

## ***Yabusame* Archery Track**

*Yabusame* is the ancient skill of mounted archery. At Tsurugaoka Hachimangu, *yabusame* events are held every year on a 250-meter track that crosses the approach to the main shrine at right angles. Archers dressed in ceremonial clothing attempt to hit three targets set up along the path while riding at full gallop. *Yabusame* was originally a martial pursuit and was highly valued on the battlefield in medieval Japan. It became a ritual practice and has been performed at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu since 1187, where it is dedicated to Hachiman, the guardian deity of the warrior class. Events are conducted by members of the Ogasawara school of **mounted** archery, which performs *yabusame* in an elaborate and highly formalized ceremony on September 16. A *yabusame* event is also held in April, when the rival Takeda school takes to the track as part of the annual Kamakura Festival.