

Ichiidani Nanano Shrine

[HEIAN]

Ichiidani Nanano Shrine is a small Shinto sanctuary built on the site of an ancient residence for imperial princesses. From the Heian period (794–1185) until 1212, daughters and granddaughters of the emperor as well as other female members of the imperial family would occasionally serve as shrine maidens at Kamo Shrine, an important religious site that was believed to protect the city and the court from evil. The shrine maidens lived in a large monastery-like complex on this site, which at the time was some distance outside the city.

The princesses' residence was abandoned during the thirteenth century. Its site became a battleground during the Onin War (1467–1477), a civil war that devastated much of Kyoto.

The shrine that now occupies the premises was moved here by the warlord and regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), who unified and ruled Japan for a short period of time in the late sixteenth century. Hideyoshi ordered the daimyo lords who served under him to construct a stone mound for the shrine to stand on. The lords' family crests are still visible here and there on the stones.

The shrine itself has a reputation for repairing relationships broken by infidelity. The story behind this dates to when Emperor Uda (867–931) was on the throne. Uda's wife discovered that he was having an affair, and visited the predecessor of Ichiidani Nanano Shrine to pray that her husband's love for her would be restored. Before leaving, the empress piled small stones on top of each other in the shape of a mountain, an act that legend claims rekindled her husband's devotion.