

Hiko Jinja Shrine

Hiko Jinja Shrine is a relatively modern Shinto shrine founded by Ninomiya Chuhachi (1866–1936), a pioneer of Japanese aviation.

Chuhachi's interest in flight began at an early age and continued throughout his life. While serving as an army medic in his twenties, he drew inspiration from nature and built a fixed-wing "crow-type model aircraft," which flew successfully in 1891, as well as a "jewel beetle-type aircraft," a tailless man-carrying biplane model. For years, Chuhachi worked at a pharmaceutical company and strove to fund construction of a manned aircraft. He began building a prototype in Yawata, but before it could be completed, the Wright Brothers successfully accomplished the world's first controlled flight of a powered, heavier-than-air aircraft in 1903.

As the field of aviation was developing, Chuhachi was saddened by the rising number of airplane-related deaths. He became a Shinto priest and in 1915 founded this shrine, naming it Hiko Jinja, "the shrine of flight." Its central altar enshrines Nigihayahi no Mikoto, a sky deity. The left altar enshrines prominent figures of the Japanese pharmaceutical industry, and the right is dedicated to the souls of people lost in airplane accidents. Based on the belief that the world is united under the same sky, Hiko Shrine honors all victims of aviation incidents regardless of nationality.

The shrine includes a small museum that contains items related to Chuhachi and his inventions, including sketches, kites, photos, and airplane models.