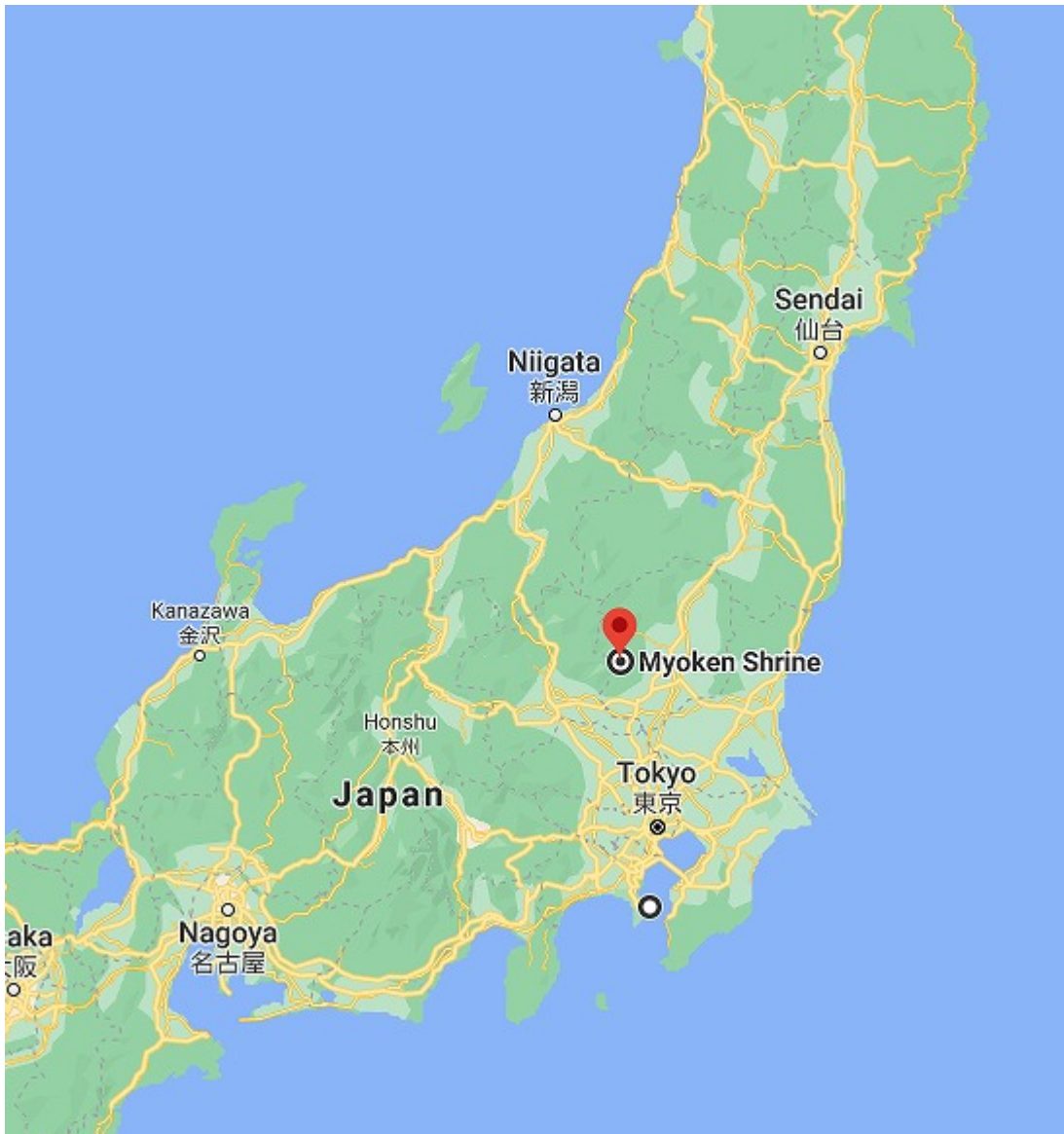
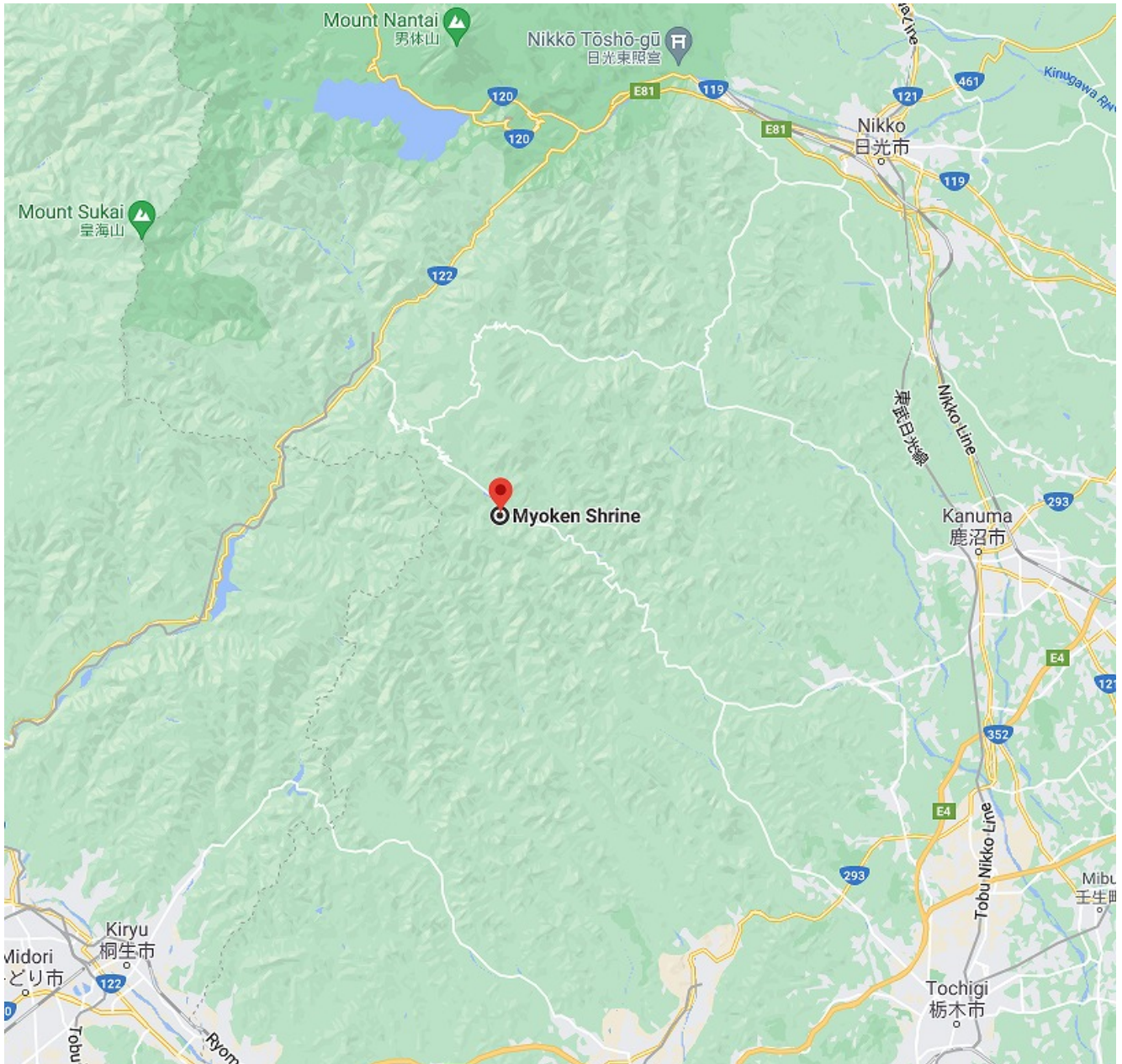


# Forced rice eating ceremony in Hokkoji





**Date:** 3rd of January every year

**Location:** Kmikasuo 915 (Myoken shrine), Kanuma city, Tochigi prefecture

**Access:** From Tochigi IC of Tohoku Expressway, approx. 45 min. for Kasuo Pass/Ashio, or from Kanuma IC, approx. 50 min. for Kasuo Pass/Ashio

## A strange Buddhist ceremony called



# forced rice eating



<https://www.rinnoji.or.jp/event/389-2/>



Rinnoji-temple 日蓮寺

<https://www.rinnoji.or.jp/photo/?1081>

There is a strange ritual called “Gohan-shiki 五穀炊き (the strong rice ceremony)”. It’s one of the Buddhist rituals. It is a ceremony where a large amount of food is prepared and forced to be eaten. There are many theories as to why it started. One theory says that it started when yamabushi (monks who practiced asceticism in the mountains) offered food to the main deity in the mountains and shared it with the people in the villages. Another theory is that it was an imitation of offerings to the gods and Buddha visiting the human world. In any case, it is not clear why people are forced to eat large amounts of food. Moreover, this ritual exists only in Tochigi prefecture, in the vicinity of Nikko. The most famous of them is conducted at the temple called Rinnoji 日蓮寺. Nikko is famous for its shrines and temples dedicated to Ieyasu 徳川家康, the founder of the Edo shogunate, the last samurai government. In the past, it was a very prestigious ceremony and only feudal



lords were invited. Therefore, even today, they still follow the dress code of that time.

## The ceremony at Hokkoji 〇〇〇



<http://10.pro.tok2.com/~a11234842/kei109.html>



<http://10.pro.tok2.com/~a11234842/kei109.html>

The Ceremony in Hokkoji is held on January 3rd, which is descended from the ritual of Rinnoji Temple in Nikko.

Access is not good. There is a campground around the area. It is a place rich in nature, but it limits the ways of transportation. It takes about 10 minutes from the station by car. From the nearby interchange, it takes about an hour or less. There is also a bus route, but it is closed during the

New Year's. The area around the station is not a place where cabs are stationed. Therefore, the only way to get there is to take your own car, call a cab according to the train schedule, or bring a bicycle.

## Outline of the ceremony



<http://10.pro.tok2.com/~a11234842/kei109.html>





[https://blog.goo.ne.jp/community\\_2007/e/bbce70d2ae14562d79213149dd70725c](https://blog.goo.ne.jp/community_2007/e/bbce70d2ae14562d79213149dd70725c)

The ceremony starts at 9:00 a.m at Myoken shrine. After an hour of rituals, they go to to the community center in the neighborhood of the shrine, and the main part of the ceremony starts at around 10:00. Originally, it is the ritual to take over the festival duty. It attracts not only the people involved, but also the mayor and other people as guests. In front of all of them is a table with a mountain of rice on it. First, a mountain priest appears, followed by an ogre called "Gouriki 𪛗𪛗". "Gouriki" is wearing a straw sash all over his body and holding a two-pronged staff. Then they stand in front of each of them and say a platitude. "Eat and drink 33 cups of sake, 5 cups of hot water, and 75 cups of rice. This is the rule. Do not leave a single bowl uneaten. No one can drink and eat like this. But the participants say "yes" and bow down. The mountain priest takes a pinch of rice and puts it in the guest's mouth. Then he says, "Do you understand? Then congratulate in honor of Gouriki." Then he orders the "

Gouriki". The "powerful" will then offer a few words. If the person is in charge of the festival, he will tell them how to run the festival. If the person is the mayor, he will tell him to recover quickly from the disaster. To newlyweds, he would say, "The number of children is decreasing these days. Have a lot of children." Then he holds his head down with the two-pronged staff in his hand. They repeated this for each of the guests.



<https://tabi-mag.jp/hokkoji0103/>





<http://www.tochimaru-shop.com/kanko/detail.php?id=176>



<https://www.sankei.com/article/20180103-DFIF2RPNK5NVPFYA4DGQ3ZK7DQ/>



<https://www.pref.tochigi.lg.jp/culture/event/1174.html>

## Ending

The roles of “Gouriki” and Yamabushi are played by ordinary local people. Although they play the roles, they speak out against the mayor and other influential people. They can’t just say the same thing every time to liven things up. It seems that they have their own difficulties. They say they break out in a cold sweat every time. This ritual has come to be held in the same way as the Nikko event. However, it is a traditional event that has continued since the 14th century. I hope it will continue. There is Nikko, a world heritage site, nearby. Toshogu Shrine is worth a visit.





Odashirogahara 湖沼園

<https://travel.rakuten.co.jp/mytrip/ranking/spot-nikko>



Edo Mura (Edo village) 江戸村

[https://www.jalan.net/kankou/spt\\_09383cc3540060189/](https://www.jalan.net/kankou/spt_09383cc3540060189/)





Toshogu shrine 日光

<https://www.gltjp.com/ja/directory/item/10071/>

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## Sagimai~ Everything is worth a photo chance



<http://tsmoyo.jp/sagimai>



**Date:** 20th and 27th of July every year

**Location:** Yasaka shrine and Tsuwano town, Tsuwano town, Katari district, Shimane prefecture

**Access:** By air, you can go from Hagi/Iwami 〇〇〇〇〇〇 Airport to Tsuwano via JR Shin-Yamaguchi 〇〇〇. By Shinkansen: JR Shin-Yamaguchi. Or, if you want to use Sunrise Izumo 〇〇, take the night train from Tokyo to Izumo via Osaka. From there, you can take the JR conventional line to Tsuwano via Masuda 〇〇.

## Area







A small town in Shimane Prefecture had handed over from generation to generation one of the most beautiful performing arts in Japan. The place is Tsuwano 津和野. Together with Hagi 萩 to the west, it is a castle town that is popular among female tourists. Shimane Prefecture, to which Tsuwano belongs, is largely referred to as the Chugoku region. It belongs to the northern part of the region. The Shinkansen runs through the southern part (which includes Hiroshima Prefecture), but not the northern part. Therefore, transportation is not very convenient, and it is one of the least populated areas in Japan. It is about one-tenth the size of the neighboring domain centered in Hagi (the former domain's area of control). The remains of samurai residences line the town and people call it the Little Kyoto of the region.

## History





In 1542, the lord of the time learned the dance from the

neighboring prefecture of present-day Yamaguchi. However, it was originally from Kyoto. It was once discontinued, but in 1643, the lord sent his vassal directly to Kyoto to learn it again. Although the practice has died out in Kyoto and Yamaguchi, it has continued here to this day. People in other areas perform the so-called “Sagimai” (the heron dance) , but this is the only one where it has been passed down correctly and is considered to be the oldest.

## Features



<http://tsmoyo.jp/sagimai>





[https://www.all-iwami.com/feature/detail\\_41.html](https://www.all-iwami.com/feature/detail_41.html)

Two people perform the role of the heron. Both wear white clothes and scarlet hakama (an old Japanese costume, similar to pants). On their heads are imitations of herons, and on their backs are feathers. The dance looks very graceful, but the feathers they wear are made of 39 layers of Japanese cypress and weigh about 15 kilograms. We can see that the old people devised a way to make the wings look most beautiful when they are open. In addition, there are two “stick-wielders,” drums, flutes, and singers. Each of them wears a traditional formal dress and accompanies the group.

## On the way









[https://www.all-ivami.com/feature/detail\\_41.html](https://www.all-ivami.com/feature/detail_41.html)







First of all, the Little Sagimai Dance, performed by an elementary school girl, precedes it. After that, the group departs, led by Sarutahiko wearing a nose-high mask. Then, from the Yasaka Shrine, the group dances for two hours at 11 locations in the town. Seven days later, the dance is performed at nine locations, following the reverse course.

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## **Yamadera (Risshakuji-temple)**





To get to Yamadera, take the Senboku Line from Sendai towards Yamagata. The journey takes about an hour. As the route winds through the mountains, cell phone reception is sometimes poor

















The air around us was clearly different from the city in its tranquility.





The structure consists of a shrine and the main hall of the temple. This is the so-called Shinto-Buddhist syncretism, and is a common sight in Japan.





**Matsuo Basho and Sora**



**a stone tablet inscribed with a haiku**

Nowadays, haiku has spread all over the world. Matsuo Basho is



at the top of the list. He stopped here on his long journey and composed his famous haiku here. Next to him is Sora, with whom he shared his journey.







Niou-mon (Niou-gate) 二王門









Godai-do hall 五代堂









**Okunoin** 奥の院

After the Godaido Hall, we came to Okunoin (the inner sanctuary). This is the highest point of the mountain temple. There is also a path around here that spreads out to the left and right.





In the past, this area was dominated by the Mogami clan, a rival to the Date clan, which had grown in power mainly in Sendai to the east. A hall dedicated to them has been built



here.















Down from here.













The path cut through the deep, deep cliffs is also a path of prayer.









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# Namahage Sedo Festival

**Date:** 18:00 ~past 20:00, second weekend (Friday~Sunday), February every year,

**Location** Shinzan shrine, Oga city in Akita prefecture

**Access:** It takes about 50 minutes from Akita to Oga by Oga Line. From there, take the toll shuttle bus for about 40 minutes.







Namahage is the most famous of all the traditional events that use traditional masks. Originally, this event has been performed only in a very limited area, the Oga Peninsula in Akita Prefecture. But now it has become a representative icon of Akita Prefecture, welcoming passengers at Akita Station alongside the Akita Dog and Kanto Festival (the summer festival). It can be classified as a “visiting god” event. Like Santa Claus, he appears only at certain times of the year to bring good fortune to the people. Most of the original events take place on the night of New Year’s Eve, and since Namahage groups visit private homes, it is difficult for anyone outside of the community to see them. Therefore, as a tourist project, the festival was created in 1964 by combining the original festival of the Shinzan shrine with Namahage. This is the Sedo Festival.





**The Akita station**



**around The Akita station**

There is a designated train (only on weekends) and a regular train to Oga station, and a paid bus service from there. Buses run sequentially as soon as the seats are full.



The venue is the Shinzan Shrine, a short walk from the parking lot. If you arrive early, there is also the Roadside Station called “Ogar” (front of the Oga station) and the Namahage Museum near the venue. The Namahage Museum is a must-see. Not only does it have Namahage goods, but it also has over 100 Namahage from around the region on display.

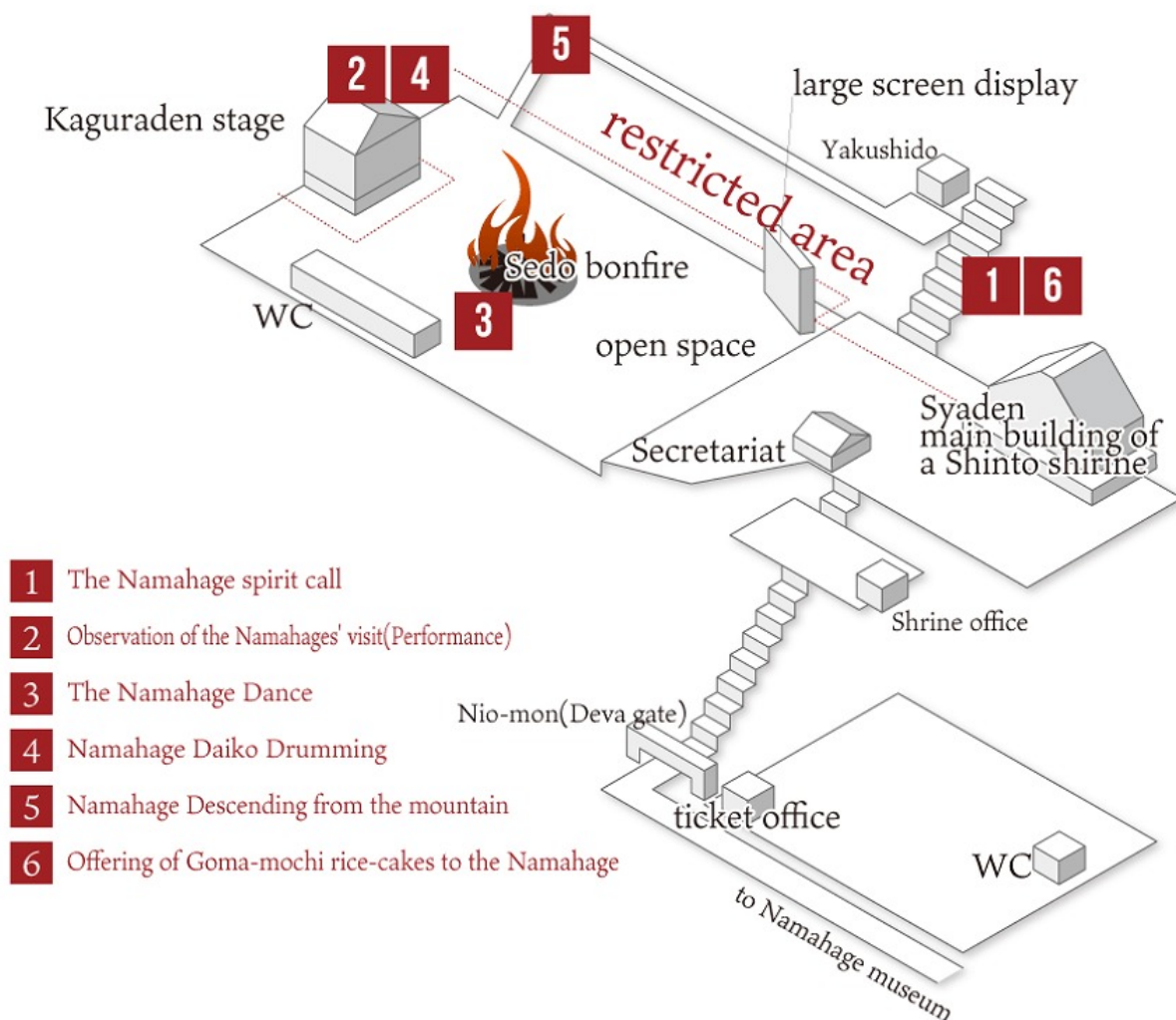
## The Namahage museum

→ <https://youtu.be/tKpC2YpuvHA>

<https://youtu.be/owqMaDMqG1Y>



followed by a rampage of Namahage in the village, where various Namahage used in the actual region appear. You are welcome to take pictures with them, so don't hesitate. However, there is one thing to note. This is the middle of winter. Akita Prefecture is known for its heavy snowfall. Therefore, there is so much snow that you can sink into the snow up to your ankles in Akita City, while at the venue the snow is trampled and hard as ice, making it very slippery. Be sure to take precautions against the snow!











On the way back, the bus will take you to Oga Station or Oga Onsen (hot spring). You are going to arrive in Akita around 10:00 or 11:00 pm.

It's not a bad idea to relax and unwind at Oga Onsen. The hot spring would surely relax you in a snowy landscape in the middle of winter. Don't let yourself be troubled by the Namahage coming into in your dreams.







<https://www.mapple.net/article/96175/>

**Prefer:**

<https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/2020/02/07/namahage-sedo-matsuri/> Namahage Sedo Matsuri

<https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/2020/02/07/namahage/> Namahage

□□□ <https://oganavi.com/sedo/en/> Official site

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## Komatsu hounen Shishiodori



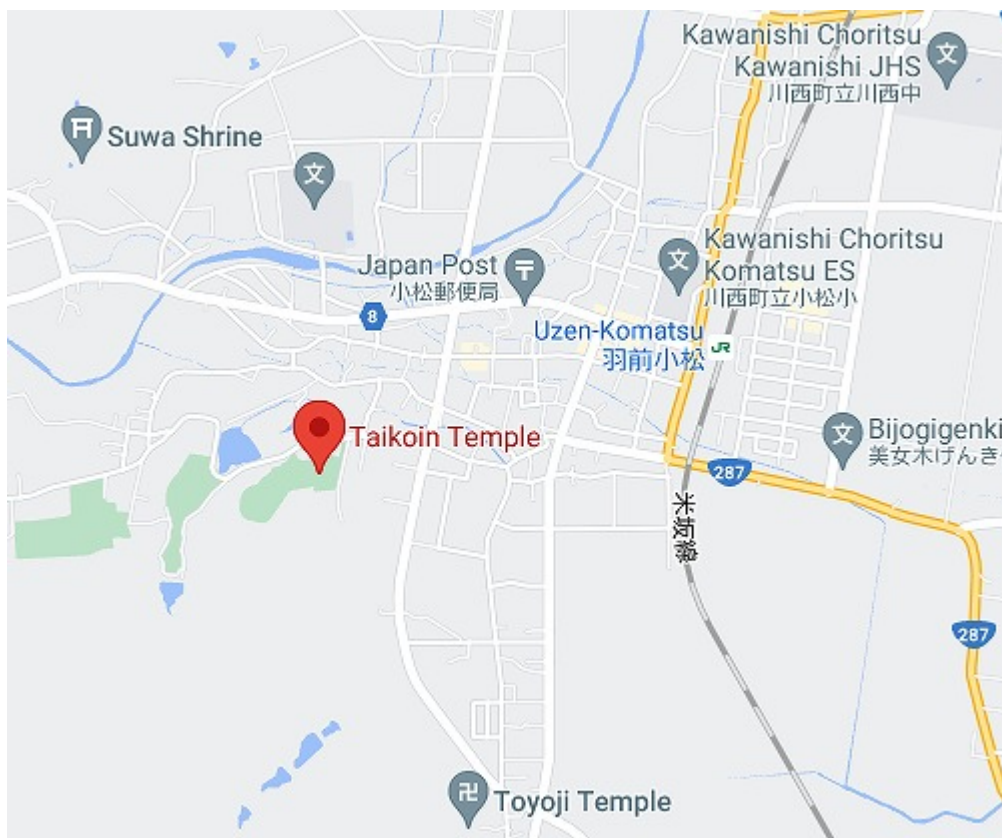
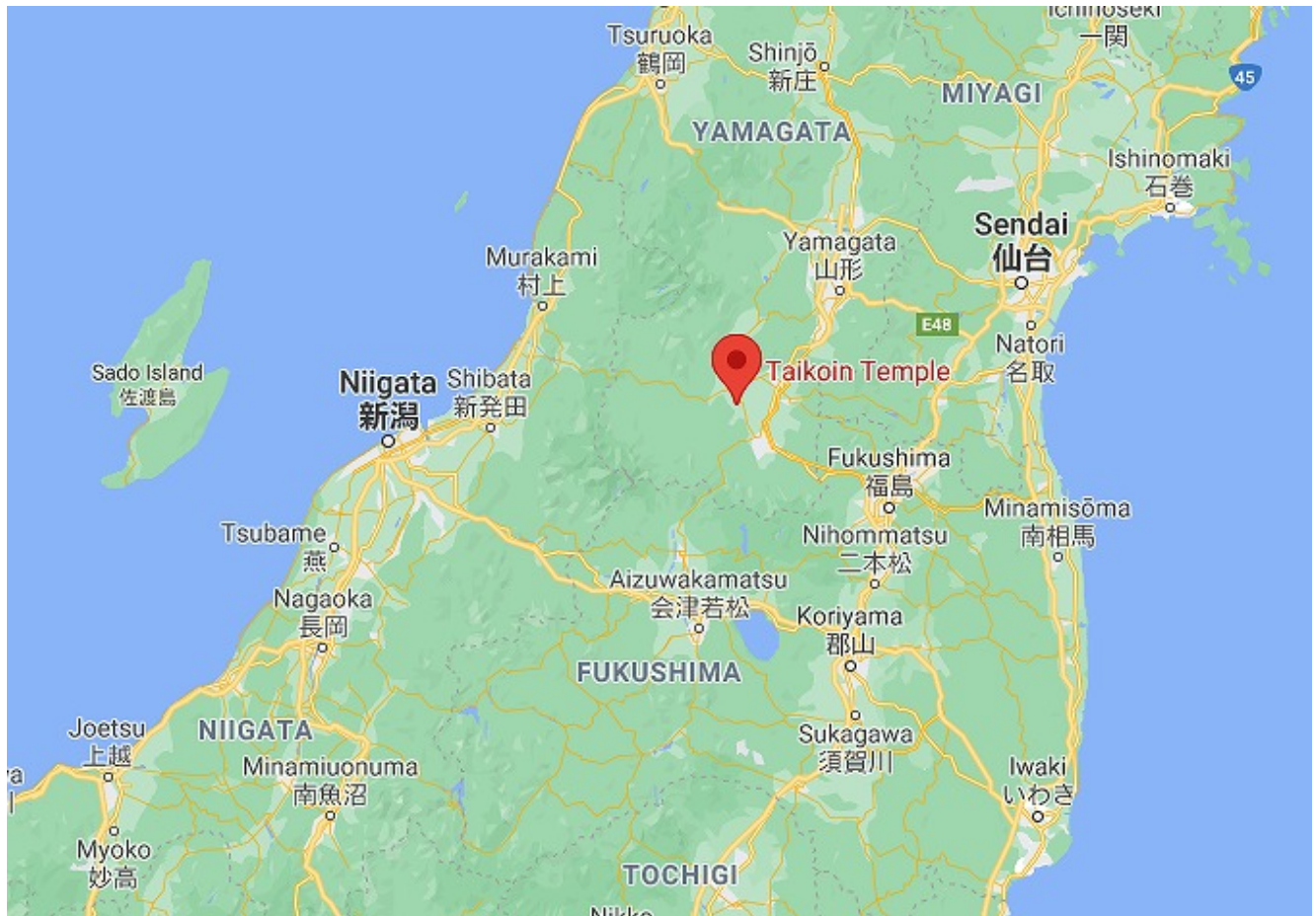
<http://www.e-okitama.net/?p=log&l=291894&m=kawanishi>

**Date:** 16th and 27th, August

**Location:** Oaza Kamikomatsu, Kawanishi city, Higashi-Okitama district, Yamagata prefecture (Daikoin-temple and Suwa shrine)

**Access:** 15 minutes walk from Uzen Komatsu station





Yamagata Prefecture has a wide variety of lion and deer (both



shishi) dances. Among them, in the southern region where this lion dance is performed, the three lion dances commonly seen in the Kanto region are popular. The faces of the shishi are Kanto-style, and the way "Hana-gasa (the flower hats)" accompanies is also very similar.. There is a reason why the lion dance of this small region is so popular among people. It is the performance jumping through the fire ring.



[http://okibun.jp/kawanishi\\_shishiodori/](http://okibun.jp/kawanishi_shishiodori/)



<http://www.shishiodori.net/muwfydlcj-14/>



# History and composition



It is said that the lion dance was started by the local people about 1,100 years ago to comfort a high priest who had escaped to this area after being defeated in his interpretation of a Buddhist doctrine at the capital. In the Edo period (1603-1868), the lords who ruled the area encouraged simplicity and frugality. Therefore, dancing was forbidden except in years of good harvest. So that is why “Hounen 年豊 (harvest Year)” was added to the name.

Ten people make up a group. All of them wear hanagasa (flower hat) and carry drums on their stomachs. They are called “nakadachi,” “saotome,” and “hanagasa”. Each of them has a different color costume. And one person called “Matoi-mochi (a person holding the “Matoi (a sign of a group) who does not take part in the dance) joins them. In the photo, the one in the pale purple costume is the “hanagasa,” and the one in front of them is the “nakadachi.

The dance is divided into three parts: the “introduction,” the “development,” and the “finale/climax,” and it takes about 50 minutes to go through the whole dance. Therefore, usually only



the “development” is performed. Most of the content is about farming. There is also a scene where a wild boar gets lost among the flowers. There is a scene in which a mother lioness loses sight of her child. In other words, the ring of fire is used to express the feeling of not being afraid of fire for the sake of the child.



source *Okitama* <http://okibun.jp/log/?l=329334>



[http://kawa1chu.blogspot.com/2014/08/blog-post\\_18.html](http://kawa1chu.blogspot.com/2014/08/blog-post_18.html)



# Jump through flaming hoop

On the day of the festival, performers will act at about five locations in the town. Not all of them involves the performance of jumping through the flaming hoop. Currently, junior high school students are learning the lion dance in order to preserve their town's traditional folk performing art. They will also perform, but for safety reasons, the junior high school students don't use the fire ring.



<http://okibun.jp/log/?l=329334> (from the same in the left



source)

It is always held on the 16th in Daiko-in, in front of the community center at night, and on the 27th at Suwa Shrine.



*from source Okitama*



[https://www.tohokukanko.jp/sozaishu/detail\\_1002944.html](https://www.tohokukanko.jp/sozaishu/detail_1002944.html)

It's not just about going through the hoops. The fire is on, so it's important to work in coordination with the person



holding the wheel. If the fire is about to shift even a little, the person holding the wheel must be able to instantly shift it to make up the subtle difference. It's also nerve-wracking not to hurt the performer's limbs because the place performer jumps to is either concrete or hard ground.



<https://www.town.kawanishi.yamagata.jp/kyoiku/bunka/komatsuhou-nen-shishiodori.html>