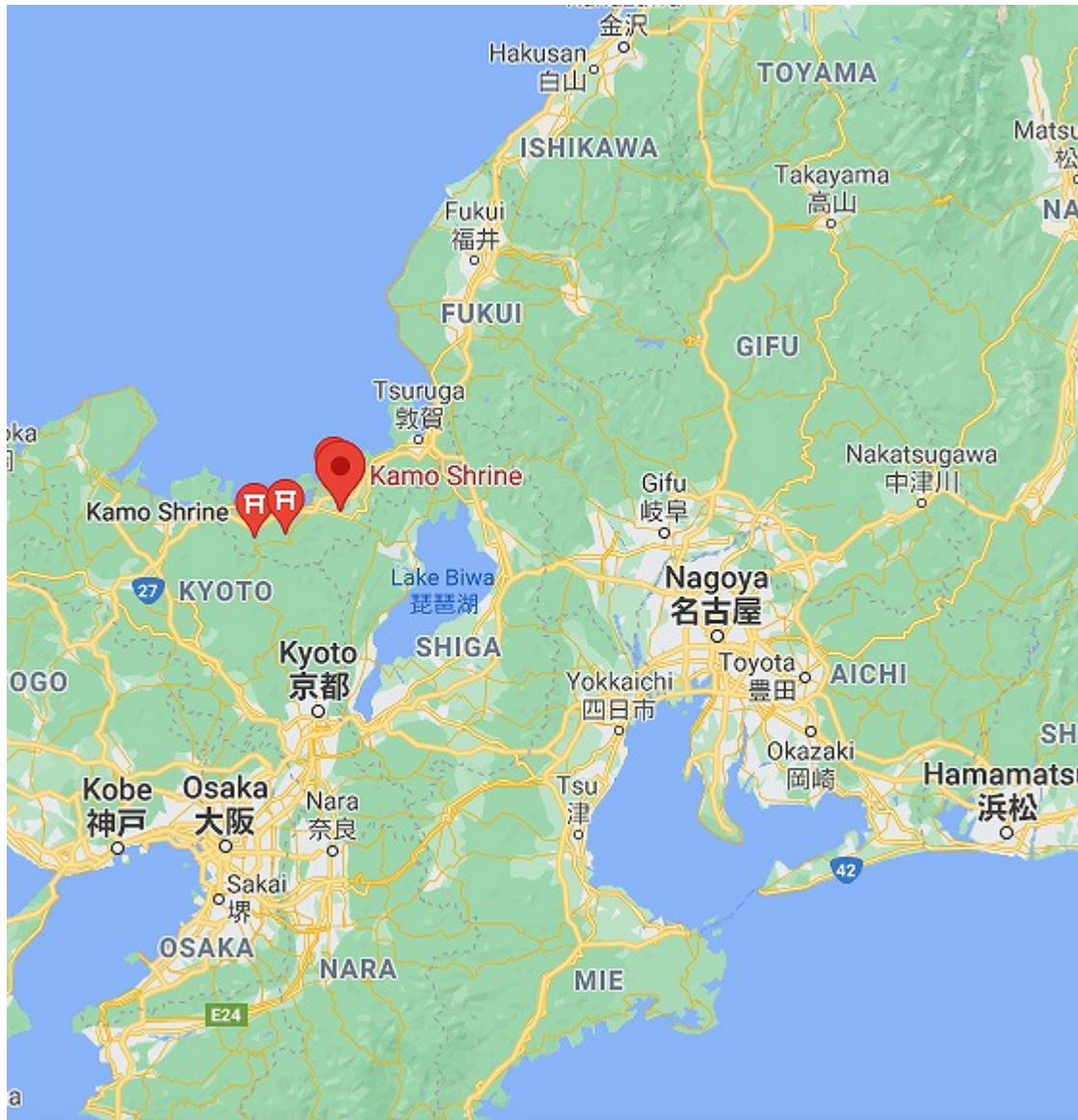
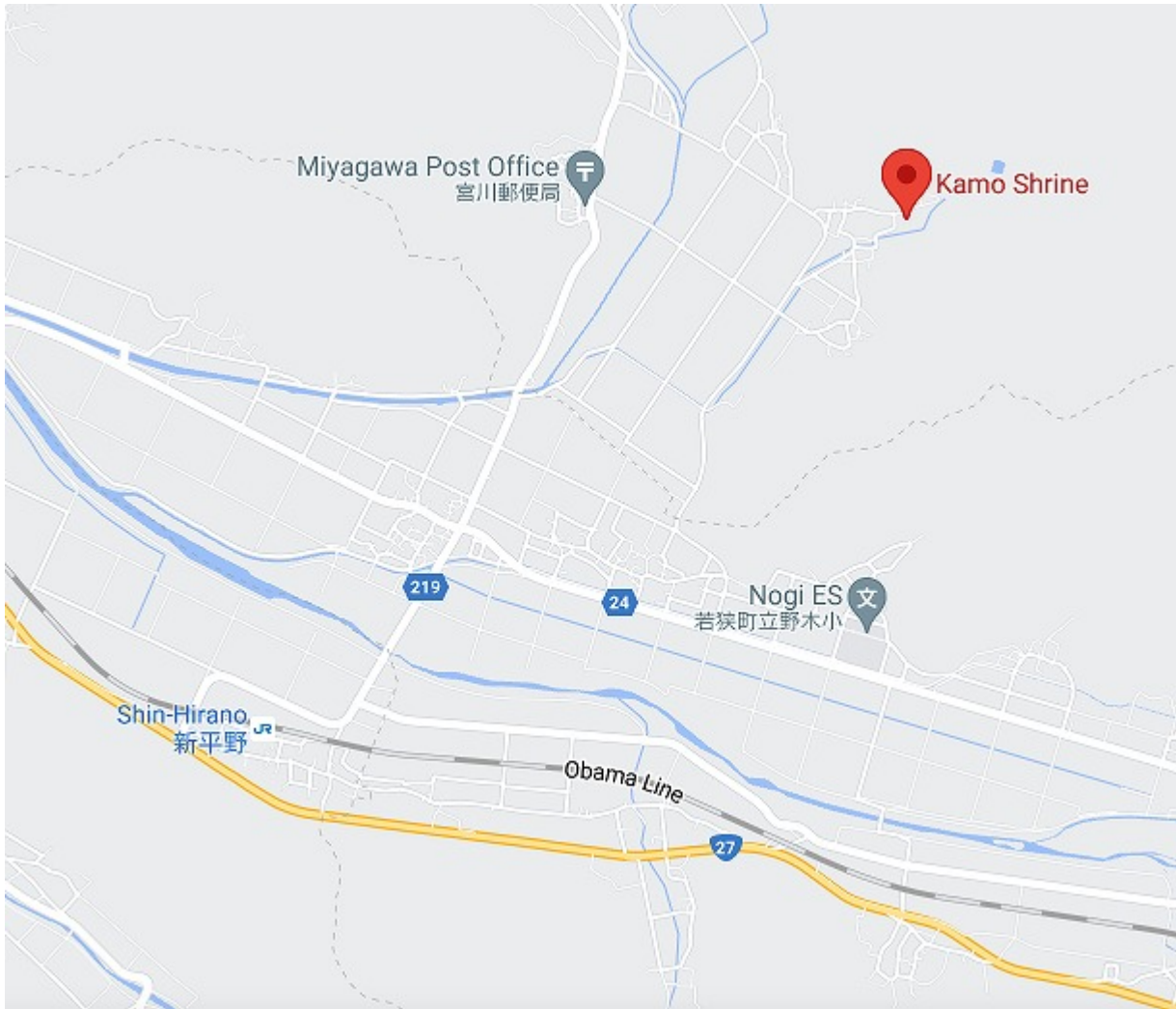


Ogre and other characters run rampant in Obama Nakanata





Date: Last Sunday in September (The Sunday before October 2)

Location: Kamo 町, Obama city, Fukui Prefecture

Access: It takes about one hour from Kyoto to Tsuruga 市 by express train. From there, change to the Obama Line and it takes about an hour to get to Shin Hirano 駅.

Outline of Festival



http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post_27.html



The kamo shrine

http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post_27.html

The father of Japanese folklore says a festival was originally a simple way of worshipping a god. Eventually, when people came to travel to other areas and learned what was going on in other areas, they became more ingenious to make their own even better. He said they began to hold festivals more flamboyantly, more lavishly, and more lively. It is easy to imagine that many different types would have been created in such a process. And once an interesting one was created, the people around it would naturally copy it. In Japanese festivals, there is definitely a field of chasing and battling. It is mainly centered in western Japan, and can be found in Hiroshima, Osaka, and many other places. This was probably born as one of the models in such a flow. This is one of them. The festival is a very simple form. A small float in the form of a portable shrine on a car is pulled around and paraded through the town with people who play flute and drums

(They are collectively called “Kagura” here).



http://nakanata.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post_27.html



<https://wakasabay.jp/articles/-/65>

At the shrine, girls perform an elegant traditional dance wishing for peace in the country. That's it in a nutshell. There are no extravagant floats, and no fancy events. But that's the way most festivals are held. Just what kind of characters will appear depends on the creativity of the district.

Characters



Yase

<http://fuutaronosekai.blog130.fc2.com/blog-entry-410.html>



Hyottoko and Okame

<https://wakasa15thfd.wordpress.com/2015/09/29/%e5%b0%8f%e6%b5%9c%e4%b8%ad%e5%90%8d%e7%94%b0%e3%83%bb%e5%8a%a0%e8%8c%82%e7%a5%9e%e7%a4%be%e4%be%8b%e7%a5%ad2015/>

There are a total of four types that appear at this festival. "The demon called "yase," the hyottoko, the okame, and the choroken. **"Hyottoko"** and **"Okame"** are two of the most popular festival characters. They entertain people with their comical movements. (For more information, please see

The word **"yase"** is a corruption of "yasha." Yasha is an Indian deity and one of the guardian deities in Buddhism. In this "Yasha" group is "Kishimojin". In order to feed her own children, Kishimojin kidnaps many human children and feeds them to her children. When the Buddha saw this, he hid her child and made her realize how sad it was to lose a child. The story goes that since then she has become the goddess of children and safe childbirth. In this festival, he appears as a red and blue masked demon, holding a long stick. They chase and beat children who make fun of them. They are almost always drunk, so even if you hit them lightly, they feel a lot of pain. But when they visit nurseries and kindergartens, everyone is scared when they come, but after they leave,

everyone wants to play “Yase” games.

“**Choroken**” is the most popular character in this festival. “Choroken is an art form that emerged in the latter half of the Edo period (the samurai government under the Tokugawa shogun). During the New Year’s holidays, the performers would go door to door to perform their art and receive congratulatory gifts. After the end of the samurai government and the beginning of a new era, people turned a blind eye to them, saying that their antics were not appropriate for the new era, and they eventually disappeared around the time of the approaching war. It was a regional art form, mainly in Osaka and Kyoto. Here he appears in a red hat, red clothes, and a tengu-like mask.

They begin to go through the town with the portable shrine on tall casters from 10 am to 3 pm. At last, they perform at the shrine.



Choroken

<https://wakasa15thfd.wordpress.com/2015/09/29/%e5%b0%8f%e6%b5%9c%e4%b8%ad%e5%90%8d%e7%94%b0%e3%83%bb%e5%8a%a0%e8%8c%82%e7%a5%9e%e7%a4%be%e4%be%8b%e7%a5%ad2015/>



“Choroken” Old printing



“Choroken” Old toy

Around this area

There are also scenic spots and old townscapes (designated by the government as a preservation area) in the vicinity. There is a quiet, unspoiled Japan that is not often visited. A little further away (about 15 kilometers), there are beautiful terraced rice fields that are lit up during the festival

season. It is definitely worth a visit.



Old town "Obama"

https://www.jalan.net/kankou/spt_18204ad2150017111/?screenId=0UW1701&influxKbn=0



Illuminated terraced rice paddies.

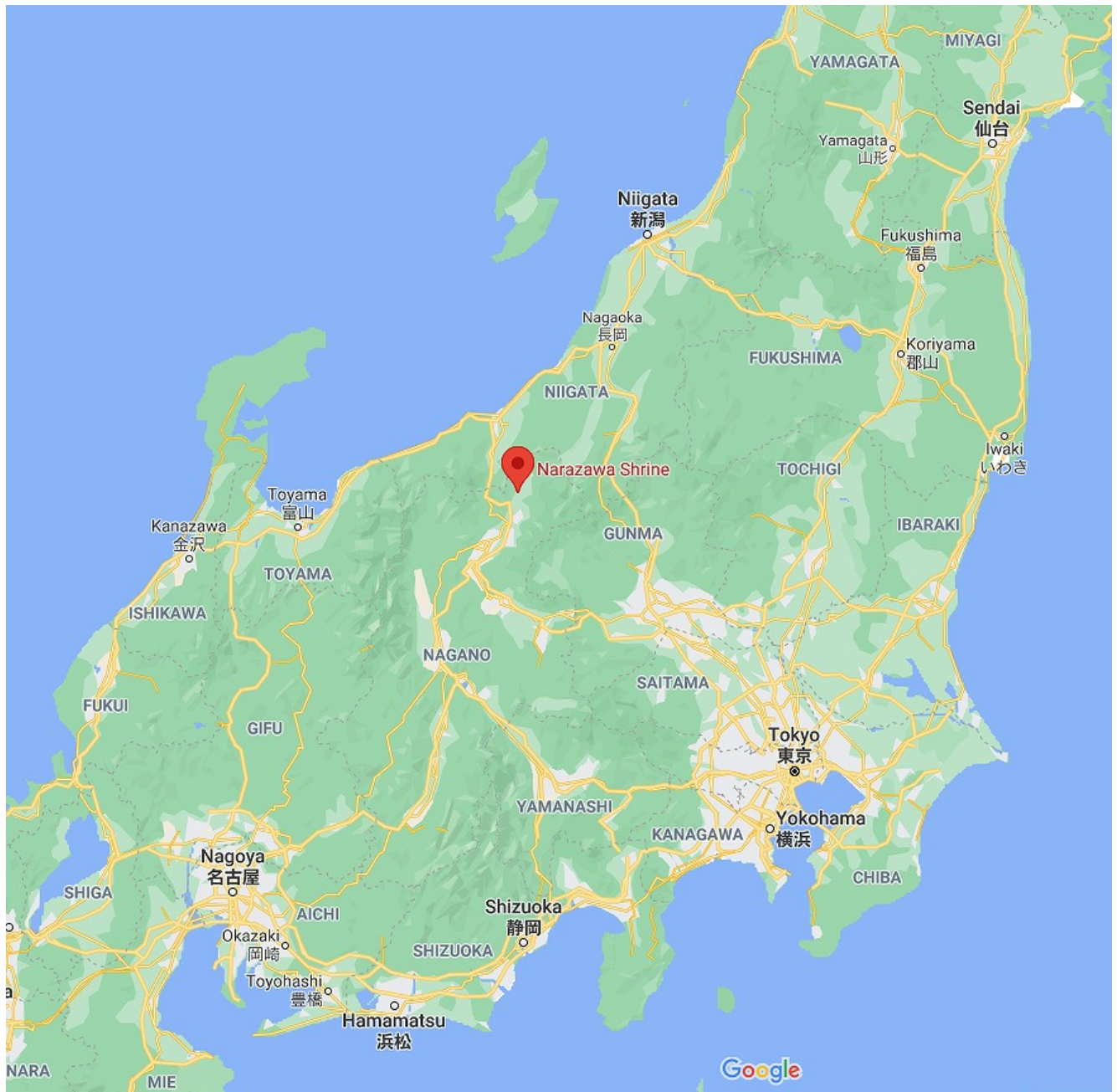
<http://yumewakanau.com/2018/10/23/%e7%94%b0%e7%83%8f%e3%81%ae%e6%a3%9a%e7%94%b0%ef%bc%88%e5%b0%8f%e6%b5%9c%e5%b8%82%ef%bc%89/>

Narasawa shrine festival ~Tengu swings big torch

Date: the 3rd Saturday and Sunday, September (every year)

Location: Iiyama Narasawa, Iiyama city, Nagano prefecture
around the Narasawa shrine

Access: It's about ten minutes walk from Iiyama station (JR
Iiyama line or Shinkansen)



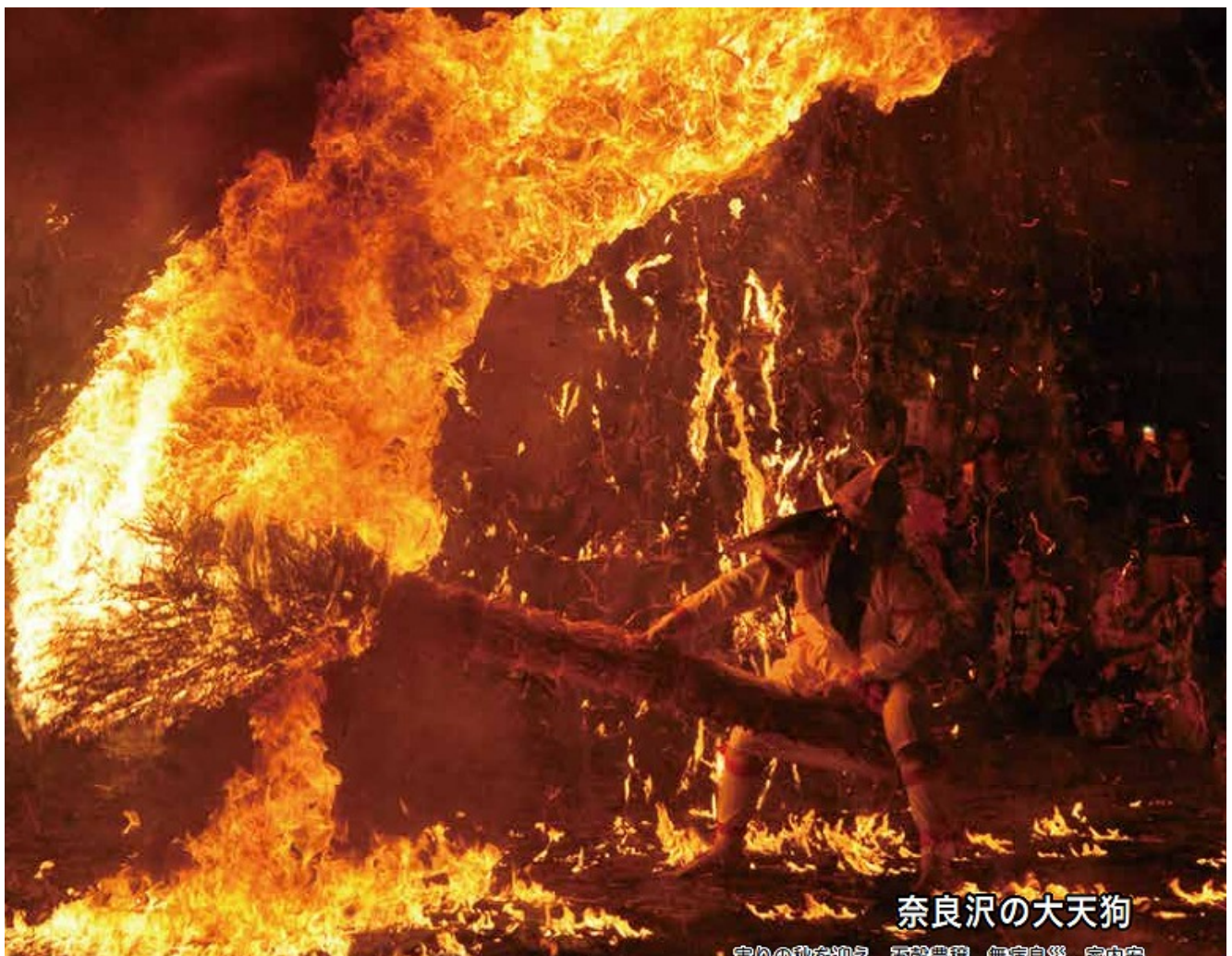


Fire has fascinated people since its discovery. Therefore, there are many festivals that use fire. https://www.google.com/search?q=japanese+fire+festival&tbm=isch&ved=2ahUKEwj0o4uE1JPwAhUaE4gKHccaB8cQ2-cCegQIABAA&oq=fire+festival+Ja&gs_lcp=CgNpbWcQARgBMgIIADIGCAAQCBAeMgYIABAIEB4yBggAEAoQGDIECAAQGDogCAAQBBA1ogUIABCxAzoICAAQsQMqgwE6BwgAELEDEAQ6BAgAEAQ6CggAELEDEIMBEAQ6BAgAEENQoZ8EW02CBWDTpgVoAXAAeAGAAVWIAeUNkgECMjSYAQCGAQGqAQtnD3Mtd2l6LWltZ7ABAMABAQ&sclient=img&ei=HF6CYM6lEJqmoATHtZy4DA&bih=900&biw=1902 Among them, this site introduces a magnificent festival in Nagano Prefecture, where Tengu wields large torches.

Surrounded by mountains on all sides and close to Tokyo,

Nagano Prefecture has been known as a summer resort and a ski resort. Iiyama City, although a mountainous area, is not too badly accessible from Tokyo, too. It only takes about 1 hour and 40 minutes to get there by Shinkansen. The cost is about 8-9,000 yen (as of 2021). If you take the highway bus, you can get to Nagano Station and then take the JR train, which costs about 6,000 yen.

These are the kinds of places where the performing arts tend to remain. A number of festivals still exist in this area. One of the most famous is the “Narasawa Shrine Festival”. First of all, please look at the following pictures.



<https://www.city.iiyama.nagano.jp/assets/files/shomu/koho/26/26.10/1.pdf>

This is the “Great Torch of Tengu” that makes the festival so famous.

When people see this, they wonder what the heck they are

doing. What the hell are you doing? It is true that at festivals, things often happen that don't make sense. But this just makes it look like they are trying to start a fire.

The festival takes place in the form of a group of people going around the village to sanctify it. Then, while celebrating newly built houses, etc., they proceed to the shrine while cutting the closures set up in several places. At that time, they perform a variety of entertainments. The Tengu wielding the torch is also a move to cut through this barrier.

Let's take a closer look. The festival takes place over two days, but the performances are the same on both days. But the starting point and the course are different, although the ending point for both days is the shrine. The group forms a circle when they come to a place where there is a barrier rope. They perform



a barrier of a rope

<http://airborn-foozin-hikarat77.blog.jp/tag/%E5%A5%88%E8%89%AF%E6%B2%A2%E7%A5%9E%E7%A4%BE>



the group of the performers

<http://airborn-foozin-hikarat77.blog.jp/archives/12349340.html>
l(A)



the dance of "Kotengu"
from same as above A



<https://ameblo.jp/mto193914/entry-12308256417.html>(B)

the dance of “Kotengue”. Also known as “Yumitengu”. In this dance, a red-faced Tengu with a bow and arrow tries to shoot arrows in all directions, but a black-faced Karasu Tengu stops him. The words are spoken, the music continues to play, and the young people around the dance continue to call out to each other.



from source A



from source A

And the lion dance. Finally, a large torch is lit, and the Tengu swings it as he heads toward the barrier rope. The power of the flames makes it easier to cut the rope, and at the end he cuts it off with his sword. It started around 6:00 p.m. and ended around 1:00 a.m. with the last performance at the shrine.

This has become one of the representative arts of the area, and is performed every year at the Snow Festival held in February, too.



Iiyama Snow festival

https://www.go-nagano.net/topics_detail11/id=17568

Iiyama is not preserved under the Important Preservation District for Collective Traditional Buildings, but it still retains its old-fashioned townscape. There is also no shortage of cycling and hiking trails in the area. There are also hot springs nearby.





<https://www.iiyama-ouendan.net/en/>



It is also close to the famous Jigokudani Wild Monkey Park, which has been gaining popularity in recent years, even among tourists from overseas. This place has been attracting a lot of attention because in winter, wild monkeys can be seen

soaking in the hot springs.

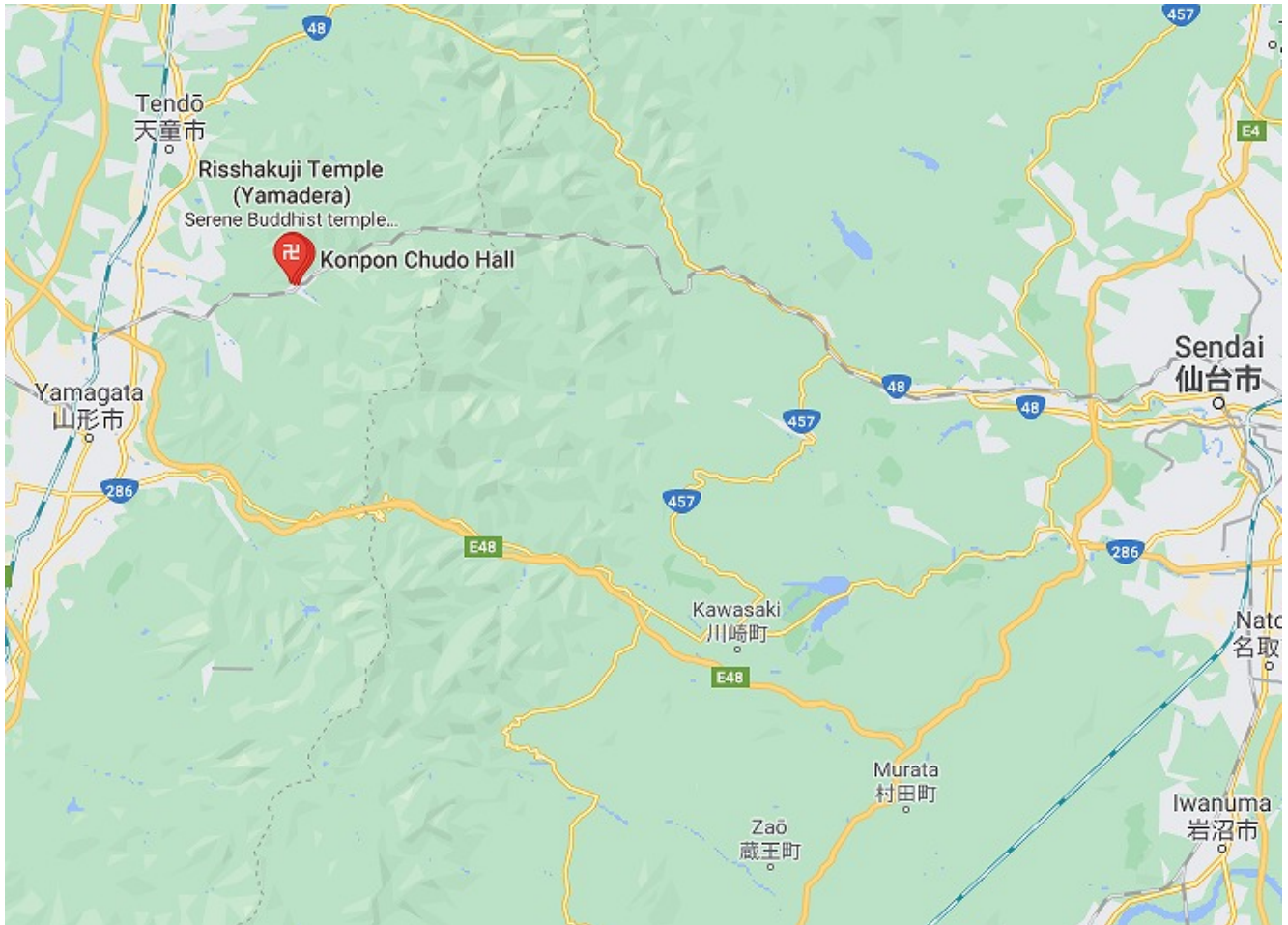
Watching monkeys, soaking in hot springs, and spending quiet time in the rich nature. And at night, you get ecstatic joining the heat of the festival. Such is the Japan that awaits you in Iiyama.

Preffer: <https://www.iiyama-ouendan.net/en/>

<https://en.jigokudani-yaenkoen.co.jp/>

Report: Yamadera-temple, haiku, and shishi dance ~or a feast of Yokai





Date: Sunday around August 8th

Location: Yamadera, Yamagata city, Yamagata prefecture, in front of the “Konpon chudo”

Access: It takes about one hour from Sendai by JR. About 20 minutes from Yamagata. About an hour from Tokyo to Sendai by Shinkansen, and 1.5 hours to Sendai

Haiku master ~Matsuo Basho

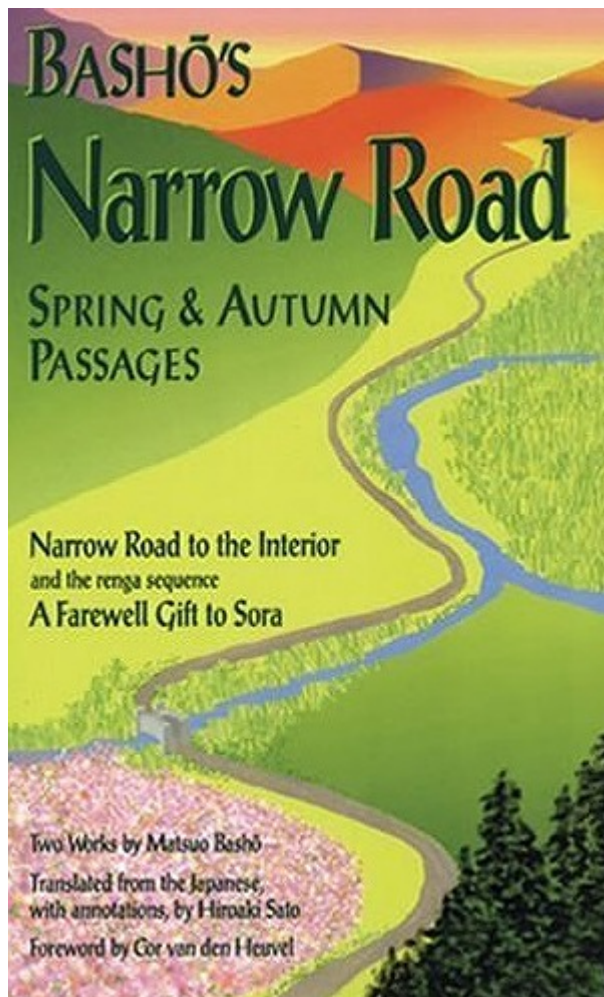


Basho and Sora (disciple)
source: *painting by Morikawa Kyoriku*

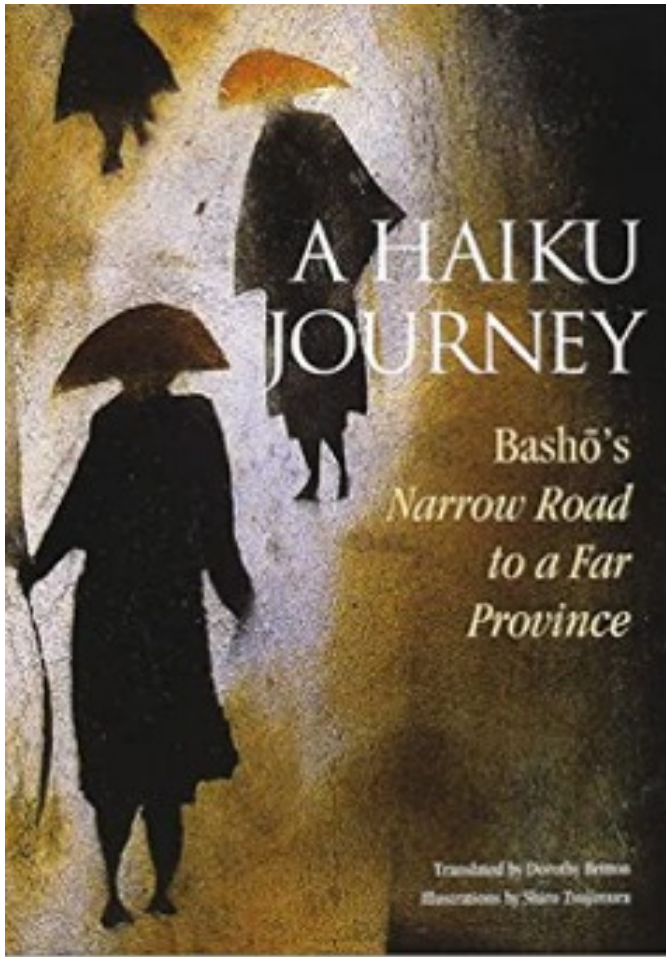
The literary form of haiku is now very popular outside of Japan. It is said that there are people who enjoy haiku in their own languages.

Speaking of haiku, there is Matsuo Basho. Matsuo Basho (1644~1694) was the great poet in history who established this form as a literary art form that is still popular today and has become internationally accepted. Until then, haiku was a literary art form that emphasized fun and was more like a banquet game. It was Basho who transformed it into what we recognize today, and his achievement is quite remarkable.

Okuno hosomichi~Haiku journey



published by Shikosha



published by Kodansha

Many of Basho's famous haiku are contained in his travelogue, "Oku no Hosomichi". Basho recorded his long journey, which took about five months, in this book. At his old age, it was almost a life and death kind of trip. There are many various theories why he decided to make such a trip. There is an interesting theory that Basho was from Iga, which is famous for its ninjas, and that he may have been gathering information for the Shogunate, but this is not the subject of this article.

Among the many famous phrases, one of the most famous haiku is "Shizukasaya 静かなる
Iwanishimiiru 岩波の
Seminokoe". 静かなる

It translates into English like this.

How still it is here

Stinging into the stones,

The locusts' trill." (translated by Donald Keene)

Voice or buzz of locusts (cicadas)?

Speaking of cicadas, it's summer. Japanese people know that summer has arrived when the cicadas begin to buzz, and think that autumn has arrived when they can no longer hear them. However, I dare to say that the word "buzz" is used, but Japanese people hear it as a voice. In various English translations, various expressions such as voice, echo, cry, etc. are used, but no one uses buzz. Why? There is a study by a Japanese scholar (Prof. Tsunoda of Tokyo Medical and Dental University) that tries to explain this, but it is not well received overseas, so I will not go into it here. I would like to add, however, that quite a few people are keen on various autumn insects just to listen to their sounds. The original direct translation of this haiku is also the "voice" of the cicadas.

Yamadera-temple

This poem was composed at Risshakuji Temple 日修寺, also known as Yamadera, in Yamagata Prefecture.

In the first place, Basho had not originally planned to stop here. When he tried to pass by without knowing it, he was asked by a local if he had been to the temple. When Basho replied that he had not, the local people said, "That's a waste of time." He was told that he should visit the temple if he came this far.

So he hurried back 4 kilometers to visit the temple. So what kind of temple is Yamadera (officially called "Risshakuji Temple")? The temple was opened in 860. It was opened by a man named Ennin, the foremost disciple of Saicho, the greatest monk of the time. Ennin went through many hardships to study in Tang Dynasty (present-day China), and after returning to Japan, he opened more than 500 temples. About 900 years later,

Basho visited the temple. The literal translation of the word “Yamadera” is “mountain temple”. As the name implies, it is a temple built in the middle of a steep mountain, and is one of the representative temples of this region.

Shishi odor

This area was once ruled by a hunter named Banzaburo Banji. Then, Ennin proposed to turn this land into a place of Buddhism. Banji accepted the proposal and stopped killing animals in this land. As a result, animals were said to have danced with joy. In commemoration of this, the Banji Festival has been held and the Shishi Dance has been dedicated.

Painting of Basho Nirvana and animals



Nara National Museum

<https://www.narahaku.go.jp/collection/756-0.html>

There is a painting called “Nirvana” which is a picture of Buddha’s death. Most of them depict the Buddha lying in the center of the painting, with people grieving around him. There are many sculptures and other three-dimensional statues, and even outside of Japan, you can see a large statue of Buddha

lying down. The subject of this painting is so famous that it was imitated in the painting of Nirvana.



“Vegetable Nirvana” by Ito Jakuchu 芋菰図



Basho Nirvana by Ueda koucho 〇〇〇〇

Monkeys, horses, deer and crows gather for a trip to the Yamadera temple. Today is the day when those who have had their haiku composed by Basho go on a trip to the mountain temples. Sora is the guide.

Come on, everybody. Are you together?

We haven't seen any snails yet. Oh, he's here. It looks like the members are all here.

So, let's get going.

Wait, wait, wait, wait. Didn't you forget someone?

Oh, it's Mr. Frog

All right. I'll tell you something. My haiku is the most famous of them all*. It's one of Basho's best. What's the matter with you leaving me here? Besides, I've been loved in Japan since the days of the "Choju-Giga (Birds and Beasts Caricatures)".

*Furukeya 古井 kawazu tobikomu 古井 水ノ音 (Japanese)
The ancient pond- A frog leaps in- The sound of the water
(translated by Donald Keene)

But I'm not in Ueda Koucho's Nirvana...

He's pretentious. Otherwise, he's got amnesia. Besides, he's not the only one who has painted the "Basho Nirvana".

Let's go with the frog. It's almost time for us to go.

Banji-sai 山寺



Yamadera station



The Main Hall

As you go up the stairs, you will soon see the Hie Shrine. Next to it is the main hall of the temple. It is characteristic of Japanese religion where both God and Buddha are worshipped together.

Let me explain the “Pan priest”. A long time ago, a monk named Ennin 延暦 came to Japan for missionary work, and he thought this would be a good place. However, at that time, this was the territory of the Banji 伴氏 clan. So, Ennin asked the head of the family, Saburo Banji, to let him use the land for the sake of Buddhism. The Banji clan accepted and set the land free. At the same time, he also stopped hunting in the mountains. The “Banji Festival” is held in honor of this achievement.

That’s why we can come to the mountain temple with a peace of mind.



Nembutsu procession

The first thing that appears today is “the Nembutsu

procession". The first event of the day is the Nembutsu, an event to welcome the morning by chanting the Nembutsu at various places to make offerings to the dead. The fact that this is the first event of the day gives us an idea of the overall character of this festival.

Nagatoro deer dance 〇〇〇〇〇〇

The content can also be enjoyed on
video→<https://youtu.be/kjsezHGDJ0U>





First up is the Nagatoro Shishi Odori in Higashine City. People also remember Nagatoro as the place where Ennin opened the land. Originally, there were eleven shishis in all, but recently there have been fewer due to a lack of manpower. There are also “sasara” and “gong striking. And flutes and drums. In total, there are 12 performances.

Wow, a yokai. It's a monster.



Sasara



gong striking

He has a small drum in his stomach. It's similar to the Kanto lion dance.

It's a yokai. I'd be scared if I met one of these in the middle of the night.



They have 12 performances in total. but today, they're over, because they are limited in time.

Absolutely scary.

Tsuchihashi deer dance □□□□□□

The content can also be enjoyed on
video→https://youtu.be/2PNzMdXs2_Y



We have another awesome one coming up.

It's a shishi dance from Nakayama Town. There are seven deer

in all. They have a total of 19 programs. The names of the programs are interesting: “Hiya, hiya-ro, hiya-ro,” “degadan,” “dengarakatta,” and so on.

That’s a very intuitive way to name something.

I can’ t recognize the language of monsters.







The leader wears “the Gohei (A Shinto ritual object in which a deity dwells)” on his head, and the sub-leaders wear the sun and moon on each of their heads.





I guess it's hard for a leader to move around all over the place.

Sawatari Shishimai 囃子舞





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

The Tengu are bringing in a bunch of weirdos.

This is the Sawatari Shishimai from Higashine City. This is not a Tengu, but Sarutahiko, the god of guidance. It uses the character for “lion,” but it’s actually a deer or wild boar dance. It is said that people learned it from Yamadera in the past. However, the Sawatari area was the entrance to a nearby mountain for ascetic practices, so there is a high possibility that it was learned or created from there.



I think he would have said something like, "We're from another planet."

I feel that frogs have no respect for traditional arts. It's a joke.

Everyone has their own view.



There is a lot of crouching, so it's harder than it looks!

Wow, a party of monsters.

After listening to the frog saying that for a long time, I felt like it was right.

Takadama-Shoryo-Bodai Shishi-odori 田楽獅子舞





The content can also be enjoyed on video→<https://youtu.be/iRQimsBP3HM>

This is a shishi odori dance from the Takanashi district, south of Tendo city. It consists of a deer in the center, and two males, two females, and two children, for a total of seven deer. The word “Shoryo” means “soul” and “Bodai” means “pray for a departed soul”. As with other shishi dances, the original purpose of this dance is to go around to the houses in the district to make offerings at the district festival to hold a memorial soul.

I see that they have the words “Namu Amida Buddha 南無阿彌陀佛” at the top.



The most important performance is “Kakasu”. This is an accent of scarecrow. Its purpose is to exorcise demons.



Finally, they defeat this straw doll named Scarecrow. The person in the center of the stage is supposed to knock it down, but the performer decides when to do it. However, it is always a multiple of three, and often the ninth time. There must be a meaning to it, but they don't know what it is

anymore.

That's funny that the monster can defeat the demon.

I mean, there are good monsters and bad monsters.

Hey, before you know it, we'll be recognizing the arts as monsters.

Karaogi-Asahi Shishi-odori □□□□





This is a shishi dance from Yamagata City. The composition and facial features are similar to the previous one. The performance is also similar.



They jump and bounce around so much that quite a bit of their feathers fall off.

Like other groups, they get their feathers from the hunters.
If they run out of feathers, they ask the hunters in advance.



This is the end of all groups for today.

It's already 12:00 noon. I'm starving.

Don't forget to visit the Basho Memorial Museum, everyone!

Oh, Basho-sensei, when did you get here?

Let's have lunch and then go sightseeing in Yamadera.

This time of year (first week of August) is "Hanagasa Odori" in Yamagata. Sendai's Tanabata Festival, Aomori's Nebuta Festival, Akita's Kanto Festival, and many other festivals. It's not a bad idea to visit all of them.

cf: <https://yamagatakanko.com/en/yamadera>
about

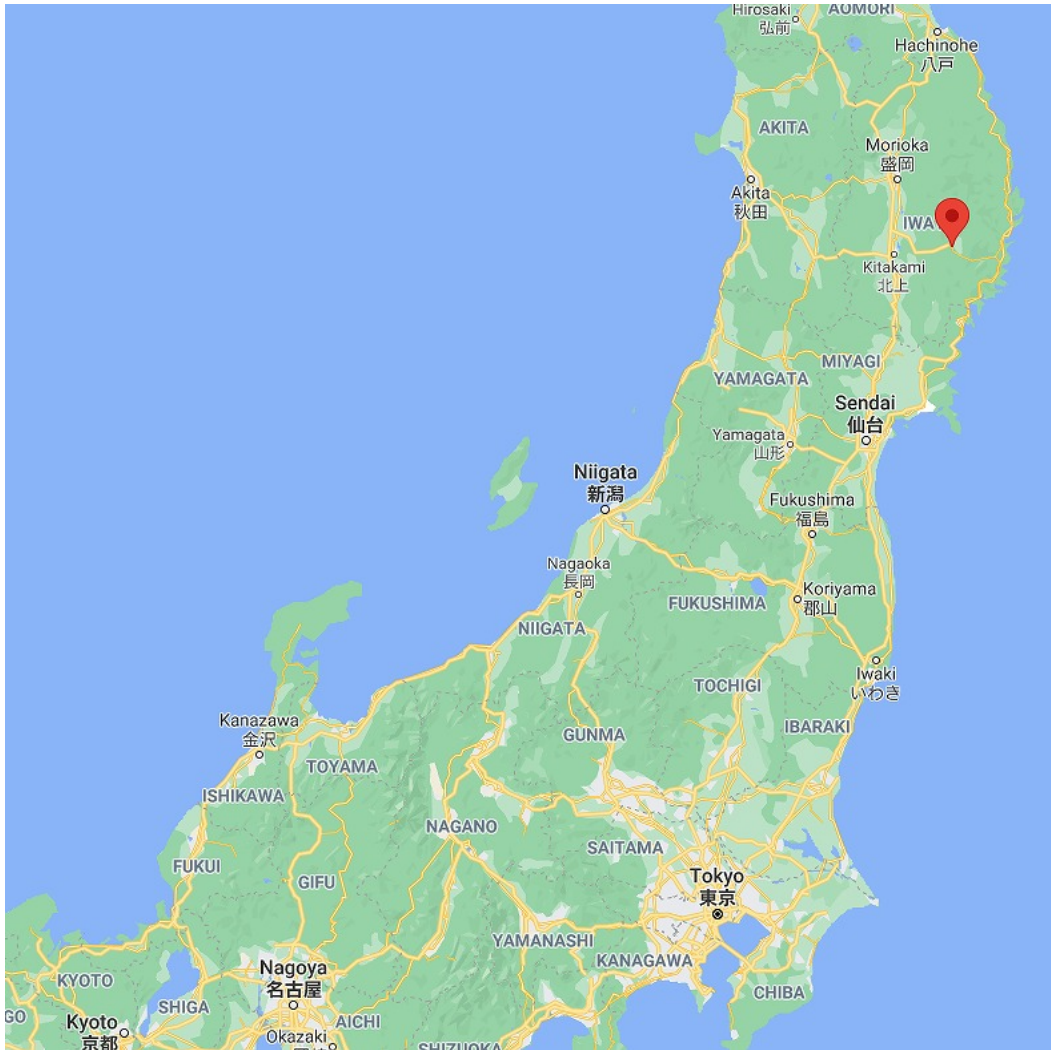
Yamadera→<https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/destination/hokkaido-and-tohoku-region/old-town-sightseeing/yamadera-risshakuji-temple/>

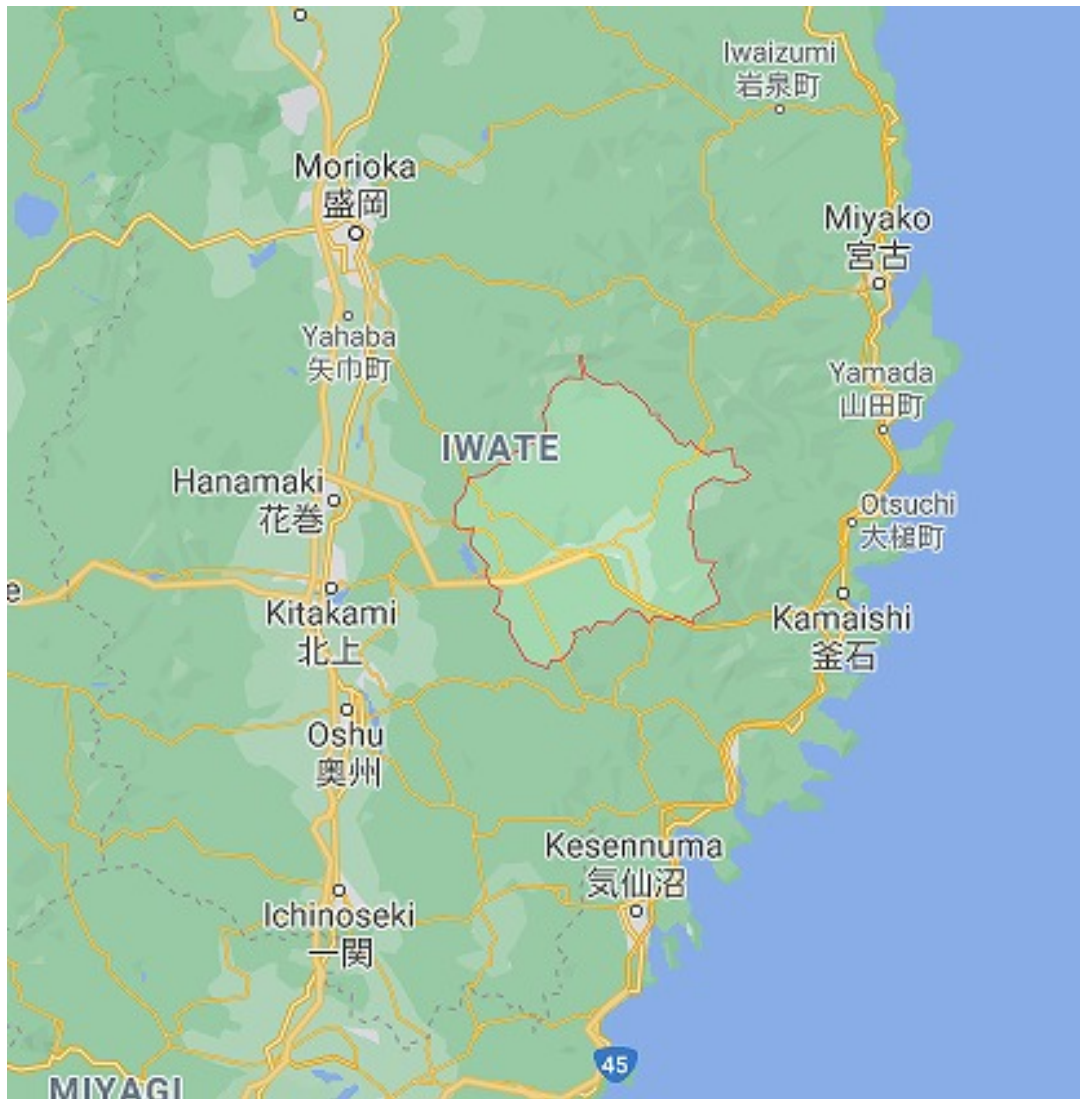
Report: Tono festival ~Day 1, at the city

Date: the 3rd Saturday and Sunday, September, every year

Location: Tono city and Tono Hachiman shrine, Iwate prefecture

Access: 1 hour from Kitakami, 2 hour from Morioka by local train. 3 hours from Tokyo by Shinkansen and change at Shin-Hanamaki, 1hour by local train.





Tono has many strange stories

Tono is a small mountain village about an hour's train ride away from the center of Iwate Prefecture. Its main industry was agriculture for a long time, but in recent years, tourism and hospitality services have been increasing in proportion. Tono has the largest cultivation area of hops, the raw material for beer, in Japan.

Tale of Tono

When Japanese people hear the name Tono, the first thing that comes to mind is “Tono Monogatari 〆〆〆 (the tale of Tono)”.

About 100 years ago, there was a scholar named Yanagita Kunio

田口卯吉. He was amazed at the number of legends and folk tales in the region, and compiled them into a book. In the preface to the book, he wrote enthusiastically, "Let the stories of this mountain village make the people of the plains shudder". In fact, the book became a bestseller, and it still holds a place in people's hearts. Yanagita thus became the founder of Japanese folklore. The "Tale of Tono" contains many strange stories, such as the story of a girl who was married to a horse, and the story of a man who spent time with a giant in the mountains. The most famous of these characters is the *kappa*. Even today, there are still many places in Tono where legends about *kappa* remain. This is the reason why Tono is called the home of folk tales.

Kappa

**Kappa* is one of the most famous Japanese "yokai". The approximate image of a kappa is that it lives in a river, has a shell on its back, hair on its head, and a dish in the center of its head. When the water in the dish runs out, it dies. They have waders on their hands and feet and are good swimmers. They are about the size of a child. They lean out of the river and drag people and horses into the river. Sometimes they come out at dusk and say, "Let's play Sumo". Their favorite foods are human liver and cucumbers. Since they are all over the country, they are called by different names in different places. "Gataro" is one of them.



Written by Toriyama Sekien (1718~88)



Written by Akutagawa (famous novelist)



Let's go with Kappa

Tono is also a treasure house of folk performing arts. All of them come together once a year to perform at the Tono Festival. The festival takes place over two days. On this day,

the normally quiet mountain village welcomes a large number of people and becomes spectacular. If a *kappa* from this area were to guide us through the festival, it might look something like this.

Day 1

Welcome guests

scene: in front of Tono station





Today is the long awaited day of the annual festival. Now, it looks like Kappa living in Tono (named Wooden) is going to welcome guests soon.

8:00 in the morning. It's almost time for the guests to arrive. Oh, here he is.

Hey, I've finally arrived at the Kappa Sanctuary. I've been looking forward to it.

Welcome from far away Fukusaki-town, Hyogo prefecture.

*Yes, he is Gajiro, a kappa from Fukusaki town in Hyogo Prefecture. There is a little explanation as to why he appeared this time. Fukusaki town is actually the hometown of Yanagita Kunio, who wrote "The Tale of Tono". In his memoirs of his hometown, he wrote about the existence of a kappa named "Gataro" in the town. In Fukusaki Town, Gajirō, who is set up as Gatarō's younger brother, plays an active role.

I have heard you're busy every day.

That's right. I work at the pond showing up every fifteen minutes during the day from nine in the morning until five in the evening every day.

*Explanation again. Fukuzaki town has installed objects of kappa and other yokai (Japanese strange monsters) throughout the town to promote the town. In particular, the main pond and the station in front of the station are attracting a lot of attention because of the kappa jumping out of the pond.

cf. <http://www.fukusakikankou.jp/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hix5SerE19g>

It sounds tough. A lot of kappa friends are waiting for you, too. Take your time and enjoy yourself.



Kappa in front of the Tono station



Kappa at the “Kappa pond”

Door-to-door entertainment

scene: Tono town

There's still time to walk around town a bit. Today I'll show you the south side of the station.

This is the area where the museums are. Most of the travelers stay here first.





Where is Kappa-pond, where are kappa said to be?

It's on the north side of the station. It's a bit far, so you should rent a bicycle or drive.

I'm starting to hear some amusing sounds.

It's already nine in the morning. It might have started by now. Let's go back.

The content can also be enjoyed on
video→<https://youtu.be/l0EuoTPm7tw>



There are people all over the place. What are you doing?

This is a custom called “Kadozuke 叩き,” in which people go from house to house to bless and receive congratulations. This used to be a very common custom in the past, but now we can see very few places where this custom still exists.





Not only the deer dance, but also the Kagura groups do the gating. The group holding the lion's head is the kagura group. In Tono, the lion's head is not worn on the head, but is usually held in the hand.

Parade~Deer Dance



The content can also be enjoyed on

video→<https://youtu.be/NGlbg81BCuc>

The first tengu with long noses came strolling in.

This is not a Tengu, but a Sarutahiko, a god of guidance. The Sarutahiko of each kagura group lead the procession together.

But that's a lot of people. And there are a lot of foreigners, too.

Currently, Tono City has friendship cities with Salerno, Campania, Italy, and Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA. And Tono has about 60 performing arts groups.

But there are so many banners, aren't there?

There are about 60 performing arts groups active in Tono.



Deer dance



Kagura



Nambu dance



Sansa dance

All things aside, the main thing is the deer dance. In addition, the Kagura dance with a shishi head, the Nambu dance with gorgeous costumes, and the Sansa dance are active. You can see many other interesting things.

But I heard that the deer dance is the most famous.

Structure of the Deer Dance

Yes. There are two types of deer dances in Iwate Prefecture, one is the self-drumming style and the other is the drape-curtain style (the dancer are holding a drape-curtain while performing). And Tono is the representative of the drape-curtain style.



Tane-fukube and Nakataiko



Katanakake

Let's look at the basic structure. At the head of the group is the leader, called "Tanefukube," who oversees the entire group. The "Fukube" group follows him. Behind them is Nakataiko group. They are holding a tassel in their hands. Next is "the Katanakake". They have a sword on their waist, and sometimes play with a deer (shishi).



Nakadate



And finally, Shishi appears. First comes the “Nakadate”, a few people in the group who have excellent skills. Then comes the flutes and drums.



Finally, a large group of Shishi arrive. All roles are based

on 12 people. So if you were to perform as traditionally done, you would need 60~70 people, but there are hardly that many nowadays.

In addition, I want you to pay attention to the top of Shishi's head. There are various designs between the horns, which are fun to look at.

That's so Tono as can be expected. There are also kappa.

Other performances besides the deer dance





The content can also be enjoyed on
video→<https://youtu.be/xdmo0oWz3TM>

Oh, tiger is coming over here.

It's a tiger dance. It's performed mostly in coastal areas,
but there are also some in Tono. It looks like a lion dance.

I'm wondering why the tiger dance has been handed down to
people who aren't in Japan.





Sansa Odori and Nanbu Odori, right? The Sansa dance is based

on drums and flutes and has a light-hearted feel, while the Nanbu dance is characterized by its elegance. The Nanbu Odori in particular is said to have been created by inviting a performing artist from Kyoto.

All women look pretty, and men look rugged and dynamic.

For example, in the same way that children in Tokyo learn English or swimming , girls in Tono yearn to dance the Sansa or Nanbu Odori dance, and boys try the deer dance.

There are so many different generations here, it's a good social learning experience.

Tono daikagura







What a strange group of people we have here.

It's Tono Daikagura. There used to be masters of the dance, and it is still handed down to this day.

It's such a strange music. It seemed to add to the suspicious atmosphere.



Corps de Deer Dance

You're not tired yet? The biggest highlight of the day is the big deer dance that will start around three in the afternoon. All the groups of deer dancers from the previous day perform their dances at the same time. You can't miss this.

I can now hear the sound of loud drums and flutes.





Wow, here it comes. They seem to spring up from behind me.

The town is completely occupied by deer right now, isn't it?
People are now just a supporting cast.





My head is already dizzy. I don't know if I'm awake in real life or just dreaming.

This is the festival. During this time, no matter how much we make noise, no one will pay attention to us.

Kagura theater



The content can also be enjoyed on

video→<https://youtu.be/Fx0clpoxjp0>

In the evening, there'll be a kagura performance in front of the city hall by the street. There are more than 20 groups in the city alone.

That's Tono, known as a treasure of folk performing arts in Iwate prefecture.

End of the 1st day



It's still crowded, isn't it?

There's a lot of fooling around until past nine at night.

This makes it hard to stay in the town of Tono.

I guess people have to book at least a month in advance to stay here.

What if they can't stay here?

In that case, I think it would be safer to stay in the surrounding areas. Kitakami, Hanamaki, Kamaishi, etc. All of these places are about an hour away by train. I recommend Kitakami. Kitakami is the economic center of the region and many businessmen come here, so there is no shortage of accommodations.

What about us?



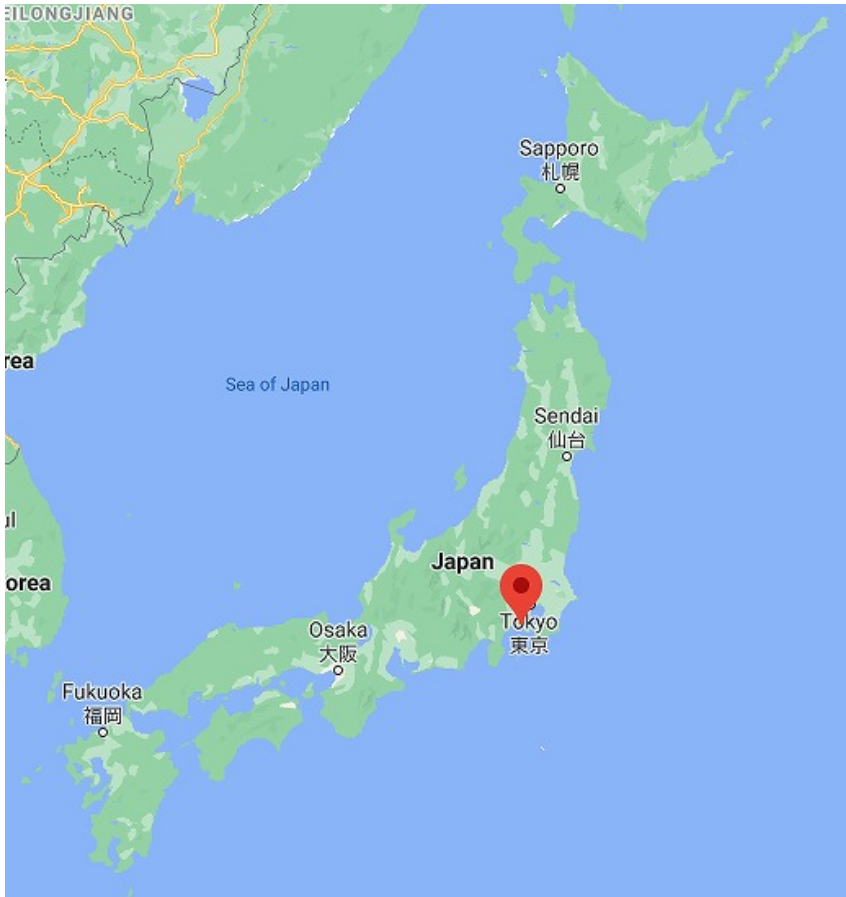


Of course, there will be a welcome party at Kappa Pond this evening. Oh, and don't touch the cucumbers. It's a trap to catch kappa.

Let's get going.

to be continued...

Report: “Yokai” parade in Kamakura~”Menkake procession”



Kamakura's location



the Great Buddha of Kamakura

<https://www.jalan.net/rentacar/drive/140000/5967/>

Date: 18, September every year

Location: Sakanoshita 4-9, Kamakura city, Kanagawa prefecture (Goryo shrine)

Access: From Kamakura station, take Enoshima line (Enoden) to Hase station and take a five-minutes walk. Kamakura is about 1 hour from Tokyo by JR line.

There are many “Yokai” in Japan.

□In Japan, there are things called “Yokai”. Many people often translate it as “spirits”. This is not a mistake. However, since Japan is basically a polytheistic country, people sometimes perceive the deities as “spirits” as well. So what is a “yokai”? If you look at the letters (if you know “Kanji”), it means “something strange” or “something suspicious”. This given name is relatively new, and people originally called them “oni (ogre)”. The word “oni” comes from the old word “onu,” which means “hidden thing”. The people believed that there was another world besides the one they lived in, and that those who lived in that world sometimes appeared in front of the people (for example, at night). They also believed that wars and droughts were all their doings. Otherwise, people could not cope with the absurdity of everyday life. In addition, the idea that objects become monsters after a hundred years of use arose, and the variety increased even more. Already around the 7th century, paintings of oni were drawn. As the spread of Buddhism progressed, paintings of ogres began to appear more frequently to teach the lesson that people who did not believe in Buddhism would go to hell.



image of a monster (12C)



image of Ogre (12C)



objects become monsters (16C)



All monsters parade (16C)

<https://www.edo-tokyo-museum.or.jp/s-exhibition/special/10309/%E7%89%B9%E5%88%A5%E5%B1%95%E3%80%8C%E5%A4%A7%E5%A6%96%E6%80%A>

A%E5%B1%95%E3%80%80%E5%9C%9F%E5%81%B6%E3%81%8B%E3%82%89%E5%A6%96%E6%80%AA%E3%82%A6%E3%82%A9%E3%83%83%E3%83%81%E3%81%BE%E3%81%A7%E3%80%8D/

□However, it was during the Edo period (17th C~early half of 19th C) that “yokai” were most developed. In this period, people enjoyed various kinds of yokai as objects of entertainment and also used them as tools to criticize the government. This is how “yokai” continues to be used today. People say that when they feel insecure about the times, a “yokai” boom occurs.



Toriyama Sekien 川童 painting



Utagawa Kuniyoshi 浮世絵 painting

□ This is how Japanese people have come to know yokai. In the Heian period (794-1185), people often met a procession of yokai at night.

There is an event in Kamakura that is evoking the procession of yokai. That is the “Menkake Procession 面掛行列”.



□ The place is Goryo 五郎 Shrine in Kamakura. Kamakura is one of

the leading tourist destinations, known as one of the three ancient capitals of Japan. Among the many shrines and temples, few people usually visited this shrine, and it is a quiet place that seems to have been forgotten. But not every September 18. The area around the shrine is closed to traffic, and many people line the streets. The reason is to see the strange procession.

Origin of the parade



Hachimangu 八幡



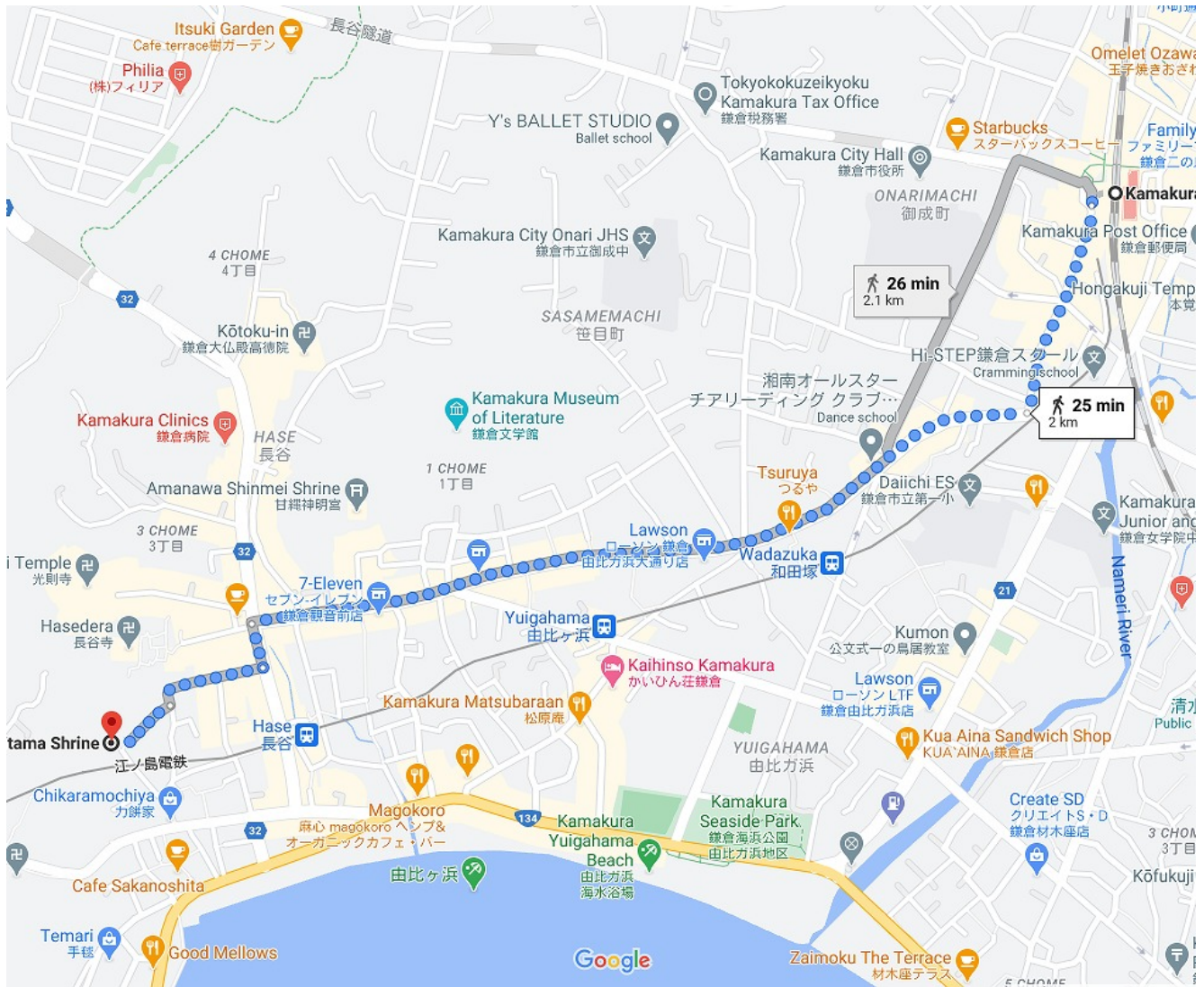
Kamakura Gongoro in Kabuki theater



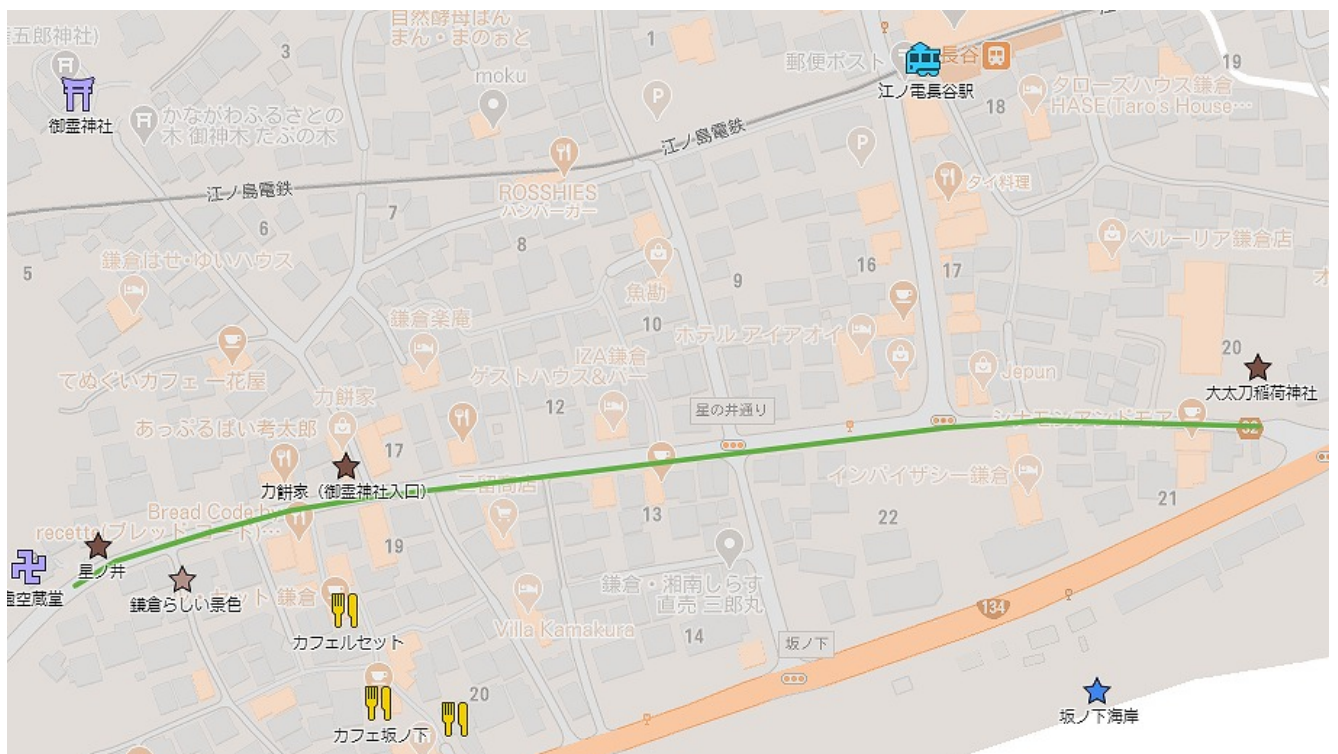
<https://www.yoritomo-japan.com/gyoji-maturi/hatiman-saireigyoretu.html>

□The reason why this day is in September is because it is said to be the anniversary of the death of Kamakura Gongoro, the god enshrined in this shrine. Gongoro was a warlord who was active in the 11th century, and was known for his bravery and courage. In Kabuki, he appears as hero. But the procession has nothing to do with Gongoro. There is a record that the procession was originally held at Hachiman Shrine, the center of Kamakura. According to the legend, Yoritomo, the founder of the Kamakura Shogunate, got a woman other than his wife pregnant. Some say that the family joined the procession to protect Yoritomo, while others say that they were allowed to join the procession on this day only without formalities. In any case, this family was of low status, so they wore masks to hide their faces. However, because these are just legends, no one knows exactly what the truth is.

Going to see



from kamakura station



Hoshinoi street

Kamakura is a small town. It is possible to walk from Kamakura station to the shrine, as it is only about 2 km. The surrounding area is lined with Zen temples, and the ocean is located nearby. If you want to take the train, transfer from JR Kamakura Station to the Enoden 江ノ島電鉄 train right next door, which takes about 5 minutes. Get off at Hase 江ノ島 Station. On weekends and holidays, it is as crowded as Shinjuku Station, the busiest station in Japan, but since Hase Station is the closest to the great Buddha (Daibutsu), many people get off the train, so don't worry. The procession departs from the shrine and goes back and forth along "Hoshi-noi-dori 星のい通り" just in front of it. It's a modest distance, so it's easy to find a spot without rushing.

Procession









□When it was time to go, the sound of flutes and drums would

be able to reach us. Finally, the procession begins. The masks don't come instantly. Things that you can't really understand unless you ask them about their origins are coming one after the other. The person leading the way looked like an Edo-period official. The people are carrying the portable shrine (mikoshi) quietly without any vigorous shouting. The musical accompaniment was also somewhat elegant. Children walked in with what looked like red streamers attached to the end of long sticks. People are wearing kimonos and hakama (Both are ancient Japanese folk costumes). The scenery is reminiscent of the illusion of an old samurai procession. Of course, no one has ever seen the real thing, but there are many reenactments of daimyo processions at festivals around the country.





Sarutahiko

In the meantime, the tengu-faced Sarutahiko (*1) finally arrives. It is a common sight to see him leading a festival procession, since legend has it that he led the way at the time of Ninigi's descent in mythology(*2). In his tall geta (Japanese wooden clogs) and long "Shakujo (monks staff made from metal) attire, he walks leisurely with a sound ting-a-ling.

*1

<https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/2020/06/07/the-most-detailed-japanese-traditional-mask/>

*2

<https://discoverdeeperjapan.com/reference/japan-mythology-and-history/>



□The lion comes next, but instead of wearing a mask like a normal lion, it is placed on top of the head. It's a little different in every way. Finally, in the middle of the procession, a group of oddly shaped people wearing the masks

we were looking for arrived. The excitement of the people is at its peak. Dressed in matching outfits, the “yokai” parade through the streets in broad daylight. Ten in all. Each of them is as unique as the other members of the group. They paraded through the streets without looking at anyone in the eye at all.

Masks



Jijii



Oni



Igyo



Hananaga



karasu-tengu



Okina



Hifuki-otoko



Fukuroku



Toriage



Okame

From the top to the bottom, there's "Jijii じい (old man)," "Oni おに (ogre)," "Igyo いご (variant)," "Hananaga はなが (long nose)," "Karasu tengu からすてんぐ (crow billed Tengu)," "Okina おきな (aged man)," "Hifuki-otoko ひふきおとこ (fire breathing man)," "Fukuroku ふくろく (prosperity and long life)" and "Toriage とりあげ (midwife)," "Okame おかめ (woman)" who is the main characters of the day.



□Why these masks were chosen is a mystery. Still, it is a strange sight to see again and again. The specters walked the

streets as if they owned the place, while the humans played a supporting role. They pass by in silence. However, when I look at them like this, I feel as if I can hear their voices.



Karasu-tengu: It was usually quiet as I walked at night, but there were a lot of people walking around during the day.

Hananaga: You are so loud. Quiet down and walk.



Okina: Thank you all for your hard work standing in line. It's a pleasure to meet you all.



Hifuki-otoko: Hmm. Are we really that rare? Say hello to me, too.





Toriage: Hey, wait a minute. You're a little quick for a pregnant lady, aren't you?



Okame: I'll keep waiting without your telling me. I'm a star, people won't let me go.



Fukuroku: Hey, what? You're ignoring me?







□They go to Hoshinoi Street and come back again. But the madness doesn't last long. People don't allow them to occupy the town all day long. After about 20 minutes, they return to the shrine. People follow them, trying to bask in as much of the afterglow as possible.





□The portable shrine is quickly dismantled and the oddly-looking group disappears. They were kind enough to put their masks back on and take pictures with us. But that was only for a short time. The lion's head returns to its original position, and daily life returns.





□The masks are in the collection of the Gallery of Treasures,

so you can see them if you wish. But, they are just quiet and silent.



Reference :

<https://youkostonihon.com/2018/03/17/menkake-gyouretsu-menkake-parade-kamakura/>

Contact

information :

<http://www.city.kamakura.kanagawa.jp/visitkamakura/en/>

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