

Omura Shrine

The lords and ancestors of Omura domain are enshrined at Omura Shrine on the Kushima Castle site. The shrine was first built in 1805 in the hills to the northeast of Kushima Castle by Sumiyoshi (1786–1838), the tenth lord of Omura, to enshrine the family's ancestor Fujiwara no Sumitomo (–941). Fujiwara was a warrior of Iyo Province (modern-day Ehime Prefecture), and a legendary pirate. Twelve lords of Omura were enshrined at the shrine in 1870.

Kushima Castle served as the home of the Omura family until 1871, when it was abandoned and razed after the end of shogunate rule. At the time, reminders of the shogunate period, including many castles, were demolished as Japan began the process of modernization under the new Meiji government. The former samurai families who lived near Kushima Castle raised money to have the shrine relocated to the castle site. The new shrine was completed in 1884 and enshrines all the former lords of Omura.

When the shrine was relocated, some one thousand cherry trees were planted in the grounds. Two distinct varieties of double-petaled cherry blossom were discovered among the trees at the shrine in the 1940s: Omura-zakura (*Cerasus serrulata* 'Mirabilis') and Kushima-zakura (*Cerasus serrulata* 'Kusimana'). The Omura-zakura tree in front of Omura Shrine has been selected as the representative specimen and designated a National Natural Monument.

A statue on the shrine grounds depicts Omura Sumihiro (1830–1882), the last lord of Omura domain. Sumihiro fought with the anti-shogunate forces who were successful in restoring political power to the emperor in 1868, after more than 200 years of Tokugawa shogunate rule. In 1869, he was awarded the governorship of Omura.