

## Main Sanctuary

The existing Main Sanctuary of Takachiho Shrine was rebuilt in 1778. It was made in an architectural style for shrines characterized by a five-bay sanctuary (*gokensha-zukuri*). This is one of the largest examples of this construction style in the Kyushu region. The Main Sanctuary was nationally recognized as an Important Cultural Property in 2004.

On the right-side wall of the Main Sanctuary, there is a carving said to depict the local legend of Mikeiri no Mikoto, the older brother to Japan's first mythological emperor, destroying the fearsome *kami* deity Kihachi. According to the legend, Mikeiri returned to his hometown of Takachiho to live and govern after his younger brother became emperor. There, he vanquished the tyrant Kihachi who had been terrorizing the people of the village. He did so by cutting him into three pieces and burying them in separate locations in the area. He also rescued Princess Unome from Kihachi and married her. Together, they had eight children.

In the Takachiho area, Mikeiri is associated with defeating malevolent *kami* deities that harass the mountain farming villages, and so considered a patron of industry and a divine protector against misfortune. Mikeiri, his legend, and his family are all honored at Takachiho Shrine.