

Onda (Sacred Rice Paddy)

The rice paddy just south of the shrine grounds is said to have first been planted by the legendary empress-regent Jingū in the third century. The rice grown there is considered sacred and is offered to the deities enshrined at Sumiyoshi Taisha. The rice is also used in the Minori Mairi—a series of rites performed at the four subsidiary shrines to pray for success in business.

Onda is a rare outpost of agricultural Japan amid the metropolitan sprawl of Osaka. Even in the countryside, few rice fields are still tilled by oxen or planted by hand, but the tradition is preserved in the rituals performed at Sumiyoshi Taisha. Every year during the Otaue Shinji ceremony, sacred oxen are led through the paddy and women plant rice seedlings in its waters. The planters and visitors then look on as costumed singers and dancers perform for the gods.

Researchers have found a unique mix of plants in this paddy, including the grass *hamahiegaeri* (*Polypogon fugax*), which grows in salty soil—a reminder that Osaka Bay once extended to the shrine's doorstep.