

Hida

Shirakawa-go is part of the Hida area, which extends across northern Gifu Prefecture west of the Hida mountain range and, in addition to Shirakawa, includes the municipalities of Takayama, Hida, and Gero. From ancient times until 1871, this area was called Hida province, a rural, relatively minor part of the country known mainly as a source of timber and metals. After the decline of the centralized state in the medieval period, Hida was contested by a number of warlord families, who built castles and outposts throughout the area. One of these fortresses was Ogimachi Castle, the site of which is now used as a scenic lookout where visitors can view the historic village of Ogimachi from above. In 1692, the ruling Tokugawa shogunate (central government) assumed direct control over the area and proceeded to govern it from the city of Takayama, which remains the largest population center in Hida. By the Meiji era (1868–1912), the key industries of forestry and mining were joined by sericulture, which flourished well into the twentieth century, particularly in Shirakawa-go.