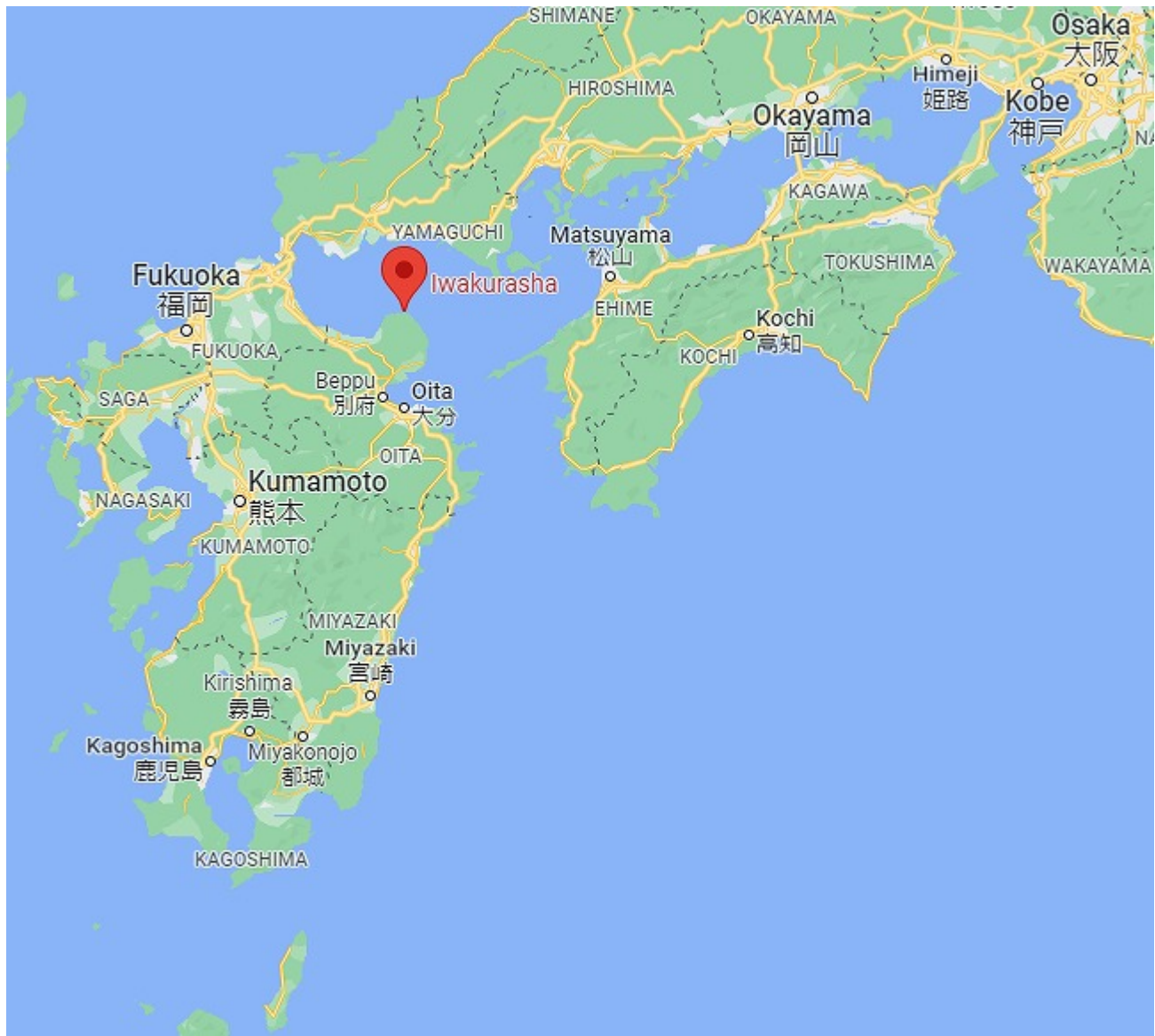
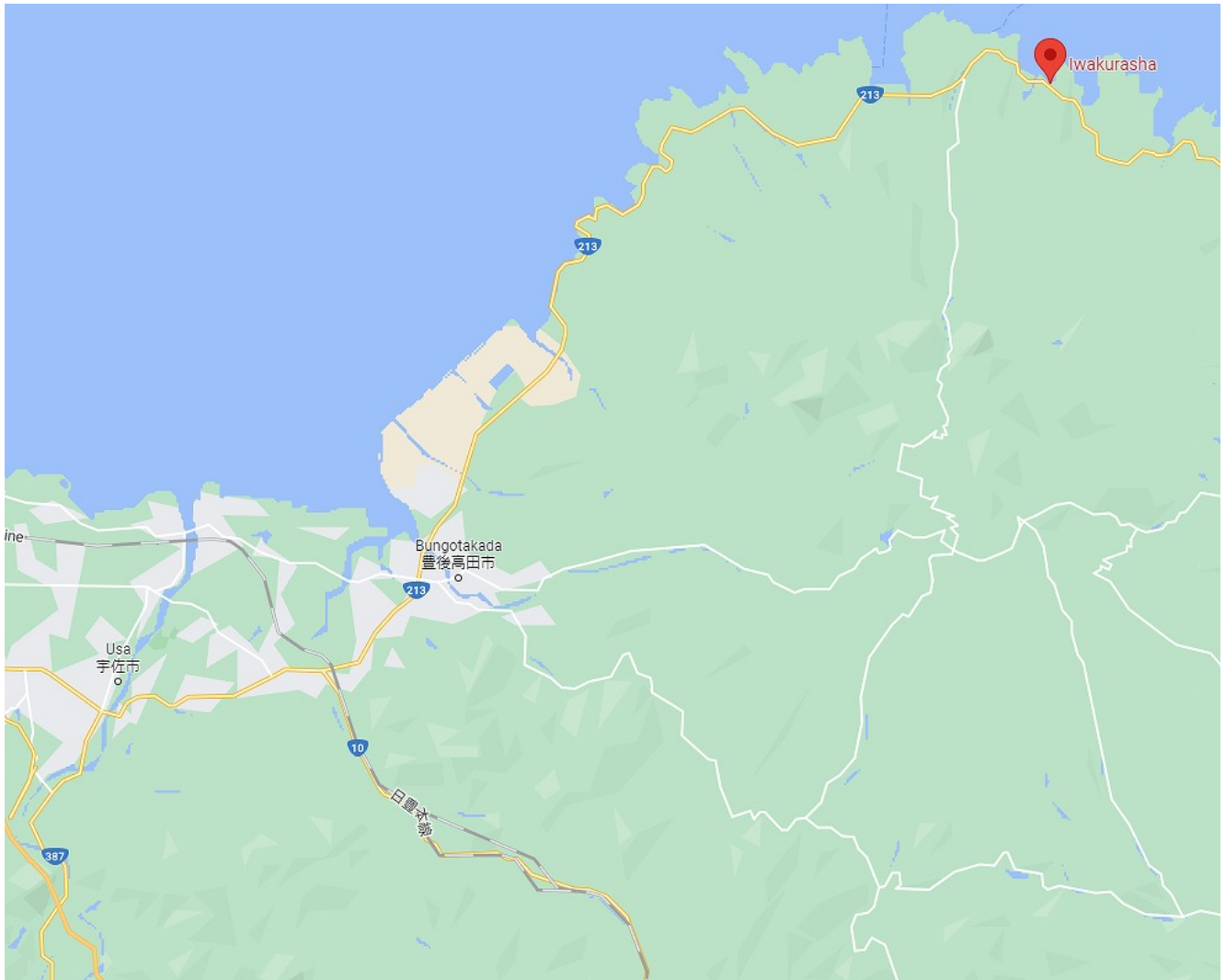


One of the most strange festival ~Kebesu festival





Date: October 14th every year

Location: Kusiku Iwakura Hachiman shrine คุสึกุいわくら

くしきくushiki, Kunimi town, Kunisaki city, Oita prefecture

Access: Take a bus from Usa to Kunimi Post Office in about one hour. From there, walk 30 minutes. A cab will take about 30 minutes.



<https://www.pref.oita.jp/site/archive/200474.html>

There are some festivals where it is not at all clear now what the purpose of such events is. Among them, the one this site

will introduce here is a festival full of mysteries. There are even questions about the relationship between Greek mythology and Judaism.

As is often the case with such festivals, the traffic is very poor. There is a bus service from the nearby Usa station (1200 yen as of 2022), but it arrives at around 2:00 in the afternoon. You have to walk another 30 minutes. If you take a cab, you can specify the time, but the price will go up to about 10,000 yen.

Schedule and outline ~up to the day before

Simply put, the festival is about a mysterious masked god named Kebesu 𐄂𐄂𐄂, who is rushing towards the fire, but is stopped by a character named Tooba 𐄂𐄂. And finally, Touba joins in and sprinkles the area with fire. It takes about 30 minutes.

Getting to this point was a challenge. The first step is to decide which of the ten districts will be in charge this year on October 7, and then to decide on the roles of each of them, except the role of Kebesu.

On the 8th, we make a place under the eaves of the house of the person on duty to welcome the gods. Then all the people, led by the god's caretaker called Okayo, move the god there. The Okayo purifies himself with sea water every day from this day on, and then makes offerings to the gods. They had to collect ferns for the festival.

The people in charge also go through a one-week purification period. Specifically, they do not eat meat. They do not mix fire with other areas. For this reason, they can only eat food that they have prepared themselves.

13 days. All of them go to the beach to bathe in sea water and

make rice cakes. Finally, the role of Kebesu is decided by lottery.

On the day



<http://www.suigun.sakura.ne.jp/tokusyu/kunisakinotabi26.html>



<https://kunisaki-tambo.com/kebesu/>

At around 2:00, all staff members carry the gods and offerings to the shrine, the site of the festival.

7:00 p.m. The ritual begins. The person in the role of Kebesu wears a mask, and the priest draws the character for “victory” on his back with his finger. Around 7:30. Kevesu and all the others dressed in white appear at the venue. Already in the center of the room, a pile of ferns is ablaze with flames.

Highlight



<http://oitaian.com/heritage/%E3%82%B1%E3%83%99%E3%82%B9%E7%A5%AD/> photo by Ishimatsu Takeo

At the venue, drums, flutes, and bells played a four-beat rhythm. The Kebesu and Toubas march in a line. Eventually, Kebesu sees an opening and rushes toward the fire. Tooba rushes to stop him. Both of them have long sticks, which they use to hit and stop each other. This is repeated three times. On the third time, Kevesu reached the fire and stirred it with a stick. But even there, Touba pushes him back again.

These series are repeated three times over, resulting in a total of nine times. Finally, on the ninth time, Kevesu stirs the fire and rolls a burning fern around a stick. However,

even the Tooba, who is supposed to stop him, gather around the fire together. They hold up the lit sticks and face the audience. It is as if the people who tried to stop the zombies have turned into zombies.

And the festival ends in confusion and chaos. This is the sequence of events.

What is the Kebesu ?



http://www.shikoku-np.co.jp/national/life_topic/photo.aspx?id=20141014000588&no=1



<http://oitaisan.com/heritage/%E3%82%B1%E3%83%99%E3%82%B9%E7%A5%AD/#:~:text=%E5%8F%A4%E3%81%8F%E3%81%AF%E7%A3%90%E5%80%89%E3%81%A8,%E9%96%A2%E4%BF%82%E3%81%99%E3%82%8B%E3%81%AE%E3%81%AF%E7%A2%BA%E3%81%8B%E3%80%82>

What is Kevesu? No one has any idea what it is. There are many theories about when it started, some say it started a thousand years ago, others say it started around 500 years ago. The records have been destroyed in fire a long time ago, so there are no clues at all.

There are several theories. The first is that it is an abbreviation of the Chinese character for “fire kicker. This word appears in the incantations chanted by the Shinto priests.

The second one is that Ebisu has become bastardized. Ebisu is a familiar god in Japan who brings good fortune. He is always depicted as having caught a sea bream. As you can see, he is a god who originally came from the sea. The theory is that it was originally people who made their living on the sea, and that it represents the conflict between them and land groups.

The third is that this peninsula produces iron sand, and the people who work with it in blacksmithing took fire very

seriously. Furthermore, there is this theory. In Greek mythology, a man named Prometheus stole the fire in God's kingdom and gave it to the people. I can only say that I don't know what's going on here anymore.



<https://4travel.jp/travelogue/11065407>



<https://norbulingka.info/guide>

In any case, it is certainly a festival full of mysteries. One person has this to say about the festival. It is a festival that no amount of words can convey.

You just have to experience it for yourself. However, please be sure to wear clothes that are safe from the fire.

**Report: Yabu are coming
~Battle in Kure□□**

Prologue

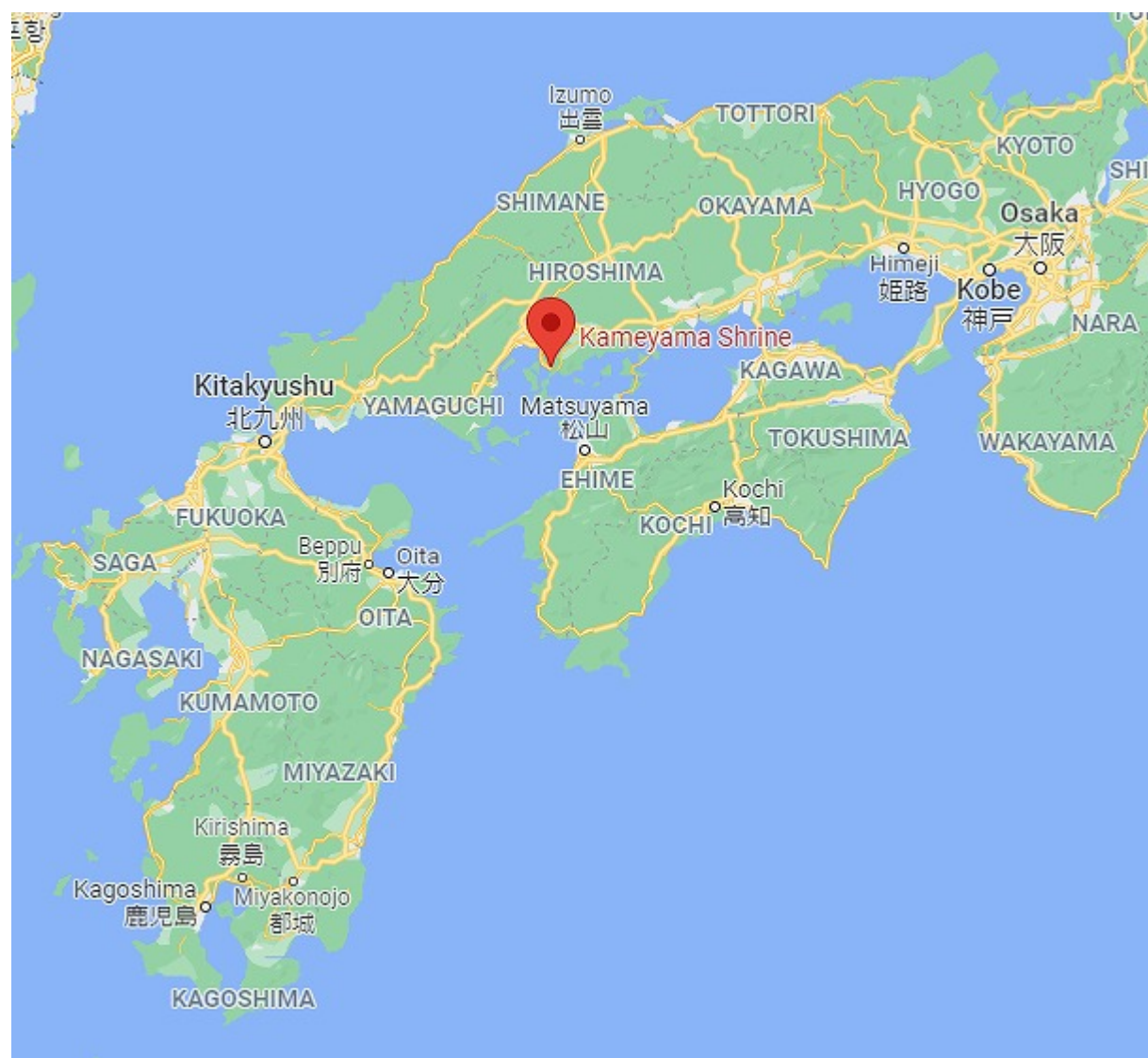


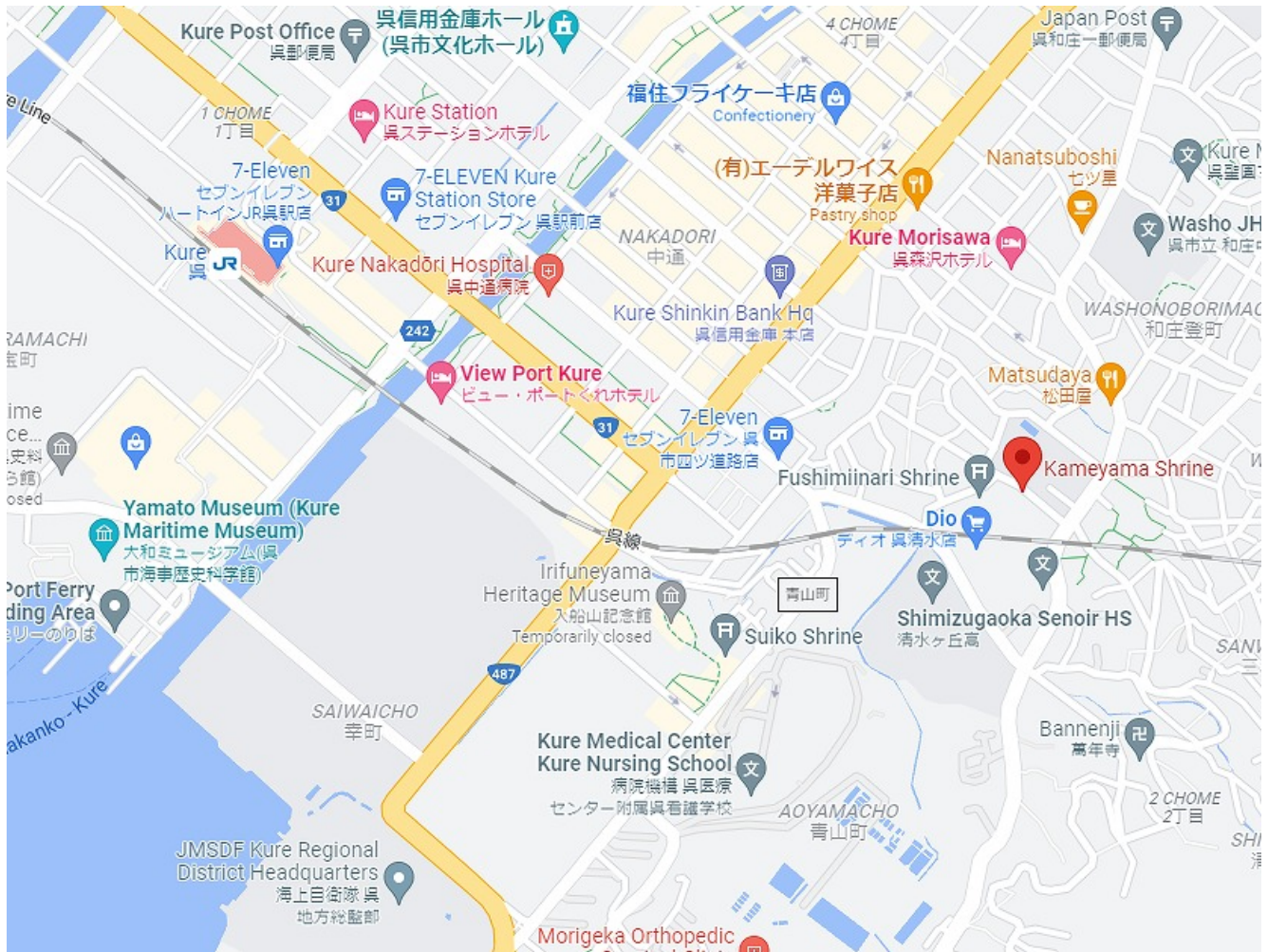
The battle begins with a song with a strange verse. The young people carrying the mikoshi (portable shrine), which is made of three rice bales stacked in a pyramid shape, are already in a state of excitement.

On the other hand, “they” are already standing by in front of the main shrine. The audience could see that they were even more excited than the mikoshi. The masked ogres hold bamboo sticks wrapped in long cylindrical cloth. Their bare chest plates are changing to blood red.

When the song ended, the mikoshi run up to the main shrine with great vigor amidst loud cheers. In an attempt to stop them, “they” violently hit the bales with bamboo sticks. A battle of wills. The excitement of the large crowd of spectators reaches a climax.

Autumn had arrived in the town of Kure.





Date: The second Sunday in October

Location: 1 Chome-9-36 Shimizu, Kure, Hiroshima

Access: It takes about one hour from Hiroshima Station to Kure. It is a 15-minute walk from the station.

Their name is “Yabu”

Their name is “Yabu”. Nobody knows exactly what a “yabu” is. Yabu always appear at festivals in Kure. However, no one knows when they first appeared or why they appear. Their presence is overwhelming. Once you see them, you can’t forget them: the terrifying masks, the straw rising up on their backs like flames or little dolls, and the long bamboo sticks in their hands. Throughout the festival, they roam the grounds of the shrine and the town in all directions. And they intimidate people with bamboo sticks in their hands. They behave as kings

and messengers of the deity during the festival.
What is “Yabu”? This report followed them for a day.

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



Kameyama Shrine—this is the headquarters of all the yabus. To be precise, the Kameyama Shrine is the headquarters of all the shrines in Kure City. Yabu first appears at the shrine at about eight in the morning. I had heard that, so I came to Hiroshima the day before to prepare for the appearance. In fact, they had appeared in town the night before. And they had been chasing children around and running amok. I didn't find out about it until much later. This was unfortunate. At any rate, it was morning in the city of Kure. I headed for the shrine in the still sparsely populated streets. The road to the shrine is slightly uphill. There were already a lot of stalls waiting to open. After climbing up the last set of stairs, you will see the main shrine beyond the spacious precincts. It seemed that the yabus had not yet appeared. I feel fresh in the morning air when I went out to the town. Yabus are famous in Kure, and there are some ardent fans. There are many people who have covered all the yabus that

appear in the festivals of shrines in Kure City. Some people have done a lot of different research. They collect old photos and ask around about the origin. Still, they don't seem to know for sure how long it has existed. There is no mention of yabu in the textbooks for the priesthood. Yabu is like the guardian deity of the shrine. That's where the discussion eventually settles. Nothing more, nothing less.



Yabu's appearance was quiet. There was no sound. He just appeared with the people involved, visited the shrine, and then took a commemorative photo. There is a pecking order in the line up of appearance. The leader is number 1. It seems to change from year to year, but at this time, there were nine yabus. At this time, there were nine yabus, plus a tengu. The no.1 yabu is in the center, and the rest are lined up in order from left to right. The order of the yabus seems to be quite strict. Eventually, the Yabus started to descend the hill in a quiet line. They took a short break until noon at the building in front of the intersection.



Kure, located in the west of Hiroshima, was a former naval

base. The topography of the city is such that it faces the coast, with mountains looming in the background. Even today, there are many facilities related to the Self-Defense Forces. It was also the home port of the Battleship Yamato (which was built and sunk during World War II, the already outdated symbol of big-ship gunnery), a ship that every Japanese person knows. For this reason, there is a museum commemorating Yamato and a Self-Defense Force museum lining the harbor. More to the point, it is also the setting for a blockbuster movie about a yakuza war. This is the image that Japanese people have of Kure.







Around noon, the Yabus would finally start. The Yabus gather in front of the building in front of the intersection, and people gather to see them. You can see many people holding their children in their arms. The gathering of the crowd makes the festival atmosphere all the more exciting. When the time came, they all started proceeding towards the shrine at once. With all the spectators and people involved in the event in tow. I hurried to the shrine ahead of the others. After all, this festival attracts so many spectators that it is also known as a people-watching festival. The area in front of the shrine, the main venue, was overflowing with people. I managed to get a spot in the front and waited for the Yabus to arrive. I'm sure the Yabus were showing off very Yabu-like on the way, but I gave up looking there. After all, I want to see the main event.

Before the fight~ drumming

This festival is also known as the “People’s Festival. As it was, many people were waiting closely in front of the main shrine.



Yabu arrives. The central performing area was officially roped

off to hold back the crowd of pushers and shakers. They go around saying, "Please don't push". Yabu is different. They shout and violently slam their bamboo sticks into the ground. "Don't come out!" They tend to be intimidating. The children begin to cry.

Two drums are brought in and Yabus beat on them. The festival has begun. After the drums are beaten for a while, the people involved clean up the area. Then they set up the drums again. This time there is only one.

There is only one person who can beat it. The first yabu. The black-faced, sturdy-looking yabu beats the drum. In front of him, a strange creature appears. A lion. The lion is lying on the ground, as if asleep.

Before the fight~ Who's at the top?





Yabu beats his drum as if to provoke. Eventually, the lion rises and confronts Yabu.

The sound of the flute flowed heavily and monotonously. It was as if a sacred air had been poured into the room. Yabu beat the drum slowly. It was a heavy bass sound that seemed to resonate in the pit of everyone's stomach.

The lion quietly raises his body. The sound of the flute becomes a little lighter. It plays a melody that seems to be angry at something fun. The yabu drums also lightened up to the melody, as if they had changed from four beats to eight.

The lion raises its body and undulates violently. The rhythm of the drums becomes even faster. Eventually, the people move the drums aside.

The content can also be enjoyed on video→<https://youtu.be/ejqypW59HSM>



Yabu replaced the *bachi* drum sticks with a long bamboo stick and swung it down to the ground. The dry sound of the bamboo bursting echoes through the air. The rhythm became even faster, and the lions went into a frenzy. Finally, the two clashed head-on as if to show off their respective powers.

It is said that this is the final battle to determine which is the more worthy of being the guardian of the gods, the yabu or

the lion.

Tonbo vs Yabu



The content can also be enjoyed on video→<https://youtu.be/CupESF45BGI>

Yabu defeated the lion and successfully won the position of divine protector. As if to show off their power, they held up bamboo sticks high in their hands and somehow began to run vigorously around the main shrine. Before long, not only the yabus, but also a group of musicians start running. During this time, Hyottoko came out and danced in front of the spectators.

After running three laps, Yabu finally settled down in front of the shrine. The young people carried Tombo mikoshi (portable shrine) , and everything was ready. Already a small skirmish broke out between the two, and shouts of anger flew around. The Tombo song begins.As soon as the song ends, the tonbo rushes toward the shrine with great force. Yabu tries to stop it by sticking a bamboo stick into the bale. Finally, the long battle began.



Tonbo is pushed back. Still excited, the Tonbo and the yabu continue their skirmish. The Tonbo lunges again. Sometimes the Tonbo pushes out to the top of the shrine steps. Sometimes the Yabu pushes back at once in front. This battle is repeated over and over again, never ending. For more information on this battle, please watch the video.

The battle lasts for about half an hour. At the end of the battle, which had been going on without end, the Tonbo pushed the boulders away and they disappeared into the main shrine. This is how the people dedicate the harvested rice to the shrine.

In fact, the Yabu does not interfere with the Tonbo's dedication of the rice bales. They are just checking to see if the dragonflies are offering strange rice.

To the town

The content can also be enjoyed on video→https://youtu.be/RJ4Vg4_vAVo

It took a while for the waiting time to become like a photography session with Yabu. Parents taking care of their children, girls lining up to take pictures with them. This continued even after they left the shrine and started down the hill. With the enthusiasm still intact, people continued on to the town.





The little ones still cry a lot, but as they get a little older, this changes. When they get older, they will take pride in not being afraid of the yabu, and the yabu will become a hero.



The group surrounded the yabu, and the portable shrines and

the musical performers went out into the town as a group. The mikoshi is carried by women here. In recent years, people of the town alone has not been able to secure enough women to carry the mikoshi, so they have asked women from nearby universities to come and carry the mikoshi.

In the center of town, a circle of people had already formed. Since this was an annual event, people knew the place and the event all too well. Even so, they felt compelled to gather together when they heard that Yabu was coming and that there would be a festival.

On this day, there is only one festival at Kameyama Shrine, but depending on the day, there may be festivals at three or four different shrines. Each yabu runs rampant amid our town. This is how the people of Kure have enjoyed the Yabu and the festival, and will continue to do so in the future.



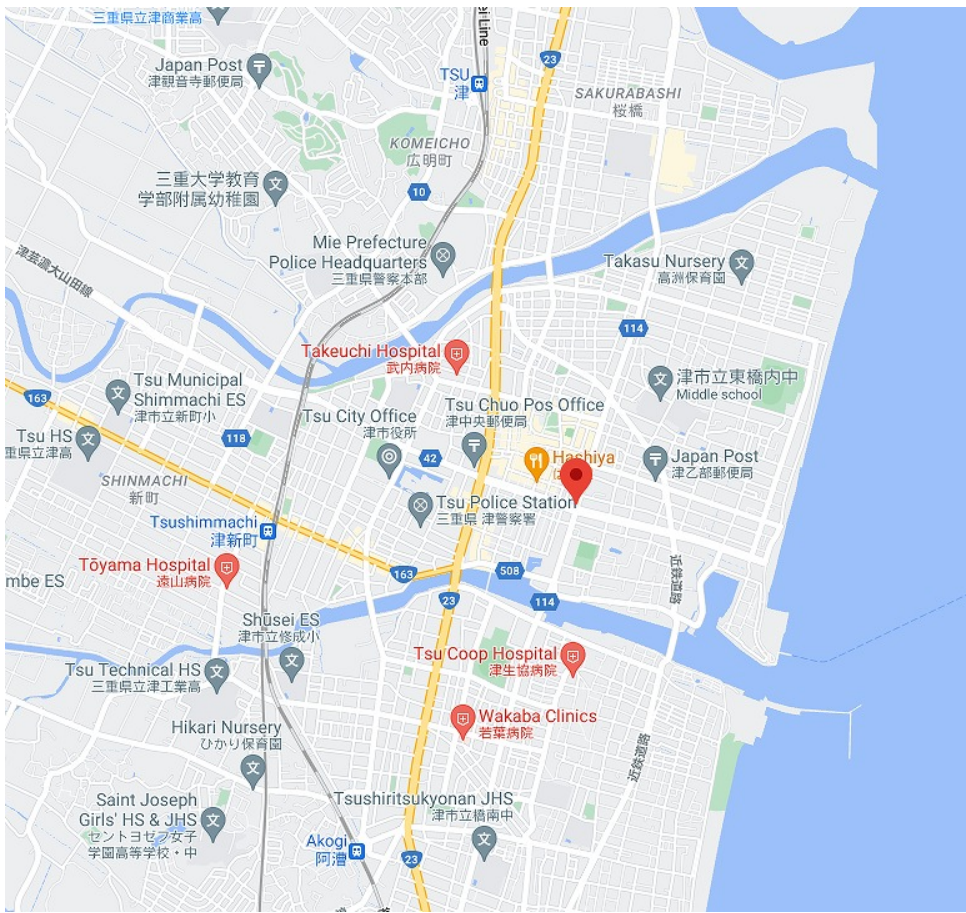
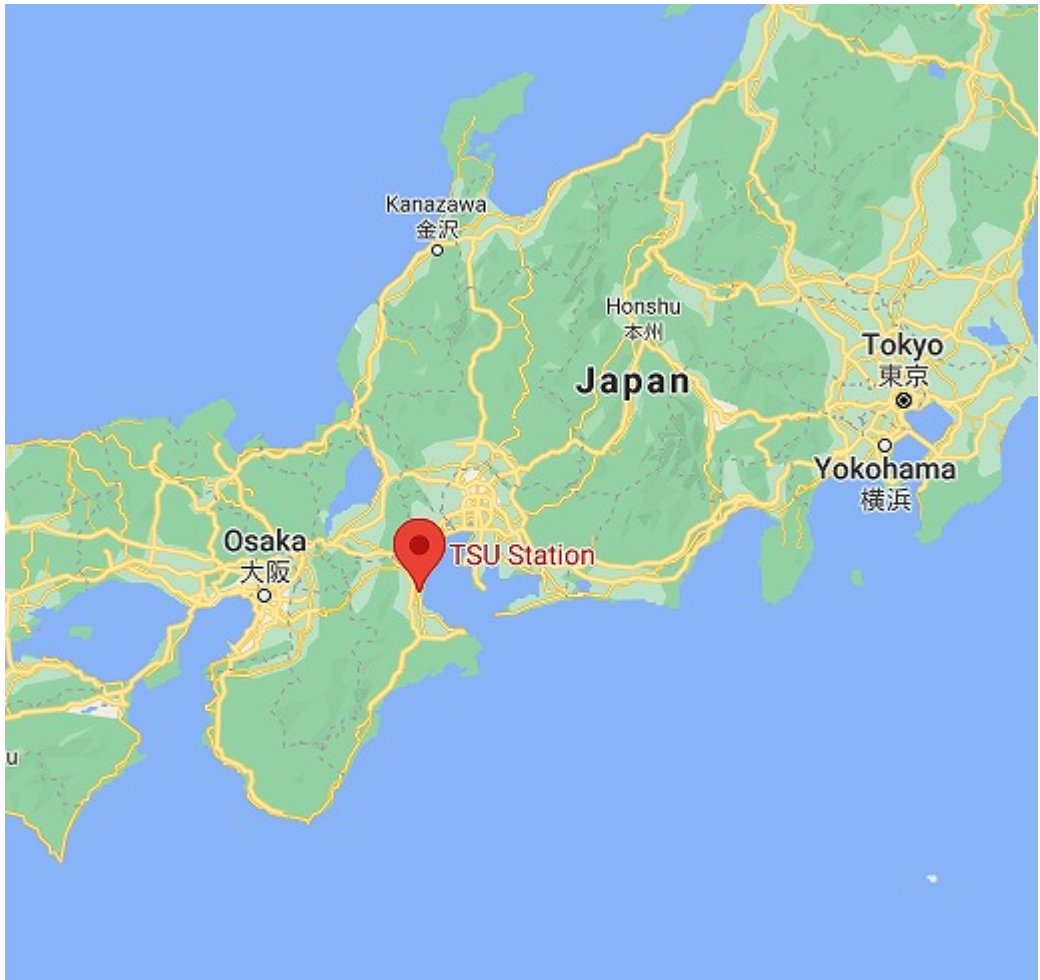




The festival in Kure has just begun. Festivals will be held at various shrines over the next month or so. Now I want you to see it for yourself.



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 〇〇〇〇”.

Shagouma 〇〇〇〇



<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/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) 唐人舞

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

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"



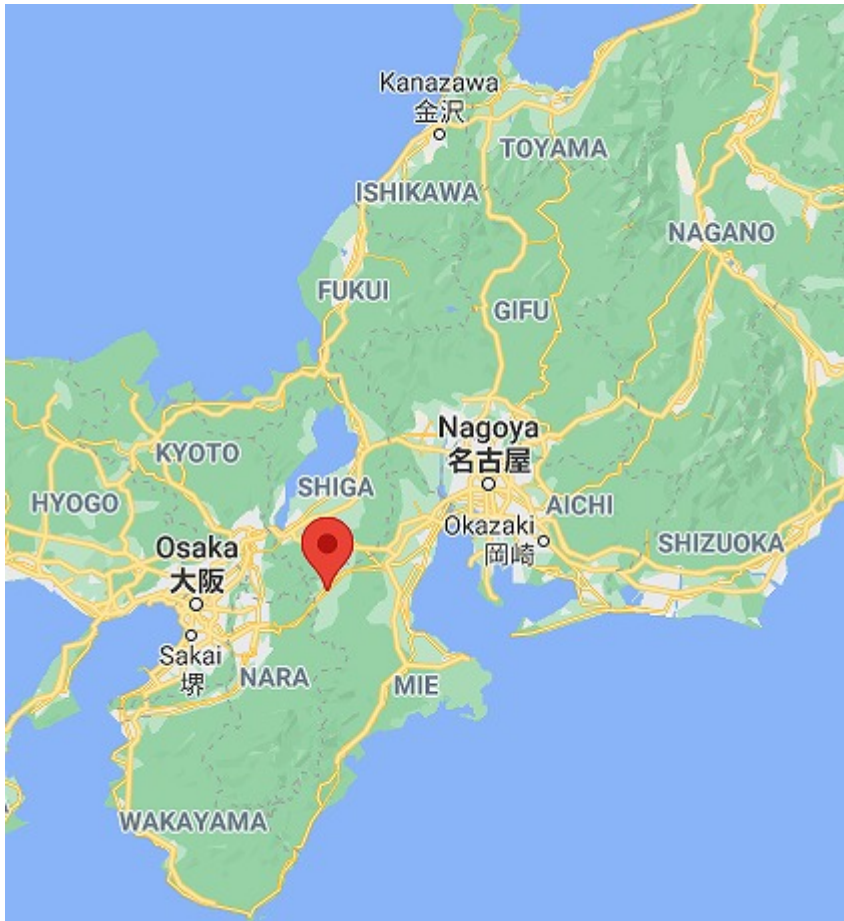
<http://furusato-shinbun.jp/2013/04/04-30.html>



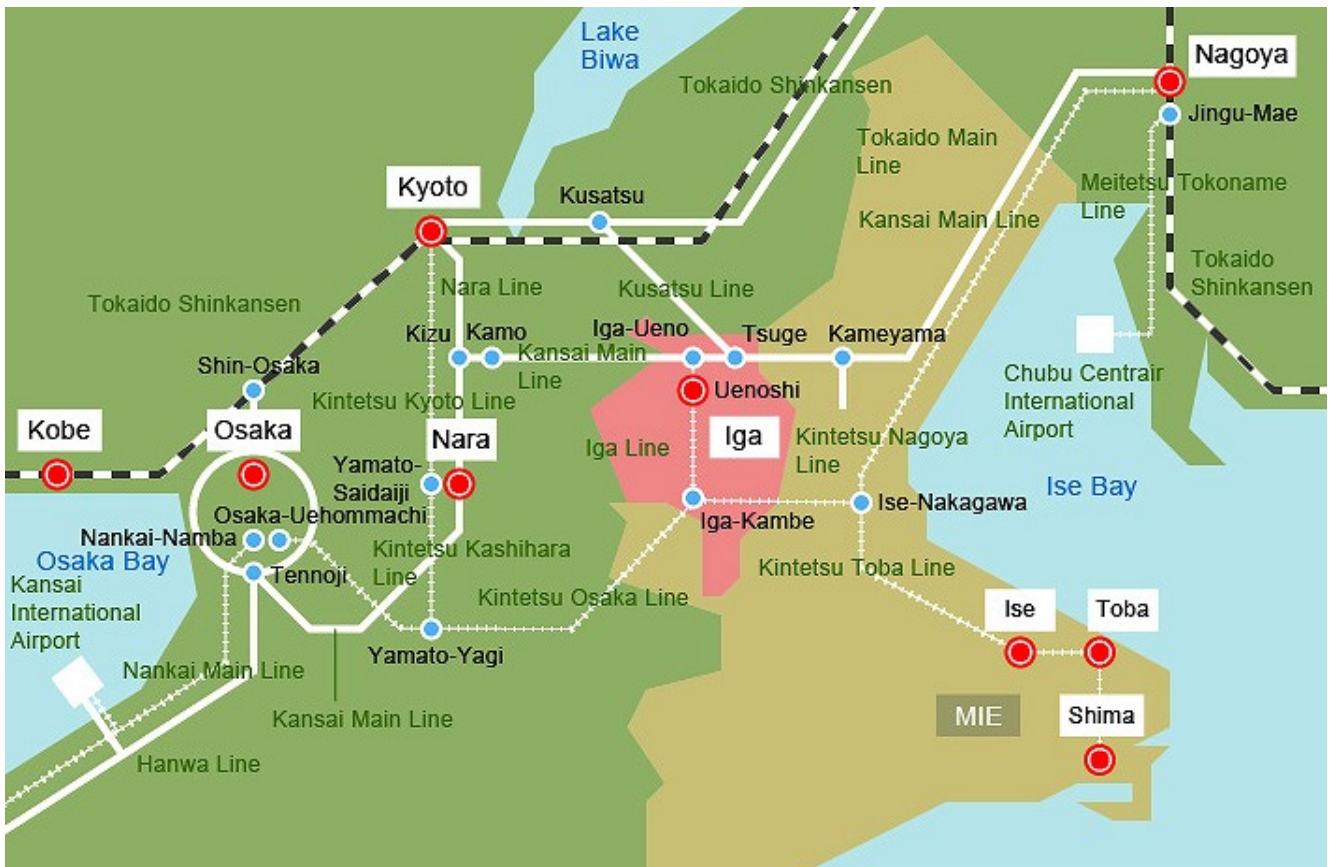
<https://www.info.city.tsu.mie.jp/www/contents/1001000000009/index.html>

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



wide area map

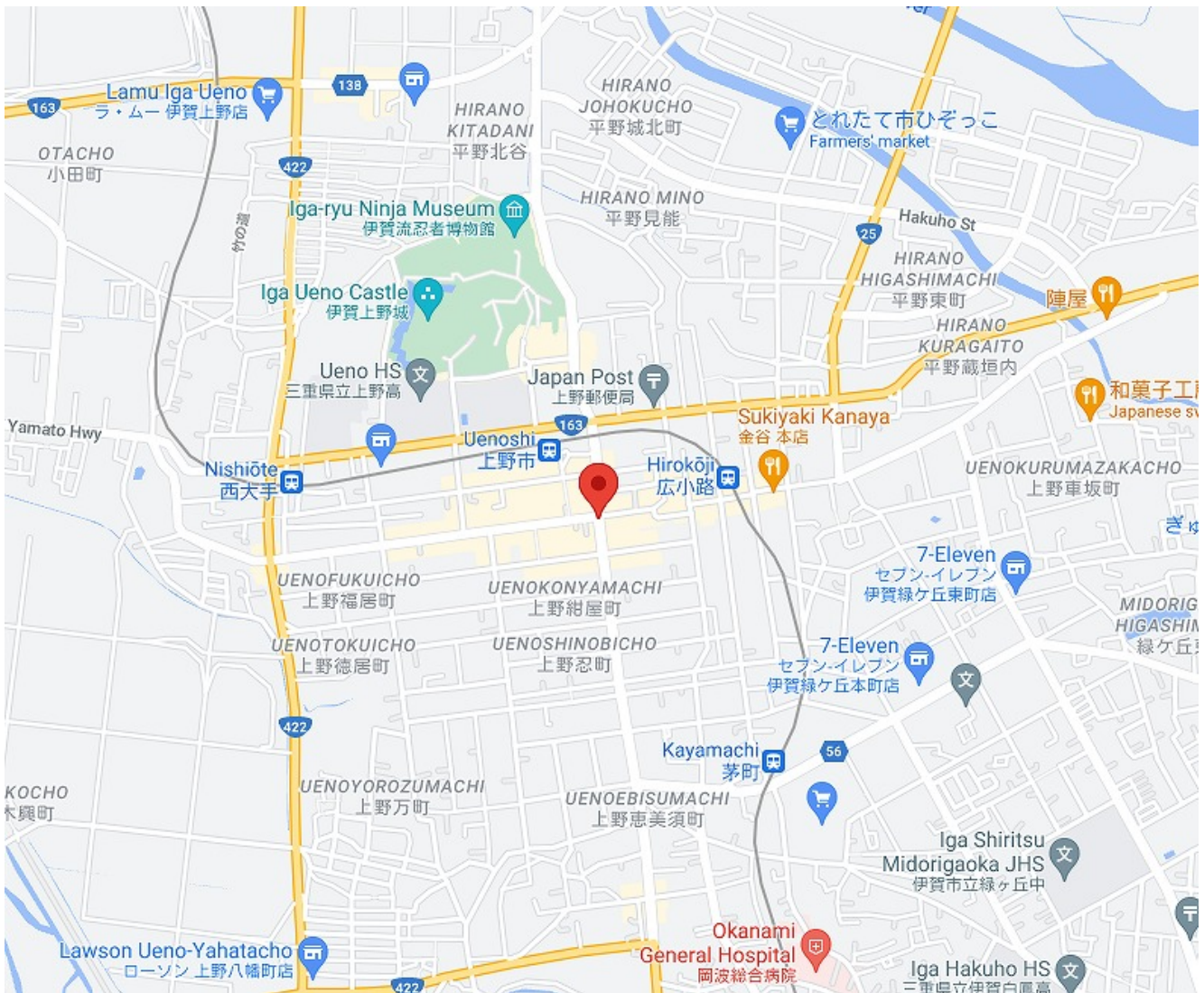


transportation

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



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 延暦寺. The other part is centered on Minamoto no Tametomo 源朝光.

En no gyoja group

En no gyoja, whose real name is En no Ozunu 延暦寺, 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>



<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 about Ninja Museum

Report: 3 reasons for going to Toyama Part 1 Rokudoji~ Winner of Kingdom of the Lion

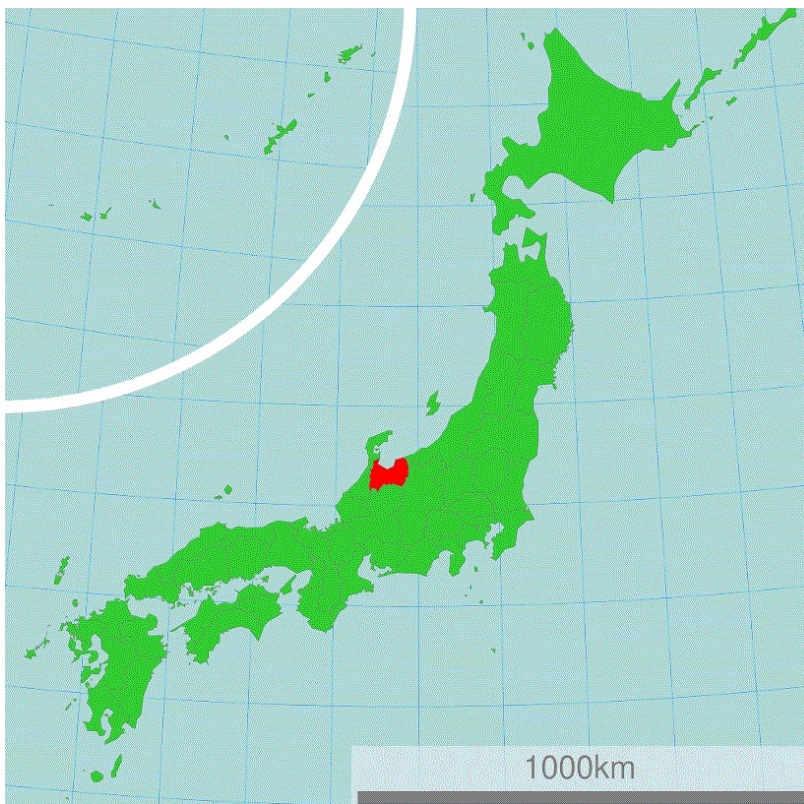
dance

Date: 14th May, every year

Location: Rokudoji district, Imizu city, Toyama prefecture

Access: Rokudoji station (Manyo line). You take “Ai-no-kaze-Toyama line from Toyama and change at Takaoka to Manyo line. To Toyama from Tokyo, you take Shinkansen (JR line) or night express bus.

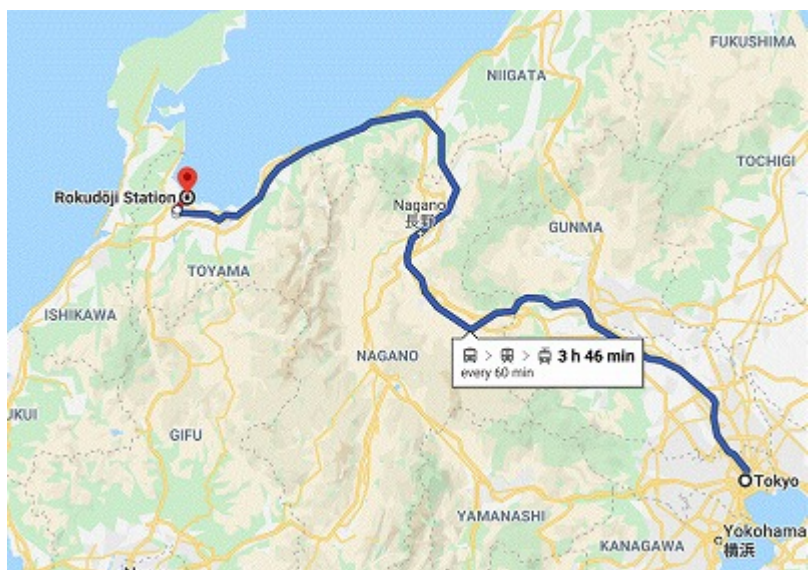
*This article is written based on writer’s experience in 2018.



Toyama prefecture 石川県



Imizu city 〇〇〇



From Tokyo to Toyama



Rokudoji district

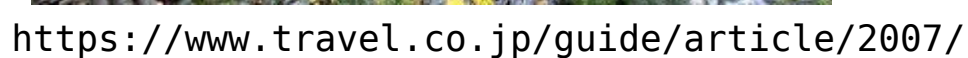
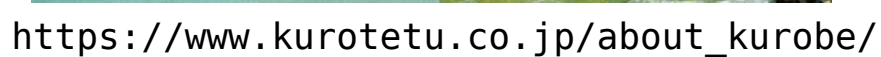
□Hello, everybody.

□ Do you have a time when you want to go to Japan, but just going to major cities like Tokyo, Osaka or Kyoto, isn't enough? Those of you who doubt there must be something more than just Ninja, temple, Fujiyama, Kawaii and high technology in Japan—you are lucky to reach this site. There are many good regions where most people don't know. For example, what do you think of Toyama prefecture? You may say "Toyama? Where is it? I have never heard such a name". That's what's fun about it. You want to see more than Tokyo, don't you? You want to know deeper attractive Japan, don't you?

□3 reasons why you should go to Toyama.

One. Toyama has great nature. "Kurobe-kyokoku (gorge) is deep V shaped gorge with a height difference between the river and mountain ranging from 1,500 to 2,000 meters. This area has

`cf->https://www.alpen-route.com/en/yuki-no-otani-snow-wall-`
`walk-2016apr-16th-jun-22nd%E3%80%80%E`
`%BD%9E%E9%9B%AA%E3%81%`
`A%E5%A4%A7%E8%B0%B7%E3%82%A6%E3%82%A9%E3%83%`
`BC%E3%82%AF2016%E`
`F%BD%9E Yuki-no - otani`





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

Two. There are many traditional cultures. The old castle “Toyama castle”, the big buddha in Takaoka. “Kanaya” is a town as if time had stopped. “Gokayama”, the historic village is designated as a World Cultural Heritage Sites.



Toyama castle



Takaoka great buddha



Kanaya town



Gokayama village

*cf. Toyama castle, Takaoka buddha and Gokayama village from <https://travel.rakuten.co.jp/mytrip/ranking/spot-toyama/>
Kanaya town from <https://toyama-bunkaisan.jp/search/1747/>

□Every spot is accessible within one or two hours by train from Toyama station. It's very convenient.

Three. There are many great "Shishimai (Lion dance). Yes, I am definite about that. Actually, it is said Toyama has more than 1,000 groups of Shishimai. Each region has its own style. They have been performed for more than 300 years. Among these, I recommend the lion dance in "Rokudoji" and "Shinminato" areas. While flames are rising up, the endless battle of "Shishi" and "Tengu" unfolds. You can watch performances transcending simple traditional performing arts.

□First, you are at the Takaoka station of "Manyo-line". Takaoka is within half an hour from Toyama. "Manyo-line" is a vehicle between a train and bus. In short, it is a streetcar. You have to get a number ticket when you get on. This streetcar starts slowly and drowsily as if you were on a roller coaster. When I got on, there were many students because it was a weekday. Although most traditional performing arts are held on Saturday or Sunday near the original day, in this area, they stubbornly observe the day prescribed. The streetcar drives along the environs of the old town to Shinminato.





*from

https://www.tripadvisor.jp/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g311426-d2401483-i228144336-Manyosen-Takaoka_Toyama_Prefecture_Hokuriku_Chubu.html

□After about thirty minutes, you reach a station. You may see a building with a nice rustic in front of the station. That's Rokudoji. But you will murmur "Well, Where is the Lion dance group? I don't know."

□When I visited the area, I arrived at about nine am. The only information I had was to be at the shrine at six. I walked along the river. Then, I heard some sounds of flutes and drums. I walked following the sound, and had a look in the alley. I found it. There was a group of the Lion dance right here.



Tengu





□Shishi and Tengu were dancing. There were five people inside both Shishi and Tengu, children (called Kiriko)dressed up with flower hats, followed by a little vehicle with several people playing traditional flutes and Japanese drum (Taiko) riding. And in addition there were more than ten people who are the leader and supporters. All people other than Tengu and Kiriko wear the same clothes.





Kiriko



□Shishi consists of five people. The front man handles the head of Shishi, and others are covered by a long cloth tinged

with a unique pattern. This style is called “centipede Lion”.

□They walk along the street, sometimes stop to play a short dance (within five to ten minutes). Shishi try to catch Kiriko, and Tengu face Shishi to try to protect them. This is the basic form. The leader decides on the spot what they do. The leader tells the name of the program, and they instantly dance it. Sometimes, a man who happen to pass by join them. I suspect he, of course, may be a member but he couldn't participate this day for some reason. And sometimes the musicians play as Kiriko.



□People who live along the street go out from their house. Children watch them with their shining eyes. This festival is held every year, but they can't help coming out to the street

when they hear the sound of the Lion dance. The group walk as they dance to meet everyone's expectation all over the town the whole day. That day was a weekday, as expected the number of viewer was not many especially in the morning. Just because the viewers weren't many, they never cut corners. Come to think of it, despite being weekday, people walk around playing Shishi dance don't go to work, and children are absent from school, too. But people in this town must consider it is only natural. And they are waiting for Shishi to come. In Japan, towns like this still remain.





□The leader cries the name of the program, every member gets prepared immediately like an army. The leader cries “Tololo!”, “Baigaeshi!”. We, as third party, don’t know any meaning of these words, but as we watch them again and again, we could imagine what they play. Thus their chant “Iyasaa, iyasaka!” echoes all over the town. This “Iyasaa” chant is short for “Iyoiyo sakaeru”, means “thrive more and more”. This chant is rare.



□People inside Shishi continue to swing its long curtain. The curtain doesn't swing easily by a little shake. People have to make the curtain swing by power of the whole bodies. It's a good amount of hard work. So people change their role repeatedly. People who come out from the curtain are covered in sweat and their faces are burning, especially the man who handles the head. Even in May, it's hot.



□They sometimes imitate pounding rice cake (Japanese traditional ceremony at New Year) with Hyottoko joying in. They don't pound rice cake actually, Kiriko (children dressed up) throw confetti at last to celebrate. They go around giving fortune to the town.



□They walk around the town while doing short performances, and sometimes do long versions of the program at facilities, like at a hospital or a kindergarten.

□When the group arrived this hospital facility at about 2 pm, many people had already waited impatiently for them. I only followed after the group of Shishi, but local people might know the time, it arrives for every year. Not only the people in this facility, but many neighbors have gathered. □Whether the people are concerned or not, or whether they have nothing to do...(no)...they all seem to gather despite of themselves every year event.

□We can see the perfect form of this Shishi dance at last here, although, the basic format doesn't change. Shishi goes mad, KIriko dance colorfully and Tengu faces the Shishi. Then, what is different? Let's go on to the chase, and we can see the last part. Until then, Shishi runs over, Tengu and Kiriko appears, and coaxes it. But that was all just a part of the battle. If there are people who say "So? What ultimately happens?", they would finally find out here.



□Before we see the last, we must give you more information. It is the torch. Most Shishimai group use this torch recently. The group that started using, Rokudoji. This performance has been the typical style, Rokudoji being the is origin. So, when Tengu holds the torches, the audience lives up. It takes about more thirty minutes.

□Rokudoji received the first prize at the competition of the Lion dance in Toyama for six years in a row for this performance. Moreover the Shishi dance is characterized by Tengu wearing the long hat called “Eboshi”. Tengu has long hair called “Shaguma” in Imizu city, while Tengu has long hat in Himi city. Rokudoji has both feature.



□Tengu dangles fire in front of Shishi. Shishi is dazzled soon, and calms down.



□Every group in Imizu type has the performance “Killing the lion”, but Rokudoji doesn’t have that performance. This is another feature. Rokudoji received the first prize at the competition of the Lion dance in Toyama where it is said to be the kingdom of the Lion dance, for six years in a row for this performance.



□When the main event finishes, it will be late afternoon. Rokudoji is located between the river and the sea. It's great to do cool off in the afternoon, or you want to eat something. Unfortunately, this area doesn't have any convenience stores, cafes or restaurants. If you want to go to a shop, you can get on the Manyo-line and go to the center of the city. In my case, I walked a very long way to find shops because I thought there are some convenience stores nearby. After all, I ended up walking for two stations away from Rokudoji. Lesson 1. "Don't think there are some shops within five minutes walking distance like Tokyo."

□In the evening, finally the most popular performance will be held called "Iwai-bana". This means that the Shishi group goes to and celebrate a house that is new or a family tgat had a happy event like a wedding or a new baby.



□This evening, two ceremonies were held. One was a personal new house and another was the community center. It started about seven pm. When this time approached many cars were lined up along the river. First, in front of a just personal house. People already filed up the area in front of the house. I couldn't see anything having been late. So, I gave up watch at this place, and moved on to the next place, the community center. In front of the center is a wide square, but many people already surrounded it. Just so you know, this information isn't uploaded on SNS. I knew that it is held at the community center just because I heard they (members of the group) say so. If you want to know where it held, you should ask them. They will surely answer because they love their Shishi performance.



□As fire lights the torch gets exciting. Fire is great. especially at night. I guess fire would awaken the memory of ancient times. The accompanied music sounds sometimes high, sometimes low, sometimes fast, and sometimes slow along with the dance movement. The whole audience is drawn into the fantasy world.



□ In this place, you can see everything that you have seen till this time. You find that all you saw in daylight mean like fitting peaces into place together like a puzzle. Shishi is not killed, calmed down and becomes obedient. All the world have become happy.





□There is a specific scene in “Iwai-bana”,too. It is called

“ko-jo”. Literally translated, this means “to state”. What they say is to celebrate the house or people, etc. Every “Kojo” is fixed sounding rhetoric. This is one way to enjoy it.



□Every event will end between 8:30 to 9 pm. It would be suggested to stay in this town or go to stay in Takaoka city. The last train starts at 11 pm but only two trains ran an hour between 10 and 11 pm. Don't forget to get a number ticket.

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 鉦), 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 holding 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

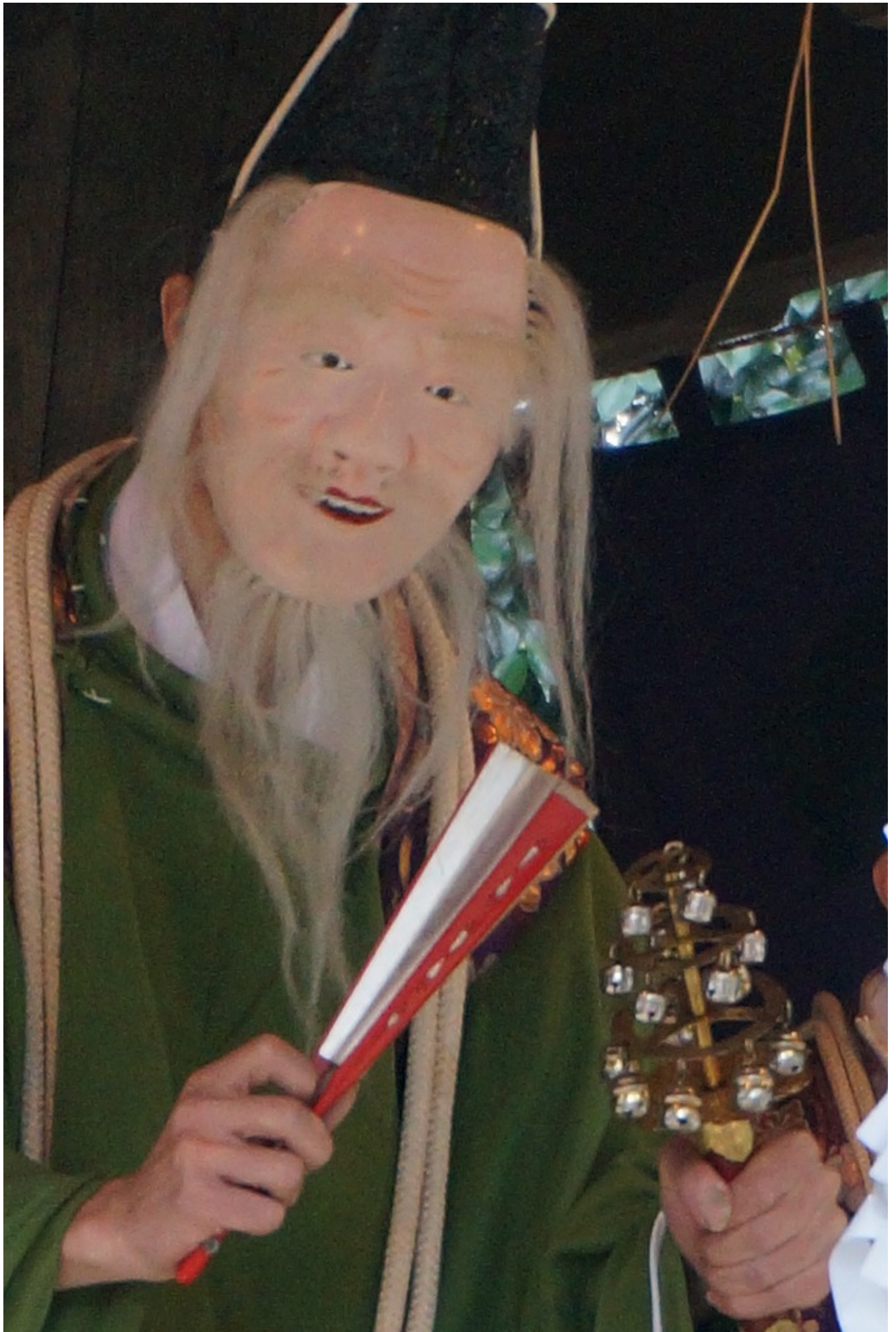


□So, two dancers enter the stage. One wore a red face mask with long -high nose, and another wore a female mask. The dancer with the red mask is “Sarutahiko”, and the other is “Ameno Uzume”. Sarutahiko held a pike, and Ameno Uzume held a big staff which red piece of paper. Two dancers faced each other 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”.

Report: Strange parade – Lion Dance in Ogawaji□□□□□□□□

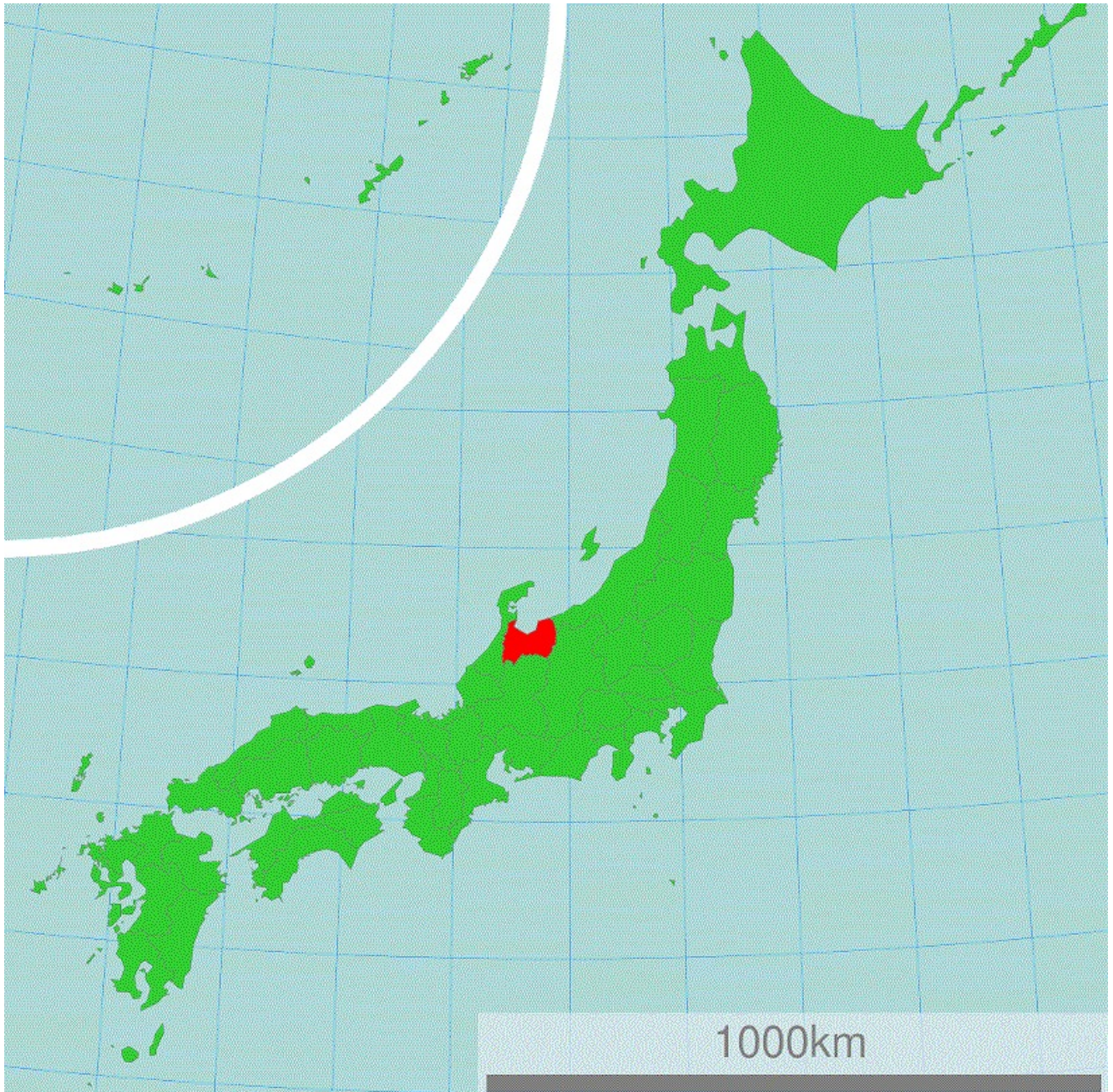


strange parade of variants in Ogawaji, Uozu city

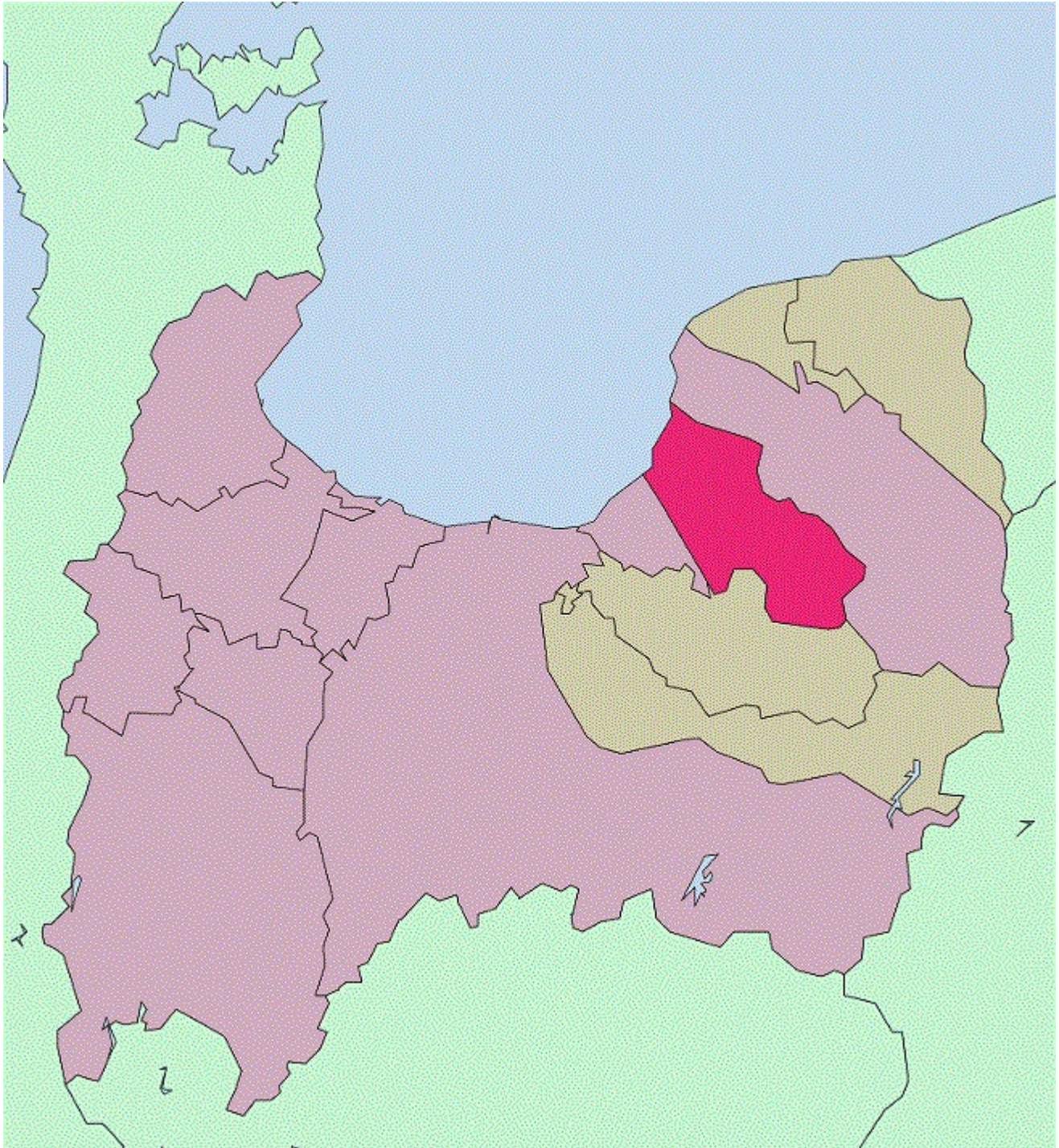
Date 4th January, 12th March, and 12th October pm 2□00~

Location Senkoji-temple, Ogawaji, Uozu city , Toyama prefecture

How to get there It takes 20 minutes from Toyama station or Unazuki-kurobe station



Toyama prefecture Toyama



Uozu city 宇治市

Introduction

□An event we'll look at this time is "Lion Dance in Ogawaji".
□This event is held on March 12th (and other days) in Uozu city in Toyama prefecture. Toyama prefecture is very prosperous region of Lion Dance, the performed number is over

850 now. There are a significant number of various kinds, and there are 10 main kinds we can break down into 3 categories. In that, the Ogawaji Lion Dance is classified as "Gyoudo Shishi" (Lion guiding the way), it follows the traditional style.

□I went to see this event in 2018. The following is from then.

□If you want to go to Uozu city, you have two options, Shinkansen or express bus.

*In all of the above routes, the starting point is from Tokyo

□In the case of a train, from Tokyo you will take the Shinkansen to Kurobe Onzaki-Onsen (黒部宇奈ヶ温泉), transfer Toyama local line (Dentetsu Toyama; bound for Dentetsu Toyama (富山) station, for Shin Uozu (新宇治) station.

It takes about 2~3 hours and costs about ¥14,000. If you take a bus, from Tokyo to Toyama station, and transfer to the local line (Ai no Kaze Toyama 愛の風富山) line; bound for Tomari (泊) and stop at Uozu station. The Uozu station is in front of Shin-Uozu station. It takes 8 hours and costs about ¥8,000. After arriving in Uozu city, you can take local bus (Kurosawa 黒沢 line) and get off at Ogawaji bus stop. But, there is only one bus every 2 hours, if you take a bus, you must get on a bus at 11:50, Kurosawa line (as of January 2020).

上越・北陸(長野経由)新幹線					Joetsu-Hokuriku (via Nagano) Shinkansen		停
時刻 Time	列車名 Train	番号 Train No.	行先 Destination	番線 Track	記事 Remarks		
9:28	TOKI	313	NIIGATA	20	1-5, Non-Reserved		
9:32	HAKUTAKA	557	KANAZAWA	23	1-4, Non-Reserved		
9:44	ASAMA	605	NAGANO	20	1-5, Non-Reserved		
9:52	TANIGAWA	83	GALA YUZAWA	22	1-4, Non-Reserved		

Tokyo station 〇〇〇



Shinkansen 〇〇〇〇

□When I went to this event, I took a Shinkansen at 9□38 (from Tokyo). the Shinkansen crossed Honshu, by way of the still snowy Nagano prefecture, after a little over 2 hours, I arrived at about 12 o'clock.





Shin Kurobe station 新黒部駅
is front of Kurobe Unzauki Onsen



Dentetsu Toyama line 〇〇〇〇〇



front of Uozu station

In Uozu city

□The event starts at 2□00. The next bus will leaves at 12□38 (as in 2018). I had a little time, so I stopped by the tourist information center. A person working there was very kind and loved the city. I got a lot of information and many booklets. I heard that it's about 4 kilometers from here to Ogawaji and road is flat. I decided to rent a bicycle. All are electric assist bicycle which are available from the information center, it costs \ 100~300.



Uozu city and Tateyama mountain range



□It's very fine, but the air is cold and feel chilly. Is this because it was still March or because this was Toyama? I was comfortable cycling, while seeing the snowy Tateyama mountain range. The city is very calm.



a road to Ogawaji



Senkoji temple 寺



The Kannondo 寺

□I wonder, if I run some 2~30 minutes, I might finally arrive at the destination. It is the “Senko-ji temple”. There are steps for the “Kannon-do hall” right next to the building.



The Hakusan shrine□□□□



□The precincts of the Kannon-do hall are unexpectedly large. About 2~30 people already were as if surrounding the Kannon-do hall. The neighboring building is the Hakusa shrine. As for the men, while the women gather in the Hakusan shrine, the men gather in Kannondo hall. In the Kannon-do hall a priest gives sutra-chanting, and Shinto priesthood gives a congratulatory address in the Hakusan shrine. This is a rare event, mixing Buddhism and Shintoism. In Japan, originally, the syncretism of Shinto and Buddhism was widely seen from the Heian period (9~10 C) until the Meiji restoration (1968), and Shinto and Buddhism were not distinguished from each other as a general rule. Therefore a trace is sometimes still seen in this way.

□A group is going to do seven laps here. On that day, the event was going to begin at 2:00 pm, but it was half past 2 and it started at 3:00 after all. A Buddhist priest seemed to be late for a funeral.



□I looked at some strange people who come up the stairs

between some trees. It may be finally beginning. First, they stopped at the Hakusan shrine 白神山 and gathered at the foot of the steps, they then received purification of the Shinto priesthood. Several children who hold the flags stood up. With them in the lead, a parade begin.

The parade has began





Tengu

Strange people appeared with flute and drums before us who were waiting. At first, it is Tengu. The kind look that some mind seems to be weak here through Tengu is severe or it is a scary image. He come while jump up and down lightly.



baba-men□□□□

□They walk with their hands and feet at same time. Next, two people following Tengu walk towards the same direction. They don't jump, instead of push their hand up front powerfully with one step forward while glaring at front. They are called "baba-men(mask)". Further more, they wear distinctive clothes characteristic. One is the pants of the striped pattern on showy clothes, and another is all striped. And after all, to catch the eyes is a strange headpiece. It seems like a crown. I have never seen anything like that. It is not Japanese - style at all. Where did this design come from?





Chinese Lion (Shishi)獅子

□Next comes a lion. Even though I call a lion, this is a Chinese legendary creature, it is totally different from the real animal. Japanese call them Kara-jishi (Chinese Lion). In Japan, there are many folk performing art about this Chinese lion. They are called Lion Dance. Lion Dance has various kinds. In this Ogawaji, it is the oldest style. They are only walking. Though, it's very tough to walk while lowering the body. Older men say that they cannot walk for a muscular.



anema-men (mask) □□□□

And the lion following is a woman called "Anema". She is coiffured old style and mouth bends for some reason and is walking while raising a sleeve by one step. And flute players, drum players and portable shrine. Though they say portable shrine (mikoshi), they pull it on a carriage. It is difficult for a few people to carry it on shoulder, so it become today's style. They decided to consider it to walk around 7 laps for walk around all town.



mikoshi



□ This event is only they repeat this 7 times. It seems very strange.

□







□Legend saya that both “baba-men” and “anema” was old heros and heroine. Name was Morimoto Sanemon, Joudou Rokubei and Omatsu. They fight with next village or avaricious feudallord. But now, we do not know the merely true meaning. Only this strange event has remained today.





□A break time enters once on the way. They sit in front of Kannon-do, Shinto priest read a long address to the deities. After this, they walk aronud again.





□After they finished laps, they came back to the starting place, under the Hakusan shrine. The event is finished.





□At the event, they accept taking a ceremonial photograph.

□Totally about 30 minutes, this event had finished.

□If you want to video, please click here.↓

□□□for your information

http://go-centraljapan.jp/lsc/lsc-upfile/pamphlet/01/33/133_1_file.pdf Pocket Guide Uozu

□If you have some time, I recommend sightseeing around Toyama. The place where there are old cityscapes, hot springs and natural. There are many places for sightseeing.



world heritage “Gokayama”



castle and park



natural “Kurobe”



old town “Kanaya”

evry pictures from <https://www.info-toyama.com/spot/21100/>
Toyama prefecture 富山県

参考

<https://foreign.info-toyama.com/en/> Tourism information in
Toyama