

Shogenji Temple

Shogenji is a Jodo (Pure Land) Buddhist temple that stands at the foot of a hill about 100 meters west of where the Omori magistrate's office used to be. This location is indicative of the close relationship the temple enjoyed with the local administration of Iwami Ginzan during the Edo period (1603–1867). It was founded in the early years of the 1600s, around the time when the Tokugawa shogunate, or central government, assumed control over the silver mine. After the shogunate assigned a magistrate to administer the mine, the town of Omori developed around the magistrate's office, with merchants and samurai moving in to satisfy the office's demand for goods and services. Over the years, many of the magistrates chose to worship at Shogenji, and six of them were buried on its grounds—along with numerous members of Omori's wealthiest merchant families, who owed much of their prosperity to the magistrate's office.

The temple is entered through an imposing 10-meter-high gate, built in 1772 and decorated with elaborate carvings by a local artisan. These include a pair of guardian lions (*shishi*), dragons, and on the back the twin heads of elephants. Just past the gate on the right, covered by a stone roof, stands the tombstone of Takemura Michikiyo (1561–1635), the second magistrate of Iwami Ginzan. The temple's main hall dates to 1867 and houses a statue of the Amida Buddha under a colorfully decorated ceiling. Further up the hill behind the main hall is a Toshogu shrine—another indication of Shogenji's ties to the magistrate's office and, by extension, to the Tokugawa government. This sanctuary enshrines Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616), the founder of the shogunate, as a Shinto deity and also includes monuments to 11 of his successors.