

Goryo Shrine

[HIGASHIJIN]

Goryo Shrine traces its history back to the year 794, when Kyoto became the capital of Japan. The ruling Emperor Kanmu (735–806) ordered the shrine's establishment to protect the imperial palace and, by extension, the nation.

This sanctuary also served to appease the souls of those who had perished due to perceived wrongdoing, including Kanmu's younger brother, who had been exiled as the result of a power struggle and died a decade before the shrine's founding. In ancient Japan, it was believed that the spirits of those who had suffered injustice in life could come back to avenge those who had wronged them.

More than six centuries later, a battle broke out in the woods surrounding the shrine. This incident is considered the beginning of the Onin War (1467–1477), a conflict that began as a dispute over who would succeed the shogun but degenerated into an all-out civil war that laid waste to most of Kyoto.

Goryo Shrine was rebuilt in the late sixteenth century, when it came to serve as protector of the people of Kyoto as well as of the court. Dating from this period is the shrine's South Gate, which was originally part of Fushimi Castle, the stronghold of warlord and regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598).

Goryo Shrine is busiest on May 18, when the Goryo Matsuri, its most important annual festival, is held. During the event, the portable *mikoshi* shrine usually displayed in the worship hall is carried in a procession from the shrine to Kyoto Imperial Palace and back.