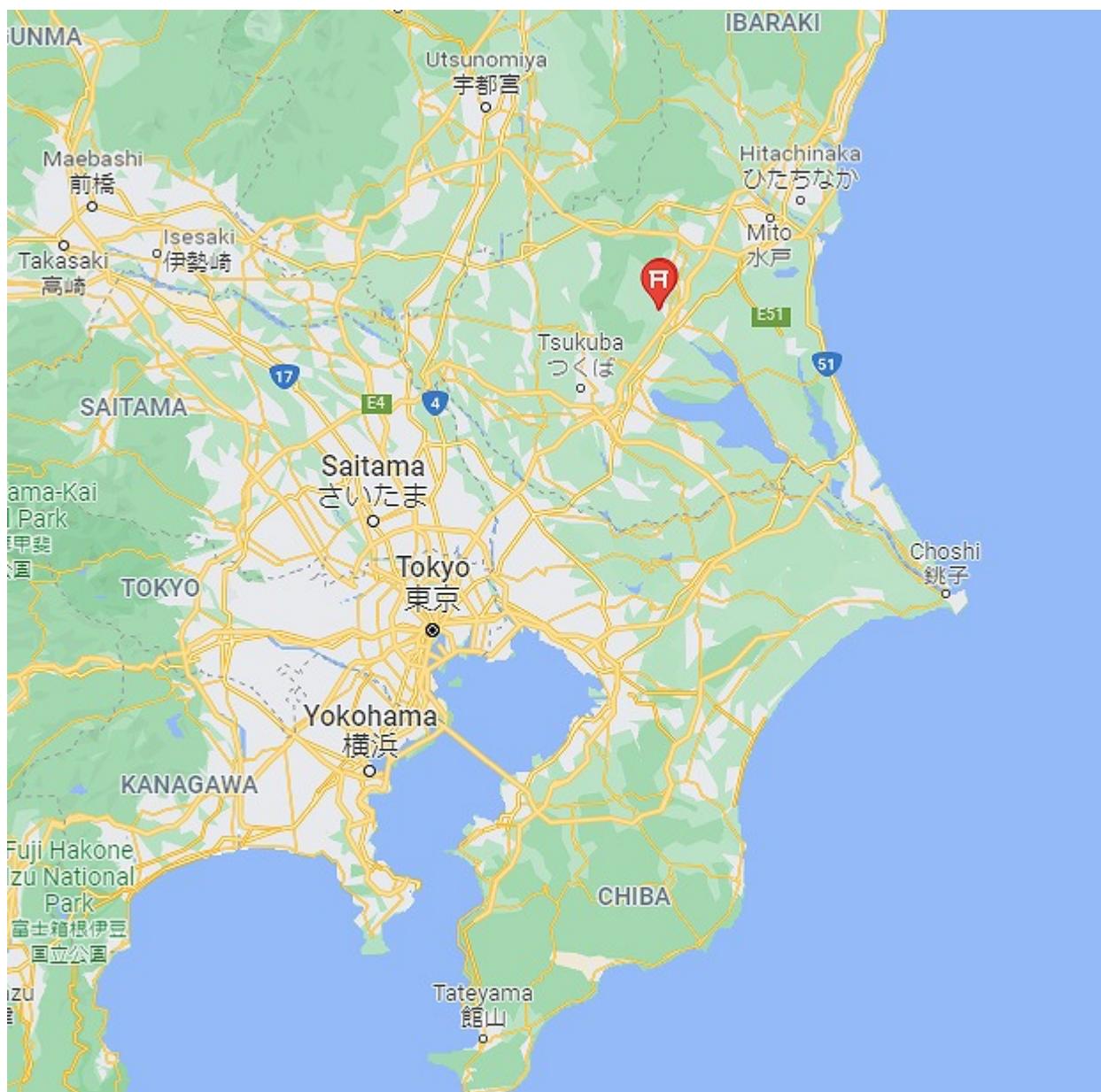
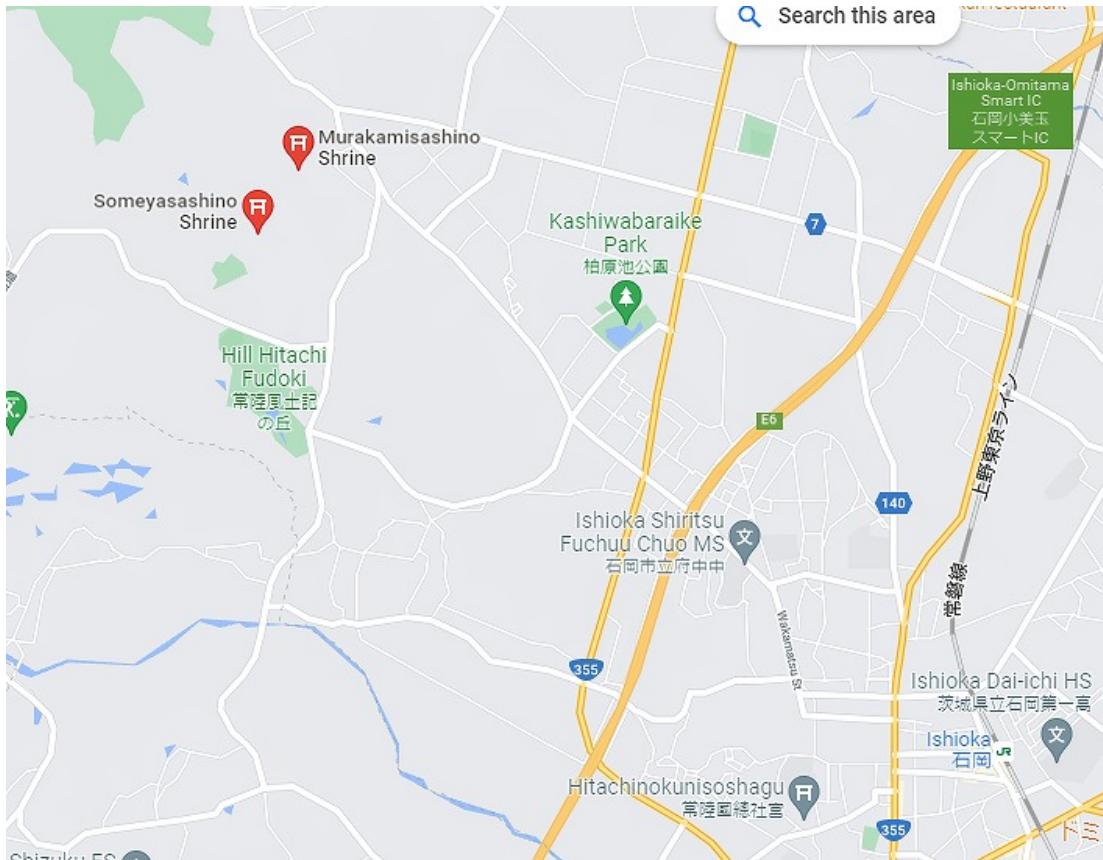


Someya juniza kagura in Ishioka





Date: 19th April

Location: Someya 1856, Ishioka city, Ibaraki prefecture

Access: Take the Joban Line from Ueno and get off at Ishioka Station. About 1 hour by express train (2,500 yen) about 1.5 hours by ordinary train (1,500 yen). Take the Kantetsu Green Bus for Kakioka Shako via Hayashi, and get off at Murakami bus stop (15 minutes on foot). Or, take the Ishioka Gurururin sightseeing bus (1,000 yen) and get off at Hitachi Fudoki no Oka. It's a 5-minute walk. If you want to rent a bicycle, there is a bicycle rental service in front of the station for 300 yen with an additional 700 yen deposit (to be returned when the bicycle is returned).

**This article is based on interviews conducted in 2015*

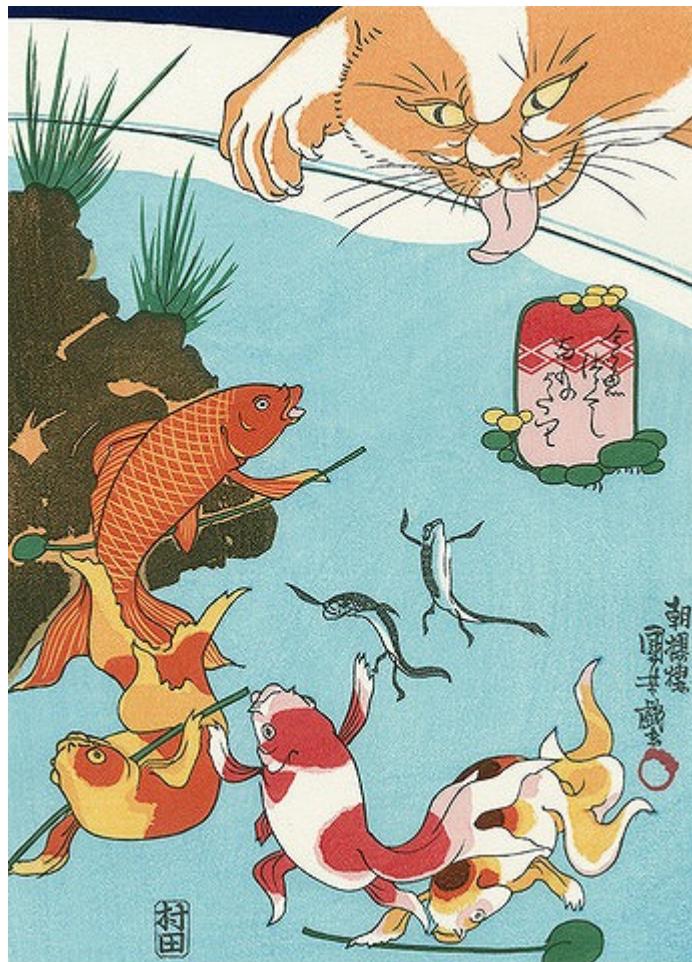


One lucky day. A family of goldfish decided to go out. The child asked his parents.

"Where are we going?"

"We're going to see a sacred performance to pray for rain."

This picture, in which such a conversation can be heard, is by Utagawa Kuniyoshi 三代歌麿, a painter active from the late 18th to 19th century.



It's not easy for goldfish to go out. They have to dodge a variety of natural enemies along the way.



Oh my Gosh. We could be lost.



Isn't this the right way to go?

In fact, there are two shrines here, and since they have the same name, it is even easier to make a mistake. And the festivals take place on the same day. And they both worship the deity of dragon. Locals consider one to be a male dragon and one to be a female dragon. To get to the shrine where the kagura is performed, the hill of Hitachi-Fudoki is a landmark. As you head that way, you will see a road to the cemetery on the way. Pass through there and climb the hill. The shrine you are aiming for is at the end of the road.



Hey, we're on the right road.



But we have to go up these stairs.



Whew! We can finally see the shrine.



Oops, we're finally here, just in time for the 11am start.





The First act ~Sarutahiko



"Hey, goldfishes. How did you get here? I'm Sarutahiko, the first program performer. As you know, I'm the deity who guides things."

I thought I had to see it at least once.

We got lost, but...

You don't have to say anything extra.

Ha-ha-ha (laughter)

Well, have fun with it.





It's always nice to have someone who can explain things to you (but in Japanese).

Not that many Japanese come here, and no one would dream of a foreigner, either. If they came to visit, they would be welcomed with open arms.

The second act ~ Ya-daijin



"Hey there, goldfish. I see you've come to see me."

Oh, it's Mr. Ogre. You don't look too tough.

"My appearance is to enhance the Ya-daijin. As soon as I'm eliminated, I'm out. Here comes the Ya-daijin!"



"Haha, I'm Ya-daijin. I will use this bow and arrow to drive away the bad ones."

Ya is an arrow. Daijin can mean many things, like minister or respectable person. I think the name here means a fine god.

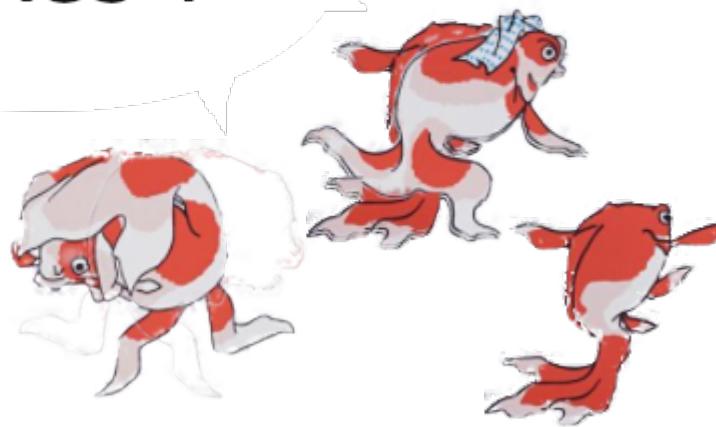
But his face looks pompous, as if he were a minister.

"What? Did someone say something? I'll put it all together and exterminate them together."



Hey, hey, hey!

Yikes !



The 3rd act~ Long sword user



“I am the Sadaijin(Minister of the Left)”.

Black face. A raven-tengu (Crow-billed goblin).

They call it the dance of the long sword too.



Let's get rid of the bad things that are doing us harm. Eia-
Eia-Ah!

The 4th act ~Dance of sword





I am Udaijin (Minister of the right).



To explain a little, in Japan, there is an event for girls on March 3, when they display hina dolls. They are modelled after the old Emperor's family. The emperor and queen are at the top. Below them are the Minister of the Right and the Minister

of the Left.

The two in the forth row from the top are them. But all these decorations cost a lot of money.

Sowing seeds





What did this deity start?

Sowing. In other words, from here, kagura shows the sowing of spring. Once the earth, and all the evil things around it, have been driven away, they now move on to the spring sowing, and then to the fall harvest. This form of kagura is very common. It is the very essence of the old life of the Japanese people.



The foxes cultivate the rice field



"For God's sake, Enyakola
Good rice grows, Enyakola
One more thing, Enyakola"





"I'm a little tired. Why don't you take a break?"

"Already? What should I do?"

"I have stiff shoulders. Please rub my shoulders."

"She's a noisy wife. Here, that's better. Please do the same for me this time."

"You don't even work."

"You son of a bitch. You turned me upside down."





It's a bit of a couple's comedy.

You have to include these elements or the audience will get bored. In the old days, this is exactly the kind of life the people watching lived.

planting seeds



"I hope everyone is doing well. I wish you a great harvest this year.



Shrine maiden's dance



Let's pray to God.

This dance is performed by an elementary school girl.

Mochi (rice cake) throwing



" Everyone's gathered here. Are you so happy that we came out?"

"They all just want rice cakes, don't they?"

"Anyway, it's harvest time. Hopefully we'll harvest a lot this fall."

audience "Here, over here, over here."





The a person whose role it is to give explanation said that

many people leave after this one, right?

If that's the case, why not make it the last one like other kagura?

It proves that they are keeping the old form. It is possible that the kagura has been handed down even older than the oldest kagura of Washinomiya Shrine in the Kanto region. The people added the rice-cake throwing later, and that's why the order is like this.

Sacred sake





Programs that have retained their most ancient form. It is monotonous by itself. This dance is meant to give thanks for the harvest and to offer sake to the gods.

Ebisu ~Fishing sea bream



“I’m Ebisu. Well, where shall I go fishing today?

“Oh, Sir Ebisu is fishing again.”

“ When I think it’s someone, it’s Hiotoko and Okame.”

“We’ll help you too.”





"Oh, this is a big one. Hey, you, Hyottoko, help me out."



"We caught a big one. Let's go home."

"Hey. But Ebisu-sama is a different person when it comes to fishing. Ebisu-sama is not like a god only when fishing."



The 12th program ~Open the Amano-iwato door



I am the mythical and familiar “Tajikarao”. I am about to open Ama-no-Iwato (the Great Rock Door) and welcome you, Amaterasu-sama.



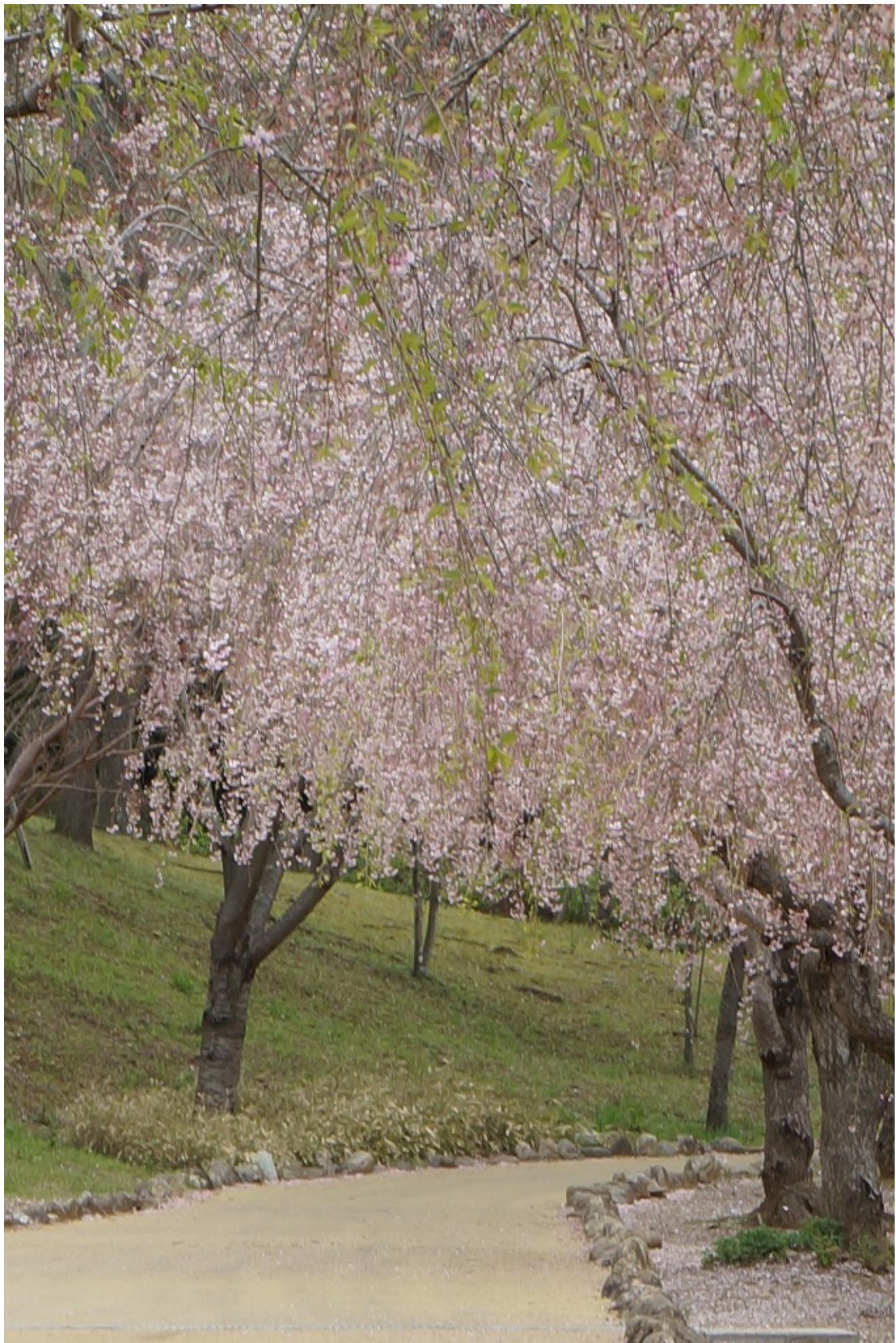
The kagura ended with the safe appearance of Amaterasu. Now,

let us go home.

Ending







Let's stop by "Hitachi-Fudoki-no-Oka." Hey, it looks like spring.

What is this big lion's head?

At the Ishioka festival, a large lion's head leads huge lion dance parade . That is famous. Let's come see it sometime.

By the way, will it rain?



"Wow, it's coming down fast. That's the Dragon God."

What do you mean you're a goldfish and you're in a big hurry for rain? And if you look closely, you can see that the rain is pond skater.



In this country, such things are also sold as figures.

cf.

*<https://www.adachi-hanga.com/ukiyo-e-en/category/33>

*https://bunkashisan.ne.jp/bunkashisan/08_ibaraki/7041.html

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 筑駅 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 began. 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 “Uzume”....

“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!