

## 5 Supporting Recovery: The Hotoku Method, Immigration, and Religious Festivals

~Recovery from disasters through mutual aid and regional ties~

### ■ Immigration policy to overcome famine

The Tenmei Famine struck between 1784 and 1788, and as a result, the Nakamura Domain's population dropped from around 53,000 to roughly 36,000 in three years as people starved to death or fled the area.

Because of this, the Nakamura Domain made efforts to be frugal, as well as enacting measures to receive immigrants such as followers of Shin Buddhism who came mainly from the Hokuriku region (now Niigata Prefecture). The number of immigrants to the area exceeded 10,000 people over 60 years until the end of the Edo period, and they played a major role in the area's recovery.

### ■ Using the Hotoku Method to achieve agricultural recovery

The Tenpo Famine took place between 1833 to 1836 when these policies were still in practice, once again causing catastrophic damage. Tomita Kokei and others became the core of the area's recovery through mutual aid and regional ties, as well as through implementing the Hotoku method, which focused on the real-life application of Ninomiya Sontoku's teachings. Ninomiya taught the value of diligent labor, living within one's means, and conceding one's position, all centered around the idea of sincere devotion. Through the Hotoku method, and using the land-surveying

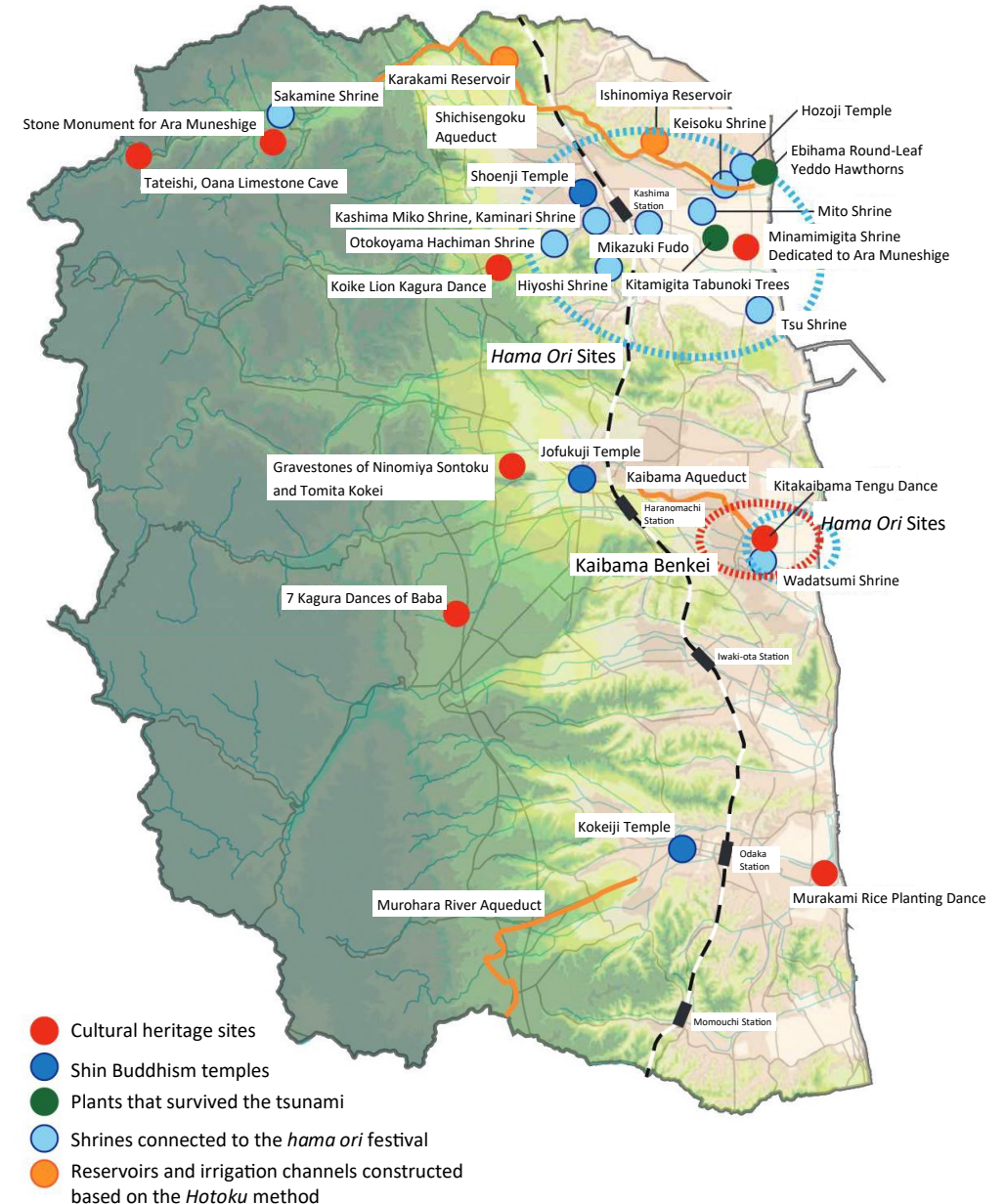
techniques of Ara Muneshige, irrigation channels and reservoirs such as the Shichisengoku Aqueduct in Kashima were constructed, and the productivity of agricultural areas increased. Thanks to these policies, the population of the Nakamura Domain recovered to its pre-Tenmei Famine levels of about 53,000 by the beginning of the Meiji period.

### ■ Festivals and dances to pray to the gods and Buddha

A particularly large number of performing arts presented at festivals that pray for a good harvest have been passed down in the Soma area, with its experience in various kinds of disasters like the Tenmei and Tenpo famines. A wide variety of folk performing arts can be seen throughout the area such as the rice planting dance, as well as the lion kagura dance, which is said to have been promoted by the Nakamura Domain.

The *hama ori* festival of Kashima Ward in particular has survived over the years as an event in which a *mikoshi* (portable shrine) is carried from the village to the ocean. There many folk arts are performed in hopes of obtaining the blessings of the gods and Buddha for the region. Such festivals like this one have continued even after the Great East Japan Earthquake, and have become important events that help connect residents in severely damaged areas.

## Hotoku Method, Immigration, and Religious Festivals, as Told Through Our Cultural Heritage



## H Gravesite of Ninomiya Sontoku and Tomita Kokei

The gravesite is located near the Ishigami Lifelong Learning Center in Haramachi. The gravestone of Tomita Kokei, who shared the Hotoku method, was built when he died in 1890. Ninomiya Sontoku's gravestone was built in 1955 in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his death, adjacent to the gravestone of Tomita Kokei. It imitates the gravestone of Ninomiya Sontoku in Nikko city, Tochigi Prefecture.



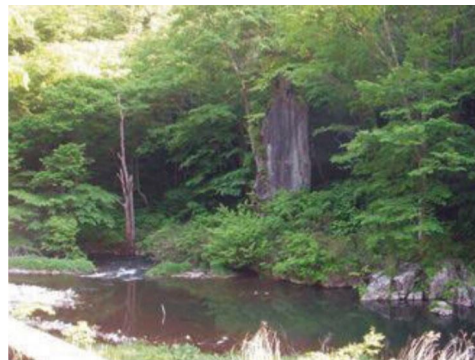
## O,K,H Reservoirs/Irrigation Created Using the Hotoku Method

There are many irrigation channels designed by Ara Muneshige, such as the Shichisengoku Aqueduct that carries water from the Mano River to reservoirs like the Karakami Reservoir and the Ishinomiya Reservoir in Minami-Yakata, as well as the Murobara Channel which carried water from Namie (the largest obstacle to the Hotoku method in the area) to Odaka Ward, and the Kaibama Channel which stretches over a distance of four kilometers.



## K Tateishi, Oana Limestone Cave

A large, upright stone called Tateishi stands on the riverbank of the Mano River in Kamitochikubo, Kashima. It has been known as a scenic spot since the Edo Period, and people once used to pray for rain in the adjacent Oana Limestone Cave. Nowadays, it is also known as a scenic spot for autumn leaves.



## K Plants that Survived the Tsunami

A type of plant known as round-leaf Yeddo hawthorn that grows in Ebihama was catastrophically damaged in the tsunami following the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake but the plants are currently recovering.



Round-leaf Yeddo hawthorns in Ebihama

In addition, the giant Tabunoki trees in a grove in Kitamigita indicate that there was once a settlement here, as they were set up to have been part of a *yashikiran* (a grove of trees surrounding a residence).



Tabunoki trees of Kitamigita (Former *yashikiran*)

## O,K,H Shin Buddhism Temples

These temples became the central places of worship for newly immigrated believers of Shin Buddhism as part of the Nakamura Domain's incentive plan to increase the population.



### (O) Kokeiji Temple

It is said that Saikyo of Kosenji Temple in Niigata Prefecture came to the village, bringing the statue of Amida Nyorai with him, and built this temple.



### (H) Jofukuji Temple

This temple's founder, Keikei from Koenji Temple in Niigata Prefecture, contributed to the immigration policy of the Nakamura Domain by promoting the immigration of 130 households.



### (K) Shoenji Temple

Kakuzen from Saienji Temple in Toyama Prefecture is said to be the founder of this temple. It took him five years to clear four hectares of countryside.

## H Benkei from Kaibama

Benkei is a dish of simmered radishes (*daikon*) that is said to have been passed down from the Shin Buddhist immigrants. Like this dish, many of the customs and performing arts passed down by Shin Buddhist immigrants have taken root in the Soma region.



## O,K,H Rice Planting Dance

The rice planting dance, or *taue odori*, is performed at 70 locations within the former Nakamura Domain as a prayer for a good harvest. As the dance spread from the mountainside toward the coast it continued to be developed and refined as a performing art.

The rice planting dance of Murakami (Odaka Ward), located on the coast, is known to be the most developed as an art.



Rice planting dance of Murakami

## K Kashima Miko Shrine Rituals: *Hibuse Matsuri* and *Tentoro*

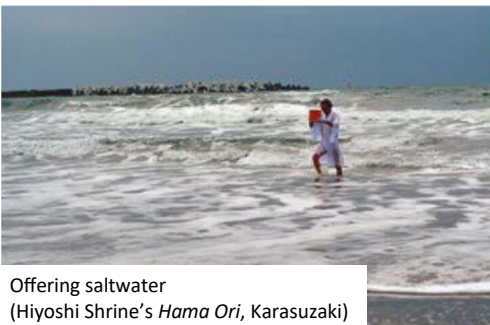
These are Shinto rituals that take place in the freezing cold of mid-January. On the night of the first day, people throw water on the houses in the town area of Kashima Ward as part of the *hibuse matsuri*, or fire prevention festival. The *tentoro* (lit. "heavenly lantern") event takes place early in the morning the next day, as residents toss water at a Shinto priest in a prayer for a good harvest, calling out "*Goshugi!*" ("Celebration!") as they do.



Shinto priest being splashed with water

## K The *Hama Ori* Festival of Kashima

This is a festival where *shintai* and *mikoshi* (portable shrines) are carried down to the beach and presented some saltwater as an offering. A great number of performing arts are then presented. Many shrines and temples along the Mano River basin hold this festival, usually only once every 12 years. Kashima Miko Shrine holds the *hama ori* festival in the year of the tiger, Hiyoshi Shrine in the year of the monkey, and Otokoyama Hachiman Shrine in the year of the dog.



Offering saltwater  
(Hiyoshi Shrine's *Hama Ori*, Karasuzaki)



Kitaebi's *Takarazai Odori*  
(Treasure Dance)  
(Keisoku Shrine's *Hama Ori*, Minamiebi)



A Parade at Karasuzaki Beach  
(Otokoyama Hachiman Shrine's *Hama Ori*)

## O,K,H Local Folk Performance Arts



### (H) Kitakaibama's Tengu Dance

It is a rare performing art in the Soma area where the battle between a tengu and a lion is performed. It has much in common with Hokuriku performing arts and is said to have been brought here by immigrants.



### (H) Baba's 7 Kagura Dances

While other areas have gradually stopped performing the lion kagura dance, it has continued to be passed down in Baba. There is a variety of other performing arts such as the bird catching dance, *oitoko*, and the demon dance.



### (K) Koike's Lion Dance

A performance in which four lions dance as many as 17 kinds of dances. It is said to be an indispensable performing art for the religious festival of Kashima Miko Shrine.



### (K) Shitamachi's Children's Hand Dance

Children's hand dances were passed down across Kashima Ward, but many of them are now gone. However, the Shitamachi hand dance continues to be energetically performed at many events.



### (K) Etari's Treasure Dance

A style of dance which originated from a the story of the fall of Ryozen Castle during the Northern and Southern Courts period (1336-1392), performed by seven people with different appearances such as a Buddhist hermit. It is an important performing art that is indispensable for the *hama ori* festival of Hiyoshi Shrine.



### (K) Kawago's Rice Planting Dance and Bird Catching Dance

In Kawago, the bird catching dance has been passed down along with the rice planting dance as support performances for the main kagura dances. The bird catching dance is a humorous dance performed by a samurai and his attendant.



### (K) Karasuzaki's Children's Hand Dance

Karasuzaki's beach is the festival ground for the *hama ori* festivals of Otokoyama Hachiman Shrine and Hiyoshi Shrine. During the festivals, children's hand dances are performed to folk songs such as *Mugitsuki-Uta*.

### (O, K, H) Lion Kagura Dances

It is said that the Nakamura Domain once had lion kagura dances in roughly 180 locations, which is 70% of the total domain in the Fukushima prefecture, making it the most common performing art in the Soma region.

Stories convey that the reason why so many lion kagura dances remain even now is because the Nakamura Domain, impoverished by famines like the Tenmei famine, encouraged people to pray for good harvests and perform kagura dances as an offering at the Kaminari shrines in each town. Perhaps because of this, the lion kagura dances in the Soma area are performed in a highly formal manner.



(K) Etari's Kagura Dance



(O) Urajiri's Kagura Dance