

## **Illustrated Miracles of the Kasuga Deity (*Kasuga gongen genki-e*)**

This set of 20 picture scrolls was created in the early fourteenth century as an offering to Kasugataisha Shrine. The text and illustrations recount tales of the five deities that are worshipped collectively as the syncretic deity Kasuga Daimyōjin.

In addition to recording miraculous events related to the shrine, the scrolls include rare depictions of scenes from the tenth through fourteenth centuries. For example, the illustrations show warriors wearing arm guards on their left arms (the arm that faces outward when aiming a bow), leaving their right arms unprotected. Without a visual record, this trend might never have been known. The paintings also capture styles and decorations of clothing, swords, and armor that have since been lost to time.

Careful analysis of the illustrations has illuminated everyday aspects of warrior culture. In some scenes, high-ranking warriors on horseback seem

to have removed their helmets. Those helmets can sometimes be spotted on the heads of nearby foot soldiers, who were evidently tasked with carrying their lord's heavy headgear. Other illustrations show that the warrior-aristocrats of the time gave swords as gifts and kept birds as pets. In this way, the scrolls are a treasure trove of information on the mores and customs of their time.