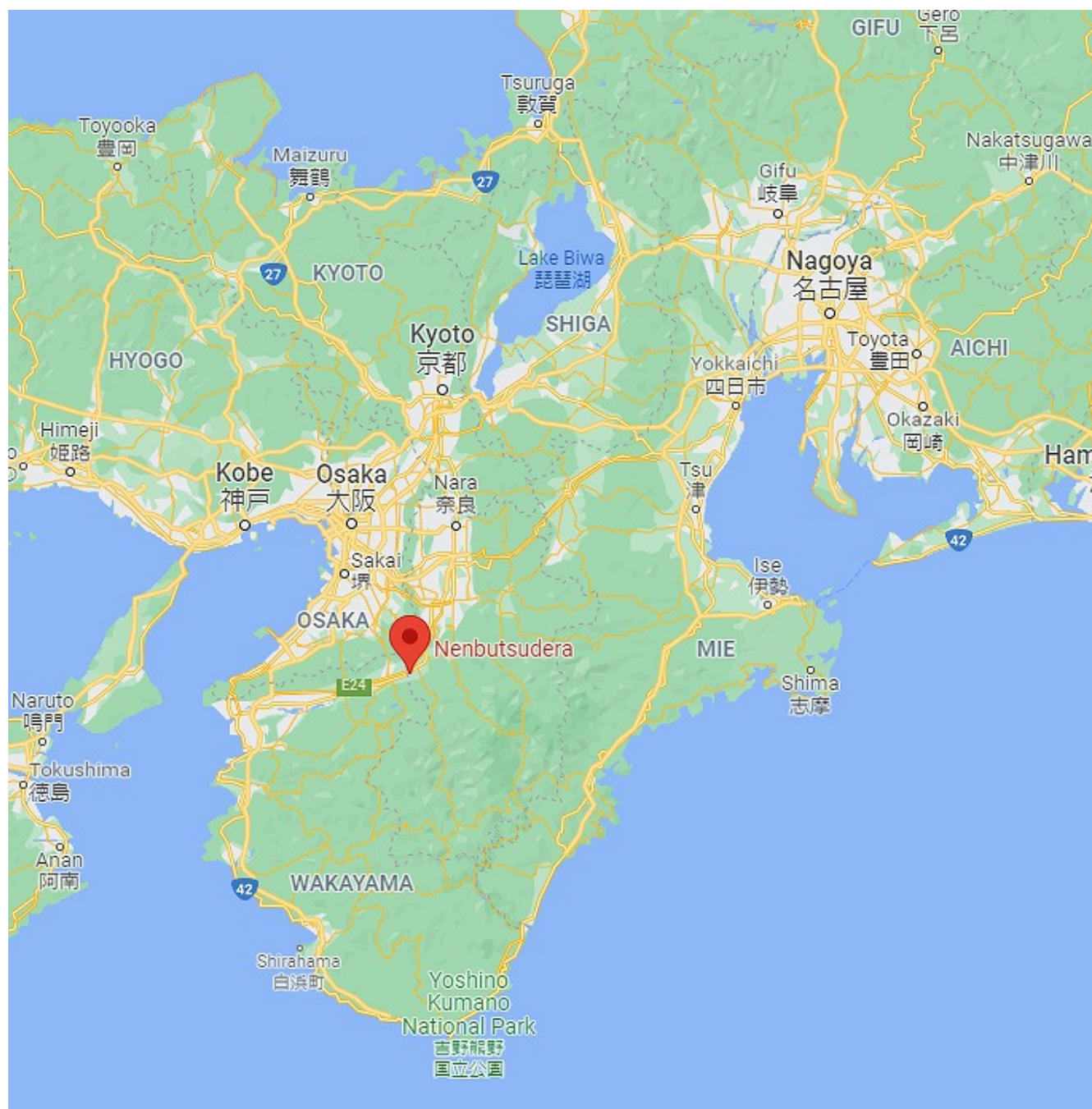
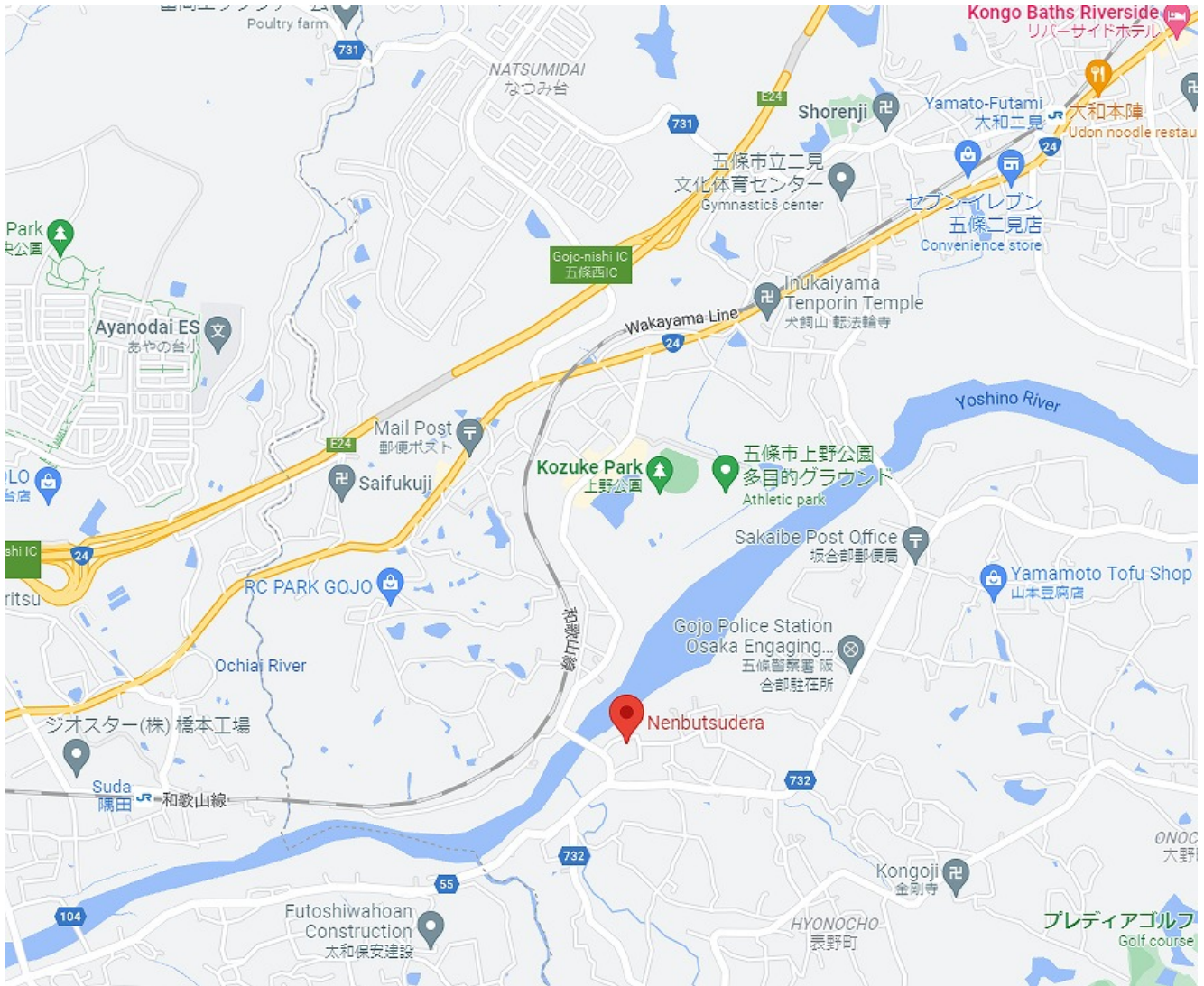


Ogre runs with fire ~at Dada-do





Date: January 14th every year

Location: Otsu town 177, Gojo city, Nara prefecture

Access: 10 minutes by car from JR Yamato Futami Station, or 30 minutes on foot.

What is the purpose of doing this?



<https://ameblo.jp/ura-tom0/entry-11750814403.html>

Ogres with huge torches wielding fire. Such events are held at a place called Nenbutsuji Temple 念仏寺. It is a very inconvenient place. The official website even lists the last train schedule. Every year, they hold an event where ogres run with torches in the temple.

Part of an event called Shusho-e 首首夜. Shusho-e is a Buddhist event held at New Year's to pray for a good harvest and to ward off bad luck. Here at Nenbutsuji Temple, we regard it as an event to rid ourselves of past sins and pray for happiness in the new year. The final day is Kechigan 切肝. Kechigan means "consummation of a vow period".



father and mother ogre



父王



子鬼面



鬼面（伝阿弥陀面）

kid and Amida

The masks used in the current event were made of cypress in 1961. However, the older masks were made in 1468, so we can assume that this event started at least around that time.

Schedule of Events

4:00 pm. the event daytime

4:30 pm. throwing rice cakes

7:00 pm. Monks begin reading sutras

9:00 pm. main event starts



<http://yoshino-ohmine-koya.jp/information/2014/01/1684/>

Why don't we go to Dada-do? There are no foxes or raccoons there. If there are, we can go back. But then ogres appeared!

This time, the stage was the Dada-do だだど in Nenbutsu-ji Temple ねんぶつじ where such a children's song is handed down. It is roughly

divided into daytime and nighttime sessions. In the daytime, ogres appear and run around with torches as in the nighttime, but they do not set fire to the torches. It's like a kind of rehearsal. But it has the advantage that there are not as many people as at night. Also, since it is bright, you can see the gestures and masks clearly. In the past, people used to make the masks from a single tree made of Japanese cypress, which weighed about 4.5 kg, but now they use masks made of a single tree made of thatch.



https://www.city.gojo.lg.jp/soshiki/bunka/1_1/1/3117.html



However, the main attraction is still at night. Fire seems to have something that makes people's hearts flutter. Whether or not you've prepared well for the daytime session, the main event is the evening session.

The evening session begins at 9 p.m.

As the sound of sticks tapping on the wall rang out, the monks entered first, blowing hollow shells. Behind them are the ogres. The monks began to shout, and the sound of sticks and more bells rang out. It's time to begin. The sound of the bells was and still is used to warn people of fire. The sound of the bells quickens people's heartbeats and heightens their sense of danger. People also call tapping on the wall with a stick "Amitabha's shoulder tapping," a unique name. In Buddhism, Amitabha is the Buddha who saves all people.

In the meantime, the first person to handle the fire in the hall (called katte) appeared with a large torch. He draws the Chinese character for water 水 in the hollow to prevent the fire from raging. Right behind him was a waterman named Kawase

with a bucket of water to put out the fire and clear away the sparks. When it was over, the demons finally made their appearance.



<https://www.pref.nara.jp/45519.htm>



https://yamatoji.nara-kankou.or.jp/01shaji/02tera/04south_area/nembutsuji-gojoyo/event/qtx8lu3j2a/



A father ogre, a mother ogre, and a child ogre: there are three ogres in total:. It is said that the ogres here are not bad, but good, bringing good fortune to the people. That's why they have quite charming faces.

The assistants pass the burning torches to the ogres. The ogre puts it on his crotch and supports it with one hand. The torch is 70 centimeters in diameter and weighs about 60 kilograms. There are two pillars in the center of the hall, so when the ogres appear, they move one by one to the next. When the child ogre appears, the three ogres are all together, creating a breathtaking sight. In this way, the demon circled the hall three times before finally leaving the hall.

Anyone can play the role of an ogre, but once they do, they often continue to do so. They bathe in water for a week and avoid fire. It takes a lot of strength and energy to be an ogre, so when they become weak, they are passed on to the next person. The event ends with people trying to steal the paper strings from the ogres, as the paper strings that the ogres wear on their bodies is said to ward off evil.

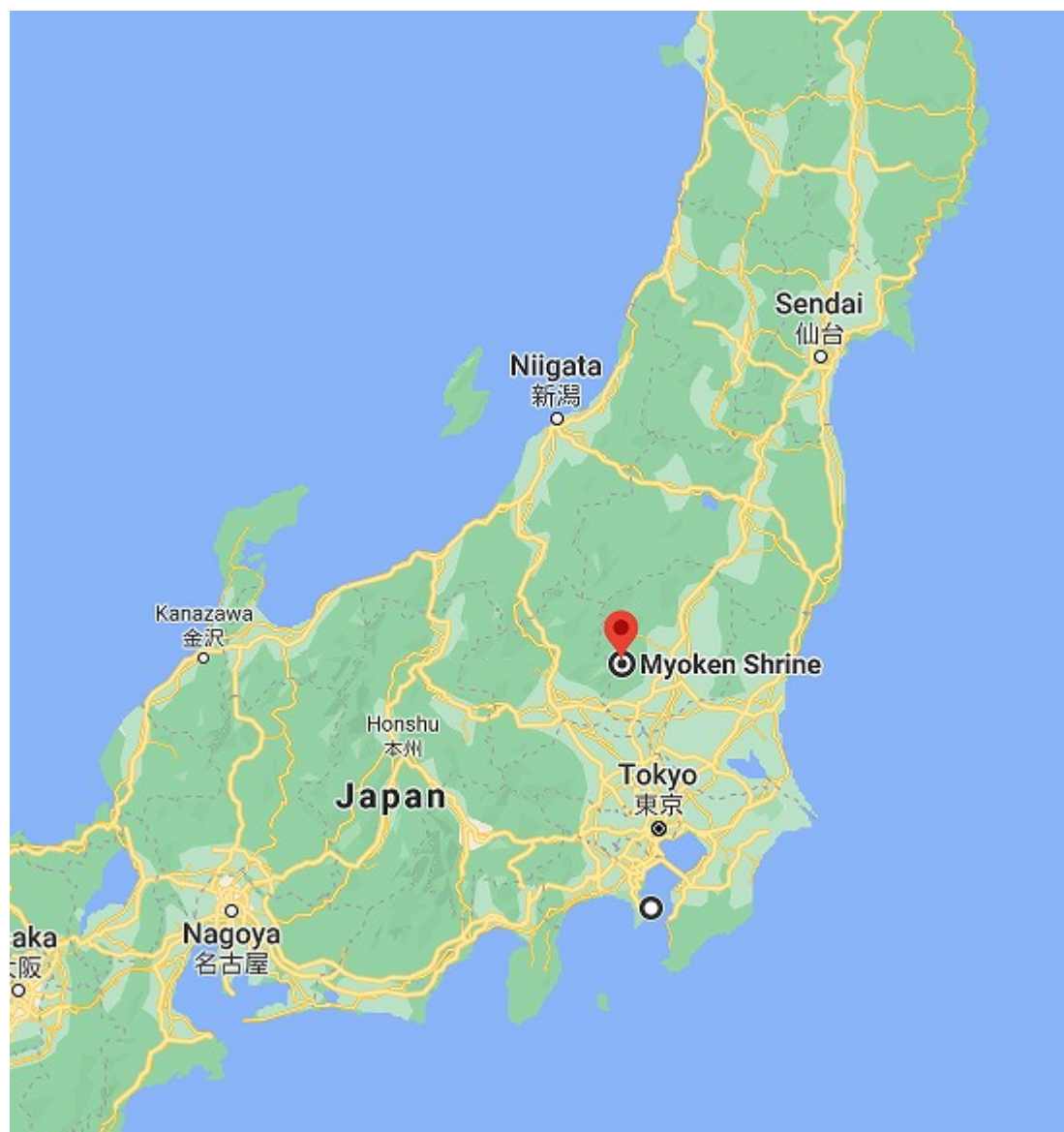
Ends around 9:30 p.m.

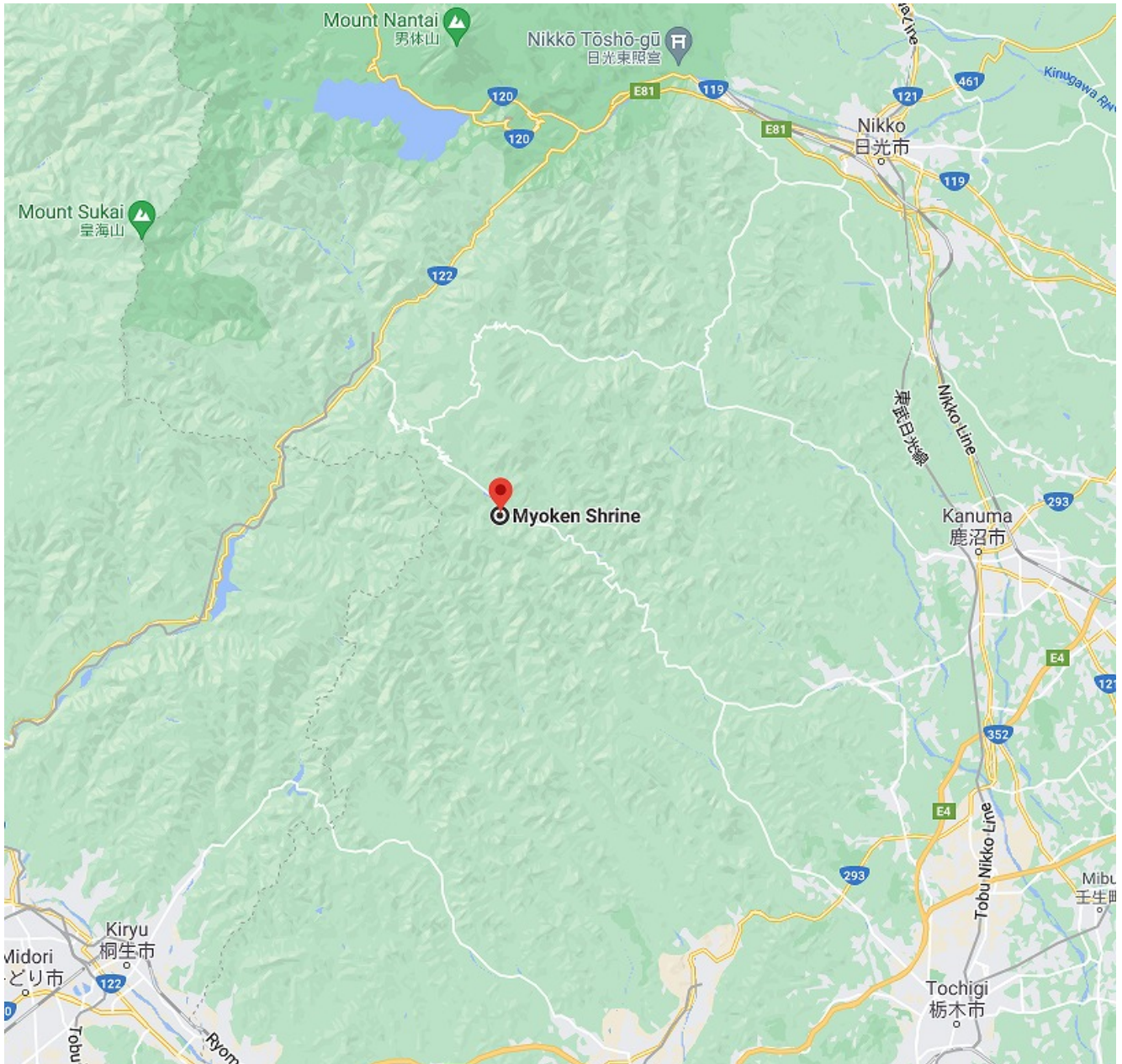
The nearest town, Gojo, is a traditional building preservation district where the streets of olden times remain intact. If you have time, you should definitely take a stroll.



http://yamatoji.nara-kankou.or.jp/03history/02old_house/04south_area/shimmachidori-gojoshi/

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 五穀満喫 (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 □□□



<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

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/



Toshogu shrine 日光

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

Report: Seven Deities of Good Fortune Parade Celebrating the New Year at the center of Tokyo

Date: 7th, January every year

Location: 1-2-7 Toranomon, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Access: From Toranomon station (subway, Ginza line) within 1 minutes walk,

What are the seven deities of Good Fortune?



seven deities on the treasure ship



Ebisu and Daikoku

All of the above are from Edo-period merchants' advertising fliers.

□It seems that Japanese people are considered to be lax about religion. Sometimes, they say that Japanese are even described as irreligious. I have mentioned this before on this site. One of the reasons for this is that the Japanese are polytheists by nature. When Japan accepted Buddhism, people faced the conflict with their original religion (which I now call Shinto). Therefore, people came up with the theory of "Shinto-Buddhist syncretism. They said that God and Buddha are the same. This theory continued on and on until the Meiji Restoration (1861). The best example of this is the Seven Deities of Good Fortune. This belief introduces seven deities that signify happiness as one group and began in the late 15th and 16th centuries.

The seven deities are Ebisu, Daikoku, Hotei, Bishamonten, Benzaiten, Fukurokuju and Jurojin, seven in all.

The Seven Deities of Fortune in Japanese Mythology has the following characteristics :

Ebisu (鰻): the deity of success in business (The country of origin is Japan)

Daikoku (金): the deity of commerce, agriculture, and prosperity (The country of origin is India)

Hotei (肥前): the deity of happiness, contentment, and good fortune (The country of origin is China)

Bishamonten (毘沙門): the deity of war and victory (The country of origin is India)

Benzaiten (弁才): the deity of financial fortune, music, and art (The country of origin is India)

Fukurokuju (福寿): the deity of wisdom, luck, and longevity (The country of origin is China)

Juroujin (老若): the deity of longevity (The country of origin is China)

As you can see, they have different origins and different sources. There is only one deity of Japanese origin, Ebisu. Moreover, there are many complications such as assuming that

Daikoku (ダイコク) and Okuninushi (オクニヌシ Japanese deity) are the same because they are pronounced the same. (ダイ can be pronounced “Daikoku”). There are both shrines and Buddhist temples where they are enshrined.

Of course, these are beliefs that have spread among the common people, so nobody has officially decided on them. Since the seventeenth century, they have taken on the currently known form and have been popular ever since. Today, each region has its own shrines and temples dedicated to the seven deities of good fortune, and a tour of the seven deities of good fortune during the New Year is a common sight.

Why is this shrine located at the center of Tokyo ?





The “Seven deities of Good Fortune Procession” that this site introduces is held at Toranomom Kotohira Shrine. The Kotohira Shrine is a famous shrine in Kagawa Prefecture that everyone knows. This is a branch shrine built by inviting a deity from there. It is located at Toranomom. It’s location is not too much to say right in the center of Tokyo. It is right next to Kasumigaseki, where the National Diet Building and other central government offices are located. Toranomom Hospital, which is just a minute’s walk away, is where the Prime Minister and other famous people are hospitalized. As a result, the area is surrounded by a forest of buildings. The

reason why there is a shrine in such a place is that this area was once home to a series of feudal lords' residences, and the feudal lords of what is now Kagawa Prefecture built the local Kotohira Shrine here, which has remained without change.

What else will take place besides the Seven Lucky Deities Parade?





□This article is based on the year 2015. However, the program will basically remain the same.

The parade of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune that we wanted to see started at 11:00. But there is no harm in going early. There are many other events besides the parade. One of them is the performance of Edo Sato kagura. It starts at 10:00. This fixed time is one of the characteristics of this place. This is something peculiar to business districts. The first performance was “Sanbaso” in 2015. This is also originally from Noh, and is often performed in Kabuki. When it is performed in Kagura, the performers often wear hats with bright red circles, costumes with crane designs, and long sleeves. Hagiwara troupe performs. This troupe is prestigious, so the dance is elegant. About 45 minutes.

1st Parade ~Are the Japanese really so

devoid of religion?

The content can also be enjoyed on video→<https://youtu.be/paxVq84l6r0>

At eleven o'clock, the procession of the seven gods of good fortune that you are looking for begins. The procession takes place twice a day, and this is the first one. There are two entrances to the temple grounds. The procession comes from one of them where three stalls are standing.







First up was the lion dance. A New Year's tradition. The head of the lion is also gold, an auspicious look. There is a legend that if you ask a lion to bite your head, you will be happy, so if you meet one, be sure to offer your head. Next, the seven deities of good fortune continued to appear.



Jurojin 𐰇𐰪𐰸𐰚



Hotei 二二



Fukurokuju 福くろくじう

Hotei was originally a Chinese monk who was modeled after several real people. The image is that they carry a large sack, bare their large bellies, and travel in poor attire. He wears light clothes even in winter, but legend says that strangely enough, it never snowed around him. **Jurojin** and **Fukurokuju** are very similar because they were originally one deity that split into two. However, while Jurojin has the appearance of a noble old man in China, he is also characterized by an unusually long head.



a typical image of Jurojin



a typical image of Hotei



a caricature of Fukurokuju, Ebisu and Daikoku



Ebisu



Daikoku



Benzaiten

Ebisu and **Daikoku** have appeared many times on this site. Ebisu catches sea breams with his fishing rod, while Daikoku brings good fortune with the mallet he carries. **Benzaiten** is the only female deity. She is said to bestow arts and wealth.



Bishamonten



Hyottoko



Okame

Bishamonten is the god of war. Originally, he is one of the four guardian deities protecting the Buddha. However, his name changes to “Tamonten” at that time. Complicated? Don’t worry about it. Even Japanese people don’t know much about it. Behind them are the familiar entertainers, Hyottoko and Okame.



There is already a line of people ahead in front of the main shrine. It is like waiting for a star to appear.



At this situation, it seems almost like a red carpet, although

there are no screams of excitement. The staff announced, “We have a little more time for photos. The star line-up doesn’t change every year. After this, they all gather in front of the stage and performed the Hyottoko and Okame dances. About 40 minutes. If you miss it here, don’t worry. The Seven Lucky Gods will appear again later.

You can enjoy the afternoon





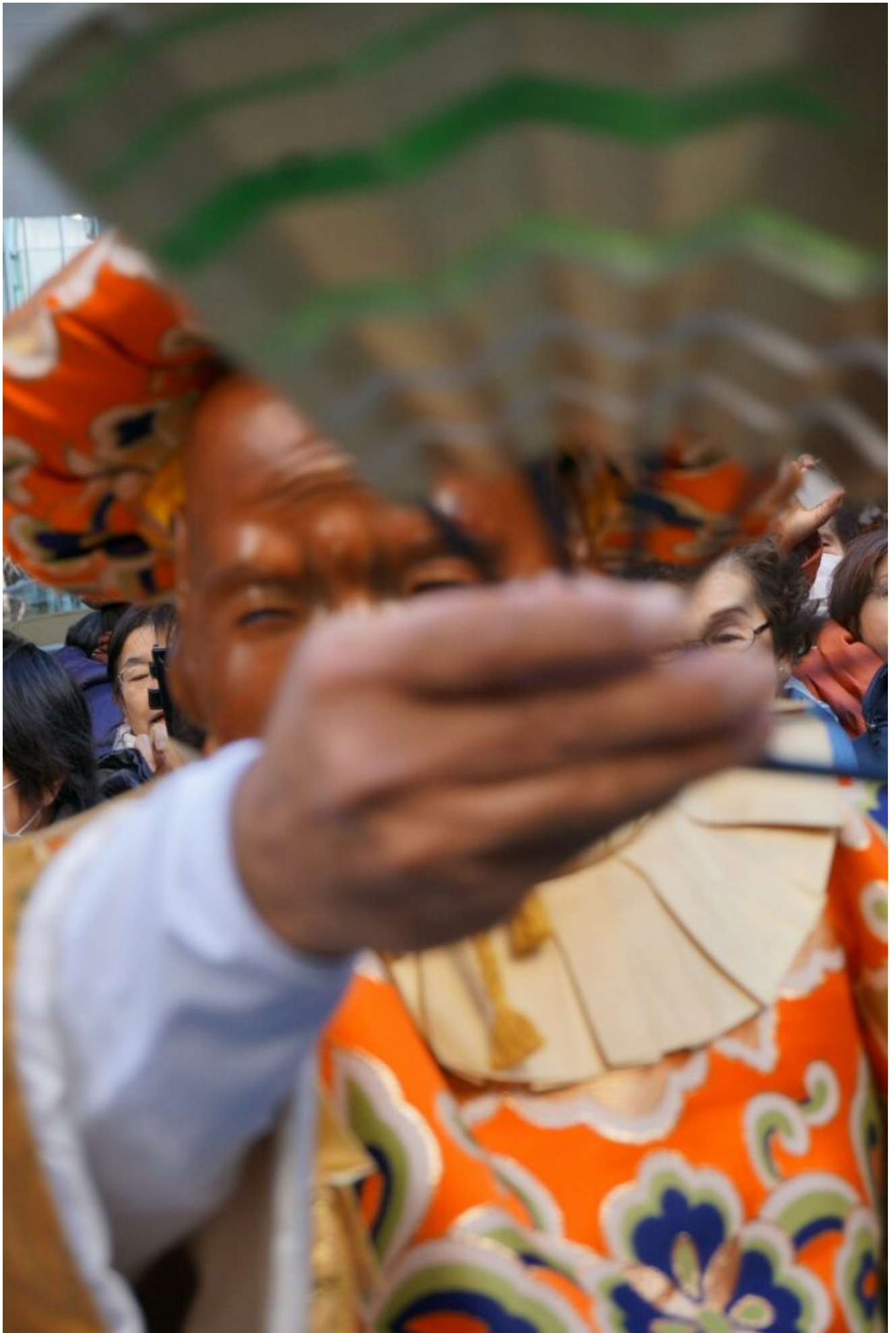
The content can also be enjoyed on video→https://youtu.be/q_8GYk038qA

At 1:30 in the afternoon, the event resumed again, starting with Kagura. This is the story of a sword smith. The emperor asks him to make a sword, and the master smith forges it every day. At the last moment, a god appears and breathes his soul into the sword.



Now the enthusiasm again







The parade starts again at 2:00 p.m. Even though it's the second time, it's just as exciting as the first. There are as many people as the first time.





The second time, the flow is almost the same. A photo session in front of the main shrine (actually, the seven deities of good fortune don't go in front of the main shrine for the photo session, they go to worship.) Then they all line up in front of the stage. And the Hyottoko and Okame perform a fun dance.



What is different from the first time is that folk dances and the stage performances of slightly different tricks are

performed. This site is not the place to go into details of these unusual arts, but they are worth seeing at least once. Please come and enjoy it.

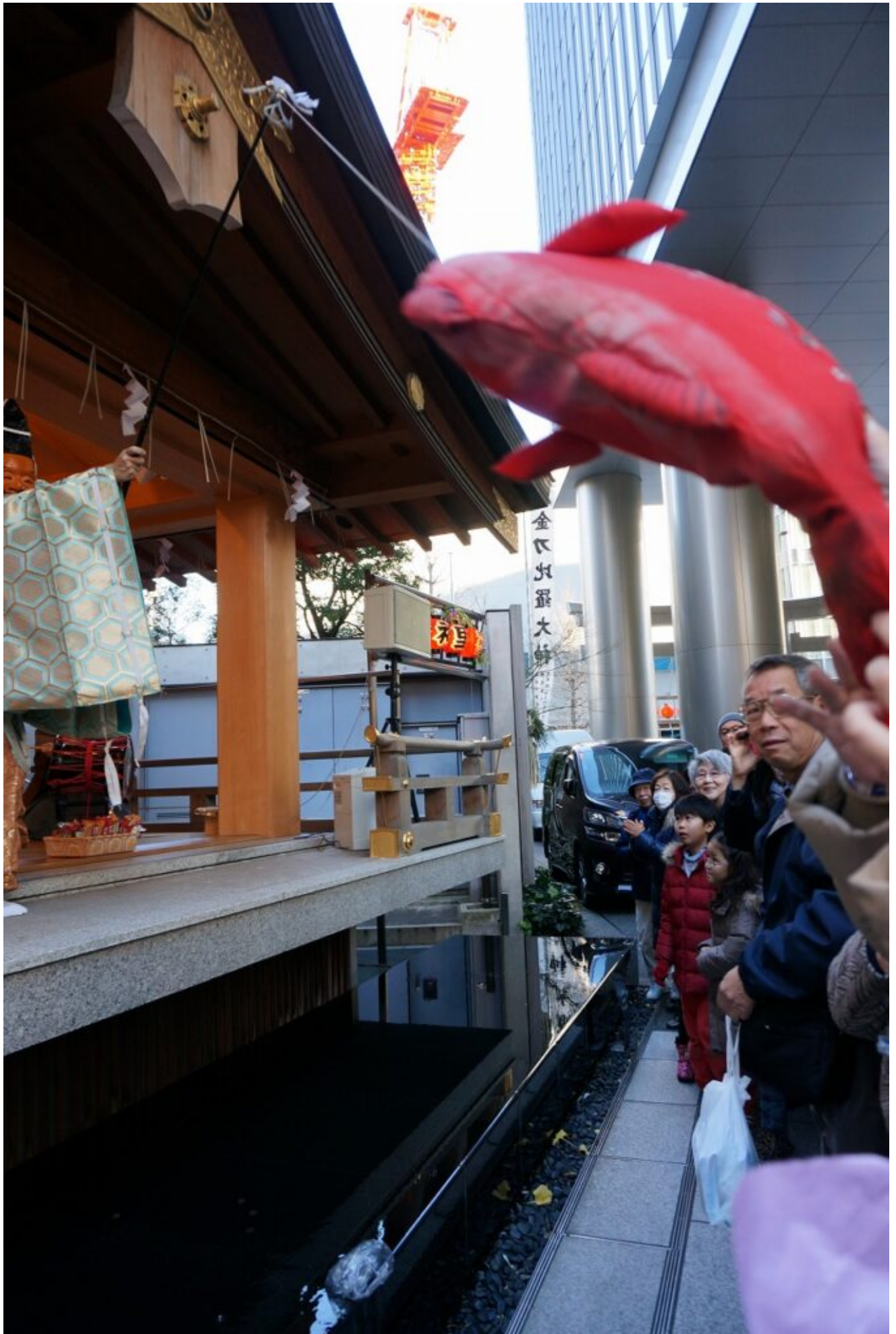
You should see this performance





The content can also be enjoyed on video→<https://youtu.be/egUg2D1wS0Q>

Among the Seven deities of Good Fortune, the most popular duo is Ebisu and Daikoku. And they have a performance that every Japanese person knows. In the case of Ebisu, he uses his fishing line to catch a sea bream. The sea bream is a fish that symbolizes celebrations. While in the case of Daikoku, it is said that if he waves the mallet, good fortune will immediately appear. On the other hand, if Ebisu catches a sea bream, nothing will happen. Actually the sea bream is just a fake attached to the end of a hook. Nonetheless, when he catches a sea bream, people go into a frenzy. They fight to touch the snapper (even if it is fake).





And when Ebisu warms up the people enough, Daikoku comes out and literally brings good fortune out of his mallet. However, only cheap sweets are thrown. If you want to buy them, you can buy them at a nearby store. But people still fight to get their hands on these small blessings.

At the end

Until the 3rd, it is still in the festive New Year's mood, and until the 7th, it is said to be within the period of celebrating New Year's. As a way to mark the end of the year (although few people do this anymore), there is a custom of eating "nanakusa-gayu"(seven herb rice porridge) on the 7th. On New Year's, TV personalities also wear kimonos. The number of people wearing kimonos increases in the town. It is also a time when the so-called "Japaneseness" of the country overflows. Not only the seven deities of good fortune, but

also various other events are held. It might not be a bad idea to experience the Japanese New Year at least once.

Report: 1/35 of the most important of the folk performing art Haji Ichiryu Saibara Kagura □□□□□□□□

Date□□□1st January, 14th February, 10th April, 10th October, and day of “Tori” in December, every year

Location□ Washinomiya shrine Washinomiya, Kuki city, Saitama prefecture

How to get there□ It takes 10 minutes from Washinomiya station (Tobu Isezaki line)

□□This kagura is consisted of 12 programs.

□□This kagura is one of 35 an important Intangible Folk Cultural Heritage by Japanese national government.



Introduction

□This kagura is called “**the source of Kanto kagura**” (Kanto is located in center of Honshu which is main island of Japan, and is the generic name of seven prefectures). In addition, this is one of **the country designation important intangible cultural asset** which there is 35.

□“Sada shinno” originally started in Shimane prefecture. A Shinto priest of Sada shrine learned Noh in Kyoto about the beginning of 17th Century, and made a new kagura (so called Sada Shinno) based on the Noh style. This kagura is known for a distinctive element. That’s the dancer is holding thing (bell, sacred staff with cut paper (heisoku 鉋), or a sakaki leaf and so on). This style of kagura started to be called “Izumo style ” and spread out in the whole country before long. This shrine is where Izumo style was accepted first. So it is called “the source of Kanto kagura”.

□But the first document of the kagura in this shrine was recorded in about the middle of 13th century. We don’t know

whether this kagura is the same kagura of today.



Washinomiya station



□I went to Washinomiya shrine on 1st January, 2015.

□**Kuki city** is located in Saitama prefecture, population of about 150,000. It is not very big town. It takes about 1 hour from Tokyo by Ueno-Tokyo line (JR), changing at Kuki to Tobu line, next station being Washinomiya station.

□**Washinomiya shrine** is about a 10 minute-walk from Washinomiya station. We cross a red bridge on the way to the shrine. It like a connection between the sacred place and the regular world.





□The shrine became a holy ground of animation films in these days. so we can see many persons who wear costumes of animation characters. We can find a middle-aged man who puts on a blond wig wearing sailor uniform (high school girls style) and skirt among them. You guess that it is quite a surreal scene. Even if it is not so, this shrine is the core of faith in this area. The number of people that gathered exceeded 400,000 in there days. The shrine is quiet in usual times, but only for three days, it becomes really crowded.

First half

□On those days, people make a long lines to pray, I passed by them and ran to the hall (kagura-den) where kagura was being performed.



□the kagura was going to start about 10 or 10:30. When I arrived at about 11:00. The kagura had already started. The kagura-den is front of the Hon-den (main hall). So many people were there, but nobody was looking at the kagura. The audience seemed to be no more than 20 persons.

□On the stage, there were one masked man and two girls. The mask showed an old man smiling gently. He dance slowly holding a bell and sacred staff with cut paper (heisoku □□). This kagura's feature was in a ceremonial manner with hardly any dramatic representation.







□I guessed from the title that this program represented at the famous scene of Japanese mythology, "*Amano iwato biraki*" (see to "Reference/Japan mythology"). In "*Amano iwato biraki*" all deities are pleased when "*Amaterasu*" (she is a deity of sun) comes out from where she was hidden in a big door of rock. But, it is difficult to understand such a state only by seeing it. It is significant to appease the Earth in every direction by the swinging the bell. This program took about **30 minutes**.



□Next program is “Hakagura”. This program is where two girls dance swinging a bell. When this program is played, people sitting on the stage play music “Saibara”. “Saibara” is a popular music in Heian period (9~10 C). When we listen to these music, we don’t feel such elements. The oldest music is called “Gagaku”. I feel this music like “Gagaku” faster in tempo. I don’t know if these music remain completely at the time, but I am filled with deep emotion. I think it worth listening to once at least because you would feel the life of ancient Japanese.



Izanagi



Izanami



□Next program is based on Japanese mythology, too. This mythology says in the beginning of time, two deities, named “**Izanagi**” and “**Izanami**” gave birth this country. So, a mobile bridge is set on a stage and two players dance across the bridge. The male deity dances powerfully, the female deity dances with grace. While changing their positions they dance around a stage. This program ended at about half past 12. Then there was an intermission.

Intermission





□There were many food stalls in the shrine precinct. After I ate lunch, I found a place where people were being fire using metal barrel. This area was surrounded by a double fence, and some people were direct cuttlefish. I thought it was a good system. Only people who bought, direct dried cuttlefish could enter in front of the fire. I saw quite a lot of people buying cuttlefish.

Second half

□Meanwhile the kagura started again at **2 o'clock**.

□First program, two little girls were dancing hoiding a bell. It was short.



□Next program was based on mythology,too. When the grandson of “Amaterasu (a deity of sun)”, “Ninigi” goes down from his country “Amatsu kuni” to this earth, two deities got married with the meditation of “Ninigi”. One is a chaperon of Ninigi, named “**Ameno Uzume**”, and is a deity who had waited Ninigi’s group and led this country to safety, named “**Sarutahiko**”.





Sarutahiko



Ameno Uzume

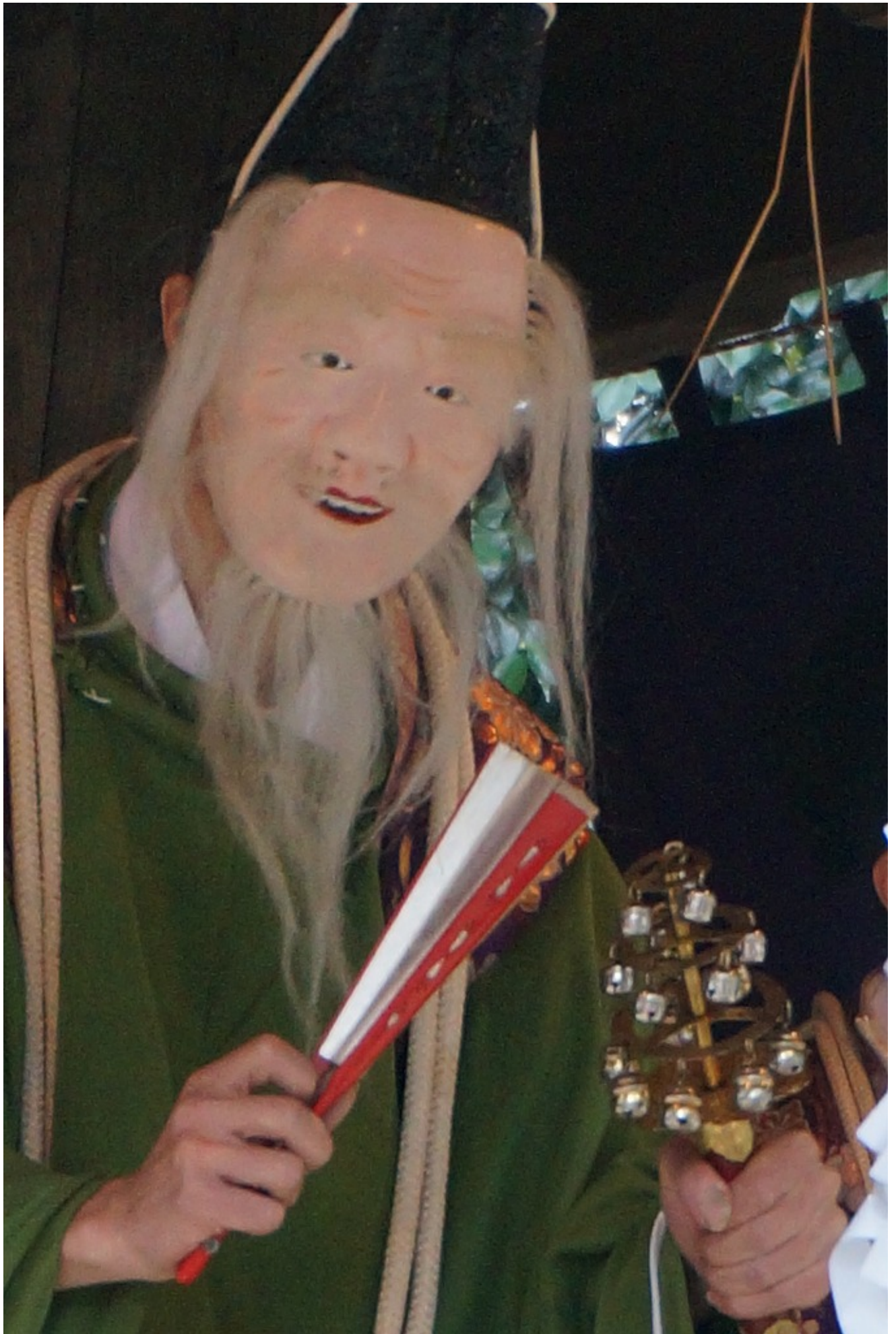


□So, two dancers enter the stage. One wore a red face mask with long -high nose, and another wore a female mask. The dancer with the red mask is “Sarutahiko”, and the other is “Ameno Uzume”. Sarutahiko held a pike, and Ameno Uzume held a big staff which red piece of paper. Two dancers faced each other across the bridge, changing their position like the program of “Izanagi and Izanami”. This kagura basically consists of such dancing.

□It ended at **2:20**.









□After short break, next program started. Three dancers each wore a mask of “okina” (old man) with long mustache and beard. They each held fans, and danced slowly making a circle. It is said that it is to express a prayer for a peace of the world.

□After **30 minutes**, the whole program for today ended.

□If you are interested in old style kagura, I recommended to watch this “Saibara kagura”. You can definitely see a noble and elegant dance program.

□□□□***For more information***

□This kagura is held at “Washinomiya shrine (branch shrine)”, 15th April. It is at “Hachiho, Washinomiya town”.