

Motoise Kono Jinja Shrine

Motoise Kono Jinja Shrine became the highest-ranking Shinto shrine in Tango Province (present-day northern Kyoto Prefecture) during the Nara period (710–794). It is closely affiliated with the famed Ise Jingu Shrine in Mie Prefecture. According to legend, Motoise Kono Jinja is where the deity of agriculture, Toyouke no Omikami, once resided. After the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami departed the imperial palace in Nara, she stopped here before continuing on to Ise. Toyouke no Omikami later followed her there, and they are now both enshrined at Ise Jingu. Thus, this shrine is referred to as *motoise*, meaning the “former Ise.”

The architecture of the two shrines is very similar. The main sanctuaries are simple gable-roof buildings with forked finials projecting above the roof ridges to form an X shape. Unique flame-shaped jewel-like decorations (*suedama*) in five colors line the railings on the main sanctuaries of these very important shrines. Additionally, both Ise Jingu and Motoise Kono Jinja were rebuilt every 20 years. And while this ritual continues to this day at Ise Jingu, it ceased in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) at Motoise Kono Jinja.

Motoise Kono Jinja is in possession of Japan’s oldest existing genealogical record, the Amabe genealogy, which traces the imperial lineage from ancestral deities (*kami*) to the late ninth century. It has been designated a National Treasure, and is seldom displayed to the public. Two stone *komainu* guardian statues from the Kamakura period flank the shrine entrance.

Visitors to Amanohashidate have historically frequented the shrine, which is on the north end of the sandbar. The cable car station for Kasamatsu Park is located near the shrine grounds.