

## **Hachiman Shrine**

Dedicated to Hondawake no Mikoto, the patron deity of warriors and fifteenth emperor of Japan, this shrine is known to some residents as Iwakawa Hachiman. The name recalls its origins as a place for worshipping the ancestors of the Iwakawa family, who served the Tanegashima clan that once governed Yakushima. An Iwakawa descendant was chief of the Hirauchi settlement centuries ago, and it seems likely that this site was a graveyard for the family. Twice yearly, in February and mid-August, the shrine's *shimenawa*, the straw rope hung to demarcate sacred space, is fashioned anew with rice straw gathered from nearby farms. Visit during the August Obon festivities to see *bo-odori*, a rhythmic dance performed with sticks.