mask had worn off because it's too old.

## Intermission



**the Hon-den of the shrine**





It's lunch break for one hour. Let's walk around the shrine.

Sounds good. I see trees of cherry blossoms in the precincts, but outside the shrine, many peach trees are distinctive.

Actually, Fuefuki city is the largest producer of peaches in Japan. The peach festival\* is held this season.

\*Refer→<https://japan-attractions.jp/festivals/togenkyo-harumatsuri/> Japan attractions

That explains why there are many peach trees on my way here.

## Second part ~afternoon

□"Iwato-biraki" It starts at 1 pm. \*please confer→Japan mythology





Today is very fine. Musicians couldn't help looking at the flowers.

Many deities appear on the stage in this program. Because it represents the scene where all the deities gathered at Amano-Yasugawara to solve the problem when Amaterasu, the sun deity, had hidden.











You are right. Many deities appear on the stage one after another.

Can you see the black board at the center of the stage? That is the “Amano-iwato”(the door made of rock).





**Ebisu, a deity of fortune**



**a deity of agriculture**





**a deity of battle**

Many deities come in, so we can watch dances of deities who don't perform their own programs today.

Ebisu is also on. By watching this program only, we can say we have seen most of kagura. It's a bargain.





It seems that there are so many deities that it's hard to find a place to sit down. When will this end?





Look, that's powerful walking. And his face has black lines like Kabuki's "Kumadori". In Japanese traditional Kabuki 隈取り, lines (it is said "Kumadori") on a face represent powerful and strong character. I'm sure he is "Tajikarao", The most powerful deity. He must open the "Iwato" and pull out "Amaterasu". Finally this program will reach a climax.







Hey,look at that. The black board that Tajikarao holds is



“Amano-Iwato”.

Is that girl who wears a golden crown on her head “Amaterasu”?

Yes. This is a scene where every deity is pleased to have light of the sun come back. This is the most famous happening in Japanese mythology.







What time is it now?

It's 2:30 pm. As one would expect, this program has took one and half hours.

## □“Black old man” and “Two swords”





□ "Four swords men"







The men holding swords come in again. As expected it is said “The kagura for going to the field”, there are many programs in which the sword is used.

This program has another name “Kume mai (dance)”. We can find this name in the records of the first emperor. The records say that this dance was played for the first emperor’s victory of battle.

Really? This is a really traditional and important program.

So they say when Takeda Shingen was going to war, this was played to wish his victory.

## Ending





His name is "Ohyamatsumi". He is the main enshrined deity. After his playing, they are to throw many gifts every time.







I got many gifts this time again. Kagura is a happy event. By the way, is this kagura held two more times?

Yes. It is held tonight and tomorrow.

Would you mind watching another two more times?

Good! You are finally coming to recognize the attraction of kagura.

So we have to stay tonight, don't we?

I have noticed your intention. You don't care about kagura, you only wish to take a bath at hot spring, don't you?

Oh, you understand. Let's go.

□ to be continue to part 4