

Kurume History Walks

No.27 History of Kitano Town* 北野の歴史

*Kitano Town, which had been an independent municipality, merged with Kurume City in 2005.



Main Gate of Kitano Tenman-gu Shrine ① *Figure in a circle indicates that of the map on the fourth page.

1. Children sing the local history.

Is local history what specialized institutions study, or what old people transmit? Are only researchers or grown-ups who know it?

It could be also children who know it well. School songs always deal with local treasures. When we hear them singing a school song, we can know the local history.

Then, what kind of things do children sing at each elementary school in Kitano area?

2. Kitano Elementary School

They sing about the Kitano Tenman-gu Shrine,

which is the origin of the town's name. It is said to be established in 1054 and enshrines Sugawara no Michizane, who is today known as a god of learning.

Michizane, a scholar, poet, and politician, was demoted from his aristocratic rank to a much lower position. It is said that in the middle of going from Kyoto, the capital of that time, to Dazaifu, he went down the Chikugo River to escape from pursuers, and arrived at Kitano Town.

Episodes during his stay seem to give the name to several areas of the town as follows:

- Ishomaru (Literally clothing place): He disguised himself as a woman to evade the pursuers there.
- Haizuka (Literally ash mound): He burnt his clothes there.
- Ushizuka (Literally cow mound): He hitched a cow for taking a rest.



Tokoshima Irrigation Channel ②

3. Kaneshima Elementary School

Goshoya, five village headmen, is a particular term that appears in their school song.

They devoted themselves to building the Tokoshima Weir, which was built on the Chikugo River in 1712, and the Tokoshima Irrigation Channel.

Although villages were located along the large river, they didn't have enough water for rice-field. Then, the source was an earnest wish for villagers.

As a result, these water supply facilities fertilize three thousand hectares of rice-field.

Recently, the channel has been changing for bank protection work. But it always blesses the town.

4. Oki Elementary School

There is a well in a corner of the schoolyard. This is the *Masukagenoi* which appears in their school song.

Empress Consort Jingu (169-269) is said to have received the water from this well for her newborn infant's first bath, following her return from the

Korean conquest.

Then, from ancient times, the villagers have respectfully treated it because they believed that if a newborn had first bath, he/she would become wise and beautiful, and live for a long time. It is closed today.



Masukagenoi ③

5. Yuge Elementary School

Kumashiro no Watashi is a term that appears in their school song. It is one of several quays for the boats that used to cross the Chikugo River in ancient times. And, it was an important transport hub in Kyushu, because it was a crossing point of a major road running north-south through Kyushu, and the Chikugo River flowing east-west when water was one of the primary means of transportation.

A lore about the Kumashiro Pontoon has been handed down. About seven hundred years ago, the warriors of Southern Kyushu went to Hakata Bay in northern Kyushu for Mongol invasion attempts against Japan. The Chikugo River rose and blocked their way. But a pontoon was made across the river by local people so that they could pass it. The warriors beat the Mongol army back.



The former site of Kumashiro Pontoon ④



Camphor Tree ⑥

6. Cultural Properties in Kitano Town

The Kitano Tenman-gu Shrine has five cultural properties, all designated by the prefecture.

- **Stone Torii gate** is in the Hizen style (Hizen is the province equivalent to roughly the present-day Saga and Nagasaki Prefecture).

- **Camphor tree**

- **Illustrated Legends of Kitano Tenman-gu Shrine in Chikugo Province** (*Chikugo-no-kuni Kitano Tenjin Engi*) shows the origin and the benefits of the deity.

- **Bronze gong** was inscribed with the creation year (1531).

- **Jinko Festival** is held on the third Sunday of October.



Illustrated Legends of Kitano Tenman-gu Shrine in Chikugo Province ⑦



Bronze gong ⑧



Stone Torii gate of Kitano Tenman-gu Shrine ⑤



Jinko Festival ⑨



Yoshizumi Stone Monument ⑩



Illustrated history of the Tokoshima Irrigation Channel ⑪

Besides, there are three municipal cultural properties in the town.

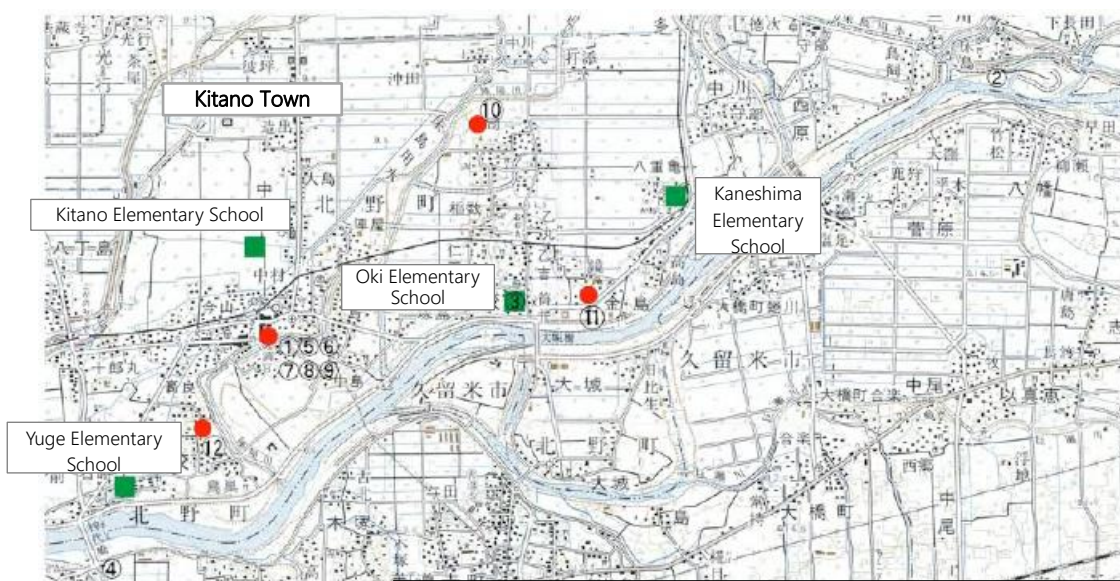
- **Yoshizumi Stone Monument** is the oldest in Kitano Town, which was inscribed with the fifth year of Jowa (1349).

- **Illustrated history of the Tokoshima Irrigation Channel construction** depicts in detail the villagers working on the river, the process of the construction, and the general instructions.

- **Kurogane holly of the Kuroiwa family** is about 400 years old, has a height of over 17 meters, and a trunk circumference of 3.16 meters.



Mochi Tree ⑫



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