

## **Nomichi Graveyard**

This terraced graveyard just to the north of Shitsu Church features flat slab gravestones of the type associated with Christianity. Father Marc de Rotz (1840–1914) of the Paris Foreign Missions Society, the French priest who presided over this parish for 35 years from 1879, is buried here.

De Rotz was from a noble family and had a considerable personal fortune at his disposal. He deployed his resources to directly benefit his poor parishioners, establishing, among other things, a kindergarten, a women's vocational training center, a pasta factory, and a tea plantation. His enthusiasm to improve people's conditions extended even to the afterlife: he initiated construction of this graveyard in 1889, with the villagers contributing their labor for free.

Because the hillside was so steep, the graveyard took an entire decade to complete. De Rotz himself was buried here in 1914. His grave was originally located at a higher level, but has since been moved to the lower level to make it more accessible. (De Rotz remains something of a local hero, even appearing in school textbooks.) The original grave markers were simple cairns, but many of them have recently been replaced with horizontal stone slabs. The topmost level of the graveyard, where children are buried, is the least restored and gives the best idea of its original appearance.