

# Kurume History Walks

## No.44 Bairin-ji Temple – Ancestral Halls of the Arima Family

Bairin-ji      Arimake      Tamaya  
 梅林寺   有馬家靈屋



Bairin'in Ancestral Hall

In 1621, twenty years after the beginning of the Tokugawa Shogunate that lasted around 250 years, Arima Toyouji entered the Kurume castle as a lord of Kurume Domain in Chikugo Province (northern half of the province). His family ruled the domain until 1868 when the shogunate ended.

Their family temple was this Bairin-ji Temple, located on the southwest of Kurume Castle, and also the Shoun-ji Temple in Hirao, Tokyo. If died in Kurume, the deceased was buried in the former temple, and if in Tokyo, buried in the latter temple.

Today in the graveyard of the Arima family within the ground of Bairin-ji Temple, there are the lords' ancestral halls and stone pagodas (tombstone), and those of their family members and retainers. Above all, five halls were built in the 17th century. These historical values were recognized, and these were designated National Important Cultural Properties in December 2018.

## Bairin-ji Temple and the Graveyard of the Arima Family

Konanzan Bairin-ji Temple (formal name) is located between the Chikugo River and the JR Kurume Station. In 1621, Arima Toyouji was ordered to move as a lord to Kurume from Tanba, Kyoto. At that time, he transferred the Zuigan-ji Temple to Kurume and renamed the Bairin-ji\* Temple.

\*Bairin-ji, literally plum trees temple. The Buddhist name of Toyouji's father was Bairin'in. Today, people can admire the flowers of plum blossoms in the garden in February.

At the temple, four lords were buried: Toyouji the first, Tadayori the second, Yoriyuki the seventh, and Yorito the tenth. The graveyard is on a hill to the north side of the temple buildings. There are five halls, seven stone pagodas, etc.

### In the Edo period

Their ancestral hall was constructed between the transfer of the tomb of Toyouji's father from Tanba in 1630 and the burial of Toyouji, his wife, and Tadayori in 1655. And the third lord, three stone pagodas were built as tombs. There are also the stone pagodas of lords' children and retainers.

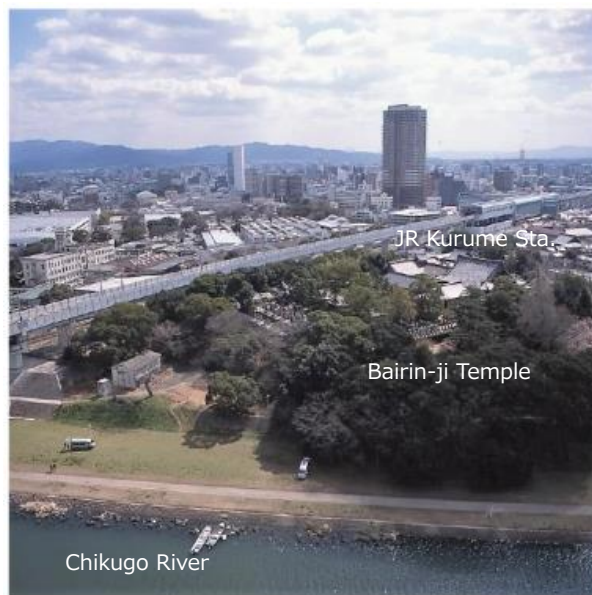
The "Diagram of Konanzan (*Konanzan-Zu*)" which was drawn in the middle of the 18th century shows the appearance of the halls of that time with a Chinese-style gate and a mud wall, which don't exist today. The "Collection of Handwriting in 1846 (*Koka Sannen Tekagami*)" indicates that "guards" took care of the Ancestral Hall daily.

### Lords of the Arima family

As the lord of Kurume Domain, the Arima family lasted until the 11th generation for about 250 years, from 1621 to the establishment of the new government after the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Five halls of the Arima Family consist of two halls for housing stone pagodas on the lower place of a hilly graveyard, and three halls of housing mortuary tablets on a higher place.

|                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Primogenitor: Yorinori   | The 5th: Yorimune        | The 10th: <b>Yoritoo</b>                                |
| The 1st: <b>Toyouji</b>  | The 6th: Norifusa        | The 11th: Yorishige                                     |
| The 2nd: <b>Tadayori</b> | The 7th: <b>Yoriyuki</b> |   |
| The 3rd: Yoritoshi       | The 8th: Yoritaka        | *Indicated in green were buried at the Bairinji Temple. |
| The 4th: Yorimoto        | The 9th: Yorinori        |   |



Konanzan Bairin-ji Temple



Ancestral Halls on the Diagram of Konanzan



Arima Toyouji, the first lord  
(Collection of the Sasayama-jinja Shrine)



### Bairin'in Ancestral Hall (梅林院靈屋)

The hall houses three stone pagodas of Yorinori, the primogenitor (1533-1602: his Buddhist name was Bairin'in), the primogenitor, his wife, and his daughter. It has a hip-and-gable roof and a platform made of large square-cut granite stones which exhibit a characteristic architectural style of the early 17th century. An inscription on a stone lantern placed in its front also indicates that it was built in 1630.



Bairin'in Ancestral Hall (foreground) and Shunrin'in Ancestral Hall (background)

### Shunrin'in Ancestral Hall (春林院靈屋)

Located on the northeast side of the above-mentioned hall, this has a square hip roof and a platform made of large square-cut granite stones. It houses four pagodas of Toyouji, the first (1569-1642: his Buddhist name was Shunrin'in), his wife (Choju'in), his son Tadayori, the second (Keirin'in), and his great-great-grandchild Yorimune, the fourth. The rightmost pagoda is the largest and bears an inscription about its history of construction on the platform. And, an inscription on a stone lantern placed in its front indicates that it was built in 1643, and suggests that the hall was constructed on the occasion of Toyouji's burial.



Pagodas in the Shunrin'in Ancestral Hall

### Shunrin'in Mortuary Tablet Hall (春林院位牌廟)

This hall stands between two other mortuary tablet halls. It houses Toyouji's mortuary tablet and is thought to be constructed in 1643 from an inscription on a stone lantern placed in its front. It has a hip-and-gable roof today, while it is thought to be renovated because it was drawn with a square hip roof on the "Diagram of Konanzan (Konanzan-Zu)" of the middle 18th century. The mortuary tablet was enshrined in a palace-like miniature shrine decorated with gilding, lacquering and brilliant colors in the style of the Kansei era (1789-1801).



Shunrin'in Mortuary Tablet Hall



Mortuary Tablet in the Miniature shrine

### Choju'in Mortuary Tablet Hall (長壽院位牌廟)

This was built on the east side of the above-mentioned hall. Choju'in was Renhime, the lawful wife of Toyouji and the adopted daughter of Tokugawa Ieyasu who established the Tokugawa Shogunate. It was thought to be constructed in 1652 when she died, and to have originally had a square hip roof as same as the above-mentioned hall. Today, it stands with a hip-and-gable roof on a platform made of large square-cut granite stones.

It houses a palace-like miniature shrine and a tombstone of Chiko'in who was the lawful wife of Noriyori the ninth, and the daughter of Tokugawa Nariatsu from a branch of the Shogun's family. There are Tokugawa's family crest (three leaves of hollyhock in a circle) on the door and the roof ornamentation, and that indicates that the hall was built for those from the Tokugawa family.



Choju'in Mortuary Tablet Hall

### Keirin'in Mortuary Tablet Hall (瓊林院位牌廟)

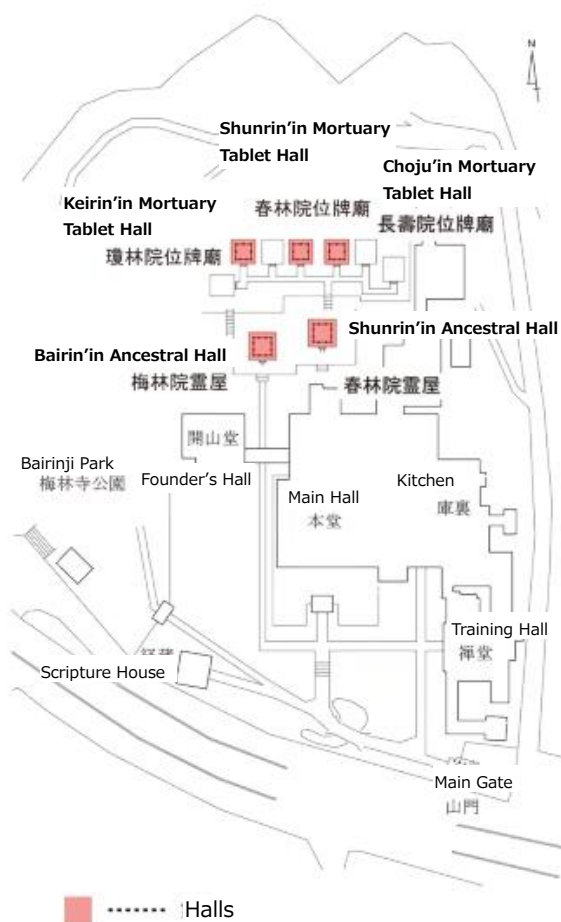
This is the latest hall among the five halls of the Arima family. It houses the mortuary tablet of Tadayori, the second. An inscription on a stone lantern indicates that the hall was constructed in 1655. It also has a hip-and-gable roof today but also used to originally have a square hip roof. And, a palace-like miniature shrine very similar to the other two was enshrined.

Since then, three-story stone pagodas were built to pray for the repose of the deceased lords in the place of building a hall.

The graveyard with over five ancestral halls of a lord family is rare in Japan. About 300 feudal domains existed throughout the Edo period, and there are only about 30 graveyards with ancestral halls.

And also, an important point is that there are the records that indicate who were enshrined and when, and how changed the way to construct a memorial for the departed lords and their family (ancestral hall → mortuary tablet hall → stone pagoda).

Visitors are kindly requested to respect the sacred character of the graveyard, which is located on the precinct of the Bairin-ji Temple known as a representative training Zen *dojo* temple in **Kyushu**.



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