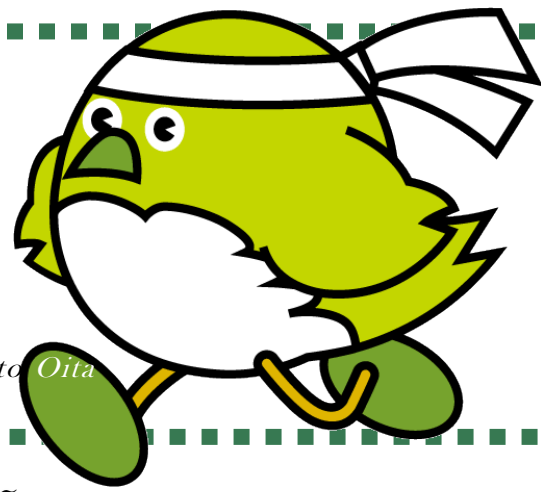


What's up,

OITA! 2018 November No. 30

Bringing the latest from Oita, Japan to all those connected to Oita thriving all across the globe.



~Oita, my sweet home~

Photo gallery feat. Tsukumi & Taketa



Tsukumi Dolphin Island,
Tsukumi



Tsukumi Hyuga-
don, Tsukumi



Kuju Kogen Road Park,
Taketa



Hime Daruma Dolls,
Taketa

A few words from the head of the International Division



The Sorin Bridge, the newest bridge in Oita to be built within the last five decades, was completed in January this year. The name of the bridge was elected out of a series of suggestions made by the public, and one of the reasons that cemented its status as the winner was that the ruins of Otomo Sorin's residence was once built on one end of the bridge. Promotion materials from various regions within the prefecture will be circulated, with the first round being the legacy of the life of Otomo Sorin presented by Oita City. On top of this, it's also worth noting that a novel based on Sorin's life has been published lately. I think that Sorin, who in his lifetime had put in much effort in backing local trade partnerships with Europeans, promoting western culture and in turn transforming Oita into an international hub, makes a great topic for *What's up, OITA!*

Mitsuru Tokuno <tokuno-mitsuru@pref.oita.lg.jp>,
Head of the International Policy Division in the Oita Prefecture Planning Promotion Department

Associacao Cultural Oita Kenjin do Brasil 65th Anniversary Ceremony



On September 29th, around 300 guests attended in the commemorative ceremony for the Associacao Cultural Oita Kenjin do Brasil's 65th anniversary held in Sao Paulo, Brazil. A total of 14 associates, including Oita's Vice Governor Mr. Ando Takashi, Prefectural Chairman Mr. Inoue Shinshi, Oita Kenjinkai International's Chairman Mr. Yakushiji, Vice Chairman Mr. Fujiwara and New York-based musician Mr. Hirano Toshi and others also participated in the event. Aside from celebrating the founding of the association itself, this year also marks the 50th anniversary for the association's Oita prefecture-sponsored study abroad initiative, as well as the 40th anniversary for the operation of its skills development schemes.



Both Japan and Brazil's national anthems were sung during the ceremony, and a silent prayer was dedicated in memory to those who have departed. Aside from awarding various guests for their achievements, the company at the ceremony also had the pleasure of listening to traineeship alumna Ms. Komura Karina Miho's report on the accomplishments in her traineeship and her experiences in Oita.



At the closing of the event, Mr. Ando shared a few words that outlined Oita Prefecture's governmental policies and overall state of current affairs. The day finished with a cake-cutting ceremony performed by the association's chairman Ms. Tamada, Consul General of Japan in Sao Paulo Mr. Noguchi, and Oita Prefecture's Mr. Ando and Mr. Inoue, closely followed by a display of Samba and a ballad and song performance that wrapped up the ceremony in high spirits.

Image descriptions, from top to bottom:

- Commemorative group photo with the Associacao Cultural Oita Kenjin do Brasil
- A glance of the ceremony stage
- Samba dance performance

Monthly staff corner

The sign of autumn is in the air, and I just felt like heading off to somewhere. With this thought in mind, I invited the other CIRs to a trip to West Oita. Since we decided to bike there, I gave my bicycle, which had been covered in dust after a year of neglect, a decent wipe before we set off. The daytime sun was bright and hot, but once we started pedalling the cool breeze would start rolling in and it felt very nice. The Kantan Harbour Park in West Oita is one of my favourite spots, as the place has plenty of beautiful views of the sea and trendy cafes. My fellow CIRs who were with me also thought the place quite gorgeous. The park was already littered with fallen leaves wherever you looked, and the leaves that remained on their branches were turning from green to gold. On top of this, the weather was just perfect for photos... Long may sunny autumn days like this one last.

- Jina Kim, CIR from Korea



When speaking of Oita, the things that come to mind are lusciously green forests and mountainous landscapes. On a sunny Sunday perfect for travelling, my colleagues and I went to see the Kumano Magaibutsu, stone Buddha carved on cliff faces. The statues are of the images of Vairocana and Acala, and are designated as Cultural Properties by the Japanese Government. In order to admire these impressive remnants of history, one must first climb a flight of 100 stone stairs that begins from the *torii* gate at the foot of the mountain. Legend of old has it that these stone stairs, which extends deep into the mountain, were forged by demons. Unforgivingly steep, the structure certainly befits the tale – my legs had trembled like that of a newborn deer's when I had finally finished the ascend. Even so, it was all worth it the moment I saw the Buddha statues, as the scene had just blown me away. Sitting at a spot where you can admire the atmosphere of *Rokugo Manzan* and being surrounded by the crisp mountain air is absolutely fantastic, and I highly recommend that you try it out too.

-Xin Lan Xie, CIR from Australia



Hiss, crackle, pop!

Kebesu-sama is here!

What's up, OITA! 2018 November, No. 30

Held annually on October 14th, the *Kebesu-Matsuri* is a curious fire festival that is designated as an Intangible Folk Cultural Property by the prefecture. Eager to be doused by ambers and sparks, visitors flock to the grounds of Hachiman Shrine in Kunisaki every year awaiting the arrival of *Kebesu-sama*.

The sun sank below the horizon, and the shadows grew longer. My colleagues and I huddled with the crowd and waited tentatively as the last traces of daylight receded from the Iwakura Hachiman Shrine. You may think that the night was chilly by how much heavily we were dressed, but the mid-October evening air was in fact quite comfortable, just windy enough to make you drowsy but not quite enough to make you shiver.

Just what were we doing, cluttered up in a dimly-lit shrine in the remote mountains of Kunisaki? The answer is exhilarating, especially if you are a fan of bright and loud things, for the night is reserved for the *Kebesu* Festival, a mysterious fire-festival the origins of which were long lost in time. I had worked during the day, and my legs were tired and wobbled like jelly, so I had entered the grounds of the shrine sore and with little expectation.

The night, however, was on its way to prove me wrong.

Having arrived early, my colleagues and I thought that we should pay our respects to the enshrined *kami*. A small flame lit brightly outside of the altar, and the hair on my head immediately began to frizzle and coming to life. If I were drowsy before, well, I certainly wasn't anymore.

When the sun had disappeared completely from our sight, a possession emerged from the shrine's inner rooms, the members consisting of several Shinto priests who waved around ritualistic paper streamer wands called *onusa*, and men clad in plain white who played a great *taiko* drum that was carried on their shoulders. The parade went on for a bit, then the men in white stopped and began gathering leaves and branches of cedars and threw them into a pile.



After the pile was made, a spark was lit, and with a little poking and cheers of encouragement, it didn't take long before the modest flame sprang into an impressive three-metre high bonfire that crackled into the evening. Mesmerised by the heat and light, I hadn't noticed the arrival of a strange guest – donning a strange mask, the eponymous *Kebesu*-sama had come before us.

Things became frenzied from that point onwards. The aforementioned men in white, playing the role of protective gods called *Toba*, took turns in sparring with *Kebesu*-sama, who began charging head-first into the roaring bon-fire. The *Toba* each guarded the fire valiantly, but were often almost pushed into the fire themselves were it not for the priests and fellow *Toba* keeping watch. The crowd cheered for both sides, though it was the fierce *Kebesu*-sama who eventually prevailed. Diving into the flames, he stirred the burning ashes and sent sparks high into the air. The spectators screamed, and before I had time to reflect, the *Toba* had each forked up a ball of flame from the bonfire and ran straight into us.

What followed was delightfully chaotic. Shriiled cries filled the air as *Kebesu*-sama, *Toba*, and spectators alike scattered all over shrine. Fireballs swooped above our heads, raining sparks from above, even spectators who thought themselves safe hiding high above the walls were mercilessly prodded with fire. It's said that being touched by the sparks brings forth good luck and cleanses one of ailments, and judging by how ash-laden we were, I think it's safe to say that we will be having a very auspicious year ahead of us.

Access:

Iwakura Hachiman Shrine
Kushiku, Kunimi-machi, Kunisaki, Oita Pref 872-1406

Image descriptions: 1. The procession prays before the main event. / 2. The bonfire is lit. / 3. The *Toba* and *Kebesu* charge into spectators with fire.

Words from the editor

The days are getting shorter. While I am grateful that my workplace is properly heated, I still can't help but think about better ways to keep myself warm. If you, dear reader, have any secrets to keeping nice and toasty during the bleaker days of Oita, please do let us know.