

MAIN HEADLINE ON RIGHT

Historical Highlights of Kuroshima

BOX 1

Honmura Village / Site of Village Headman's House / Kozenji Temple

Honmura is the oldest Buddhist village on Kuroshima, dating back to the fourteenth century. The island's Buddhists had a policy of not interfering in the affairs of the Hidden Christians, who arrived later, and the two groups managed to coexist. The park in the photograph above is the site of the village headman's house where the *efumi* ritual of trampling on religious images was conducted.

Kozenji Temple, next door to the park, is where the Hidden Christians worshipped a Kannon Bodhisattva as "Maria Kannon," or Mary, the Mother of God, while pretending to be Buddhists.

Caption

Maria Kannon of Kozenji Temple (now lost)

Speech Bubble

The name of the donor, a Hidden Christian, is carved into the bell, showing the close links between the Hidden Christians and Kozenji Temple.

Captions

The village of Honmura

Site of village headman's house

Kozenji temple bell

BOX 2

Warabe Village

The horse farms of the Hirado domain were located in the south of the island, in the area around Warabe and Tashiro. After 1802, when the horse farms were shuttered, settlers were encouraged to move here. Many Hidden Christians from Sotome and other places came to the island, building houses on hillsides sloping down to the sea and secretly maintaining their faith. The old landscape from those days is still visible in Warabe today, with windbreaks, houses, and fields all lined up in a row.

BOX 3

Hidden Christians' Graveyard (Shikirimaki Cemetery)

Shikirimaki Cemetery was where Warabe's Hidden Christians were buried until the 1880s, when the island's general Catholic cemetery opened. The Buddhists on Kuroshima always erected their gravestones with the front facing toward the west. In this graveyard, however, there are graves facing toward the east. Since none of the east-facing gravestones were erected in modern times, it is fair to assume that they are the graves of Hidden Christians.

Captions

East

West

*The cemetery is not open to the public.

BOX 4**Site of the Hidden Christian Leader's House**

This was the site of the house of the Deguchi family, whose men were the leaders of Kuroshima's Hidden Christian community. In 1872, the year before the ban on Christianity was lifted, the island's Hidden Christians secretly invited a priest to the island, and the first mass was held here. After the ban was lifted, their house became a temporary church, and was used until the first church was built in the middle of the island in 1879. The site is honored as one of Kuroshima's sacred places, with a stone memorializing it as the place where the faith came back to life.