

### ***Warōsoku* Candles**

The Honda Mokurō Workshop is one of the few places in Japan still producing traditional *warōsoku* candles made from the Japanese wax tree. This workshop is the only place in Japan that uses mechanical presses, rather than chemical extraction, to produce its raw material.

Candle-making first came to Shimabara at the end of the eighteenth century, after the earthquakes and tsunami of the Shimabara Catastrophe devastated the region in 1792. The local lord encouraged farmers whose lands had been destroyed to grow Japanese wax trees as a cash crop. However, the largest of these tree plantations was destroyed in the Heisei Eruptions of 1990–1995, threatening this already-disappearing craft.

Of course, there are now much more efficient methods of extracting wax, but the newer methods use chemicals that are released as the candle burns. The owners of Honda Mokurō are passionate about their more natural methods of extracting the wax. They use ball-clamp presses built in the 1950s, which produce wax that is better for their customers and the environment.

If you visit the workshop you will discover the rich world of this traditional craft: You can see the wax-tree fruit (*haze*) which are crushed to extract the wax, and the classic machinery that is still used to this day. Candle-making lessons are held daily, and highly decorated candles are available to purchase.