

Tobiume Tenmangu Shrine

Tobiume Tenmangu, a subsidiary shrine within the grounds of Ima-Hie Jingū, is dedicated to the spirit of the Japanese plum (*ume*) and to the renowned scholar, poet, and politician Sugawara no Michizane (845–903). This shrine was established by the Retired Emperor Goshirakawa (1127–1192) out of reverence for Michizane, who was considered to be the ideal scholar-statesman.

“Tobiume” in the name of the shrine means “flying plum” and refers to a legend derived from a famous Japanese poem written by Michizane while he was in exile after being deposed from a high-ranking position in the government. In the poem, Michizane, near the end of his days, pleads for the eastern wind to blow the fragrance of his beloved plum blossoms to him in distant Kyushu. The legend has it that the plum tree flew off to console Michizane in exile.

The name “Tenmangu” indicates that the shrine is dedicated to Michizane. Many other such shrines can be found throughout Japan. Two of the most important are located at Kitano, in the northwestern part of Kyoto, and at Dazaifu in Kyushu, where Michizane was exiled.