

Daishogun Hachi Shrine

[HEIAN]

Daishogun Hachi Shrine was founded in 794, the year in which the city of Kyoto became the capital of Japan. The shrine was established in the northwestern corner of the imperial palace to ward off evil spirits thought to come from that direction. Such beliefs were rooted in traditional yin–yang cosmology (*onmyodo* in Japanese), an occult divination system based on Taoist thought and which held great sway over political and military decision-making in Japan at the time.

The shrine is dedicated to Daishogun, the god of the stars, who in *onmyodo* presides over the directions. The Hachi part of the shrine name is the Japanese word for “eight,” which here refers to the eight children of Daishogun, all gods of celestial bodies who are also enshrined at Daishogun Hachi.

Eighty statues of Daishogun are on display in the shrine’s Hotokuden Hall. Most of these depict the deity dressed in armor and with a fierce expression on his face, as was thought fitting for a figure whose name translates to “great general.” Artefacts associated with geomancy rituals and with Abe no Seimei (921–1005), a famous court astrologer and diviner, are exhibited in another room on the second floor of the hall.