

History (short version)

Ise-Shima has a long history of people whose lives have been shaped by the sea. Excavations have unearthed 3,000-year-old tools for taking abalone. There are also records of seafood being traded by Ise-Shima's Daio Town dating from 745 CE, evidence that seafood has sustained the population here for thousands of years.

Ise Jingu, the most sacred *jinja* (Shinto shrine) in Japan, was established about 2,000 years ago to worship the sun deity Amaterasu-Omikami. The excellent quality of Ise-Shima's seafood and other local produce further enhanced the area's reputation. Ise-Shima were declared a *miketsukuni*—a special area given the honor of providing food for both deities and the imperial court.

During the period of military upheaval in the sixteenth century, Kuki Yoshitaka (1542–1600) rose to prominence as a naval commander leading a faction in the conflict. Roads were improved during the 250 years of peace that followed the end of this warring period. This meant that more people could make pilgrimages to Ise Jingu. During this period, about one-sixth of the Japanese population was able to visit this sacred place. At the same time, trade between Ise-Shima, Edo (now Tokyo) and Osaka, boomed, leading to increased wealth and exchanges of culture.