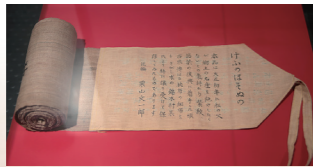


Nishikigi Zuka

Nishikigi Zuka Exhibition Room

Within Civic Center in Nishikigi District, Kazuno City
91-1, Aza Hamada, Towada-Nishikigi, Kazuno City, Akita Prefecture
TEL 0186-35-4477

Nishikigi Zuka is located in the Nishikigi Zuka Historical Park near Towada-minami Station of the JR Hanawa Line, and has an annex named Nishikigi Zuka Exhibition Room, which showcases materials related to "Nishikigi Zuka" and "Kefu no Hosonuno".



▲ "Kefu no Sebanono" (equal to "Kefu no Hosonuno") by Masumi Sugae, a drawing of five Nishikigi trees (trees used for dying cloths) and Sebanono (narrow cloth). Owned by Odate City Kurimori Memorial Library

◆"Kefu no Hosonuno"

"Hosonuno" woven by the woman in the Nishikigi folk tale was called "Kefu no Hosonuno", where "Kefu" means feather-woven cloth or narrow cloth in Japanese, and is currently pronounced as "Kefu", and "Hosonuno" is a narrow cloth made by weaving bird feathers.

There is a description of "Kefu Hosonuno - Furukawa Village" in the "Kemanai Dori" section of "Onryobun Sanbutsu Kakiagecho", a list of regional products in the domain. As such, narrow cloth from Furukawa Village was considered to be closely related with Nishikigi Zuka, and was presented to Junkenshi, an inspector sent by the shogunate who visited Kazuno, as a special product of Kazuno. The entire roll of this cloth is about 18.2 cm wide and 7.88 m long, and, as its name implies, is narrower than usual linen cloth.

As the Nishikigi folk tale had been introduced to the then capital (current Kyoto), the story deeply impressed the nobility, which let people use the theme in so many tanka poems during the Heian to Kamakura periods that "Nishikigi", "Kefu no Kori" (meaning a village of Kefu cloths) or "Kefu no Hosonuno" became "utamakura", meaning a famous place used in tanka poems. Moreover, Zeami created a Noh song called "Nishikigi" featuring Kefu no Sato in Mutsu Province for a drama on the theme of the Nishikigi folk tale, which has been continuously played on the Noh stage for over 500 years to date.



A Festival in Gassan Shrine Kemanai Matsuri

July 12 and 13

◆ Kemanai, Kazuno City
Gassan Shrine (Main and Satomiya shrines), Komose Street (Honcho Street)

During the regular festival for Kemanai Gassan Shrine, "Taru Mikoshi for Children", "Kemanai Bayashi" music and " Kawara Daikagura " grand kagura performances are dedicated to the shrine. At night, Min-yo folk songs and other art performances are made in the Honcho street, while a range of stands selling foods, beverages, and toys add to the festival entertainment. For Kemanai, these two days are the most prosperous of the year.

Tangible Cultural Property designated by Kazuno City
Gassan Shrine
Dedicated votive picture of a horse featuring "Ogura Anthology of One Hundred Tanka by One Hundred Poets"



Gassan Shrine Main Shrine

Senjin Kensho-kan, Kazuno City

Exhibits materials and data on the achievements by people born in olden times in Kemanai.



3-2 Aza Kashiwazaki, Towada Kemanai, Kazuno City
TEL 0186-35-5250
9:00-16:30/Closed on Mondays and the last day of the month, as well as year-end holidays
Entrance fee: 210 yen (adults)

Konan Naito

(1866-1934)

A historian born in Kemanai, Kazuno City in 1866. Graduated from Akita Prefectural Normal School. After coming to Tokyo, engaged in editing and writing editorials in "Nihonjin" or "Osaka Asahi Shimbun" and others, while obtaining deep knowledge through research on China. Started teaching Oriental History at the Department of History of Kyoto Imperial University in 1907. Became a professor in 1909. Retired in 1926. A member of the Imperial Academy. His research covered not only Chinese history including the periodization theory, ancient history, history of the Qing dynasty, etc., but also left a prominent mark in Japanese history. Also famous as a calligrapher.



Restored study room of Konan Naito

Sadayuki Wainai

(1858-1922)

A researcher in fish farming. Born in Kemanai, Kazuno City in 1858. While working at a mine, he became interested in culturing fish in Lake Towada. After releasing young carp into Lake Towada in 1884, he became involved in promoting fish production. Succeeded in culturing red salmon in 1905. Later, Lake Towada became a main source of roe of red salmon species for various lakes and ponds. His persistent research approach was cinematized in 1950 in a movie named "I Did See Legendary Fish", and featured in textbooks for elementary/junior high schools. He also contributed to tourism development in Towada.



Kiyoko Segawa

(1895-1984)

Enrolled in Toyo University in 1922, motivated by a newspaper ad stating that "Even women can enroll in university" while working at Kemanai elementary school, her alma mater. After graduating from the university, studied native Japanese folklore under Kunio Yanagita, while teaching at a school in Tokyo. Later became a professor at Otsuma Women's University. Visited mountain hamlets and fishing villages nationwide for survey until the age of 84. Won "AVON Award to Women" by Avon of the U.S., and the Kunio Yanagita Award.



* There are also corners for books and panel exhibitions related to Rinpei Tateyama, Teishiro Tateyama, Sasuke Asari, and local communities.



Akita Prefecture
Towada, Kazuno City

Cultures of Kemanai and Adjacent Areas

Intangible Folk Cultural Property designated by the national government

Kemanai Bon Odori

**Kemanai Matsuri,
a festival at Gassan Shrine**

**Nishikigi Zuka and
Kefu no Hosonuno**

Senjin Kensho-kan, Kazuno City



Issued by:
Executive Committee for Revitalization of Cultural Assets and Traditional Cultures in Kazuno City
85, Aza Kami Hanawa, Hanawa, Kazuno City, Akita Prefecture 018-5201
TEL 0186-23-7799

Kemanai Bonodori Dance Preservation Association
23, Kemanai, Kemanai Aza, Towada, Kazuo City, Akita Prefecture 018-5334
TEL 0186-35-3317

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Kefu no Hosonuno

The "Nishikigi Zuka" mound is located at Towada-Nishikigi, Kazuno City. The legend related to this mound was featured in a tanka poem by Noin Hoshi (Buddhist priest and poet) in Goshui Wakashu (Later Collection of Gleanings of Japanese Poems) in the Heian period or noh chanting by Zeami (Noh program author) in the Muromachi period as the "Legend of Nishikigi Zuka" and then spread nationwide.



▼ "Nishikigi Zuka" in "Nishikigi" by Masumi Sugae. Owned by Odate City Kurimori Memorial Library

◆ Legend of Nishikigi Zuka

Once upon a time, there was a custom in this region where a man placed a "nishikigi" pole decorated in beautiful colors on the gate of the house of the woman he cared for. The woman could choose to take the pole into her house to indicate that she would allow the man to enter the house, or leave it to indicate refusal.

One man fell in love with a beautiful woman who was weaving a "Hosonuno", or a narrow cloth, to sell. He placed a "nishikigi" pole at her house, but she left it there for 7 consecutive days. His love for her grew stronger, so he continued to place the pole for 100 days, and then for three years, but the pole was left as it was. He felt desperate, and finally put an end to his life. But in fact the woman wanted to see him and spend at least one night with him, but could not gain permission from her parents. She had been weaving that narrow cloth to overcome her trapped feelings. Upon hearing of his death, the woman followed him in her grief. Local people considered them as an inseparable couple, buried them together, and named the site they were buried as "Nishikigi Zuka".



From "Kazuno Yurai-shu (Histories of Kazuno)" written in the 17th century about the histories of villages in Kazuno when they were dominated by the Nanbu Domain



Kawara Daikagura, Intangible Folk Cultural Property designated by Kazuno City



Kemanai Bayashi music



Omikoshi Hotai Togyo at Gassan Shrine



Taru Mikoshi for Children

Intangible Folk Cultural Property designated by the national government

Kemanai Bon Odori

August 21 to 23
7:30 pm to 9:30 pm (on all days)

◆Komose Street (Honcho Street), Kemanai, Kazuno City

At the Kemanai Bon Odori, "Jinku" and "Dai no Saka", which both have a long history, are still played. The former originates from the "Jingo Odori" which was performed in celebration of the soldiers who won a war in the Kazuno area with the Nanbu and Ando clans in 1567, and returned to Kemanai. Initially it was called "Jingo Odori", but later was renamed "Jinku Odori", according to legend. The latter is thought to have been performed as early as around 1657. After the Shirane Gold Mine was found near Kemanai around 1598, merchants from the Kansai region gathered and the area prospered greatly with the establishment of new towns supplying materials, which made the Bon Festival greater in scale and detail. As a result, the festival has continued for as long as 450 years to today.

After the Meiji period, the festival was held except when suspended due to the Great Kanto Earthquake and wars in the Showa Period. The festival was initially held in several towns, one night in each town. But currently it is held jointly by several towns from August 21 to 23 at Komose Street (Honcho Street). In 1998, "Kemanai Bon Odori" was designated as an Intangible Folk Cultural Property by the government.



"Murasakiusu" in "Momousu no Zu" by Masumi Sugae
Owned by Odate City Kurimori Memorial Library

Masumi Sugae, a travel writer in the Edo period, visited Kazuno three times. He drew "Murasakiusu", a mortar used in Kemanai in "Momousu no Zu" (Picture of a Hundred Mortars), and lyrics for "Dai no Saka", a song named "Tsukime Uta", which was sung while pounding Murasaki (lithospermum root used for purple color for plant-derived dye) with pestle in a mortar, to explain the drawings. The song of "Dai no Saka" was passed down until the early Showa period, but unfortunately was no longer used thereafter. Currently "Dai no Saka" is played only by musical accompaniment.

◀Kemanai Bon Odori from mid-1930s to mid-1940s
(Photo/Owned by Mr. Shuichi Toyoguchi)

Yobi Daiko



At 7:30 pm when the summer day begins to fade, "Yobi Daiko" to mark the start of the Bon Odori echoes throughout the town. Upon hearing the music, dancers start gathering at the venue which is decorated with Japanese lanterns and banners.



Dai no Saka

"Dai no Saka" was once accompanied by songs, but is currently played only on Japanese drums and flutes. People play drums and flutes while moving together with lines of dancers at the venue. An elegant dance to the solemn music is truly reminiscent of the original Bon Odori derived from a Buddhist dance intended to calm the souls of ancestors who come to our world from the other side during the Buddhist All Souls' Day (Urabon-e), and return them to the other side.



The choreography of putting their hands together signifies praying for ancestors.



Jinku (Japanese livery dance)

The "Jinku" Odori does not involve musical accompaniment, but only songs with lyrics in the pattern of 7-7-7-5 Japanese characters. Since it is said to originate from dances at festivals celebrating victory in war, the dance is rather playful. The lyrics express various aspects of daily life, such as prayers for a good harvest, the fun of Bon Odori, local scenery, etc. and people sing this song alternately while performers dance and clap their hands.



❖Meaning of the lyrics of Jinku❖

- ◡Once the Jinku Odori starts, you cannot use your spatula or ladle (meaning you cannot do other work).
- ◡On the night of the 16th day, or Bon period, everyone goes out for dancing.
- ◡All dancers line up like ears of rice at harvest.
- ◡Though it seems narrow, Kazuno is filled with mountains with gold from east to west.

Kemanai Jongara Odori

Since the Meiji Period, "Kemanai Jongara Odori", brought by the youth who enrolled as troops in the Imperial Japanese Army at Hirosaki, has been danced as a side show.



Inheriting the Kemanai Bon Odori

Prior to the Bon Odori, many children from pre-schoolers to high school students perform excellent dances in the "Bon Odori Competition for Children" or "Warashikko, Merashikko (meaning children and young ladies) Bon Odori". They are our source of strength in handing Kemanai Bon Odori down to future generations.



Costume for Kemanai Bon Odori

In line with ancient practices of formally dressing for visiting temples in the Bon period, people wear tomesode (kimono for older ladies for formal events) or montsuki (kimono for men with family crests) for Bon Odori dances, which people call "wearing clothes stored at the bottom of the closet", meaning clothes worn on special occasions. Women tucking their hems, wear underskirts of pale pink, and form obi belts in Taiko Musubi (a box-shaped knot), under which the Shigoki decoration belt is tied, and completed with white Tabi (Japanese socks) and Zori (Japanese sandals).



Men wear black kimonos with white family crests with their hems tucked, showing underwear of pale blue, and use a half-width belt and yellow Shigoki decoration belt, completed with white Tabi and Zori.

Both men and women wrap their heads with a spotted patterned Japanese hand-towel, which is folded up at the temples, hiding the mouth, forming a unique mask.

Musical accompaniment for Kemanai Bon Odori

At the Kemanai Bon Odori, songs named "Takaya" and "Dai no Saka" are played as "Yobi Daiko" (introductory music). The latter is accompanied by Japanese flutes and drums, which are about 1 m in diameter and length, suspended from a rope by one person in front of his stomach and struck, while another person supports the other side. About 7 to 8 drums made of horse hide are used. Prior to the festival, "Takaya" and "Dai no Saka" are played at a festival venue by 12 people with Japanese bamboo flutes with 7 holes.



Japanese drum



Japanese flute