

Kumamoto-jo Omotenashi Bushotai

The Kumamoto-jo Omotenashi Bushotai is a troupe of reenactors who welcome visitors to Kumamoto Castle by bringing to life key characters from the history of Kumamoto and Kyushu. Among the historical figures they portray are Kato Kiyomasa (1562–1611), who built Kumamoto Castle, and Hosokawa Tadaoki (1563–1646), lord of the nearby domain of Kokura, whose son was the first of 11 generations of the Hosokawa family to rule over Kumamoto from the castle.

The action takes place on a covered outdoor stage at Josaien, a re-created castle town inside the precincts of Kumamoto Castle that is full of restaurants and shops. Attired in period costume (including samurai armor weighing 15 kilograms), the reenactors give a humorous performance by speaking in courtly language (mostly in Japanese, but with a smattering of Chinese and English) and using archaic terms for modern devices such as cameras and cars. The performers battle one another using traditional weapons like spears and long-handled swords. Audience members are encouraged to take photographs of (and with) the reenactors and to post the pictures on social media.

Japanese history buffs and computer-game aficionados may recognize the 10 historical characters portrayed in the performances.

Kato Kiyomasa, lord of Higo (1562–1611)

Hosokawa Tadaoki, lord of Kokura (1563–1646)

Konishi Yukinaga, lord of the southern part of Higo (1555–1600)

Shimazu Yoshihiro, lord of Kagoshima (1535–1619)

Kuroda Kanbei, lord of Nakatsu Castle (1546–1604)

Omura Yoshiaki, lord of Omura Domain (1568–1615)

Matsui Okinaga, Hosokawa family retainer (1582–1661)

Yaso-hime, daughter of Kato Kiyomasa and daughter-in-law of Tokugawa Ieyasu (1601–1666)

Nanjo Motokiyo, Kato family retainer and master spear fighter (died 1614)

Iida Kakubei, Kato family retainer (died 1632)