

The Proof of Nagasaki's Secret Faith

The ban on Christianity in Japan began in the 17th century and continued for more than two centuries. Without missionaries, some Christians continued to practice their faith in hiding, in the midst of conventional society and its religions, such as Buddhism and Shinto. In 2018, the “Hidden Christian Sites of the Nagasaki and Amakusa Regions” were registered as World Cultural Heritage Sites. These significant heritage sites bear testimony to this unique history, and having been handed down from ages past, they must be passed on to future generations.

Photo ● Remains of Villages on Nozaki Island / Hidden Christians from the Sotome Area moved to and settled Nozaki Island, a Shinto sacred site. They continued to practice their Christian faith as a group, while at the same time paying their respects to the pre-existing religions.



1 The Loss of the Missionaries and the "Hidden" Christians

In 1549 (Tenbun 18), Christianity was brought to Japan by Francis Xavier. It then spread throughout Japan through the efforts of missionaries and with the protection of the Christian *daimyo* (feudal lords) who converted to Christianity and hoped to profit from the *Nanban* trade. However, with Toyotomi Hideyoshi's Purge Directive Order to the Jesuits followed by the Edo Bakufu's Ban on Christianity, all churches were destroyed and missionaries were expelled from the country. In 1637 (Kan'ei 14), as the ban on Christianity deepened, the suppression triggered an uprising of Christians, who fortified themselves within the “Ruins of Hara Castle” . Shocked by this “Shimabara-Amakusa Rebellion” , the Edo Bakufu banished all Portuguese ships, which could have potentially smuggled in missionaries, and enacted the Policy of National Isolation (*sakoku*). In 1644 (Tenbo 1), the last missionary was martyred. The remaining Christians continued to practice their faith in hiding, while maintaining unofficial faith-based communities.



Photo – Top ● Painting of St Francis Xavier [Property of the Kobe City Museum] Photo – Bottom ● Hara Castle Ruins (Minamishimabara City)/ Surrounded by 120,000 Bakufu Troops, Hara Castle was completely destroyed. Archeological excavations have unearthed countless human bodies, as well as crucifixes and medals.

2 How the Hidden Christians Practiced their Faith

Hidden Christian villages throughout Japan were suppressed. However, Nagasaki and the Amakusa Region had been the site of the most concerted missionary activities during the period in which Christianity was introduced to Japan. From the 18th century onwards, communities continued to be maintained in secret, and they searched independently for ways to practice their faith. Each village worshipped different objects in secret: Mountains and Islands (Sacred Sites and Villages in Hirado), things found in everyday life and work (Sakitsu Village, Asakusa), Statues of the Saints (Shutsu Village, Sotome), and Shinto Shrines (Ohno Village, Sotome).



Photo – Top ● Kasuga Village and Mt. Yasumandake, Nakaenoshima Island (Hirado City) / The Hidden Christians of Kasuga Village revered Nakaenoshima Island (the island at the left) as a site of martyrdom in the early days of the prohibition of Christianity. As a place for drawing holy water, they worshipped Mt. Yasumandake (the mountain at the top right) which had been long-revered as a sacred buddhist site. (© Yuichi Higurashi) Photo – Bottom ● Ohno Shrine / Hidden Christians secretly made ancient Shinto Shrines the focus of their worship. (© Tsutomu Ikeda)

3 How the Hidden Christians worked to Maintain their Communities

Towards the end of the 18th century, with the population of the Sotome area growing, migration to the Goto Islands began. Many of the settlers were Hidden Christians, and in order to maintain their communities, they chose places where they could live alongside the existing society and its religions. For example, a location that the local clan wanted to re-settle (Villages on Kuroshima Island), a Shinto sacred site (Remains of Villages on Nozaki Island), an island that had been used for sick people (Villages on Kashiragashima Island), an unsettled area (Villages on Hisaka Island), and a valley away from a Buddhist village (Egami Village on Naru Island). In this way, the Hidden Christians were able to protect their faith for two centuries, by choosing the places that they moved to and the objects that they worshipped when practicing their faith.



Photo – Top ● Okinokoujima Shrine (Ojika Town)/ Located in the north of Nozaki Island, this shrine was widely revered as the guardian god for safe voyages. As a Shinto Sacred Site, this was an island where normal people were not able to live. Photo – Bottom ● Kashiragashima Island (Shinkamigoto Town) / Hidden Christians chose to move to an island used for the treatment of the sick, and maintain their faith while at the same time living near Buddhist spiritual teachers.

4 Contact with Missionaries: A Turning Point & the End of the Hidden Christians

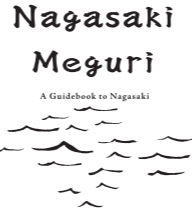
With the end of Japan's Period of National Isolation in 1854, missionaries came to Nagasaki and built Oura Cathedral, and began missionary work for Western residents. In 1865, the missionaries of Oura Cathedral met the Hidden Christians of Urakami Village in what is known as the “Discovery of the Hidden Christians” . As a result, many Hidden Christians began to practice their faith openly, which led to the suppression of Christians being strengthened once again. There were many incidents in which Hidden Christians were exposed. However, after heavy protesting from Western countries, in 1873 the Meiji Government finally lifted the ban on Christianity. Some Hidden Christians chose to receive guidance from missionaries and return to practicing Catholicism. Others decided to continue to follow their own religious practices. Still others converted to Shintoism or Buddhism. A church built in a village that returned to Catholicism symbolises the end of the “Hidden” Christians.



Photo – Top ● A relief depicting the “Discovery of the Hidden Christians” / A relief within the grounds of Oura Cathedral shows the meeting between Fr. Petitjean and the Hidden Christians of Urakami Village. Photo – Bottom ● Egami Church (Goto City) / Built after the ban on Christianity was lifted, the design of this church demonstrates how conventional techniques were adapted to suit the surrounding environment and climate.

The History of Nagasaki ③

A Place of Prayer



Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region



● A statue of the Virgin Mary that watched over Oura Cathedral as the miracle of the Discovery of the Hidden Christians occurred. The Hidden Christians of Urakami confessed their faith at this place after having remained in hiding for 250 years.

The Twelve Component Sites



12. Oura Cathedral [Nagasaki City]

● Oura Cathedral, built in 1865 in the foreign settlement under the direction of the French missionary Fr. Petitjean. The church was designated a National Treasure in 1953 and is the oldest church still standing in Japan.



1. Site of Hara Castle [Minamishimabara City]



2. Villages and Sacred Places of Hirado (Kasuga Settlement and Yasumandake) [Hirado City]



3. Villages and Sacred Places of Hirado (Nakaeno Island) [Hirado City]



4. Sakitsu Village in Amakusa [Amakusa City, Kumamoto Prefecture]



5. Shitsu Village in Sotome [Nagasaki City]



6. Ono Village in Sotome [Nagasaki City]



7. Settlements on Kuroshima Island [Sasebo City]



8. Ruins of Settlements on Nozaki Island [Ojika Town]



9. Kashiragashima Village [Shinkamigoto Town]



10. Settlements on Hisaka Island [Goto City]



11. Egami Village on Naru Island [Goto City]

Nagasaki: A Pioneer in the Modernization of Japan

Nagasaki Naval Training Center: the Wellspring of Modernizing Technology

In order to prevent invasion by European and American forces, the Edo Bakufu government established the Nagasaki Naval Training Center in 1855, with support from the Dutch. Instruction at the Center covered not only naval skills but also physics, astronomy and *rangaku*, the study of Western technological and scientific ideas. Young people sent by the Bafuku or by their clan, converged on Nagasaki from all over Japan, hoping to acquire new expterise in the lastest techniques.

Nagasaki Harbor: The Grand Theater for a “Shipbuilding Japan”

In parallel with the increase in numbers of large seafaring vessels that occurred with the opening up of the country, technology related to the manufacturing and maintenance of ships became necessary too. An ironworks in Nagasaki was created by the Edo Bakufu, and a ship-repair yard was built by Thomas Glover. The stage was thus set for the story of shipbuilding in Nagasaki to begin. These facilities were originally under the control of the Meiji Government, but were later sold off by the government to Mitsubishi, leading to huge growth in the shipbuilding business. And so, one of the world’s foremost shipbuilding cities was born.

Nagasaki: A Treasure- Trove of Industrial Heritage

With the growth of the shipbuilding industry in Nagasaki, the town itself also developed rapidly. In Nagasaki there still remain numerous sites linked to industrial heritage which played important roles in the modernization of Japan and which now tell the story of that dramatic development. In particular, the “Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining” tell the story of the rapid industrialization of heavy industries in Japan from the end of the Bakufu to the Meiji period. They achieved World Cultural Heritage registration in 2015.



Hashima (also known as Gunkanjima): an island that led the way in the modernization of the coal industry.

Sites of Japan’s Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining



● Kosuge Ship Repair Dock

This is the earliest western-style ship repair facility in Japan, constructed by Thomas Glover and associates. The dolly and track system used to hoist ships up the slipway looked similar to Japanese abacuses, called “soroban”, and so was also referred to by the popular name “soroban dock” .



● Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard: No. 3 Dry Dock

After the construction of the dock in 1905, repairs were carried out here on many vessels. The facility has undergone three expansions but retains much of its original form, and is thus a precious historical asset. (Not open to the public)



● Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard: Giant Cantilever Crane

With the electrification of the shipyard, this crane, also known as a “hammerhead” crane, was the first of its kind British-made electric crane to be installed in Japan. The hoisting power of this crane is 150 tons and it is still in use over 100 years after it was first set up in 1909. (Not open to the public)



● Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard: Former Wood-Pattern Shop

This brick building was constructed as a production facility for wooden molds used in metal casting. At present, it houses the History Museum, showcasing artifacts such as the oldest machine tool in Japan, a slotting machine.

The History of Nagasaki ④

Nagasaki Meguri

A Guidebook to Nagasaki



Modernization



● Mitsubishi Nagasaki Shipyard: Senshokaku

This two-storied western-style wooden house was used as a guest house of the Nagasaki Shipyard. The guest house was given the name “Senshokaku” when the commander of the naval ship the Chiyoda, Prince Higashifushimi Yorihiro, stayed at the guest house. The name “Senshokaku” is based on the characters of the Japanese phrase “ruko keisho wo shimeru”, which means “to command a view of picturesque natural scenery”.



● Takashima Coal Mine

This is the Hokkei Well Shaft on Takashima, developed by Thomas Glover and company. The construction of the vertical pit constituted the first usage of modern mining methods in Japan and set a precedent in the modernization of coal mining in Japan.



● Hashima Coal Mine (Gunkanjima)

The island was developed as a coal mining island and owned from 1890 onward by Mitsubishi, which began mining in earnest. Mining on the island expanded in parallel with the mining industry in Japan as a whole, and during its heyday there were more than five thousand people living here.



● The Former Glover House

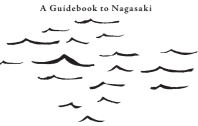
This house was the base of operations for Thomas Glover, the merchant who in his day contributed greatly to the modernization of the main industries in Japan, such as coalmining and shipbuilding. Built in 1863, this is the oldest example of western-style wooden architecture in Japan.

An Invitation to the Border Islands : Iki, Tsushima and Goto

Nagasaki Prefecture has the largest number of inhabited islands of any prefecture in Japan. With their natural splendour unchanged since ages past, and a history tightly interwoven with a connection to the Asian Continent and the Korean Peninsula, “Border Islands: Iki, Tsushima, Goto” were registrated in the first group of Japan Heritage Sites in 2015.

Located between the Japanese mainland and the Continent of Asia, the islands of Nagasaki have long connected these places via the sea, acting as bases for exchange and trade. The connection to the Korean Peninsula was especially strong, with a Kingdom established in Iki on the basis of sea trade during the Yayoi Period. After the middle ages, Tsushima gained sole responsibility for trade and foreign relations with the Korean Peninsula, and prospered as an intermediary for trade. Although this role as an intermediary became less common after that time, the remains of ancient settlements, castles and gardens tell the story of the prosperity of those days, and traces of this exchange can still be read in the specialty products such as shochu and noodles, as well as in the traditional events. Even with the repeated cycles of conflict and peace that comes with the position as border islands, exchange still continued on these islands. In this way, they are very rare examples of areas where the bonds between people and countries can be felt.

Nagasaki
Meguri



● **The Iki City Ikikoku Museum**
With permanent exhibits that include earthenware excavated from the Harunotsuji Archeological Site, a Nationally Designated Special Historical Site, both children and adults can enjoy and experience history at this museum. Near the Harunotsuji site is "Harunotsuji Guidance", where you can experience ancient crafts such as Magatama bead making and fire-starting.



● **Uchime Bay**
This was the gateway for ancient boats that visited the Ikikoku Kingdom and Harunotsuji. After anchoring their boats here, they transferred to small boats to carry people and cargo. An illustration of Uchime Bay in "Charts of Scenic Places in Iki", written in 1861 at the end of the Edo Period, records the many ships that visited this bay.



● **The Ruins of Kaneda Castle**
A Joseon (Korean)-style mountain castle built in 667 CE to prevent the invasion of Japan by the Silla Kingdom and Tang Dynasty. From just below the summit of Mt. Shiroyama, which juts out into the south coast of Aso Bay, the stone castle walls form a semicircle that protects the east side of the castle, with a total length of 2.9km.



● **The Three Implements of Worship at Bansho-in Temple**
Three ceremonial bronzeware implements said to have been presented by the Joseon kingdom. These three items, a *tsurukame* (a crane riding a turtle) candlestand, an incense burner and a vase, have been carefully enshrined in the main hall of Bansho-in Temple. The bold design and detailed ornamentation catch the eye.



● **Miiraku**
The "Jibongai" stone monument stands in the Kashiwazaki Park in Miiraku-cho. "Risking death, I go to sea. I have already left the furthest edge of Japan behind..." It was with this that Kukai left Japan behind him and sailed for Tang China.



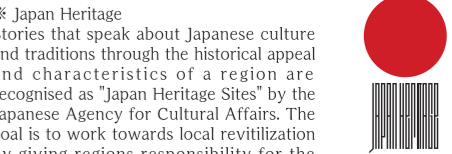
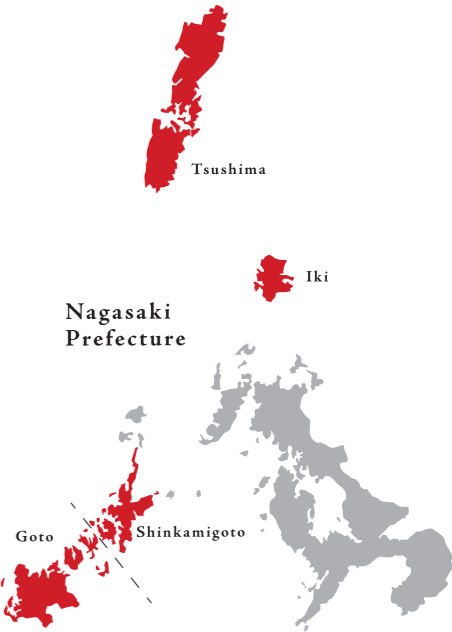
● **Tomozuna Stone**
The Tomozuna Stone, which is said to have been used to moor the ships of the Japanese envoys to Tang China. Today, it is enshrined in a small shrine for safe voyages, almost hidden beneath the altar.



● **The Stone Monuments of Hinoshima**
More than 70 stone monuments are spread along the coast. It is said that these stones were brought back home as ballast by trading ships that carried trade goods from the continent to Wakasa in Fukui Prefecture. In this way, the stones can be thought of as the proof that this was once a base for sea trade.



● **Mt. Sanno**
Saichou, who travelled to China to study Buddhism with Kukai, is said to have built the Sanno Shrine here to pray for the safe voyages of the envoys to Tang China. In side the cave at the second shrine, partway up the mountain, a mirror imported from China during the Song Dynasty can be seen, making this a place to learn about trade with the Asian continent.



※ Japan Heritage
Stories that speak about Japanese culture and traditions through the historical appeal and characteristics of a region are recognised as "Japan Heritage Sites" by the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. The goal is to work towards local revitalization by giving regions responsibility for the overall management and utilization of the various cultural assets, both tangible and intangible, indispensable to telling these stories, and for their strategic promotion both domestically and overseas. In Nagasaki Prefecture, in 2015, "Border Islands: Iki, Tsushima and Goto — A bridge from ages past" was recognized. Then, in 2016, "The Hometown of Japanese Porcelain – A stroll through countless ceramics" and "The Naval Bases of Yokosuka, Kure, Sasebo and Maizuru – Cities where you can experience the dynamic modernization of Japan" were also recognized. Finally, in 2020, "Nagasaki Road that Spread Sugar Culture – Sugar Road" was recognized.

Japan Heritage Sites in Nagasaki

Border Islands