

These two “unlucky” age groups play an essential role as organizers for this event, selecting the five sacred beech trees from which the festival’s *shaden*—a large wooden shrine—is built on January 13th, two days before the main event. After its construction, a priest from a nearby shrine holds a special ceremony to endow it with the spirit of Dosojin.

On the evening of January 15th the festival starts in earnest, as male villagers light torches from a bonfire and stage an assault on the *shaden*. The “unlucky” 42-year-olds sit on top of the shrine defending its roof while singing and chanting, and the 25-year-olds protect the wooden structure at its base, using pine branches to put out the torchbearers’ fires. Once the excitement of battle is over—and all participants have withdrawn to a safe distance—the *shaden* is ceremonially burned, together with large decorated lanterns on poles that are carefully made by families to bring good health and fortune to the children.

You can see a replica of one of these large, beautifully decorated poles in the Oborozukiyo no Yakata Museum.