

# 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





**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 feaature 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