

Shokoji Temple

Shokoji was established in 1471 as a temple of the Jodo Shinshu, or True Pure Land, school of Buddhism. Jodo Shinshu teaches that all people, regardless of status or background, are equal before the Buddha. This was particularly appealing to the common people and contributed to the school's widespread popularity. Shokoji's history reflects the strong local support of its followers. Almost all the structures on the grounds date from the Edo period (1603–1867), and the temple complex looks much as it did in illustrations preserved from 1803.

Architectural heritage

The temple complex consists of 12 buildings, all of which are designated Important Cultural Properties. In particular, the Main Hall, the Reception Hall, and the Entrance Hall are National Treasures recognized for their architectural and historical significance. In the late nineteenth century, many temples were destroyed or had their land holdings reduced when the new Meiji government (1868–1912) declared Shinto the official religion. As such, it is rare to find a temple complex largely unchanged and with so many buildings from a single historical period.

Turbulent history and relocation

During the late fifteenth century, Shokoji Temple was a base for militant groups engaged in a series of uprisings known as Ikko-ikki. These revolts were led by Jodo Shinshu practitioners, including farmers and merchants, against daimyo lords and the samurai class to oppose what they saw as unfair taxation and social

conditions. Shokoji was burned to the ground during these uprisings and was rebuilt at its current site (present-day Takaoka, Toyama Prefecture) in 1584.

Support of the Maeda family

Shokoji flourished during the Edo period with the help of the powerful Maeda family. As daimyo of the Kaga domain (present-day Toyama and Ishikawa Prefectures), they protected and financially supported the temple. This was despite the temple's past involvement in the Ikko-ikki movement and ongoing tensions between some Jodo Shinshu practitioners and the ruling class. Their backing was likely a move to gain favor with the local populace and quell further uprisings. Several sons of the Maeda family served as abbots, and the family granted land and contributed funds to expand and improve the temple.