

Takasago City

Takasago has long-been an important transport hub, with overland routes and waterways. In the Edo period (1603–1867), many small settlements were established where commodities such as salt and stone were produced. Ports and farms, as well as a distribution center for goods shipped on the Kakogawa River, were also set up. During this period the area was under the control of the Himeji domain.

The city of Takasago is believed to be the setting of the Noh play *Takasago*, written by Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443), who is considered one of the foremost figures of the traditional Japanese performing art of Noh, a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. A song called *Takasago* is part of the play. It is often chanted at traditional wedding ceremonies in Japan to celebrate the long life and happiness of married couples and their union. On the grounds of Takasago Jinja Shrine are two pine trees merged at the roots, referred to in the play as “Aioi no Matsu” (twin pines). The spirits of the paired pines, an elderly couple named Jo and Uba, who represent marital happiness and longevity in the play, are enshrined at the Jo-Uba Shinto Shrine, next to the twin pines.

When the legend of Jo and Uba and the existence of the pines became widely known, Takasago became known as Musubi no Machi (“matrimony town”) due to its many legends related to the harmony of married couples in the area.