

The Sanada Family Mausoleums

The Sanada were the ruling family of Matsushiro for most of the Edo period (1603–1867). Their rule began in 1622 when Sanada Nobuyuki (1566–1658) was transferred to Matsushiro by the Tokugawa shogunate. That same year the Zen Buddhist temple of Chokokuji was established in Matsushiro as the new Sanada family temple. Five Sanada mausoleums were built on the grounds of Chokokuji, three of which still stand today.

Nobuyuki's mausoleum stands behind Chokokuji's main hall. Built in 1660, its black-lacquered exterior is adorned with gold leaf and intricate wood carvings. Inside are more elaborate and colorful carvings, along with a ceiling consisting of a series of gold leaf paintings. The mausoleum is a National Important Cultural Property.

To the right of Nobuyuki's mausoleum stands another, constructed for Nobuhiro (1671–1737), the fourth Sanada daimyo. Dating from 1736, it is noted for its interior ceiling, decorated with a painting of a dragon. Between Chokokuji's main hall and Nobuyuki's mausoleum stands the Kaizando, built in 1727 as the mausoleum of Matsushiro's third Sanada daimyo, Yukimichi (1657–1727). The mausoleum of Matsushiro's second daimyo, Sanada Nobumasa (1597–1658), once stood to the left of Nobuyuki's mausoleum, but is now located at Rinshoji Temple. A fifth mausoleum once stood behind Chokokuji, built for Sanada Yukimichi's mother.

The Sanada family graveyard is also at Chokokuji, containing the graves and memorial stones of ten generations of the Sanada family. Other temples that contain Sanada family mausoleums include Sairakuji and Daieiiji.