

James Harry Morris

## Christianity, Martyrdom and Pilgrimage in Ōkago Village

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My research focuses for the most part on the history of conversion to Christianity in Japan, through the study of six different groups from throughout Japanese history. One area of focus is the Sendai or Date Domain (仙台藩・伊達藩) which covered modern day Miyagi Prefecture (宮城県), parts of southern Iwate Prefecture (岩手県) and parts of northern Fukushima Prefecture (福島県), and was ruled by the Date Clan from its creation in 1600 until it was disbanded in the early 1870s. The success of Christian missionaries in the area during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century was helped by Date Masamune's (伊達政宗) protection of the religion until 1620 whilst *Kirishitan* (16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century Christians) faced persecution elsewhere. The Date Clan's links to Christianity culminated in the now famous Keichō Embassy (慶長使節) to Mexico and Europe. There are a number of Japanese works which deal with the Christian history of the area; however, beyond texts on the Keichō Embassy, few are easily accessible to the general public. The history of Christianity in northern Japan has been largely ignored in Western research, too.

Ōkago (大籠) is a small village of about 500 people located in the west of Ichinoseki City (一ノ関) in Iwate (岩手) Prefecture. It's rather difficult to access without a car, but can be reached by taking the Ōfuno (大船) line from Ichinoseki to Senmaya (千厩) and then transferring to a bus which runs around five times a day. During the 17<sup>th</sup> Century it was part of the Sendai Domain, and a location in which some 300 *Kirishitan* were martyred. However, unlike the martyrs of Kyushu and Edo, these *Kirishitan* — ordinary peasants, farmers, and iron manufacturers — have not been celebrated in our history books nor canonized by the Church. Now, as we approach the fourth Centenary of the return of the Keichō Embassy, we should recall that the return of the embassy marked the beginning of a ruthless persecution against Christianity throughout the north of Japan.

Here I shall recount these persecutions as they occurred in the village of

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Ōkago, with a place by place guide to the village's *Kirishitan* sites.

### How Christianity Spread in Tohoku

Most Japanese and Western authors have tended to focus on the role of the missionaries and a few high ranking Japanese converts, such as the *Kirishitan* daimyō, for which primary sources are available. However, the *Kirishitan* may have been present in the north prior to the arrival of the missionaries and daimyo from the south. Some scholars believe that Christianity came to Ōkago as early as 1558 with two brothers who migrated to work in Ōkago's iron manufacturing industry from Bitchū (備中) (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:5). The date usually given for the arrival of Christianity in the Sendai Domain, 1611 (Takagi 2001:169), accounts only for the arrival of missionaries and not ordinary *Kirishitan*.

On the topic of Christianity in Aizu in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century I have found very little in English apart from Kroehler and Kroehler 1994, which I follow in this section. Takagi (2001) is another accessible introduction for those who read Japanese.

Scholars often refer first to Gamō Ujisato (蒲生氏郷), a daimyo from Ōmi Province (近江国 — modern day Shiga Prefecture), who had fought for Oda Nobunaga and later for Toyotomi Hideyoshi. He converted to Christianity at the persuasion of his friend Takayama Ukon (高山右近) and was baptized by the Jesuit Gneccchi-Soldo Organtino in 1584. Following faithful service, Hideyoshi granted Ujisato Aizu Domain (会津藩) in 1590 (now part of Fukushima Prefecture), which was extended to include several territories previously under the remit of the Date family. He was not the first *Kirishitan* in the area; several of his vassals in Aizu were also *Kirishitan*, including Gamō Gōan (蒲生郷安) of Yonezawa (米沢), Gamō Gōsei (蒲生郷成) of Shiroishi (白石), Oka Echigo (岡越後) of Inawashiro (猪苗代), Tsukuda Matazaemon (佃又左衛門), Kagayama Hayatonoshō (加賀山隼人正), and Inoue Masashige (井上政重) who later became chief inquisitor in the Japanese persecution of Christianity. It is likely that some of the subjects of these vassals had also converted. During his reign Ujisato encouraged his vassals to spread their faith and gave them free remit to do so, having made strenuous efforts himself to convert the entire population of his former domain in Ise. In 1591 he met with Alessandro Valignano to request that the Jesuits send missionaries to Aizu, and on his return to Aizu he openly opposed the ban on Christianity that had been issued by Hideyoshi in 1587. The available sources do not mention whether the missionaries materialized; when he had made similar requests as lord of Ise, the Jesuits were unable to supply permanent evangelists due to a lack of personnel.

Following his death in 1595 his son, Gamō Hideyuki (蒲生秀行) ruled Aizu for a brief time, but was replaced by Uesugi Kagekatsu (上杉景勝) in 1598, before once again becoming leader of Aizu following the success of Tokugawa

Ieyasu and his allies at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Neither Hideyuki nor Kagekatsu were *Kirishitan* and they did not actively encourage or discourage the spread of Christianity. However, such a situation provided relative freedom for the *Kirishitan* in Aizu and therefore the religion flourished and spread rapidly in the areas controlled by the various zealous *Kirishitan* vassals of the region. It is estimated that at its peak there were 2000 *Kirishitan* in the domain, which extended beyond the Samurai classes to include a large number of farmers. There were a number of churches and a seminary to support this population. Furthermore, although the Tokugawa Shogunate began enforcing a more stringent prohibition on Christianity in areas under its control in 1612, due to the remote location of Aizu, missionary work continued in spite of the prohibition.

For most scholars the arrival of Ujisato and his successors marks the start of the *Kirishitan* presence in northern Japan. Yet the arrival of Christianity in Sendai is usually dated some twenty years later to 1611, when daimyo Date Masamune invited a Franciscan priest called Luis Sotelo to Sendai after he had healed Masamune's favourite concubine in Edo (Hamada, 61-3).

Spanish explorer Sebastián Vizcaíno was also present intermittently in Sendai from early 1611 (34-41). Sotelo was accompanied by the Franciscan Bonventura Diego Ibañez with whom he began to preach in the area (Takagi, 29-30). Later others came to Sendai to join him (170).

It is likely that *Kirishitan* were already present in Sendai. As previously noted, some believe *Kirishitan* came to Ōkago in 1558. It is also not unlikely that Christianity spread from the neighboring Aizu Domain, some of which was formerly Date Clan territory. Furthermore, as early as 1591 Masamune himself displayed his knowledge of Christianity when he marched into Kyoto preceded by a crucifix and dressed in burial robes in preparation for his possible execution or suicide at the hands of Hideyoshi (Levine, 131; Meriwether, 19). However, whether Masamune's knowledge of Christianity was the product of *Kirishitan* influence in Sendai or his travels around the country is unclear. It seems likely that some *Kirishitan* were present in Sendai prior to Sotelo's arrival. Other scholars support this conclusion, for instance, Kataoka Yakichi notes that every region of Tohoku had groups of Christians, but lacked the presence of missionaries and clergy for much of its history (Kataoka, 365-6).

Contrary to the policy of the Shogunate, which saw anti-Christian persecution intensify in areas south of Tohoku, the arrival of Sotelo and the sending of the Keichō Embassy in 1613 marked the beginning of increased missionary work and conversions in Sendai (for details on important figures see Takagi, 32-58). Masamune's protection of the religion from persecution in his domain further aided in increasing the Christian population of Sendai as Christians migrated from the south (170).

When the Keichō Embassy returned in 1620 it had failed in its goals to secure trade and a larger number of priests for missionary work in Sendai. After meeting head ambassador Hasekura Tsunenaga (支倉常長) shortly after

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his return, Masamune, who had previously resisted the Shogunate's anti-*Kirishitan* prohibitions, promulgated the law within his own domain (Hamada, 257-8). Despite this, both the Japanese and Europeans continued to have great hopes for the Sendai Domain, and in a letter written by a number of *Kirishitan* to the Pope in 1621 it was claimed that Masamune's promulgation of persecutory laws was the result of his fear of the Shogun (Gonoi, 229). In spite of Masamune's persecutions, the number of clergy and missionaries in Sendai increased throughout the 1620s (Takagi, 32-58), although this was likely caused by their fleeing from more severe persecution in southern Japan.

Most *Kirishitan* in Sendai were martyred or renounced their faith, Takagi (191-2) records executions up until 1644. However, *Kirishitan* and suspected *Kirishitan* remained an issue for the Sendai Domain into the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (see the documents in Yajima 1972). Naturally by the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century these remaining *Kirishitan* had chosen to conceal their faith underground becoming *Sempuku Kirishitan* (潜伏キリシタン). Unlike the *Sempuku Kirishitan* of Kyūshū who continued to exist at the opening of the Meiji period, rejoining the Church or becoming *Kakure Kirishitan*, the last record of *Sempuku Kirishitan* in Sendai Domain was in 1835 (Takagi, 195). The Tohoku *Kirishitan* made up over 10% of the *Kirishitan* population in Japan, the largest group outside of Kyūshū (Shimizu, 231).

### Visiting *Kirishitan* Ōkago

Ōkago was very much a *Kirishitan* village, and today we can see the remnants of almost all the possible sites one might associate with groups in the *Kirishitan* Century within the space of a few kilometres of each other. When I visited I was stunned to find everything I had read about *Kirishitan* Century Christianity within such a small area, and for those with some interest in the period I would recommend a visit.

After the initial possible arrival of Christianity to Ōkago in 1558 with the brothers Senmatsu Daihachirō (千松大八郎) and Senmatsu Kohachirō (千松小八郎) who worked in the iron trade (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:5), the *Kirishitan* population of Ōkago was strengthened by the conversion of the leader of Iwaigun (磐井郡 – the area of which Ōkago was part) Gotō Juan (後藤寿庵), who built a church in the region and attempted to spread Christianity there.

In 1615 a Jesuit, Jerome de Angelis, and three catechists came to Juan's dominion to preach (Takagi, 172). In the same year Satō Sado, a member of the Keichō Embassy, returned from Mexico after his baptism there (173). From 1618, Satō housed a group of Franciscans who had moved to Ōkago from Shimotsuke (下野国 - modern-day Tochigi Prefecture) for two years (173). Although persecution broke out in Sendai Domain in 1620, clergy, missionaries, and *Kirishitan* from other areas of Japan continued to visit and

migrate to the area. Similarly, Ōkago which acted as a center for the iron trade attracted a large number of migrants who came to work in iron manufacturing, some of whom happened to be Christians.

One of the most important figures of the post-1620 mission to Ōkago was Spanish priest Francisco Magoemon (フランシスコ・孫石衛門), who moved to the village in 1620 and remained there for twenty years instructing the *Kirishitan* population and spreading the faith. During the persecutions he went into hiding with other *Kirishitan* taking the faith underground (Ōkago *Kirishitan* Museum).

Several sites in Ōkago relate to the worship and religious lives of the *Kirishitan* before persecution broke out. Naturally these sites were marked by the persecution which Masamune instated, meaning that today their purpose or shape has radically altered. In the area of the village known as Senmatsu (千松), three such sites exist. First are the remains of the *Kirishitan* Church (教会跡), the location in which it is believed that Senmatsu Daihachirō explained Christian doctrine, and local *Kirishitan* prayed together (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:13). I am unsure whether the remains are marked, as I was unable to find them myself; however, the location of the former Church is marked on most maps available in the village. There is very little information on the former Church site available, and I have been unable to ascertain for instance when the Church was destroyed.

A more exciting site is *Yama no Kami* (山の神), for a building still exists (although not the original). It is located to the east of the Church remains in a wooded area, and can be difficult to find. This was originally a shrine in which Deusu (デウス – the Christian God) was worshipped. A statue of Deusu brought from Bitchū by the Senmatsu brothers was stored and prayed to at this site. After the beginning of persecution, in an attempt to remain hidden, users of the shrine began referring to the God by different names, first Jūni no Kami (十二の神) and later *Yama no Kami* (Fujisawa Board of Education 1987:134). Despite a thorough search, I could not find an explanation of the name Jūni no Kami. Could it be a code word meaning ‘God of the Twelve disciples’? Today no entity is enshrined here. I was told during a conversation with a museum staff member (14 July 2015) that the shrine now acts like any other. I was unable to ascertain whether this meant that the most recent publication on the topic is out of date, or that people worship there regardless of there being no object of worship, or if she meant that it simply has the appearance of a Shrine with no other function. It is clear in all sources, however, that the Christian God is no longer worshipped at the location.

*Daizenshin* (大善神) is in the far north of Senmatsu. This was the site where the Senmatsu brothers began explaining Christianity to the iron manufactures (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:13). Prayer was also performed in morning and evening at the site (Fujisawa Board of Education 1987:131). Today it is marked by a signboard and several graves and memorials.

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clustered in one part of the village. The sources do not mention whether or not the believers stopped using *Daizenshin* or *Yama no Kami* when the Church was built, and as both *Daizenshin* and *Yama no Kami* were built by the Senmatsu brothers I presume the sites were used simultaneously. During the persecution the function and appearance of these places changed. The Church was destroyed, *Yama no Kami* became a site for the *Sempuku Kirishitan* to worship, disguising their religion through a change of terminology, and *Daizenshin* fell out of use.

Other pre-persecution sites also exist, for example, the grave and former homes of Senmatsu Daihachirō. The gravestone was erected in 1929 and is located in the same area as the previously mentioned sites (Fujisawa Board of Education 1987:131).

### Persecution Sites

Although persecution reached Ōkago, its remoteness and the strong seed Christianity had sown meant that the persecution was initially weak. However, after pressure from the Shogunate and intensification of policy following the rise of Tokugawa Iemitsu's persecution in Sendai increased (Takagi, 179). In 1623, the residence of Gotō Juan was burnt down, and he alongside more than a hundred other *Kirishitan* fled to Kubota Domain (久保田 – modern day Akita Prefecture). Other groups also began to flee from the area (180). In 1624 persecution began to occur in Iwaigun, rising again in 1629 and 1630 when arrests were made and several *Kirishitan* apostatized. In 1632, in the neighboring Motoyoshigun (本吉郡) between 150 and 160 *Kirishitan* were arrested and sent to prison in Sendai City (181). In the same year arrestees from Ōkago apostatized.

Further arrests took place in Iwaigun in 1638. Severe persecution reached Ōkago in 1639, when over 36 and 84 *Kirishitan* were executed during two purges, in 1640 a further 94 were executed, and in total over 300 *Kirishitan* were martyred in the village (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:10). I have not been able to locate the figures on the number of apostates. The persecution and executions used a variety of methods, and the locations used to carry out these methods can still be visited in Ōkago today.

Two types of persecution sites exist in Ōkago: first there are those, all with their own stories, which are locations of martyrdom; and then there are sites which were linked to the 'art' of persecution and operated by the persecutors to increase the effectiveness of the persecution.

In the center of the village, located close to the *Kirishitan* Museum, is a martyrdom site. This was a former execution site, in which the majority of Ōkago's *Kirishitan*, more than two hundred people, were killed through the methods of crucifixion and beheading. It is said that the persecution was so cruel, that the stream which runs next to the site ran red with blood. Over a number of years the wives and children of the martyrs erected Buddhist

statues there including one of Jizō (地藏) and they prayed there to ask that the martyred might find happiness in the next life (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:10). The place therefore became known as *Jizō no Tsuji* (地藏の辻). The Jizō no longer has a head, and thus serves, presumably by chance, as a reminder of the atrocities which took place here.

Across the road from the site sits a large white rock, which was used by the Sendai Domain coroner and other officials as a seat when they confirmed the identities of the executed (Fujisawa Board of Education 1987:134. Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:10). It is called *Kubi Jikkenseki* (首実検石). There is another set of gravestones near to *Kubi Jikkenseki*, but whether these are related to the *Kirishitan* persecution or not, I was unable to ascertain.

About 500 meters from these sites on the road to Fujisawa Town is the modern Catholic Church around which there are several further martyrdom sites. Adjacent to the Catholic Church's bus stop is a site called *Ueno Keijō* (上野刑場), and nearby along the gravel path on the way to the Church on the right hand side is the *Genroku no Ishibumi* (元禄の碑). Here a further 94 people were executed in 1640 (Takagi, 190). It is said that every night the cries of men and women could be heard from the site, and the change in atmosphere led many residents to flee the area. The taking and burial of the dead was originally banned, and it wasn't until 1703 that the bodies were able to be collected, buried, and monuments and graves erected (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:10-11). These events are mentioned in the *Ōkago Kirishitan Shūmon Aratame Chō* (大籠切支丹宗門改帳), a contemporaneous text recording the persecutions; see Taira 1979.

If one continues down the gravel track in front of the Church, one will come across a small wooded grove where there is a further martyrdom site called *Saihata Keijō* (祭畑刑場). In 1640, 23 *Kirishitan* were able to escape during their planned execution at *Ueno Keijō*, however, as they attempted to flee they were shot. Now several graves and statues stand at the location. There is another site nearby, a hidden burrow which was used by these *Kirishitan* as they attempted to flee (Takagi, 190).

A final martyrdom site exists in the west of the village (Ue Ōkago – 上大籠), called *Tokizōsawa Keijō* (トキゾー沢刑場). The place name is taken from the words *To* (徒), *Kei* (刑) and *Jō* (場). In 1790, twelve or thirteen people were killed here; eventually their families erected monuments.

It seems that the martyrdoms in Ōkago were mostly confined to crucifixions and beheadings, although as noted on occasion guns were used. This was not necessarily the situation, however, for the rest of Tohoku where a variety of cruel methods were used, including burning, drowning, throwing from cliffs, and forcing to freeze in cold rivers. For a detailed exploration of these persecutions see Kataoka 1979 and Shimizu 1981.

### Methods of Persecution

The majority of sites relating to the persecution in Ōkago are not the sites of martyrdom, which were mostly restricted to *Jizō no Tsuji*, but the sites which aided in making the persecutions possible and 'effective,' in other words the sites which were part of the persecutors' machinery of persecution. One of the most important sites was *Daitenba* (大転場), which is located in the Senmatsu area near the *Yama no Kami*; the Church remains, and also Senmatsu Daihachirō's grave.

The anti-*Kirishitan* persecutions and to some extent even the Tokugawa Shogunate's 'closed country' (Sakoku – 鎖国) edicts aimed to destroy the entirety of Christianity in Japan (Laver 2011). While the offer of monetary rewards for those who handed in *Kirishitan* to the authorities was an important part of the attempt to reach this goal, it was not a method which could be relied upon, especially in remote areas with high numbers of *Kirishitan*. Therefore, other methods were devised in order to discover and locate *Kirishitan* especially after they had gone into hiding. One such method was *fumie* (踏み絵) also known as *ebumi* (絵踏み): suspected *Kirishitan* were made to tread on a Christian image, and hesitation or refusal to do so implied guilt (Miyazaki, 14).

*Daitenba* was the location in Ōkago where *fumie* took place. It was a strategic location with no escape routes and near to the iron manufacturing industry so that the workers there might be tested. Here they built large fences to prevent escape, and led suspects single file to the *fumie* board. Those who failed the test were sent to *Jizō no Tsuji* to be executed. There is now a monument at the location.

Apostasy was a way in which a *Kirishitan* could avoid death, but was also in and of itself an aim of the persecutors, who played on people's fear. The severed heads of the executed were often displayed as a warning to others. Three sites where the heads were buried are marked by signboards or memorials, *Hodoko Kubizuka* (保登子首塚) and *Haseba Kubizuka* (ハセ場首塚) in the West, and *Ue no Sode Kubizuka* (上の袖首塚) in Senmatsu. The heads buried at *Haseba Kubizuka* were buried alongside various written documents, whereas the heads at *Ue no Sode Kubizuka*, were taken from *Jizō no Tsuji* by close family members of the deceased during the night, hidden in their sleeves, and transported to this burial ground. (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai, 2007:11-13). There was also a location where bodies were cremated known as *Kasōba* (火葬場) in the Senmatsu area (13). It was another site I was unable to locate and, therefore, I am unsure as to whether or not a signboard exists. Another site was used to burn written materials and other resources such as rosaries used by the communities (14).

Finally, although there is no memorial site in Ōkago, many victims of the persecution were brutally tortured, until they apostatized or were executed. Various torture techniques existed for interrogating and forcefully apostatizing *Kirishitan*. *Ishidaki* (石抱き) (also known as *sorobanzeme* (算盤

責) and *ishizeme* (石責), was a technique by which the tortured were made to kneel on sharp triangles of wood as 45 kg blocks of stones were placed upon their thighs. *Ebizeme* (海老責め) involved tying prisoners into the shape of shrimps or other uncomfortable positions. Various hanging tortures, including *tsurizeme* (釣責め), where the prisoners were hung from their arms which were tied behind their backs, and variations of this including being hung head first into a darkened pit were also common. Finally, there was torture with boiling water from hot springs. Many other forms of torture also existed. A picture in the Ōkago Kirishitan Museum shows *ishidaki*, a torture similar to *ebizeme*, in which the tortured is tied in an uncomfortable position for long periods, and a person having his head held under water.

### Ōkago's Sempuku Kirishitan

Due to the persecutions many of Ōkago's *Kirishitan* took their faith underground and practiced it in hiding. Francisco Magoemon who had aided in taking the faithful underground continued to give Mass and instruction throughout the persecutions; however he was captured in 1640, confessed to his crimes and was taken to Edo where he was burnt at the stake (Taira, 630). Due to the severity of the persecutions very few *Kirishitan* could survive in hiding. In 1789, there were a recorded 32 *Kirishitan* out of a population of 615 in Ōkago; however by 1837 there were none (Taira, 648).

Nevertheless in my opinion one of the most interesting sites in Ōkago is one related to the *Sempuku* period. Although it is likely that *Yama no Kami* was used for a while as an underground worship site, there was a need for the creation of further sites for the hidden community. One such site remained completely forgotten until it was rediscovered in 1973 (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:14). Ogarasawa Cave (小柄沢洞窟) is a hand-dug cave just over the village and prefectural border into Miyagi Prefecture on the wooded foothills leading away from Ōkago. It is a two-kilometer walk up sometimes overgrown and steep woodland path from the Catholic Church, but it is well signposted.

The cave contains an altar, and is believed to have been built to act as a secret place to conduct Mass. However, following the capture of Magoemon, the cave fell into disregard (according to the signboard adjacent to the cave). Today the altar is adorned with a modern statue of the Virgin Mary, with two candles on the further wall placed in candle holders original to and built into the cave walls. Entry is dangerous and forbidden, and it is only by the luck of flash photography and thirty minutes or so of experimentation that I was able to see that the cave was not just a black entrance into the mountain but contained a pathway, altar, and the aforementioned adorning items. Nevertheless I was unable to capture a clear photograph. During the Great Tohoku Earthquake the entrance collapsed and had to be dug out (conversation with museum staff member, 14 July 2015).

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A publication called *Iwate: Fujisawa no Yokō* shows many other sights associated with the *Sempuku Kirishitan* in Ōkago or nearby, including graves with hidden *Kirishitan* symbols and hidden worship rooms in some of the older homes (Fujisawa Board of Education 1987:134, 141). However, museum staff informed me that these either no longer exist or cannot be viewed by the public.

### Ōkago's Modern-Day Christians and Pilgrims

In 1952 a Catholic Church was opened near the site of *Ueno Keijō*, which was originally run by a Swiss missionary (Fujisawa Bunka Shinkō Kyōkai 2007:14). The church, however, attracted few members, and now only two remain in the village. Furthermore, I was told that the priest may have married one of the villagers and therefore left the position. The church itself has for all intents and purposes closed.

This does not mean that Christians in the village are a rare sight. Although the village is mostly forgotten, a few churches make regular trips to see the museum and peace park. Other individual travelers sometimes appear also. Nevertheless when I visited, I was the only person at the museum for most of the day. The pilgrims I spoke to that day came in order to attempt to understand and remember the history of the church, and it was pleasant to learn that these visitors were from a number of denominations.

If my brief and somewhat simplistic description of the village's history and sites has failed to enthrall the reader, and failed to give you the sense that you must visit this location, then I must repeat that the museum and Peace Park are in and of themselves worth the arduous trip. The museum has one of the best collections of *Kirishitan* artifacts I have come across, including *Kirishitan tsuba* (sword hilts), a great number of *Sempuku Kirishitan* statues and daily items containing hidden symbols, and a board detailing the ban on the religion made in the late Edo period.

Even though I had focused on both the *Kirishitan* in Sendai and the *Kakure Kirishitan* on Ikitsuki in my research, the museum contained items which I had never even read about. Most scholarship refers readers to Maria Kannon (マリア観音), the Buddhist Kannon statues which contain hidden crosses and are representative of Mary found in great numbers in Kyushu. While the museum had several (all from the Sendai area), there were also statues of various other Buddhist deities such as Daikokuten and Ebisu containing hidden crosses. There was also a book containing hidden items for use in worship within its pages. I had never come across such items in my research. The museum therefore seems to hold a key to a *Kirishitan* way of existence that even most scholars have forgotten. I do not, however, wish to spoil the experience for the reader should he or she decide to visit, and have therefore kept this description brief. Some items from the area can also be found at other locations, such as the museum at Nagoya's Eikokuji (栄国寺).

The memorial park behind the museum contains replicas of some of the village's sites, meaning that for those short on time many of the places mentioned in this paper can be viewed there. A small art gallery in the park contains items made by the artist Funakoshi Yasutake. And the park's stations of the cross contain messages from Pope John Paul II, H. Chieslik, Endo Shusaku and others, as well as artwork by Funakoshi Yasutake, Kakehata Minako and Tsuchiya Mizuho.

At the beginning of this article I stated that on the fourth centenary of the Keichō Embassy, we should not forget that this marked the beginning of persecutions in Sendai. But it has become clear to me through visiting Ōkago and through talking to others that the *Kirishitan* history of the area has already been forgotten in both academia and common consciousness. I hope that this article can challenge that state of affairs.

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