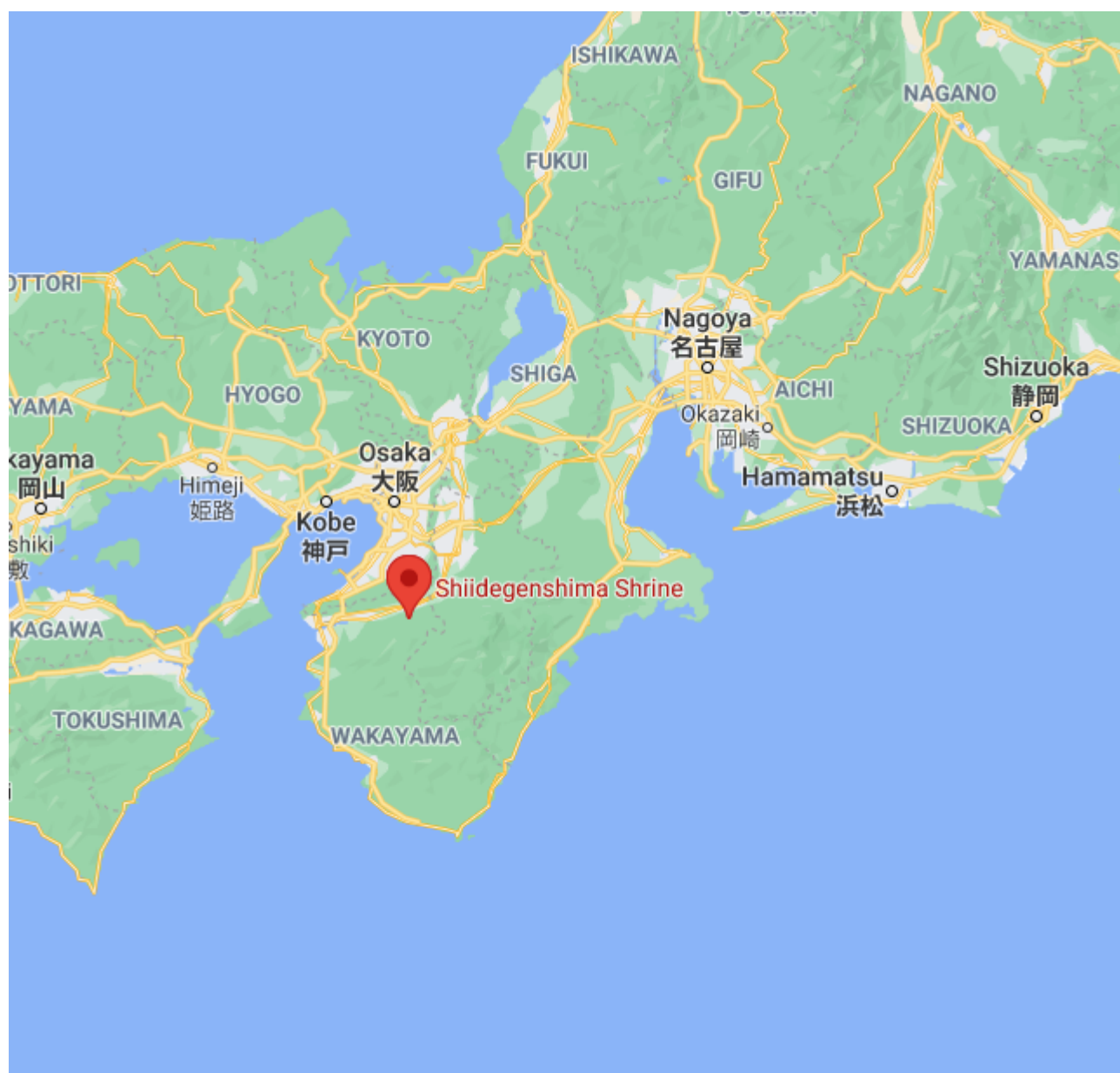


Shiide Ogre dance





Date: 16th August, every year

Location: Shiide 3, Kudoyama town, Ito district, Wakayama prefecture

Access: 5 minutes walk from Koyacho station (Nankai line).

A place called Kudoyama

There are two places where the entire mountain is lined with temples, making it a major religious city. Mount Koya 高野山 and Mount Hiei 比叡山. Both were built in the 10th century. Both are legacies that cannot be fully visited in one day (although they are still in operation).

At the foot of Mount Koya, there is a place called Kudoyama 九度山.

At the end of the 16th century, The Tokugawa clan, who were in power at the time, imprisoned the father and son of a warlord

who fought against them here. This is such a place. It is deep in the mountains, and the surrounding area is still dotted with uninhabited stations. There is still a ogre dance here that is said to have a history of 600 years.

People performing the Ogre dance





A total of 11 people perform the ogre dance. In addition to the ogre, there are ten other people: one drummer, two flutes, seven singers, and one person who holds the drum. They are called the “ten men”. They are chosen from those who are 16 years old or older in the community. In the past, it was an honor just to be chosen. The chosen ones purify themselves in a nearby river and bring back three stones each. Then they go through a ritual and join the performance. It is customary to keep the name of the ogre actor secret until the performance is over.

Performance



This is held as a festival of Itsukushima Shrine. At the appointed time, the group departs from the nearby Jizoji Temple, beating drums as they go. The ogre slowly moves forward, drawing a circle with a long stick in one hand. For every three beats of the drum, the ogre takes only one step

forward. The path is about 30 meters long, so it takes about 30 minutes to complete the journey.

When they arrive at the precinct, the ogre is released from the restriction of the drums and is free to move around. Parents and children gather in the precinct, hoping to be touched by the ogre. It is said that if the ogre touches the child, the child will grow up in good health, and if the ogre touches the painful part, the pain will go away by the power of the ogre.



Eventually, the ten men leave the grounds, leaving only the ogre behind. The remaining ogre grieves, and even rampages through the precincts in anger. He then prays to the shrine for a good harvest and for rain. Why does the ogre suddenly start praying? Originally, several people, including an old man, appeared on stage to warn the ogre and ask for their prayers. However, due to lack of staff and the trend of the times, that part was cut off about 120 years ago.

Finally, the ogre goes on a rampage again and the festival ends.

Mount Koya

Nearby is one of Japan's major religious centers, Koyasan 高野山, which was founded in the 10th century and has 19 important buildings. A ropeway takes you up to the town. There is a school and a bus service. Numerous temples line the streets, and at the far end is the largest sacred site, the Oku-no-in 奥の院. Even now, the monks who gather here make daily offerings to Kukai 空海, the founder of the temple, as if he were still alive. As you walk through the dense trees, you will feel as if your daily worries will disappear.

