

## Fumi-e made from Japanese paper, used to prove if suspected citizens were Christians An old cross from more than 400 years ago speaks out

*Fumi-e* made from Japanese paper had existed in Oka clan! And what did the old cross, which had travelled from a destroyed church in Nagasaki to Taketa, speak to the residents of Taketa about? The mystery of the Miyado Kagome *Gongen* deepens further. Has the name come from the emblem of David of ancient Judea?

As a special feature, I will introduce the Christian relics stored in a church in Oita City. The church that holds the relics is the Church of the Holy Jesus – Eiko no Sanbi Kyokai, and valuable Christian relics that had originally been scattered across the territories of the old Oka clan have been brought together and stored in this church.

Why were the Christian relics from the Oka clan territories stored in the Church of the Holy Jesus – Eiko no Sanbi Kyokai? The reason behind this was that Pastor Shino Mitsuko (Photo 2) of this church had personally bought over these dust-covered relics from the back of an antique shop in Taketa about 25 to 26 years ago.

Please refer the Photo 1 first. This is an image of Jesus and a cross, printed on Japanese paper. The existence of paper *fumi-e* in itself is a surprising fact. This had originally been printed in Amakusa, and an identical print remains in Amakusa today. The following words were found on the paper: “Christian - Capital punishment for those who fail to step on the Father”, “Kuroda family”, and “Chikuzen”, showing that it may have belonged to the Kuroda family. (The “Kuroda family” refers to Kuroda Kanbe (Jyosui) whose story was serialized as a television drama on NHK. He had been a Christian feudal lord and had the Christian name “Don Simeon”.) According to Pastor Shino, this piece of *fumi-e* shows no marks of having been stepped on, and had therefore probably been hidden until the end of the Edo period as a prohibited document. Needless to say, this is rare and valuable Christian relic that has remained in Japan to this day.

The second relic is an old cross. According to Pastor Shino, this old cross is estimated to be over 400 years old, based on its shape. Studies show that this cross used to belong to a church in Nagasaki. The size of the base, the cross and the ivory statue of Jesus (\*1) are unbalanced, possibly because they had originally been separate items that were put together as one. But who had owned these until the Meiji era in Taketa? (\*2) Many Christian relics are displayed in this church, and these had come from other separated domains of the Oka clan such as Misa, Oita City or Inukai Town. These tell of the huge numbers of Christians in the Oka clan (Photo 4). However, Pastor Shino thought that it was unfortunate that such valuable Christian relics had been discarded as trash in Taketa. She felt that each piece of relic has a voice that conveys something to the modern people. This is why I have placed the spotlight on these relics and introduced them as part of a special feature. I hope you will all take a look at these relics if you have the opportunity.

There was a special edition about the Kagome *Gongen* in Miyado in the last issue, and a reader from Osaka had provided me with information regarding the place name “Kagome”. According to this reader, “Kagome” in Japan refers to the Kagome crest, which is known as the Star of David (a six-pointed star) in Europe and the decorative emblem in the national flag of Israel. Israel is Jewish, and the country where Jesus Christ was born. Jesus was the king of Judea, so it would not be an exaggeration to describe the Star of David as a symbol of Christian religion or of the Jewish race. After that, I conducted further research into the Kagome *Gongen* and uncovered some points of interest. I will introduce greater details about the connection between the Kagome *Gongen* and the Star of David. The mystery of the Kagome *Gongen* has a very long history that spreads beyond the shores of Japan. (GOTO Atsumi)

Note 1: There were no ivory products in Japan around the 16th century, so the statue of Jesus would have been made outside of Japan.  
 Note 2: The *fumi-e* made from Japanese paper was meant for samurai warriors from higher classes.

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Photo 1: Explanation of text written on the paper *fumi-e*  
 Kanji at the top: Under the rule of the Kuroda family (*Kuroda-ke no sadame*)  
 English letters: Christi (meaning “Christ” in Latin)  
 Kanji letters on the right: “1. Christian - Capital punishment for those who fail to step on the Father” (*Kirishitan Bateria no fumazaru mono wa gokumon no koto*)  
 Kanji letters on the bottom left: Chikuzen Hamamura



Photo 2: Pastor Shino Mitsuko of the Church of the Holy Jesus – Eiko no Sanbi Kyokai



Photo 3: An old cross of more than 400 years old, brought in from Nagasaki to Taketa



Photo 4: Roof tile with the design of the Nakagawa cross, unearthed from Misa. Other Christian relics have also been unearthed from the ruins of the same residence.