

The Kamikochi Connection

There are two branch shrines related to Hotaka Jinja, one easily accessible to worshippers, the other located among the clouds.

The former is the Okumiya branch, near Myojin Pond in the Kamikochi valley, about an hour's walk from the iconic Kappabashi Bridge. This branch shrine has a nautical aspect that is likely an ancient link to the seafaring Azumi from Kyushu: during the annual festival in October, Shinto priests in colorful Heian-period (794–1185) dress glide across Myojin Pond by boat, offering prayers to the gods and thanking them for safe passage through the mountains.

The Minemiya branch of Hotaka Jinja is a small wooden structure that stands at 3,190 meters on the summit of Mt. Oku-Hotaka, the third tallest mountain in Japan and the highest spot in the Northern Alps. This is believed to be where the god Wadatsumi no Mikoto descended to earth from the heavens, and from where he protects hikers and the descendants of the Azumi clan in the valley beyond the mountains.