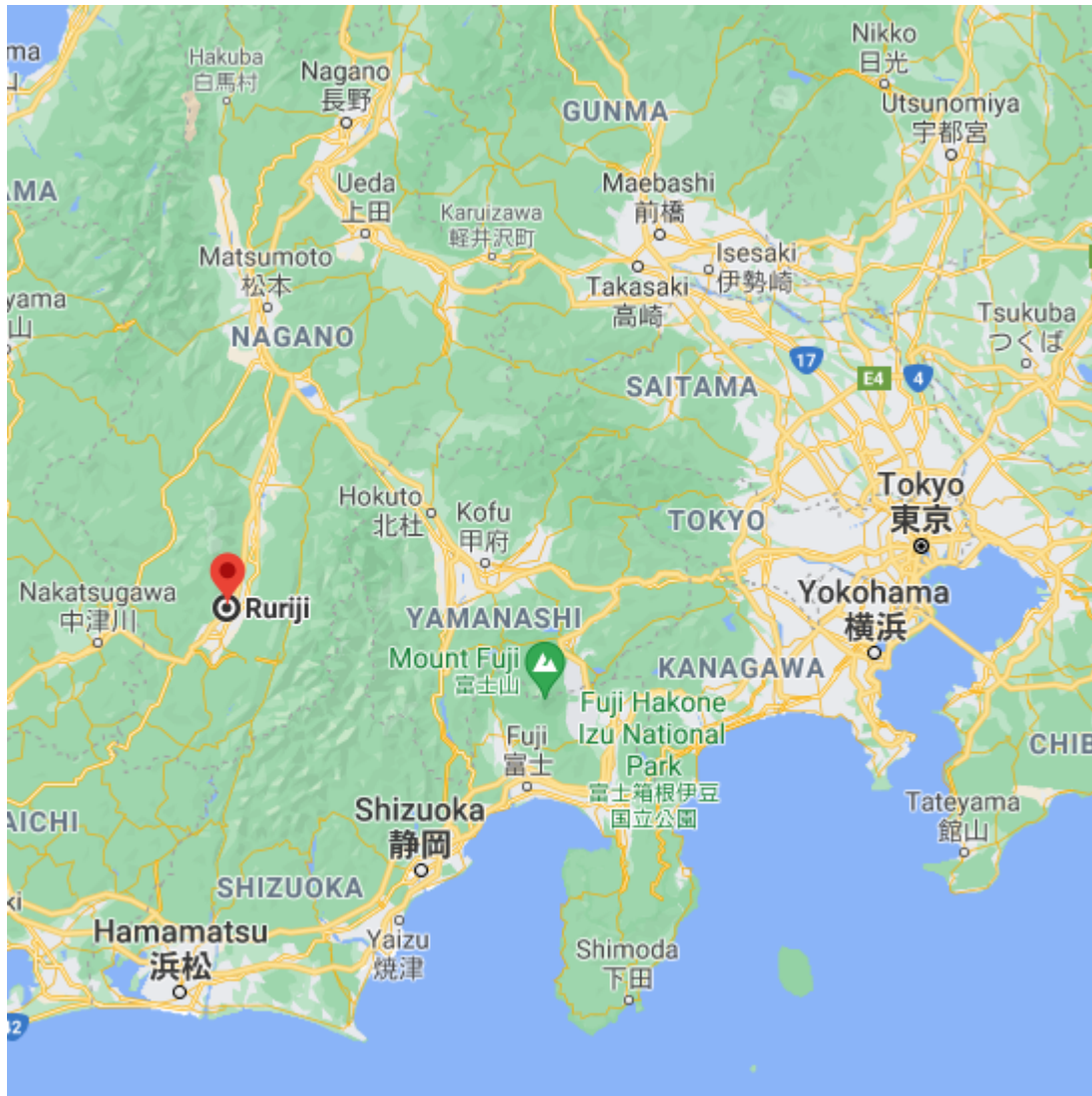
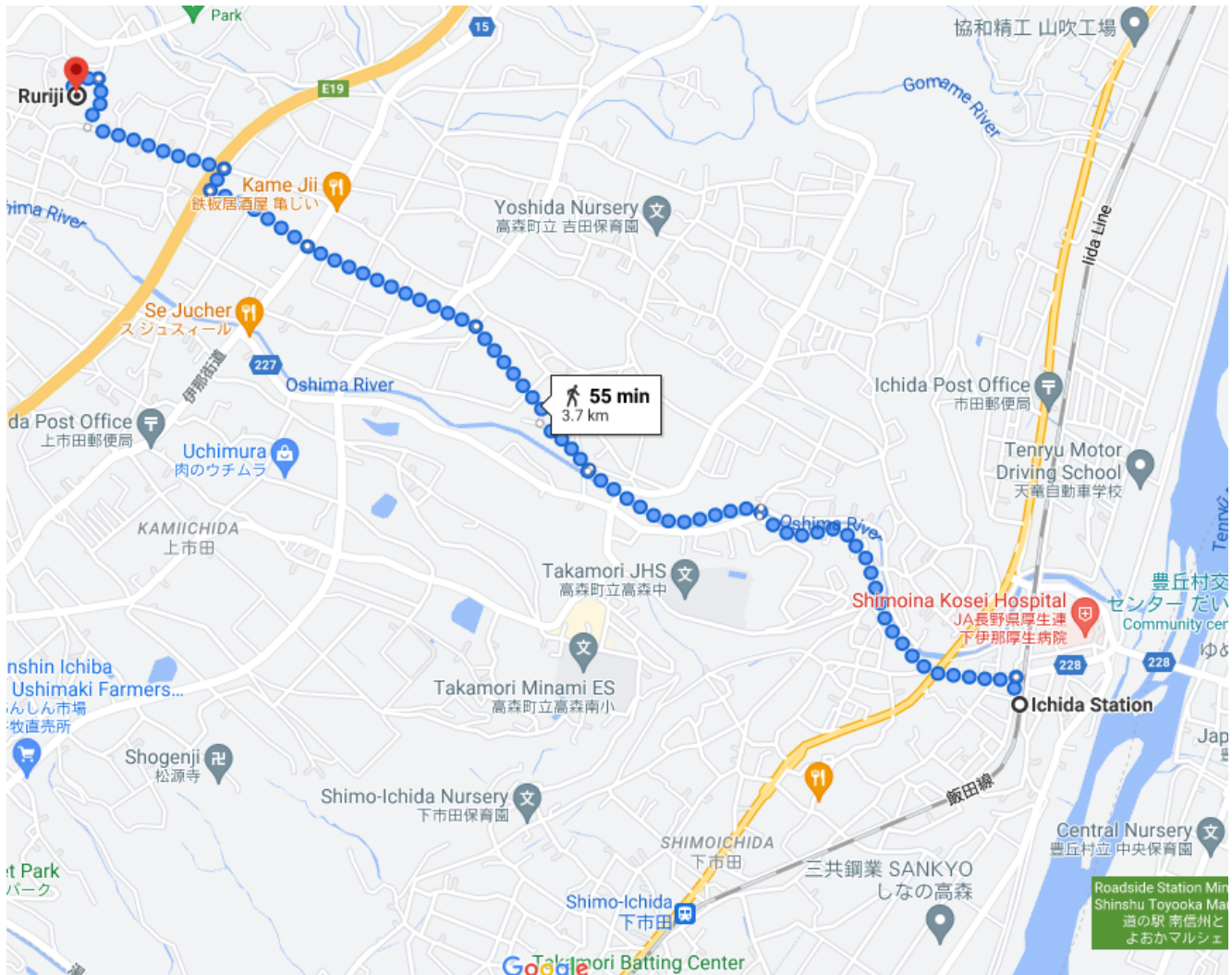


# Shishi dance in Ruri-dera temple





People say that there are seven valleys in Ina 〇〇. The transportation is not so convenient. It takes 20 minutes by train from Iida Station, the main station of the region, to Ichida Station, the nearest station of this festival. It takes about 30 minutes to walk from the station. There is only one train every hour or so. That is how deep the mountains are in the region, but that is why so many performing arts remain. The biggest feature of this area is the appearance of a huge lion called “Yatai Shishi 〇〇〇〇”. There are many “yatai” lion dances in the area, but the lion dance of Ruri-dera temple 〇〇〇 is considered to be the origin of all of them. It is said to have a long history, dating back about 600 years. However, the current form started about 120 years ago.



What is “Yatai Shishi” ?



**Shishi**

<https://mg.minami.nagano.jp/group/ruriji>



**inside of Yatai**

[https://maturinoatode.web.fc2.com/festival/daitousan\\_ruritera\\_no\\_sisimai/daitousan\\_ruritera\\_no\\_sisimai.html](https://maturinoatode.web.fc2.com/festival/daitousan_ruritera_no_sisimai/daitousan_ruritera_no_sisimai.html)

A yatai lion is a large cart made of wood and bamboo that people enter and operate. It is easy to imagine it as a giant bamboo basket. It has wheels on both sides to move it. It is about two meters high, two meters wide, and seven meters long. There are about 20 drums, flutes, and other musical instruments inside, and a curtain is placed over the top to resemble a lion's body. Only the leader of the group controls the lion's head.

## The feature



**3 main kinds of characters**

<http://iimachi.net/ms/3319/>





<https://sites.google.com/site/countryfarm790/home/oshirase/dadaoshanliulisishiziwu>

One of the features of Ruri-dera temple is the large number of characters that appear in it. The main character guiding the lion is “Uteno 〇〇〇”. Then there are two ogres who protect the lion, and a monkey who is a messenger of the shrine. The event is held at a temple called Ruri-dera temple, which also houses a shrine called Hiyoshi 〇〇 Shrine. The fusion of shrines and temples is characteristic to Japan. To begin with, the people of the time learned the lion dance from the Hiyoshi Shrine in Kyoto. There is also a recently revived character named “Ranryo Oh 〇〇〇”. He dances before the lion dance. “Ranryo-oh is one of the oldest Japanese musical forms called bugaku 〇〇, which combines music and dance from the continent with traditional Japanese music and dance. For this reason, the entire lion dance is very elegant, accompanied by the sounds of bugaku.

# Procession



<https://mg.minami.nagano.jp/group/ruriji>



<https://blog.goo.ne.jp/yokote17212/e/572fcff14d9302a4a21628f3d894a327>

At around 12:30 pm, small monkeys played by children begin to patrol the area. Eventually, at one o'clock, the sutra reading ceremony begins. After that, the lion dance begins.

The monkeys organize the audience with their silly movements. Then two demons come out to intimidate those who are out of line. Then, in front of the guest hall, there is a large lion with its head on the ground, asleep. The main actor, "Uten-oh" appears and wakes up the lion. When the lion is woken up, it is in a bad mood and starts to yell, but Uten-oh soothes it. Then he slowly leads the lion outside. This is how the lion's journey to the main shrine, 500 meters away, begins. It is late spring, and the cherry blossoms begin to fall in the plains at the beginning of April, but here in the highlands, the cherry blossoms finally come into full bloom around this time. Under the cherry blossoms in full bloom, the lion slowly moves forward with the guidance of Uten-oh, accompanied by elegant old music. The journey takes about 30 minutes.

When you arrive at the main shrine, you will be given a "shishibana" which was used as the tail of a lion. This is a piece of bamboo with flowers made of five different colors of Chiyogami paper. People take these home and offer them to their Buddhist altars or display them on their altars.

In October, there is an event where all the lion dancers in the area are gathered, but this lion dance is not included in the event. In the first place, it has rarely been seen outside. Therefore, this is a rare opportunity to see it. On Saturday nights, there is also an illuminated road on the way. If time permits, I recommend staying overnight and taking your time to enjoy it.

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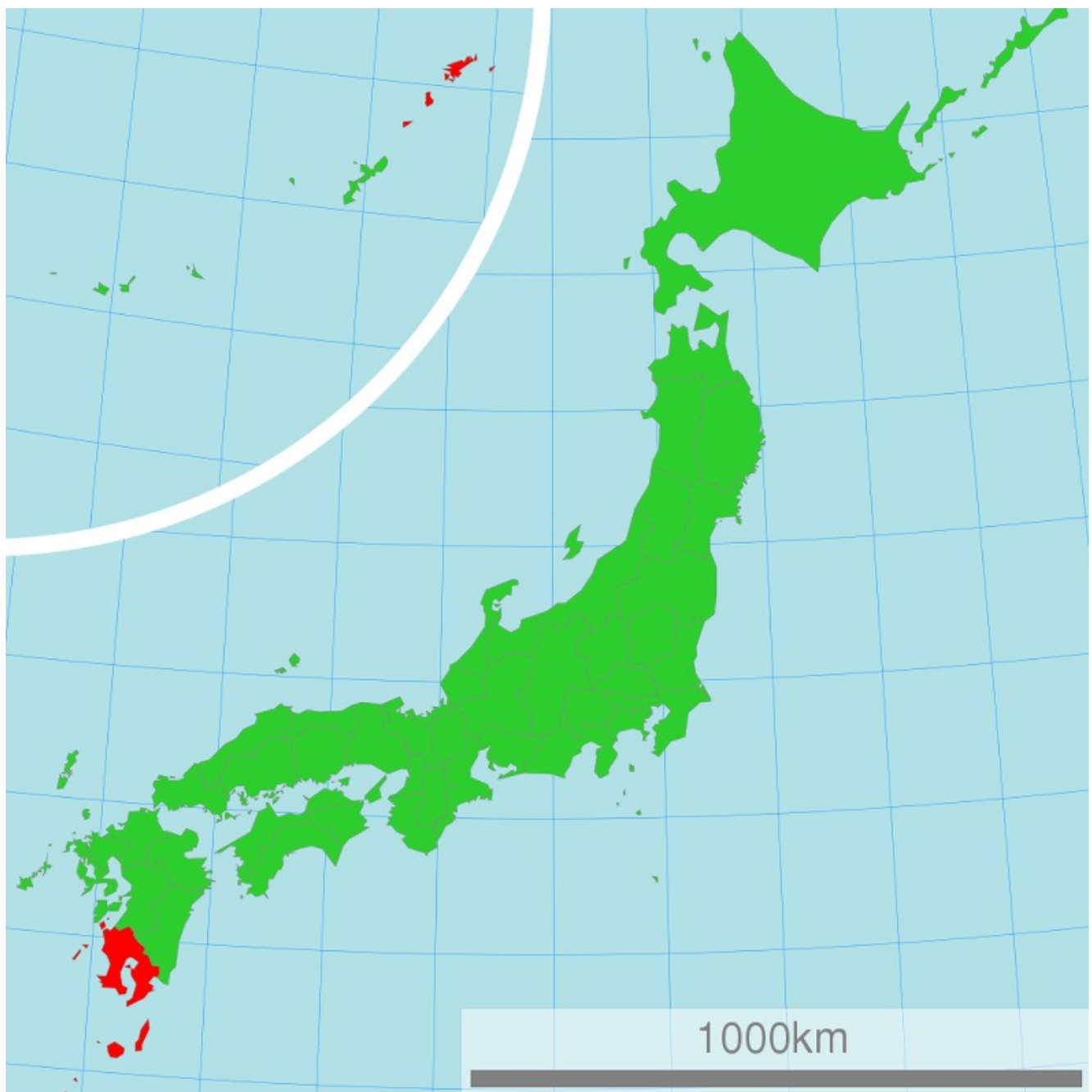


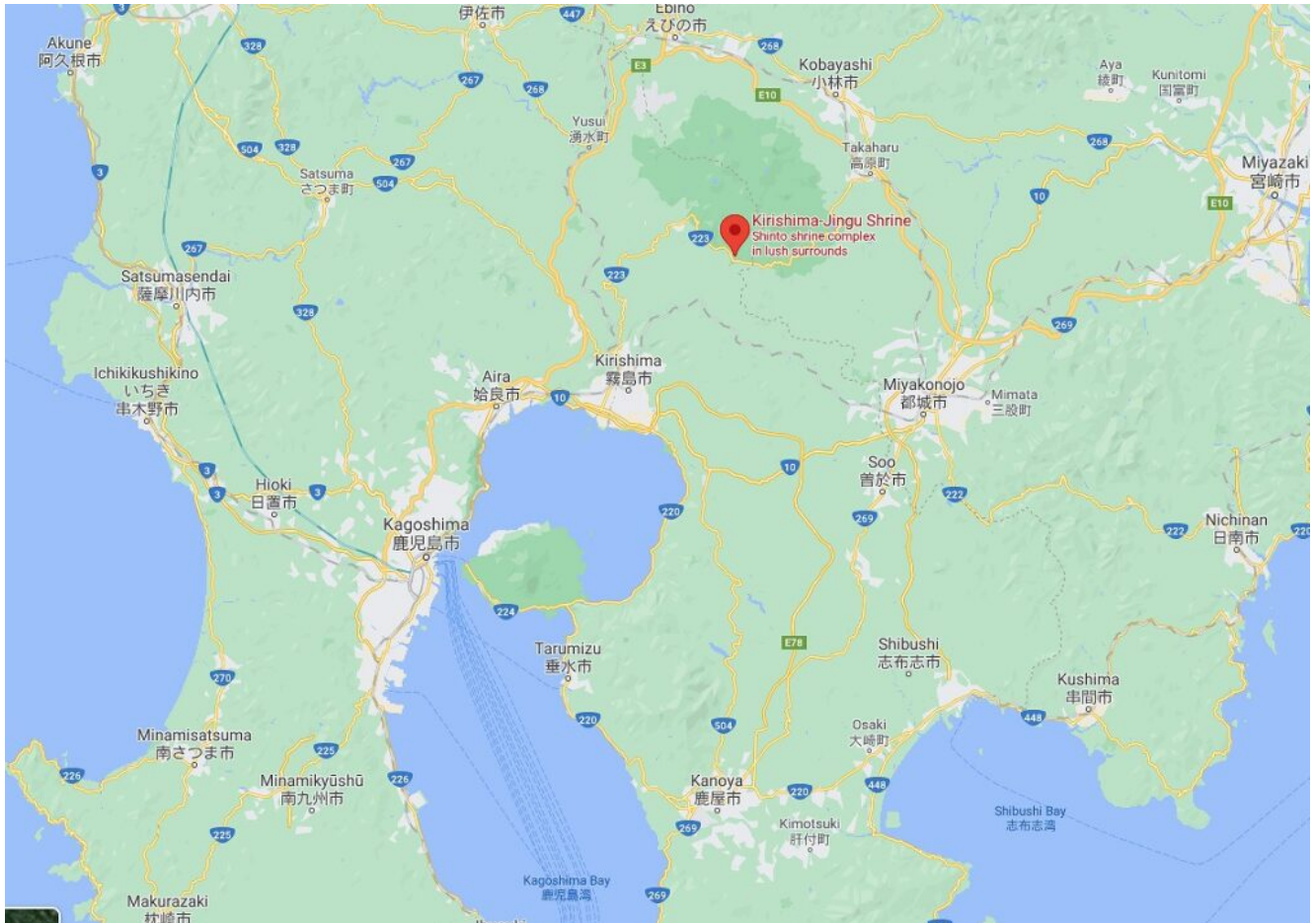
# Otaue(rice planting) festival at Kirishima Grand shrine

**Date:** February 4 of the old lunar calendar (In the new calendar, it is a month late, in mid-March)

**Location:** Kirishima taguchi 2605-5, Kirishima city, Kagoshima prefecture

**Access:** 10 minutes by bus from Kirishimajingu Station on the Nippo Line. (About 1 hour from Kagoshima)





**Kirishima                      Grand                      shrinr                      □□□□**

<https://www.kagoshima-yokanavi.jp/spot/20063>

Kirishima Shrine is one of the most famous shrines in Kagoshima. However, it is located in a rather inconvenient



place. It is about six kilometers away from the nearest station. There is only one bus every hour. However, it is also one of the places where Japanese mythology is handed down, with a history of over 1500 years. More than 100 rituals are held here every year. One of them is the “Rice Planting Festival”.

There are many rare statues in Kagoshima that are not found in other prefectures. They are called “Tanokansaa”. It means the deity of rice fields. In Japan, if you look at the side of the road, you may see a statue of “Jizo-san”. In Kagoshima, we have “Tanokansaa” like that.







<http://5.travel-way.net/~niemon/kagosima/tanokami/tanokami.html>

It is said that there is a festival in which “Tanokansaa” appears at Kirishima Shrine, the home of Tanokansaa.

It starts at 10:00 on the day. After the Shinto ritual, the first thing to do is to bring in the shii tree with the cow in the lead and scatter the branches around the area. This is supposed to be fertilizer. After that, several rituals are performed, and then the old man and woman appear.





Shinto ritual

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9xkE0BTzVc>







**the aged husband**





## **the aged wife**

These two perform a skit.

“Do you know where the cow is?” “I don’t know where the cow is,” “That cow is always annoying me.” “It’s because you don’t take care of it,” and so on. Then the cow finally appears. But the cow doesn’t listen to them. It does everything on its own and annoys the couple.





[http://www.kirishimajingu.or.jp/contents/gosaigi\\_file/0313otauesai.html](http://www.kirishimajingu.or.jp/contents/gosaigi_file/0313otauesai.html)

After this, the “rice field gods,” who should be called the main characters, finally appeared.



<https://www.tabirai.net/sightseeing/column/0008810.aspx>

It looks as if a roadside “tanokansa” has just stood up and



walked away. He is holding a large rice ladle in his hand. After this, they say a few words and end with a dance. The performance is scheduled to end around noon. Japanese have always lived on the basis of agriculture. Rice has always been the staple food, and in the past, rice itself was the standard of national power, and salaries were paid in rice. This festival is a precious opportunity to experience the original scenery of Japan.

The area is also dotted with hot springs and an art forest. Above all, the shrine itself stands in the midst of a mythical setting. It takes an hour and a half from Fukuoka to Kagoshima by Shinkansen.



<https://icotto.jp/presses/14679>



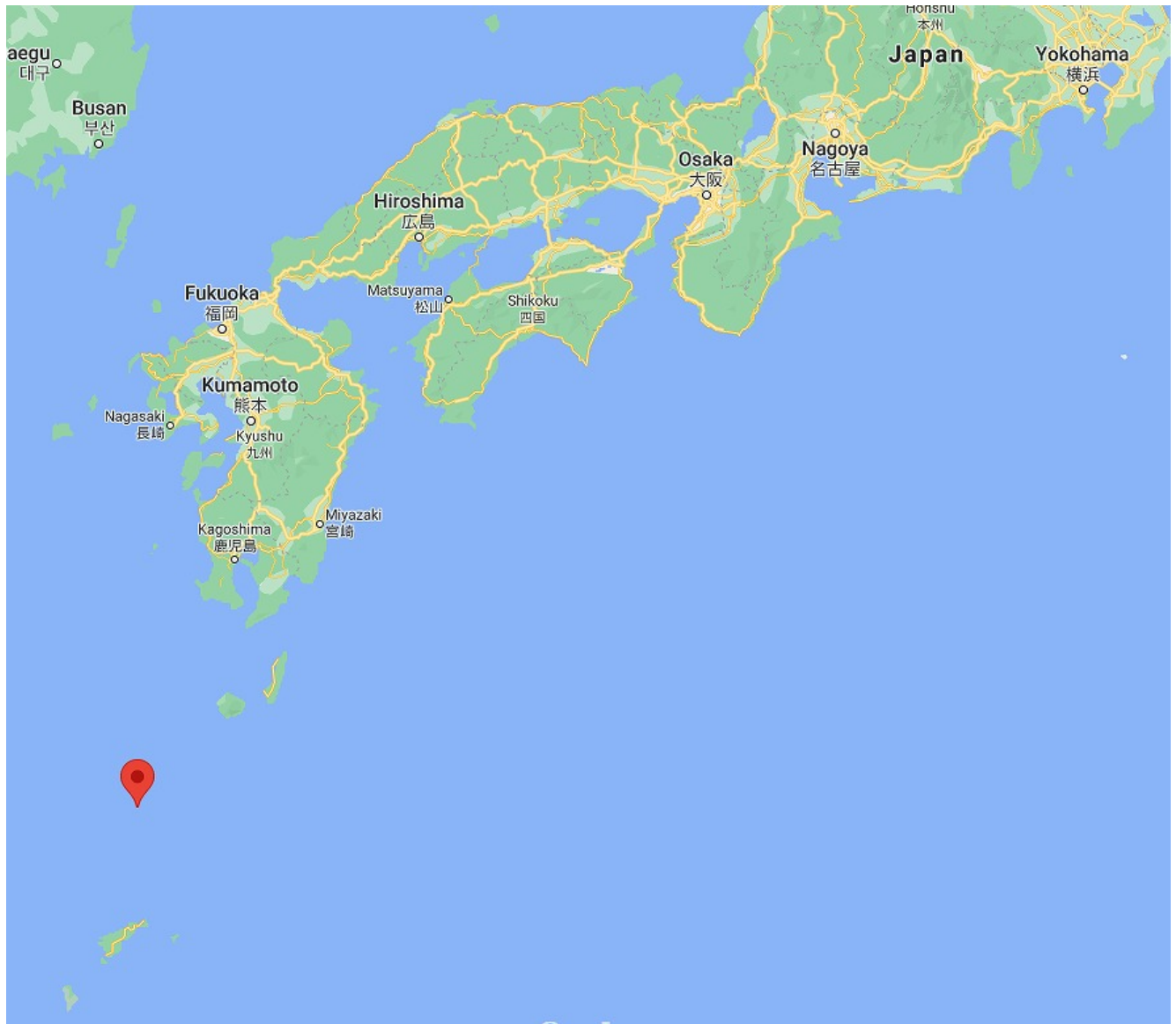


<https://www.ana.co.jp/ja/jp/japan-travel-planner/kagoshima/0000008.html>

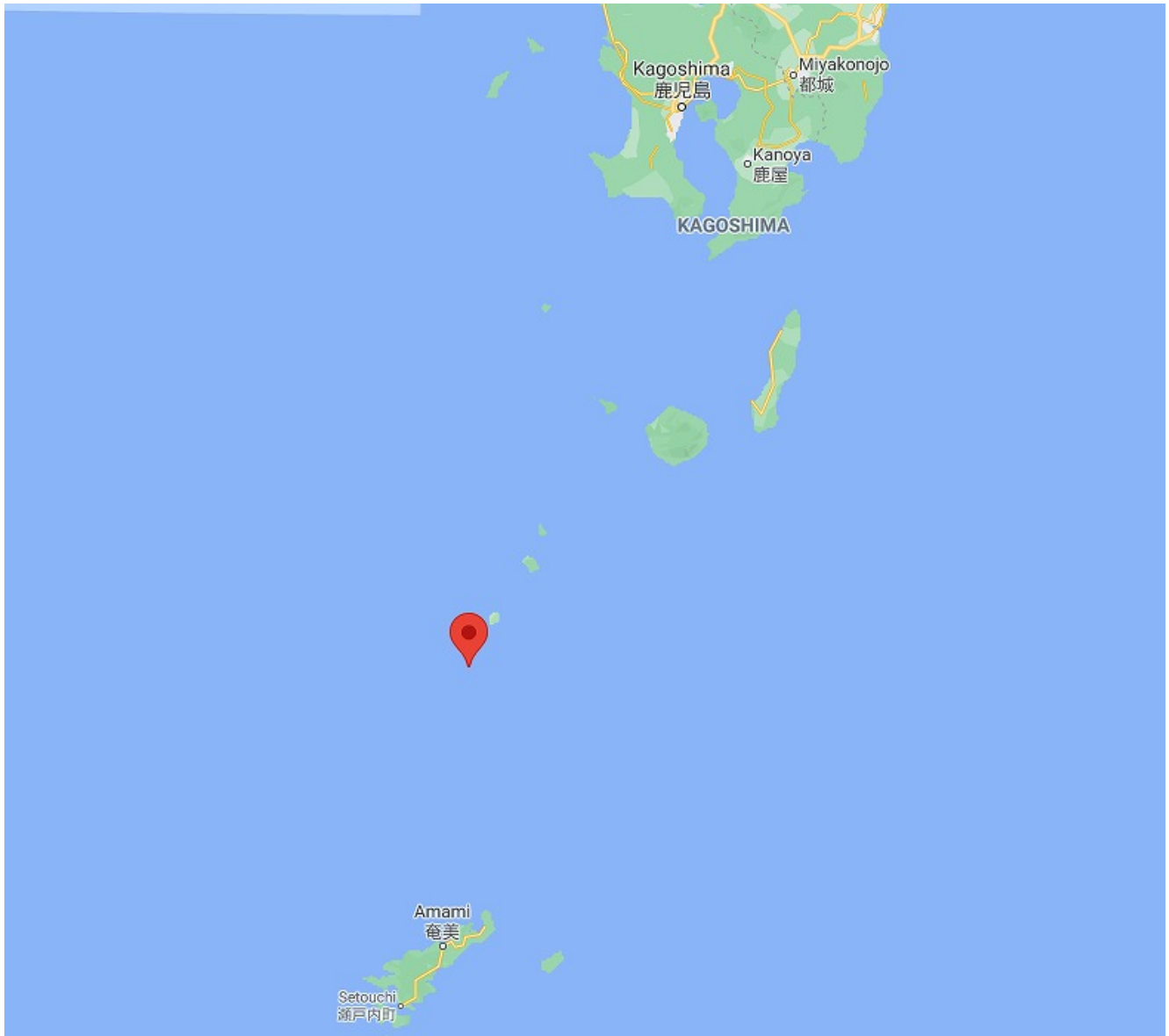
Enjoy the spiritual world of Japan and heal yourself in a hot spring. One way to enjoy Japan.

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# **Boze ~The strangest visiting deity**







**Date:** July 14 of the lunar calendar (around mid-August)

**Location:** One of the Tokara Islands, Toshima Village, Kagoshima County, Kagoshima Prefecture

**Access:** By air, from Kagoshima airport there is a limousine bus (1250 yen) to Kagoshima Honko Minami port. By train, from JR Kagoshima Chuo Station take the Sakurajima shuttle bus (160 yen) and get off at the High Speed Boat Terminal, or take a 15-minute cab ride from Kagoshima Chuo Station. Then take a Ferry from Kagoshima Port which runs twice a week.

## Prologue

Boze is a strange visiting deity. Or maybe it's not even a

deity. It could just be a monster. He does not resemble any masked deity in all of Japan. Just by looking at his appearance alone, it is difficult to instantly determine which country he is from. Access is also poor. The only way to get there is by ferry, which only runs twice a week. Moreover, the season is typhoon-prone. There was a high possibility that even the ferry would be cancelled. Moreover, the ferry only takes 15 to 20 minutes to arrive. Still, there is no end to the number of people who are eager to see Boze every year.

## **Akusekijima (Akuseki island)**

Akusekijima 隠岐島 (Akuseki island) is a small island with an area of 7.49㎢, a circumference of 8.8km, and an elevation of 584m. The population is about 80. As I briefly explained in the "Access", you need to be prepared to go here. The only ferry that goes to Tokara Islands (Toshima Village), where Akuseki Island is located, is the village-run ferry "Ferry Toshima", which usually departs from Kagoshima Port only twice a week. From Kagoshima Port, you can take the ferry that leaves on Monday or Friday. Each will arrive at the island the following day.

If you want to go to Kagoshima Port from the island, you can take the ferry on Wednesday or Sunday. However, it is highly recommended that you book your accommodation for the last day in Kagoshima if you live outside of Kagoshima, because the ferry arrives at Kagoshima Port late at night.





The island is also reluctant to engage in tourism. On the day of the Boze, all the people on the island come together to prepare for the Boze, and they shut down all the guest houses. This is the reason why the island has refused to allow tourists to come to the island. However, this changed in 2009 when the solar eclipse occurred. At that time, a very large number of visitors came and brought a lot of benefits to the island. Since then, the island has been actively accepting visitors during the Bose period. Nowadays, tours are also organized.

## **“Boze” festival**

Usually people call it the Boze Festival, but it's actually a Bon dance. It is also a valuable dance that has been passed down from generation to generation and is unique to this island. The festival is held for three days starting on July 14 of the lunar calendar. On the evening of the last day of the festival, the masked god Boze suddenly appears.



<https://hanatsubaki.shiseido.com/jp/trip/622/>



<https://hanatsubaki.shiseido.com/jp/trip/622/>

Boze wears a strange mask made of a bamboo basket with gods and other objects pasted on it. He wears leaves of a palm tree wrapped around his body. In his hands, he holds a stick called a “bozemala.” This stick has red clay on its tip.



At the end of the dance, they suddenly appear out of the forest. They chase the people around. Children and women are especially prone to attack, as it is believed that if they are poked with the sticks, they will become healthy and have children. Then, after throwing everyone around into confusion, he vanishes into nowhere. In the past, everything was burned down right away, but nowadays, they are left for while to take a photo with tourists later. The dance continues throughout the night.



<https://hanatsubaki.shiseido.com/jp/trip/622/>



<https://hanatsubaki.shiseido.com/jp/trip/622/>

**What is “Boze” ?**





<https://www.kagoshima-kankou.com/event/20278/>

What is this “boze” that destroys Bon dance, causing chaos and leaving like a whirlwind? According to one theory, they are responsible for returning the souls of the dead to stay forever in the other world after life. Others say it is a way to purge the surroundings of the souls of the dead. No one knows the real reason now. The only thing I know for sure is that his appearance is nothing like any other masked deity in Japan. I think it’s worth a visit to check out the human imagination.

## Escaping from the real world

There is also a rare hot spring here called Underwater Hot Springs. There is also a hot spring with a view of the sea. There is also a jungle-like walkway. Even if you wanted to go home, you couldn’t until the ferry arrived. You just get lost



in a different world where strange monsters rule. It's not a bad idea to have such a summer once in a lifetime.



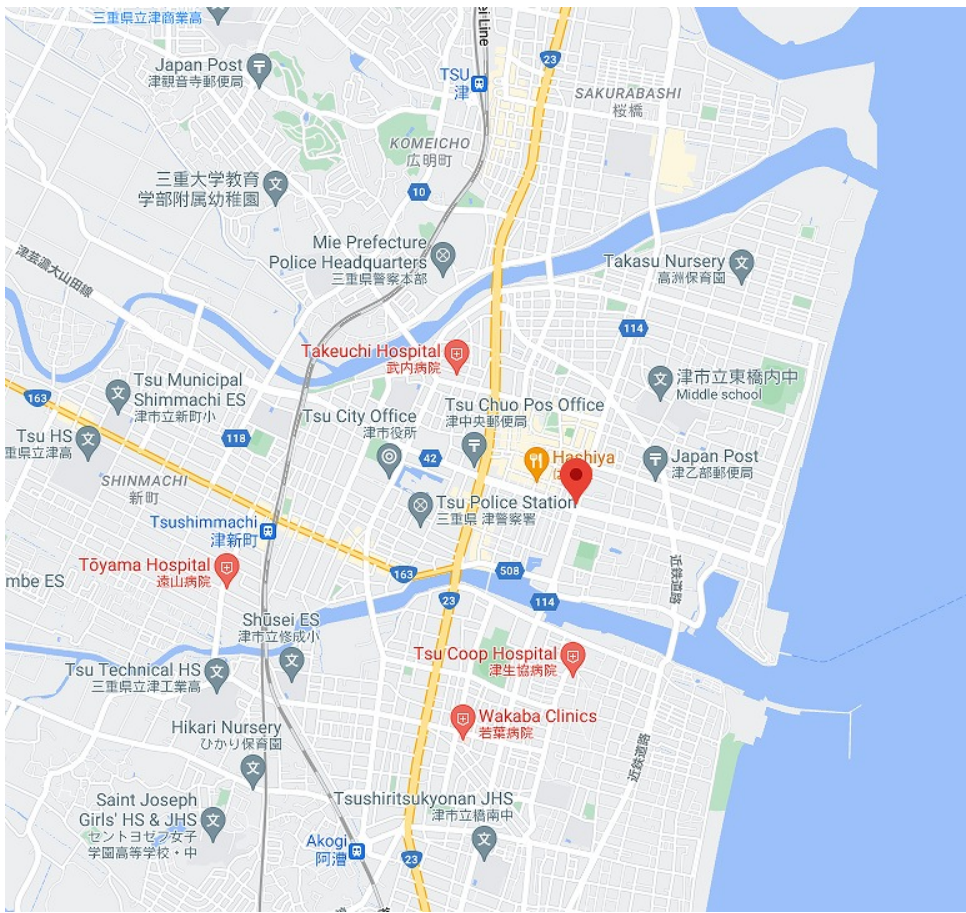
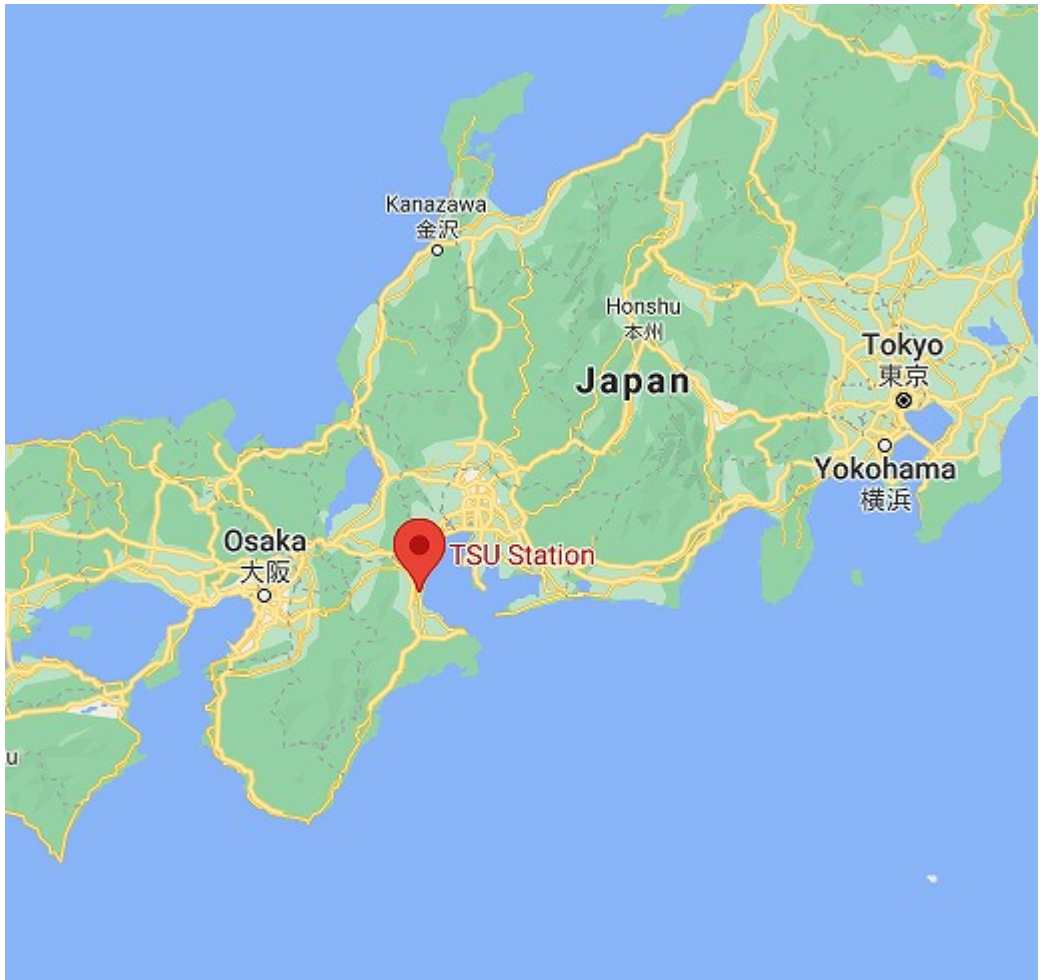




<http://www.tokara.jp/tourism/profile/akusekijima/>

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## **Strange characters in “Tsu festival”**





**Date:** Saturday and Sunday around October 10

**Location:** around the castle, Phoenix Street, etc.

**Access:** Just over an hour from Kintetsu Nagoya to Tsu Shinmachi

## Tsu, the city and the port

The present Mie Prefecture used to be called “Ise 伊勢”. Its center is Tsu 津. There is an old saying, “It is Tsu that supports Ise, and it is Ise that supports Tsu.” The shortest name in Japan, “Tsu,” means port. And when we think of Ise, we all think of Ise grand shrine. In the 17th century, when travel became popular, paying a visit to the Ise grand shrine became an excuse to travel. The previous phrase means that Tsu prospered as a gateway because of the Ise grand shrine, and the Ise shrine prospered because of the port of Tsu.

## Tsu festival



<https://tabiiro.jp/leisure/s/201416-tsu-tsumatsuri/>



<https://tsumatsuri.info/>

In Tsu, there is a very strange performing folk art that uses masks. Tsu holds a folk performing art that is rare in Japan. These are “Shagouma” and “Tojin Odori”. They are performed at the Tsu Festival.

The history of Tsu festival dates back to the early 17th century. The lord who ruled the area moved the Hachiman shrine in 1632. Five years later the festival began. And the feudal lord himself donated money to the shrine, and the festival began to be held with the interest from that money. Since the fall of the samurai regime in the 19th century, the festival has continued to be held, although there have been some changes in the offering. In the old days, there were many masquerade parades and floats. Today, it is a place for the Daimyo processions (the feudal lords’ processions) and various entertainment performances. World War Ⅱ burned down all the floats and decorations. Among them, the ones we will introduce here are “Shagouma” and “Tojin Odori 〆〆〆〆”.

## Shagouma 〆〆〆〆





<http://tokowaka-tsucity.jp/www/tokyo/contents/1536022099733/index.html>

“Shagouma” is a folk performing art that resembles a mounted warrior. Originally, it was an actual mounted warrior who walked as a guard at festivals. They disappeared with the end of the samurai era, but somehow they have remained as a folk art until now. They wear a wig made of red dyed yak hair on their heads. It is said that the purpose of this wig is to gain divine power through this hair. Then they put on a jinbaori (a traditional cloth worn) and a demon mask. Jinbaori is a special jacket worn by samurai during wars in the past. In spite of their shabby appearance, they wear papier-mâché in the shape of horses on their bodies as if they are swimming floats. They look like children playing at an amusement park.





[https://tsu-mingei.net/h30\\_shago/](https://tsu-mingei.net/h30_shago/)



[https://tsu-mingei.net/r1\\_shago/](https://tsu-mingei.net/r1_shago/)

The horses have reins attached to them, and while holding these reins, with the sound of hora shells they move with a



vigorous jumping motion, accompanied by the sound of drums and vigorous shouting in the background. Sometimes they attack children. This is why all the children living in this area are afraid of "Shagouma". Therefore, parents in this area scold their children when they misbehave, saying, "If you misbehave, Shagouma will come. They are so scary to the children, but the citizens love them. During the festival, they go around the city and perform in front of stores. Then they receive a congratulatory gift.

There is no similar art form in the whole country. It is a folk art unique to Tsu.



<https://www.asoview.com/spot/24201be2220092453/>



## Tojin-odori (Chinese dance) 中国舞

### Joseon missions

“Tojin 唐人” represents the old Chinese dynasty “Tang”, so the word Tojin originally meant Chinese. However, since the Tokugawa shogunate didn’t allow most foreigners to enter in the 17th century, it also became a name for foreigners in general.





<https://www.asahi.com/articles/photo/AS20171031000937.html>



### **Reenactment by people from Japan and Korea**

[https://www.chugoku-np.co.jp/blog/article/article.php?comment\\_id=6861&comment\\_sub\\_id=0&category\\_id=1104](https://www.chugoku-np.co.jp/blog/article/article.php?comment_id=6861&comment_sub_id=0&category_id=1104)

For this reason, the “Tojin odori” here at Tsu Festival refers to the Korean envoys. Because the Tokugawa Shogunate severely restricted trade with foreign countries, there were few opportunities for ordinary people to see foreigners. However, only the Korean delegation occasionally visited Japan and met the shogun. During the Tokugawa Shogunate, there are records of 12 visits. The foreign knowledge and culture they brought



was very important to Japan. They marched in a procession from Kyushu to Edo (Tokyo), which became a very popular topic among the common people. As a result, many people began to imitate them. The "Tojin Odori" of the Tsu Festival is said to be an imitation of this.

## Outline of "Tojin-odori"



<http://furusato-shinbun.jp/2013/04/04-30.html>





<https://www.info.city.tsu.mie.jp/www/contents/1001000000009/index.html>

Tojin-odori consists of 23 people in total. A flag bearer, a dancer, a general, and a bow and arrow bearer. They are accompanied by flutes, drums, and, unusually, buglers. Each one uses a different mask, so there are 23 different types in total. Some are smiling, some are angry, and there is a lot of variety. The clothes are also different, but only the dancers wear white. The dancer raises both hands upward and brings them together, then dances as if jumping while looking up to the sky. It is a strange dance, but people call it the “Dance of Joy” because of its appearance. The Tojin-dance also marches through the town during the festival, giving performances from time to time. Over the course of two days, they visit about 300 houses and receive congratulatory gifts. There is a museum in Wakebemachi wakebemachi, the birthplace of the dance, where you can see the masks and costumes at any time.

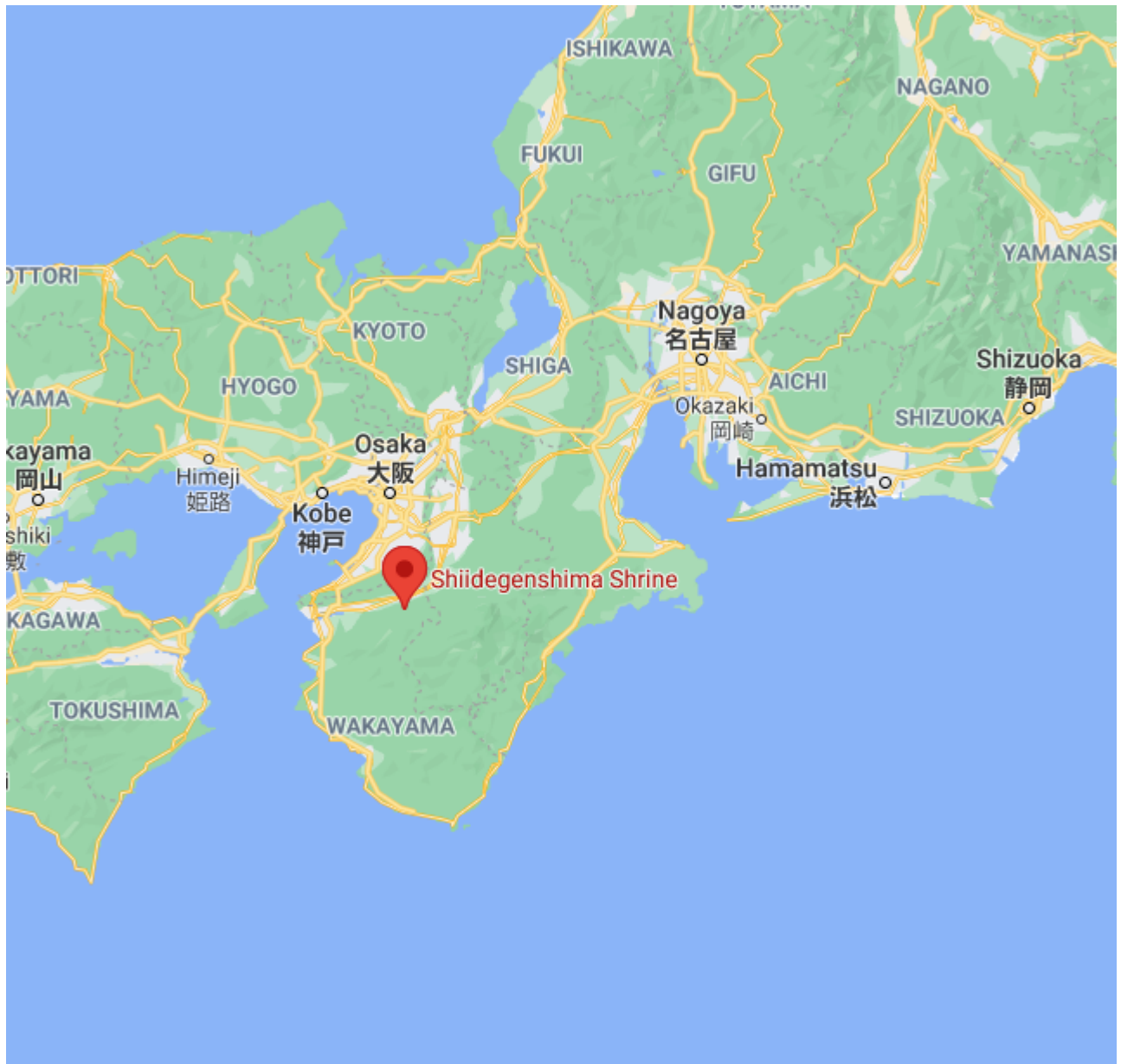


<https://ooishiyuu.hateblo.jp/entry/2015/10/22/%E6%97%A5%E6%9C%AC%E3%81%A7%E5%94%90%E4%BA%BA%E8%B8%8A%E3%82%8A%E3%81%8C%E6%AE%8B%E3%81%A3%E3%81%A6%E3%81%84%E3%82%8B%E3%81%AE%E3%81%AF%E3%80%81%E3%81%AA%E3%82%93%E3%81%A8%E3%80%81%E4%B8%89%E3%81%8Bcf.%20http://www.searchnavi.com/~hp/tojin/eng/>

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## 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 and Mount Hiei 比叡. 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.



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# Iga Ueno Tenjin Festival



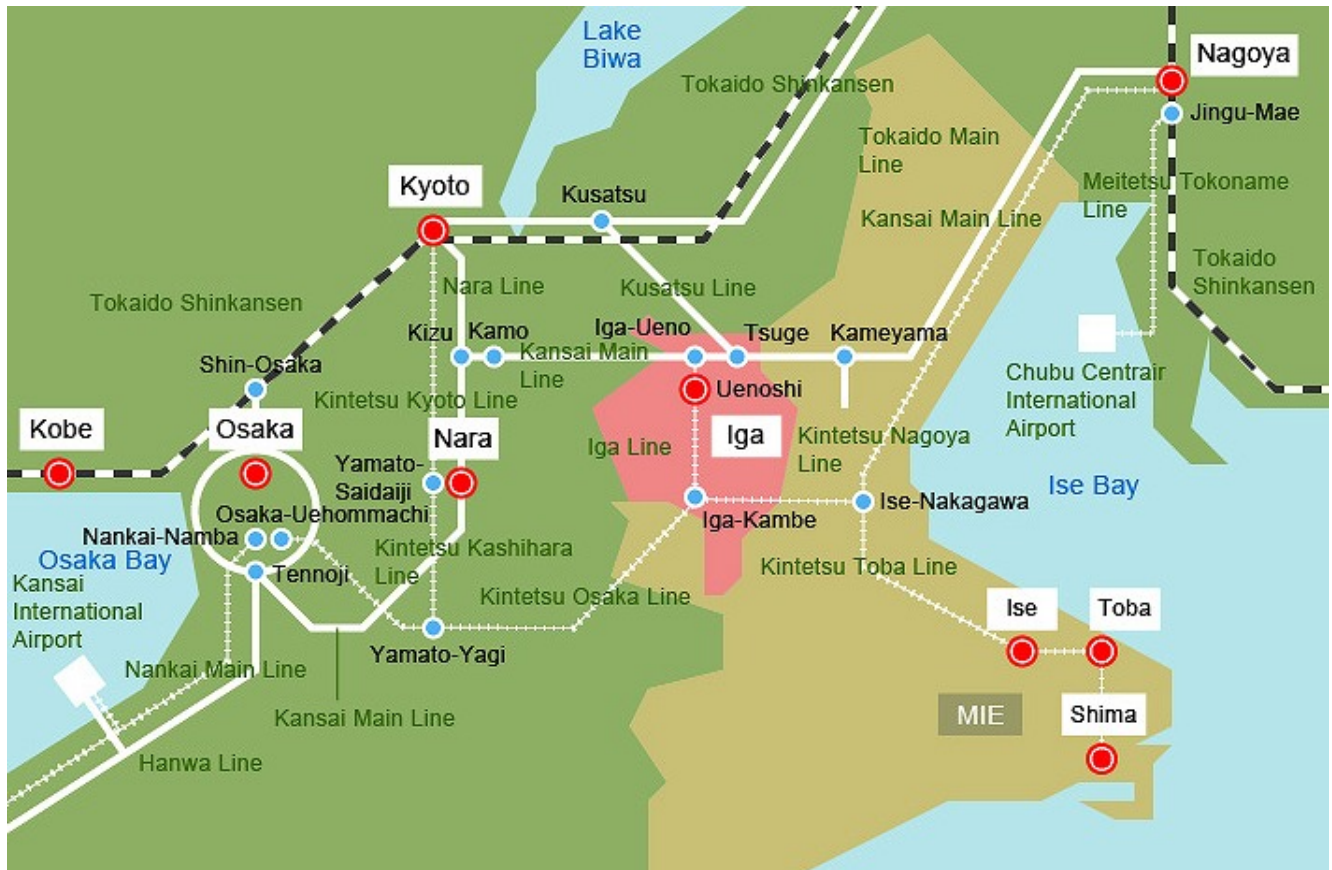


<https://igakanko.net/?p=173>



wide area map



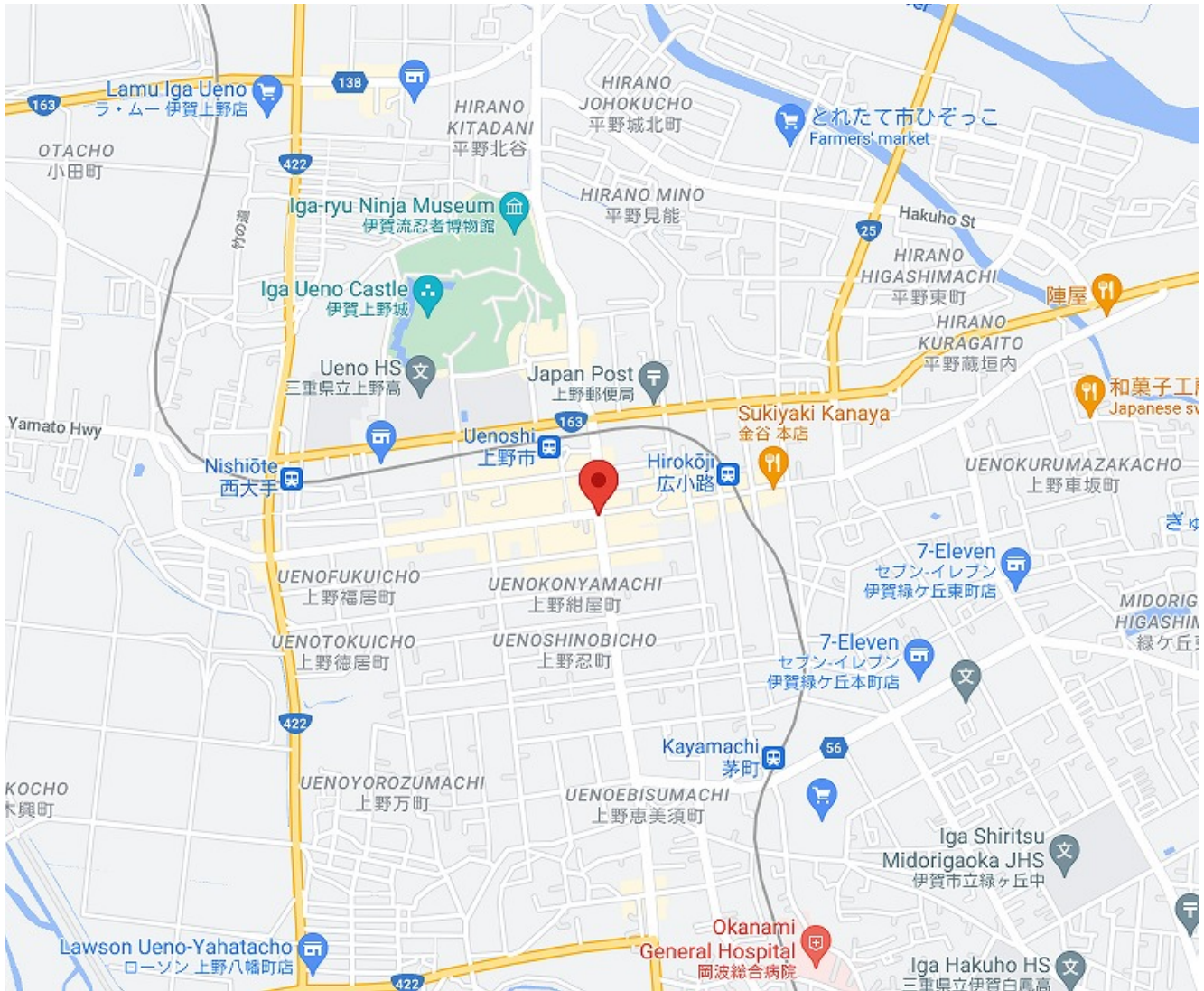


## transportation

**Date:** the Friday through Sunday closest to the 25th of October

**Location:** Iga Ueno city, Mie prefecture

**Access:** From Osaka or Kyoto, take Kintetsu or JR to Iga. Take the Kintetsu or JR train from Osaka or Kyoto to Iga, then change to the Iga Line to Iga-Ueno. It takes about two and a half hours. There are also direct buses from Tokyo, Nagoya and Osaka.



area map



route



# Outline

Recently, “ninjas” have become overwhelmingly popular among visitors to Japan. The “Iga Ueno Tenjin Festival” is held every autumn in this ninja village. In this festival, floats called “danjiri” and masked parades proceed through the town. The festival is held for the Ueno Tenjin Shrine. It has a long history, although there is a record that the festival was revived in 1660, it is not clear what happened before that. In the past, the people of the town performed Noh, Kyogen and other entertainments, which were watched by the lords from the castle. It was not until 1802 that the castle took on its present form. Today, there are nine floats (danjiri) and a procession of ogres (Oni) parading through the town.

## Schedule



**Danjiri through the town**

[https://www.kankomie.or.jp/event/detail\\_5285.html](https://www.kankomie.or.jp/event/detail_5285.html)



### night scene

<https://www.asoview.com/spot/24206ba2210131709/>

All events begin at the shrine during September. People determine the order of the Danjiri.

On **Friday**, people pull out and decorate the Danjiri in each town, and at night turn on the lights and begin to play the music, heightening the festive atmosphere.

On **Saturday**, a procession of ogres takes place from 2:00 to 4:00 in the afternoon. The Danjiri floats start at 1:00 pm and cruise around the town until 4:00 pm. They return to the shrine, the four units are in series, except that they proceed separately from west to east.

On Sunday, the festival takes place in the morning and afternoon, with the oni (ogres) parade, followed by the danjiri parade, cruising through the town all day long.

## Ogres procession





<https://www.ueno-tenjin-matsuri.com/>



<https://www.igaueno.net/?p=1224>

We cannot leave out the Oni parade. It is these demons that distinguish this festival from others and make it special. In all, about 100 demons walk. Sometimes the children don't wear

masks, but most use masks of some sort. There are many different types of masks, including traditional Noh and Kyogen masks as well as many unique masks. The procession is divided into two parts. The first is the part centered on the En no gyoja 延吉. The other part is centered on Minamoto no Tametomo 源朝朝. 源朝朝.

## En no gyoja group

En no gyoja, whose real name is En no Ozunu 延吉, is a real person, active in the latter half of the 7th century, and is considered to be the founder of today's Shugendo (Japanese mountain asceticism incorporating Shinto and Buddhist concept). However, he is too much of a legend to be a mysterious figure. To begin with, even in the actual history books authorized by the country, there are descriptions of him using demons as his minions. Once upon a time, the first lord of this area suffered from eye disease in his later years. It is said to be a memorial to the time when shugenja (mountain ascetics) went to the holy land of Shugendo to pray for his recovery.







<https://igakanko.net/?p=426>

And the most famous of all are the “hyorotsuki oni (their legs are wobbly)”. They carry large objects on their backs and move left and right. Children will be amazed and adults will laugh. They are also meant to keep the spectators in line at the edge of the street.



<https://igakanko.net/?p=426>



<http://www.tougeizanmai.com/tabitetyou/016/17tenjinmaturi.htm>







<http://www.tougeizanmai.com/tabitetyou/016/17tenjinmaturi.htm>

## Minamoto Tametomo group



Minamoto no Tametomo 源朝高

<https://www.ueno-tenjin-matsuri.com/>

The Tametomo Group is a procession led by Minamoto Tametomo.

In the past, the samurai were largely divided into the Taira 平 and Minamoto 源 clans. Minamoto no Yoritomo 源頼朝 was the one who later opened the first samurai government. His uncle was Tametomo. He is also a man of many legends, and is said to have confronted the demons that appeared to him with impunity.



<https://igakanko.net/?p=173>



<https://www.ueno-tenjin-matsuri.com/>

## Ending

Iga-Ueno is an old castle town. Just walking around the town has its own charm. There is also a ninja museum nearby, where you can watch ninja shows. Whether before or after the festival, it is a good idea to experience the ninja.





**Iga Ueno castle**

<https://www.igaueno.net/?p=89>



<https://retro.useless-landscape.com/archives/10629>



<https://www.iganinja.jp/>





cf. <https://www.ueno-tenjin-matsuri.com/lang/en/> about  
festival official sight  
<https://igakanko.net/?p=173>  
[https://www.iganinja.jp/?page\\_id=837](https://www.iganinja.jp/?page_id=837) about Ninja Museum

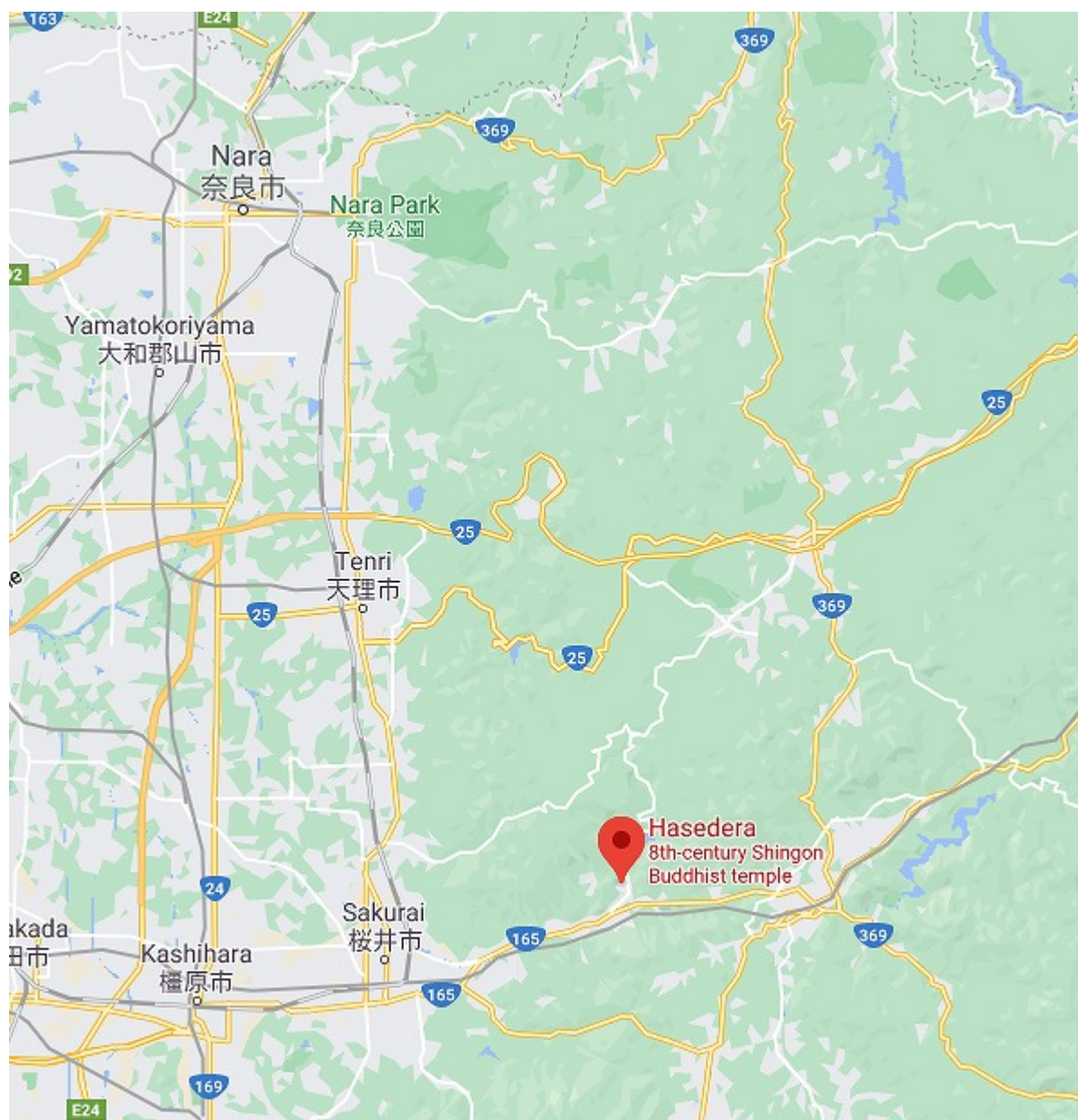
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# Dadaoshi at the Hasedera temple

**Date:** February 14th, every year

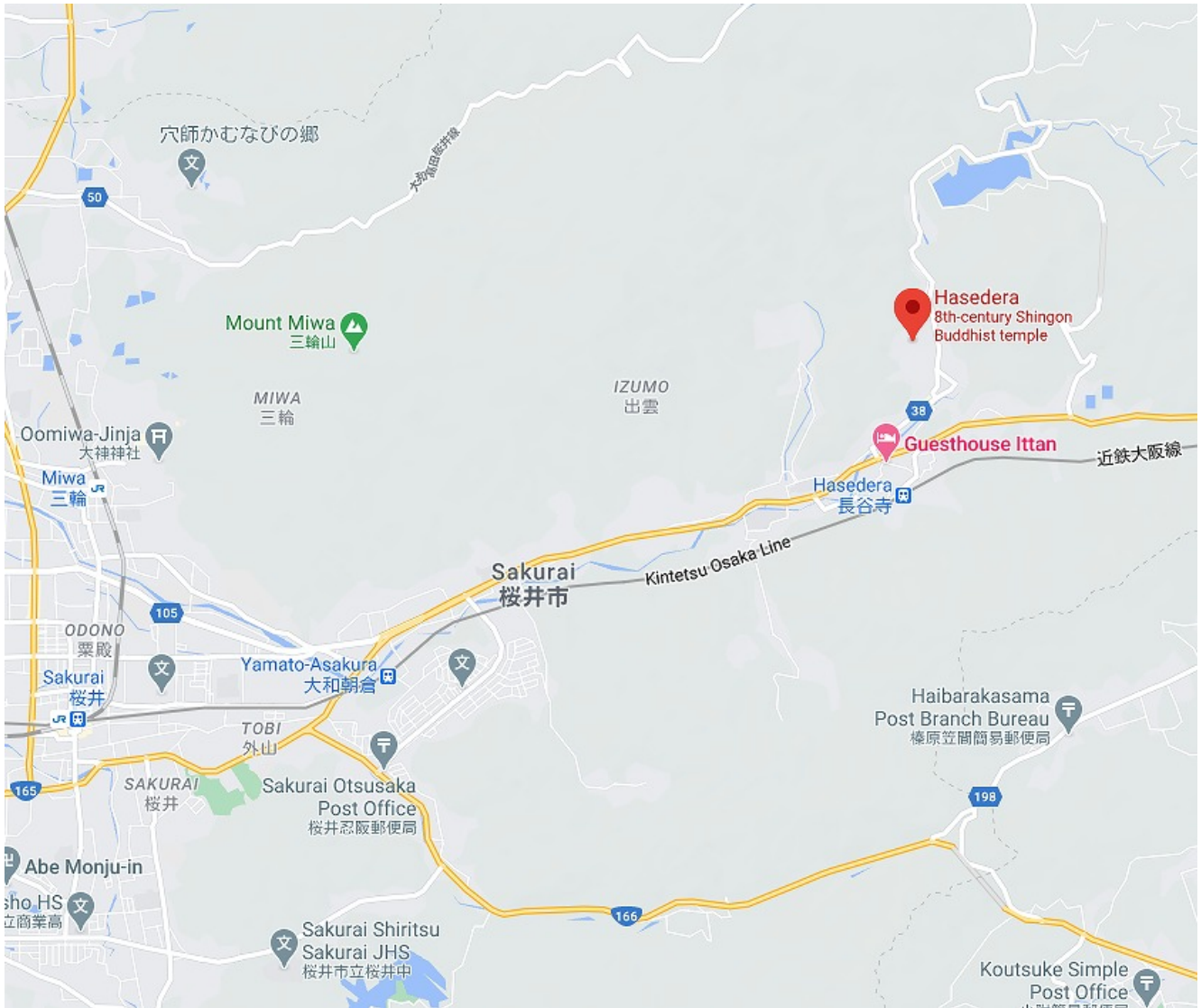
**Location:** Hatsuse 731-1, Sakurai city, Nara prefecture

**Access:** A 15-minute walk from Kintetsu Hasedera Station. Or take the JR Manyo Mahoroba Line to Sakurai Station. From there, take the Nara Kotsu bus to Hasedera Sando-guchi. It is a 10-minute walk from the bus stop.



from Nara





## around Sakurai city

Hasedera temple is located in a slightly out-of-the-way place in Nara. The temple was founded in 686. It is a very old temple. There are many temples and shrines like this in Nara. Todaiji temple, famous for the Great Buddha, was built in 741, so it is older than that. If Todaiji Temple is famous for the Great Buddha, Hasedera temple is famous for the Kannon (Goddess of Mercy), which is said to have been created in 727, but was destroyed by fire several times, and the current statue was rebuilt in 1538.



<https://www.hasedera.or.jp/free/?id=531>

Dadaoshi" is the final stage of the annual event, called "Shunie 神無" held at this temple in February to drive out demons.





<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/0mizutori>

Shuni-e is a Buddhist ritual that began in the Nara period (710-794), where people repent before the Buddha for the sins they have committed during the year without knowing. It is held in various places, but the most famous one is at Todaiji Temple. The ceremony, commonly called “0mizutori,” is held for two weeks from the first day of March, the most famous being the 13th. The most famous ceremony is held on the 13th, which usually lasts about 10 minutes, but lasts 45 minutes on this day. Because of the large number of spectators, admission is sometimes restricted. I won’t go into detail about it here, so please confer another site.

Cf.→<https://www.japan-guide.com/e/e4110.html>

Now, even though it’s not that big, the most famous one is “Dadaoshi”.

The Shuni-e at this temple started about a week ago, and the last day will be on the 14th. Around 3:00 p.m., monks bring the seven treasures in the main hall and the ceremony begins.

The monks run around the hall and so on. This does not mean they are being idle, nor are they pressed for time. This ritual is supposed to take place in the virtual world of the Buddha, called "tosotsuten," where things move hundreds of times faster than in the human world, so they are trying to catch up as much as possible. After four o'clock in the afternoon, the last treasure, called "Gofuda," is taken out. This is the most powerful talisman that the founder of the temple received from Enma, the king of hell, a long time ago. When it appears, the demons (ogres), who have finally lost their patience, come running out.



<https://www.hasedera.or.jp/free/?id=531>





<https://omatsurijapan.com/blog/dadaoshi/>

There are a total of three types of ogre masks. The blue and green masks are relatively recent, but only the red mask was made in the Edo period. The red mask is different from the other masks in terms of power. The red mask represents this event, so it is often seen on the posters. It is not only different in size, but also in carving technique and outstanding expressiveness.

Then, the Buddhist monk presses something called a “danda-in” on the forehead of the attendant. At this point, the demons, unable to take it anymore, run out toward the cloister. This Danda stamp is said to be the origin of the word “Dadaoshi.



<http://xn--54qt8q919aucg.jp/dadaoshi/>



<http://nara-tabikura.jp/960/>

The most powerful part is the big torch that follows behind



the ogres. A large torch is said to weigh more than 150 kg, and it takes four people to carry it. As a result, the torches swing left and right, and fire sparks fall on the audience each time. It is said that being exposed to these fire sparks will keep people healthy, but it is necessary to be very careful about how you dress. So, a firefighter sprinkles water right behind torches and chases after them. These can be viewed outside the hall, on the cloister side, for an entrance fee only, or you can watch the ceremony inside the hall by applying for a paid Goufuda.



<https://www.nara-np.co.jp/news/20210216093755.html>

And finally, the red ogre, the last boss, comes out. The people playing the role of the demons are said to have drunk sake to cheer themselves up before appearing on stage, so they wander around the corridors, scaring people.

The rhapsody lasts about 15 minutes. By 5:00 p.m., it was all over. After that, everything goes back to normal in an instant. People take the burnt-out torches home as a souvenir. When this ceremony is over, spring will soon arrive in the area.



<https://twitter.com/kotonomaakari/status/1360818739910909956>





<https://omatsurijapan.com/blog/dadaoshi/>

Surprisingly, this main hall is actually a national treasure. Hase Temple is also dotted with various other facilities such as a five-story pagoda, and it is also a temple of flowers where seasonal flowers bloom all year round. The long staircase leading to the main hall is the most beautiful part of the temple. It's worth taking a short walk to see. A different kind of Nara. A different kind of Japan. That's what you'll find here.





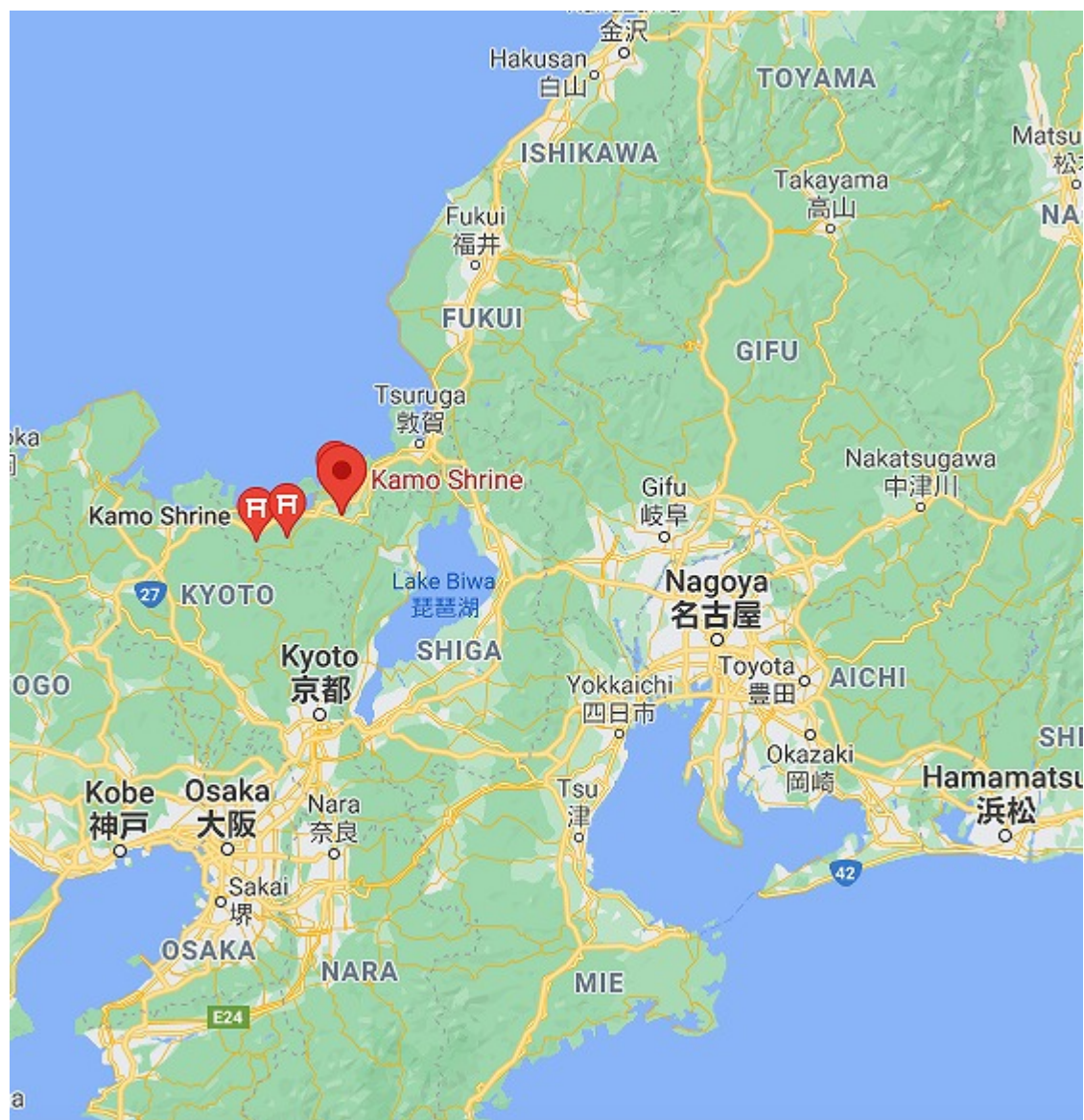


<https://www.youkamiuryu.com/blog/dadaoshi-2019-2-14>

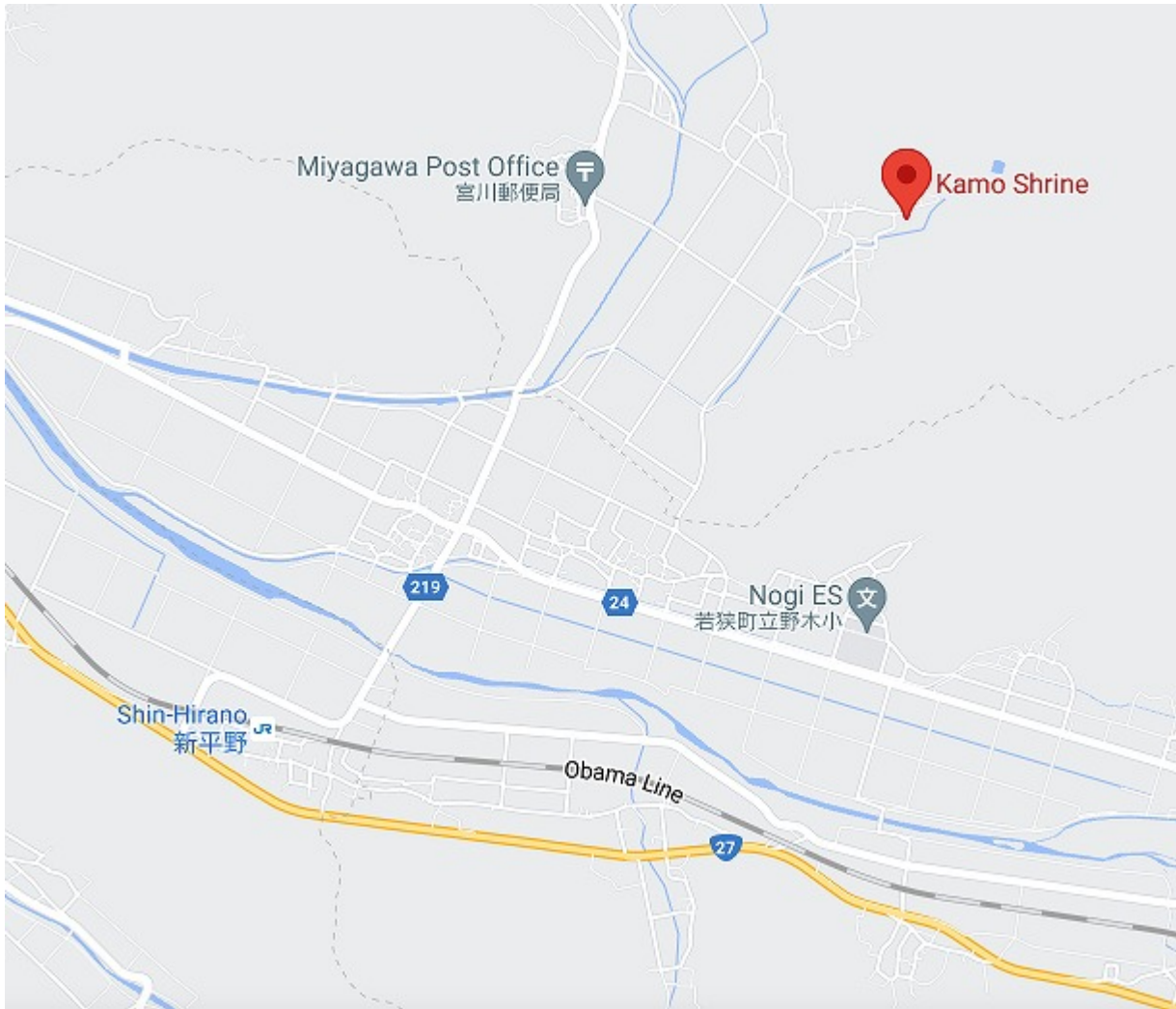
**prefer:** <https://www.hasedera.or.jp/free/?id=345> official site

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**Ogre and other characters run rampant in Obama Nakanata**







**Date:** Last Sunday in September (The Sunday before October 2)

**Location:** Kamo 町, Obama city, Fukui Prefecture

**Access:** It takes about one hour from Kyoto to Tsuruga 市 by express train. From there, change to the Obama Line and it takes about an hour to get to Shin Hirano 駅.

## Outline of Festival



[http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post\\_27.html](http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post_27.html)





### **The kamo shrine**

[http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post\\_27.html](http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post_27.html)

The father of Japanese folklore says a festival was originally a simple way of worshipping a god. Eventually, when people came to travel to other areas and learned what was going on in other areas, they became more ingenious to make their own even better. He said they began to hold festivals more flamboyantly, more lavishly, and more lively. It is easy to imagine that many different types would have been created in such a process. And once an interesting one was created, the people around it would naturally copy it. In Japanese festivals, there is definitely a field of chasing and battling. It is mainly centered in western Japan, and can be found in Hiroshima, Osaka, and many other places. This was probably born as one of the models in such a flow. This is one of them. The festival is a very simple form. A small float in the form of a portable shrine on a car is pulled around and paraded through the town with people who play flute and drums



(They are collectively called “Kagura” here).



[http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post\\_27.html](http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post_27.html)



<https://wakasabay.jp/articles/-/65>



At the shrine, girls perform an elegant traditional dance wishing for peace in the country. That's it in a nutshell. There are no extravagant floats, and no fancy events. But that's the way most festivals are held. Just what kind of characters will appear depends on the creativity of the district.

## Characters



**Yase**

<http://fuutaronosekai.blog130.fc2.com/blog-entry-410.html>



## Hyottoko and Okame

<https://wakasa15thfd.wordpress.com/2015/09/29/%e5%b0%8f%e6%b5%9c%e4%b8%ad%e5%90%8d%e7%94%b0%e3%83%bb%e5%8a%a0%e8%8c%82%e7%a5%9e%e7%a4%be%e4%be%8b%e7%a5%ad2015/>

There are a total of four types that appear at this festival. "The demon called "yase," the hyottoko, the okame, and the choroken. "**Hyottoko**" and "**Okame**" are two of the most popular festival characters. They entertain people with their comical movements. (For more information, please see

The word "**yase**" is a corruption of "yasha." Yasha is an Indian deity and one of the guardian deities in Buddhism. In this "Yasha" group is "Kishimojin". In order to feed her own children, Kishimojin kidnaps many human children and feeds them to her children. When the Buddha saw this, he hid her child and made her realize how sad it was to lose a child. The story goes that since then she has become the goddess of children and safe childbirth. In this festival, he appears as a red and blue masked demon, holding a long stick. They chase and beat children who make fun of them. They are almost always drunk, so even if you hit them lightly, they feel a lot of pain. But when they visit nurseries and kindergartens, everyone is scared when they come, but after they leave,



everyone wants to play “Yase” games.

“**Choroken**” is the most popular character in this festival. “Choroken is an art form that emerged in the latter half of the Edo period (the samurai government under the Tokugawa shogun). During the New Year’s holidays, the performers would go door to door to perform their art and receive congratulatory gifts. After the end of the samurai government and the beginning of a new era, people turned a blind eye to them, saying that their antics were not appropriate for the new era, and they eventually disappeared around the time of the approaching war. It was a regional art form, mainly in Osaka and Kyoto. Here he appears in a red hat, red clothes, and a tengu-like mask.

They begin to go through the town with the portable shrine on tall casters from 10 am to 3 pm. At last, they perform at the shrine.



## Choroken

<https://wakasa15thfd.wordpress.com/2015/09/29/%e5%b0%8f%e6%b5%9c%e4%b8%ad%e5%90%8d%e7%94%b0%e3%83%bb%e5%8a%a0%e8%8c%82%e7%a5%9e%e7%a4%be%e4%be%8b%e7%a5%ad2015/>



“Choroken” Old printing



“Choroken” Old toy

## Around this area

There are also scenic spots and old townscapes (designated by the government as a preservation area) in the vicinity. There is a quiet, unspoiled Japan that is not often visited. A little further away (about 15 kilometers), there are beautiful terraced rice fields that are lit up during the festival



season. It is definitely worth a visit.



Old town "Obama"

[https://www.jalan.net/kankou/spt\\_18204ad2150017111/?screenId=0UW1701&influxKbn=0](https://www.jalan.net/kankou/spt_18204ad2150017111/?screenId=0UW1701&influxKbn=0)



Illuminated terraced rice paddies.

<http://yumewakanau.com/2018/10/23/%e7%94%b0%e7%83%8f%e3%81%ae%e6%a3%9a%e7%94%b0%ef%bc%88%e5%b0%8f%e6%b5%9c%e5%b8%82%ef%bc%89/>

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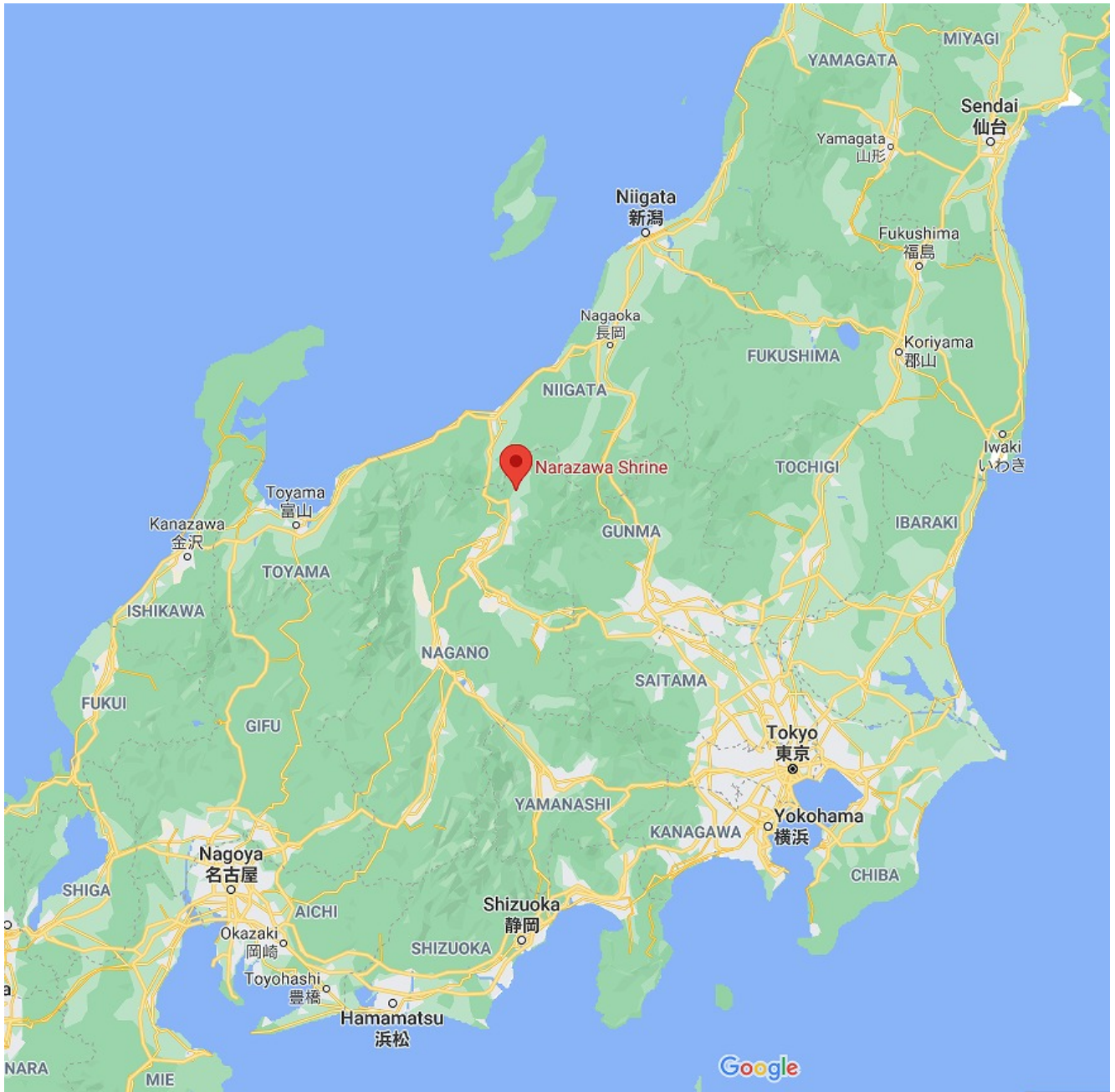
# Narasawa shrine festival ~Tengu swings big torch

**Date:** the 3rd Saturday and Sunday, September (every year)

**Location:** Iiyama Narasawa, Iiyama city, Nagano prefecture  
around the Narasawa shrine

**Access:** It's about ten minutes walk from Iiyama station (JR  
Iiyama line or Shinkansen)







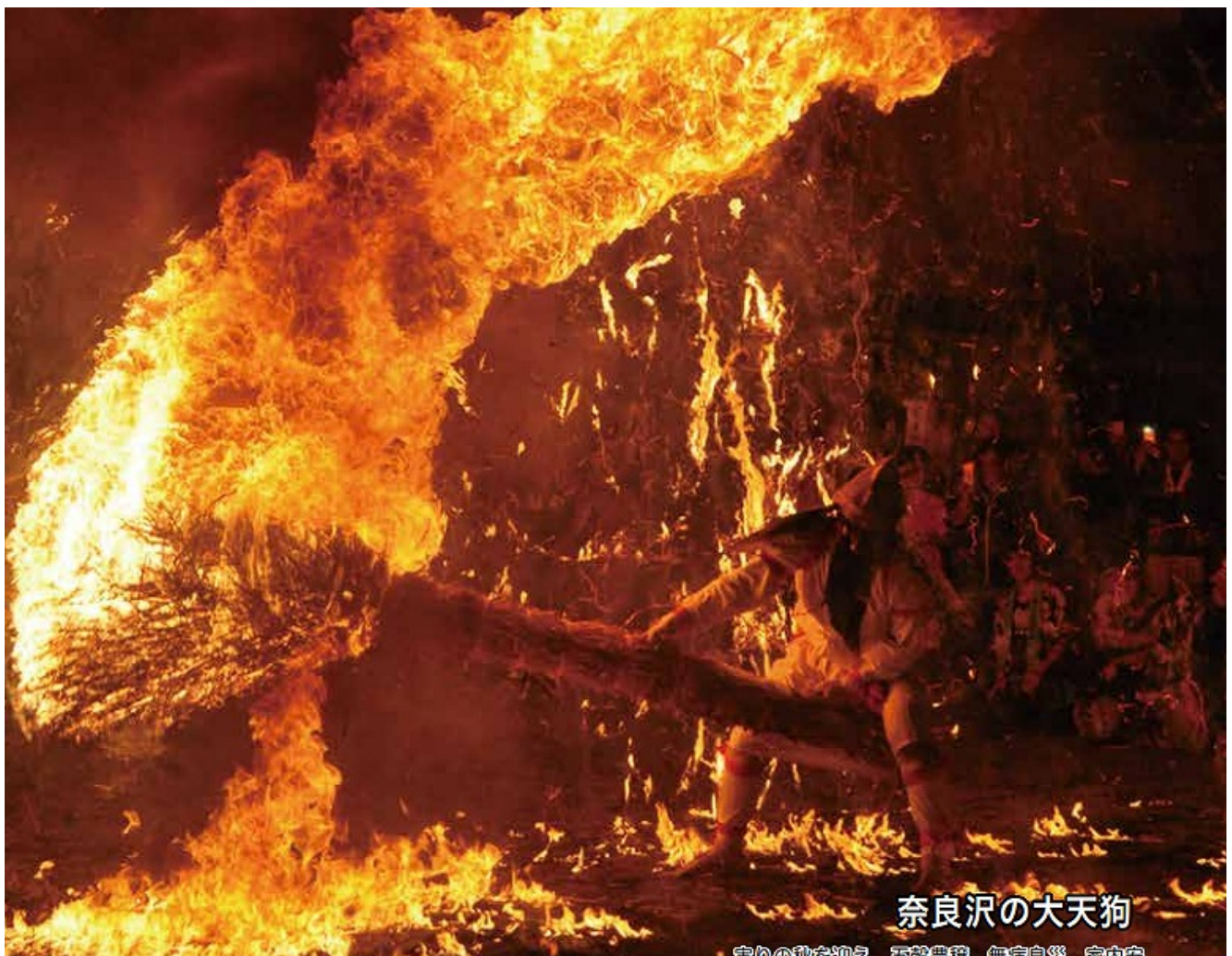
Fire has fascinated people since its discovery. Therefore, there are many festivals that use fire. [https://www.google.com/search?q=japanese+fire+festival&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwj0o4uE1JPwAhUaE4gKHccaB8cQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=fire+festival+Ja&gs\\_lcp=CgNpbWcQARgBMgIIADIGCAAQCBAeMgYIABAIEB4yBggAEAoQGDIECAAQGDogCAAQBBA1ogUIABCxAzoICAAQsQMqgwE6BwgAELEDEAQ6BAgAEAQ6CggAELEDEIMBEAQ6BAgAEENQoZ8EW02CBWDTpgVoAXAAeAGAAVWIAeUNkgECMjSYAQCGAQGqAQtnD3Mtd2l6LWltZ7ABAMABAQ&sclient=img&ei=HF6CYM6lEJqmoATHtZy4DA&bih=900&biw=1902](https://www.google.com/search?q=japanese+fire+festival&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwj0o4uE1JPwAhUaE4gKHccaB8cQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=fire+festival+Ja&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQARgBMgIIADIGCAAQCBAeMgYIABAIEB4yBggAEAoQGDIECAAQGDogCAAQBBA1ogUIABCxAzoICAAQsQMqgwE6BwgAELEDEAQ6BAgAEAQ6CggAELEDEIMBEAQ6BAgAEENQoZ8EW02CBWDTpgVoAXAAeAGAAVWIAeUNkgECMjSYAQCGAQGqAQtnD3Mtd2l6LWltZ7ABAMABAQ&sclient=img&ei=HF6CYM6lEJqmoATHtZy4DA&bih=900&biw=1902) Among them, this site introduces a magnificent festival in Nagano Prefecture, where Tengu wields large torches.

Surrounded by mountains on all sides and close to Tokyo,



Nagano Prefecture has been known as a summer resort and a ski resort. Iiyama City, although a mountainous area, is not too badly accessible from Tokyo, too. It only takes about 1 hour and 40 minutes to get there by Shinkansen. The cost is about 8-9,000 yen (as of 2021). If you take the highway bus, you can get to Nagano Station and then take the JR train, which costs about 6,000 yen.

These are the kinds of places where the performing arts tend to remain. A number of festivals still exist in this area. One of the most famous is the “Narasawa Shrine Festival”. First of all, please look at the following pictures.



<https://www.city.iiyama.nagano.jp/assets/files/shomu/koho/26/26.10/1.pdf>

This is the “Great Torch of Tengu” that makes the festival so famous.

When people see this, they wonder what the heck they are

doing. What the hell are you doing? It is true that at festivals, things often happen that don't make sense. But this just makes it look like they are trying to start a fire.

The festival takes place in the form of a group of people going around the village to sanctify it. Then, while celebrating newly built houses, etc., they proceed to the shrine while cutting the closures set up in several places. At that time, they perform a variety of entertainments. The Tengu wielding the torch is also a move to cut through this barrier.

Let's take a closer look. The festival takes place over two days, but the performances are the same on both days. But the starting point and the course are different, although the ending point for both days is the shrine. The group forms a circle when they come to a place where there is a barrier rope. They perform



**a barrier of a rope**

<http://airborn-foozin-hikarat77.blog.jp/tag/%E5%A5%88%E8%89%AF%E6%B2%A2%E7%A5%9E%E7%A4%BE>





**the group of the performers**

<http://airborn-foozin-hikarat77.blog.jp/archives/12349340.html>  
l(A)



**the dance of "Kotengu"**  
from same as above A



<https://ameblo.jp/mto193914/entry-12308256417.html>(B)

the dance of “Kotengue”. Also known as “Yumitengu”. In this dance, a red-faced Tengu with a bow and arrow tries to shoot arrows in all directions, but a black-faced Karasu Tengu stops him. The words are spoken, the music continues to play, and the young people around the dance continue to call out to each other.



from source A





from source A

And the lion dance. Finally, a large torch is lit, and the Tengu swings it as he heads toward the barrier rope. The power of the flames makes it easier to cut the rope, and at the end he cuts it off with his sword. It started around 6:00 p.m. and ended around 1:00 a.m. with the last performance at the shrine.

This has become one of the representative arts of the area, and is performed every year at the Snow Festival held in February, too.



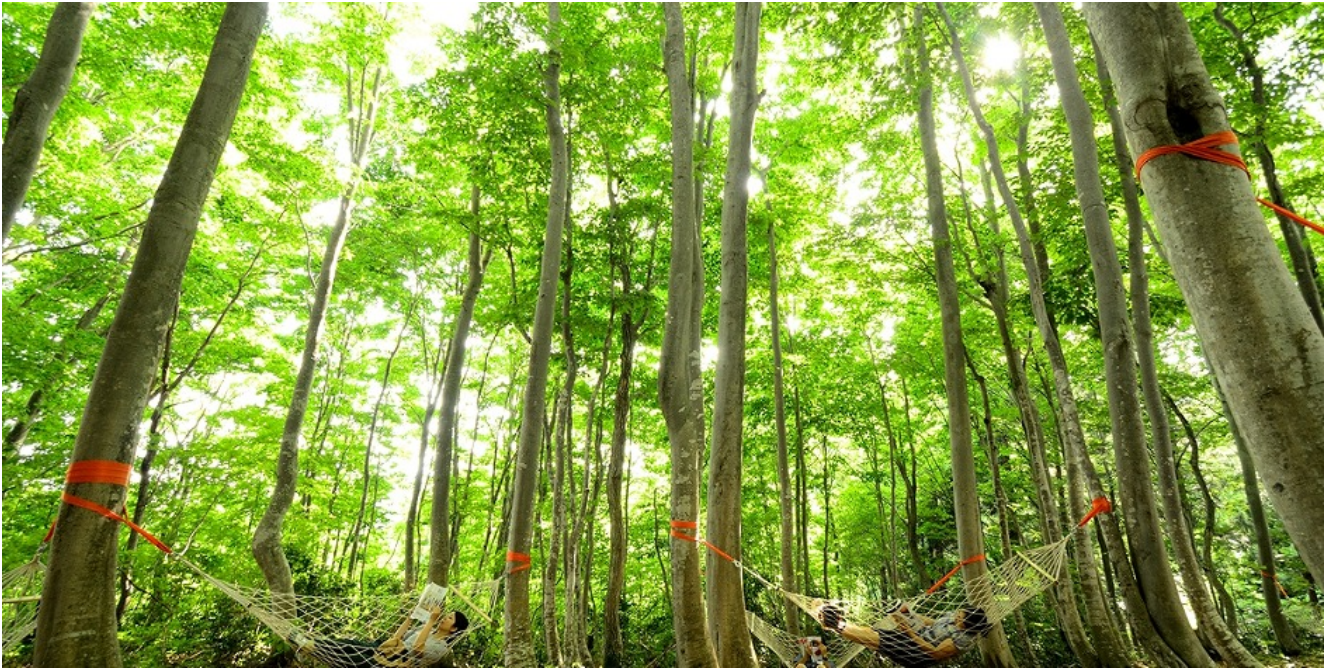
## **Iiyama Snow festival**

[https://www.go-nagano.net/topics\\_detail11/id=17568](https://www.go-nagano.net/topics_detail11/id=17568)

Iiyama is not preserved under the Important Preservation District for Collective Traditional Buildings, but it still retains its old-fashioned townscape. There is also no shortage of cycling and hiking trails in the area. There are also hot springs nearby.







<https://www.iiyama-ouendan.net/en/>



It is also close to the famous Jigokudani Wild Monkey Park, which has been gaining popularity in recent years, even among tourists from overseas. This place has been attracting a lot of attention because in winter, wild monkeys can be seen



soaking in the hot springs.

Watching monkeys, soaking in hot springs, and spending quiet time in the rich nature. And at night, you get ecstatic joining the heat of the festival. Such is the Japan that awaits you in Iiyama.

**Preffer:** <https://www.iiyama-ouendan.net/en/>  
<https://en.jigokudani-yaenkoen.co.jp/>

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## Gojinjo Daiko



**Date:** 31st, July and 1st, August (Nafune festival)

**Location:** Nafune town, Wajima city, Ishikawa prefecture

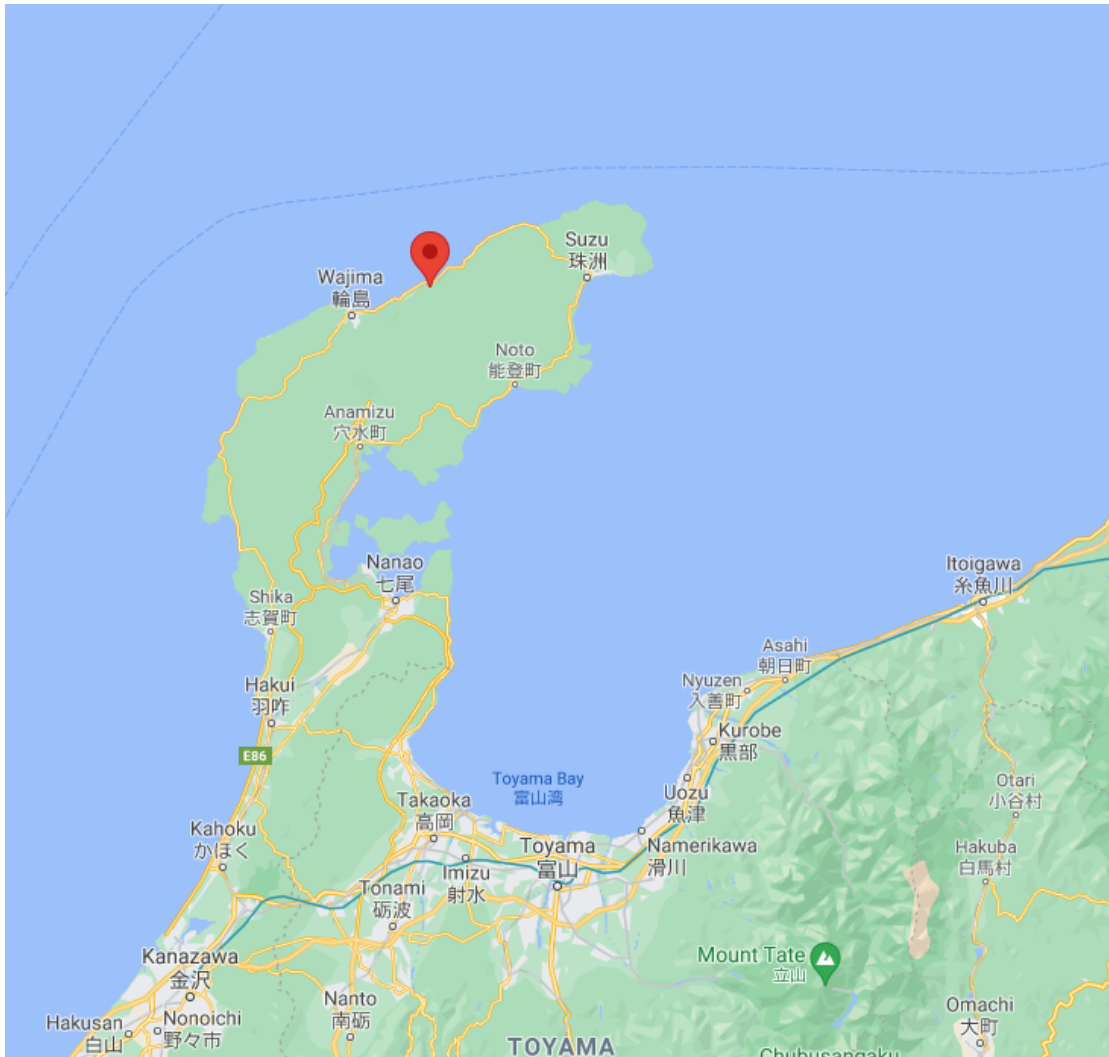
**Access:** About 1 hour by airplane from Haneda (Tokyo) to Noto Satoyama airport



or It takes 1 hour by JR Nanao line from Kanazawa to Wakura Onsen, and 40 minutes by Noto line to Anamizu



**Ishikawa prefecture**



**Noto peninsula**



**Yasha (female monster)**

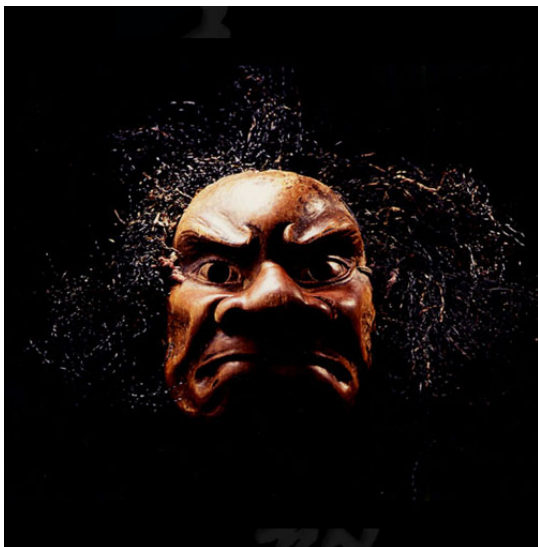




**Jiji (aged man)**



Jiji



Jiji





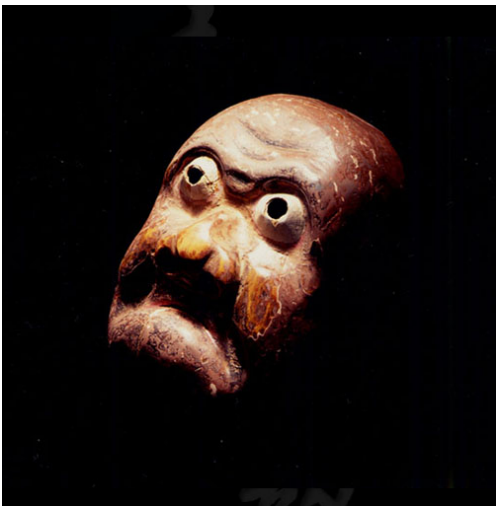
**Otoko yurei (male ghost)**



**Onna yurei (female ghost)**



**Otoko yurei**



**Daruma (priest)**

All images from [http://www.gojinjodaiko.jp/en\\_top.html](http://www.gojinjodaiko.jp/en_top.html)

Gojinjo Daiko (drums) 五井浄土太鼓 is the most famous traditional folk performance group in Noto region. Eight drummers appear one after the other to beat a single drum. All of them wear bizarre masks and their hair is made of seaweed or horse hair. They play a rhythm based on beginning, middle portion, and denouement. They repeat it over and over again. Sometimes they make strange noises, sometimes they strike menacing poses.

As for why they started using such strange masks, here is the origin. Once upon a time, there was a powerful warlord named



Uesugi Kenshin 上杉謙信 who ruled the wide area including Niigata and Ishikawa prefectures. When his army finally invaded this area, the farmers, who had no defense, came up with a plan. They wore masks made of wood and hair made of seaweed, and played drums to intimidate them. The fearful army turned back. Since then, the performance has been passed down from generation to generation by the men who protect the area. Currently, they have formed a preservation society comprising about 20 members. All of them are from the town of Nafune. Only those born and raised in the area are allowed to carry on the Gojinjo-daiko tradition. Regardless of the restrictions, the rhythms of the taiko are complex and difficult to master unless one has grown up listening to them from childhood.

Since they are a popular group, they are invited to various events. However, one of the most prestigious and nerve-wracking events for them is a performance at the local Nafune Grand Festival.

This is a small village with only about 200 residents. More than 10,000 people gather for the festival. Even those who have left the village come back only for the festival.



**Kiriko lines in festival**  
image from the site above



**a image of Kiriko**

At the Nafune Grand Festival, many people come to see the Gojinjo-daiko. On the first day of the festival, from around 9:00 p.m., a large number of people carrying kirikos pass through the shrine and head for the sea. Then the drums are performed. After that, people continue to enjoy late into the night. The next day, the festival starts in the afternoon.





<https://www.ent-mabui.jp/program/3332>

Even if you can't see it on this day, there are still many opportunities to see the Gojinjo-daiko. The easiest way is to go to the Wajima Kiriko Museum, where the Kirikos are displayed, and performances are held every day at a certain time. There are also other opportunities to see the performance at some hotels.

Summer in Noto is the summer of the Kiriko Festival. And Kanazawa, a popular tourist destination, is nearby. And of course, there are hot springs.



<https://wajimanavi.jp/event/gojinjitsuen>





<https://www.hot-ishikawa.jp/spot/6009>