

## Kunin Yashiki (former Okamoto Mansion)

Since old times, Sakamoto thrived as so called “Monzenmachi” , lit. “city in front of the temple gate” , due to the fact that it provided the supplies for the Enryakuji-Temple located at nearby Mt.Hiei. During the Edo era, the city of Sakamoto established the “Satobou”, a place to stay for the monks who came to Mt.Hiei to receive their training. Gradually, Satobou developed into a place for dwelling not only for said monks and Shinto-priests from the Hiyoshitaisya-Shrine, but also a wide variety of people, amongst others craftsmen like carpenters and merchants. Also, there existed the so called “Kunin”, who were — while being monks of the Enryakuji-Temple—charged by this temple with the collection of the land taxes. Furthermore, along with the right to have a wife and carry a sword, the Kunin were also awarded the right to carry a family name. At that time, this was a right reserved (in general) only to members of the samurai families and thereby represented a special privilege.

Due to the fact that Sakamoto was donated Enryakuji-Temple as some kind of fief by the Tokugawa-Government, Sakamoto was spared direct control by said government, feudal lords or samurai families. Instead, a council, called “Oodoshiyori” and consisting of 5 members, was established, which shouldered the whole administration of Sakamoto. Below this was the rank of the “Toshiyori”, to which also the Kunin belonged. Until recent years, many former dwellings of the Kunin, called “Kunin Yashiki” , were left in Sakamoto. Among these, the buildings belonging to the Okamoto family—from whose ranks generations of Kunin were drawn—are still left in their original (i.e.structurally unchanged) state. As of March 2005, the main building, the rice storehouse and the stables of said Okamoto Mansion have been acknowledged their historical value and accordingly have been awarded the status of “Cultural Treasure of Otsu City”.

Otsu City November 2005

## Kunin Yashiki, Main building

The “Kunin Yashiki,” the Mansion of the “Public Officer” is one of the central structures that represent the particularity of ancient Sakamoto, the “Town outside the Temple Gates” at the foot of Mt.Hiei. This “Yashiki,” which preserved its original atmosphere up to the present day, was probably constructed in 1864. Inside the Yashiki, a painting of the well-known painter Yokoi Kinkoku was discovered on one of the sliding doors.

## The ruins of the cottage

Although it is very small in scale, this Sukiya-style cottage (i.e.a tearoom like building) was used as a sort of secret living room hidden behind the surrounding passageway. The passageway around the Sukiya-style cottage used to be connected to the main structure through a bridge-like construction.

## The Storage • Ruins of the storage

The roof tiles of the present storage bear the coat of arms of Mt. Hiei's Enryaku-ji Temple. This indicates, that the structure was used to store the collected land tax (paid in natural products,e.g.rice) for Enryaku-ji temple on Mt. Hiei. The building was one of originally two buildings and is the oldest part of the Okamoto estate, dating back to 1794.

## The stable

This stable was not only used to raise horses, but was also a facility to shelter the horses of aristocrats and noble-men, who came to Sakamoto to visit the “Monzeki” of the Shiga-in Temple(Monzeki is a head priest of a temple, who belongs to the imperial family).