

Tomb of Kikuchi Mochitomo

Kikuchi Mochitomo (1409–1446), the nineteenth head of the Kikuchi clan, is remembered as a skilled diplomat who improved the clan's relationships with its former enemies, the Ashikaga shoguns.

When Mochitomo became leader in 1431, around four decades had passed since the warrior-led Ashikaga shogunate had subjugated the Kikuchi-backed Southern Court, ending a civil conflict that had torn the imperial court in two and divided the warrior class. The clan's political influence and martial power had diminished greatly, although the shogunate had allowed the Kikuchi to retain control of Higo Province (now Kumamoto Prefecture) after their defeat.

In Kyushu, the Kikuchi were engaged in local conflicts against the warlord-led Ouchi and Otomo families. When a succession dispute arose within the Otomo family, the side that had been denied leadership of the family allied with the Kikuchi. The Ashikaga shogunate was also unhappy with the Otomo, and Kikuchi Mochitomo struck a deal with the shogunate: the government would support a Kikuchi-led overthrow of the current Otomo warlord and reward Mochitomo with governorship of Chikugo Province (the southern part of today's Fukuoka Prefecture), formerly held by the Otomo.

Mochitomo's plan worked, and he governed both Higo and Chikugo until his death in 1446. The Otomo, however, would have their revenge half a century later, when they overwhelmed the Kikuchi and took over their ancestral homeland of Higo. Kikuchi Mochitomo's tomb is on the grounds of Kozenji Temple.