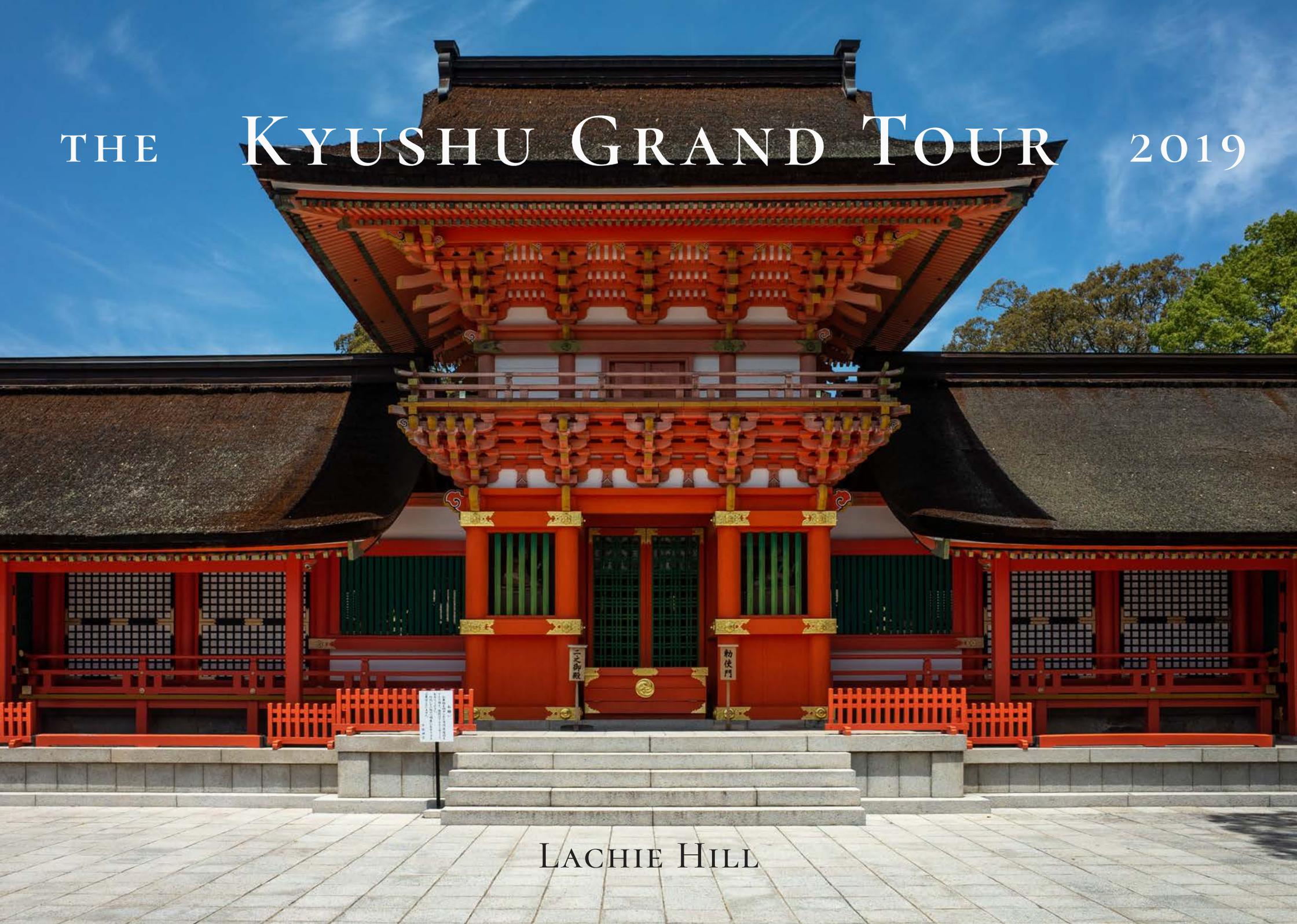


THE KYUSHU GRAND TOUR 2019



LACHIE HILL

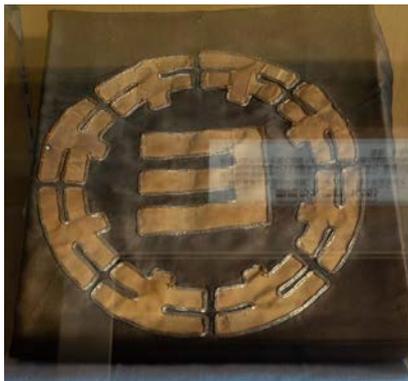
THE following is a pictorial journal of the KYUSHU GRAND TOUR compiled from photographs taken at the many sites visited on our travels. While travelling, the recurring theme of state formation and religion was ever present. As the gateway to the continent, the Kyushu region has a long and interesting history, full of diverse narratives and mythologies. Cultural endeavors both old and new abound here, and the latest trends in religious practice find many locations across Kyushu worth making the pilgrimage. Although the itinerary of this trip mainly focused on places of religious significance, other historically important sites were also visited to contextualise not only the tour, but the broader learning as part of the studies taken with the IMAP program.

DAY 1



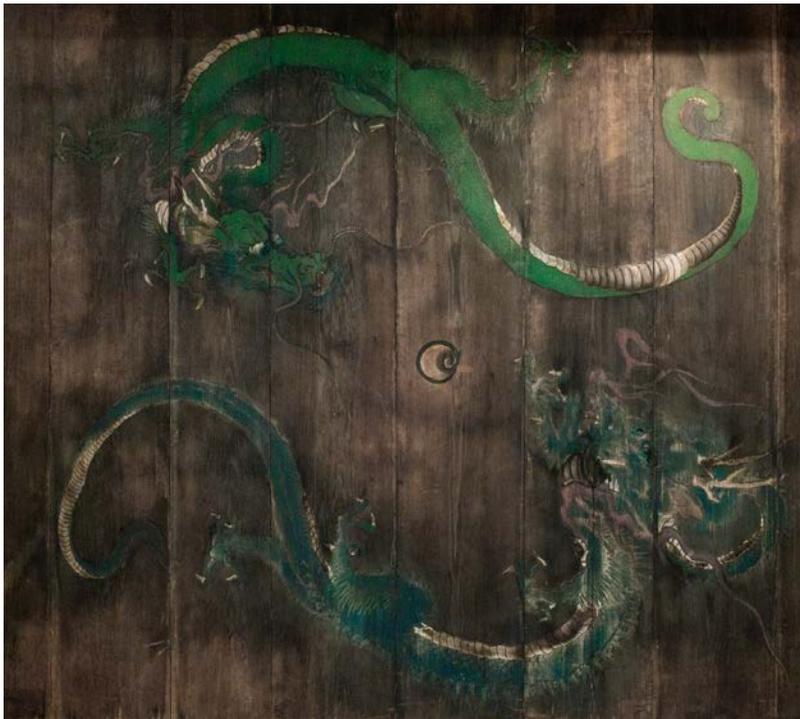
HACHIYOZA

The Hachiyozza is an historic Kabuki theatre located in Yamaga and founded in 1910. This theatre was established by the local merchants of the area for entertainment. It should be noted that the theatre is multipurposed, and other forms of entertainment are performed here aside from Kabuki. The crest of the theatre is an ingenious work of design, playing on the name of the theatre: eight kanji for *sen* 千 surround the *katakana* for *yo* ヨ.



YAMAGA TŌRŌ MINGEIKAN

The Yamaga Tōrō Folk Art Museum holds many remarkable works of handworked paper crafts. One of the signature objects still produced are the golden paper lanterns which sit atop possessive maidens' heads during ritual performances at nearby shrines. Above the main gallery is the weathered roof from the bath of the former Kikuchi Castle. One can see two dragons circling each other painted on the ceiling. The green and blue dragons are considered to bring healing, rest, and serenity in Chinese mythology. Viewing the ceiling now, it is easy to imagine the splendour of the bathing experience of patrons in the Edo period.



ASO SHRINE

In the massive caldera centered on Mount Aso is a shrine named after the volcano. The origins of the shrine claim a very long history, with some figures allegedly dating almost two thousand years prior. Unfortunately, the main gate and the *Haiden* (*worship hall*) offering hall both collapsed in the earthquake of April, 2016. This destructive event is interesting from a number of perspectives. First, the *rōmon* 楼門 gate which collapsed was a designated national cultural asset of Japan.

Because of this, the gate has received funding for its reconstruction. The *haiden*, however, did not share this designation and thus its revival has been delayed as funding is being gathered from other sources. Secondly, it is interesting to think

of the social-religious narratives when events like this happen.

How do the people react? It was said that the Aso Shrine should be praised for taking the main

force of the damage, saving the surrounding township from destruction. The priest gave us a

more scientific explanation: tall

buildings with a small footprint, such as the *rōmon*, are much more susceptible to destruction by the type of waves generated by the earthquake.



MOUNT ASO

The impressive Mount Aso stands nearly 1600 meters above sea level. It is the largest active volcano in Japan. Not too far from the smoking crater on the peak are the geological measuring facilities. Further down, the half-occupied remains of what appeared to be a once-thriving tourist stop for visitors to the mountain can be found. Cattle and tame horses roam the grassy plains. One can imagine that the volcanic soil provides excellent nutrition for the flora which covers the slopes. However, the sides of the mountain are marred by the scars of recent landslides. The smoke is an omnipresent reminder for the residents in the surrounding area of a possible—and eventual—doomsday-like scenario. The main bridge which crosses into the caldera was destroyed in recent earthquakes. And yet, residents below the mountain continue living their lives as they and their forebearers had before. The ASO NO TSUKASA VILLA PARK HOTEL attracts multitudes of visitors, mostly from Taiwan and China. The townspeople rely on this industry, which is in turn reliant on the volcanic activity of the mountain.



DAY 2



HEITATE JINGU

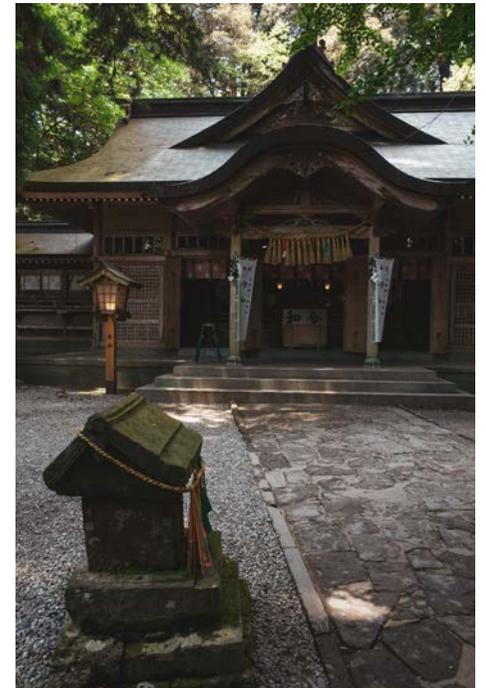
Directly beside the main hall of the Heitate shrine is a large cedar tree said to be many centuries old. There is no doubt that it is an old tree, but the exact figure is most likely a lot younger than the priest was describing. Down a path to the left behind the *honden* (inner sanctuary) is a little refuge where spring water comes out of the mountain side. From this water the priests keep a small rice paddy.



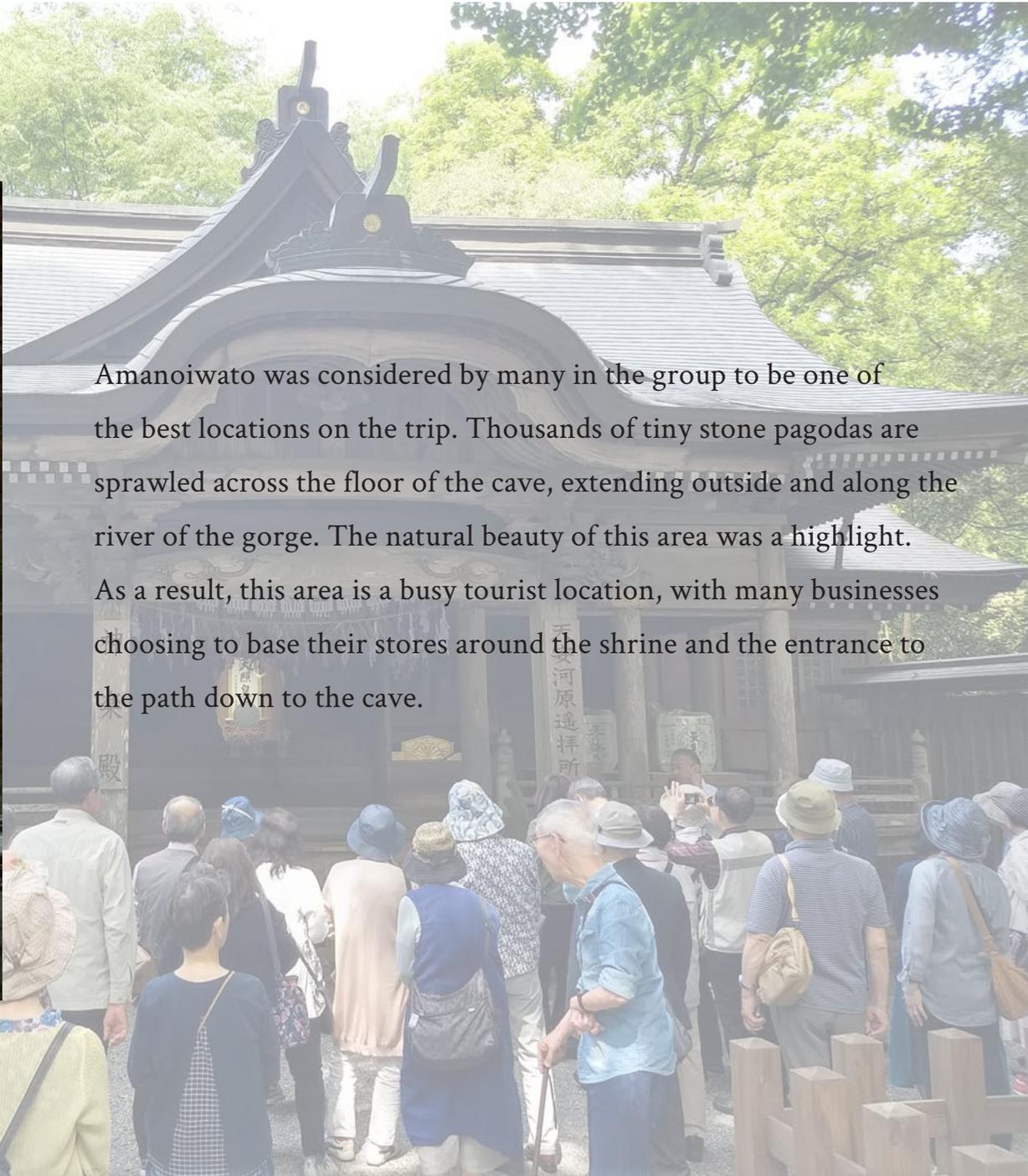
TAKACHIHO SHRINE



The Takachiho Shrine is home to many power spots, which are places strong spiritual energy is believed to coalesce. In the photo (left), one can see that the pressing of hands to claim this power has eroded the top layer of the bark from the tree. Tucked away next to the *honden* is another power spot, this time in the form of a small pile of stones. It is believed that just holding one's hands over these stones is enough to harness their power. It is curious to see the different ways, both direct and indirect, in which people interact with power-spots.



AMANOIWATO SHRINE



Amanoiwato was considered by many in the group to be one of the best locations on the trip. Thousands of tiny stone pagodas are sprawled across the floor of the cave, extending outside and along the river of the gorge. The natural beauty of this area was a highlight. As a result, this area is a busy tourist location, with many businesses choosing to base their stores around the shrine and the entrance to the path down to the cave.

MIYAZAKI SHRINE

The Miyazaki Shrine was modified during the Meiji period. Outside the main hall is a large, wide-open space which was constructed as a venue for the public to participate in imperial events. Prior to this, these public spaces did not exist in this capacity. Festivals, markets, and shows of skill are still held here to this day, as is the case for many other grounds of shrines across the country. Nearby, there is a *Gokoku* shrine devoted to those who died in combat.



DAY 3



HEIWADAI PARK



At the Heiwadai Park in Miyazaki is a large tower constructed of stones brought from the various countries under the control of the Japanese Empire. Following the Asia-Pacific war and the dissolution of the Empire, the tower has been repurposed for peace. Although one can see many doves make their home in the trees around this tower, other visual reminders of a conflicted past are still present if one looks closely. On many of the rocks, the provenance is carved out: some from China, some from Korea, Southeast Asia, etc. It appears that many of these stones had images carved out in relief, and others have had the images scratched off; as one can see from the pictures on the right.



SAITOBARU ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM



More than three hundred tombs are located within the vicinity of the SAITOBARU ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM in Miyazaki. The tombs date from the end of the third century to the seventh century. The two largest are called Osahozuka and Mesahozuka, and according to Kunaicho, *Ninigi no mikoto* and his wife, *Konohana no Sakuyahime*, respectively, are entombed. It is important to be aware of the attribution of these two tombs, as they are managed by the Imperial Household Agency, and the legitimacy of the history of the Imperial family could be called into question if the tombs were opened. Thus further research is halted and the tombs have become a sort of historical Schrödinger's cat.

USUKI



Near Usuki Castle, once the home of the converted Christian lord, Ōtomo Sōrin, is a storehouse decorated with images of Christian plight in Usuki. The Nioza district holds many former Samurai residences and restaurants catering the traditional cuisine of the area: pufferfish.



DAY 4



鬼の鳴物
丸走飛
かあは丸
夜に
修

KUMANO MAGAIBUTSU

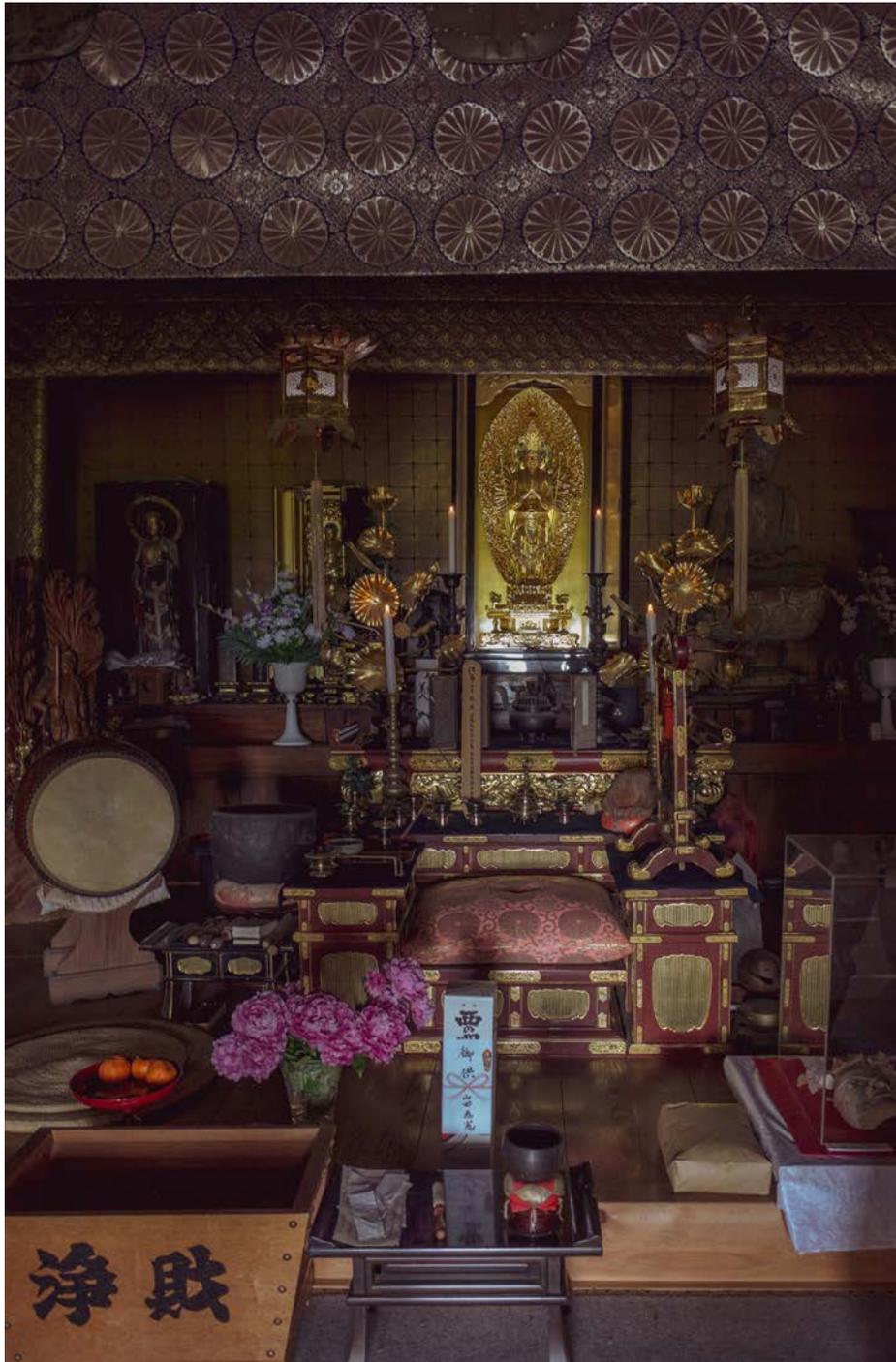
Nearby the Taizōji temple are a group of large stone reliefs that are believed to have been carved in the late Heian period. One of them, seen in the picture to the right, is of Fudō Myōō. On his left is Dainichi Nyorai, also known as the cosmic Buddha. Smaller carvings existed at one point in time, however the weather has eroded most of their appearance off of the stone. The Dainichi carving is greatly detailed, despite the various rock types that compose the area. The path leading to this site is paved with stone boulders. This path extends directly straight up the sight of the mountain, making it much more difficult to traverse. Yet this does not stop many keen retirees.



FUKIJI

At Fukiji we were fortunate enough to view the treasures of the main hall, which is normally inaccessible to the public. Inside is a statue of Amida, to which a red string is placed in his hand, that then extends up and outside the hall to a pole in the grounds outside. This establishes a direct physical connection to the Buddha.





CHŌANJI

At Chōanji, we were also able to see the treasures of the temple in the storehouse. Inside was a number of priceless religious artifacts including gold plates of the lotus sutra and wooden statues. In the corner was a large temple drum that was thirteen hundred years old. Many a hungry insect seems to have tried its luck eating the body of the drum, and the skin seemed very brittle. Nonetheless it is an interesting example of precursor *taiko*.



FUTAGOJI

Futagoji is a temple struggling for patronage. Year by year the numbers of donations have been decreasing. In order to combat this, the temple sells a wide variety of services and souvenirs. The cost to repair and renovate temple buildings is far beyond what I had imagined. A lot of the cost comes from the specialised labour required, in addition to materials. In time, this will likely get more expensive as the skill diminishes alongside temple attendance.



DAY 5



USA HACHIMANGŪ



Usa Hachimangū was historically one of the most powerful shrine-temples in Japan. At one point in time, it contested with Dazaifu near Fukuoka in terms of influence. Two frequent rituals were performed here, the *Stately Progress*, and the *Release of Living Beings*, required extensive time and costs to conduct. By involving the tributes and skills of many different persons from the Kunisaki peninsula to as far as Kyoto, the rituals effectively served as a sort of religious precursor to the *alternate attendance* system of the Edo period. In the Meiji period, the shrine-temple aspect was split and Usa Hachimangū was required to become a strictly Shinto institution. From the religious rituals performed here, however, we can still see heavy Buddhist influences.

RAKANJI



Rakanji contains five hundred statues of *arhats*, from which the temple takes its name. In the cave by the temple, is a small pond. Graffiti from the early twentieth century can be seen on some rock surfaces and the no longer functional hand-purifying basin. It was interesting to see inside the temple buildings a workspace fully connected with internet, a phone line, and



other modern comforts. Deeper inside the cave is a small area for one to write their ills and have it sent to hell. The steep climb to the temple contrasts with the convenience of the optional chairlift, making this more accessible to visitors.



