

## **Matsudaira Toshogu Shrine: Ubuyu Well**

The Ubuyu Well is thought to be among the oldest extant structures on the grounds of Matsudaira Toshogu Shrine. According to Matsudaira family lore, water from this well has been used to give the family's newborn babies their first bath (*ubuyu*) since at least the fifteenth century. This tradition was upheld even after the main line of the family left the ancestral home in Matsudaira-go and expanded its territory to the south and west. Legend has it that when Matsudaira Takechiyo (1543–1616), the future shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, was born at Okazaki Castle some 13 kilometers southwest of Matsudaira-go, a rider was dispatched to this well to bring back bathwater in a bamboo tube.

The Ubuyu Well is no longer in use, but water from it is drawn twice every year. On the night before the Matsudaira-go Gongen Festival, a celebration of the life of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the priests of Matsudaira Toshogu open the well and dedicate some of its water to the enshrined deities. Water from the Ubuyu Well is also used to purify a wooden ball used for rituals during the Tenka Festival, the other big annual event in Matsudaira-go.

Next to the well are two small Shinto shrines. The larger enshrines Hachiman, the guardian deity of the Matsudaira family and the warrior class. It stands in front of a huge boulder thought to be the original object of reverence at the shrine. In distant antiquity, such natural features were often worshiped as abodes of the divine, and the idea of enshrining deities in buildings was adopted only later. The smaller shrine is dedicated to Benzaiten, the deity of knowledge, beauty, and the arts, who is also associated with water.