

Ushiodake Shrine

Ushiodake Shrine is the only Shinto sanctuary in Japan that enshrines Umisachi-hiko, a tragic character who appears in a myth of the divine ancestry of Jimmu, the legendary first emperor. Umisachi-hiko was an accomplished fisherman, who one day was convinced to exchange tools with the hunter Yamasachi-hiko, his brother. Yamasachi-hiko, however, lost Umisachi-hiko's fishing hook, causing a fraternal rift that went on for years and eventually resulted in Yamasachi-hiko forcing his brother onto the sea in a small boat. Umisachi-hiko drifted for days until crashing ashore in an isolated location, where he lived out the rest of his days. According to local legend, this place was the present site of Ushiodake Shrine. The myth is said to have inspired a centuries-old tradition, which lives on to this day, that devotees of the shrine should refrain from borrowing sewing needles from each other to avoid disagreements like that between the two brothers.

When Ushiodake Shrine was founded is not known, but it has long been an influential religious edifice in what is now southern Miyazaki Prefecture. During the Edo period (1603–1867), the shrine was maintained by the Ito family, the daimyo lords of this region, who rebuilt it in 1832. The shrine's repertoire of sacred *kagura* dances also dates from the Edo period. Kagura is performed annually on February 11 to pray for an abundant harvest in the season to come. The dances include a retelling of the Umisachi-Yamasachi myth and other ancient legends, and are part of a festival that features offerings of boar and fish heads to the deities.