

Mitsui Hikoshiro and “Hanzaki-Daimyojin” Shrine

According to the Sakuyoushi, published in 1691, the rare worldwide Hanzaki Grand Shrine was recorded as having been built to appease a divine punishment that came about from the killing of a Hanzaki by Mitsui Hikoshiro during the Bunroku period (1592-1596).

Long ago, within Yubara's Asahi River, were Ryuuzuze and Hanzakibuchi (both of which no longer exist), and it was said that Giant Salamanders would hunt down people and eat them. One day, there was a strange light from the depths of the river, and if one looked closely, they could see a Giant Salamander.

A young villager called Mitsui Hikoshiro tied a rope to himself, and, holding a sword, jumped into the water, where he was swallowed by the Giant Salamander.

Hikoshiro cut the stomach from the inside, and was pulled out by the villagers.

When they pulled the Giant Salamander from the river, it was roughly 10m long, and 3meters wide.

That evening, Mitsui heard a crying voice at his gate, but when he went to look, there was nothing there. From then on, the Mitsui household fell into despair, and everyone died.

The villagers were terrified of the curse of the Giant Salamander, and so built a small shrine within the borders of the local deity's shrine.

This is currently connected to the west side of the Hanzaki center, and is known as the Hanzaki Grand Shrine.

From this history, every year on the 8th August, in front of the Hanzaki Grand Shrine, there is a large Hanzaki Festival.

A giant salamander float is guided around town, and there is also an invocation of the gods with branches of a sacred tree, and Buddhist monks offering incense whilst sutra chanting to appease the curse.

Even now, it is a rare festival, and is often referred to as Okayama's bizarre festival.



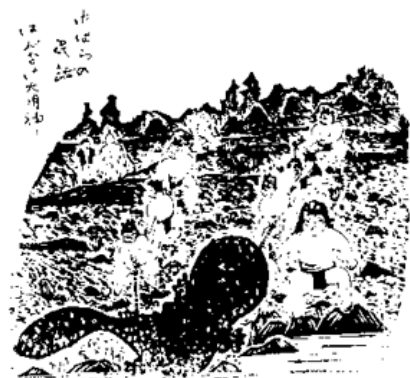
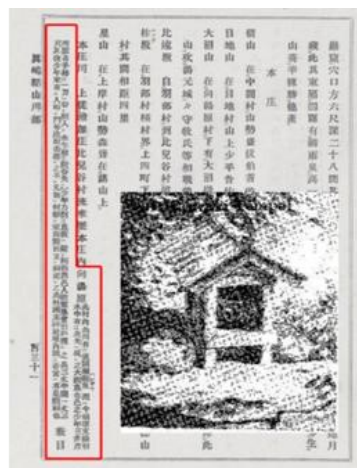
A photograph by
Ishikawa Chiyomatsu of the
Hanzaki Grand Shrine around 1900
(taken from the Hanzaki Collection)



Buddhist and Shinto Ritual



Former 10m long Hanzaki
Monument in Yubara



The story of the Hanzaki as recorded in the Sakuyoushi published in 1691.