

Ueno Tenjin Festival: Chinzei Hachirō Tametomo Procession

Hatten, or minor spirits that live in the natural world, run amok throughout the procession. They are followed by performers who represent the Four Heavenly Kings of Buddhism. Dressed in regal costumes, they hold ancient spears designating their rank and skill.

Many types of *oni*, dressed in a variety of costumes and behaving devilishly, surround the chief image of En no Gyōja (634–706). Adding to the mischief-making are performers like the *hyōrōtsuki-oni*, or “staggering spirits,” who carry heavy objects on their backs and try to startle children in the crowd. If a child shrieks, it is said to be a sign that they will grow up strong.

The Chinzei Hachirō Tametomo procession is led by the *kiokensaki* (“grand sword”) *shirushi*. This float represents the martial skill and legendary strength of Chinzei Hachirō Tametomo (1139–1170), a samurai who fought during the Hōgen Rebellion of 1156 and is revered in Japan. A performer dressed in an elaborate twelfth-century-style costume as Chinzei Hachirō Tametomo is followed by two *oni* carrying metal clubs, signaling the end of the procession.

Following both the En no Gyōja and Chinzei Hachirō Tametomo processions are large drums played by local musicians. The drumming invigorates the *oni* as well as spectators, providing rhythmic accompaniment to the parade’s festivities.