

Overview

Sumiyoshi Taisha has stood watch over Osaka Bay for almost 2,000 years. Founded by the legendary empress-regent Jingū in the third century, it honors four deities: a trio of sea gods called the Sumiyoshi Sanjin, and Empress Jingū herself, whose spirit was enshrined alongside them after her death.

Since its founding, Sumiyoshi Taisha has been linked with the sea. People involved in fishing, shipping, and other maritime industries still come to pray at Sumiyoshi for safe voyages. The shrine offers spiritual protection for the port of Osaka, which was the main gateway to Japan's historical capitals and the rest of the country until the late nineteenth century.

Sumiyoshi Taisha has close ties with poetry, the performing arts, sumo wrestling, success in love and business, and the safe delivery of babies—a range that reflects the shrine's long history and its place in the hearts of the people of Osaka, who affectionately call it “Sumiyossan.”

The shrine is famous throughout Japan for its rites and festivals. Two million people come to Sumiyoshi Taisha each January for *hatsumōde*, the traditional first shrine visit of the year. The midsummer Sumiyoshi Matsuri is one of Osaka's biggest festivals, climaxing in a parade of portable shrines. Other events, such as ritual rice planting in June and a moon-viewing celebration in early autumn, attract visitors with music, dancing, and readings of traditional poetry.