

Takahama Shichinen-Matsuri

In ancient Japan, epidemics and disasters were believed to be caused by vengeful spirits. To appease these spirits, people held rituals called Matsuri as offerings. The Takahama Shichinen-Matsuri is one such festival, with over 450 years of history. Based on the principles of Yin and Yang and the 12 signs of the Japanese zodiac, the first six signs, from the rat to the snake, are considered Yang (positive), while the latter six, from the horse to the boar, are Yin (negative). The Yin and Yang energies peak in the Year of the Snake (6th sign) and the Year of the Boar (12th sign), which are regarded as "festival years" occurring every six years. As a result, every 7th year becomes a "festival year," giving this festival its name. For seven days, the town comes alive as locals carry large portable shrines (Mikoshi) and festival floats (Hikiyama) through the streets, accompanied by traditional performances such as Tachifuri, Kagura, Otaue, and Niwaka.



During the "7-Year Festival," three mikoshi (portable shrines) are carried throughout the town. **The Higashiyama mikoshi**, which enshrines the goddess Inadahime no Mikoto, radiates a beautiful golden glow. **The Nakanoyama mikoshi**, dedicated to the fierce deity Susanoo no Mikoto, is the largest of the three. **The Nishiyama mikoshi** is recorded as being descended from the deities of Higashiyama and Nakanoyama. Throughout the seven days of the festival, the three mikoshi are carried to several otabisho (resting places for deities). On the final day, all three converge along the shore and are carried into the sea for the purification ceremony (Ashi-arai), before returning to the shrine.



Wakamiya District



Yokomachi District



Akomachi District



Honmachi District

The seven hikiyama (festival floats), representing seven different wards, are pulled through the streets to the shrine on the 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 6th days when the mikoshi remain stationary. These floats feature musical performances called hayashi, along with children's taiko (drum) and buto-hono (Shinto dedication dance) performances. One highlight is Yamaagari, held on the 2nd day, when all the hikiyama gather at Sakichi Shrine, creating an unmissable and stunning spectacle.



Imazake District



Nakamachi District



Onishi District



The 7 Hikiyama (Festival Float) all assemble at Sakichi Shrine

Tachifuri is a reenactment of traditional sword (tachi) techniques. **Higashiyama's** Tachifuri captivates audiences with its beautiful, tranquil, and commanding atmosphere. **Nakanoyama's** Tachifuri is dynamic, featuring powerful movements and impressive changes in pace, requiring precise timing from the performers. In **Nishiyama's** Tachifuri, children showcase their skills through remarkable performances. Each style of Tachifuri is unique and sure to captivate spectators.



Nishi-yama Tachifuri



Naka-no-yama Tachifuri



Higashi-yama Tachifuri



Niwaka



Otaue



Kagura

Kagura is ancient Shinto music and dance, including the Shishi (Lion Dance) and the playful Tengu (Arajishi) performance, along with other programs dedicated to the shrine. In the **Otaue** rice-planting ritual, dozens of children and adults use Japanese farming tools like hoes or eburi, dancing and shaking them together in an impressive display. **Niwaka** offers a different kind of entertainment with exhilarating and humorous ad-lib performances. These traditional performances, passed down through generations, are truly worth experiencing.