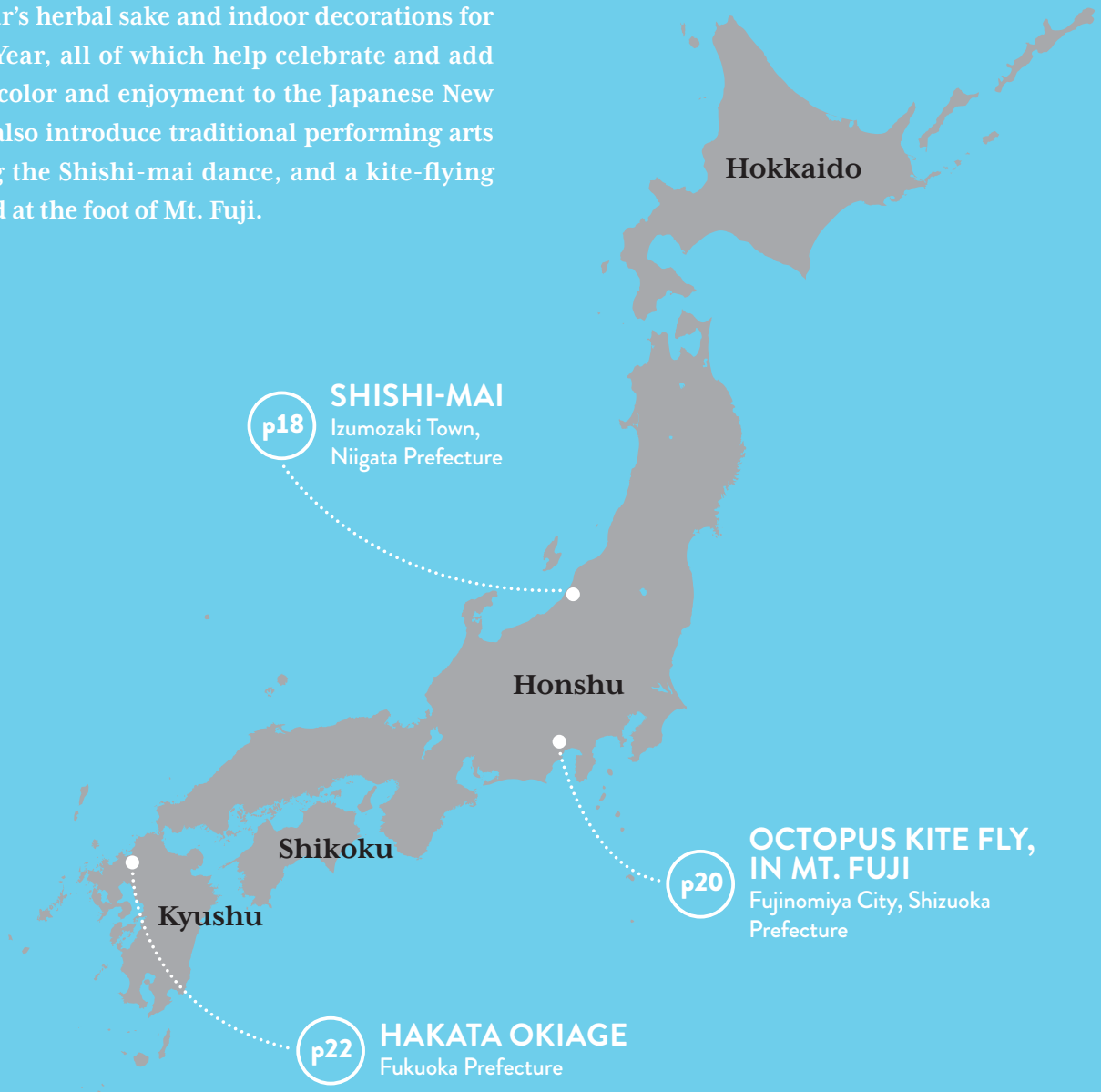
Celebrating a Bright New Year in Japan

Above left: An example of New Year decorations based on the concept of *shitsurai* in a Japanese home's *tokonoma*.

Above right: Pouring O-toso into a *sakazuki* (sake cup).

Below left: An example of o-sechi cuisine, beautifully arranged in a lacquered *jubako* box. The three-tiered circular vessel on the left is a lacquered sake cup.

Below right: An example of a *furisode haregi*: Long-Sleeved Robe ("Furisode") with Clouds, Bamboo Curtains, and Tachibana Oranges (19th century, Tokyo National Museum collection).

Japan has many annual events throughout the year, but it has treated its New Year events with special care since ancient times. The Japanese New Year is known for a variety of customs and good luck events related to food, clothing, and shelter, and each has its own meaning. In this month's *HIGHLIGHTING Japan*, we present an interview with a great scholar of folklore on the special meaning that welcoming the New Year has for Japanese people. We introduce kimono, *o-sechi ryori* cuisine (traditional Japanese New Year food), a New Year's herbal sake and indoor decorations for the New Year, all of which help celebrate and add splendid color and enjoyment to the Japanese New Year. We also introduce traditional performing arts including the Shishi-mai dance, and a kite-flying event held at the foot of Mt. Fuji.