



Koshu Isawa no Akatsuki" from Fugaku Sanju Rokkei (Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji)

Preface

"Koshu Isawa no Akatsuki" (Dawn at Isawa in Kai Province) is not only one of the masterpieces by Katsushika Hokusai, the Ukiyo-e artist of the late Edo period, but also a depiction of an aspect of the old days of Isawa-shuku full of vibrancy.

This woodblock print depicts the busy early morning scene of travelers with their cargo departing for the long journey on the Koshu-dochu Road. The roofs of the houses are gradually getting lighter and in the background Mt. Fuji is seen in the pale light of dawn. Isawa River flows on its way with the Ukai Bridge silhouetted in the haze on the route leading to the Kamakura Kaido Road.

Isawa River is currently called the Fuefuki River or the Ukai River where cormorant fishing was conducted.

Cooperation by: Fuefuki River Isawa Cormorant Fishing Preservation Association
Material provided by: Yamanashi Prefectural Museum and Ukaizan Onmyoji Temple

Koshu-dochu Road and Isawa-shuku^{*1}

Gokaido, the five major roads established by Tokugawa Shogunate

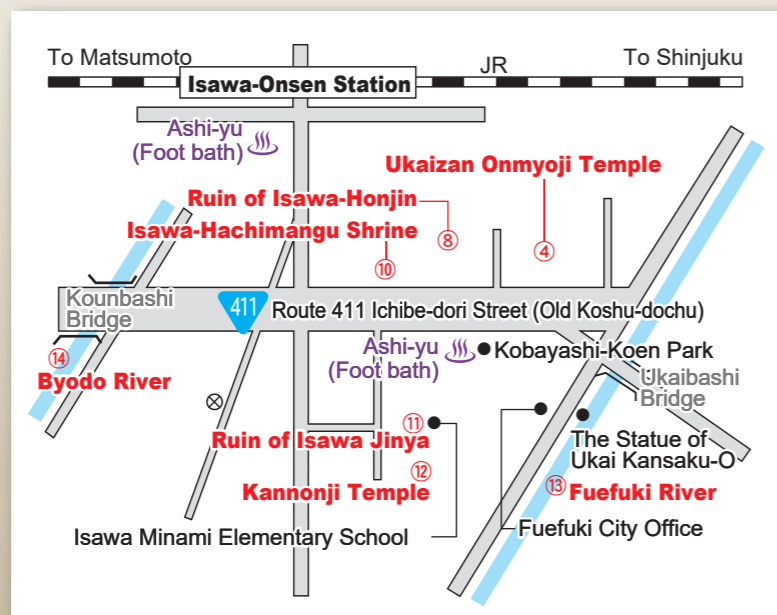


Koshu-dochu Road, which crossed Isawacho-Ichibe, Fuefuki City, connected Nihonbashi and Shimosuwa-shuku and led to Nakasendo Road. With a total length of 219 kilometers, it was one of the five major roads (Gokaido) established by Tokugawa Shogunate. This Road was also called Koshu-Kaido.

Isawa-shuku was located at the current Isawacho-Ichibe, Fuefuki City. There were 45 post towns on the Koshu-dochu Road. Isawa-shuku was the 38th post town counting from Nihonbashi.

Directly connected to the capital Edo, Isawa-shuku on the Koshu-dochu Road enjoyed prosperity as a post town.

^{*1} . . . Shuku (or Juku) refers to a station or a post town on a major road.



Current map of the vicinity of Ichibe-dori Street (Outline)

Isawa-shuku appears on the "Koshu-dochu Bunken Nobe-ezu"^{*2}

The illustration "Koshu-dochu Bunken Nobe-ezu", completed in 1806, depicts the landscape of Isawa-shuku in those days. Isawa-shuku, measuring 545 meters long and comprising of 85 houses, was a post town on the Koshu-dochu Road. It acted as a junction to the Kamakura-Kaido Road.

Isawa-shuku had a boat wharf accessible to the Fuji River waterway via the Fuefuki River and became a key place for land and water traffic in the eastern Kofu Basin area.

Tracing the illustration from the right it shows ^①Entrance of Isawa-shuku, ^②Border of Azanakamachi, ^③Kosatsuba, ^④Goshuinchi Onmyoji Temple to the north, ^⑤Toiyaba, and ^⑥Kamakura Kaido Road extending south-east from the Toiyaba.

- ^{*2} . . . "Koshu-dochu Bunken Nobe-ezu" is a map that was completed by the dochu-bugyo(traffic control bureau) under the order of the Tokugawa Shogunate to control the roads.
- ^{*3} . . . Fujigawa Suin was a water route that connected Kofu Basin and Suruga Bay.
- ^{*4} . . . The Fuefuki River was moved about 1 kilometer east of the original flow due to a large flood which occurred in Meiji 40 (1907). Nowadays, the Byodo River flows where the original stream was.



The landscape of Isawa-shuku illustrated on the "Koshu-dochu Bunken Nobe-ezu" (Owned by Yamanashi Prefectural Museum)

Going further west on the Koshu-dochu Road, it shows ^⑦Azanishimachi ^⑧Honjin and Waki-honjin^{*3} to the north, ^⑨Kosatsuba, and ^⑩Torii Gate of Isawa-Hachimangu Shrine. Going south from the front of Honjin, it shows ^⑪Isawa Jinya,^{*4}^⑫Goshuinchi Kannonji Temple, and ^⑬Isawa River^{*5} to the south

At the far left, it shows ^⑭Fuefuki River; ferryboats were operated between the river wharf of Isawa-kashi and Kawata village (present-day Kofu City) on the west bank.

In addition, cargo boats were also operated from the river wharf at Isawa-kashi, sailing down the Fuefuki River to the wharf on the Fuji River to transport annual rice tax and other goods.

The Koshu-dochu Road was used not only for usual transportation but also used by pilgrims coming from Edo to go to the temple at Minobusan Mountain.

- ^{*5} . . . Kosatsuba refers to a place where public notices were posted including, precautionary statements from the Shogunate,accommodation charges, and so on.
- ^{*6} . . . Toiyaba refers to a place where horses and palanquins were arranged for travelers; today's railway station or bus-stop.
- ^{*7} . . . Honjin and Waki-honjin refer to hostels authorized and used by Kuge (court noble), Daimyo (feudal lord), and Shogunate officials.
- ^{*8} . . . Isawa Jin-ya was a building used as Isawa Daikan-sho(magistrate's office).
- ^{*9} . . . Isawa River was a small river that flowed on the route of the current Fuefuki River. The river was also called Ukai River.

Isawa Jinya (Isawa Daikan-sho)

^⑪Isawa Jinya was the building of the Isawa Daikan-sho (magistrate's office) established in 1661. Local governors primarily collected land taxes and cracked down on crime in villages under their control. Isawa Minami Elementary School was built on the ruin of the Isawa Daikan-sho. A monumental stone of the ruin of Isawa Jinya stands on the left side of the school gate. The main gate of the office was relocated to the Hatta-ke Goshuin Yashiki Residence in 1874.



Monumental stone of the ruin of Isawa Jinya



Main gate of Isawa Daikan-sho relocated to Hatta-ke Goshuin Yashiki Residence

Hatago and Isawa-honjin

When Isawa-shuku was nominated as an authorized accommodation place, no inns were in business for travelers, and so regular travelers had to stay at private houses in the area. Around 1843, 18 inns of various scale were in business. This was the moment when the town landscape became that of an orderly post town.

Kuge (court noble), Daimyo (feudal lord) and Shogunate officials did not use general inns but used Honjin instead.

The building of Honjin burnt down in Meiji 13 (1880) and only the warehouse remains now.

Isawa-shuku flooded

In the past Isawa-shuku had suffered from flood disaster due to its geographical location on the low land between the Fuefuki River and the Isawa River.



A monumental stone stands at the ruin of Isawa Honjin and its warehouse



Isawa-shuku was waterlogged by a large flood in Meiji 40 (1907) Photo from "Natural Disaster Historic Record of Fuefuki City"