

Foreword

The Kunisaki Peninsula and Usa region in Oita Prefecture in eastern Kyushu has been a crossroads connecting mainland China, the Korean Peninsula, and the political, economic, and cultural center of Japan in the capital since ancient times. Having been seeded by various cultural influences, the area is considered the birthplace of the syncretization of Shinto and Buddhism, which occurred following the establishment of Usa Jingu Shrine. Buddhist culture in the region, which was deeply affected by the syncretization of the two religions over its long history, is known as Rokugo-manzan culture.

Tradition holds that many of the temples in the region were founded by monk Ninmon in 718. The year 2018, which marked the 1,300th anniversary of those temples, brought many visitors to the area.

This guidebook records the cultural properties displayed in a special exhibit hosted by the Kyushu National Museum entitled *Kunisaki-Usa and Rokugo-manzan in Oita Prefecture: The Home of Shinto Gods, Buddhist Deities and Ogres*. The Kunisaki Peninsula and Usa region are home to many invaluable cultural properties that are not included in this volume, and so my hope is that readers will take advantage of this record to learn more about the region and then make a visit so that they can experience its appeal firsthand.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Kyushu National Museum for its hard work in authoring this volume, to the owners of the properties it depicts for their cheerful willingness to cooperate with its compilation, and to all who continue to lend their support to Rokugo-manzan culture.

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Akifumi Mikawa
Mayor, Kunisaki City

Chairman, Kunisaki Peninsula-Usa Region and Rokugo-manzan Tourism Council

To Those Who Would Visit Kunisaki-Usa in the Future

If you are planning a trip to Oita Prefecture, why not add Usa and the Kunisaki Peninsula to your itinerary? It is only a little further north than Beppu, the prefecture's famous hot spring town.

Usa is bordered by calm ocean waters. In one corner of a large plain lies Usa Jingu Shrine, a large Shinto shrine dedicated to Hachiman, Japan's most famous deity. More than 1,300 years old, the shrine is surrounded by a majestic, sacred forest. To the east of Usa, the round-shaped Kunisaki Peninsula juts out into the ocean. Countless years of erosion have shaped its mountains into groups of enormous and oddly shaped rocks, and clear-flowing rivers course from headwaters deep in the mountains toward the sea, nourishing the plain as they go. Long ago Oita Prefecture was known as the Toyonokuni (land of plenty), and Usa and the Kunisaki Peninsula are nothing if not rich in natural beauty.

Numerous Buddhist statues made during ancient times have been passed down over the generations in this region. If you visit the small temples in its mountain villages, you will find mossy stone Buddhas and stone stupas outdoors and beautiful wooden Buddhas indoors. Their artistic beauty and overflowing life force are sure to surprise and delight you, and you'll doubtless be taken by this rural area's long history and the unbroken chain of prayer on the part of its residents.

This guidebook is an English translation summarizing the catalog from a special exhibit hosted by the Kyushu National Museum entitled *Kunisaki-Usa and Rokugo-manzan in Oita Prefecture: The Home of Shinto Gods, Buddhist Deities and Ogres*. It includes numerous Buddhist statues and other manifestations of Kunisaki and Usa's religious heritage, accompanied by easy-to-understand explanations of noteworthy features and historical background information. I trust that it will help communicate the region's appeal while enriching your visit.

If it does its job, then Kunisaki and Usa will have gained one more admirer.

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Important cultural property
Yamantaka Seated on a Buffalo
Heian Period
12th c.
Wood with polychromy
Statue-H: 241.0
Makiido Temple, Bungotakada City





Buddhist priests in Rokugo-manzan undertake ascetic pilgrimages along the area's steep, mountainous roads during which they visit sacred places such as caverns, shrines, and temples on the Kuni-saki Peninsula. It takes about one week to visit sites such as Itsutsuji Fudo and Ofudo Iwaya.



Itsutsuji Fudo

Ganjojuji Temple



Guardian King at Monjusenji Temple



Mask used in the Shujo-onie ritual:
Ogre mask called "Saibarai-onimen"



Shujo-onie ritual at Tennenji Temple



Shujo-onie ritual at Jobutsuji Temple



Himeshima Bon Odori dance

Introduction

The Shape of Rokugo-manzan

Background

The name Rokugo-manzan, which derives from the six communities of Musashi, Kunawa, Kunisaki, Tashibu, Aki, and Imi on the Kunisaki Peninsula, refers to a Buddhist cultural zone centered on the area's temples and priests.

Located in northeastern Oita Prefecture, the round-shaped Kunisaki Peninsula juts out into the Suonada Sea. Until a little more than one million years ago, the entire peninsula was an enormous, cone-shaped volcano. The remnants of several volcanoes can be found today on the island of Himeshima off the tip of the peninsula. One of those remnants, known as Cape Kannonzaki, is home to the Himeshima Obsidian Quarries, a Nationally designated Natural Monument known for its scenic natural beauty.

As deposits of lava and pyroclastic flows eroded once the volcanoes ceased being active, steep escarpments developed in the area's mountainous terrain, forming a landscape dominated by groups of oddly shaped rocks. Rainwater collected and coalesced into rivers that carved out layers of radial patterns in the rock as they flowed down from the mountains to the coast. In this way, the wilderness of the Kunisaki Peninsula

as we know it today was shaped by natural processes.

Neither should the role of ocean surrounding the peninsula be overlooked. Heavy ship traffic continues to ply the comparatively calm waters of the area, which lies along one of the major north-south routes that connect the islands of the ancient Japanese archipelago. These waters, which connected the area to Yamato (Nara Prefecture), home to the Japanese capital, and, further afield, to the Korean Peninsula and mainland China, were to become a key geographical and cultural factor in the subsequent development of Rokugo-manzan.

Following the arrival of Buddhism in Japan, in the 7th century, more than 500 ancient temples were built on the model of the ancient temples constructed in Yamato, and a number of such sites have been excavated at Usa at the base of the Kunisaki Peninsula, including Mirokuji Temple and Kokuzoji Temple. *Senbutsu* square tiles with Buddha in relief excavated at the site of Kokuzoji Temple exhibit the same shape as similar tiles from Minamihokkeji Temple in Nara Prefecture, indicating that the cutting-edge Buddhist culture of the time had been transplanted to Usa directly via the surrounding sea routes.



Remnants of volcanoes at Cape Kannonzaki, Himeshima



Oddly shaped rocks at Sannomiya, Tashibunoshō manor

Development of Rokugo-manzan

It was at the beginning of the 8th century the deity Hachiman emerged in Usa, where shrines were constructed to worship him. The deity is likely to have been seen as a protector who would safeguard the area from the strength of the Hayato tribe in southern Kyushu.

According to records kept at Usa Jingu Shrine, Mirokuji Temple was built on the grounds of Usa Jingu Shrine in 738. It is likely that Horen, the first Chief Priest of Mirokuji Temple, made a significant contribution to the fusion of the deity Hachiman with Buddhism. Hachiman was an active participant in Buddhist rituals performed at the new temple. Legend holds that the Hojoe ritual, which continues to be held at Usa Jingu Shrine to this day, was started by Horen, suggesting that an effort to syncretize Shinto and Buddhism was already underway in Usa during the Nara Period (8th century).

Most of the temples on the Kunisaki Peninsula credit their founding to monk Ninmon in 718, suggesting that the mountains of Kunisaki were being used in the ascetic training of monks at Mirokuji Temple, starting with Horen. Rokugo-manzan had its beginnings as a Buddhist cultural zone when those monks moved to the area to use the steep, mountainous terrain in the center of the peninsula for such training and in the process transformed it into a sacred place.

Usa Jingu Shrine and Mirokuji Temple owned

numerous *shoen* manors on the Kunisaki Peninsula, where they functioned to provide an economic basis for their owners' operations. The grounds of one such manor, the Tashibunoshō manor, were home to numerous buildings and structures that typified Rokugo-manzan, including Fukiji Temple, Makiodo Temple, and Kumano Magaibutsu Stone Buddhas. The Buddhist statues at Makiodo Temple are identical to similar statues found in Kyoto, suggesting that temple-building at the manor involved sculptors from Kyoto.

The key factor that led to the formation of this great Buddhist cultural zone was the organization of most of the temples that had been built on the Kunisaki Peninsula into the Tendai sect at the beginning of the 12th century. The Osaki district of the Tashibunoshō manor, an important cultural landscape, preserves the landscape of the *shoen* manors that supported the new organization.

The Home of Shinto Gods, Buddhist Deities and Ogres

The syncretization of Shinto and Buddhism spawned numerous statues of the two religions' gods. The deity Hachiman, which was enshrined by Usa Jingu Shrine, occupied a central place in the area's religious faith, and many statues of the deity were produced. Typical of these works is the seated statues of Hachiman Triad



Mountains of the Kunisaki Peninsula as seen from Himeshima island



Cavern and inner sanctum at the site of the former Sentoji Temple

at Hachiman Nadagu Shrine.

Exceptional Buddhist statues that were intimately linked to their Shinto counterparts include the statues of Amida Triad at Fukiji Temple and the statue of Acalanatha, the statues of Kimkara and Cetaka at Makiodo Temple. The refined, Kyoto-inspired style exhibited by these works is evidence of the strong connection between Kunisaki and Kyoto. The statue of Amitabha that used to stand in Tennenji Temple's cavern stands a full 2 meters tall, giving it a broad-shouldered physicality that was more than enough to strike awe into the hearts of ascetic monks. Another large statue executed in classical style is the seated statue of Bhaisajyaguru at Mudoji Temple. The youth-like countenance of the standing Buddha statue at Mantokuji Temple is striking, and the characteristics of the head point to the early adoption on the Kunisaki Peninsula of a style pioneered in the area surrounding Mt. Hiei (in Shiga Prefecture).

The Shinto and Buddhist statues introduced in this volume are but a small sampling of what can be found on the Kunisaki Peninsula, but they offer an eye-opening glimpse at the diversity of shape and design that characterizes the area. This diversity derives from the unique culture that developed here in response to the stimulation of contact between the traditional culture of Usa and the Kunisaki region, which had developed since the Asuka Period, and more recent cultural influences from Nara and Kyoto areas.

Ogres, or *oni* occupied a place of importance on the Kunisaki Peninsula along with Shinto gods and Buddhist deities. The Shujo-onie ritual, which gave expres-

sion to participants' prayers for benefits such as peace and prosperous harvests of grain, is the traditional ritual that offers the clearest proof of the coexistence of ogres with Shinto gods and Buddhist deities in the area. Although tradition holds that the ritual was performed at numerous temples on the Kunisaki Peninsula during the Edo Period, today it continues only at Tennenji Temple, Jobutsuji Temple, and Iwatoji Temple. Nonetheless, the tradition and appeal of the ritual are undiminished, with large numbers of people from other places in Japan and around the world participating along with local residents.

Much stonework was also produced in the area. During the Edo Period, the temples of Rokugo-manzan captured the hearts and minds of the residents of the mountain villages where they stood, and simple stonework along pilgrimage routes and mountain roads, including guardian kings and stone stupas, was safeguarded by local residents and other nameless devotees. Carved from stone produced on the Kunisaki Peninsula, this stonework tells the story of the prosperity of ancient Rokugo-manzan.

The passing down of this rich cultural heritage became a serious problem during the modern era due to rapid change and population loss in agricultural villages. Nonetheless, the cultural heritage of Rokugo-manzan has been protected through the tireless effort of the local residents who support the temples. Rokugo-manzan has 1,300 years of history. That the Kunisaki Peninsula's legacy lives on today after overcoming countless crises and challenges is doubtless one aspect of Rokugo-manzan's appeal.



Sento Sekibutsu, Stone Buddhas of Sentoji Temple, Kunisaki City

