**Kuzu Hachimangu Shrine**

Kuzu Hachimangu Shrine is said to trace its origins to the fourth century CE when it was established to honor Emperor Ojin (believed to have reigned from 270–310). The emperor is the divine spirit of the Shinto deity Hachiman.

The shrine’s main hall was built in 1412 and has a realistic carving of two Japanese bush warblers on a frog-leg strut beneath the eaves. The worship hall was built in 1581. Two fish carved on the eaves are known as “the carp that call water” and were placed there to protect the site from fire. However, it is said that these carvings were so powerful that they caused the nearby Mashita River to flood. Alarmed by this phenomenon, the shrine had arrows carved next to the fish to restrict their power.

In mid-January, high school students from the area gather at Kuzu Hachimangu Shrine for the annual Kawa Shizume no Gi, or “river-calming ceremony.” They don traditional Japanese archery outfits and shoot arrows at a straw carp to pacify the river and ensure a bountiful haul for local fishermen.

Kuzu Hachimangu Shrine preserves many cultural treasures from centuries past, such as distinctive wooden statues by the Buddhist monk Enku (1632–1695) and a sculpture of a lion’s head that purportedly rid the area of a plague.