

The name Kannonji Castle derives from Kannonshoji Temple (referred to as Kannonji Temple in the Middle Ages), which is located near the center of the castle ruins. The first written historical record of the castle occurs in the *Taiheiki* in the Nanbokucho Period (1336-1392 A.D.), where the structure is referred to as “Kannonji Temple Castle”. Although earthwork enclosures spread from the summit of Mt. Kinugasa all along the mountain’s southern slope, many of these are believed to be the remains of Kannonshoji Temple; distinguishing these from the remains of the castle itself is a task for future archeologists and scholars.



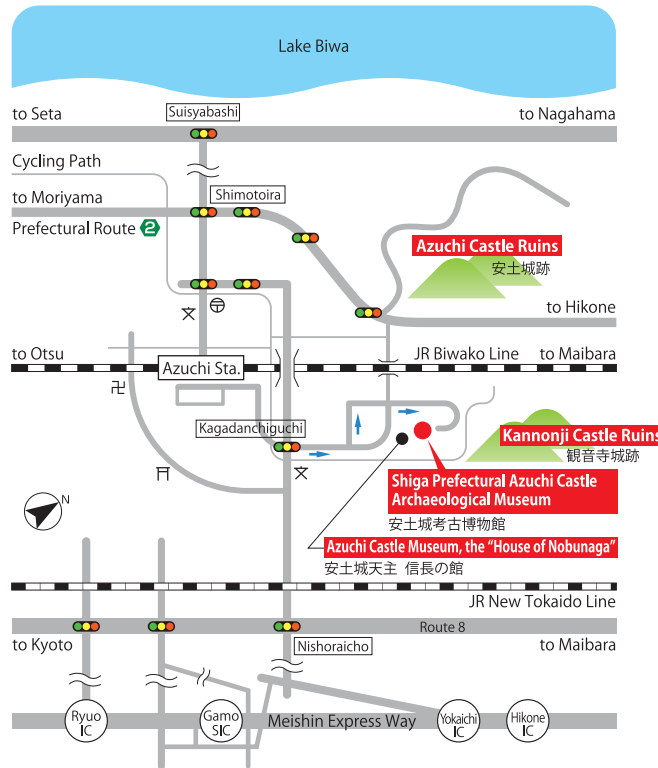
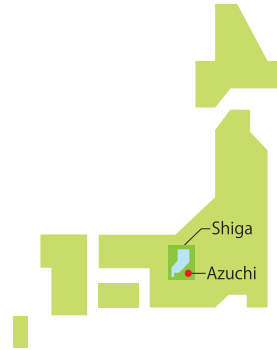
Entrance to the Hirai Maru

The central part of Kannonji Temple is thought to be located in the vicinity of the Hon Maru, Hirai Maru, and Ikeda Maru enclosures on the west side of Kannonshoji Temple. These enclosures (*maru*) occupy a large area and are surrounded by mounds of large stones. The Japanese poet Tani Soboku, a writer of *renga*, or linked verse, who visited the castle in 1544, wrote that he was guided to the second floor of the building, where the tea room was furnished with high quality and famous tea utensils. While Kannonji Castle was a fortress, it also served as a place of elegant living by the Rokkaku family of the Sasaki clan. In 1970, an excavation of the site yielded a trove of tea utensils, Chinese ceramics, and other artifacts.

When Oda Nobunaga attacked Kannonji Castle in 1568, the castle owner, Rokkaku Jotei, and his son, Rokkaku Yoshiharu, were forced to flee and relinquish their control of the castle. Oda Nobunaga subsequently completed and moved into his own Azuchi Castle in 1579, and the historical role of Kannonji Castle came to a close.



Unearthed goods from Kannonji Castle Ruins (from the collection of Shiga Prefectural Azuchi Castle Archaeological Museum)



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**TEL.** 0748-46-2424 **FAX.** 0748-46-6140  
**URL** <http://www.azuchi-museum.or.jp>  
**e-mail** [gakugei@azuchi-museum.or.jp](mailto:gakugei@azuchi-museum.or.jp)



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# Kannonji Castle Ruins, A Historic Site

The Main Castle of the Rokkaku Family  
of the Sasaki (Omi Genji) Clan



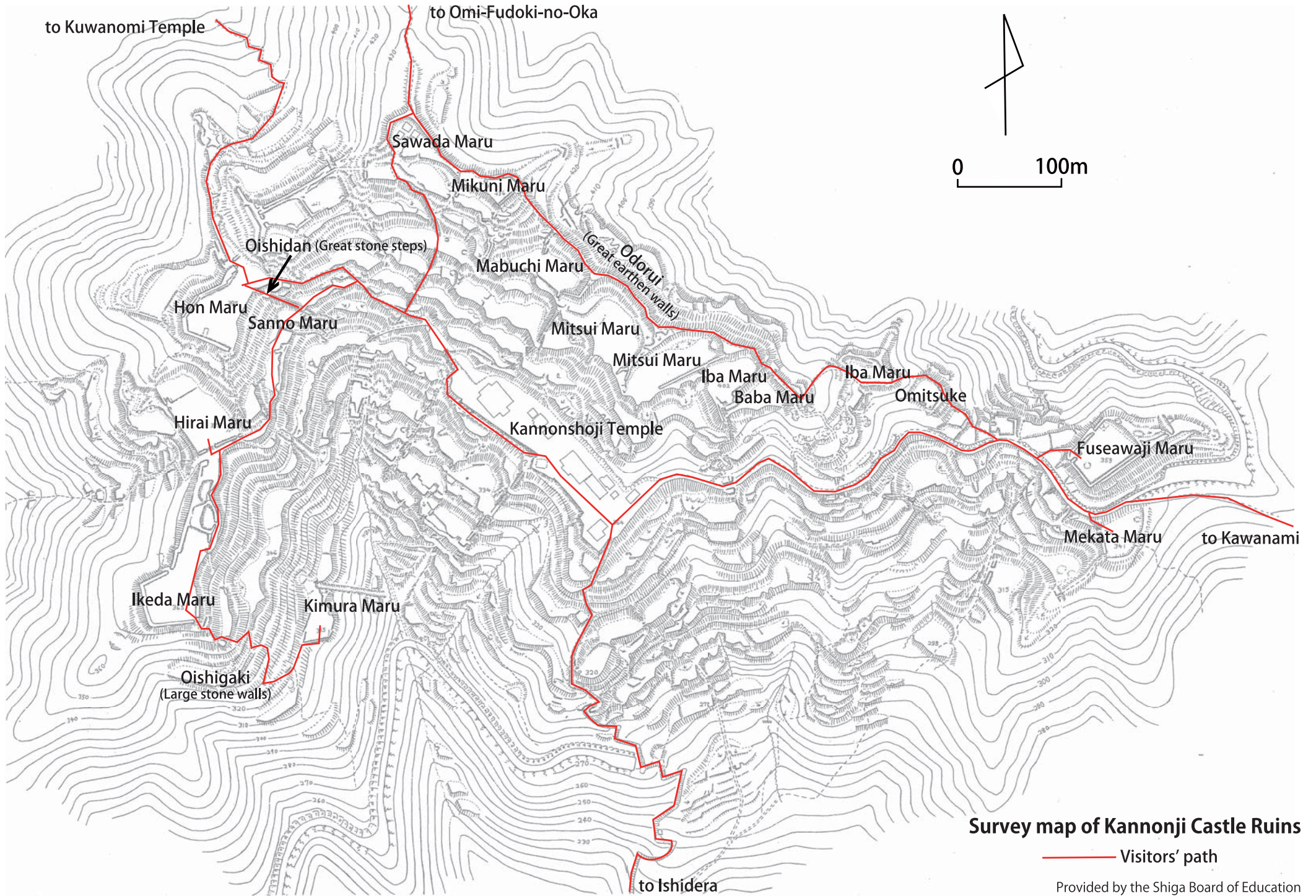
Kannonji Castle Ruins from the sky

Kannonji Castle was built on Mt. Kinugasa, which rises to a height of 432 meters. The castle owner was the Rokkaku family of the Sasaki clan, which acted as guardian of Omi Province (the traditional name for Shiga Prefecture) from the early Kamakura Period (1185-1333 A.D.) to the end of the Warring States Period (1467-1567 A.D.). The Rokkaku family built Kannonji Castle during the Warring States Period. The castle is considered an outstanding example of a medieval mountain castle, one characterized by impressive scale and by its incorporation of abundant stone walls, at an earlier date than even Azuchi Castle. It is believed that the stone walls of Kannonji Castle were constructed from the 1530s to the 1550s.

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**Survey map of Kannonji Castle Ruins**

— Visitors' path

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