

Ogi Festival Schedule

NOTE: This corresponds to a museum exhibit where content will be accessed by scanning a QR code.

February 1

This is the first day of the Ogi Festival, held to celebrate the New Year in the old Japanese lunar-solar calendar and to pray for peace and a bountiful harvest in the coming year. At about 6:00 a.m., Ogi-sama deities are carried down politely from Kasuga Jinja Shrine by Ogi-sama bearers, members of Kasuga Jinja Shrine begin a procession led by a sacred *Chochin* lantern bearers each troupe, which is followed by about 40 children and other festival participants. Along the way, the group splits into upper troupe (*kamiza*)-related participants and lower troupe (*shimoza*)-related participants, and each troupe makes its way to the home of its respective *toya* (lay officiant).

At about 10:00 a.m., all members of each troupe begin a ceremony at their *toya* residence, with their *toya* as leader. Women and children in the lower troupe assemble first, followed by the men. In the upper troupe, the order of assembly is reversed. During this part of the ritual, parishioners solemnly greet their respective Ogi-sama deity. The names of all parishioners are read and lay officiants for the coming year are confirmed. After the official duties are completed, a celebratory meal is served. Dishes include a special roasted tofu, which reflects the festival's other name, the Tofu Festival.

At about 6:00 p.m., performances of the local tradition of noh, Kurokawa Noh, begin. They are the highlight of the festival.

A participant representing the *akatsuki no tsukai* (dawn messenger) travels from the *toya* of the lower troupe to the *toya* of the upper troupe at about 10:00 p.m. At the conclusion of a minor piece in the series of noh performances, he takes a seat on the stage. He then greets the Ogi-sama and the upper troupe, congratulating its members on their success in the festival thus far and requesting their presence at the shrine the following morning.

Kurokawa Noh performances continue throughout the night, pausing only for the performers to have a light meal at midnight.

February 2

At about 5:00 a.m., the performances draw to a close with the completion of the fourth comic interlude. Members of the troupe begin to queue for the return to Kasuga Jinja Shrine, where the final ceremonies are performed.

The upper troupe sends the *shichidohan no tsukai* (seven-and-a-half-times messenger) to the lower troupe to aid the return of the Ogi-sama deity to the shrine. The repetition of a greeting seven times is thought to be the highest form of respect that can be given, thereby reflecting the sense of occasion.

At about 8:00 a.m., the Ogi-sama deities of both troupes are returned to the shrine's *haiden* (worship hall) in the same way they were removed.

At about 2:00 p.m., ceremonies continue with the *daichifumi* (stomping of the earth) ritual whereby two young boys acting as messengers of the deities stomp their feet on the stage. This is followed by a performance of *shiki sanban* (plays of prayer) in collaboration by both troupes.

At about 4:00 p.m., the final ceremony takes place to install the shrine's *tonin* (lay officiant) for the coming year and to place the Ogi-sama deities back in the shrine until the Ogi Festival the following year.