

Tomiō (Kitagawahonke)

Kitagawahonke has been brewing fine sake since at least 1657. Its founder, Funaya Shirobē (dates unknown), was an innkeeper who provided lodging for merchants and travelers who came to Fushimi via the Ujigawa River, an important commercial waterway. His inn was located beside Bungobashi Bridge (now called Kangetsukyō Bridge) at the heart of Fushimi's inland port.

Shirobē's sake, brewed using soft Fushimi spring water, found fame downriver in Osaka. Currently run by its fourteenth-generation president, the company combines traditional brewing methods with modern techniques, using locally developed *Kyō-no-koto* sake yeast, high-quality Yamada Nishiki rice, and the same pure spring water that it has used since 1657.

For 18 years starting in 1983, Kitagawahonke's flagship brand of *junmai ginjō* sake, Tomiō, won consecutive gold prizes at the Annual Japan Sake Awards. The name "Tomiō" is derived from a line in one of the Four Books and Five Classics of Chinese literature and means "those who are rich of heart will enjoy a happy life until the end."

For over a century, Kitagawahonke has had close ties with master brewers from Nuka in Fukui Prefecture, many of whom came to Fushimi as seasonal workers until recently when the brewery began hiring them to make sake throughout the year.