

Tenman Jinja Shrine

Tenman Jinja is a Shinto shrine dedicated to the deity of knowledge, Sugawara no Michizane, also known as Tenjin. The main sanctuary was built in 1733 on Mt. Tenjin, overlooking the commercial street Chirimen Kaido, just a decade after the region's *chirimen* (silk crepe) industry began. On the same hilltop is a much smaller shrine, Agano Jinja Shrine, which was built during the Heian period (794–1185) to worship the deity of the fields, Kayahime. There is also an octagonal stone lantern on the shrine grounds, which has been dated to the Kamakura period (1185–1333).

Tenman Jinja's main sanctuary was previously located directly in line with the stone steps that lead up the hill, very close to a cliff edge. After an earthquake in 1927, however, the sanctuary was moved to a more secure location behind the present-day worship hall. The unusual architecture resulting from its original construction on a narrow plot of land is still apparent: Normally, the elegant, swooping *karahafu* gabled roof and bargeboard would be located farther forward, protruding from the facade of a shrine's main sanctuary. On Tenman Jinja's sanctuary, however, this gabled roof was constructed higher up on the main roof, which allowed it to protrude less.

Today, the building at the top of the stone steps houses the portable shrine (*omikoshi*), which is brought out once a year during the Kayadani Festival. The massive portable shrine is shouldered by strong men and carried precariously down and up the 137 steep steps to be paraded through the streets of town.