**Shrine Grounds (1)**

**Honden and Gonden Sanctuaries**

Two sanctuaries called the Honden (Main Sanctuary) and the Gonden (Temporary Sanctuary) stand side by side within the main shrine area of Kamigamo Jinja. The deity Kamo Wakeikazuchi no Okami is enshrined in the Honden on the right, which is where the majority of rituals take place. The Gonden on the left is an identical building that is kept ready as a temporary enshrinement site to be used when the Honden undergoes repairs.

Both sanctuaries are constructed in a classic Shinto architecture style called *nagare-zukuri*, characterized by an asymmetrical gabled roof. They serve as notable examples of an older form of *nagare-zukuri* which was typically seen in the Heian period (794–1185). The current Honden and Gonden were built in 1863 and are designated National Treasures.

Statues and paintings of mythical *komainu* beasts and *karajishi* lions guard both the Honden and the Gonden. The paintings on the walls of the sanctuaries were originally done by artists from the renowned Kano school that was prominent in the Edo period (1603–1867).

**Katayama Miko Jinja Shrine**

Katayama Miko Jinja (also known as Kataokasha) is considered the most important of the 24 subsidiary and auxiliary shrines on Kamigamo Jinja grounds. It is dedicated to Kamo Tamayorihime no Mikoto, mother of the deity Kamo Wakeikazuchi no Okami enshrined in the Honden (Main Sanctuary) of Kamigamo Jinja. She is believed to grant luck in love, happy marriage, successful pregnancy, easy childbirth, and safety for the household.

The date when the first shrine to Kamo Tamayorihime no Mikoto was built is unknown, but Katayama Miko Jinja is mentioned in the *Engishiki*, a compilation of customs and official procedures from the early tenth century that includes a list of all 2,861 Shinto shrines in existence at that time. Many prominent Kyoto courtiers revered Kamo Tamayorihime no Mikoto, including Murasaki Shikibu (973?–1014?), the author of *Genji Monogatari* (*The Tale of Genji*), who made a pilgrimage to Katayama Miko Jinja to pray for a good marriage.

The shrine is situated at the base of the small Mt. Kataoka across the stream from the Romon Gate. A rack in front of the worship hall displays colorful *ema* (votive tablets), each bearing an image of Murasaki Shikibu and the poem she wrote during her pilgrimage, which reads: Oh, songbird! / While I remain here / Waiting for your call / In the forests of Kataoka / My garments grow wet with morning dew.

When important annual rituals are conducted for Kamo Wakeikazuchi no Okami at the main sanctuary, it is customary to start the ritual at Katayama Miko Jinja. In a show of piety toward the deity’s mother, priests at the main sanctuary do not begin the prayer service until they hear a call from a priest outside at the auxiliary shrine, signaling that the ritual is commencing there as well.

**Shingu Jinja Shrine**

Shingu Jinja Shrine is dedicated to a dragon deity called Takaokami no Kami. The deity is believed to answer prayers about rainfall, field irrigation, flood prevention, safe travel by water, good health, and rejuvenation. The shrine is located on the northeast side of Kamigamo Jinja grounds, next to the main shrine area. The first mention of a shrine building on this site appears in Kamigamo Jinja records from 1048.

Shingu Jinja is also known as Kifune Jinja, after the larger shrine located to the north in the village of Kibune, which was the original center of Takaokami no Kami worship. Kifune Jinja in Kibune was once an auxiliary shrine managed by Kamigamo Jinja. However, as it was difficult for priests to make the pilgrimage to the village in heavy rain or winter snow, sometime in the Edo period (1603–1867) Takaokami no Kami was enshrined on Kamigamo Jinja grounds. The original Kifune Jinja became independent in 1871, but Takaokami no Kami is still worshipped in both locations.

Shingu Jinja is open to the public on the second and fourth Sunday of each month. There is an option of a paid prayer service that includes a *kagura* dance called Kamo no Mai, which is unique to Kamigamo Jinja. Worshippers that have requested a *kagura* dance also receive a protective amulet shaped like a *gohei* (a sacred wand with paper streamers).

**Ota Jinja Shrine**

Ota Jinja Shrine is located approximately 800 meters to the east of Kamigamo Jinja grounds and is dedicated to Ame no Uzume no Mikoto, a goddess from the famous myth about Amaterasu Omikami, the goddess of the sun. Amaterasu Omikami became angry with her brother Susanoo no Mikoto and shut herself in a cave, plunging the world into unending night. Other deities tried to convince her to come back outside, but all their attempts failed. Finally, Ame no Uzume no Mikoto performed a lively dance while others cheered, which made Amaterasu Omikami curious enough to exit the cave and bring sunlight back to the world. Because of this story, Ame no Uzume no Mikoto is primarily worshipped as a deity that helps improve artistic skills.

As a shrine, Ota Jinja is said to be even older than Kamigamo Jinja. Farmers worshipped a deity of good fortune and long life at a shrine on this site even before the Kamo clan that founded Kamigamo Jinja immigrated to the area in the sixth century. After Kamigamo Jinja grew in power and influence, Ota Jinja became one of its auxiliary shrines.

The Otanosawa Pond on the shrine grounds is renowned for *kakitsubata*, or rabbit-ear irises. They bloom in purple clusters in mid-May, covering the entire pond, and the sight attracts countless visitors. In 1945, the iris pond was designated a Natural Monument. The irises at Ota Jinja have been beloved for centuries and were mentioned in several ancient records and poems. A particularly famous poem written by the courtier Fujiwara Shunzei (1114–1204) reads: The sacred mountain / The irises of Ota Pond / People’s deepest wishes / Can be seen in their color.

The prayer hall at Ota Jinja is used for *sato kagura*, the oldest remaining style of sacred *kagura* dance. *Sato kagura* is accompanied by musicians playing cymbals and drums. The words used to describe the sounds of the cymbals and the drums are “chan” and “pon,” which gave rise to the alternative name *chanpon kagura*. *Sato kagura* is performed as part of prayer ceremonies held at Ota Jinja on the night of the 10th of each month. It is a registered Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Kyoto.

**Romon Gate**

The Romon Gate leads into the main shrine area of Kamigamo Jinja, symbolizing passage into the sacred space that contains the most important sanctuaries. The gate is characterized by a two-story construction, hip-and-gable roof, and bright vermilion color intended as protection from evil and misfortune. It is unknown when the Romon Gate was first built, but it is mentioned in shrine records from the Kamakura period (1185–1333). The current gate was constructed in 1628 and is a nationally designated Important Cultural Property.

In front of the Romon Gate is the arched Tamabashi Bridge that spans the Omonoi Stream. As the vermilion bridge is only used by priests and designated participants during certain festivals and religious rites, visitors must cross one of the nearby bridges to access the main shrine area.