

Kurume History Walks

No.17 Cultural Properties related to the Daizenji Tamatare-gu Shrine

大善寺玉垂宮由来の文化財

■ History of the Daizenji Tamatare-gu Shrine

The Daizenji Tamatare-gu Shrine was reportedly established in 672. In ancient times, the predecessor shrine temple, which was later called the Daizen-ji Temple, had been built at the site under the syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism. It attracted many believers and to be prosperous. In 814 the governor of the Miike District constructed the hall, the gate, the corridor, and so on, under the order of the Emperor Saga. At its peak, they had owned 45 residences for the monks and the estate of 3,000 cho, which was about 30 km².



After going through decline and revival, with the Order Separating Shintoism and Buddhism in 1868 by the new government, here, the temples were abolished and today only the Tamatare-gu Shrine remains as religious facilities.

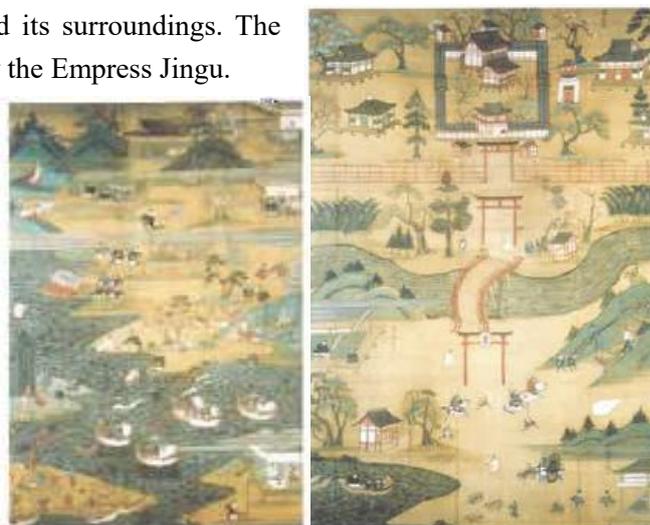
■ Color Paintings on Silk of Tamatare-gu Shrine's History

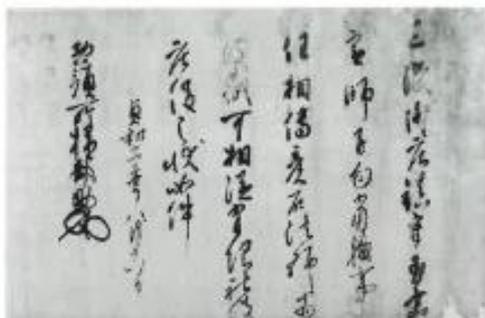
These two paintings were drawn in 1370, based on another old and damaged painting. Worshippers including a powerful family asked the Kaneyoshi Emperor for the permission to reproduce it. That was described on a former wooden box in which the paintings used to be stored.

One painting depicts the Tamatare-gu Shrine and its surroundings. The other describes the legend of the conquest to Korea by the Empress Jingu.

Being a National Important Cultural Property, today this pair of paintings are deposited in the Kyoto National Museum.

Besides, these copies, which Arima Tadayori, the second lord of Kurume Domain dedicated in 1651, are exhibited in the Kusano History Museum at Kusanomachi, Kurume.





▲ Permission Letter for the Position of Lion Dancer



▲ Letter for Entrusting the Estate from Otomo



▲ Diagram of Daizenji Tamatare-gu Shrine



▲ Devil masks



◀ Spears

Permission Letter for the Position of Lion Dancer

This is an official document issued by a local government in 1346. The Umezu family, who lived at Yoake, Daizenjimachi, monopolized the folk performing arts “*dengaku*” and dedicated it to shrines of the Chikugo province. They were active under the patronage of the lords from the Kamakura period (the 13th and the early 14th century) to the Edo period (the 17th and the late 19th century).

Letter for Entrusting the Estate from Otomo Yoshiaki to Kuma clan of Daizenji in 1536

The Otomo family of the Bungo province (today’s Oita) strengthened its governance over the Chikugo province. The Ryuzoji family of the Hizen province (today’s Saga) tried making inroads into Chikugo. During that period, powerful clans of the province repeated the alinement and the estrangement with the Otomo or the Ryuzoji. This is a document showing such a circumstance of the time.

Diagram of the Daizenji Tamatare-gu Shrine

This picture depicts the Daizenji Tamatare-gu Shrine at the time of the Shinto-Buddhism syncretism. The shrine was surrounded by many Buddhist temples, the Hirokawa River, the Karakasabashi Bridge, and Uenomachi area. The bridge was used only for the rituals. Once, it was swept away by the flood in the Edo period. One of those stone pillars remains as a monument in the precinct.

■ Restoration in the Edo Period

Tanaka Yoshimasa, who became the lord of Chikugo Province in 1601 revived the temple in the early Edo period. He donated 300 *kokus* of rice (**Koku* 石’ was a traditional volume unit for measuring the rice quantity: about 150 kg) a worship hall, a bell tower, a temple bell, a steel gong and other things to the worshiper of the Daizenji Tamataregu Shrine. After the rupture of his lineage, the Arima family, who succeeded in the lord’s position, continued to give financial protection.

Devil masks (鬼面 *kimen*)

According to the inscription on the back of a mask, they were donated in 1604. We presume that the same person who donated the spears (the following page) donated them too.

Spears (鉾 *hoko*)

A pair of iron spears bears the inscription of the donation date (March 1604) and the donor’s name.



◀ Hanging banner

Hanging banner (御幡 *onban*)

A silk banner, used for the Buddhist rituals, has the inscription written in ink: a man from Hizen taken over this banner in the battle during Tensho era (1573-1593), but later he received an oracle and brought it back to the shrine in 1608.



▼ Hoods

Hoods (頭巾鳥兜 *zukintorikabuto*)

A pair of paper hoods measure 50 centimeters. They must be vividly colored, when they were donated by twelve people on April 15th, 1732.

■ Buildings

Stone Torii gate (石造鳥居 *ishizukuritorii*)

It stands on the front approach. When facing it, there is the inscription of Tanaka Tadamasu, the lord on the right column, and a samurai's name and the date 1618 (Genna 4th) on the left. It was designated a Municipal Cultural Property in 2007.



▼ Stone Gate

Former monks' kitchen and living (旧庫裡 *kyukuri*)

The Daizen-ji Temple was abolished in 1868 based on the Order Separating Shintoism and Buddhism. Although there are still some Buddhist buildings including the monks' kitchen and living that had been used as school firstly for the Western studies, and then for children. We have preserved part of the building after the relocation to the current site. It was designated a Municipal Cultural Property in 1983.

Former monks' kitchen and living

▼大善寺旧庫裡



■ National Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property

Oniyo Fire Festival (鬼夜 *oniyo*: devil night)

This festival for exorcising evil spirits is annually held on January 7th. It is counted as one of three major fire festivals in Japan and attracts many people.

According to the old document “吉山旧記 *Yoshiyama Kyu Ki*”, which was edited in 1604, the festival originated from that in 368 a minister came to capture the bandits, decapitated their leader and burnt his head.

The festival is composed of several rituals, which are carried out from the afternoon to around midnight. About nine o'clock, it reaches its climax. Within the darkness from the main sanctuary, a fire is brought to light the six giant torches all at once. In front of these burning torches, a ritual takes place – It is called *hokomen shinji* 鉾面神事, literally ritual of spears and masks. It represents the bandit extermination. Two men, wearing “Tengu, long-nosed goblin” mask with spears and swords, duel and young people, who follow these two, seize one by one yelling “Got masks!”, “Got spears!” and “Now drew sword!”.

Then, the parade of burning torches, *Otaimatu Mawashi*, starts. Three or four hundred male worshipers wearing only a lion-cloth separately bring these giant torches, 13 meters high and 1 meter across, and turn twice around the main hall, while a person who plays a role of demon (*oni*) turns seven and a half times around the oni hall in the darkness away from the burning torches.

For closing the festival, the first torch is brought to a sacred place in the Hirokawa River and the *oni* goes to purify itself.



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