

Ao Shrine

One of the Matsubara Six Shrine Fortune Pilgrimage shrines. Sugawara no Michizane is worshipped here. According to the shrine's records, it is said that during the first half of the Heian period, when Michizane was sent away by the Kyushu Dazaifu (Government), in order to bid farewell to Kakujuni, his aunt in Domyoji Temple (in Fujiidera City), he traveled from Kyoto through Naniwa, passing through the Ao region and resting here, leading to this shrine being built.

The Ao region was so named from the legend that, at the beginning of the Heian period, Prince Abo, the son of the Emperor Heizei, the 51st emperor of Japan, lived there. Ariwara no Narihira, one of the Six Poetic Geniuses, was the fifth son of Prince Abo. In the "Kawachi Kagami Meishoki," released in the 7th year of the Enpo era (1679), an illustration picturing the numerous clustered houses of Ao Village, Shinno pond (also known as Chigoga pond, which was located along Nagao Road, south of Kaizumi pond, but is currently collapsed) dug by Prince Abo for irrigation for the farmers, and the nearby Kawachi Otsukayama Tomb (Nishi-Otsuka), said to be the grave of Prince Abo, can be found.

On the right side of the inner shrine is Shinno Shrine, the shrine dedicated to Prince Abo, like in Itsukushima Shrine in Hiroshima. In front of the inner shrine is a stone monument marking the location as a "historic landmark where Prince Abo lived." The framed "Ao Shrine" hung in the hall of worship was written by Yasuda of Nishi-Ao Village, who went by the surname "Minamoto" and was said to be a descendant of Prince Abo, towards the end of the Edo period. The holy camphor tree standing behind the inner shrine is 16 meters tall with a trunk circumference of 4.5 meters, and a root spread of 6 meters and is one of the biggest giant trees in the city.