Miboro Hakusan Shrine

Miboro Hakusan Shrine is one of the nine Shinto shrines in the municipality of Shirakawa dedicated to the worship of the deities of Mt. Haku, or Hakusan. The peak has been an object of reverence from prehistoric times to the present. Organized worship of the mountain is believed to date back to the eighth century, when Buddhist ascetics began using it as a training ground. Devotees would ascend to the summit and often spend extended periods of time on the slopes to instill themselves with spiritual discipline. Two ancient trails are known to have led to the peak from the Shirakawa area, and one of them started near Miboro Hakusan Shrine, which was established for worshiping the deities of the peak from afar.

The Ujigamiyama hill where Miboro Hakusan Shrine stands may have been a place of worship long before a formal shrine was established on it. The two large stone slabs next to the shrine building were possibly considered a *yorishiro*, or an object that served as a place where the deity would reside during religious ceremonies. The hill is also notable for its plant life. Some of the trees and shrubs growing on it are rare in this area, suggesting that its ecosystem may preserve parts of the Sho River valley as it was before human influence altered it. Characteristic species include beeches, the Japanese horse-chestnut (*tochi*; *Aesculus turbinata*), rhododendrons, and the snow camellia (*yukitsubaki*; *Camellia rusticana*).