

Dazaifu Tenmangu and Anrakuji Temple

Dazaifu Tenmangu stands at the head of more than 12,000 Tenjin shrines dedicated to Sugawara Michizane (845–903). Michizane is deified as Tenjin and worshipped as the deity of learning, culture, and the arts. After his death, the ox pulling the funeral cart bearing his remains lay down in the road and refused to move. Michizane's followers buried their mentor at that exact spot and the site became a shrine to Michizane's memory.

The grave of Michizane and the surrounding area evolved over time, from the site of Anrakuji—a Buddhist temple—to the Dazaifu Tenmangu complex of today, a place of Shinto worship. Despite the thousands of shrines dedicated to Michizane all over Japan, Dazaifu Tenmangu is his true resting place.

Here you can see a surviving document that alludes to Anrakuji. The document dates to 1555. Portions of roof tiles inscribed with the Chinese characters for “Anrakuji Temple” excavated in the shrine's grounds corroborate the document. Dazaifu Tenmangu retains some Buddhist features, for example, the Taikobashi Bridge. The Taikobashi has three elements that reflect the Buddhist ideal that only a single thought should be held at any given time: the first arched bridge represents the past, the flat bridge denotes the present, and the second arched bridge corresponds to the future.