



Nagahama is the setting of the story.



Kita Biwako
Tourist Information
WEB Site

Kinomoto-Juku and the Hokkoku Kaidō Road

During the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1867), regional lords known as daimyo were required to make regular trips to Edo, the capital. Each trip was an opportunity to display the lord's status: they traveled with large retinues of guards, footmen, servants, and family members. The retainers were required to travel on the major roads (*kaidō*) that connected Edo to the rest of Japan and make frequent stops at the post towns along the way.

The Hokkoku Kaidō Road, which connected Echizen to Edo, passed through Kinomoto-juku. The town was made up of mostly inns, wholesalers, relay stations, sake breweries and other businesses for travelers. Kinomoto Jizōin Temple stood at the town's center, and the road near the temple was lined with small canals and willow trees. Several historic buildings and landmarks scattered between the temple and Kinomoto Station have been given protected status to preserve the legacy of the old post town.

Foreign language guide

English



한국어



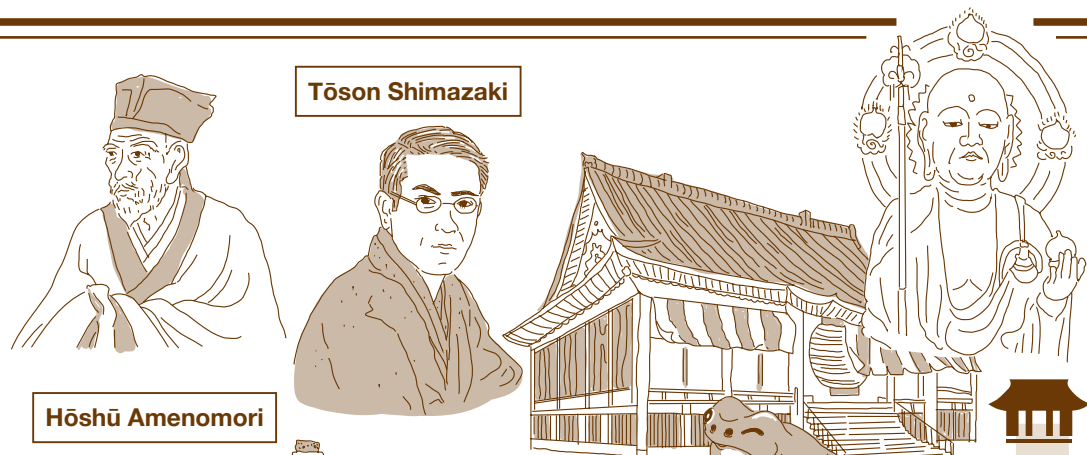
简体



繁体



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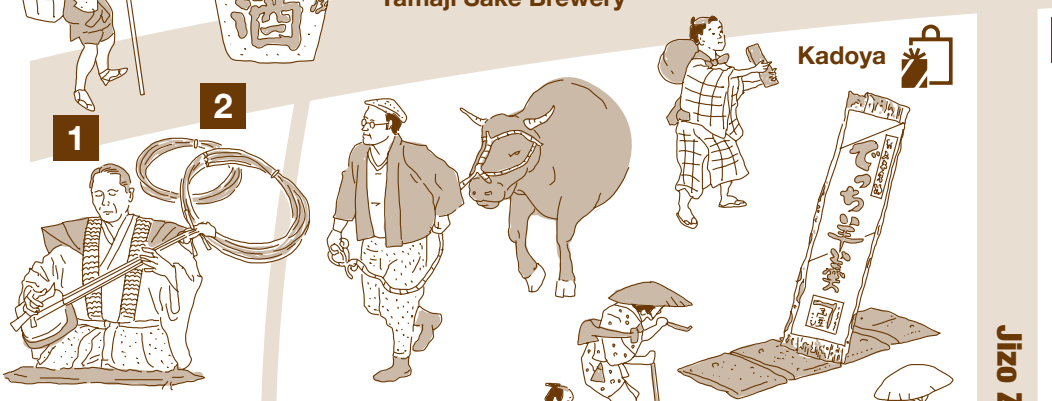
Tōson Shimazaki

Hōshū Amenomori



Yamaji Sake Brewery

Kinomoto-Juku and the Hokkoku Kaidō Road



Bunya Sugino



Kohoku Library

"Koto of the Lake"
by Tsutomu Mizukami

JR Kinomoto Station



Tsutomu Mizukami

Kinomoto Jizōin Temple and One-Eyed Frogs

This temple's location at a major crossroads testifies to its significance: it was originally the center of Kinomoto-juku. Many prominent historical figures are said to have visited the temple, including the priest Kūkai (774–835) and the founder of the Ashikaga shogunate, Ashikaga Takauji (1305–1358).

The temple's principal object of worship is a statue of the bodhisattva Jizō. This incarnation of Jizō is believed to cure ailments of the eyes. According to temple lore, the frogs that live in the garden show compassion for suffering worshippers by offering prayers to

the bodhisattva on their behalf. It is said that a frog permanently closes one of its eyes in sacrifice each time a worshipper receives Jizō's aid. To show their thanks, temple-goers have left the countless little figures of one-eyed frogs that are piled in different areas of the temple.

Today, visitors may descend under the temple into absolute darkness and walk through a winding pitch-black corridor with only the walls for a guide. The experience is believed to be spiritually cleansing.

6



5 Tsuruya Pan Bakery



Inuzakura Tree

This large *inuzakura* tree is all that remains of a rest area where travelers would stop to wash their feet and their horses' bridles in a nearby stream. According to legend, the powerful daimyo Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598) buried his horse here. Hideyoshi stuck his whip into the soil as a grave marker, and it is said to have sprouted into this *inuzakura* tree.

7



Tomita Sake Brewery

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Kinomoto Exchange Hall

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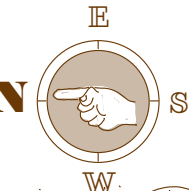


Daiko Soy Sauce Brewery

10



Hokkoku Kaidō Road



7 Tomita Sake Brewery

Tomita Sake Brewery was founded in 1534 and is one of Japan's oldest sake breweries. Their signature sake is Shichihonyari ("Seven Spears"), named after the seven samurai who helped Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–1598), local warlord and eventual de facto ruler of all Japan, defeat the powerful general Shibata Katsuie (1522–1583) at the Battle of Shizugatake in 1583. Shichihonyari is made with local ingredients, including water from Mt. Ibuki and organic rice grown in Nagahama. The current building dates to 1744.

8 Former Site of Kinomoto-Juku Wholesale Market

This tall neoclassical building with Ionic columns hardly calls to mind sword-bearing samurai or shogunate officials. However, many such travelers stopped here to exchange horses or procure travel documents during the Edo period (1603–1867). At that time, this spot was occupied by a traditional wooden building which contained a wholesale market. In 1935, it was replaced by a Western-style bank. Today, this building is the Kinomoto Exchange Hall, which hosts cultural events throughout the year.

9 Home of Village Head Takemoto Sukeroku

This was the home of Takemoto Sukeroku (dates unknown), an Edo-period (1603–1867) village head in charge of administration on behalf of the governor. Notice the fire walls that project from the eaves at each end of the second-floor roof. These fire walls helped to prevent the spread of fire from neighboring buildings. Their size and decoration displayed the owner's wealth. Structures equipped with fire walls can be seen throughout Kinomoto-juku.

10 To the Right: Kyoto; to the Left: Edo

This inscribed stone marker is a reproduction of the signpost that once stood at this crossroads. The Hokkoku Kaidō Road continued southwest, toward Kyoto, and the Hokkoku-waki Ōkan Road went west, toward Edo (now Tokyo).

11 Old Kinomoto Station

This is the original Kinomoto Station building. Kinomoto was one stop on the railroad built in 1882 to expedite the transport of goods between the major trade centers of Nagahama and Tsuruga. The building was replaced by the elevated station nearby in 2006. Today, the old station is a symbol of Kinomoto's role in the history of Japan's railroads.

Map legend



1 Ichirizuka

During the Edo period (1603–1867), travel distance was measured in units called *ri* (equivalent to about 4 kilometers). Each *ri* was marked by a tree planted near a mound of earth. These distance markers, known as *ichirizuka* (literally, "one-*ri* mounds"), lined the roads leading to the capital. One such marker stood here when Kinomoto-juku functioned as a post town.

2 Kinomoto Livestock Market

This section of the Hokkoku Kaidō Road once hosted the biannual Kinomoto Livestock Market, where cattle and horses were sold. The market was first held during the Muromachi period (1392–1573) and continued until the early twentieth century. To place a bid, a potential buyer would put their hand into the seller's sleeve and indicate a price by grasping or bending a certain number of the seller's fingers. When a deal was struck, both buyer and seller would clap their hands, an action which constituted a binding contractual agreement.

3 Yamaji Sake Brewery

Travelers in the late Edo period (1603–1867) rested and changed their horses at the relay station that was next to the Yamaji Sake Brewery. This history is immortalized in the name of the brewery's Hokkoku Kaidō sake. Yamaji is renowned today as the only brewery in Japan that makes *kuwazake*, a sweet sake flavored with mulberry leaves. Founded in 1532, Yamaji Sake Brewery is believed to be the fourth-oldest sake brewery in Japan.

4 Home of Village Head Kōzaka Gorōuemon

This was the home of Kōzaka Gorōuemon (dates unknown), who lived during the Edo period (1603–1867). As village head of Kita-Kinomoto, Gorōuemon oversaw local affairs on behalf of the regional governor and mediated disputes between villagers. This house was built in 1847. At the time, strict sumptuary laws prevented non-samurai from owning houses that stood taller than 7.2 meters or had more than two floors. Such restrictions prevented wealthy merchants from building large, impressive houses which might outshine their social betters, the samurai.

5 Historical Noticeboard

A noticeboard of laws and announcements made by the local government once occupied this spot. These noticeboards were common in post towns, which were frequented by a large number of travelers.



6 Former Honjin: Home of Takeuchi Gozaemon

This building was originally Kinomoto-juku's *honjin*, an inn that served traveling daimyo lords and other prestigious guests who passed through the area. The inn was owned by the Takeuchi family. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Takeuchi family started making and selling medicine in addition to running the *honjin*. During the Meiji period (1868–1912), Takeuchi Gozaemon (dates unknown), the twenty-second family head, earned a pharmacist's license. Although the Takeuchi family pharmacy is now in a different building, their approximately 170-year-old family business continues today.

