

Hitoyoshi Kuma (History)

Hitoyoshi Kuma is a microcosm of pre-modern Japanese history, ranging from sites that reveal ancient burial practices, to those that tell the story of the rise and fall of the samurai class. Most of the sites are connected with the Sagara family, who ruled this area continuously for nearly 700 years.

Ancient society in the area developed early and burial sites from the Yayoi (ca. 300 BCE–300 AD) and Kofun (ca. 250–552) periods hint of local class hierarchies and the centralization of power. Traditions passed down at Aoi Aso Jinja Shrine date from the Heian period (794–1185), and sites like the Kajiyamachi former blacksmith district and Hitoyoshi Castle are reminders of the rise and fall of samurai culture. Hitoyoshi Kuma's rich history is evident in its sacred sites, Buddhist artwork, Edo-era streetscapes, and recreational activities on the Kuma River.

Many of the historical sites and activities offer insights into the Sagara family and their contributions to the economic and cultural development of the region. The family ruled from the twelfth to the nineteenth century, and their legacy is preserved through regional traditions such as distillation of Kuma Shochu liquor, the biannual Sagara 33 Kannon Pilgrimage, and cultural treasures that include National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties.