

History of Takayama: Under the Tokugawa Shogunate

During the Edo period (1603–1867), when the entire country was governed by the Tokugawa shogunate, Takayama was a major transport hub. It sat at the intersection of five major roads used to transport goods and people, and it borders the Miyagawa River, which was used to float lumber to Toyama and from there to around Japan. Takayama's rich mines and verdant forests also made it particularly valuable.

In 1692, the shogunate moved the ruling Kanamori family to another domain and began to administer the region directly to secure control of the roads and waterways. Takayama Castle was dismantled, and the samurai families were relocated.

Carpenters and woodcarvers from Hida Province enjoyed unprecedented prosperity during the Edo period. They were already well known throughout the country as “Hida no Takumi,” builders of magnificent temples and shrines in Nara and Kyoto. As the long peace under the Tokugawa continued, they built the homes of prominent samurai and sold intricate *netsuke* (sculptured toggles) and other objects.

Takayama also had moneylenders, numerous silk-producers, and more than 50 licensed sake breweries. The town was so prosperous as a cultural hub that it came to be known as “Little Kyoto,” a nickname that is still used today.