

Karakuni Jinja Shrine

Karakuni Jinja Shrine was founded approximately 1,500 years ago, during the reign of Emperor Yūryaku (fifth century). It is one of a few thousand shrines that received offerings from the imperial court, as recorded in the *Engishiki*, a collection of tenth-century texts on government regulations and ceremonial procedures. The Shinto deities, or kami enshrined here include many of the first kami to be mentioned in Japanese creation myths.

Three kami are enshrined in the main hall: Nigihayahi, the legendary ancestor of the powerful Mononobe clan; Ame no Koyane, a deity charged by the sun goddess with protecting the divine mirror that is part of the imperial regalia; and Susanoo, the troublemaking deity who is the brother of the sun goddess and the moon god.

A towering stone torii gate stands at the entrance to the shrine grounds, marking the separation between the sacred and profane. The approach from the gate to the main hall is a stone walkway lined with trees and stone lanterns. The lanterns are lit with votive lights during the February Star Festival and other nighttime celebrations.