

Kurume History Walks

No.37 Cultural Properties of Mt. Kora 高良山の文化財

No other shrines and mountains in Chikugo Province were recorded on old documents as often as the Kora-taisha Shrine and Mt. Kora. These names appeared in the books of the 8th Century: “*Fudoki* (reports on provincial culture geography and tradition)” and “*Nihon Shoki* (the Chronicle of Japan)”.

The establishment of the Kora-taisha Shrine is said to be in 400 CE. It is surrounded by ancient stones arranged in a row (*kogoishi** 神籠石), which is thought to be the remains of a mountain castle built around the 7th century. This indicates that the mountain was strategically an important place since then.

The mountain was also always a religious place for Shintoism as well as Buddhism since ancient times. Monks and priests exhibited great power in the province.

And, those in power at the time stayed there: Kanenaga prince as the commander of the Southern Imperial Court for the battle in 1359; Otomo Sorin, the lord of Bungo Province for the battle in 1570; and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, “Grand Unifier of Japan” for the Kyushu campaign of 1586-1587.

During the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603-1868), the Arima family, the lord of Chikugo Province patronized the Shinto shrine and the Buddhist temples. People have worshiped and venerated it also as the most religious place of the province. Although, under the Shinto and Buddhism separation order in 1868, all temples in the mountains were abolished, and many old documents were lost.

This number presents the remaining precious properties.

*For further details about *kogoishi*, refer to Kurume History Walks, No. 20 Korasan Kogoishi.



The Kora-taisha Shrine

Kora-taisha Shrine - Main Hall, Votive offering hall, Worship hall, and Stone Torii gate

A National Important Cultural Properties designated on Many 15th, 1972

The halls were built from 1656 to 1661 with contributions by Arima Yoritoshi, the third lord. The ceiling picture of the votive offering hall and worship hall was painted in 1755 by Mitani Sensetsu, an official painter. The stone Torii gate was donated by Arima Tadayori, the second lord in 1655. The stone materials were brought by the local people from the present Ishigaki, Tanushimaru Town.



Korasan Mitarai-bashi Bridge

A Prefectural Cultural Property designated on April 5th, 2002

A stone bridge over the Mitarai-ike Pond was built in 1803. It is 10 meters long, 4 meters wide, and made of Yamakita stone. The pond is located at the foot of Mt. Kora which is the precinct of the Kora-taisha Shrine. It is called the Hojo-ike pond, which is used in a Buddhist ritual that fish are released into.



Some old ornamental railing tops (*giboshi*) remain today. These bear an inscription of “Korasan Mitarai-bashi Bridge, in June 1773”. Then, when today’s bridge was constructed, these are assumed to be reused to hand down the history. It was made of gold-plated copper and a precious work of the Ueki family, the government caster.

Color Paintings on Silk of the Kora-taisha Shrine’s History

A Prefectural Cultural Property designated on August 14th, 1975

It consists of two paintings: one historical and the other geographical. This pair is one of the largest among this kind of paintings and is thought to be painted around the late 16th century.

The historical one measures 237 cm by 207 cm. It depicts the story of the Jingu Empress’s invasion of Korea: her preparation, her victory with the support of the Kora God, her childbirth at Umi Palace, etc.

The geographical one measures 328.3 cm by 212.5 cm. It depicts the precinct of the Kora-taisha Shrine and the prosperity of the street near the gate in those days.



Twelve volumes of the Tales of the Heike, inked on paper

A National Important Cultural Property designated on April 17th, 1912

The Tales of the Heike, *Heike Monogatari* is the most well-known war tale about the battle between the Heike clan and the Minamoto clan at the end of the 12th century. The story was gradually made up during the Kamakura period (the late 12th century and the early 14th). In the beginning, it was three volumes, in the middle of the 13th six volumes, and at the beginning of the 14th, it was completed at twelve volumes.

This is one of six copies that remain today and was donated in 1797 by Jakushun, a monk of Mt. Kora.



Old documents of the Kora-taisha Shrine

A Prefectural Cultural Property designated on August 14th, 1975

The shrine has kept many precious old documents. All are very important for the research on the Chikugo Province in the ancient and medieval times.



Ebisu Stone Sculpture

A Municipal Cultural Property designated on July 29th, 1998

Ebisu is a deity of fishermen and luck. It is often depicted with a laughing face, having a fishing rod in the right hand, and a sea bream in the left hand. However, during Medieval Japan in Chikugo Province, it was sculptured as a pair of male and female deities. In those days, near the main gate of the Kora-taisha Shrine, there was a market, in which Ebisu was worshiped for a thriving business. This sculpture is located today in the precinct of the Kora-taisha Shrine.



Guardian Dog Statues

A Municipal Cultural Property designated on June 29th, 1984

These bears an inscription of the year 1724, and then, these are the oldest in Chikugo Province. There is not any name of the creator, but it is sculptured by a stonemason from Yamakita, Ukiha.



Three Symbols of Buddhas

A Municipal Cultural Property designated on February 21st, 1987

These symbols are Sanskrit characters that represent three different states of Buddhas: Jizo, Fudomyoo, and Bishamonten. These are carved into the surface of natural rock on the south side of the Atago-jinja Shrine in Mt. Kora. There is a record that described that it was the 50th head priest of Mt. Kora who wrote these symbols around the end of the 17th century.

Moso Kinmei Chiku Bamboo Grove in Mt. Kora

A National Natural Monument designated on November 25th, 1974

This kind of bamboo is a mutant species of the rods going green vertical stripes with a golden color. So rare that during the Edo period (1603-1868) if someone discovered this bicolored bamboo, it was reported even in a newspaper.



Camphor Trees of Kora-taisha Shrine

A Prefectural Natural Monument designated on May 7th, 1964

At the Kora-taisha Shrine, it was said that the camphor tree was seen as holy because the box used for holding the symbol of the deity was made of the camphor. It was taboo to use that wood for making even the main hall or the daily equipment.

Two Camphor Trees standing on the approach to the shrine are about thirty meters tall. Very old that these are said to be planted by the restorer of the shrine in the late 17th century. These were venerated as a sacred tree for a long time.



Colony of Azaleas at Kora-taisha Shrine

A Municipal Natural Monument designated on March 27th, 2001

Many azaleas on the hillock in the south of the main building of the Kora-taisha Shrine. These are estimated to be over 200 years old and to be the original trees of Kurume azalea.

The Kurume azalea was a new garden tree that Sakamoto Motozo, a retainer of Kurume Domain, succeeded to grow by his own methods of hybridization after many years of his pursuit. He collected Kirishima azalea seeds in the precinct of the Kora-taisha Shrine and the Bairin-ji Temple which does not have any old trees of azalea today.



Mochi Tree (Ilex Integra) at the Umashimizu-Mii Shrine

A Prefectural Natural Monument designated on March 31st, 2008

This Mochi Tree is a male plant of about 500 years old, 19.71 meters high with a trunk circumference of 4.06 meters, and is thought to be one of the largest trees among the same species in the prefecture.



Cultural Properties Protection Department of Kurume

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