

Formed from the Mount Futago volcanic cone on the edge northeastern Kyushu, the Kunisaki Peninsula was at one time a region of major political power in Japan. In the eighth century, the legendary monk Ninmon created the ascetic practice known as Rokugo Manzan. This practice is a combination of Buddhist and Shinto worship and includes a year-long pilgrimage to twenty-eight holy caves hidden in the mountains of the peninsula. As the practice became more embedded in religious tradition the temples and shrines of the Mirokuji-Usa Jingu complex required their monks to complete the Rokugo Manzan before they could serve at the shrine-temple. Along the Rokugo Manzan path, acolytes built additional shrine-temples with which to better worship the deities. This religious system held political power in the region until it was displaced by warrior lords who in turn built the castle towns that dot the peninsula today. Syncretic Buddhist and Shinto worship continued until shortly after the Meiji restoration in 1867 when Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines were required to separate by the new government.