

Fukushima Bon Uta (Soma Bon Uta)

Danced in 2011 and brought back in 2021

Soma Bon Uta is an old folk dance from the Soma region in Fukushima Province in Japan. At some point, it began to be called Fukushima Bon Uta more than Soma Bon Uta but if you look up the dance in books such as Furusato no Minyo (Folk Dances of Japan) or you go to buy music, you will only find it under Soma Bon Uta. These are both different from Fukushima Ono which is done quite often in Hawaii and which is taken off from Soma Bon Uta. Sometimes the names are all used interchangeably which is really confusing. That is sometimes the way it goes.

The version we are doing was taught by Sahomi Tachibana – our dance teacher for 25 years. She studied buyo and bonodori in Japan before the war and went to Fukushima (the family home) to dance with her Grandfather. Her Grandfather told her she was not doing the dance correctly and he taught her some movements that were part of the area in which he lived. This is not unusual, as we in the US vary a dance from temple to temple, in Japan they will vary from locale to locale. Point is there is no single right or wrong. That's just the way it is. It's a folk dance and the dancers are enjoying themselves.

The basis of the dance are the old movements as found in the Furusato no Minyo text but when you put your hands over your head you first cross your hands in front of your body then down and around to a circle over your head. Then you sort of crouch down, sway hands to right, sway hands to left, and then stand up straight and extend both hands out. There is some footwork that goes with this which Sahomi did not include as it was complicated. We like the dance because it's very relaxing – almost meditative.

We think of the tsunami victims from 2011 and do this dance as a remembrance.

Teaching Video:

OBT Teach - Fukushima Bon Uta <https://youtu.be/cMYRrED1J7A>

Dancing Video:

OBT Bon Odori - 2021 Virtual Obon – Fukushima Bon Uta <https://youtu.be/QsObonma4i8>

Lyrics: coming.....