



# DISCOVER YOUR OWN TRUE AKITA



# HISTORY & CULTURE



# 1. Innai

## • Isabella Bird came to Innai in 1878.

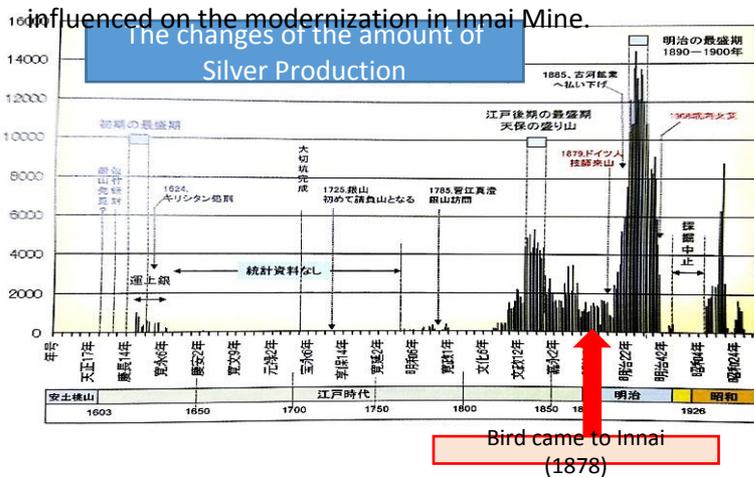
She came from Yamagata prefecture through Ogachi Mountain Pass. She said "It was a terrible road, with two severe mountain-passes to cross, and walk nearly the whole way, but to help the man with the kuruma up some of the steepest places." and "We crossed the Shione and Sakatsu passes, and in twelve hours accomplished fifteen miles!" It was so tough road that Bird had to walk more than 12 hours. Nowadays, we can pass the Usyu highway(Route 13) from Innai to Kanayama in about 30 minutes crossing Ogachi(She mentioned as Sakatsu) and Shionezaka Pass.



• Bird stayed in *yadoya* and mentioned "There were six engineers in the next room who are surveying the passes which I had crossed, in order to see if they could be tunneled, in which case kurumas might go all the way from *Tokiyo* to *Kubota* on the Sea of Japan, and, with a small additional outlay, carts also."

In my opinion, They had to dig a tunnel because Meiji Emperor came to Tohoku region including Innai after 2 years after Bird arrived at Innai. He came with a lot of servants. Meiji government had to prepare for the road Tokyo to Kubota.

• The opening a new transportation from Yamagata to Innai was



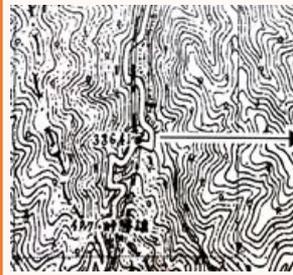
## Transition of the Usyu Highway

“羽州街道”

1880-1955

New Ogachi Road was opened

※When Bird came to Innai, there was more severe route



1955-1981

Old Route 13 was opened



1981-

New Ogachi tunnel was opened



In the future...

Tohoku central highway”東北中央自動車道” will be opened from Innai to Kanayama.



## The history of the Mine in Meiji era

• In 1878, when Bird came to Innai, Innai Mine was not modernized at that time. Innai people were not modernized and lived with an old-fashioned style. (At that time, about 10,000 people lived in Innai.)

• In 1879, first “hired” foreigner (Oswald Vifel), came to Innai for the modernization of the Innai silver mine.

• In 1880, Meiji Emperor came to Tohoku region including Innai Mine. He entered Innai Mine through fifth entrance of silver mine “五番坑” Meiji emperor entered only Innai mine. Therefore, this entrance named as *miyukikou* “御幸坑” and The date (Sep.21<sup>st</sup>). Was designated to the memorial day of the mine “鉱山記念日”.

Thanks to the five hired foreigners (Oswald Vifel), Innai Mine was modernized based on foreign techniques and ideas.

• In 1906, however, there was a fire in Innai Mine because of the fire of tobacco. Miner cannot escape from the fire because the only entrance was closed in order to prevent from the fire. At the end, 102 people were killed from this disaster. After this disaster, the miner gradually had complain to the executive of the silver mine. One of the guide Aida san told us that the miners of Innai silver mine are like a family so Innai people complained about the decision that the entrance was closed. As a result, Innai Silver Mine had declined the production of the silver.

## Innai district in Heisei era

• In Innai, there were 1690 people, 624 residents, 41.7 % of over 65 years old(2010). Innai is also the area that Advanced of aging society with falling child birthrates and declined of population of people in production ages. In addition, young people tend to get jobs in central Yuzawa or Yokote areas.

• According to the interview, unlike the other farming areas, people tend to work as public officials. This is because People in Innai used to be miners who get salary from the company.

• It is predicted that the low birthrate and aging population will be proceeded in Innai but there are some good news. Yuzawa district including Innai Mine is gradually developed and recognized as tourist spots in Japan. For example, in 2007, Kaneyama shrine was designated to the *Heritage of Industrial Modernization in Japan* “日本の近代化産業遺産”, and in 2012, Yuzawa district was designated to *Yuzawa geopark* “ゆざわジオパーク”. In addition, Tohoku central highway”東北中央自動車道” will be opened between Yamagata and Akita.

• The new transportation and new effort as a tourist spot may cause a fourth prosperity in Innai area. These changes will be also influenced on the culture and life style of Innai people. More communication will be taken between People in Innai and other areas and many people easily visit Innai area.

# 2. YOKOTE

## The times of Bird

Isabella Bird mentioned about Yokote in her book. (p.287-290) When she visited Yokote, she found uniqueness of Yokote.

1. Wicked horses → she felt that transportation was so bad.
2. 10000 people, Yodoya
3. Ill-favored, ill-smelling, forlorn, dirty, dump, miserable place, large trade of cottons
4. No beef, no eggs / miserable meal of rice, bean curd → feeling somewhat starved
5. Shrine: Shinto \*she mentioned TORII  
20 feet high, cross beams, beyond the posts, frequent carves upwards at both ends.



→ This is yadoya of Yokote in that time. Birds felt uncomfortable, she could not sleep well..

## Modern Yokote

In today's Akita, Yokote is main food cultural area

Compared with times of

### Similarity

1. meat of rice
2. the shape of TORII

### Differences

1. we ate egg dishes and beef dishes
2. Yadoya is less than that time
3. Transportation had developed
4. Not miserable place
5. Not place of cotton trade

Now... Yokote is food area

When we stayed Yokote, we saw a lot of rice field, vast farm

The people who live in Yokote made processed food such as KOIZAKI.

Yokote Yakisoba is also famous in Japan.

# 3. JINGUJI - TOWN OF OMONO RIVER



## BIRD AND JINGUJI

Isabella Bird visited Jinguji in 1878. She described her experience and impression as following (p.297-298).

“I saw three faces pressed against the outer lattice, and before evening, the shoji were riddled with finger-holes, at each of which a dark eye appeared.”

“About nine I heard a good deal of whispering and shuffling, which continued for some time, and on looking up, saw opposite to me, about 40 men, women, and children (Ito says 100), all staring at me, with the light upon their faces.”

Guessing from the above, foreigner visitor is rare in Jinguji at that time. After staying at Jinguji, Bird head to Kubota, modern Akita city central, via Omono river.

“I arrived here on Monday afternoon by the river Omono, what would have been two long day's journey by land having been easily accomplished in nine hours by water.” (p.299)



## OMONO RIVER AND MT. JINGUJI

Retrieved from

<http://blog.livedoor.jp/sakeakmt/archives/65483601.html>

Phot credit to Akimoto liquor shop

Jinguji-162 Jinguji, Daisen, Akita Prefecture 019-1701

0120-404-711

## OMONO RIVER & JINGUJI

As Bird used river and ship as a transportation way, river Omono was center of transportation and commerce at that time. Jinguji, and some other town near the river, for example Masuda town, had developed by the commerce. Jinguji had developed as a port of Omono river and post town in Bird's era. After the main transportation way had changed, warehouses in Jinguji was renovated and used as brewery. There are two famous sake brewery near Jinguji. The liquor shop called Akimoto shoten expand the market to overseas and sell Jinguji local sake.

The stars in the map below is my favorite spots in Akita. It shows that spots people visits are along with river not main road or railway.



Kariho Brewery started in 1913.  
(The architecture was constructed in 1850)

## JINGUJI IN HEISEI

In this century, though Omono river and ships are not popular transportation way, but there still remains the history of Bird's century. Areas along river are still developed than other areas. The architectures constructed in Bird's era still used by today's people in different purposes. Main industry of the town is not only commerce now, but also agriculture, food processing food including sake brewery.

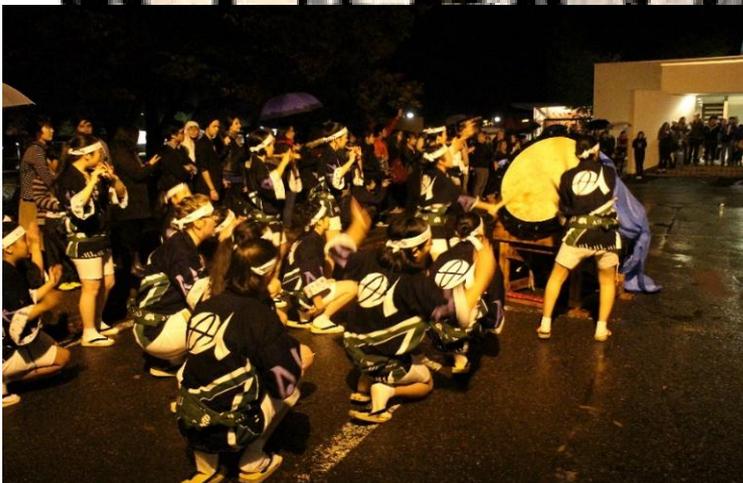


# 4. AKITA KANTO MATSURI



The Akita Kanto Festival belongs to Japan's most famous festivals and is one of the 'Three Great Festival of the Tohoku region', also called 'Tohoku Sandai Matsuri' in Japanese, alongside the Tanabata Matsuri in Sendai and the Aomori Nebuta Matsuri. The Akita Kanto Matsuri is held in Akita City every year from August 3 to 6, also known as the 'pole lantern festival'. Kanto are the bamboo poles used in the festival. The festival is held in hope of a good harvest as well as to keep evil summer spirits away. Sadly, Japanese festivals have lost their original religious signification over the last centuries and are becoming more and more commercialized. (Isabella Bird, p. 331)

The Akita Kanto Matsuri originated from the Neburi Nagashi Festival which was held yearly on July 6 of the lunar calendar. It was introduced as the original tradition of Akita as annual festival praying for good harvest, ridding illness and maliciousness in summer. The Festival already existed in the Horeki Period (1751-1764), in the middle of Edo Period. During Neburi Nagashi, people around Akita City decorated silk trees and bamboo grasses with strips of paper on which they wrote their wishes. Then, they walked around the city with the decorated silk trees and bamboo and floated them downstream. People combined candles and lanterns, so Neburi Nagashi became Kanto.



The Matsuri features up to 230 Kanto poles with dozens of paper lantern attached to the end. The giant poles are balanced by more than 160 men, Sashite, participating in the festival. The bamboo poles weigh around 60kg each.

The highlight of the festival is the Sashite performing by balancing the giant bamboo poles on their hips, hands, shoulders and forehead to the rhythmic beats of the Ohayashi, taiko drums and flutes. The main event is the night parade, which is held in the center of Akita City. The performers, Sashite and Ohayashi, show off their amazing skills for around 90 minutes. Many events are also held during the day time, such as taiko drumming, dance and music performances as well as kanto demonstrations.

The Akita Kanto Matsuri is a must see during summer time in Japan with amazing performances and colorful night parades.

