

Shirakawa Hachimangu Shrine

Shirakawa Hachimangu Shrine is the main Shinto sanctuary in Ogimachi. It is believed to have ancient origins, but the year of its establishment is unknown. The shrine first appears in recorded history in the seventeenth century, when it was rebuilt by Yamashita Ujikatsu (1568–1653), a samurai general who ruled Ogimachi on behalf of the family of the warlord Uchigashima. The shrine's association with Hachiman, the guardian deity of warriors, is believed to date to this period. Also from the seventeenth century are the Buddha statues housed in the Shakado Hall, next to the main sanctuary. Their presence reminds us how Shinto and Buddhism, now thought of as separate, were intimately linked in Japan for more than a thousand years. On the opposite side of the main sanctuary is the Mikiden, the building where the shrine's sacred sake is brewed every winter. This sake is served to local devotees and visitors alike on October 14 and 15, when the annual Doburoku Festival is held at the shrine to celebrate the end of the farming season and to thank the gods for the harvest.