

Chirimen Kaido

Chirimen Kaido, a historically important street in the Kaya region of former Tango Province (present-day northern Kyoto Prefecture), rose to prominence as a center of trade and distribution hub for the region's *chirimen* silk crepe industry. This high-quality textile is a popular kimono fabric because of its soft texture and outstanding dyeability.

Chirimen weaving techniques had been a tightly kept trade secret of Kyoto's Nishijin district until three men from Kaya brought this knowledge back with them in 1722. Kaya already had established ties with the silk industry, but when the *chirimen* weaving techniques spread throughout Tango the local economy prospered as never before. Gradually, *chirimen* production became the main industry of Kaya, and by 1803 some 120 looms were employed in weaving this profitable luxury fabric. Chirimen Kaido became a bustling center of commerce lined with storefronts and weavers' residences, contributing to the town's considerable growth.

Visitors today can explore Kaya's rich cultural heritage along Chirimen Kaido. Architecture from the Meiji (1868–1912), Taisho (1912–1926), and early Showa (1926–1945) eras can be seen in approximately 120 of the street's 260 buildings. Visitors will notice the old shop windows and projecting latticework on residences. Many of the buildings are still occupied, but some are open to the public, including the Former Kaya Town Hall and the Former Bito Residence. In 2005, the area was designated an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings.