

***Kentoshi* Sites in the Northern Goto Islands**

Several sites on Nakadori Island are associated with the *kentoshi*, the eighth- to ninth-century Japanese envoys to Tang China. Most of the sites are in the sheltered Aokata and Aiko areas on the western side of the island, where the delegations are thought to have stopped to resupply and wait for favorable winds before attempting the perilous crossing over the East China Sea.

The *kentoshi* ships are believed to have anchored in **Mikanoura** (“three-day inlet”) and off **Kinpose** (“silver sail cape”) on the southern side of Aokata Bay. **Mifunesama**, a boat-shaped rock by the water there, may have been worshiped by the envoys and local people alike. The peak of the sacred Mt. Sanno is visible from the site, and seafarers may have prayed to the mountain for protection from the seas.

Kentoshi ships also moored in the innermost part of Aokata Bay, near what is now the port of Aokata. The **Tomojiri mooring stone** by the port, said to have been used by the *kentoshi*, now stands some distance from the water’s edge due to landfill work carried out in later centuries, but still gets bathed by the waves at high tide. At the mouth of the stream that empties into the bay is the former site of **Hime Shrine**, a sanctuary dedicated to a Shinto deity of the sea. Members of a *kentoshi* mission in 776 that had to turn back due to adverse weather established the shrine to pray that the winds would blow more favorably the next year.