
Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region (Japan) No 1495

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region

Location

Nagasaki Prefecture
Kumamoto Prefecture
Japan

Brief description

Located in the Nagasaki and Kumamoto prefectures in the north-western part of Kyushu Island of the Japanese Archipelago, the 12 components of this serial nomination encompass 10 villages, Hara Castle, and one cathedral dating from between the 17th and 19th centuries. Together they reflect the earliest activities of Christian missionaries and settlers in Japan, including the earliest phase of the encounter, a subsequent era of prohibition and persecution of the Christian faith and settlers, as well as the final phase of the revitalization of Christian communities after the official lifting of the prohibition. These sites bear testimony to the unique cultural tradition nurtured by Hidden Christians in the Nagasaki region who secretly practised their faith despite a ban on Christianity.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of 12 components, which include 11 *sites* and 1 *monument*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

30 January 2007

International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

Date received by the World Heritage Centre

1 February 2017

Background

In January 2015, the nomination "Churches and Christian Sites in Nagasaki" was submitted to the World Heritage Centre by the State Party of Japan. On 9 February 2016, during the ICOMOS Evaluation Process, the State Party decided to withdraw the nomination. At the request of the State Party, ICOMOS provided it with assistance from

February to June 2016, through an Advisory mission, for the reconfiguration of the nomination.

On 1 February 2017, the State Party submitted a substantially re-scoped nomination that is the object of the present evaluation.

Consultations

ICOMOS has consulted its International Scientific Committee on Shared Built Heritage and several independent experts.

Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 3 to 14 September 2017.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

On 30 August 2017, the State Party sent additional information to ICOMOS providing background information on the revised nomination. The additional information received is integrated into the relevant sections below.

An Interim report was sent to the State Party by ICOMOS on 22 December 2017. The State Party provided additional information referring to the boundaries and buffer zone of the property, protection, conservation and management of the property. The State Party responded on 28 February 2018 and the additional information provided is integrated into the relevant sections of this report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

14 March 2018

2 The property

Description

Located in the Nagasaki and Kumamoto prefectures in the north-western part of Kyushu Island of the Japanese Archipelago, the serial nomination consists of 12 component sites, made up of ten villages, one castle, and one cathedral dating from between the 17th and 19th centuries. Together they reflect the earliest activities of Christian missionaries and settlers in Japan, including the earliest phase of the encounter, a subsequent era of prohibition and persecution of the Christian faith and settlers, as well as the final phase of the revitalization of Christian communities after the official lifting of the prohibition in 1873.

The 12 serial sites comprise an overall area of 5,569.34 ha and are surrounded by buffer zones with a total area of 12,152.43 ha. These 12 components are categorized into four stages, mainly demonstrating each historic stage of the distinctive cultural tradition of Hidden Christians and will be presented according to these four categories. Stage one: the event that triggered the ban on Christianity and the subsequent formation of the Hidden Christians' religious tradition, illustrated by one component (001). Stage two: the development of the Hidden Christians' religious tradition in different ways, illustrated by five components (002, 003, 004, 005 and 006). Stage three: the migration strategies

that the Hidden Christians used to maintain their religious communities, illustrated by four components (007, 008, 009 and 010). Stage four: the event that triggered the new phase and the transition, and the ultimate end of the religious tradition, illustrated by two components (011 and 012).

The Remains of Hara Castle (001), are located in the southern part of the Shimabara Peninsula, in the southeastern area of the Nagasaki Prefecture (Minamishimabara City). It comprises an area of 48.48 ha and was constructed between 1598 and 1604. The castle remains dominate a hill and cliff, which overlook the sea, and is included as the place where more than twenty thousand peasants of the Arima domain and Amakusa Island were besieged during the Shimabara-Amakusa Rebellion in the early period of the nationwide ban on Christianity. Archaeological excavations at the site have uncovered finds of human bones but also devotional items, including crucifixes and medals, which have been interpreted as indicating that the besieged had maintained their Christian faith even after the ban on the religion was enforced in 1614.

Kasuga Village and Sacred Places in Hirado (002 and 003), are located on the western coast of Hirado Island. In Kasuga Village, there are remains of Catholic graves on Maruoyama Hill dating back to the period of the initial introduction of Christianity to Japan in 1550, and houses in which devotional tools have been secretly kept since that period. In Kasuga Village and Sacred Places in Hirado, the local communities venerated natural sites as sacred places, such as Mt. Yasumandake (situated to the east of Kasuga Village) that had been regarded as sacred by the pre-existing religious communities (Buddhists and Shinto practitioners) long before the introduction of Christianity to Japan. Components 002 and 003 also include Nakaenoshima Island, where a group of Japanese Catholics were martyred during the early period of the ban.

Sakitsu Village in Amakusa (004), established in the 15th century, is a fishing village located in the western part of Amakusa Shimoshima Island. Here the Hidden Christians concealed their faith by substituting everyday items that were used in their livelihoods for Christian devotional tools during the ban on Christianity. This component contains the site of the house of Mizukata, in which Hidden Christians' devotional tools, such as statues of the Japanese traditional deities Daikokuten and Ebisu which were venerated as Deus, the God of the Christian faith, have been kept right up to the present day; the Sakitsu Suwa Shrine where Hidden Christians secretly offered the Oratio prayer; the site of the house of the village headmen from the Yoshida family, in which the Efumi ceremony took place; and the site of the Former Sakitsu Church built in 1888 after the Hidden Christians rejoined the Catholic Church following the lifting of the ban on Christianity.

Shitsu Village in Sotome (005), is located in the Sotome area on the western coast of the Nishisonogi Peninsula. It comprises several houses in which Hidden Christians' secret icons were kept, several Hidden Christian

graveyards, the magistrate's office that controlled the village during the ban on Christianity, the beach on which Catholic missionaries landed after the 'Discovery of Hidden Christians', and the church that was constructed after the lifting of the ban in 1882, with extensions and structural additions added in 1891 and 1909.

Ono Village in Sotome (006) is located on a steep hill facing the East China Sea, on the western coast of the Nishisonogi Peninsula. It comprises several shrines where Hidden Christians outwardly worshipped in order to hide their inner faith and where they secretly enshrined objects for worship; Hidden Christians' graveyards; and the church that was built after the lifting of the ban in 1893 for the use of 26 Catholic households who could not visit Shitsu. In Ono Village, the Hidden Christians outwardly behaved as Buddhists and Shinto followers and venerated Shinto shrines commonly seen in conventional Japanese villages at that time. However, they secretly enshrined their own deities in the shrines and shared these places of worship with Shinto practitioners.

Villages on Kuroshima Island (007). Kuroshima Island, with a circumference of almost 12 km, is located to the west of the north-western part of Kyushu Island. On this island, there remain the former pastures that were cultivated by the Hidden Christian migrants from Sotome; the Buddhist temple where the Hidden Christians secretly venerated a Buddhist statue as the Virgin Mary (*Maria Kannon*); the sites of the houses of Hidden Christian leaders as well as their communities' graveyards; the site of the magistrate's office where the Efumi ceremony took place; and the site of the church that was built after the lifting of the ban between 1880 and 1902.

Remains of Villages on Nozaki Island (008). Nozaki Island is a long narrow island, extending 6 km from north to south and 1.5 km east to west, located in the northern part of the Goto Islands territory. The island includes the Okinokojima Shrine with which the Hidden Christians were outwardly affiliated in order to hide their secret faith; the residence of the Shinto priests who managed the shrine; farmland with stone retaining walls; and the Nokubi Church and the site of the Setowaki Church which were constructed after the lifting of the ban. The Hidden Christians on Nozaki Island rejoined the Catholic Church after the lifting of the ban on Christianity and constructed the Setowaki Church in 1881 (in Funamori Village) and Nokubi Church in 1882 (Nokubi Village).

Villages on Kashiragashima Island (009). Kashiragashima Island is a small island located in the northern part of the Goto Islands. The component comprises the remains of a graveyard bearing testimony to the Hidden Christians' migration to an island which had been a smallpox quarantine station; the grave of the Buddhist who directed the migration and cultivation of the island; and the sites of the temporary church constructed there as well as the Kashiragashima Church, built after the end of the ban in 1887 and used until 1914.

Villages on Hisaka Island (010). Hisaka Island is horseshoe-shaped and located in the southern part of the Goto Islands. This island still retains rice paddies that were once cultivated by the Hidden Christians who migrated there under an agreement between the feudal lords; the site of the *Rokuroba* that bears witness to their co-operative relationship with Buddhist fishing communities; Hidden Christian graveyards; places where persecution occurred after the 'Discovery of the Hidden Christians' at Oura Cathedral in 1865; and the sites of churches that were built after the lifting of the ban: Hamawaki Church in 1881, Eiri Church in 1918, Zazare Church in 1921, and Akanita Church in 1926.

Egami Village on Naru Island (Egami Church and its Surroundings) (011). Naru Island is located in the central part of the Goto Islands and is characterised by its convoluted shoreline and steep ridges. Egami Village was established on a narrow strip of land in a valley facing the northwestern coast of the island. The Egami Church was built in 1918 on a reclaimed area of flat land on the southern side of this small valley, with funds collected from fishing for kibinago herring. The Egami Church is considered as the best example in terms of design and structure among the wooden church buildings constructed in the Nagasaki region from the 19th century onwards.

Oura Cathedral (012) is located on a hill facing the Port of Nagasaki in the south of the Nagasaki region. Its precincts contain the parish house, the church building that was initially built for the foreigners within the Nagasaki Foreign Settlement, a seminary, and a catechist school (both of which were established for missionary work after the lifting of the ban on Christianity). Oura Cathedral was built in 1864 by missionaries who had come back to Japan after the opening of the nation's ports to foreign trade in the middle of the 19th century. It was dedicated to the Twenty-Six Saints who had been martyred in Nagasaki in the 16th century. Oura Cathedral is the site where the 'Discovery of Hidden Christians' took place, bringing about the new phase marking the transformation and subsequent end of the distinctive religious tradition of the Hidden Christian communities.

History and development

The 12 component sites were selected to reflect and represent four consecutive periods in the introduction of Christianity to Japan. The earliest of these starts in 1549, when the Jesuit priest Francis Xavier first reached Kagoshima in Japan and took up Catholic missionary activities. Several local feudal lords, aiming to gain profit from the exchanges and oversee trade, converted to Christianity and often genuinely embraced the new faith. These lords came to be called the Kirishitan Daimyo, which translates as the Christian feudal lords. Within their political domains, many citizens followed suit and embraced the new religion. When Japan was unified in 1587 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi after lengthy feudal wars, on the occasion of his triumphal return from battle he issued an edict expelling missionaries from Japan. As a secondary move, he prohibited Christianity altogether and seized Christian properties and territories.

In 1614, the Shogunate issued a nationwide ban on Christianity and Christian ritual practice. Severe inquisitions and persecutions were carried out, which forced the remaining Christian communities into hiding. In 1637 the hidden Christians of Arima and Amakusa started a rebellion triggered by over-taxation and famine. This had a profound effect on the Shogunate, which prohibited the arrival of Portuguese ships and broke off all relations with the Portuguese. Seventy-five missionaries were publicly executed and more than one thousand Christians lost their lives during intense persecutions between 1617 and 1644. Christian communities were forced to convert to Buddhism and the Efumi ceremony was developed, to reaffirm on an annual basis their rejection of Christianity. After the last missionary within Japan had been martyred in 1644, the remaining Japanese Catholics could only continue their faith by themselves in secret.

Only in the middle of the 19th century were missionary activities reintroduced in Japan, where the faith still remained forbidden to Japanese citizens. In 1854 Japan reopened its doors to Western countries at the request of the United States of America. Nagasaki was one of the ports opened for foreign trade and the first group of missionaries began to construct the Oura Cathedral in Nagasaki Bay. Just after its dedication ceremony in 1865, a group of Hidden Christians came to the cathedral and revealed their secret faith to the missionary of the cathedral. This event came to be known as the 'Discovery of Hidden Christians', following which Hidden Christian communities in the Nagasaki region entered a new phase.

The Western trading partners made continuous protests to the Meiji government regarding the situation of Christianity in Japan, which led to the final lifting of the ban in 1873. Consequently, Hidden Christians split into three groups: (1) those who reaccepted Catholicism under the guidance of the missionaries and re-joined the Catholic Church, (2) those who refused to submit to the authority of the missionaries and instead continued with their own practices nurtured during the lengthy period of the ban on Christianity (this group was known as the *Kakure Kirishitan*), and (3) those who decided to convert to Buddhism or Shinto, leaving the Christian faith altogether after a long debate over whether to re-join Catholicism or not.

3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis is presented in the nomination dossier quite extensively in five categories: A) comparison with World Heritage properties, especially those directly associated with religious suppression; B) comparison of histories of acceptance of Christianity in Asian countries; C) comparison with Hidden Christian sites throughout Japan (from the latter half of the 17th century to the first half of the 19th century); D) comparison with Hidden Christian villages in the Nagasaki region; E) comparison with Catholic churches built in villages in the Nagasaki

region during the phase that followed the lifting of the ban on Christianity.

The initial global analysis (category A) considers that all ten World Heritage properties used for comparison have a different historical background to that of Nagasaki. Two sites, 'Ouadi Qadisha (the Holy Valley) and the Forest of the Cedars of God (Horsh Arz el-Rab)' in Lebanon, inscribed under criteria (iii) and (iv), and 'Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia' in Turkey, inscribed under criteria (i), (iii), (v) and (vii), are identified as having some similarities with the nominated property in that Christians there also kept their faith whilst in hiding from religious suppression. However, the State Party considers that the case of Nagasaki is essentially different in that Christians there did not physically hide from the outside world but were socially in hiding, meaning that they maintained their Christian faith whilst outwardly behaving as Buddhists and Shinto practitioners.

Regarding other Asian countries and their history of acceptance of Christianity (category B), the State Party considers that only in Japan was the Christian faith passed down secretly through many generations in the complete absence of missionaries and despite a two-century ban. Furthermore, Japan's ban was much longer and more severe than any such ban in other Asian countries. Concerning similar Christian sites within Japan (category C), the comparative analysis supports the idea that the Hidden Christian communities across Japan gradually became disorganised throughout the 18th century due to the ban, remaining intact only in the Nagasaki region.

With regards to all 214 Hidden Christian villages in the Nagasaki region (category D), the comparative analysis indicates that the 10 areas included in the nominated property are representative in terms of their contribution to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value and the state of protective measures being implemented. Finally, regarding the 73 Catholic churches in the Nagasaki region (category E), the State Party considers that the Egami Church is a representative example in terms of duration of the transitional phase of religious identity, authenticity, and protective measures in place.

ICOMOS is of the view that the comparative analysis at the global level is interesting and draws on a number of other suitably comparable serial nominations. Comparative studies at the global level (categories A and B) and within Japan (comparison with items in categories C, D, E) and the selection process of the components are logical and well conducted. The arguments establish clearly the difference between these and the Japanese case. The nominated property bears specific features that justify its consideration for the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The nominated property bears unique testimony to the history of people and their communities who secretly transmitted their faith in Christianity during the time of prohibition spanning more than two centuries in Japan, from the 17th to the 19th century.
- Hidden Christians gave rise to a distinctive religious tradition that was seemingly vernacular yet which maintained the essence of Christianity, and they survived continuing their faith over the ensuing two centuries.

ICOMOS considers that this justification is appropriate because the 12 sites do indeed reflect the earliest activities of Christian missionaries and settlers in Japan, including the earliest phase of encounter, a subsequent era of prohibition and persecution of the Christian faith and settlers, as well as the final phase of revitalization of Christian communities after the official lifting of the prohibition.

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

The property is proposed as representing completely, in 12 serial component parts, the history and the continuity of the tradition of the Hidden Christians. In ICOMOS' view, the selection of components provides good coverage of the four stages of the Hidden Christian period and the range of sites needed to illustrate the initial ban on Christianity, different types of Hidden Christian worship and development of different secret traditions, strategic migration, and the responses of the Hidden Christian Communities once the ban on Christianity was lifted in 1873.

ICOMOS considers that ten components of the nominated property retain a high degree of visual integrity, both of themselves and within their broader physical and visual settings. Two components: the Remains of Hara Castle (001) and Oura Cathedral (012) have been adversely affected by surrounding development. The impact on the latter was exacerbated by the construction of a new Catholic Church on adjacent land in the 1970s. However, ICOMOS notes that the Cathedral building sits within a plot that contains a grove of planted trees, which ameliorate the effects of the surrounding built-up area in close views and most distant views. Overall, while the built-up areas around Oura Cathedral do adversely affect its setting, the primary attribute of this component, which is the association with the revelation of Hidden Christianity in 1865, is not jeopardised. The majority of the Hara Castle site remains intact and in stable condition. However, ICOMOS' technical evaluation mission noted that there were some inappropriate and intrusive elements at the southwestern end of the proposed component boundary, including industrial buildings and a large junior high school which

jeopardised the 'intactness' of the component. In the additional information sent to ICOMOS on 28 February 2018, the State Party agreed with ICOMOS recommendation and redefined the boundaries of the small area in the southwestern corner of the remains of Hara Castle by removing it from the core nominated area but maintaining it within the buffer zone.

In terms of the integrity of individual site components, ICOMOS notes that houses within the component villages show considerable variations. In some places, such as Sakitsu Village and on Kuroshima Island, original houses remain, but have been substantially changed over time. There are programs in place to provide support for private owners to repair and re-clad original houses to provide greater visual harmony with the surrounding village context. It is likely that relatively little original building fabric remains from the Hidden Christian period. At other places, such as Kasuga Village, and Nokubi and Funamori Villages on Nozaki Island, only foundations of houses that were occupied by significant community leaders during the Hidden Christian period remain.

An important attribute of the property is the retention of various collections of historic artefacts related to the Hidden Christian period, some within private houses and others within museums. The collections within museums (at Oura Cathedral, Sakitsu Village and Shitsu Village) appear to be in good condition. ICOMOS notes that artefacts in private ownership retain a high degree of historical context but are not kept in climate-controlled environments and are at risk, owing to the passing of time and uncertainty about what may happen when current custodians are no longer able to look after them.

ICOMOS is of the view that each of the components of the property has a distinctive visual character created by the interplay between the physical and visual setting, coastal scenery, forests, villages, agricultural lands and church buildings. In the case of the villages, the continuing presence of actively-worshipping Christians, the continuing use of the agricultural lands and ongoing worship at shrines and within church buildings are all important functions that contribute to the Hidden Christian narrative. The connection between the contemporary communities and the places associated with Hidden Christian traditions is an important attribute of the property.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity of the whole series have been met and that the conditions of integrity of the individual sites that comprise the series have been fully met for all site components.

Authenticity

Overall, in ICOMOS' view, the property retains a high degree of authenticity, across a range of tangible and intangible attributes. The major built elements within the property, including Oura Cathedral and the eight churches, retain a high degree of authenticity in their form and design – both internally and externally. There have been changes to facilitate continuing worship (such as the introduction of

pews), and to protect the fabric (such as fire detection systems), but these do not fundamentally affect the design integrity. The relatively few residences remaining from the Hidden Christian period have undergone substantial physical change and their value and contribution rests in their association rather than in integrity of form and design. The materials presented in the major buildings and landscape structures of each component, including churches, cemeteries, rice paddies, and archaeological ruins, retain a high degree of authenticity.

ICOMOS notes that the property has continued in traditional use and function over centuries as home, workplace and sacred place for the local community, including typical agricultural production, fishing, traditional events and religious worship. The churches and many shrines continue as places of worship. Important spiritual places, such as the site used for the Omizutori (holy water drawing) ceremony on Nakaenoshima Island, continue in use as places of worship; although some, (such as the Zazare Church on Hisaka Island) are now derelict or demolished. A number of burial grounds remain in use. The few remaining residences from the Hidden Christian period continue as residences and a few (at Sakitsu Village and Kasuga Village) continue to house venerated objects from the Hidden Christian period.

ICOMOS also notes, however, that over the last few generations there has been a diminution and discontinuation of some of the Hidden Christian rituals, especially those associated with the veneration of holy objects. Nevertheless, the components of the property retain a strong sense of spirit and feeling, evident in both the places themselves and through the attitude of the local people to whom they are important. Churches, shrines, some graveyards, agricultural lands and holy objects continue to be cared for by local people.

ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity of the whole series have been justified; and for individual sites, the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criterion (iii).

Criterion (iii): bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the nominated property is a unique testimony to the history of people and their communities who secretly transmitted their faith in Christianity during the time of prohibition spanning more than two centuries in Japan. Located in very remote areas including small islands at the westernmost edge of Japan, the property represents how the Christian communities survived in the midst of the conventional society and its religions, gradually transforming, ultimately ending their religious traditions

and being assimilated into modern society after the prohibition was lifted.

ICOMOS considers that the property does indeed illustrate a distinctive religious tradition nurtured by the Hidden Christians in the Nagasaki region while they secretly continued their Christian faith during the ban on Christianity. While the Hidden Christian story is one located solely within Japan, its wider dimensions – the endurance under dire circumstances of a tradition, the resilience, fortitude and skills of those who adhered to it and managed to maintain it, displaying inventive ways of so doing that illustrate how humans can shield and mask meanings within the overt frameworks of existing cultures – speak to broader values and contexts.

ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified for the whole series.

ICOMOS considers that the serial approach and the selection of site components is justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criterion (iii) and conditions of authenticity and integrity.

Description of the attributes

The attributes are the village settlements, castle, houses, cemeteries and graveyards, agricultural lands and landscapes, churches and places of secret worship, cherished and venerated objects, coastal scenery, forests, topographical features of the settings (e.g. mountains), relationship between sites and visual setting, continuing use of agricultural lands, and ongoing worship at sacred places (e.g. shrines and within church buildings).

4 Factors affecting the property

Given the remoteness of most serial components, there are currently few serious development pressures. The environment of farming and fishing villages on remote islands has experienced little development impact in the past, so that integrity of the sites is merely limited in terms of industrial farming structures or inappropriate neighbouring constructions, of still acceptable volume. Nevertheless, there have been some significant urban development within the buffer zone and visual catchment of Oura Cathedral, which is located within a heavily built-up area of Nagasaki. ICOMOS considers that even in the case of increasing development pressures, adequate provisions are in place to allow for careful consideration of appropriateness and scale of each project within the historic settings.

The nomination dossier correctly identifies environmental pressures as including air pollution, acid rain, marine litter and feral animals. ICOMOS notes that the remote region in which the property is located has, however, experienced damage from natural disasters, which could potentially occur in the future. These include uncontrolled fires, floods,

typhoons (and consequent flooding) or earthquakes. Regional disaster prevention plans have been established but the extreme remoteness of some of the serial components will increase difficulties in providing immediate dedicated response action in case of natural disasters. The area of Minamishimabara City, where the Remains of Hara Castle (001) is located, could also be affected by landslides due to its construction on volcanic ash soil. This is a risk to the castle structures which are located on cliff and hill settings and accordingly require careful geological monitoring.

In the light of potential risks and threats from climate change and rising sea levels, ICOMOS requested in its Interim report dated 22 December 2017, additional information on the preparation of Seashore Management Plan. The State Party replied on 28 February 2018 explaining that Nagasaki and Kumamoto Prefectures have already instituted “Basic Plans for Coastal Preservation” (the latest version is established in 2015) to address the risks of climate change and rising sea levels. ICOMOS considers that the additional explanation provided by the State Party is satisfactory.

Visitor numbers at all sites – with the exception of Oura Cathedral – are very low at present but the provision of World Heritage status would likely increase interest and visitor numbers in these remote sites. Some of the sites in ICOMOS’s view are fragile and may not be able to accept large numbers of visitors. The same applies to the communities which are in the process of diminishing and to whom visitors could bring revenue but also considerable impacts on modes of daily life, privacy, religious practice and atmosphere. ICOMOS requested further clarification in its Interim report on the ‘carrying capacity’ and management of potential tourism at the components of the property having particular regard to the physical and social circumstances of each component and potential limitations imposed by factors such as parking areas, boat transport and availability of local guides. The State Party responded that in the medium- to long-term strategy, analysis of the carrying capacity of each component will be conducted, and visitor management plans will be reviewed with regard to the physical, cultural, and social circumstances of each component. For the short term, in anticipation of a rush of visitors just after inscription of the property on the World Heritage List, local authorities are currently working on training guides, establishing rest houses and visitor guidance facilities, expanding accommodation facilities, and introducing new sea routes. ICOMOS considers that the additional explanation from the State Party is satisfactory. ICOMOS also notes that the visitor increases need to be attentively steered and monitored by the responsible authorities as indicated in the Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan for the property.

Of serious concern to ICOMOS is the gradual abandonment of the villages by their inhabitants in a process of economically-motivated migration towards urban centres. In particular, economic difficulty among older citizens has become a pressing concern, which affects the ability of the communities to act as custodians

of their heritage. In combination with the above-mentioned urban migration, the remoteness and small size of the communities poses a risk factor in terms of future responsible visitation to the property.

The decline of human resources available for ongoing conservation and management also poses a potential risk regarding the loss of memories. With the changing demographics of local residents and an increasingly older population, some of the rituals and memories which create these associations are no longer passing from generation to generation. While the information itself can be recorded through oral history and other mechanisms, there is a growing disconnection between the place and the stories of the descendants of the Hidden Christians. ICOMOS requested the State Party for additional information on the strategies to mitigate the potential loss of memory amongst the custodians of the nominated property. The State Party answered that there is already a considerable collection of folkloric, religious, and historical studies of the Hidden Christians' customs, practices, traditions, and other intangible features. Looking ahead to the future, efforts are being made to raise public awareness among local residents through school education and lifelong education.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are natural disasters, in particular storms, floods, earthquakes and fires, as well as the risk of rural exodus, loss of collective memory and over-visitation.

5 Protection, conservation and management

Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The nominated property has a total area of 17, 721.77 ha, which encompasses a property of 5,569.34 ha and a buffer zone of 12,152.43 ha.

At the Remains of Hara Castle (component 001), a small section of lower ground at the southwestern corner of the component included initially the industrial buildings and a large junior high school which jeopardised the 'intactness' of this component. These boundaries of this component have been well-resolved as indicated above. ICOMOS considers that all component boundaries are regarded as appropriate and reflective of the values of the nominated property.

The buffer zones for the components of the nominated property are defined by a combination of topographic features and defined to take in adjacent areas of seascape, which is part of the visual catchment of the core nominated areas. ICOMOS requested further clarification in its Interim report on practical justification for the delineation of buffer zones wherever these are marked in the sea. The State Party replied on 28 February 2018 explaining that the buffer zones have been set not only on land but also in the sea to control development activities such as construction, extension or reconstruction (fishing port facilities, etc.);

mining minerals or extracting soil and stones; and land reclamation by landfill or drainage. The above controls are instituted in accordance with the Landscape Act, the Natural Parks Act and other relevant legislation, and the buffer zones are delineated for the sufficient range and/or extent to ensure the harmony of the nominated property with the surrounding environment, taking into account the location and topography of each component.

In the case of Egami Village on Naru Island, ICOMOS' evaluation mission revealed that there was a small promontory to the west, which forms part of the visual setting of the proposed component and which is visible from the Egami Church. ICOMOS requested the State Party to consider amending the buffer zone of the Egami Village to incorporate a highly-visible promontory area as a substantial development in this location would have potential to impact on Egami Village adversely. In the additional information sent to ICOMOS dated 28 February 2018, the State Party agreed to revise the delineation of the buffer zone of component 011 and provided the map illustrating the revised buffer zone.

In ICOMOS' view, all buffer zones are regarded as appropriately encompassing those areas within which it is important to maintain development controls in order to protect the values of the nominated areas.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone are adequate.

Ownership

The twelve components which comprise the nominated property have diverse and multiple ownership, including land owned by the National government, the Nagasaki and Kumamoto Prefectures, local government authorities, community groups and private owners. ICOMOS considers that there are no issues arising from this diverse ownership, which reflects the nature of the nominated property. The legal protection outlined below, in conjunction with financial assistance, plus community interest and initiatives, provide an appropriate framework. It is apparent, from the consultation processes undertaken during the mission, that free prior informed consent of affected property owners and associated people has been retained as part of the nomination process.

Protection

The legal framework which provides statutory protection and management arrangements for the property is established by national and regional legislation, including particularly: The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, The National Parks Act, Nagasaki City Planning Act and Landscape Ordinances. The Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan provides extensive detail of the statutory protection mechanisms which apply to core component areas and buffer zones, including details of the mechanisms under which decisions are made at a local, prefectural or national level.

Oura Cathedral is designated as a National Treasure and Historic Site, the Remains of Hara Castle are designated

as a Historic Site and all of the other components, apart from Ono Village, are designated as, or contained within, 'Important Cultural Landscapes'. Individual elements within the components, including the major churches, are designated as 'Important Cultural Property'. Parts of Kasuga Village and its buffer zone and part of Nozaki Island are afforded special zoning under the National Parks Act. Buffer zones for the Remains of Hara Castle and the island and village components are protected as Priority Landscape Planning Areas. Part of the Egami Village buffer zone is a fishing port. In the case of Oura Cathedral, the buffer zone is partly within an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings, totally within a scenic zone and protected by specific height controls. ICOMOS' technical evaluation mission noted that Ono Village (component 006) was yet to be designated as an 'Important Cultural Landscape' under the provisions of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. ICOMOS requested further clarification in its Interim report on the timeframe for the designation of Ono Village as an 'Important Cultural Landscape'. The State Party responded that all procedures relating to the designation of this component as an Important Cultural Landscape under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties are completed on 13 February 2018.

ICOMOS considers the additional information to be satisfactory and notes that the suite of statutory provisions provides appropriate and comprehensive protection.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate.

Conservation

In ICOMOS' view, the links between the attributes, such as churches, residences, cemeteries, villages, agricultural lands, artefacts and other elements within the diverse components, with the narrative story of the Hidden Christians are very strong, despite the diversity in the physical condition of the elements within each component of the property.

Movable objects are an important attribute of the nominated property, as they were crucial elements in the continuation of the Hidden Christian tradition for centuries. These objects are well documented, and a number of them are curated, conserved and displayed in museums. However, others remain within private houses, for example at Sakitsu and Kasuga Villages. ICOMOS considers that it would be appropriate for these elements to undergo physical conservation assessment (and any required remedial action), and for consideration to be given to the long-term conservation and management, if and when is no longer possible for them to be retained and conserved in private ownership, and in their current locations. In this regard, ICOMOS requested further clarification in its Interim report. The State Party responded that, in order to prevent venerated artefacts becoming scattered and lost, the locations of such artefacts have already been ascertained and a basic list was produced thereof. One of these artefacts is subject to 'legislative, regulatory, and institutional protection' as a designated cultural property of

Nagasaki Prefecture, and is preserved in a museum of Nagasaki City. There are many other venerated artefacts without legal protection that are nonetheless held in museums.

ICOMOS notes that the property is well documented, through inventories, written descriptions, photographs and hardcopy records. Nevertheless, opportunities exist for additional documentation, such as photogrammetric or Lidar recording (particularly the fabric of abandoned villages, churches and cemeteries and collapsed structures), and oral history projects which record the beliefs and memories of current generations of local people. The Action Plan within the Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan identifies a number of such projects.

ICOMOS requested the State Party for additional information on the possibilities and mechanisms for extending the financial assistance available to both individual property owners and community groups to cover other aspects of heritage value such as vegetation/landscape management and interpretation. The State Party answered that National, prefectural and municipal subsidies are available for the maintenance, management, restoration and other activities not only of archaeological remains, historical structures and other elements that directly express the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property but also other attributes of the components of the property that contribute to the Outstanding Universal Value. For example, financial assistance is available for activities undertaken by individuals and local communities in regard to the maintenance and management of vegetation, the repair and landscaping of ordinary residences and churches, and other forms of landscape maintenance and improvement.

ICOMOS considers that these strategic planning tools for conservation are commendable and that active conservation measures implemented in the past years seem largely adequate.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation strategies are commendable and conservation activities undertaken are largely adequate. ICOMOS further recommends that the fabric of abandoned villages, churches and cemeteries within the property should be comprehensively achievable recorded, using photogrammetry, Lidar and/or other similar techniques.

Management

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

Management of the property is undertaken collaboratively, by the Nagasaki Prefecture, the Kumamoto Prefecture and the local government agencies responsible for the individual components, as well as local community groups and private owners. Day-to-day management rests with local government authorities, community groups and private owners. The detailed relationships and

arrangements of stakeholders are set out in detail in the Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan. The framework for implementing this Plan, comprises a World Heritage Preservation and Utilisation Council which works in cooperation with the owners of the components and other stakeholders. The Council is operated for the appropriate protection, enhancement and utilisation of the nominated property. The Council receives guidance from, and consults with, experts comprising an academic committee (the Nagasaki World Heritage Academic Committee), as well as the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which is the principal agency in charge of protection of Japan's cultural properties.

The property benefits from a high degree of professional expertise spread across staff in local and prefectural governments, as well as access to a special Academic Committee, the World Heritage Council and Ministry for Cultural Affairs. Scientific Committees can be appointed at the local, prefectural or national level to provide access to expertise and expert advice. The Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan provides for ongoing capacity building, training and sharing of knowledge and information.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

The State Party, in conjunction with the Nagasaki and Kumamoto Prefecture Governments and local government authorities, have prepared a Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan for the property, which has been in place since 2014. This Plan is extremely comprehensive and provides a values-based, logical framework for understanding and managing the Outstanding Universal Value of the property. The Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan will operate in conjunction with an extensive suite of preservation management plans, as well as enhancement and utilisation plans, which are already in place for a number of the components of the property.

ICOMOS requested in its Interim report dated 22 December 2017, additional information on the preparation of Seashore Management Plan. The State Party answered on 28 February 2018 that in accordance with the Basic Policy for Coastal Preservation instituted by the national government based on the Coast Act, Nagasaki and Kumamoto Prefectures have formulated Basic Plans for Coastal Preservation for their respective coastlines. These plans have been updated in every ten years, protection standards have been determined based on the plans, and all necessary measures have been implemented taking into account of the result of survey on post-disaster and normal state of the seashore. The seashore in Shitsu Village in Sotome (Component 005), for example, is subject to measures including levees, revetments, and wave dissipation works to prevent damage by high tides and wave overtopping, designed based on tidal level + 1.90 m. ICOMOS considers the additional information to be satisfactory.

There are many opportunities provided for interpretation and presentation of the Hidden Christian story and the values of the components of the property. Visitors are welcome at each component. In a number of cases, including the Remains of Hara Castle, and several villages, formal tours are provided by local people. There are a number of walking tour brochures, both in villages such as Sakitsu and on some islands, including Kuroshima. Within the property itself, there are museum displays at Oura Cathedral, Sakitsu and Shitsu Villages, and Kashiragashima Island. In addition to the museum and visitor centre displays, there is some signage at the major churches, but relatively little other on-site interpretation is provided. The lack of overt interpretive devices adds to the visual character and authenticity of the property.

The components of the property have, at present, only modest visitation related to the Hidden Christian story. Whilst the number of visitors varies from component to component, tourism is low-key and only very seldom exceeds 100 people a day. Whilst it is likely that visitation will increase, should inscription on the World Heritage List occur, a number of factors already provide highly-effective limits on tourist numbers. These include car parking capacity in some of the villages, such as Kasuga, Sakitsu, Shitsu and Ono Villages, inaccessibility of elements within a number of components, such as abandoned villages and graveyards, and the island context which requires access by water. ICOMOS considers that it will be important that increased tourism is pro-actively managed through consideration of the 'carrying capacity' and management of potential tourism at each individual component of the property. In this regard, ICOMOS requested additional information on the State Party's tourism approach and strategy to allow visitors access to the site as well as an understanding of all elements and places within the components of the property that are part of the story of the Hidden Christians. The State Party responded that information on visitor access to the site is managed exclusively by "the Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region Information Centre" and disseminated via the Centre's website and by other means. With regard to the story of the Hidden Christians, Nagasaki and Kumamoto Prefectures have instituted an "Interpretation Plan" and are gradually developing tools for information dissemination.

Involvement of the local communities

There has been a high degree of engagement with local communities as part of the nomination process. During the course of the ICOMOS evaluation mission, there were many meetings with local community representatives, including direct consultation with individuals, all of whom were well-aware of the nomination process and implications of the potential inscription on the World Heritage List. Without exception, local people were strongly supportive of the nomination and it is very clear that full prior informed consent of the affected local people, particularly those who have a direct association with the Hidden Christian narrative, has taken place.

ICOMOS considers that the management system is overall effective and that the Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan is already being implemented. In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the management system for the overall serial property is adequate.

6 Monitoring

The Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan provides a well-structured and detailed program for monitoring the state of conservation of the property, including specific indicators, frequency and cross-referencing to the location of records. This program brings together individual monitoring programs which are already in place for the majority of components. The program also includes forward-looking monitoring, having regard to the likely increase in visitation should inscription on the World Heritage List occur. A schedule within the Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan clearly identifies materials and documentation relating to monitoring of the property which has been previously prepared.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring indicators, administrative arrangements, as well as frequency and responsibility, are adequately developed.

ICOMOS considers that the monitoring indicators and arrangements presented are adequate.

7 Conclusions

The property being nominated include 12 components serial nomination encompassing 10 villages, one castle, and one cathedral dating from between the 17th and 19th centuries. These sites bear testimony to an exceptional cultural tradition nurtured by Hidden Christians in the Nagasaki region who secretly practised their faith despite a ban on Christianity.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this serial property “Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region” for the World Heritage List; that the serial approach is justified and the selection of sites is appropriate. ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criterion (iii) and conditions of authenticity and integrity.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are natural disasters, in particular storms, floods, earthquakes and fires, as well as the risk of rural exodus, loss of collective memory and over-visitation. ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone are adequate; legal protection in place is adequate, and the protective measures for the property are adequate. ICOMOS recommends, however, that Ono Village (component 006) should be designated as an ‘Important Cultural Landscape’ under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. ICOMOS considers that

the conservation strategies are commendable and conservation activities undertaken are largely adequate. ICOMOS considers that the management system is overall effective and that the Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan is already being implemented. ICOMOS considers that the monitoring indicators, administrative arrangements, as well as frequency and responsibility, are adequately developed.

8 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region, Japan, be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criterion (iii)**.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

Located in the Nagasaki and Kumamoto prefectures in the northwestern part of Kyushu Island of the Japanese Archipelago, the ‘Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region’ is a serial property comprising 12 component sites, made up of ten villages, one castle, and one cathedral dating from between the 17th and 19th centuries. Together they reflect the earliest activities of Christian missionaries and settlers in Japan, including the earliest phase of the encounter, a subsequent era of prohibition and persecution of the Christian faith and settlers, as well as the final phase of the revitalization of Christian communities after the official lifting of the prohibition in 1873. Hidden Christians survived as communities that formed small villages sited along the seacoast or on remote islands to which Hidden Christians migrated during the ban on Christianity. Hidden Christians gave rise to a distinctive religious tradition that was seemingly vernacular yet which maintained the essence of Christianity, and they survived continuing their faith over the ensuing two centuries.

Criterion (iii): The Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region bear unique testimony to a distinctive religious tradition nurtured by Hidden Christians who secretly transmitted their faith in Christianity during the time of prohibition spanning more than two centuries in Japan, from the 17th to the 19th century.

Integrity

The 12 components not only include all of the elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of the property but are also of an adequate size and in a good state of conservation. Thorough and complete protection measures have been taken for each of the components in accordance with all relevant national laws and regulations – including the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Within the buffer zones of the nominated property, appropriate protection is provided not only by the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties but also by the Landscape Act and other relevant laws and regulations. Therefore, the property does not suffer from any adverse

effects of development or neglect, and it has been effectively conserved together with its surrounding landscape.

Authenticity

Each component of the property maintains a high degree of authenticity based on the attributes selected according to its nature. The villages possess a high degree of authenticity based on their attributes of 'form and design', 'use and function', 'traditions, techniques and management systems', 'location and setting', and 'spirit and feeling'. The component, 'Remains of Hara Castle', has lost its authenticity related to 'use and function', as it is an archaeological site, but it retains a high degree of authenticity in regard to the other attributes. Oura Cathedral and the Egami Church in Egami Village on Naru Island possess a high degree of authenticity in terms of 'materials and substance' in addition to the other attributes as they are architectural works.

Requirements for Protection and Management

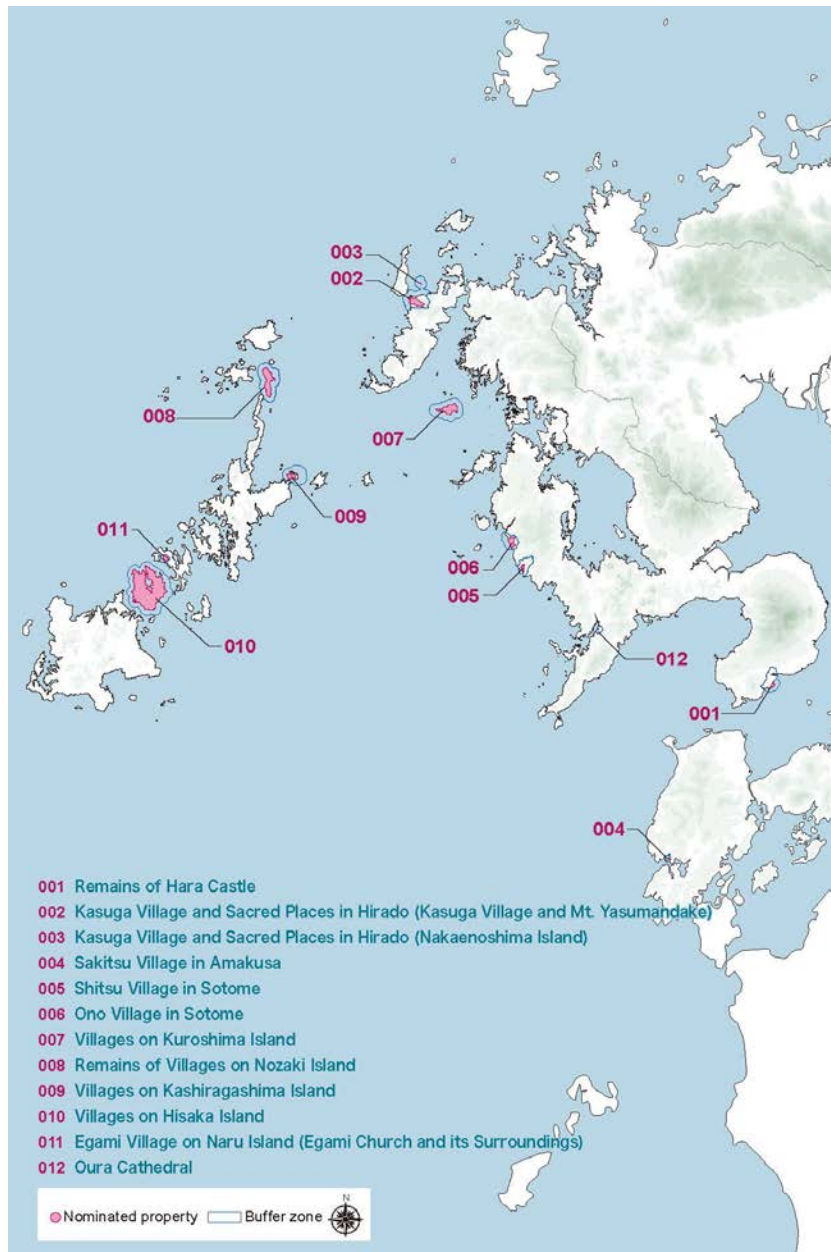
The property and its buffer zones are properly conserved under various laws and regulations including the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Furthermore, Nagasaki Prefecture, Kumamoto Prefecture and relevant municipalities have formulated a robust Comprehensive Preservation and Management Plan from the perspective of safeguarding the Outstanding Universal Value of the property as a whole. The framework for implementing this plan comprises a World Heritage Preservation and Utilisation Council which works in cooperation with the owners of the components and other stakeholders. The Council is operated for the appropriate protection, enhancement and utilisation of the nominated property. The Council receives guidance from, and consults with, experts comprising an academic committee (the Nagasaki World Heritage Academic Committee), as well as the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which is the principal agency in charge of protection of Japan's cultural properties.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Recording and archiving the fabric of abandoned villages, churches and cemeteries (such as those on Hisaka and Nozaki Islands) within the property using photogrammetry, Lidar and/or other similar techniques,
- b) Developing a communication strategy to inform local community groups and individual owners about the financial assistance which is available for conservation projects from local, prefectural and national government,
- c) Undertaking a study on the 'carrying capacity' and management of potential tourism at the components of the property, having particular regard to the physical and social circumstances constraints of each component,

- d) Assessing new developments within the property in accordance with the ICOMOS *Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties* (2011);



Map showing the location of the nominated properties



Hisaka Island



Kasuga village