

Stone Walls of Kuchinoerabujima

The main street of Kuchinoerabujima, about a two- to three-minute walk from the ferry port at Honmura, is lined with stone walls of undetermined age. The stones are not evenly cut but round, collected from the ocean, and stacked high, giving the walls a stately appearance. Built in front of houses, these walls may have had two purposes: to prevent intruders from entering the property, and/or to protect the houses from typhoon winds. Stone walls are common on the islands of southwestern Japan, but those on Kuchinoerabujima are said to be higher and the stones larger than on islands further south, such as Okinawa. Regrettably, maintenance and preservation work on the walls has been lacking, as their distinctiveness and value as a cultural property were not generally recognized until recently pointed out by scholars.