

Imamiya Shrine

Imamiya Shrine is a modest sanctuary located in a grove some distance behind the main shrine complex. It enshrines the spirits of three emperors who unsuccessfully rebelled against the Kamakura shogunate and were punished severely for their actions. In 1221, the retired emperor Gotoba (1180–1239) attempted to restore power to the imperial house by overthrowing the Kamakura shogunate, the first warrior-led government in Japan. Establishment of the shogunate in 1192 had left the court in Kyoto virtually powerless and the aristocracy resentful. The rebellion, however, failed to win samurai support and was quickly put down. Gotoba and his sons, the retired emperor Tsuchimikado (1196–1231) and Emperor Juntoku (1197–1242), were banished from Kyoto. They were sent into exile and died without ever seeing the capital again. In medieval Japan, people believed that the spirits of those who had suffered injustice in life could come back to avenge those who had wronged them. Imamiya Shrine was established in 1247 to appease the spirits of these three emperors and has been tended by Tsurugaoka Hachimangu ever since.