

## **Agata Shrine**

Agata Shrine is an ancient site of worship that is believed to have been the spiritual center of the local farming community for more than a thousand years. An annual festival held at the shrine in spring features ritual *kagura* dances performed to pray for a bountiful harvest. Some of these dances reenact scenes from Japanese mythology. According to local beliefs, the grave of Tagishimimi is on the hill behind Agata Shrine. In the myth, Tagishimimi is the first child of the legendary first emperor, Jimmu, and his first wife, Princess Ahiratsu, who is described as a native of a place called Agata. After his father's death, Tagishimimi seeks to inherit the throne, but is thwarted and killed by his half-brothers, and buried in his mother's home village. The Agata Shrine enshrines both the tragic prince and his mother as Shinto deities. The forested hill behind the shrine is thought to be a prehistoric burial site.