

Red Lacquered Bow, Black Lacquered Arrows, Gold Lacquered Quivers

This sandalwood bow with feathered arrows and two ornate quivers is one of the oldest and most precious items in the Tsurugaoka Hachimangu collection. The red-lacquered bow is almost 2 meters long and has gilt copper detailing on both ends as well as a decorative carving underneath the grip. The quivers are decorated with mother-of-pearl inlays (*raden*) in an apricot-leaf pattern on a ground of lacquer densely sprinkled with gold powder (*ikakeji*). Inside are narrow pockets for individual arrows. Of the 30 black-lacquered arrows, 13 are “turnip-headed” *kabura-ya* for ritual use, 13 are pointed, and four are rounded. These arrows are said to be the origin of the *hamaya* (demon-breaking arrow) tradition. Arrow-shaped *hamaya* amulets, which are believed to ward off misfortune and attract good luck, are popular with visitors to Shinto shrines on New Year’s Day.

This archery set has important historical connections to the founding of the first Hachiman shrine in Kamakura in 1063 by Minamoto no Yoriyoshi (988–1075), a military commander serving the emperor in Kyoto. Yoriyoshi was dispatched to northeastern Japan in 1051 to subdue rebellious samurai. Before his departure from Kyoto, he prayed at Iwashimizu Hachimangu, a shrine dedicated to Hachiman, the guardian deity of the Minamoto clan and of the warrior class in general. There he received an archery set as a token of divine protection. The northeastern campaign was a success, and on his way back to Kyoto, Yoriyoshi stopped in Kamakura to establish a shrine to Hachiman, dedicating two bows (one was lost to fire in 1807), arrows, and quivers to the deity to express his gratitude. The set was inherited by Tsurugaoka Hachimangu after its founding by Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), Yoriyoshi’s descendant, and has been cherished by the shrine ever since. It is designated a National Treasure and stored at the Kamakura Museum of National Treasures.