

Jinbakaisho

Service Station for Travelers

The post towns on the Nakasendo had a legal obligation to furnish traveling government officials with horses and porters. This was the job of the *jinbakaisho*, which translates as something like “horse-and-labor exchange.” In Tsumago, the two families who ran the main inn and the secondary inn shared responsibility for the provision of horses and labor, and would alternate operations every six months. For convenience, the *jinbakaisho* was usually situated on the main street.

The person in charge of the overall operation was known as the *tonya*. Under him was the *umasashi* (“horse manager”), who assigned horses and handlers, and the *ninsokusashi* (“porter manager”), who assigned porters.

Kiso, of which Tsumago was a part, paid its taxes in the form of wood, labor, and horses, and was obliged to have 25 horses and men ready at all times. If the *jimbakaisho* failed to provide proper service to the feudal lords who passed through, the Owari domain that controlled the Kiso region would incur the shogun’s displeasure. If nothing else, this system gave the Owari domain an incentive to make sure the local people were well fed and dedicated to their work.