**Matsunoki Jinja Shrine**

This shrine is dedicated to Matsunoki Shozaemon (1625–1652), a village leader who advocated for Obama domain farmers suffering from heavy taxation. Four centuries later, he is still remembered in Wakasa as a heroic figure who sacrificed his life trying to lessen the burden placed on his fellow villagers.

*Heavy Taxation to Fund Castle Construction*

During the Edo period (1603–1867), goods such as rice and beans were used to pay taxes instead of money. In the early seventeenth century, when the Kyogoku family was appointed to govern the Obama domain, taxes were raised significantly to fund the construction of Obama Castle. For example, the tax paid in soybeans was increased by 12–25 percent. This level of taxation remained unchanged even after the castle was completed in 1641 under the rule of the Sakai family. Though the farmers managed to make the payments initially, the disproportionate tax burden jeopardized the livelihood of many people throughout the domain.

*Matsunoki Shozaemon Advocating for Farmers*

Matsunoki was one of more than 20 representatives from 252 villages in the region who gathered to discuss the unfair taxation and directly petition the domain government to revise the rates. After more than a decade of continuous unsuccessful appeals, the taxes were finally reduced to the original level. However, because of the strict social class division of the time, it was illegal for lower-ranking people to directly petition the government in this way. Matsunoki, who had been a key figure in the years-long process, was arrested in 1648 and crucified on the bank of the Hikasa River in 1652, losing his life at the age of 28.

*Shrine Founding and Precincts*

In 1933, Matsunoki Jinja Shrine was built in honor of Matsunoki Shozaemon and his sacrifice. It is located on the land where the official Obama domain rice storehouses once stood. While the majority of shrines in Japan are dedicated to Shinto deities that have been worshipped since ancient times, Matsunoki Shrine is an example of a shrine venerating a relatively recent historical figure. Beyond the first torii gate is a large statue of Matsunoki down on one knee and offering up a written document, depicting the moment when he petitioned the domain officials on behalf of the common people.