For those wishing to visit churches in the Nagasaki region

Code of etiquette
A church is a place of prayer. When visiting, you are kindly requested to observe the code of etiquette and respect the church's spiritual atmosphere.

Give prior notice before visiting the churches
When you wish to visit the churches listed below, please contact the relevant organisations and give them prior notice via their websites. Please note that, owing to a large number of visits or due to religious events inside the churches, there are times when it may not be possible for you to visit. However, you can visit Ohra Cathedral without prior notification.

Nagasaki Church Information Centre is in charge of visits to the following churches
Shito Church, Nio Church, Kaminomichi Church, Takitsune Church, Igimi Church, Former Gotou Church, Kakegoshima Church, and Satesa Church.

Ojika Island Tourism is in charge of visits to the following churches
Former Nobashi Church.

Nagasaki Church Information Centre
Dejima Wharf 2nd Floor, 1-1-305, Dazaifu-ku, Nagasaki City, 850-0802
Tel: +81-95-843-7908, Opening hours: 9:30 to 17:00
http://www.ohracenter.com

Ojika Island Tourism
270-13 Higashigohan, Ojika Town, Shinsozuma Misaki, 857-0701 (within the Ojika Port Terminal)
Tel: +81-952-58-2840, Opening hours: 9:00 to 18:00
http://ojikainfo.jp/

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Email: whp@nagasaki.jp

http://kirishitan.jp

Our goal is to be inscribed on the World Heritage List in the summer of 2018, following an on-site investigation carried out by an international professional association (ICOMOS) in the summer of 2017.

Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region

Candidate for World Heritage

Japan’s unique way of practising the Christian faith

English
Introduction to the Nagasaki Region

Japan lies at the far eastern edge of the area in which Catholicism was introduced during the Age of Exploration. The Nagasaki region, located in the western part of Kyushu in the south-western part of the archipelago, has served as Japan’s gateway for exchanges with the Asian Continent from antiquity and, in the latter half of the 16th century, Catholic missionaries were very active throughout the region. As a result, newly baptised Japanese in the region could receive pastoral guidance from these missionaries over a longer period than anywhere else in Japan, and Catholic communities became firmly established there.

Based on these communities, even after Japan banned Christianity in the 17th century and not a single missionary was allowed to remain in Japan, some Catholics in the Nagasaki region nurtured their own unique religious system and continued to practice their faith in secret while coexisting with the conventional society and its religions. After the ban on Christianity was lifted in the latter half of the 19th century, the Hidden Christian communities rejoined the Catholic Church and built churches in their villages, which visually marked the end of their clandestine religious system nurtured during the ban. Against this historical background, the Nagasaki region still has an exceptionally large number of Catholics and churches, compared with other regions in Japan.

The property, "Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region", is a unique testimony to the history of people and their communities who secretly transmitted their faith in Christianity during a time when the religion was prohibited for more than two centuries.
Japan’s unique practice of the Christian faith continued even during the ban on Christianity

‘Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region’ bear unique testimony to the tradition of people and their communities who secretly transmitted their faith in Christianity while surviving in the midst of the conventional society and its religions during the time of prohibition. These sites consist of 12 vital components that express the history of the tradition from its origin and formation, through its continuation and spread, to its transformation and end in the transitional phase following the lifting of the ban. The 12 components are located in very remote areas including peninsulas and small islands in the Nagasaki region where practitioners received pastoral guidance from Catholic missionaries during the Age of Exploration to a greater extent than in any other region of Japan. Japan itself lies at the far eastern edge of the area in Asia where Christianity was first introduced.

12 components

Remains of Hara Castle
[Image 1]

Kasuga Village and Sacred Places in Hirado
[Image 2]

Sakitsu Village in Amakusa
[Image 3]

Shitsu Village in Sotome
[Image 4]

Ono Village in Sotome
[Image 5]

Villages on Kuroshima Island
[Image 6]

Villages on Nozaki Island
[Image 7]

Villages on Kashiragashima Island
[Image 8]

Villages on Hisaka Island
[Image 9]

Villages on Nankoku City
[Image 10]

Egami Village on Nara Island
[Image 11]

Oura Cathedral
[Image 12]
The value as
World Heritage

Outstanding Universal Value

I

Origin of the tradition of transmitting the Christian faith

Catholicism was first introduced to Japan by a
Jesuit priest, Francis Xavier, in 1549. It spread
nationwide due to the evangelising activities of the
Jesuits who came to Japan after Xavier, and also
due to the protection afforded by baptised feudal
lords (Kitashita Daimyo) who sought to profit from
overseas trade. However, the ban on Christianity,
which had begun with an edict issued by Toyotomi
Hideyoshi expelling the missionaries, was
tightened under the Tokugawa Shogunate, which
ordered the destruction of all the churches in
Japan. In 1637, during the nationwide ban on
Christianity, remaining Catholics took up arms
against the tyranny of their local lord and were
besieged in Hara Castle. The Shogunate was
shocked at this Shimabara-Amakusa Rebellion and
adopted its national seclusion policy to prohibit
the arrival of Portuguese ships that could be used
to smuggle missionaries into Japan. After the last
missionary within Japan had been martyred in
1644, the remaining Japanese Catholics could only
maintain their faith and communities on their own
in secret. Many such communities disintegrated in
rapid succession in the latter half of the 17th
century due to a series of large-scale crackdowns
on remaining Catholics, forcing them to either
renounce their religious faith or be martyred.

II

Formation of the tradition of transmitting the Christian faith

Hidden Christian communities disappeared in
Japan except for the Nagasaki region, where
Catholic missionary activities had taken place
more extensively than in any other part of Japan
in the initial phase of the introduction of
Catholicism. This region provided the foundations
for the maintenance of the secret faith even into
the 18th century and afterwards. Here, Hidden
Christians nurtured a distinctive religious system
and continued to practice their secret faith in
various ways. Those in Kasuga Village and Sacred
Places in Hirado venerated a mountain, an island
and other natural sites as sacred places or as sites
of martyrdom. Those in Sakitsu Village in Amakusa
substituted everyday items that were used in their
life and work for Christian devotional objects.
Those in Shitsu Village in Sotome continued their
religious practices by themselves based on the
Catholic liturgical calendar and the Christian
catechism, and secretly venerated sacred
images. Those in Ono Village in Sotome combined
their faith with common Shinto practices. In this
way, the Hidden Christians in these villages
nurtured their religious system based on secrecy.
III Hidden Christians’ endeavours to continue and spread their religious faith

To cope with increases in the population in Sotome, some of the villagers began to migrate to the Goto Islands and other remote areas at the end of the 18th century. Many of the migrants were Hidden Christians, and they decided where to settle, considering how they could live alongside pre-existing communities and their religions. These destinations included abandoned pasturage on Kurashima Island that needed redevelopment, untouched land on Hisaka Island, an island that was regarded as sacred by Shinto practitioners (Naraki Island), and parts of Kashiragashima Island that had been used for sick people and therefore had no settled communities.

Specific sites and devotional tools provided a focus for the Hidden Christians to continue and spread their religious beliefs for over two centuries.

IV The transitional phase in the religious identity of Hidden Christians, leading to the transformation and the end of their tradition

Following the opening of Japan to foreign trade in 1854, Catholic missionaries returned to Nagasaki and constructed Oura Cathedral for Westerners within the Nagasaki Foreign Settlement. In 1865, a group of Hidden Christians from Urakami came to the cathedral and revealed to the missionary that they had been practicing Christianity in secret. This event came to be known as the Discovery of Hidden Christians, following which some Hidden Christian communities professed their faith despite the fact that the ban on Christianity was still in effect. The authorities once again strengthened the suppression of Christians, leading to the last wave of persecutions. In 1873, however, due to Western countries lodging strong protests to the Meiji Government, the ban on Christianity was eventually lifted in Japan. Consequently, Hidden Christians split into three groups: (1) those who reaccepted Catholicism under the guidance of the missionaries and rejoined the Catholic Church, (2) those who continued with their own practices nurtured during the lengthy period when the ban on Christianity was in place, and (3) those who decided to convert to Buddhism or Shinto.

Simple churches were built in the villages where the Inhabitants reclamated to Catholicism. Among these churches, Egami Church on Naru Island is a representative example clearly demonstrating how traditional techniques were adopted to deal with the environment in the places Hidden Christians migrated to and visually marking the end of the cultural tradition nurtured during the ban on Christianity.
Interrelationships of the 12 components

Hidden Christians' tradition to maintain their faith

I Origin

II Formation

1600 1637~1639 1700 1800

III Continuation and spread

1865~1873 1900

IV Transformation and end

1. Remains of Hara Castle
2. Kizugawa Village and Sacred Places in Mihara (Kizugawa Village and Mt. Yosumada"
3. Kizugawa Village and Sacred Places in Mihara (Kizugawa Church Island)
4. Sakitsu Village in Amakusa
5. Ibikyu Village in Sotome
6. Ono Village in Sotome
7. Villages on Kurashiki Island
8. Remains of Villages on Aki Island
9. Villages on Kuroshio Island
10. Villages on Hidaka Island
11. Shima Village on Higashigahama Island (Sagami Church and its surroundings)
12. Oura Cathedral

12 components

Establishment of Japan's national exclusion policy

Migration starts from Sotome to the Goto Islands and other areas

Some Hidden Christians chose to continue their faith in secret amid the intense searches. As a result, their religious system was nurtured based on secrecy so that their inner faith remained undetected.

Migration to remote islands and other areas

Discovery of Hidden Christians

Hidden Christian migrants from Sotome decided where to settle, taking into consideration how they could live alongside pre-existing communities and the existing religions while continuing to practice their faith.

End of Hidden Christians tradition

Trigger for the transitional phase in the religious identity of the Hidden Christians

Representative example that marks the end of Hidden Christians' tradition

Reformation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan in 1947

Opening of Japan in 1854

Promulgation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan in 1947

Migration to remote islands, absence of redisciplinary, abandonment by the local church

Migration to an undeveloped island regarded as a neutral Mutsu site

Migration to an island that once had been used for silk people

Migration to an island that once had been used for silk people

Discovery of the identity of the Hidden Christians

1918
## Introduction to 12 components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Site Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Remains of Hara Castle</strong>&lt;br&gt; Honmaru (or the main enclosure) of Hara Castle at the time of the Shimabara-Amakusa Rebellion (‘Harajō Kolzi’, housed in the Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo.)&lt;br&gt; Honmaru of the Remains of Hara Castle at present&lt;br&gt; The current Sakitsu Church standing at the site of the former village headman’s house, in which the Eimu ceremony was held by the authorities to find Hidden Christians during the ban on Christianity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Kasuga Village and Sacred Places in Hirado</strong>&lt;br&gt; Stone objects on the summit of Mt. Yasumandake, which were a traditional focus for nature worship and also venerated by Hidden Christians.&lt;br&gt; Kasuga Village of Hidden Christians who venerated Mt. Yasumandake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Kasuga Village and Sacred Places in Hirado</strong>&lt;br&gt; Omizutori ceremony held on Nakaonoshima Island to collect holy water for the Hidden Christian baptismal ceremony.&lt;br&gt; Nakaonoshima Island where Japanese Catholics were executed in the early phase of the ban on Christianity and later venerated as a site of martyrdom by Hidden Christians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4   | **Sakitsu Village in Amakusa**<br> An abalone shell used by Hidden Christians and now preserved by a villager. "The part encircled by a red line was regarded as a representation of the Virgin Mary."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Shitsu Village in Sotome</strong>&lt;br&gt; “Saint Michael”, an icon secretly kept and venerated by Hidden Christians. (Copy, housed in the Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture.)&lt;br&gt; Shitsu Church built on a hill overlooking Shitsu Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Ono Village in Sotome</strong>&lt;br&gt; Kado Shrine, a Shinto shrine in which an early Japanese Catholic is enshrined.&lt;br&gt; Ono Church built in the centre of Ono Village</td>
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## Introduction to 12 components

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Villages on Kuroshima Island</td>
<td>Shikirimaki graveyard - The Hidden Christian gravestones in this graveyard, resembling Buddhist memorials, face eastward, while Buddhist graves face westward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Villages on Hisaka Island</td>
<td>The current Kuroshima Church standing on the site of the first church.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Remains of Villages on Nozaki Island</td>
<td>Former Nokubi Church standing on the site of the house of the former Hidden Christian leaders called Chokata.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Egami Village on Naru Island</td>
<td>The floor level of Egami Church is set high above the ground to deal with the high humidity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Villages on Kashiragashima Island</td>
<td>Graves of the Maeda family who led the migration to Kashiragashima Island. As the graves are located on private property, they are not open to the public.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>