

Iwashimizu Hachimangu Shrine & Mt. Otokoyama

Iwashimizu Hachimangu is a Shinto shrine with a history spanning nearly 1,200 years. Its origin dates back to 859, when the deity Hachiman was ceremonially transferred from Usa Jingu Shrine in Kyushu to Mt. Otokoyama. Over the centuries, nobles and commoners alike made pilgrimages here, and eventually Iwashimizu Hachimangu grew to cover the entire mountain, with a large main shrine, subsidiary shrines, numerous temples, and a thriving town at the base of the mountain. Because Hachiman was worshipped as a guardian of Kyoto and the imperial family, people would come here to pray for protection against misfortune, a tradition that continues to this day.

For many centuries, Iwashimizu Hachimangu was a shrine-temple complex where religious elements from Shinto and Buddhism were combined. This style of worship of Shinto deities (kami) and Buddhist deities (Buddhas and bodhisattvas) as syncretic entities gradually became tradition after Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the sixth century. Since faith in Hachiman was particularly strong, Iwashimizu Hachimangu played a big part in the development of syncretism and the spread of Hachiman worship across the country. This mixture of Shinto and Buddhist practice lasted more than a thousand years until the government ordered the separation of these religions in 1868.

Iwashimizu Hachimangu remains one of the more prominent shrines in the country and is recognized for its long history, syncretic religious traditions, and notable architecture. In 2016, several of its structures, including the main sanctuary, were designated National Treasures.