

***Otenpenshia* Ceremonial Scourge**

Items: One

Length: 40 cm

Edo period (presumed)

Private collection, Kasuga Village

Otenpenshia is a corruption of the Portuguese word *penitencia*, meaning a scourge used for penance and self-mortification. This specimen was made by knotting together 46 separate strands of rope, then tying a metal cross at the end of each strand. In Japan, however, its purpose was different and more symbolic. In a 2012 oral history interview, one speaker referred to the item as a “rope for purifying the sick.” In the village of Kasuga, the person responsible for conducting baptisms was known as the *o-mizuyaku*. Before the Second World War, a certain T— held this post. In Kasuga, the *otenpenshia* was used to gently strike the sick and purify them.

***O-fuda* Cards**

Items: One set (16 components)

Height: 7 cm; width: 5 cm; thickness: 0.5 cm

Edo period (presumed)

Private collection, Kasuga Village

This set of small card tablets belonged to one of the two Kirishitan-kō (secret groups of Hidden Christians) in the village of Kasuga. They would take it in turns to receive the tablets, enshrine them and conduct ceremonies around them. Known as *o-kamisama o-fuda* (“God Tablets”), this set consists of a set of 16 cards that were kept in a cloth bag. They originate from the 15 Mysteries of the Rosary, depicting events in the lives of Mary and Jesus. The 15 mysteries are in turn divided into three subsets: the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries. Fifteen of these tablets reflect that division, being broken into three groups, each having its distinct symbol.

The 16th tablet, known as *o-fukuro-sama*, features a picture of a bag. It represents Mary, the Mother of God, and is the *oyafuda*, the most powerful card.

***Maburi* (*O-maburi*) Amulets**

One set

Height: (each) 1.8 cm; width 1.8 cm

Date unknown

On loan to Hirado Christian Museum

Maburi is another word for *o-mamori* (an amulet or charm of the kind you see at most Japanese shrines and temples.) They are made by folding Japanese *washi* paper into squares from which a cross is cut. These *maburi* come from Ira, a small village nearby. They were given as offerings to the dead, and they were also mixed in the feed of sick cows as a cure. Other communities had similar *maburi*, which were used in a range of rites.

28/9 (Combined version)

Hanging Scroll: *The Annunciation*

Paper and wood scroll

Height 49 cm; width 28 cm
Date unknown
Shima no Yakata Museum

This is a hanging scroll belonging to a family from Tachiura on Ikitsuki Island. It shows the Annunciation, when the Angel Gabriel announces to the Virgin Mary that she will conceive and become the mother of Jesus. God the Father is in the upper part of the composition, above the clouds. In the lower part of the picture sit Mary and the Angel Gabriel. Note that Mary already has the baby Jesus at her breast, a detail that would never have appeared in the original paintings, as Jesus has obviously not yet been conceived, let alone born. It is likely that the baby Jesus was added as the picture was copied and recopied over the years. Mary is depicted with a hairstyle that was in fashion in the early Edo period (1603–1868). Three things characterize this representation of the traditional scene: Mary's breasts being visible, the high degree of realism with which the wings of the Angel Gabriel are depicted, and the overall richness of the colors.

Statuette of Holy Mother and Child (Kasuga)

Statuette of Holy Mother and Child

This statuette was worshipped by several generations of Kakure Kirishitan in Kasuga Village. It is stored in a wooden box known as an *akezu-bako* (not-to-be-opened box), along with medals and other devotional items, and is even now kept on the household Shinto altar.