

# 牛の角突き



A guide book for Tsunotsuki



# What is Tsunotsuki?

Tsunotsuki in Ojiya is different from bullfighting elsewhere. Bullfighting overseas is often "matador-versus-bull" and what springs to mind for most people is the kind of bull fighting in Spain. With matador, bull, cape and sword.

Tsunotsuki is "bull-versus-bull", and different in that we will not decide a winner or loser. Tsunotsuki avoids long and thorough/exhausting fights between bulls. The bulls are drawn by handlers at an appropriate time. Usually after 5 or so minutes. Quite a different philosophy and approach to bullfighting from other countries.



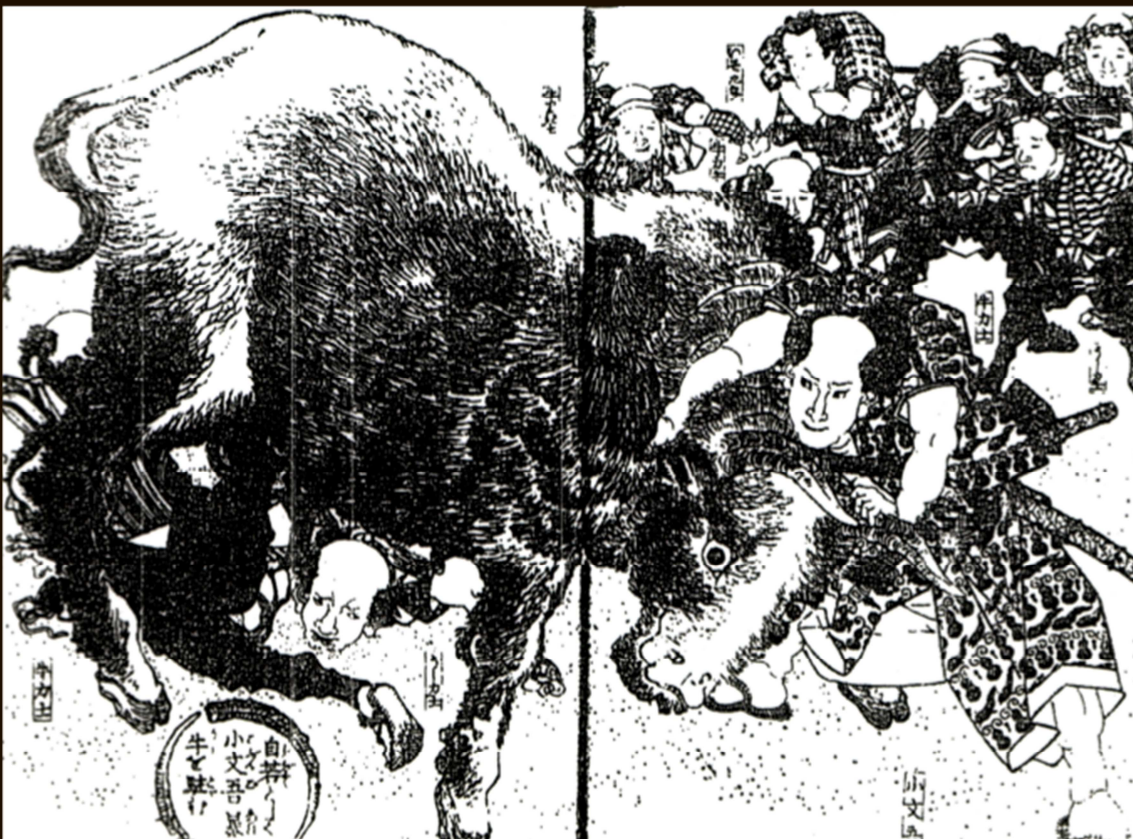


# Customs and history

Tsunotsuki in Ojiya had its beginnings in the Shinto religion, the thinking guided more by worshiping at the shrine. It is said that a dreadful battle was avoided because it was not a suitable dedication to the God who protects the land.

Ending Tsunotsuki in a draw also takes into account the thoughts of those who raise and carefully handle the bulls. The bulls are their irreplaceable assets and viewed more as living companions and part of the family. The state of this draw was written in the literature of the late Edo period, and its description and appearance is the same as it is now. The draw is one of the most important traditions that people involved in Tsunotsuki have kept unchanged to the present day. They say, "We are not bullfighting, but Tsunotsuki."

In addition, only Tsunotsuki is designated as an important, intangible folk cultural asset of Japan. The remnants of ancient animal competitions are recognized in various ways, as is seen in the manner in which a draw is given in Tsunotsuki.



From Nansō Satomi Hakkenden written by Bakin Takizawa in 1842

# Tsunotsuki-Ushi

Many of the Tsunotsuki-Ushi (bulls) in Ojiya are male off-spring of the Nambu bull (Japanese Shorthorn). Originally bred in Kuji city (formerly Yamagata village) in Iwate Prefecture. Their colors are red, roan or black. Weight of Tsunotsuki-Ushi is about 700 to 1100kg. Qualification for fighting is from 3 years of age.



Tsunotsuki-ushi bred from Nambu bulls (Japanese Shorthorn)



Selecting a Nambu bull to be Tsunotsuki-ushi



They are then transported from Iwate Prefecture.



There is a custom to hold Umayaire to celebrate the introduction of a Tsunotsuki-ushi.



# Life with Tsunotsuki-Ushi

Ushi-mochi is the owner and raiser of a bull. Although they keep bulls, they are not engaged in the livestock industry. Ushi-mochi are the same as ordinary people, who keep and raise bulls as "part of the family", not as a business. They are quite different from most people in that they very much like looking after and raising bulls carefully and lovingly. Caring for bulls involves not only feeding in the morning and the evening, but also walking and exercising, hair brushing, nail care, mowing and so on. A person who is willing to do such work and is ready to devote his life to a bull is Ushi-mochi. Their life translates to "Bulls first".



Tsunotsuki-ushi are brought up by eating hay.



Ushi-mochi take Tsunotsuki-Ushi for a walk.



Ushi-mochi washes their Tsunotsuki-ushi.

# Deliberations and decisions of the matches

Matches are reviewed by representatives of each district before about five days of the Tsunotsuki. Taking into account age, skill, physical condition, status, past fighting, and needs of owners, matches are deliberated carefully and determined. Matches are confirmed along with the applause from Tsunotsuki seko on Tsunotsuki day.



Matches are always deliberated seriously.



Matches are officially confirmed on Tsunotsuki day.



Representatives decide matches using the wooden tags that have the names of bulls.



# Welcome audiences

On the day of Tsunotsuki, Tsunotsuki-ushi come together one after another to the bullring in the morning. At the same time, people in the local region work together to prepare for spectators - such as stadium cleaning, checking seats, etc.



Local children help prepare the stadium.



Staff welcome you at the entrance reception



Tsunotsuki bullring is purified before matches with salt and sacred sake - a ritual handed down from a Shinto ritual.



Local children can't wait for Tsunotsuki!

# Preparation before fight

Before a match, owners of the bull and supporters gather around the bull. The bull must be purified by sacred sake. Then they will proudly enter the bullring.



Bull and beaters purify themselves in the sacred sake.



The bull heads for the bullring led by the owner.



They enter the bullring along with the shout of "Yoshita!"



Bull and Seko who enter earlier wait for the opponent to enter.



# The start of Tsunotsuki

Once both bulls enter the bullring, they walk around in a clockwise direction. Both seko cue each other to start. After confirming the cues, the seko start to unwind the Hanagi (halter) and Tsunotsuki will start!



Both bulls walk around in a clockwise direction after entering the bullring.



After the seko cue each other, Tsunotsuki will start.



It is a custom that the seko lead the bull from the right side by the Hanagi (halter).



Some bulls can run into the bullring from outside. It is referred to as "Yamanugi".

# Technique and character

The bulls poke and hit the opponent's face or head with their horns. Some bulls are aggressive. They launch swift attacks as "victory goes to the one who makes the first move". Others are defensive. They wait for the opponent to get tired paring blows with their neck, then fight back in the second half.



Attacking and defending by tilting the body



Hooking - Hooking a placing one horn under the opponent's horn



Pushing the nose up under the face of the opponent, and then attacking quickly



Browbeating - threatening each other before battle

※There are a variety of techniques in addition to the above.



# Roles of seko

Both bulls exert their strength and it is said that the state that they are equalized is the best. Therefore, if one bull is going to attack a little more and is likely to make the battle equal, the Seko will watch over the situation. On the contrary, if both bulls continue fighting and the state of equality is likely to collapse, then the Seko will draw them apart as soon as possible. Even if the difference in strength of the bulls is clear, Seko will create a state of equality and smoothly draw both bulls without missing that moment. Making an equal state is the most important role of Seko.



With arms spread, the beaters cheer the bulls up with the shout of "Yoshita!"



The beater makes the bull well-energized in a timely fashion.



A leader of the beaters instructs the decision to draw. Then two beaters give cue to each other, and hook ropes to the bulls' legs.



The beaters of the owners grasp the bull's noses and pull them away.

# After Tsunotsuki

After seko pull the bulls apart, they put a halter on them and put a ring, called an Omozuna, on their face. They will exit walking around the bullring.



Even after the fight is finished, some bulls look daggers at an opponent.



Tsunotsuki ends successfully and the owner feels relieved.



After the Tsunotsuki, the owners give appreciation to their bulls.



They leave walking around in a clockwise direction.



Play-by-play and commentary to liven up Tsunotsuki!



Tsunotsuki is fun once a month for local people.



You can see our unique attractive treasure!



### Mimamori-iwa (rock)

It is a symbol of the bullring. It looks like Tsunotsuki-ushi! Feel how big it is!



### Joint barn

There is a joint barn for the owners who cannot have Tsunotsuki-ushi at home. The Higashiyama Elementary School has kept White Gyutaro there.



### Mokujiki Kannondo (prefecture designated cultural asset)

Mokujiki Kannondo is work by wandering monk "monkjiki-shonin" who lived in the late Edo era. You can see its gentle face.



### Mt. Kanagurayama (the highest peak at 581m near Ojiya city)

It also appeared in "Nansō Satomi Hakkenden" by Bakin Takizawa, who wrote in the late Edo era. We can overlook the Echigo plain from there. Great view!



## Stalls and information - come and visit us!



### Higashiyama mini omozuna

Selling Higashiyama traditional mini omozuna (ring) and Tsunotsuki fork art made from wood. They're good luck charms!



### Kagura Nanban (hot pepper)

Selling creative dishes and snacks of Kagura Nanban.



### Hira-Chu

Selling Tsunotsuki goods such as T-shirts and towels.



### Kanagura Soba dojo

Try Soba (buckwheat noodles) made from local buckwheat!



### Suehiro-ya

Liquor store in Higashiyama



### Sun Plaza shop

You can buy original souvenirs from Ojiya.



# History of Tsunotsuki

A.D.	Japanese calendar	Event
Around 1775	Anei 4	A monk “Ryokan” watched Tsunotsuki in Mushigame and read the poem.
1820	Bunsei 3	An essayist “Bokushi Suzuki” watched Tsunotsuki in Mushigame (March)
1852	Kaei 5	Tsunotsuki was held in July in Edo
1888	Meiji 21	Tsunotsuki was held at Asakusa park in May in Tokyo
1893	Meiji 26	Niigata Governor temporarily permitted Tsunotsuki for combat motivation exaltation at the Sino-Japanese War
1903	Meiji 36	By the issue of "Niigata Prefecture Ordinance No. 9 “Togyu regulation”, Tsunotsuki is permitted to be held in February.
1936	Showa 11	Tsunotsuki was held in Koguriyama sponsored by Newspaper company “Hokuetsu Shinpo-sha” in July.
1945	Showa 20	Tsunotsuki was prohibited by the occupation policy from GQH.
1951	Showa 26	Yamakoshi Togyu Association was formed again in June. Tsunotsuki was permitted to be held.
1954	Showa 29	Higashiyama village were merged with the Ojiya City in May 11.
1967	Showa 42	The number of Tsunotsuki-ushi in Higashiyama district was reduced down to 40. Tsunotsuki got paused after held in Shiodani in May.
1970	Showa 45	Tsuneichi Miyamoto visited Yamakoshi village first time, giving a guidance for revival of Tsunotsuki in September.
1973	Showa 48	Introduction 20 2-year-old bulls from the southern region in Iwate Prefecture.
1974	Showa 49	Tsunotsuki training meetings was held by owners in Ojiya and Yamakoshi in June.
1975	Showa 50	20 bulls in Yamakoshi and 10 bulls in Higashiyama were gathered, and Tsunotsuki was restated in Koguriyama bullring in November.
1976	Showa 51	The Echigo Togyu Association was launched in April Ojiya Togyu development promotion committee was formed and the development of Koguriyama bullring was started in August.
1977	Showa 52	The development of Koguriyama bullring was completed in August.
1978	Showa 53	Establishment of Tsunotsuki folkways Preservation Society in February. Because Koguriyama bullring should be managed by local region, Ojiya Togyu Promotion Council was

		established in March. Tsunotsuki has been designated as the important intangible folk cultural asset as “Tsunotsuki folkways” in May.
1997	Heisei 9	The number of bulls got the same level as Tsunotsuki restarted.
2004	Heisei 16	Chuetsu earthquake happened in October.
2005	Heisei 17	Tsunotsuki were held at Hakusan Sports Park in Ojiya city and at Higashiyama Family Land in Nagaoka City in May.
2006	Heisei 18	After the earthquake, Tsunotsuki was held at Koguriyama bullring in June in Ojiya city.
2008	Heisei 20	Ojiya Togyu Promotion Council won the Chairman's Award and the Special Jury Prize in November.
2010	Heisei 22	Ojiya Togyu Promotion Council established a joint barn in August.
2013	Heisei 25	Echigo Togyu Association re-launched in March.



# Access to bullring in Ojiya

It's 20-minute drive from Ojiya IC on Kanetsu expressway.



1. Turn right after you get off Ojiya IC, and head for Ojiya Station.
2. When you see Ojiya Station, turn left.
3. Turn right at Yokowatashi crossroad.



4. Turn left after exiting the tunnel.

Issued by Ojiya Togyu Promotion Council and Ojiya Togyu Hokuto Board

For the up-to-date information, visit our website.

<http://www.tsunotsuki.com>