

Ukiden (Wama Jinja Shrine)

The Ukiden, or “floating sanctuary,” is a small auxiliary shrine of [Usa Jingu Shrine](#) that was first built on Wama Beach and appeared to be floating on the waves when the tide was high. Due to land reclamation undertaken in the nineteenth century, the coastline moved and the shrine now stands on the bank of the Yorimo River. However, the vermilion main sanctuary still “floats” above the water on supports. The Ukiden is officially named Wama Jinja Shrine after its original location.

The Ukiden was constructed in the mid-eighth century as the shrine for the annual *hojo-e* (“rite for the release of living beings”) performed by Usa Jingu. The ritual is held to atone for the killings of the Hayato people who lived in southern Kyushu and were subjugated during the Hayato Rebellion in the 720s. At present, the *hojo-e* continues as part of the three-day [Chushusai](#) festival that takes place in autumn. On the first day, the deity Hachiman is transported in a portable shrine (*mikoshi*) from the [Jogu \(Upper Shrine\)](#) to the Ukiden in a grand procession. On the following day, priests and monks perform a purification rite at the shrine and then release snails and clams representing the reborn spirits of the Hayato into the river.

In the past, the Ukiden was a larger shrine with several worship halls, but its grounds gradually shrank, and now only the main sanctuary and a prayer hall remain. Still, the Ukiden was considered important enough to undergo several restorations with financing from powerful lords who ruled in Kyushu. The current Ukiden was rebuilt in 1938 and repaired in 1964.