

Shrine History

During the Edo period (1603–1867), present-day Shizuoka Prefecture was divided into Izu Province, Suruga Province, and Totomi Province. The area that is now Hamamatsu was part of Totomi Province, and its Shinto shrines were ranked in order of prominence, as was the case in other provinces across Japan. The most prestigious shrine in a province was called *ichinomiya* (“first shrine”), a ranking bestowed by an imperial envoy based on a shrine’s history, size, and the amount of support it received from prominent local families. The *ichinomiya* of Totomi Province was Okuni Jinja.

Okuni Jinja is also linked with Ieyasu (1542–1616), the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, which ruled over a unified Japan during the Edo period. Prior to this period and before Ieyasu received the title of shogun, powerful warlords were in a state of near constant conflict. After a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Mikatagahara in 1573, Ieyasu stopped to pray at Okuni. He sat on a stone for a while before continuing on his way to successfully capture a castle. The stone is now placed near the entrance of the shrine so that visitors may sit on the stone and contemplate how to achieve recovery after suffering a setback.