

## **Migochi Hikiyama Festival**

The Migochi Hikiyama Festival is an annual spring celebration, featuring a procession of floats, which has been held in the Migochi area since the early eighteenth century. The timing of its origins coincides with the rise of Tango *chirimen* (silk crepe), an important regional product that has supported the local economy for centuries. The festival honors the textile deity enshrined at Shidori Jinja Shrine and is meant to encourage local prosperity. Although traditionally held in autumn, in the twentieth century the festival was moved to spring, and today is held on May 3 and May 4 each year.

Elaborately decorated *hikiyama* floats are the main attraction. The elaborate pavilion-like structures are made primarily of zelkova wood, painted with black urushi lacquer, and inlaid with gold. There are 12 floats in total, four of which have two levels and reach heights of over 4 meters; these are known as *yama*. During the procession, the *yama* floats transport sacred objects said to contain the spirits of local deities through the streets of the town. Large banners draped on the backs of each *yama* float are richly embroidered with gold thread. All of the floats are mounted on wheels and pulled by rope, and they carry musicians playing drums, flutes, and bells that fill the air with festival music. Some of the smaller floats carry children playing instruments as well. Even today, the festival remains an important part of the region's cultural heritage.