

Introduction to Okuni Jinja Shrine

Okuni Jinja Shrine, which appears in records from as early as 840 CE, is a Shinto shrine located to the northeast of central Hamamatsu. The shrine stands at a site believed to be a middle ground between the realm of untouched nature and the human world. A long, wide path lined with thick cedars leads the shrine buildings, which are revealed at the end of the passage. A river flows past, and dense forest lies beyond the shrine, encompassing the site as a “garden” in a broad sense of the word. It is place for humans to revere the nature that the shrine protects. While the spirits worshipped at Okuni Jinja are too many to count, the main kami is Okuninushi no Mikoto, who is depicted as kind-hearted and a bringer of blessings. Okuninushi no Mikoto also appears in the *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters), a chronicle of Japanese myths, legends, and oral traditions written in 712 CE.

The Shinto priests at Okuni Jinja hold more than 400 rituals and festivals every year, praying for world peace, tranquility, and bountiful harvests. The public is welcome to watch or participate in a number of these rituals.