

Shogoji Temple

Shogoji is a Soto Zen temple north of central Kikuchi that for a short time in the 1300s functioned as the spiritual anchor of the Kikuchi clan. The temple was established in 1338 by Kikuchi Takeshige (1307–1341), the thirteenth head of the clan, who was a devout practitioner of Zen.

Takeshige invited the Zen priest Daichi (1290–1367), a native of Higo Province (now Kumamoto Prefecture) who had studied in China for a decade, to serve as head priest of Shogoji. Daichi advised the lords of Kikuchi on spiritual matters at this secluded sanctuary high in the mountains, which took an entire day to reach on foot from the castle town of Waifu. He also tutored other members of the clan, including Takeshige's younger brother Takemitsu (1319–1373).

After Takemitsu assumed leadership of the Kikuchi in the mid-1340s, he chose to build a new temple called Shokanji in the castle town. He paid less attention to Shogoji, and Daichi eventually moved away. The temple in the mountains fell into disrepair and lay abandoned for more than 500 years, until a Zen priest from Nagasaki rebuilt it in the 1940s.