

## Sone Overview

The Sone district of Takasago is known for Tenmangu Shrine and its long history of salt harvesting.

Sugawara no Michizane (845–903) was a scholar, poet, and politician. Later his spirit was deified as Tenjin, the Shinto deity of learning. In 901, when Sugawara was on his way to Kyushu, his ship docked near Sone. Sugawara took the opportunity to climb Mount Hikasa, west of Tenmangu Shrine, where he planted a pine seed and prayed that he would prosper in Kyushu. The seed grew into a great pine tree, the trunk of which has been preserved at the shrine.

When Sugawara's son, Atsushige, visited Sone some years later he built a shrine to honor his father. Although the shrine's buildings have been damaged or destroyed during periods of unrest and in natural disasters through the ages, it remains in the same place today, and is known as Tenmangu Shrine. It is one of the main shrines dedicated to Tenjin as the deity of learning, and many people visit the shrine to pray for academic success.

Sone's coastal location was well-suited to salt-harvesting. By the early Edo period (1603–1867), there were more than nine hectares of salt fields, which had expanded to some 49 hectares by the late 1690s, when the industry in the area peaked.

Several salt merchants built houses and stores to the northwest of Tenmangu Shrine, forming a commercial area for salt trading. A number of the old buildings remain, including the residence of the then-prominent Irie family.