



HACHIOJI HIGASHI POST

Special Edition

March 2023

The last remaining silk farmer left in Tokyo

Five years ago, students at Hachioji Higashi High School wore ties made of silk. Hachioji once prospered because it produced a lot of silk.

Have you heard of *yosan*? *Yosan* is the silk producing industry where they raise silkworms and produce cocoons. Silkworms grow by eating mulberry leaves. Hachioji is good for growing mulberry trees. As a result, silk production flourished in Hachioji, especially during the Edo period. The silk industry was also the backbone of the Japanese economy in the Meiji period.

However, the silk industry has been steadily declining in Japan due to the lack of succession in farming households and the low demand for silk products. During



Seiichi Osada, the owner of Osada Silk Farm, is holding a silk fan and cocoons. On the table are a stuffed silkworm, cotton, and a silk fan.

MIYAKO INOUE PHOTO

all this, there are still people who continue and protect the tradition of silk production. One of them is Seiichi Osada. He is the only silk producer in Tokyo and lives

in the city of Hachioji.

“We should continue to protect traditional Japanese culture because our ancestors worked so hard to preserve it,” Osada said

in an interview with Hachioji Higashi Post. He runs a silk production farm. The farm was established about 126 years ago. He has been running the farm for 30 years. His farm received an *omamori*, an amulet, from the Yakuohin Temple of Mt. Takao. Thus, the efforts of the farmers were recognized, and silk production was listed as a Japan heritage. He sells silk products at the roadside station. He also teaches elementary school students about silkworms and silk production. Osada started this project in 2001 because he wants many people to know and learn about our unique culture and preserve it for the next generation.

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Miyako Inoue, Shota Shimizu, and Mei Fukuda

Interview with Seiich Osada

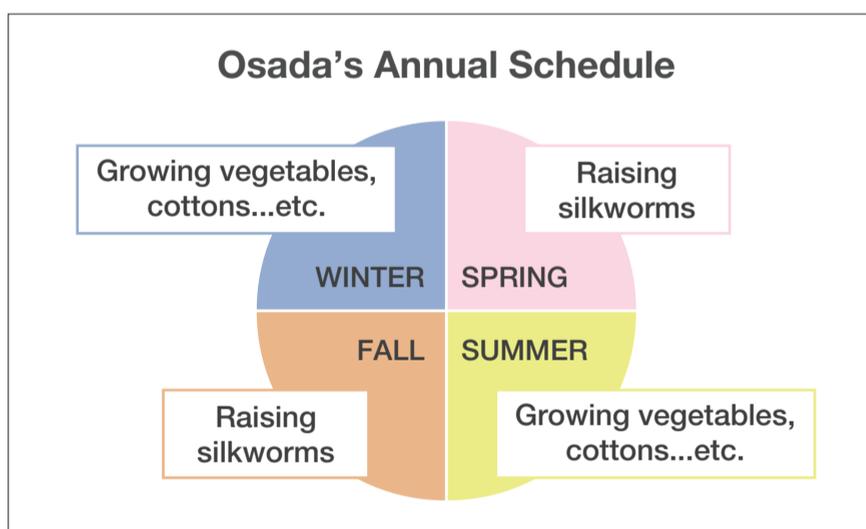
Seiichi Osada raises silkworms in spring and autumn. In these seasons, he raises his silkworms and keeps an eye on them for a month as if he were taking care of his baby. He takes care of about 45,000 silkworms in a year. He collects mulberry leaves early in the morning and in the evening to keep them fresh. Osada has to feed the silkworms continuously so that they grow at the same time and the same speed.

Silk produced in different seasons has different features and characteristics. For example, silk produced in the spring is heavy and silk produced in the fall is

thin. In general, heavy silk is better, but which silk to choose depends on the user.

Osada told us about his love for silkworms. “Silkworms are like gods to silk farmers, so I call them *okaiko* or *okaikosama* to show respect,” he said. “Silkworms have no waste. Because they eat only mulberry leaves, even if I touch the silkworm’s excrement, it will crumble in my hand, and my hand will not be sticky, but smooth,” Osada added.

He also told us about the good features of silk. He said that clothes made of silk fit our skin, so they are comfortable to wear.



“Silk production connects me with many people, as if silk was combined with other silk and silk thread was produced,” he said. This means that through silk production, he has met

many people and made friends with them, and he has associated them with silk.

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Miyako Inoue, Mei Fukuda and Shota Shimizu

HACHIOJI HIGASHI POST

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LOCAL MOUNTAIN

The world famous Mt. Takao in Hachioji

Have you ever heard of Mt. Takao? And have you ever climbed it?

Mt. Takao is located in Hachioji, west of Tokyo. The height of this mountain is 599 meters. It is known that Mt. Takao has the highest number of climbers per year in the world. There are about three million people climbing the mountain every year. It is about eight times the size of Mt. Fuji. In recent years, not only Japanese, but also many tourists from abroad visit Mt. Takao.

What is the charm of Mt. Takao for foreign visitors?

We interviewed three groups of foreign visitors, Nola from Hong Kong, Kaito and Brick from Hawaii, and Cecilia from the U.S. at the Kiyotake ropeway station.

Q. Why did you come to Mt. Takao?

A. I came to hike without using the ropeway. (Nola) (She said she did not use the ropeway.)

We came to see the view from the top of the mountain. (Kaito and Brick)



Kiyotaki Station, a cable car station at the foot of Mt. Takao NATSUMI UJIE PHOTO

Q. How did you know about Mt. Takao?

A. I learned about it online. (Nola)

We have climbed it before. (This was Kaito's second time and Brick's third time climbing Mt. Takao.)

Q. How do you feel about Mt.

Takao?

A. The view from the top is beautiful and it's fun. (Kaito and Brick)

Q. What did you see?

A. I saw the Yakuo-in Temple and the *Saru-en*. (Cecilia) (The *Saru-en* is the facility where the monkeys live on Mt. Takao.)

The summary of the interviews

All three groups said, "Mt. Takao is beautiful and wonderful," and climbed up to the summit. From this it can be concluded that one of the purposes of foreign tourists visiting Mt. Takao is the scenery of the summit.

Charms that are unique to Mt. Takao

In 2007, Michelin selected Mt. Takao as one of the highest rated three-star tourist sites. According to Michelin, the three-star rating means, "The site is worth visiting as a tourist destination." There are nine standards for evaluating tourist sites, such as comfort, wealth of cultural treasures, beauty and so on. It is said that Mt. Takao received three stars because of its rich nature and easy

access from downtown Tokyo.

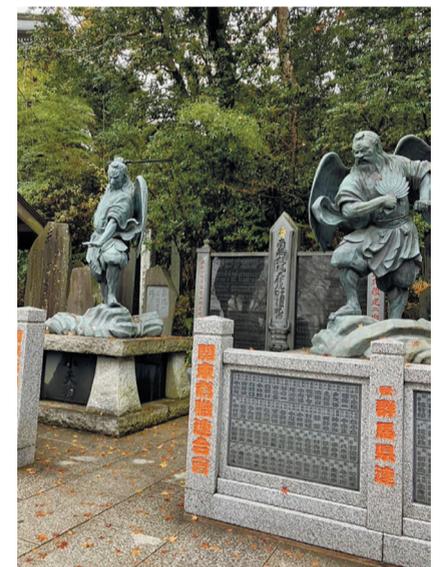
Many kinds of creatures live on Mt. Takao, and a large natural forest remains there. There are deciduous forests, coniferous forests, and giant cedar trees that are hundreds of years old. In addition, there are artificial forests made of Japanese cypress and cedar trees. Not only the plants, but also the animals living in Mt. Takao are diverse. It is found that

more than twenty-five species of mammals, seventy species of birds and four to five thousand species of insects inhabit the area. This shows that Mt. Takao has unique biodiversity.

Another charm of Mt. Takao is that such an environment exists in Tokyo, the capital of Japan. It takes about an hour to get from Shinjuku, a station in central Tokyo, to Takaosanguchi, the closest station to Mt. Takao. In addition, there is no need to change trains. These facts make Mt. Takao so easily accessible and attract the highest number of climbers in the world.

Tengu, the guards of Mt. Takao

"Have you seen the tengu statue on Mt. Takao?" (A tengu is a long-nosed goblin.) When we asked a foreign visitor, she didn't understand what a tengu was, so we would like to explain it in detail.



The tengu statues of Yakuo-in Temple MIU KUMAGAI PHOTO

The tengu of Mt. Takao is an attendant who follows and protects the main image and has a role to bring many benefits such as good luck and warding off evil spirits. It has long been revered as the object of many legends, sometimes with familiarity and sometimes with fear.

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Natsumi Ujiie, Toshiyasu Nawa and Miu Kumagai



The view of the summit of Mt. Takao NATSUMI UJIE PHOTO

CULTURE

The historical shrine in Hachioji City

In Japan, there are shrines where gods have been enshrined since ancient times.

The shrines are closely related to the history of the area and the lives of the people.

We will talk about the Hachiman Yakumo Shrine in Hachioji City, Tokyo, its history and importance.

What is Hachiman Yakumo Shrine?

Hachiman Yakumo Shrine is located in the center of Hachioji City. It is in an easily accessible location, a 10-minute walk from Hachioji Station. The gods of *Hachiman* and *Yakumo* are enshrined here. It is very rare for two gods to be enshrined together. The god of Hachiman Shrine is said to be the god of the founder of Hachioji, and the god of Yakumo Shrine is said to be the god that inspired the place names in Hachioji, and both are the gods with the deepest connection to Hachioji. It is said that this shrine brings many benefits, such as good luck, warding off evil, academic achievement, traffic safety, and marriage.

History of Hachiman Yakumo Shrine

Hachiman Yakumo Shrine was founded about 1100 years ago. It was also the object of faith for the influential samurai in the area, and it was the center of power on the western side of Tokyo.

In the Tokyo air raid during World War II, most of the urban areas including the precincts were burned, but there was one building left, which was a 100-year-old *Kagura-den*, a shrine stage. It is said that the tree next to it protected the *Kagura-den* from the fire. The inside of the tree was burnt and hollow, but the leaves were still alive. After the air raid in Tokyo, the grandfather of the current priest protected the tree, and it has survived to this day. The portable shrines used during festivals were rebuilt after the war.

The location of this shrine is a flat area of the Hachioji basin, and water easily springs up, so it is believed that people have lived there since ancient times. As evidence, the first elementary school in Hachioji City is located opposite the shrine. The city is also a textile production area, and merchants from all over the country come to buy them. You can also see geisha districts nearby.

Today, the shrine is beloved by people as a shrine with deep roots in the community, holding annual events such as *Hatsumode* (New Year's visits) and *Shichigosan* (a traditional event that celebrates the healthy growth of children), and participating as the central shrine in the Hachioji Festival.

Understanding the local area through the shrine

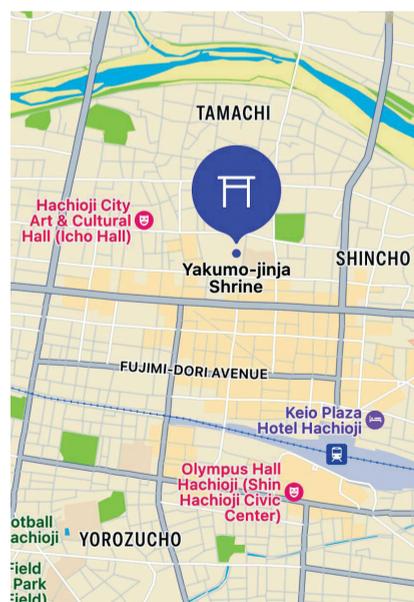
Thus, Hachiman Yakumo



Hachiman Yakumo Shrine built in Yokoyama-cho YUIKO MURAI PHOTO

Shrine has always been at the center of Hachioji's long history and has long been carefully protected as a shrine dedicated to the God of Hachioji. Japanese shrines are an object of faith for the people of that area, both now and in the past. People visit and pray for peace in their daily lives. The Hachiman Yakumo Shrine has watched over the development of Hachioji, survived the war era, and continues to be the shrine closely associated with Hachioji. Everyone, please check out the history of the shrine related to your hometown and visit it. You can learn and discover the history of your hometown.

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Kanae Seo and Yuiko Murai



Maps to Hachiman Yakumo Shrine from Hachioji station

Interviews with the Head Priest

Q. Why are the two gods enshrined together?

A. During a flood about 400 years ago, the sacred object from the god named *Yakumo* was lost. It drifted to the northern town of Hachioji, and farmers brought it to the Hachiman Shrine. The two gods were then enshrined together. Therefore, the name of the shrine was changed to "Hachiman Yakumo Shrine".

Q. What is the relationship between the Hachioji Festival and this shrine?

A. In the past, the Hachioji Festival was divided into a western district festival and an eastern district festival. The western district is represented by Taga Shrine, and the eastern district is represented by Hachiman Yakumo Shrine. The combination of the two festivals is the Hachioji Festival, which is currently held every August. The festival floats are the main attraction, and the entire Hachioji area is filled with excitement. The Hachiman Yakumo Shrine plays an important role in the Hachioji Festival, as it is the center where the east side district meets the west side district.

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Kanae Seo and Yuiko Murai



The float during the Hachioji Festival FROM THE HACHIMAN YAKUMO SHRINE WEBSITE

SWEETS / MUSEUM

Specialty shops filled with the charms of Hachioji

**Not just a melonpan shop!
What is the secret?**

Have you ever heard melonpan? It is bread from Japan that has sweet biscuit dough on top. It's called melonpan because it looks like a melon and pan means bread.

Melon de melon is a melonpan shop in Hachioji. It is different from other shops because they try different ways to be unique and stand out from others.

This store puts a lot of effort into scheduling meetings with



Top left: Belgian Chocolate Melonpan; Middle: Chocolate Chip Melonpan; Top right: Amai Strawberry Melonpan SAHO WAKATSUKI PHOTO

food manufacturers.

The dough of the melonpan is first fermented at the factory and shipped to the stores.

The store's recommendation is the plain melonpan.

Through this interview, we found that originality and commitment are important to create distinctive products.

Why is this store so popular? Is it just because of the good taste?

This shop is popular because of its ingenuity.

First of all, an impactful large melonpan is attached to the outside wall.

Another factor is that employees keep the area around and inside the store clean.

Finally, employees place the products that they want to sell the most on the right side of the store because people tend to look from left to right. This is how employees make the best impression on customers.

Popular shops do a lot of ingenuity. Hard work and a lot of effort leads to great success.

The future of Melon de melon

Melon de melon will start selling other types of bread to get more people to know about the shop.

It started with the owner's idea to provide delicious bread to many people.

The owner aims to create a popular melon bread shop that makes people, even those who are not repeat customers, feel good about their purchase.

For this reason, he would like to offer Japanese-style melon bread, such as *matcha* melon bread, to foreign customers.

Another shop filled with the owner's passion

Another shop is Akameru, a cake shop in Hachioji. It was opened by the owner's love for sweets. The sweets shop that used to be there was closed. She wanted to leave a place with her passion, so the owner decided to open Akameru.

A special feature of the shop is the concerts. Musicians are invited to give the customers a feeling of luxury.



Seasonal menus without additives MAO KOMURO PHOTO

They recommend a seasonal menu that serves four seasons using seasonal fruits.

They also don't use any food additives. There is a child who has eaten the sweets since 0 years old among these customers!

Akameru's dine-in area is of high value in the exceptional space. For take-out, they attach a sheet with recommended eating instructions. The owner feels happiest when people say, "*Oishii* (This is delicious)."

We found that the store owner's commitment and consideration to the customers are the reasons why this cake shop is loved by many.

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Miku Iwasaki, Mao Komuro and Saho Wakatsuki

The Edo-Tokyo Open-Air Architectural Museum, where you can step back in time

The Edo-Tokyo Open-Air Architectural Museum opened in 1993 as an annex of the Edo-Tokyo Museum. Its purpose is to relocate, restore, preserve, and exhibit historical buildings of high cultural value that cannot be preserved locally, and to pass them on to the next generation as valuable cultural heritage.

There are many old Japanese buildings in the museum. Amazingly, Studio Ghibli's movie director Hayao Miyazaki visited the museum and used some of them as references for his movie titled "*Spirited Away*" ("*Sento Chihirono Kamikakushi*" in Japanese). For example, the public bath in the movie refers to one of the buildings in the museum. There are several buildings that were referenced. It is interesting to look for them. The Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum

has a strong relationship with Studio Ghibli and Hayao Miyazaki. Also, the Edo-Tokyo Open Air Architectural Museum has an original character whose name is Edomaru. It looks like a caterpillar, and Mr. Miyazaki designed it. It holds attractive events, such



A public bath that appears in Spirited Away called Kodakarayu. TSUKASA YAMAMURA PHOTO

as floodlights, demonstrations of traditional crafts, and so on.

How is the Edo-Tokyo Open-Air Architectural Museum managed on a vast 7-hectare site? Many buildings have been moved exactly as they are. However, buildings built in the old days naturally have different architectural standards and earthquake resistance standards, so they are newly reinforced. The buildings are not the only highlight of this museum. There are also beautiful gardens and trees to see. People from the landscaping industry regularly take care of the garden and trees. In addition, they use their ingenuity, such as working on pine trees, and show off their skills to viewers.

Hiroyuki Kutsuwada, a curator in the museum, recommends two places in the museum. First, Shitamachinaka Street. It has the



The front of Kunio Maekawa's house TSUKASA YAMAMURA PHOTO

Kodakarayu, a public bath, which appears at the end of the street in *Spirited Away*. It was built in 1929. Second, the house of Maekawa Kunio. Maekawa Kunio is a famous architect who was a disciple of Le Corbusier who planned the National Museum of Western Art. He also planned Kunio's house. The house doesn't have many things and it is not flashy because it was built during World War II. However, many visitors say that the building is good, and still worth the visit.

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Tsukasa Yamamura, Lisa Nakano and Yumi Masuya