

Site of Mirokuji Temple

For many centuries, part of the [Usa Jingu](#) shrine grounds was occupied by a large Buddhist temple called Mirokuji, the remains of which can still be seen between the [Kurehashi Bridge](#) and Yasaka Jinja Shrine. Throughout much of its history, the temple was an important part of the Usa Jingu complex and enjoyed the support of the imperial family, nobility, and warrior clans, allowing it to become a prominent political and economic force in its own right.

Mirokuji owned vast amounts of land and exerted influence not only in Kyushu, but throughout the entire country. Historical records and maps show that the temple had dozens of structures, including worship halls, pagodas, and living quarters, spreading along both sides of the present-day [Nishi Sando Path](#). The Kondo (Main Hall) was dedicated to Yakushi Buddha, the deity of medicine and healing, and the Kodo (Lecture Hall) enshrined Miroku, the bodhisattva expected to appear in this world in the distant future as the next Buddha.

Main Buddhist Temple in the Usa Jingu Shrine-Temple Complex

Mirokuji originated from an older temple called Mirokuzen'in, which was moved to the plain between Mt. Ogura and the Yorimo River in 738, not long after the first sanctuary of Usa Jingu was built on the mountain in 725. Mirokuji soon evolved into one of the earliest examples of a *jinguji*, a Buddhist temple closely connected to a Shinto shrine and usually located on or near the shrine grounds. Usa Jingu thus became a shrine-temple complex, reflecting the syncretic fusion of Shinto and Buddhism (*shinbutsu shugo*) that took shape in Kyushu around the eighth century and gradually spread throughout Japan. Buddhist temples within such complexes provided monks to participate in ceremonies and rituals at the shrine, managed finances, and sometimes fully controlled the operations of the entire complex. By the late ninth century, Mirokuji came to play a prominent role in all affairs of Usa Jingu, performing both religious and administrative functions.

Loss of Power and Final Years of Mirokuji

During the struggle for power between the Taira and the Minamoto clans in the twelfth century, the head priest of the Usa Jingu complex chose to side with the Taira. In the midst of the conflict, in 1184 both Usa Jingu and Mirokuji were burned down, and the Taira were defeated a year later, in 1185. Even though the complex was subsequently rebuilt, the power of Mirokuji began to wane. The temple gradually lost the lands it owned, the number of buildings dwindled, and by the mid-nineteenth century no more attempts were

made to revive it. In 1868, the Meiji government issued an order to separate Shinto and Buddhism, and all Buddhist structures and objects of worship were removed from Usa Jingu by 1871. The former Mirokuji grounds now contain the shrine offices, the Treasure Hall, and beautiful gardens, with only the foundation stones left as a reminder of the temple's past glory. The most valuable statues of Mirokuji, however, were saved: the large statue of Miroku is now on display at [Gokurakuji Temple](#) nearby, and the statue of Yakushi Buddha is housed at [Daizenji Temple](#) across the river.