

## **The Culture of Kumagawa**

Since Kumagawa is located on the Wakasa Kaido road, it has long been a place of cultural exchange between the old capital of Kyoto and mainland Asia. People and goods from the Sea of Japan and beyond passed through Kumagawa on the way to Kyoto, while religious beliefs, festival traditions, and works of art flowed from the capital to Kumagawa.

### *A Cultural Crossroads*

Many famous artists, writers, entertainers, and religious figures stopped in Kumagawa during their travels. Rennyo (1415–1499), the leader of the Jodo Shinshu (True Pure Land) school of Buddhism, spent some time with the monks of Tokuhoji Temple in 1475, and the temple was later converted to Jodo Shinshu. Hosokawa Fujitaka (also known as Hosokawa Yusai, 1534–1610), a prominent general and accomplished writer who married Jako (1544–1618), the daughter of the lord of Kumagawa Castle, visited in 1567 to host a *renga* poetry gathering. The renowned *renga* poet Satomura Joha (1525–1602) stayed in Kumagawa-juku in 1568.

### *Aspects of Kyoto Culture in Kumagawa*

The influence of Kyoto culture is most evident in the traditional festivals of Kumagawa-juku. During the annual festival of Shiraishi Jinja Shrine on May 3rd, a large float decorated with a luxurious tapestry is paraded through the town in the style of Kyoto's famous Gion Festival. The Tessen Odori dance that originated in the Yase and Ohara villages of northern Kyoto is performed in Kumagawa-juku in the summer. The practice was discontinued in the Taisho era (1912–1926), but was revived in 1998 through the efforts of the town residents and a traditional performing arts preservation society.