

Costumes of Mikagura

[Costume of *Miyabito*]

The costumes for *Miyabito* are specially designed to reflect the period when the dances were composed. They are based on the costumes of the court ladies in the Heian period (794-1185). The costume consists of three layers of clothing: *hitoe*, *uchigi*, *omigoromo*, and *mo*.

Hitoe

A short silk pink robe of thigh length. This is worn under the *uchigi*, so its colour can be seen only in the neck area and around the openings of the sleeves.

Mo

An apron-like train which flows down the back of the robe. Seasonal flowers and birds are printed on the white and dark blue silk.

In the Festival Spirit

There is a full calendar of rituals performed at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, each with its own unique history and distinctive characteristics. There are almost 50 major rituals alone performed each year.

Kensuzu

A cluster of bells attached to a blade that

symbolizes the three sacred Imperial

regalia: the sword, mirror, and curved

Kanzashi

A traditional Japanese hair

ornament, decorated with yellow

chrysanthemum flowers.

Uchigi

An unlined silk green robe. Its

colour can be seen through the

Omigoromo

An ancient style Japanese

coat worn in important rituals. Cranes are printed

on it in blue ink.

jewel or magatama stone.

omigoromo.

There are major, medium and minor rituals: *taisai, chusai*, and *shosai* respectively. The Annual Grand Festival, the Spring Festival for a Bounitiful Harvest and the Autumn Harvest Festival are *taisai*; *chusai* include the celebrations for New Year's Day and the first offering of the new rice harvest. All other festivals are minor rituals.

Gochinza Kinen-sai, Shrine Foundation Ceremony, December 16th

In 1191, the original shrine was established and the Hachiman kami enshrined, mid-way up Mt. Daijin behind the main sanctuary. This event is commemorated by a performance of *mikagura* sacred dance accompanied by classical court music (*gagaku*) at the north end of the Lower Worship Hall.

• *Oharae*, Major Purification Ritual, December 31st

This important ritual offers purification from daily sins and pollution. Participants recite the purification rite and pray for the exorcism of evil and the cleansing of body and soul.

• Saitan-sai, New Year's Day, January 1st

A celebration for the arrival of the New Year to offer prayers for the blessings of the Hachiman *kami* in the coming year and to pray for the peace of the nation.

• *Gohan-gyoji,* Sacred Seal Ceremony, January 1st – 7th

The official seal of the shrine is symbolically impressed on the foreheads of worshippers to drive away disease and bad fortune in the coming year.

• *Joma shinji*, Dispelling Evil with Sacred Arrows, January 5

Archers in traditional costume shoot arrows at a target with the character *oni*, devil, written on the back of the target. The bow and arrow are believed to possess special powers to prevent misfortune and ward off evil.