



Hassaku Festival

八 朔 祭

山都町

YAMATO-CHO
KUMAMOTO/JPN



The sacred procession of Nanase Inari Shrine

Transition of Hassaku Festival

Here's the summary of the transition of the festival.

The Hassaku Festival is held by local residents of Hamamachi Yamato-Cho kumamoto Japan. The biggest feature of this festival is the "Giant Ornaments" made with prayers for a good harvest in nearby farming villages.

The relation between prayers for a bountiful harvest and ornaments traces back to after the Edo Period and it is the most important factor of the festival. According to the historical records, a performing art called "Jiodori" was performed at Koichiryo Shrine in Hama-machi in the late Edo Period. A document remains which tells that "the ornaments" were made by residents in Hama-machi at the time of prayers for rain in 1785.

The present Hassaku Festival has such a tradition as a main factor, and, in the modern period, other factors such as the beliefs of Nanase Inari Shrine, which worships the deity of success in business and others, were added. So this festival has been handed down while evolving as a multi-faceted celebration.

Due to the panics in the Showa Era and World War II, the Hassaku Festival was cancelled sometimes. However, it has become more splendid since it resumed in 1947.

Around 1949, it was decided that the festival would be held over two days, and, in 1955, those dates were determined to be September 1st and 2nd. On the day of festival, shopkeepers treat farmers with warm hospitality. As for ornaments, some are dedicated to world peace and some satirize social conditions.

The present Hassaku Festival is held on the first Saturday and Sunday of September, praying for a bountiful harvest. It reaches its climax with the "Parade of Giant Ornaments".

※There are various views regarding the transition of the Hassaku Festival.

Current schedule of the Hassaku Festival

The eve 7:30pm Asaokoshi

**The
1st
day**

10:00 am

Nanase Inari Shrine's sacred procession, rituals praying for a bountiful harvest (Koichiryo Shrine)

3:00 pm

Fife-and-drum bands and brass bands of elementary and junior high schools, dancing of neighborhood associations, mikoshi (portable shrines) and drums

**The
2nd
day**

10:00 am

Grand Self Defense Force Brass Band, dancing, mikoshi and drums of various groups

1:00 pm Parade of Giant Ornaments starts

1:30 pm Judging of giant ornaments

7:30 pm Fireworks display



※Venue/ Hama-machi shopping arcade in Yamato-cho, Kami-mashiki-gun, Kumamoto Prefecture
※Date is scheduled usually to be the first Saturday and Sunday of September

Main attraction is the giant ornaments

Here is a summary of the characteristics of giant ornaments in recent years.



■ Joint work of residents is a main factor

Giant ornaments have been made by the joint work of residents in every neighborhood association in the community. It takes some months to complete them. Furthermore, the subject matter varies every year. Not only succession and improvement of ornament-making technique but also cooperation and collaboration of residents are indispensable. However, aging of those who make ornaments and a manpower shortage are recent challenges.



■ Completed ornament is the best in Japan

There are many festivals around Japan whose main attraction is man-made ornaments. Among them, the giant ornaments of the Hassaku Festival are so excellent in terms of precision, size, and power. Some say that they are number one in Japan. What is the motivation to complete the giant ornaments? In the Hassaku Festival, there is judging to select the gold award. Therefore, the contest has accelerated the progress of ornament-making. However, the biggest motivation for the creators is the enjoyment of the spectators.



■ Titles full of satire and humor

The titles of the ornaments are another point worthy of note. Regularly, giant ornaments are titled expressing the wishes of residents with humor, or satirizing social conditions. The title is introduced on the day of festival along with a masquerade and festival music. It seems that many spectators are looking forward to the humorous titles.



■ Materials are all from nature

Materials of the ornaments are wild plants such as cedar, silver grass, bamboo, palm skin, acorn, arrowroot, pine cone and others. The main body are adorned with those materials. The lively movement of the ornaments is due to the techniques of artisans who can make the best use of the natural materials and their energy. Recently they have difficulties in finding the necessary materials because of the deterioration of the natural environment.

