

高梁市 TAKAHASHI CITY

備中神楽

THE BITCHU KAGURA
GOES TO ITS SISTER CITY
BEYOND THE OCEAN



Kagura Dancers, Abe-sha.



備中神楽

BITCHU KAGURA

The Bitchu Kagura Dance has been held by the people of Takahashi area for hundreds of years. The origin can be traced back to an ancient belief that natural disaster, disease and other such misfortunes were brought upon by a god named Kojin. In order to appease the god, this dance was created, but at the early stage it was quite unsophisticated.

Around 1770, a priest of shintoism, Mr.Kokkyo Nishibayashi, who was born in Takahashi, re-created the Bitchu Kagura Dance based upon two famous birth-myths of Japan-Kojiki and Nihonshoki. And he gave the dance order and sophistication.


Bitchu Kagura was originally performed by priests of shintoism, but because of its complexity it was then performed by special dancers called Kagura Dayu.

There are five acts in the Bitchu Kagura. Of the five these three are the most famous—Open the Gate of the Celestial Rock Cave, Division of Territory, and The Battle Against a Serpent. Each act has some scenes of dances.

Now its performance is made mainly in fall to thank god for happiness and a rich harvest for the year. Also to pray for happiness and a rich harvest for the coming year.

The Bitchu Kagura Dance was registered as an important intangible cultural asset by the national government in 1979.

The people of Takahashi take pride in this dance and look forward to its performance every year.





DANCE OF SARUDAHIKO-NO-MIKOTO

This dance is done before the act of "Open the Gate of the Celestial Rock Cave.

In the time of the descent to earth of the descendants of the Sun-Goddess, Sarudahiko played the role of a forerunner, driving away evil spirits.

For this reason the dance is performed at the very beginning of Kagura Dance. It is very famous for its dynamic splendor.

Through this dance people pray to this god for the happiness of their families, protection from natural disasters, diseases, traffic accidents and for the prosperity of their children etc.



Sarudahiko-no-mikoto

DANCE OF OKUNINUSHI-NO-MIKOTO

This dance is in the Division of Territory.

Okuninushi appears with a smile on his face and with a mallet of luck in his hand. There is something elegant and dignified about this dance.

At the beginning he says, "I will bring happiness and prosperity to people who pray to me. And I will use the mallet to rule this land in peace."

In the dance the god scatters red and white rice balls (Japanese cakes made from steamed rice) to people.

We call these "seeds of good luck."

Today Okuninushi is dedicated to as the god of marriage.



Okuninushi-no-mikoto

BATTLE AGAINST A SERPANT

The god who battles against a serpent is called Susano-no-mikoto. He is a brother of the Sun-Goddess.

The story goes like this: There lives an old man and his wife in a village. They had eight daughters. But now only one of them is alive. Why? Because a giant serpent had attacked the village every year and ate seven of their daughters, one daughter a year.



Susano hears about this sad story and decides to fight against the serpent. But it seems too strong for him to defeat. So he works out a trick. It is sake (Japanese liquor)! He gives the serpent as much sake as it wants, and attacks it while it is drunk and sleeping.

After a terrible battle, he finally wins and saves the maiden.

(Right) Susano-no-mikoto

