

A history of "Osumi,"  
the "great corner" of Japan  
Open to the sea and  
enclosed by mountains

## A Cornerstone of Maritime Interaction

Starting halfway through the third century and spanning approximately 400 years, tombs were made in the form of burial mounds for the regional elite. These tombs, called kofun, consisted of a corpse laid to rest with offerings underneath an earthen mound.

There are many ancient kofun remaining in the Osumi Peninsula. Based on this, one can conjecture that the central political body in the Kinki region looked on Osumi as a significant place. They may have considered it the gateway to maritime exchange with southern powers.

Kimotsuki houses the oldest kofun in Osumi, burial mound number 16. This kofun lies within the Tsukazaki kofun cluster, a nationally designated historic site. Also notable is burial mound number 1, which has a giant camphor tree growing directly above it.

Many of the other kofun in Osumi are buried within mountains and fields. At times, farmers discover bones and metal arrowheads when they plow their fields.

background photo: **MAP①**  
Giant Camphor Tree in Tsukazaki

The giant camphor tree rooted in burial mound number 1 of the Tsukazaki kofun cluster. A sacred tree of the Tsukazaki Otsuka Shrine. Estimated to be over 1,300 years old, approximately 25 meters tall and 14 meters around. Open to the public.

Kimotsuki Museum of History and Folklore **MAP②**

Displays archeological artifacts with a focus on ancient everyday objects and relics recovered from the Tsukazaki kofun cluster.

🕒 9:00 am to 4:30 pm 🗝 none  
Closed: Mondays, national holidays, Dec. 28th to Jan. 4th

## Lords of an Invincible Mountain Castle

The Kimotsuki clan held immense power in Osumi during the Middle Ages. Founded at the end of the twelfth century, Kimotsuki's domain stretched even beyond the north end of the peninsula. Although the clan's strength surpassed that of the Shimazu, a clan which later controlled most of Kagoshima, Kimotsuki went into decline after the death of Kimotsuki Kanetsugu, the 16th head of the family. With his death, the times would turn to favor the Shimazu.

Trace of Koyama Castle **MAP③**

The castle of the Kimotsuki clan. Time of construction unknown. Surrounded by three rivers, this mountain castle was never captured in battle. Although the buildings have long vanished, one can walk the mountain paths and envision the former days. Open to the public.

Kimotsuki Clan Graves at the Jokoji Ruins **MAP④**

Established as the Kimotsuki family temple in 1272 by Kaneishi, the 5th head of the clan. From the 8th head Kaneshige to the 17th head Yoshikane, 250 years of history and twelve lords of Koyama Castle lay to rest here. Open to the public.

## Demolished Temples, Lasting Shrines

As the Meiji Restoration ended the age of samurai, modernization accelerated. Nationalism grew at the same time, and the central government ordered the elimination of Buddhism, which originated in China. This caused the destruction of nearly all temples in Japan.

Shinto shrines, on the other hand, lost documents and rituals by burning down in fires or failing to find successors to carry on their customs. Despite this, shrines conducting rituals passed down hundreds of generations still exist today.

Doryuji Ruins **MAP⑤**

Established in 1246 and thought to be Japan's oldest Zen temple. Built by Zen master Doryu, who later opened Kenchoji, a famous Zen temple in Kamakura. All the buildings were destroyed during the push to eliminate Buddhism. Today, only the restored stone graves remain standing, lined up under a grove of maple trees. Open to the public.

Shijukusho Shrine **MAP⑥**

Thought to be built by Tomo Kaneyuki in 984, but any detailed records have been lost in fires. Yabusame, a traditional form of horseback archery, takes place here on the third Sunday of October every year. While yabusame is practiced throughout Japan, this yabusame is unique in that the archer is always a thirteen-year-old boy in his second year of middle school. The prefecture has designated the practice an intangible folk cultural property. During the annual yabusame festival, the archer shoots nine arrows at a target and prays for national peace, bountiful harvest, and protection against illnesses. Open to the public.

## Architecture Preserving the Past

Nikaido House **MAP⑦**

An Edo Period samurai residence. Thought to be built in 1810. Consists of two buildings, one for receiving guests (Omote) and one for daily living (Nakae). The buildings are directly connected at their corners, a feature characteristic of southern Kyushu architecture in that period.

🕒 9:30 am to 5:00 pm 🗝 Adults 300 yen, children 150 yen  
Closed: Mondays (except on holidays)

Kawakami Junior High's Wooden School Rooms **MAP⑧**

School rooms built in 1949 and closed to regular attendance in 2011. Nationally registered as a tangible cultural property for preserving the architectural style of the period of construction and contributing to the historical scenery of the area. Open to the public. Entering the buildings is prohibited.



Entrance of the Trace of Koyama Castle



Doryuji Ruins ©Kimotsuki Town



Yabusame ©Kimotsuki Town



Nikaido House



Kawakami Junior Highschool  
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