

Miyajima History and Folklore Museum: Exhibition Room B

The second exhibition room focuses on the numerous annual festivals and other events that have taken place on Miyajima for centuries and remain important to island residents. Many of the festivals are of religious origin, being associated with Itsukushima Shrine or one of the other religious sites on the island, but others are folk events centered on the local community.

The most famous and grandiose among the former is the Kangen (“wind and string instrument”) Festival. This celebration takes place on the night of the seventeenth day of the sixth month according to the traditional lunar calendar, which now falls between mid-July and early August. It features a musical ensemble that performs classical court music onboard an elaborately decorated boat that is towed between Itsukushima Shrine and other shrines on Miyajima and the mainland. Scale models of the participating boats are among the displayed items related to the Kangen Festival.

Boats, albeit much smaller ones, are also the key components of the Tanomo-san festival, which takes place in autumn. The people of Miyajima, who were long prohibited from practicing agriculture, build small vessels as a symbol of gratitude to farmers on the mainland, on whom they used to depend for food. These boats are blessed at Shinomiya Shrine, fitted with small lanterns, and set afloat from Itsukushima Shrine after dark, making for an enchanting sight.