

“Email Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama (64) February 24th, 2016 Issue”

[Saidaiji Eyo, a festival that brings spring to Okayama]

Hello, I'm Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

I went to watch the annual “Saidaiji Eyo festival” at Saidaiji Kan-non-in temple on February 20th.

It had been raining from the morning but stopped raining by the late afternoon so I was relieved. I thought Okayama is really a sunny region. The venue was filled with a sense of strange exaltation about an hour before with the heat of naked men walking around the temple grounds and they were waiting for the sacred woods to be dropped off. When the sacred woods were thrown off at 10pm, the excitement reached a peak. 10,000 naked men looking to get happiness who made a rush at the two woods looked very valiant and wonderful.

Also, 6,000 people from the youth group of the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry gathered in Okayama for the national convention on that day and they watched the festival after the convention.

Mr. Ban, the leader of the youth group from Utsunomiya city said, “I have always watched the festival on TV and wanted to see it live, so my dream came true”. Other people of the group were also very interested in watching the festival. It seemed that many people came to the festival. I realized that the festival is nationally famous.

I also saw quite a few foreigners this year. One of them was TV crew from France.

It was especially very impressive that a comment about the festival by a Canadian. He said that it would be a lot of fights and accidents if this kind of festival was held in Canada. He also said that he thinks the reason the festival lasts for 500 years is that Japanese people are

thoughtful even though they smash against each other.

The festival is expected to be designated as a significant intangible folk cultural asset in March. It will bring more popularity to the festival in the future. I would like to willingly show the world about this bizarre festival “Saidaiji Eyo” of Okayama. I personally think that it would be more fun for the audience if there was a device that the sacred woods can be tracked after they were thrown off.

“Taihaku Plum Festival” was held in Taihaku school district in the same Saidaiji area on the 21st. It was very beautiful to see 500 plum trees in full bloom. I feel the spring is coming to Okayama soon.

Let's enjoy spring.