



01st
EDITION

Lets Go to KUNISAKI!

Adventure with Mick

国東に行きましょー

SPECIAL REVIEW
Yayoi Ankokuji Village

- Nature
- Food
- Religion
- Rice Padding

Dear Reader,

Thank you for finding your way to this magazine. We hope you will enjoy exploring the wonderful Kunisaki with our international exchange student Mick. Mick is a new student to Oita University. It is his first time in Japan, although he knows already so much about Japanese history and culture. Mick follows a course at Oita University called Project Planning and Volunteering. The objective of the class is to research the city and the surrounding area as well as nature of Kunisaki through interacting and engaging with the local population.

Kunisaki is a city located in Oita Prefecture, Kyushu, Japan. The population of the city totals, as of March 2017, 29,098. It has a number of valleys, radiating from Mount Futago at its center; it is mostly covered by forests and sparsely populated farmlands. There are a lot of temples, such as the famous Futagoji Temple as well as smaller and rustic ones.

The main challenges Kunisaki is facing are
-depopulation
-difficulties accessing the city
-un-kept shrines and temples

However this is not the full, nor the complete picture of Kunisaki. The magazine is the product of our common perception of Kunisaki, projected onto different themes that are present in Kunisaki. These are religion, food, nature, festivals and history. We present to you our common exchange student, Mick, who just like you, dear reader, will explore Kunisaki and fall in love with the picturesque scenery, the pure Japanese atmosphere and friendly community in Kunisaki.

Please enjoy!
Dylan, Thuy, Chi, Elaine and Sofie



This is Mick. This is his first time in Japan; he is enrolled at Oita University. At the IPOU Faculty. Here he attends Nanri Sensei and Nagaïke Sensei's class 'Project Planning and Volunteering', together with his international and Japanese friends! He is having such a good time here, and wants to bring you with him, on his journey around Kunisaki.

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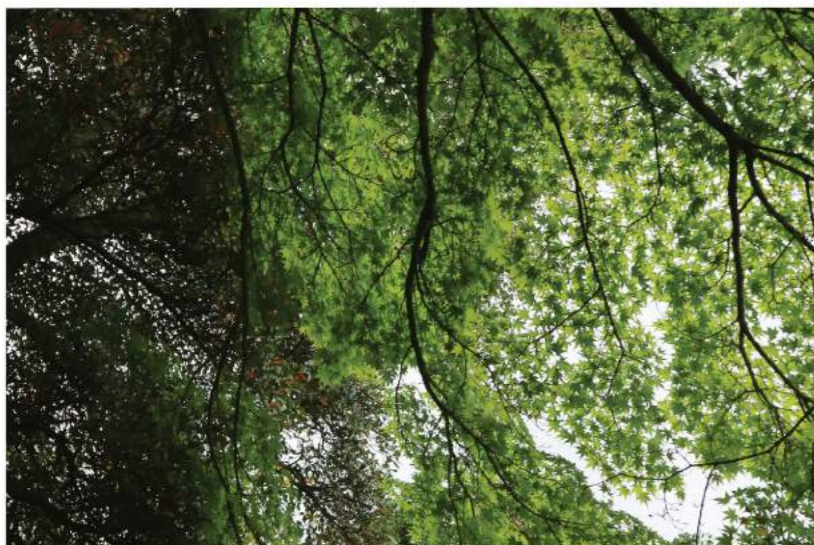
NATURE

MICKS DIARY: – AN ODE TO KUNISAKI NATURE

April 14th 2017



For how many minutes or hours have I walked without finding my path I do not know. Despite my condition I was relatively calm but that was not the most surprising thing. Even I found it funny that I cared less about finding my way back than the pleasure I got from the view in front of me. It was not my first time in the mountains and woods. I experienced it many times with my parents. I just wanted to run off to see something that could shock me from inside. Then this happened. I was wandering off the trails and now I have raw nature in front of me. In the



modern society where everything is about success or failure, a stroll in the nature can remind you of many things you have lost. Kunisaki's nature is one that can make people remember that stopping up for a minute to admire the leaves on a tree or the sunshine is important to do once in awhile. From here on my big stroll begins to explore an area living in harmony.

Locals and nature

I stood at a cliff and was unsure whether to turn back or wait here for someone else to find me. While I was wondering I looked down and was astonished. Fields spread out and thick woods surround the few old fashioned houses. The fields that support human life are also made by them, surrounded by woods that reach far deep into the land without any human. The raw nature and modern age clash at some point but still can be at peace with each other. In a strange sense this seemed as a perfect union or more like a balanced symbiosis between nature and humanity. Locals don't seem to take much from it but won't let nature take back the land. They are supporting each other and the view that I can enjoy because of that harmony is a first in my life. Kunisaki seems like a place that puts great effort into protecting its culture but alongside nature, respecting and living next to it.





Continuing my stroll

It was still early but I walked a fair distance from the cliff earlier. As I walked I realized that Kunisaki is so rich in wildlife. Many birds sang to encourage me on my journey and colorful bugs crossed my way. The fresh air made me relax and refreshing wind helped me withstand the heat of the summer season. Still searching my way but lost in thoughts I was wondering where am I and where to head but as of no idea to help me I just walked where it was easier for me to pass. Even so wherever I turned the inhabitants looked curiously at me as of inquiring about my intentions.

Finding Futago Ji

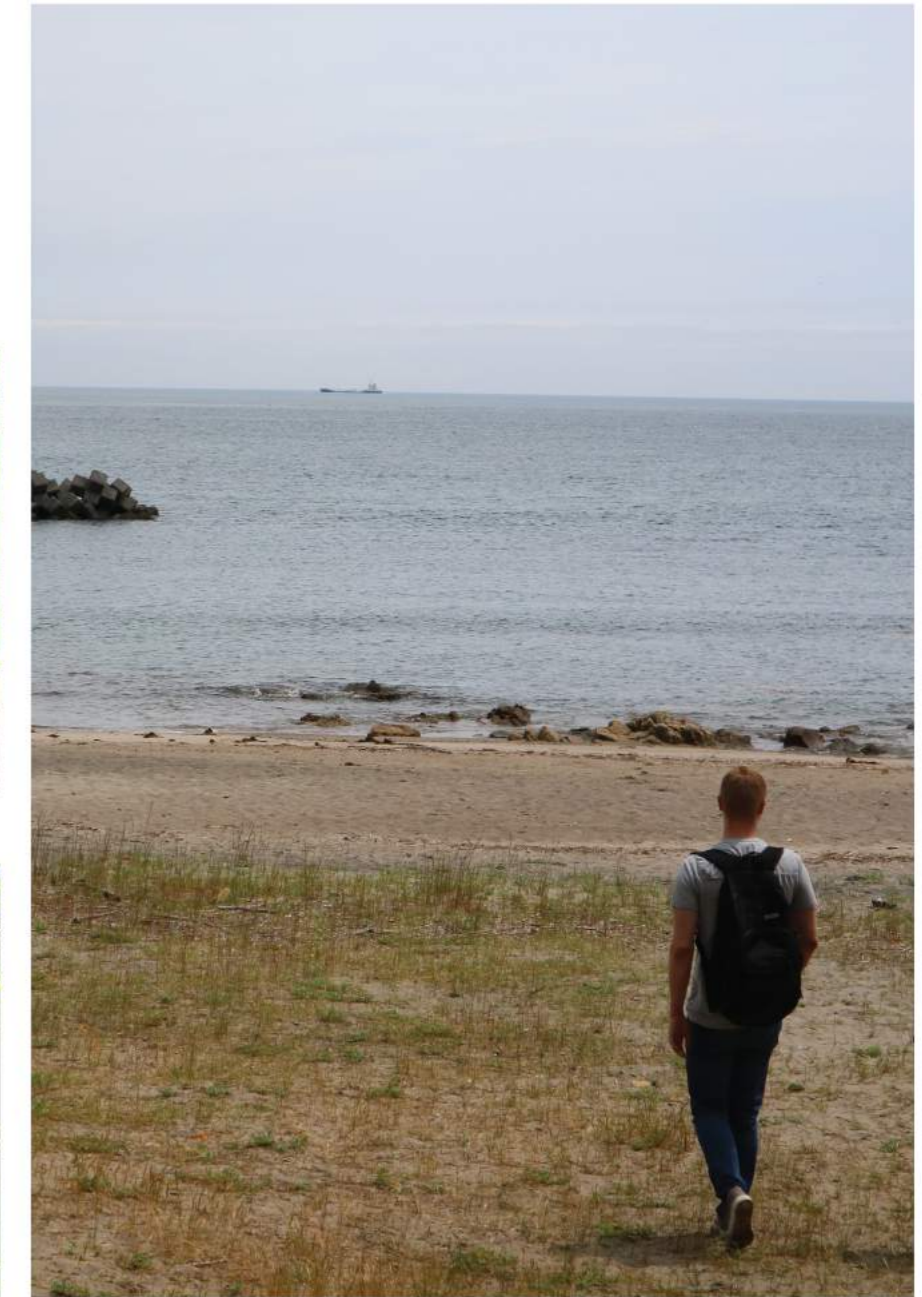
After all, who knows how many hours I was finally able to find some kind of structure towering above the tall woods. It was beautiful but also mysterious at first glance. I could not fathom the purpose or what kind of thing it was in front of me. Two statues were protecting a

long stone stair leading up to - who knows where. Even so this unknowingness invited me to explore it further. I climbed the stairs with my tiring legs but soon my fatigue was gone as I took in what was ahead of me. Authentic Japanese architectural style and an atmosphere of ancient times. It looked really old but still had such a strong dignity to it that demanded absolute respect. Now I understood that down the two statues were meant to protect the temple up here from those not able to respect it fully. This place was different from the nature of Kunisaki. It was more like Kunisaki's pride taking a form in front of me. I wanted to adore it more but there was still a long journey ahead of me.

Beach

My legs were giving in. I could not proceed any further. I wanted to go on but I had to take a break. My legs were giving in. I could not proceed any further. I wanted to go on but I had to take a break. Fortunately I was near the beach. The time was getting late but as it was summer the sun was still going strong. I took off my shoes and tried to put my feet in the seawater. It stung a little bit but I felt my legs getting relaxed. As I looked around I was mesmerized how clean the water was and how soft the sand felt to my hand. I didn't understand how no one was here on such a hot day. At the distance I could see mountains and clouds meeting up in the sky, reaching to

each other while the sea mirrored what was going on up in the sky. It was calming. Not like the ever changing cities but also it was different from other parts of Kunisaki. The woods were surrounding me leading my every step. The cliff was showing me exactly what it wanted to and the temple demanded my gaze, but here I could lay down and sleep if I felt like it. I could relax and look or go wherever I wanted to - even if there was nothing there, this emptiness also offered me something I longed for.



End of Journey

I was looking at the sunset and was thinking about the long stroll I had taken today. It was so good but also exhausting. I got to know a little bit more about a place called Kunisaki, living in harmony with nature while protecting what it created

FOOD

MICKS LETTER: – AMAZING KUNISAKI'S FOOD



Dear Sofie,

How is your Youtube channel of food going? I know you love food and I have to share with you my experience of Kunisaki cuisine. It will definitely be helpful for your food channel.

I know sometimes people may feel concerned and be nervous about cuisine in a new culture, but that is not a problem at all in Japan, especially in Kunisaki. I myself have tried so many typical and special dishes of Kunisaki so let me introduce some of my favorite food I tasted here in Kunisaki.

If you come to Kunisaki, "Kurotsu no Sho" Shop is the place you cannot miss out. The shop is right next to Kunisaki Information Center so it is very convenient to access. In the shop, they have not only all the specialties of Kunisaki but also all the typical food of Oita prefecture. You can buy some as very delicate and unique presents (Omiyage) back to your home country. The storeowners were very generous and invited us to try many different types of dishes. I have had some amazing Kunisaki specialties (nohm.. nohm..) so here are some in the must-try-list of mine:



Karashi Shiitake fried cake: Wasabi is the most famous spice of Japanese cuisine. Have you ever imagined that mushroom tastes very well with wasabi? I was astonished. The karashi shiitake fried cake is made from mochi powder and shiitake mushroom mixed with wasabi. The first bite might be a little surprise to you as for me, it was a little strange but... good strange. I love it from the second bite. You can feel both the not so spicy wasabi and the very delicious with shiitake mushroom – which Kunisaki is proud to be No 1 in Japan producing shiitake mushroom as well as exporting them. I bought a pack of karashi shiitake and it tastes wonderful with hot rice too.

Kaborin: This is another specialty with a very creative and refined combination of Oita prefecture distinctive kabosu lime, the most famous lime in Oita and Kunisaki. The skin of kabotsu was kept as whole, just the inside was all carefully taken out and filled with youkan, an other popular Japanese sweet that you can find almost every corner in Japan. The sweetness of bean paste combining with a little sour yet great flavor of the kabosu skin are what makes Kaborin sweet extraordinary. Cut one in 6 or 8 pieces and eat kaborin when its cool is the best.



Sake Youkan: If youkan is one of the common sweet in Japan, the mixture of youkan and sake wine liquor has made sake youkan cake to be one of the very signatures dish of Kunisaki. Even if I cannot drink alcohol, sake youkan is still very tasty and easy to eat. This is another example of why I am so amazed by Kunisaki specialties as they always have a creative combination of their typical and famous ingredients that you have never seen or tasted before elsewhere in Japan.

RELIGION

MICKS MID TERM: – KUNISAKI UNIQUE RELIGION



Zecco restaurant *the creative cuisine restaurant in Kunisaki*

We spent our lunchtime at Zecco restaurant, a very popular restaurant in Kunisaki. All of the ingredients are originated in Kunisaki and Oita prefecture.

My first impression is the interior design that makes me feel so calm and relaxing, which is one of the factor I love Japan.

In addition, the menu is various, you can try anything, and they also have vegetarian dishes. I want to give you my own suggestion of the lunch course I chose. I think to myself: I want to know more and taste as many ingredients of Kunisaki as possible. That is the reason why I order traditional Japanese lunch set, which in Japanese called washoku. Furthermore, in my opinion, the set was not expensive at all as I got so full and satisfied with my lunch. From chawamushi to the sour namban fish, then sashimi and tempura, then the wasoba plus vegetable side dish, all of them are so

typical Japanese food, but much fresh and so tasty for me. I was so happy with great food, and I cannot stop saying oishi after one bite to another.

In the fieldtrip, we also had the chance to talk with the chef of Zecco after lunch that day. He spends years practicing as a Japanese chef, knowing Japanese ingredients and flavor. He also believes that local culture such as cuisine culture in Kunisaki is unique and should be promoted and preserved, especially by the young people. However, what impressed me the most is that he is not only a passionate chef but his dish is tasty because he spent years with foreign customer from other countries such as Korea, Thailand.... His recipe and pallet also adjusted time after time by taking in all the comments about taste and flavor from other cultures. And that is why the dish becomes so delicious and gave you an unforgettable memory.

With my time left in Oita, I will try more and more food and share them with you. I wish you were here so we could talk about food in Kunisaki all day.

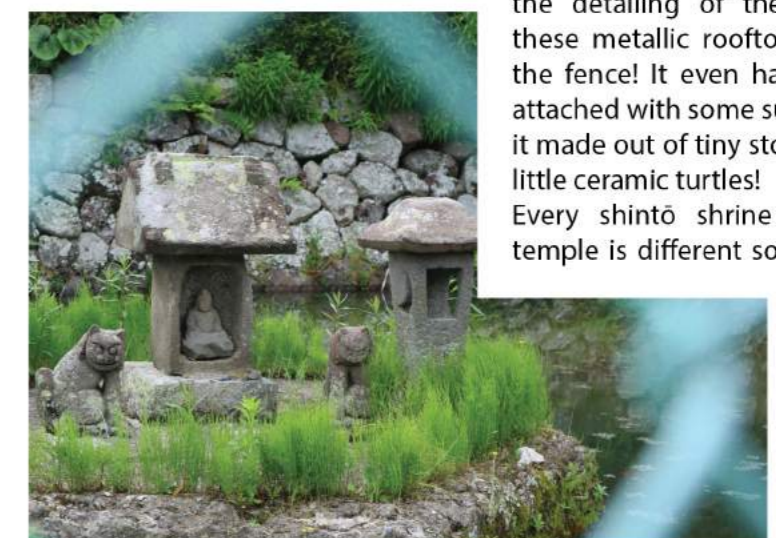
„HOW IS THE RELIGION PRESENT IN THE KUNISAKI CITY. WHAT DID YOU EXPERIENCE?“

One of the first things we went to see when we arrived to Kunisaki was Jiju shrine (地主神社) which was a really unique shrine to begin with. It has a connection with Kyōto's Jiju shrine, which is located near the famous Kiyomizu-dera. Both Jiju shrines are said to grant your wish of love to come true. But it's uniqueness is that it doesn't only have one torii gate at the entrance but three, which is really rare now in Japan. And another awesome thing about this shrine, that it has the family crest of the Edo period's ruling family, the Tokugawa! It's beautiful how the shrine is surrounded by so much green, and even tough it looks old with a long history attached to it, being there felt like being part of something big, and it's atmosphere was so calming for me!

The next shrine we visited was Sakura Hachiman shrine (櫻八幡神社), which is quite different from Jiju shire by it's apperance. First of all it was bigger, and the entrance with the torii had a bridge-like grounding with two giang golden arrows! The

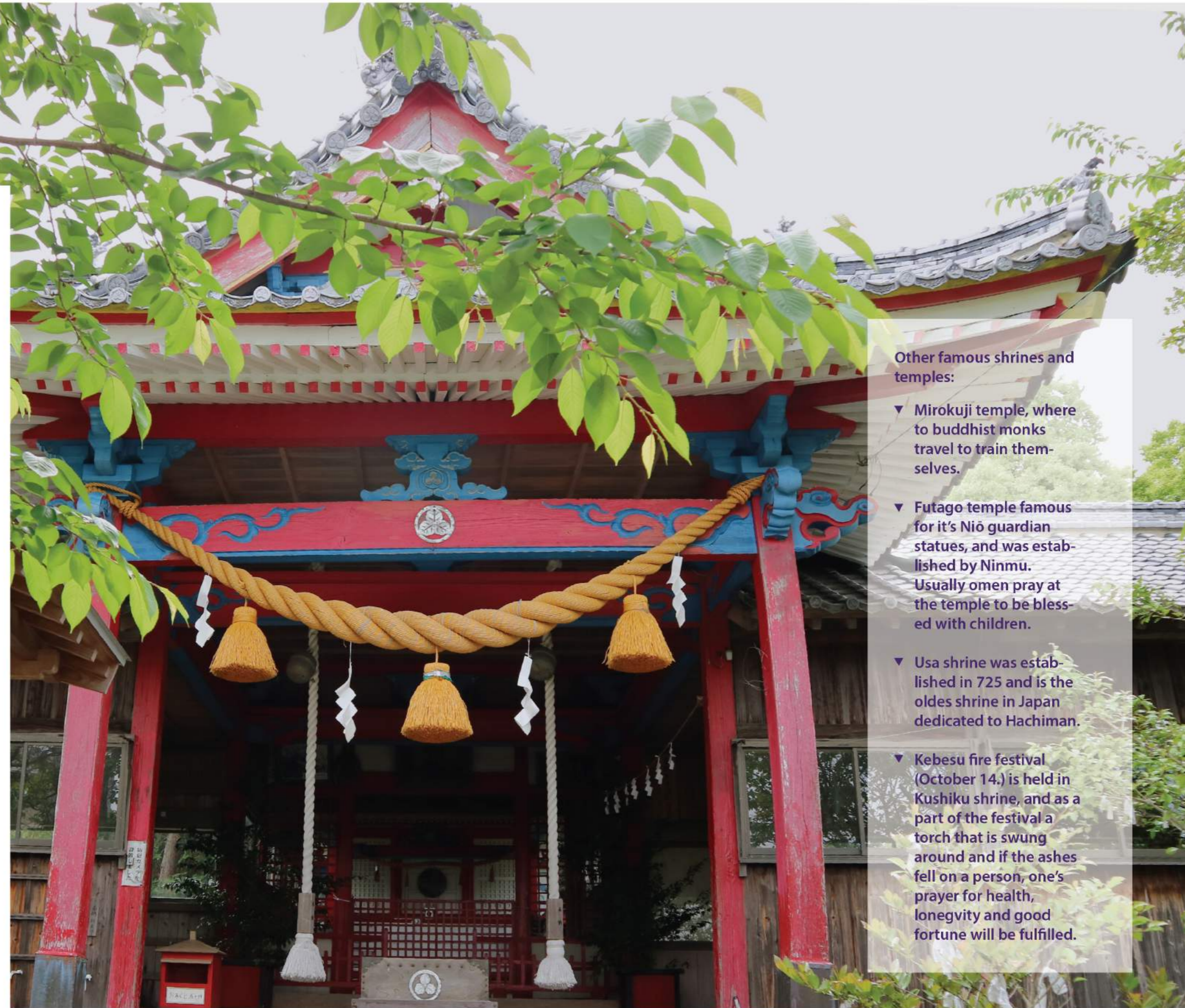


other diffenece is while Jiju shrine was colorful too, Sakura Hachiman shrine had so many red parts which made it really stand out. Not to mention all the detailes we found while walking in, like painting on the ceiling of one of the buildings, statues and so on. And as it's name says, it's one of the many branches if Hachiman shrines, dedicated to Hachiman, a the syncretic divinity of archery and war, the protector of Japan.



The last religious place we visited was Kōdō temple (興導寺), which is a buddhist temple in contrast to the two shintō shrines. Next to the entrance it has a dōtaku, a buddhist bronze bell. Near the bell at the time we visited the temple offerings were given next to the statues. In the main building we could try out some buddhist drums too! The color of the wooden buildings and the golden details of the main building give off such a holy vibe. And I really loved the detailing of the rooftop and these metallic rooftop-like parts of the fence! It even had a tiny pond attached with some sutra letters into it made out of tiny stones, and three little ceramic turtles!

Every shintō shrine and buddhis temple is different so it was a great



Other famous shrines and temples:

- ▼ Mirokuji temple, where to buddhist monks travel to train themselves.
- ▼ Futago temple famous for it's Niō guardian statues, and was established by Ninmu. Usually omen pray at the temple to be blessed with children.
- ▼ Usa shrine was established in 725 and is the oldest shrine in Japan dedicated to Hachiman.
- ▼ Kebesu fire festival (October 14.) is held in Kushiku shrine, and as a part of the festival a torch that is swung around and if the ashes fell on a person, one's prayer for health, longevity and good fortune will be fulfilled.

experience to visit all these three so much near each other. It feels like entering different world each time.

Kunisaki has an unique syncretized religion as shintō and buddhist elements merged in a rich natural environment which is called Rokugō Manzan Culture, as shintou gods and Buddha are considered the same.

As the legend says in 718 Ninmu monk established 28 buddhist temples in this region, and Kunisaki has around half of the stone carved buddhist statues across Japan. Even after the Meiji period, when shintōism and buddhism was tried to be divided, Kunisaki kept this mixture of elements



RICE PADDING

MICKS POSTCARD: – RICE PLANTING EXPERIENCE

On June 6th my classmates and I were lucky to join the Otaue Festival in Bungotakada city in Kunisaki. The Otaue Festival (御田植祭) is the annual rice paddy festival held in Tamisuo village in Bungotakada city. Since the festival is considered as an exchange event between the inside and outside of the city, this year there was a lot of students as well as residents came here to take part in the rice padding. There were a lot of Japanese people at the festival, but also us – the international students from Oita University. I have been looking for this festival for a long time, because I have never experienced any rice

padding before. Yesterday, I heard that there might be rain on the day of the festival, and I was so worried if the rice padding activity would be cancelled or not. However fortunately it did not rain on, and the weather was so good for the event to proceed as scheduled. As we all had been informed, there is no public transportation to Kunisaki, we got there on our school bus and it took around 1 hour to get to Kunisaki from our university. When we arrived and got off the bus, I was so impressed with nature here with a large area of rice fields.

The teachers took us to a small house to change our clothes. To participate in the rice padding event, we need to wear the traditional custom.

Compared to other Japanese traditional customs like Kimono or Yukata, this kind of custom is not only beautiful, it is simple to put on. It is also easy to move in it, so that the rice planting process will be comfortable and easy. Although the clothes were fairly simply to get on, we still need the help from the staffs to wear them rightly and nicely.

Once we were dressed, so many people who wanted to take our picture stopped us! I was so surprised that there were so many photographers coming to the festival. I assumed they were local people, most of them quite old. I even do not remember how many times we have been asked to let them take a picture, especially with those international students from Europe or America. Some people also brought cameras with themselves and make some short interviews with us. Most of us felt a little weird and shy, but more than that we felt that we were welcomed here by the local residents. There were a few food stands or food shops selling Kunisaki specialties, so we could eat something before going to the field. Before the rice padding started there is a kind of ritual ceremony held by several Shinto monks in white



attires. This Shinto ceremony was held to express gratitude for the bountiful crop. After the

ceremony finished, two men lead two other men who were impersonating buffalos to get into the mud to plough the field.

Then, we, and all other participants also entered the field. We had to stand in two face-to-face long rows. The field was not really that large and with the participation of around 30 people, we finished the rice padding in a half hour.

The kids in Yukata looked so cute and they also got into the field to help us to plant the new seeds. After the rice padding finished, every participants were treated with drinks and specialty foods.

There are also many other characteristic religious festivals relating to agriculture that are still practiced to this day in Kunisaki. However, the Otaue



Festival in Bungotakada is the only festival where we could really experience the Japanese rice cultivation by getting into the mud and plant the rice. It was our second field trip to Kunisaki. Last time we came here, the teacher led us to some ancient temples and while we were squandering the streets, we hardly saw anyone here. However, fortunately, this time we had chances join the festival with locals and talk to them. We really felt the hospitality of the local people there. I believe the Otaue Festival will be an unforgettable memory, not only for me, but also for all my classmates. This is our first time to know the weird feeling when we get into the mud and seed the rice. I assume Japan is the country where there are traditional festivals held, and although Japan is one of the leading developed country over the world, Japanese people still maintain their tradition very well.



Love you, see you in August
Greetings, Mick!



THE ANKOKUJI VILLAGE RUIN PARK

SHORT STORY: MICK VISITING YAYOI NO MURA

For the last field trip to Kunisaki the class visited the Ankokuji Village Ruins Park, where an ancient village from the Yayoi era has been restored and the rich natural environment is persevered. There is a museum full of materials and tools used by the people in the Yayoi era. It is very informed and helps explaining the lifestyle of the people from this period. Outside, there are thirteen buildings, pit and pile dwellings, shown in their original form for a better understanding of the lives lived by one the first cultures in Japan, dating back to 300 BC. The Yayoi people cut down timber from surrounding forests and used the wood to build their dwellings. In contrast to the previous era (the Jomon era) people from the Yayoi period were the first to permanently settle in village communities. This was because they used the land to grow food, particularly rice. The Yayoi culture was advanced in rice cultivation, and they used the elevated pile dwellings to store food. It is in this same period that landownership begins to mark social status and the access and ownership of land becomes a major incentive for violent conflicts.

At the Ankokuji Village Ruins Park it is also possible to learn how to weave and make earthenware (at an indoor facility) or enjoy outdoor activities, such as firing the formed earthenware, ancient cooking and bathing in their river.

It is a must see, and also Mick had a good time visiting the park.

When he went to the Yayoi historical village, he had to make pizzas together with his classmates. There is an outdoor kitchen that is big enough for a whole university class to cook there. "I LOVE PIZZA!" thought Mick. "And they even have a stone-oven! This place is awesome!" Mick swooned. After preparing and eating the delicious pizza Mick went around the historical village to explore the area with his friends.

The pit dwellings were where the Yayoi people would use as housing. Mick imagined that in the four pit dwellings probably a whole village lived together. All day they must have spent outside because there was absolutely nothing inside except dead bugs and spiders in the buildings.

There was a hole in the ground – "probably that was the toilet" said one of Mick's friends. "Bahahaha" – everyone laughed. "NOO! I'm pretty sure that, that business they took care of outside!! This hole was probably meant for fire!" Mick smiled reassuring. "Well, sure, maybe. But wouldn't that be quite a fire hazard considering that the whole house is made of straw?!" "Oh! Yeah.." everyone responded. Realizing how little they actually knew of the Yayoi lifestyle. The ruins made it possible to experience the culture interactively, which it was very advantageous. Before squatting down to exit the low opening of the dwelling, another friend of Mick yelled "Ahh, they have fire extinguishers! Obviously they were prepared for the possibility of fire!" Mick gave him a slap on his shoulder for the dumb remark.

While they explored the area the friends discovered a bridge crossing the road to another Yayoi area. Mick ran faster ahead when he saw more elevated dwellings. These were used for storage and meeting place for the Yayoi



community. Mick only just crossed the bridge when he felt the sensation of strings across his neck and face. "YIKES!!!" he had run straight into a massive, undisturbed spiders web (!) accommodating not one but three big spiders!! Mick screamed like a little girl when he discovered this. Paralyzed by fear, his friends, in return, were paralyzed with laughter and weren't to any help. One friend eventually managed to take out his phone and document Mick's horrors. The spiders got a scare as well, despite being disrupted, their web was gone and they were now stuck on the body of a hysterical boy. Two of the spiders made a jump for it themselves, but Bob – the last spider – was brutally pushed off by the hands of Mick. "So much for experiencing nature in its true environment" Mick sighed.

After that ordeal, and numerous reassuring that no more spiders were anywhere on Mick's body, the group of friends reached the pile dwellings. These were pretty cool. For these, there were simple wooden ladders to access them, since they were elevated approximately a meter high. Mick wanted to share his knowledge of the Yayoi with his friends: "You know, the Yayoi era were the second in Japan history, it dates back all the way to

300 BC and..." "Ahh, yes we know! We're all taking the same history class with Nagaike sensei!"

"Yeah, but its not all! The yayoi people were the first to settle down permanently and through their utilization of the ground they created a feudal system that created an incentive for conflict. So

because the ownership of land gave social status they started to conflict over the land. The

threat of war was therefore very eminent

for the first time, meaning that the

communities adapted to violent

conflicts and began practicing

attacking and defending."

"Oh!" Mick's friends were

speechless. This was new

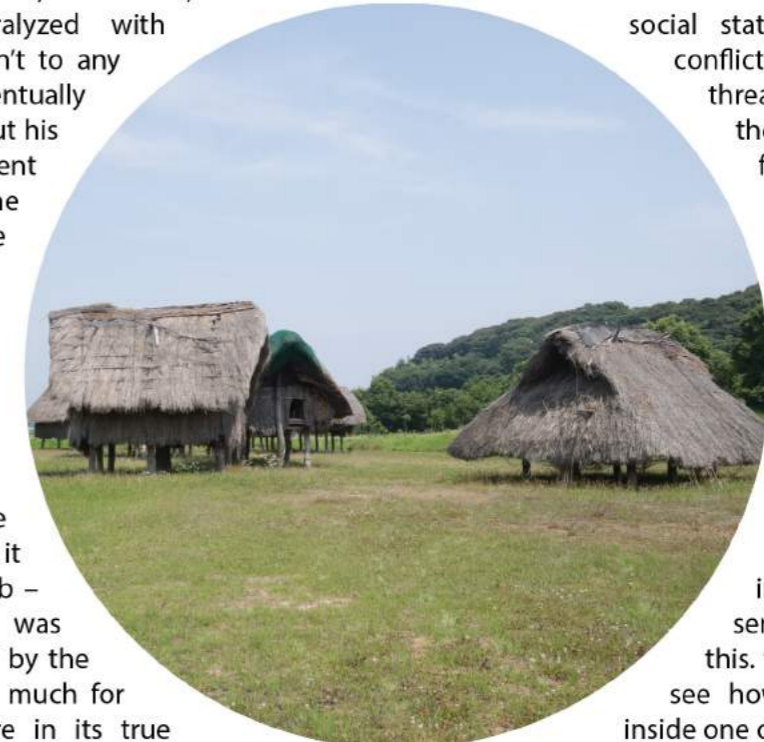
information, Nagaike sensei hadn't told them

this. "Haha, ok guys. Let's see how many we can fit

inside one of these dwellings!"

"Can we really go inside?" asked one of his friends. "Yes sure! This is an interactive museum, it really allows for you to explore the history on first hand! Let's pretend we're conflicting communities now!"

And so did Mick and his friend use their knowledge of the Yayoi culture to imitate and relive history. Mick had always been very interested in the Japanese history and was grateful to the Ankokuji Village Ruins Park in Kunisaki for bringing history to him.



The 150-year old Inn

While in the slow-paced and quiet Kunisaki City. Nanri Sensei showed his international students around. Mick and his friends tried local food at the beautiful restaurant Zecco, saw the infamous 'busy' shopping street, visited the impressive temples and shrines that unfortunately have been left a bit unmaintained.

On the tour of the city, Nanri Sensei mentioned there was an Inn with a bathhouse. The Inn was in a very traditional Japanese building that was over 150 years old. If you go there you could try the full Japanese experience, such as: sleeping on futons, sleeping in Yukata, eat Japanese food, and maybe even eat the sticky rice for breakfast.

To visit the Inn would be like opening a window into the Japanese culture – at least the travelling edition. Furthermore you could go there to relax, take some time to recharge in a beautiful Japanese environment.

"If only I had the money and time to enjoy such luxury" thought Mick. While the group got further away from the Inn and nearer to the next temple, Mick and his friends agreed: "When we're employed in ten years time let's meet again in Kunisaki, and let's stay at the Inn, and spend our time exploring the blooming Kunisaki nature. Maybe we can even visit Nanri and Nagaike Sensei again. Then after our stay at the Inn we can return to our lives refreshed and with new energy, and with new memories from Japan that will last for a lifetime. Just like the memories we have collected now!" They all agreed that it was a good idea! And surely, ten years after making that promise, that's where they all met again. In Kunisaki.

If you too, dear reader, wish to experience Kunisaki, please come and visit! Make sure to orient yourself with the many possibilities available, you can reach the Kunisaki Tourism Office, they will help you to plan your itinerary.

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