

Birth Stone

This large stone is the legendary birthplace of Shimazu Tadahisa (1179–1227), the founder of the Shimazu samurai family. According to family lore, Tadahisa's father was Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147–1199), who would become the first shogun of the Kamakura shogunate (1185–1333). His mother was Tango no Tsubone, daughter of a warrior noble. Yoritomo's wife, Hōjō Masako (1156–1225), discovered her husband's affair and had Tango no Tsubone accused of a crime. Pregnant with Yoritomo's child, Tango no Tsubone fled the capital in Kamakura and eventually sought refuge at Sumiyoshi Taisha. When she arrived, she suddenly went into labor and clung to this large stone as she gave birth to Tadahisa.

Yoritomo later appointed Tadahisa governor of Ōsumi and Satsuma provinces (now Kagoshima Prefecture). Tadahisa was given the surname Shimazu, and his descendants created a family that ruled most of Kyushu during the peak of their power in the 1580s. Although they were forced to swear allegiance and service to the Tokugawa in 1602, their forces were instrumental in defeating the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868) and establishing the first modern Japanese state 265 years later. Even now, people from Kagoshima come to Sumiyoshi Taisha to pay their respects to the ancestors of the Shimazu family at this stone.