

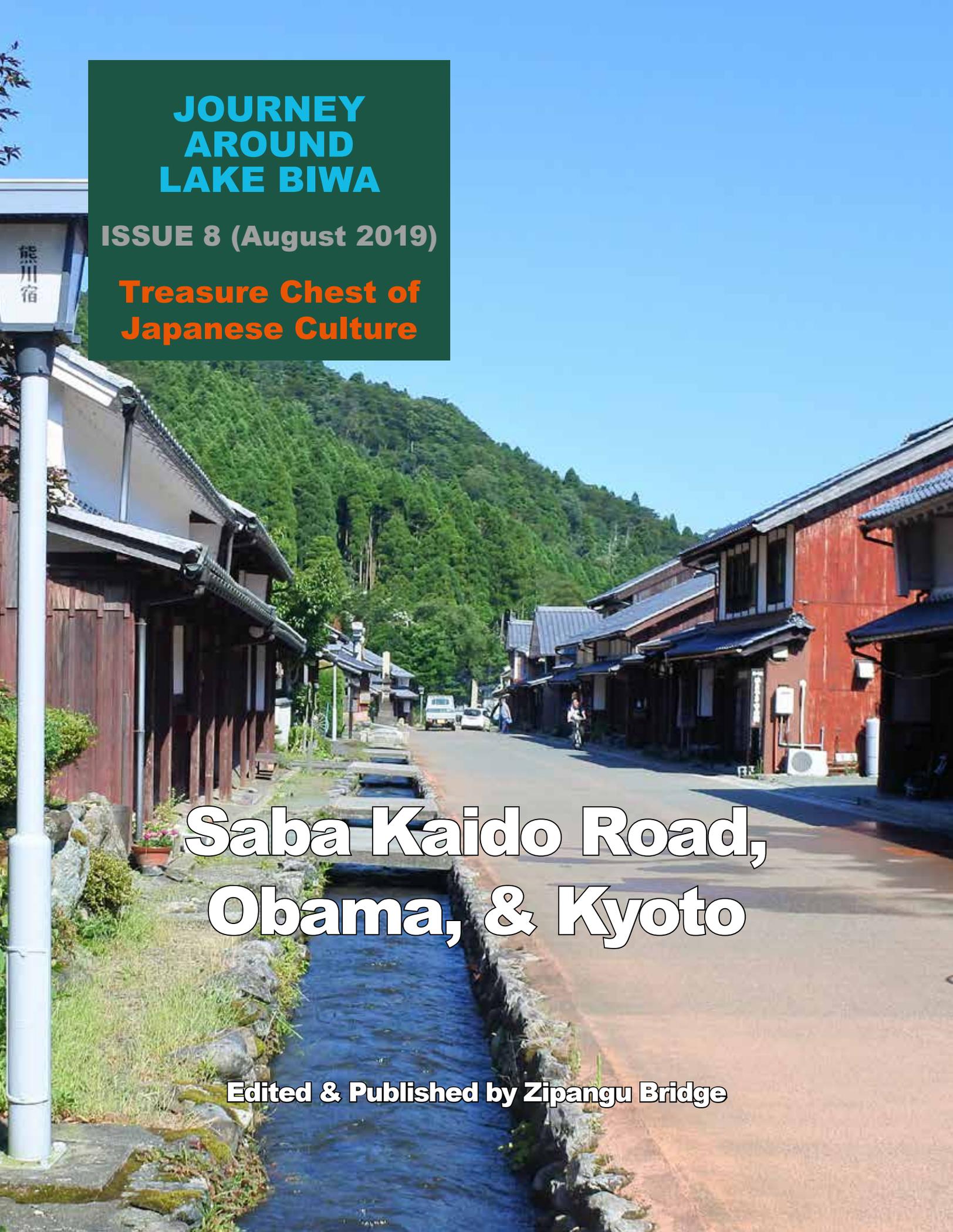
JOURNEY AROUND LAKE BIWA

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**Treasure Chest of
Japanese Culture**

Saba Kaido Road, Obama, & Kyoto

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Editor's Letter

Masashi Harada

This issue features Saba Kaido Road. The Saba Kaido Road refers to the road used to transport mackerel caught in Wakasa Bay from Obama in Fukui Prefecture to Kyoto in the capital. There are several roads called Saba Kaido Road, but the most famous route is from Obama, Fukui to Oharaguchi in Kyoto via Kumagawa-juku and Ohara. It is said that the mackerel were salted to preserve them on their journey from Obama to Kyoto, and when they arrived in the capital, they tasted even better than when they were fresh.

In this issue, we visited and interviewed the shop owners and people preserving Japanese culture along the Saba Kaido Road, mainly in Obama City. Obama is a port town facing Wakasa Bay. In the past, the mackerel were plentiful and the port was lively. Even today, it retains the appearance of the old port town and we can enjoy the charm of the culture. We visited Kutsukiya, which sells mackerel and runs a restaurant. We asked Takashi Masuda about the history of the Saba Kaido Road and mackerel cuisine.

The area along the coast of Wakasa Bay, centered on Obama City, is a city where traditional crafts are thriving. *Wakasa-nuri* lacquerware is one of the classic types of Japanese lacquerware. *Wakasa-nuri* chopsticks are the most common type of lacquered chopsticks in Japan. Some common *Wakasa-nuri* patterns are *okoshi-moyo* (*okoshi* pattern), *tamagogara-moyo* (egg pattern), and *kaigara-moyo* (shell pattern). Furui Chopsticks Studio has produced *Wakasa-nuri* chopsticks for many years. Mr. Masahiro Furui, a certified traditional craftsman, talked about the history and characteristics of *Wakasa-nuri* lacquerware.



Wakasa *washi* (Japanese paper produced in the Wakasa area) is famous as well. Wakasa *washi* has a history of more than a thousand years. It is soft, glossy and durable. We interviewed Mr. Mitsuo Shiba of Wakasa Washi-no Ie (House of Wakasa *Washi*) who has inherited this tradition as a business. He talked about the history and characteristics of Wakasa *washi*.



The stone at the end of Saba Kaido Road in Kyoto

Obama, which developed as a logistics base for the Saba Kaido Road and *kitamaebune* (old cargo ships), retains the old Japanese architectural style. Seisuihan is a 150-year-old merchant house that has been remodeled and opened to the public as a gallery. The director, Yasuhiro Tsuji, guided us through the old house.

In the past, rich merchants built their own temples, many of which still exist in Obama city. There is a sacred cave in Kuinji Temple that is said to be mausoleum of Yao-bikuni. The chief priest of Kuinji Temple talked about the legend of Yao-bikuni who lived to be 800 years old. We will also introduce Wakasa Hime Shrine, which has a history as a shrine in the Wakasa district, the scenery of Kumagawa-juku, a post town along the Saba Kaido Road, the coastal scenery of Obama, and *saba-zushi* (rod-shaped sushi topped with mackerel).

The Ohara district of Kyoto is located in the vicinity of beautiful mountains along the Saba Kaido Road. This rich district is known for vegetable making cuisine, and the Kyoto pickle known as *shibazuke* is famous throughout the country. We visited Shibakyu, which has been making pickles for many years, and asked representative Masaru Kubo about the making of *shibazuke* in Ohara.

We hope that you will enjoy the stories of the people who are active in the Saba Kaido Road area and cultural heritage and be interested in the history, culture and people's lives of Fukui, Shiga and Kyoto prefectures throughout this issue.