

Kumatakamon Gate

Kumatakamon Gate takes its name from the *kumataka*, a mountain hawk-eagle native to Japan and other parts of Asia. The connection between this bird of prey and the gate that once stood here is not entirely clear; one theory is that the daimyo lord of Himeji kept his hunting birds somewhere nearby.

When Himeji Castle changed hands and control was passed from one daimyo lord to another, the new lord's arriving retainers and vassals entered the castle town through the Kumatakamon Gate. Departing retainers were required to leave by another route.

The earth-and-stone bridge in front of the gate functioned like a dam and helped maintain the water level of the moat. The bridge could be flooded, allowing water to spill over and raise the water level on its other side.