

Maeda Gidayū The Man Who Settled Kashiragashima

Kashiragashima was first settled in 1858, when Maeda Gidayū a Buddhist, moved from Arikawa, a village on Nakadōri Island, with a view to farm on the island. He settled in the northern area of Fukuura. Relatively unexposed to the wind, with a supply of fresh water (albeit not in great quantities), and an easy place for boats to land, Fukuura was the most livable place on the island. Gidayū built a house close to the shore with a shrine to the guardian deities immediately behind. The family graves were later erected adjacent to the shrine.

In 1859, several families that Gidayū had recruited to help him settle on Kashiragashima arrived from Nakadori Island. These settlers were Hidden Christians who had moved from Sotome to Nakadori as the result of a pact between the Ōmura and Gotō domains. While they had managed to avoid friction with Nakadori's original Buddhist population by posing as good Buddhists, the uninhabited island of Kashiragashima, which held out the promise of a safe and peaceful existence, inspired them to move for a second time. Working with Gidayū, who was himself a Buddhist, was also a good way to camouflage their Christian beliefs.

Caption

Maeda Gidayū's Grave

* The grave stands on private property and is not open to the public.

“The Origin Story of Kashiragashima” on Maeda Gidayū's Gravestone

An account entitled “The Origin Story of Kashiragashima” is carved into three of the four sides of Maeda Gidayū's gravestone. This account serves as an important record of the history of Kashiragashima, recording how the island was settled, as well as its history, population, and the number of households.