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### Japan's UFO Capital (Sightings, Ancient Documents)

From: [Stig\\_Agermose@online.pol.dk](mailto:Stig_Agermose@online.pol.dk) (Stig Agermose)  
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>From ABC News September 2 1997. URL:

<http://www.abcnews.com:80/sections/scitech/ufojapan902/index.html>

The Search for Aliens  
UFOs Bring Masses to Rural Japan

=93Everyone started talking about the myths associated with this town.=94  
=97 Takashi Ishiyama

H A K U I,=BF=BFJapan,=BFSept. 2 =97 Long known for seafood and beaches, Hakui now draws tourists from around the world for its obsession with UFOs, as the town's UFO-themed restaurants, pinball gaming centers, bars and hot spring resorts attest.

At the center of this celestial activity is the town's most popular attraction, Cosmo Isle Hakui, a UFO and space museum shaped, of course, like a large flying saucer.

The driving force behind the museum, located in Ishikawa Prefecture's rugged Noto peninsula along the Sea of Japan coast, is its director, Johsen Takano, a scientist and UFO buff who has turned a lifelong hobby into a paying job.

Takano's electronics background and leadership of the town's "mystery club" convinced town fathers to cough up public funds to build the museum, which opened in July 1996.

"We have three themes: space and space development, SETI or the search for extraterrestrial intelligence, and then UFOs," said Takano, SETI and UFO Science Museum Habitable Zone Director.

#### Restoring Terrestrial Life

The museum has space-related equipment from the United States and Russia on display, UFO-related materials, a library and a research center. Information on UFOs discuss aerial phenomena, alien abductions, crop circles, UFO contacts and radio transmissions related to SETI.

Vice director Takashi Ishiyama said local officials turned to UFO's to revitalize the town after its population was decimated by an exodus of young people to the cities.

"Usually, governments wouldn't participate in this kind of thing. But

with our government's lead and attention from the mass media, everyone started talking about the myths associated with this town," Ishiyama said.

#### Legend of Shohachibun

The town, which boasts the most reported UFO sightings in Japan, is steeped in alien folklore and legend.

"There is one legend called shohachibun, which says cymbal-like flashing lights were seen flying from one end of the mountain to the other," said Ishiyama.

"Another legend tells of children being taken away in a big nabe (stew) pan while playing."

But it is the town's ancient Ketataisha shrine, regarded as one of the four main shrines in Japan, that may hold the key to the town's preoccupation with strange phenomena.

"Ancient documents kept in the town's Ketataisha shrine talk about flashing lights in the sky and the hand of god controlling them. The story has been passed down from generation to generation." Ishiyama said.

#### Earthly Possibilities Identified

Although there was opposition from residents at first to using tax money for the museum, they finally came around to the idea as much out of curiosity as the commercial possibilities.

Around the corner from the museum is the UFO ramen restaurant, which serves up a heaping bowl of noodles garnished with little octopus balls shaped like aliens.

After a long day of sightseeing, visitors can also relax at the town's "Euphoria" hot springs.

Further up north are some of the region's most famous hot spring resorts, which draw tourists from countries like Taiwan who have made the museum a necessary stop on their tour.

Officials expect 200,000 people to visit this year.

"I don't believe in UFO's but this is interesting nevertheless," said housewife Masako Minami, as she eyed the burned shell of the Russian space capsule Vostok used to make the first manned space flight, in 1961.

"I grew up during the space race, so this is interesting."

#### Academic Aspirations

Takano said the aim of the museum is not just to attract tourists, but to become a leading research center for people interested in researching and studying UFOs.

Hakui has hosted several international space and UFO conferences in the past and the last one in May, held in the museum, attracted top scientists and researchers from the U.S. Naval Research Centre and NASA's SETI Institute.

Takano said he started to believe in the existence of alien life after obtaining declassified U.S. top-secret information.

He said data from the U.S. Air Force Academy shows that the UFOs have been around for 50,000 years and there is the existence of three to four groups of aliens.

"The conclusion is the unpleasant possibility that there have been alien visitors to our planet or alien-controlled UFOs," he said.

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