

# Take-no-Karakai



Jr. High School Students Participating

The **Omi Take-no-Karakai** (Omi Bamboo Fighting Festival) is held every **January 15** in front of Omi Station in Itoigawa City. The festival first started centuries ago during the Edo period to pray for a bountiful harvest and good catch of fish.

Two teams of young men representing the western and eastern sides of Omi paint their face with brightly colored *kumadori* makeup and meet in central Omi carrying bamboo poles. Holding their bamboo poles together, they engage in a fierce match of tug-of-war. The team which wins is said to be blessed by the gods with a bountiful harvest of rice and fish.

After the fight, the teams move to the nearby beach, where two pyres have been erected. The two teams encircle their fires and chant, warming their bodies and dispelling evil spirits.

This rare and unusual New Year's festival is registered as a National Important Intangible Cultural Property of Japan.

# Sai-no-Kami



**Sai-no-Kami** is the name used in Itoigawa to describe an ancient New Year's tradition. The **Omi Take-no-Karakai** is one of over 70 such events held throughout Itoigawa City every year. Sai-no-Kami festivals tend to be unique to each community, but they all feature the **Sai-no-Kami pyre**, a large bonfire built to burn the New Year's decorations, old charms and other religious talismans in order to dispel bad fortune. **Sai-no-Kami** is also the name of a Japanese *kami* (god) who is said to preside over the New Year's season. The **Omi Take-no-Karakai** is held each year in honor of this *kami*.

Learn more about Sai-no-Kami at <http://sainokami.geo-itoigawa.com/en/>



## Getting to Omi



※From Itoigawa, take the Nihonkaihisui Line train bound for Tomari (Toyama).

## Getting to Omi Take-no-Karakai



## Festival Schedule

※May be canceled or delayed for inclement weather or unforeseen circumstances.

### Jan 15

- 12:30 p.m. Take-no-Karakai Bamboo Fight #1
- 1:00 p.m. Children's Bamboo Fight #1
- 1:10 p.m. Fukumochi Rice Cake Toss
- 1:30 p.m. Take-no-Karakai Bamboo Fight #2
- 2:00 p.m. Children's Bamboo Fight #2
- 2:10 p.m. Fukumochi Rice Cake Toss

- 2:30 p.m. Take-no-Karakai Bamboo Fight
- 3:30 p.m. Burning of the Sai-no-Kami Pyre (Nearby Omi Beach)

※All times are approximate and subject to change.

※Please take care when observing the event and obey the directions of police and event officials.

## More Info About Itoigawa

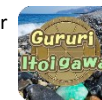
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# Itoigawa Omi Take-no-Karakai Omi Bamboo Fighting Festival





# Omi Take-no-Karakai



## **Kumadori Makeup**

The style of makeup worn by the participants is called *kumadori* and originates in kabuki theatre. It is characterized by a white base with black, red and blue highlights, creating bold, fierce expressions.

There are several theories about the origin of this tradition, although many say it is to symbolize that for the duration of the festival the participants are separate entities from who they are in normal life.



## **Take-no-Karakai Bamboo Fighting**

The two teams, made up primarily of young men from the East and West sides of Omi, fight in a large match of tug-of-war using bamboo poles freshly cut for the festival. The third of these three fights is usually the most intensely contested.

For the fight, the two teams align their bamboo poles together in what is called *awasetake*. This custom isn't seen anywhere else in Japan.



## **Children's Take-no-Karakai**

Elementary and junior high school-aged children are invited to participate in separate teams. By taking part alongside the adults, the children have fun while learning how to continue this culturally important festival in future generations.



## **Fukumochi Lucky Rice Cake**

After the children's fight, event officials toss pouches of *mochi* rice cakes out to the crowd. These rice cakes are said to bring good health and fortune to those lucky enough to eat them.



## **Kumadori Makeup**

Even the local police officers get involved in the festivities, painting their faces and donning *hachimaki* bandanas for the event.



## **Sai-no-Kami Pyre**

At the end of the festival, the bamboo poles are added to a large pyre which is then lit. The pyre contains the previous year's religious charms and decorations, burned to dispel bad fortune and prepare for the new year. These are collected throughout the community on January 7.