

The House of Nuchi du Takara

Anti-War Peace Museum

Wabiai no Sato Foundation

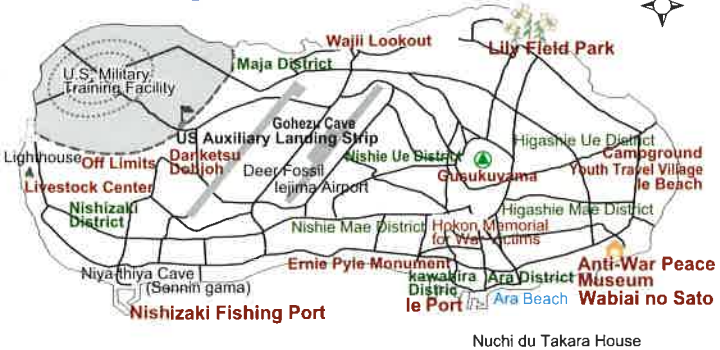


Iejima (Ee-ei-ji-ma) (Ie Island) is said to be a miniature version of Okinawa, having undergone a land battle (during the Battle of Okinawa, March – June 1945) and being subject to US military bases after the war. “The House of Nuchi Du Takara/Anti-War Peace Museum” exhibits items collected during and after the war by the late Ahagon Shoko. Each item speaks the truth of history to visitors. When you stand here, you will feel a weight that no amount of words can convey.

What is war? How can we construct peace? We hope our museum will provide each visitor a chance to think about such questions.

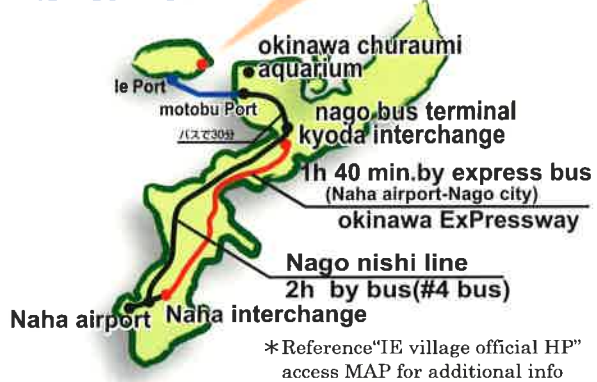
Director, The House of Nuchi Du Takara/Anti-War Peace Museum
Jahana Etsuko

Map of Iejima



Nuchi du Takara House

Ie island wabiai no sato



Admission: 300 yen for Adults;
200 yen for Elementary and Junior-High Students
Group Discount: for 20 or more, 250 yen each for Adults
and 150 yen each for Elementary and Junior-High Students
Hours: 8 AM to 6 PM
Open All Year Round

Contact

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Ahagon Shoko

Late Ahagon Shoko (1901.3.3-2002.3.21) dedicated his life to peace activism, and was called the “Okinawan Gandhi.”

Born in Yamakawa, Motobu Village, cross-channel from Iejima, he moved to Iejima as a grown man. He fell in love with a hard-working woman named Kiyo, and married her. Later, Ahagon left pregnant Kiyo and went to Cuba, then to Peru by himself to earn money for the family.

When Ahagon came back to Iejima, he acquired land in the Western part of the island in order to build a farmers’ school. The Battle of Okinawa broke out when the school was 80 percent completed, and the whole island became a battleground. He lost his beloved son Shoken in the battle. Surviving residents of Iejima, including Ahagon, were forced by the US forces to move to Kerama Islands, and were only allowed to return to Iejima two years later. As the residents started to rebuild their lives, re-cultivating the totally destroyed land and constructing houses, their land was confiscated by the US forces. Ahagon, together with his fellow islanders, began a movement of non-violent resistance.

Ahagon also excelled in keeping records. He kept extensive records throughout his life, both personal and professional, such as petition statements to the Ryukyku government, letters, minutes of meetings, newspaper clippings, books, magazines, photographs and films.

In 1984, Ahagon established “Wabiai no Sato,” a place for people to work and learn together. The House of Nuchi du Takara/Anti-War Peace Museum exhibits part of Ahagon’s collection. Since its establishment, more than 10,000 people a year, including students on study tours, have visited the museum.

Overview: The Battle on Iejima and US Military Bases

In 1944, the Japanese army built an airfield on Iejima that was said to be number one in the Far East. The US military forces landed on the Kerama Islands on March 26, and on Okinawa Island on April 1, 1945. On April 16, the US forces invaded along the Southern shoreline of Iejima, and the battle there continued for 6 days. Fifteen hundred residents, about one third of the island's population, were killed in the battle.

The US forces captured the surviving residents, and forcefully moved them to the Kerama Islands. In Kerama, an incident happened where the US forces used some of the Iejima residents to try to convince Japanese troops, who were hiding in mountains, to surrender, but that led to the brutal killing of the Iejima residents by the Japanese troops. Later on, the Iejima residents were moved to Kushi, Nakijin, and Motobu, and were only allowed to return to their home island two years later. What they saw when they returned was the new airfield that the US forces had built on the totally destroyed land. The residents cultivated the waste land, built houses, and tried to rebuild their lives.

However, in 1955, the US military came, and gave eviction orders to the residents of Maja village. They ignored the residents who begged them not to take their land, burned down their houses, bulldozed through the land, and build their military base there.

The residents who were deprived of land lost their livelihood, and walked across Okinawa Island in what they called the "Beggars' March," raising awareness on their hardship and asking for support. Despite the residents' efforts, 67 percent of Iejima was turned into US military bases. Accidents and crimes related to the US military have continued to this day.

Okinawa was returned to Japan in 1972. However, no complete return of the land has happened, and 32 percent of Iejima's land continue to be in the hands of the US military, being used daily for war exercises.



Exhibits at the entrance include a dummy nuclear warhead dropped during a US military exercise, spent cartridges, parachutes, and barbed wires. Slogans on the placards used for peace rallies and demonstrations still apply to today's Okinawa, which suffers from US military bases more than sixty years after the war.



The museum, which receives visitors from Japan and around the world, displays messages of support from those visitors, books, and photographs of historic moments, which Ahagon took with the camera that he acquired in 1955, in a time when it was still difficult to obtain cameras.

Ahagon Shoko speaking to students on a study trip



During the war, all life necessities were destroyed. After the war, people had to make them all over again, sometimes using substitutes. Such livingware, used right after the war, are also displayed at the museum.

Displayed to the right of the entry is a "kankara-sanshin," the three-string musical instrument made of a large tin can, instead of wood and snakeskin, made at a concentration camp right after the war. Those who survived the war played them to inspire their will to live.