

## **Ichinono-oji**

Ichinono-oji was one of the oldest *oji* (subsidiary shrines) in Kumano, appearing in pilgrimage diaries from the early twelfth century. *Ichi* means “market,” and the name suggests that the site originally doubled as a marketplace.

### *Ichinono-oji-jinja Shrine*

In 1873, Ichinono-oji became a village shrine called Ichinono-oji-jinja. Beside the shrine stand the massive stone walls of the *gokura* (village storehouse), which was only roofed when necessary. It was divided into several rooms, so the walls seem to form a small open-air maze. Rice belonging to Kumano Nachi Taisha Grand Shrine was once stored here.

There is some debate over whether Ichinono-oji-jinja Shrine stands on the *oji*'s original site. About 100 meters away is a small patch of hallowed ground called Osugi-yashiro. Osugi-yashiro contains old foundation stones and a rock that is a *shintai* (the physical object in which a deity resides) of the sun goddess Amaterasu-no-Okami. Tradition holds that Osugi-yashiro is the original site of Ichinono-oji.

### *About Oji*

*Oji* were subsidiary shrines of the three Kumano grand shrines. They were located along the pilgrimage route, and while some were simple places of worship, others offered accommodation and even baths to weary pilgrims. They developed out of traveler's shrines tended by ascetics in ancient times, and became independent shrines or simply fell into disuse early in the Meiji era (1868–1912).