

### **The History of Hetsu-miya**

The original site of worship on the mainland of Kyushu was Takamiya Saijo, an open-air ritual site in the forests above Hetsu-miya, with a view across the Genkai Sea towards Okinoshima. This was the spot the Three Female Deities of Munakata were said to have descended to earth from the heavens. Worship sites evolved over the centuries from natural objects and forest clearings, to include buildings, and by the twelfth century, worship halls had been added below the Takamiya Saijo ritual site.

The area was controlled by the Munakata family, who became wealthy through foreign trade, and served as the area's Shinto priests. They built the main shrine and two smaller shrines next to it, venerating each of the three deities. Successive fires and wars destroyed the original buildings, but the present main sanctuary was rebuilt in 1578 by the last of the Munakata high priests. The original Teini-gu and Teisan-gu shrine buildings burned down, but two newer structures, relocated from Ise Jingu in Mie Prefecture in 1978, are now situated behind the main sanctuary.