Introduction

During the 80-year period starting when the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier and his party arrived in Kagoshima in August of 1549 and propagated their Christian teachings until the early 1630s, it is estimated that a total of 760,000 Japanese converted to Christianity. Followers of Christianity were called “kirishitan” in Japanese from the Portuguese christão. As of January 1614, when the Tokugawa shogunate enacted its prohibition of the religion, kirishitan are estimated to have been 370,000. This corresponds to 2.2% of the estimated population of 17 million of the time (the number of Christians in Japan today is estimated at around 1.1 million with Roman Catholics and Protestants combined, amounting to 0.9% of total population of 127 million). In November 1614, 99 missionaries were expelled from Japan. This was about two-thirds of the total number in the country. The 45 missionaries who stayed behind in hiding engaged in religious instruction of the remaining kirishitan. The small number of missionaries was assisted by brotherhoods and sodalities, which acted in the missionaries’ place to provide care and guidance to the various kirishitan communities in different parts of Japan. During the two and a half centuries of harsh prohibition of Christianity, the confraria (“brotherhood”, translated as “kumi” in Japanese) played a major role in maintaining the faith of the hidden kirishitan. An overview of the state of the kirishitan faith in premmoden Japan will be given in terms of the process of formation of that faith, its actual condition, and the activities of the confraria.

1. Japanese society at the time Christianity was introduced

Around the time that Christianity was communicated to Japan, the country was experiencing a prolonged period of internal war (Sengoku Period). The Ōnin-Bunmei War (1467-1473) was centred around Kyoto and devastated the capital region. A major po-
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itical change then took place in Kyoto and the Kanto Region in 1493, and this is considered to be the beginning of the warring period. In 1536, the Tenbun Hokke disturbance saw 21 major temples of the Hokke School of Buddhism burned to the ground in Kyoto, where all the self-governing populace (machishū) were Hokke followers. Much of the southern quarter (shimogyō) of Kyoto was burned down. Arriving in Kyoto in January 1551, Xavier noted that where there had previously been 180,000 houses, there were now a little more than 100,000. The Muromachi shogunate had already been weakened, and with the Shogun, Ashikaga Yoshiteru, unable even to continue residence in Kyoto, conflict spread from the capital to provincial regions. The period of civil war brought a conspicuous decline in the political and social positions of the nobility and great temples, who were all large estate owners. The lesser lords and samurai in the provinces extended power over the farm population, who formed self-governing villages and often organized “ikki” (rebellious leagues) against the estate owners’ and samurai rule.

This was an era of transition from the declining manorial society of the medieval to the early modern, plainly “feudal” society. In a society of upheaval and tumult, people sought a way to sustain their lives. They sought salvation. As in Europe, Japan’s fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a time of pilgrimage. Towards the end of the period of warring states, there were crowds of people going on pilgrimage to Ise and other shrines in various regions of the country. Buddhist priests were no exception. Many of them went on journeys through the provinces on foot, paying their respects at Shinto shrines, while some changed over to other sects, seeking new ways of living. People of the era had a strong sense of sin, and they believed that sin would not only bring misfortune in their present lives, but retribution would also cause them suffering through eternity. People who committed wrongs were said to fall into hells where they underwent suffering even after death. It was considered inevitable that they would have to fall into hell and endure torment. Even high-ranking priests, if contracted leprosy, were abandoned on the supposition that they would never be free from that illness even after they died.

Xavier and his successor, Father Cosme de Torres, went to Yamaguchi, the “capital city of western Japan”, where they converted Buddhist priests to Christianity (who included those who had studied at the Ashikaga School). The Jesuits, having realized that Christianity and Buddhism had something in common, used Buddhist terminology to explain Christian precepts. Christianity was therefore referred to as “Tenjiku-kyō”, meaning religion from India and beyond, and apparently Japanese people initially did not sense anything incompatible about Christianity, which they viewed as a sect of Bud-
The Jesuit Mission and Confraria de Misericórdia

dhism. Father Balthazar Gago, who arrived in Japan in 1552, observed that “If they [the Japanese] had not had these religious sects of Buddhism, it would have been difficult for them to understand these matters.” However, he stopped using 50 or more Buddhist terms that he thought might invite misunderstanding when used in that way. When Xavier was starting his missionary activity, the term he used for the Christian deity (Deus) was “Dainichi”, from the name of the supreme Buddha of the Shingon School, Dainichi Nyorai (in Sanskrit, *Mahavairocana Tathagata*). After realizing this as a mistake, he returned to using the original word, Deus (“deusu” or “daiusu” in Japanese pronunciation). Deus before long came to be referred to as “tendō”, meaning the heaven. Xavier was bestowed a former Buddhist temple by Ōuchi Yoshitaka, the lord of that domain, and a 1552 document written to Father Cosme de Torres from Yoshinaga, Yoshitaka’s successor, referred to this as Daidōji Temple. A translation of the document sent to Portugal puts it as “*o grande caminho de ceo*” (the great road leading to heaven), or the great temple of tendō, the way of heaven. After the Ōnin War, the philosophy of heaven (“ten”) and the way of heaven (“tendō”), which has its roots in Confucian morality, became pervasive in Japan. The concept of tendō was spread by books of popular tales (*otogisōshi*) to become widely known not only among the warrior leaders and domain lords of that period of internal wars, but also among the populace.

The *Raponichi Jisho* (Latin-Portuguese-Japanese Dictionary) published by the Jesuits in Amakusa in 1595 has as equivalents for Deus the terms “tendō”, “tenshu” (lord of heaven), “tenson” (most honoured of heaven), and “tentei” (heavenly emperor). In the *Nippo Jisho* (Japanese-Portuguese Dictionary) published in 1603, says about tendō that it means “the way of heaven, or in other words, the order and providence of heaven, and we are already accustomed to using this name to refer to Deus.” Similarly, the *Society of Jesus, Japan Annual Report* of 1622 stated that the missionaries had come to Japan to show the Japanese people the way of heaven.

2. Formation of kirishitan faith

Most of the Japanese did not have a clear awareness of the differences between Christianity and Buddhism when they converted to Christianity. Consequently, they formed a powerful attachment to the “kontatsu” (*contas*, or rosary) and “medai” (medals) they were given to replace the “juzu” (prayer beads) that had been their Buddhist implements of faith. The converts persistently asked their priests for these objects. Father Luis Fróis,
who arrived in Japan in 1563, observed that “there are no other people in this world who treat their contas (rosary) as objects of such devotion and significance as the Japanese.” The implements of faith were employed not only for prayer, but also for self-protection. When warriors were heading for battle, they asked for pieces of paper inscribed with verses from the Bible and prayers as well as for the implements of faith, and the common people used these objects to ward off or drive out evil influences in times of disaster or illness, for easy childbirth, and so on. According to a 1578 letter from Goa, the kirishitan were faithful to the missionaries’ teachings, but they were so deeply imbued with Buddhist thought and practices that the missionaries resorted to observance of holy days, funerals, weddings, baptisms, and other such occasions with as much impressive splendour as they could manage. This was the missionaries’ approach to releasing their converts from old customs and practices.

The faith of the kirishitan was of a kind that could practically be considered magical or supernatural and little different from the Shinto and Buddhist faith of medieval times. One wonders, then, how these people understood the Christian faith and how they developed into followers of Christianity. The teachings that Xavier preached in Japan were a “shorter catechism in 29 articles.” The basic prayers were the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria, and the Apostles’ Creed. A book of doctrinal teachings that was adopted subsequently explains these prayers in detail through a dialogue between teacher and student. The lives of the kirishitan followers were strictly regulated by the teachings of the Ten Commandments (Mandamentos). A doctrinal text in dialogue form that was brought in in 1568 was revised and amended to fit the circumstances in Japan. This work was named the “Doctrine for Japan” and was later copied out and widely distributed. In 1591, the “Doctrine for Japan” was printed on a metal type printer brought back by the Tenshō Mission to Europe. This was the Doctrina Cristã, or Christian doctrine in native Japanese script, and the following year a version in roman letters was printed as the Dochiriina Kirishitan. As the number of kirishitan grew, these two works were reprinted in 1600. Since the number of missionaries was so small, the printing of books of doctrine proved of great service in the promulgation of Christianity.

The Bible was not printed, but chapters and verses regarding the Gospels were read out during the mass, and lectures were then given on the subject. Stories from the Old Testament were told and acted out during the mystery plays performed after mass during Easter and Nativity celebrations. As a result, the faith of the kirishitan was basically formed by the 11 chapters of the Dochiriina Kirishitan, or Christian doctrine. The intro-
duction to the doctrinal text explained that the most crucial teaching was that given by Jesus Christ to the Apostles while in this world, which was the true commandments for salvation in the afterlife. The first was to believe in the Christian deity (Deus). The second was to hope for salvation by Deus. The third was to conduct oneself with great caring (go-taisetsu), or in other words with love. Faith, hope, and love make up the basic teaching of Deus, and these are taken to be the truth by which the soul can be saved in the life after death. Regarding the practice of love, meaning charity, the doctrinal text in Chapter 12 (11) sets forth 14 articles on “obra de Misericórdia” (acts of charity or mercy). The introduction to the 1600 revised edition of the Dochiriina Kirishitan explains that “(in the third place) that which one should put into faithful practice is that which corresponds to the good of caring that is called caridade (love or charity).” Caring refers to love or charity. The same chapter contains this further explanation that “in the third place is caridade, which means the goodness of acting with great care toward D (Deus) above all things, and treating neighbours (proximo) also with care as towards D.”

Emphasis is placed on the deity’s love made manifest in the humanity of Christ, in other words on great caring. With regard to great care toward neighbours, believers were called upon to practice the same love for the neighbour that is shown towards Deus. In Xavier’s doctrine, this is explained in terms of seven bodily acts of charity (Article 19) and seven spiritual acts of charity (Article 20).

The faith inculcated in kirishitan by the doctrinal books was made yet richer and deeper by the contribution of a spiritual text known as Contemtus Mundi (Contempt for the World and Worldly Things). The proper title is De Imitatio Christi et contemptu omnium vanitatum mundi (The Imitation of Christ), which became a spiritual pillar in the new faith (Devotio moderna) movement, started in the late fourteenth century in the Netherlands as one of the movements to reform Christianity. In southern Europe, the last part of the book’s title was taken for the title Contemtus Mundi, showing scorn for all worldly glory. Where the old faith showed itself influenced by the speculative and conceptual philosophy of scholasticism, the new faith placed the humanity of Christ as its core and sought to imitate Christ by taking Christ’s human virtues as a model for the believer. Francis of Assisi is said to have been the starting point of this spiritual reform movement. The book contained many biblical quotations and it is said that this work was a favourite among European readers second only to the Bible.

Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, was deeply influenced by this work, and was inspired by the Ejercitario de la vida espiritual (Exercises for the Spiri-
tual Life) by Abbot Cisneros of the Benedictine abbey at the sacred site of Montserrat, based on the *Imitation*, to write his own *Ejercicios Espirituales* (Spiritual Exercises). Anjiro, the man from Kagoshima who became the first Japanese convert to Christianity, went through a four-week discipline in Goa that was based on these exercises. People who joined the Society of Jesus undertook a four-week discipline and period of silent meditation according to the *Ejercicios Espirituales*. The Jesuits who came to Japan brought with them this book and the *Contemtus Mundi*. In 1556, that same work was brought together with the differently titled *Works of Thomas à Kempis* and *Gerson*.

Work on a translation of *Contemtus Mundi* into Japanese was begun early on. A version set in Romanised Japanese was published in 1596, and a version set in native Japanese written language in 1602, in Nagasaki, then again in a woodblock print edition in Kyoto in 1610. The native Japanese written language edition (in 68 chapters) produced for kirishitan was reduced by about one-half from the Romanised Japanese language edition (119 chapters), and was written in plainer language. Members of the warrior class and intellectuals read it avidly, while headmen and leading figures of the village gave readings for kirishitan converts. As of December 1613, a further 1300 copies had been printed.

Martyrdom had already taken place in 1558 in Hirado and then the following year in Hakata. These believers had already been instructed in the readiness for martyrdom early on through Christian hagiography. What the kirishitan learnt about martyrdom was that they should constantly bear in mind the suffering of Jesus, the son of the deity, placed upon a cross, to which they should bear witness as martyrs. In this way they would offer up their lives to Deus, in imitation of Christ. In 1587, Toyotomi Hideyoshi issued an edict on the deportation of the Jesuits. Seeking to accommodate Hideyoshi’s intentions, Ōtomo Yoshimune, the lord of Bungo Province, took action to comply with the order to renounce the religion by killing in 1589 two “kanbō” (carer of kirishitan community) who had been caring for kirishitan in place of deported missionaries.

The Jesuits responded to these dire circumstances by printing a hagiography titled *Sanctos no Gosagyeo no vchi Nuqigaqi* (Excerpts from the Acts of the Saints) in 1591, and in the latter part of that work they placed their principles of martyrdom (“maruchiriyoyo no Kotowari”), which set for the significance of the martyr. The hagiography was composed of 39 biographies of martyrs in Jerusalem and Rome. The translator was a person from the Wakasa area named Paulo Yoho-ken. Formerly a doctor of Chinese medicine in Sakai, he converted to Christianity in Kyoto in 1560. In Sakai, he had treat-
ed Brother Luis de Almeida, a Portuguese of Jewish ancestry who was a licensed surgeon, then journeyed with him to Kyushu and became a catechist. In 1580, Paulo became a Jesuit monk and translated four accounts of martyrdom. His son Vicente Toin also gave up medical practice to join the Jesuits, and he translated 35 accounts of martyrdom.

In February 1597, the martyrdom of 26 Christians, including six Franciscans, took place in Nagasaki. Immediately after this incident, the Jesuit Vice-Provincial Pedro Gomez wrote and printed a work on martyrdom to calm the shaken kirishitan and to make their faith firm. He wrote about the glory of martyrdom, the conditions required for martyrdom, the attitude of martyrdom needed during an era of persecution, and the preparation for that purpose. Two centuries later, during the period 1790-1795, some hidden kirishitan in Urakami were uncovered. Among the Christian documents in their possession confiscated by the magistrate in Nagasaki was a “Recommendation of Martyrdom”, reminiscent of the writings of Father Gomez. The text declares that the church will not perish from persecution, but rather will flourish, and that is because the holy blood of the martyrs is like seeds for the kirishitan community. It declares that holding to the faith to the very end constitutes service to the holy caring (love) and passion (suffering) of Jesus Christ, and that martyrdom itself is the highest service to Deus.

Apart from the above three documents relating to the formation and deepening of the kirishitan converts’ faith, there were also items that became documents of faith. A work titled *Method of Administering Baptism* was published around 1593 (whose alternative title was *Byoja o tasukuru kokoroe* or Knowledge for Saving the Sick). This work was intended for Christians who did not have enough or any priests available, and it gave instruction for kirishitan to administer baptism to the ill, how to administer the last sacrament of anointment to the dying, how to prepare for confession by the ill, and methods for helping them to achieve true contrition. The work *Salvator Mundi* (Saviour of the World), which was printed in 1598, bears the title “*Confessionarum*” inside the front cover. It is a guide to confession that explains the procedure and significance of penance as part of the last sacrament.

The hidden kirishitan in the Goto Islands and the region off the coast (Sotome) of Nagasaki had preserved and passed on the “*Konchirisan no Riyaku*” (Benefits of Contrition) that was a copy dated to in the late fourth month of 1603. Konchirisan (contrição) means contrition, and this work states that it is “the state of true and profound regret.” It is said to have been written and printed by Luis Cerqueira, who became Bishop of Japan.
(officially, the Bishop of Funai) in 1598. It consists of three points of knowledge for generating contrition and one item of prayer (oratio) for that purpose. The purpose of this text was to be read to people who had fallen into sin, when there was no officiant to hear their confession (konpisan or confissão), so that such people would be led by the message in this text to receive the garasa (grace) of Deus to release them from their sin. It was also for people on the verge of death to hear the text read to them and lead them to a final act of contrition. In 1601, there were an estimated 300,000 kirishitan for whom there were no more than 25 priests to serve them, so the majority of kirishitan had virtually no opportunity to receive penance.

3. Establishment and the role of the jihi no kumi and sodalities

In 1558, Father Gaspar Vilela was expelled from Hirado by the lord of the domain Matsura Takanobu. At that time he designated seven influential kirishitan to be “jihiyakusha” (Gifiiyaxua), literally mercy administrators, meaning members or brothers of the Misericórdia society (Irmãos da Misericórdia), and thereby established the jihi no kumi or lay association of mercy. These jihiyakusha saw to the needs of kirishitan at the church every Sunday and took care of burying the dead. The jihi no kumi was also established on Takushima, Ikitsuki, and the west coast of Hirado Island, which were in the domain of Antonio Koteda Yasutsune, a powerful retainer to the Matsura family. The kirishitan in these brotherhoods were guided by four kumi heads (mordomos).

The following year, a Cumi de Misericórdia consisting of 12 members was established at Funai in Bungo by the guidance of Father Torres. This brotherhood was different from the one in Hirado, which was organized for the survival of the kirishitan community. The Funai brotherhood was established for its members to take on the administration and operation of a hospital as well as to provide relief for the poor when the hospital, established in 1557, had a new one in 1559. Another purpose was to allow Brother Almeida, who had been in charge of the expanding medical activities since the start of missionary activity in Kyoto, to devote his time to preaching and teaching.

Following the assassination of Shogun Yoshiteru in 1565, a ban on Christianity (called daiisu harai) was issued by the emperor in Kyoto. Both Father Fróis and Father Vilela were expelled to Sakai. The kirishitan in Kyoto maintained their community of faith with Thoma, a former Buddhist priest from Sakai, as the kumi head for the three years and eight months until Fróis received permission from Oda Nobunaga to return to Kyo-
to. In Takatsuki of the Settsu Province in 1573, Dario Takayama Tomoteru, who had been lord of Takatsuki, relinquished the family headship to his son Ukon and devoted himself to promulgating Christianity. He established a *misericórdia*, of which he made himself leader (“cumioya”), and every year appointed four *kumi* heads (*mordomos*) to provide care and guidance to the membership. Their duties were to convert the heathen, to visit the poor, to bury the dead, to make preparations for feasts, to receive guests, and so on.

The first Portuguese ships entered Nagasaki in 1571, when six city blocks were made for that purpose. Kirishitan who had been expelled from various different provinces gathered there and a *misericórdia* was established in 1583. That same year, the *misericórdia* dispatched some of its members to Macao, where they obtained a flag and commitment for Portuguese people that were in possession of a *misericórdia* there. They operated the *jihi no kumi* according to those commitment. The confraternity was made up of one leader (“kumi oya” or Provedor meaning “provider”) and 100 brother (*irmão*) members. The day celebrating the visitation of the Holy Mother Maria to St. Elizabeth (second day, July) was made a feast day. The members took part in funeral services and Eucharistic processions, and collected alms for the poor, widows, orphans, the ill, and other needy people. In 1585, a *misericórdia* for women was instituted. The section of six new city blocks was called Uchimachi, and the lord of the domain Bartolomeu Ōmura Sumitada donated it to the Society of Jesus in 1580. Uchimachi was confiscated by Hideyoshi in 1587, but the *jihi no kumi* increased in size to 120 members in 1590, and it possessed three medical charities. The next year, the confraternity renovated and operated the San Lazaro leprosarium for Hansen’s disease patients that was located in the suburbs, and in 1603 they built and operated the Santiago Hospital for ordinary, non-Hansen’s patients.

Due to enforcement of the edict on the deportation of Christian missionaries, the Jesuits became unable any longer to maintain the missionary system they had adopted in 1580 based on the three regions of Shimo, Bungo, and Miyako (or Kami). A great majority of missionaries had taken refuge in the Shimo region, in Takaku (Arima) and Ōmura in Hizen Province or in Amakusa, and they discreetly restrained their public activities. The kirishitan in the Bungo and Miyako regions, which were now devoid of missionaries, strengthened their *jihi no kumi* and strove to maintain their faith. Sodalities (*confraria*) and congregations for the purpose of maintaining and strengthening their faith were established in every kirishitan community, and these terms came into frequent
use in place of the name *misericórdia*. The representation of what the kirishitan called Cumi (or *kumi*, as contemporaneously romanised) as *confraria* was seen first in the *Japan Annual Report* of 1592. According to the *Japan Annual Report* of 1594 and 1595, *confrarias* of the Holy Mother of the Immaculate Conception that the kirishitan called *kumi* had been started in many major locations. The formal name for these confraternities was *Confraria de Misericórdia*, and the kirishitan converts, as noted already, referred to them as *kumi*. Groups of this kind named *confraria* were established in the Arima domain and in the villages on the Amakusa Islands during the 1590s. In 1603, a Congregation of the Annunciation (*Congregação de Annunciada*) was established in the Arima seminary composed primarily of Japanese catechists (then referred to as “dōjuku”, meaning fellow residents), and another such *kumi* was also created in Nagasaki. A second Congregation of the Annunciation was formed in Arima next year. This served as a model for kirishitan in general, and the number of people making confession increased rapidly. People of all classes joined the *kumi*, and since the “kirishitan daimyo” Arima Harunobu had been situated as the overall head (the “sō-oya”, meaning “kumi oya”) of all the members of every confraternity, the kirishitan community of Arima grew into one of the most stable, along with that of Nagasaki.

The missionaries treated congregation (*congregação*), mentioned above, and confraternity (*confraria*) as synonymous, and the kirishitan referred to these also as *kumi*. In 1592, there were seven or eight *kumi* congregations (*congregación*) in Kyoto, and every Sunday the kirishitan of each *kumi* gathered at the home of one of their members to pray.

The Franciscan Jerônimo de Jesus returned to Japan after the martyrdom of the 26 Christians in return for having helped arrange visits of Manila trading ships to Japan, which Tokugawa Ieyasu wanted; the Franciscan was granted land for a church in Edo. A church was erected there in May 1599. In 1610, a confraternity referred to as the “Sesutakō” (*Sextaco*; the Japanese kō being a term for a lay-oriented religious organization) was organized at this church by Father Luis Sotelo. The formal name of this organization was Confraternity of the Stigmata of Saint Francis (*Confraternitatis Plagarum Sancti Francisci*). The name Sesuta was from the Portuguese sexta-feira, meaning Friday, and the male members of the confraternity gathered on Fridays. The Sesuta-kō included numerous *kumi* that had 50 members. For each *kumi* there was a *kumi* head, and the leader of the association supervised them all. Sotelo accompanied Hasekura Tsunenaga, the head of the Keicho Embassy to Europe dispatched by Date Masamune. They set sail from Tsukinoura in 1613, and presented their regulations and order of the prayer to Pope Paul
V. In 1620, mission activities in Edo were again being pursued by Father Diego de Francisco, who organized the “Obihimo no kumi” (*Cofradía de Cordón*, or the Confraternity of the Sash). This is known to have had 12 *kumi* for men and four *kumi* for women. The Obihimo no *kumi* in Edo had 800 members.

In 1602, the Dominicans and Augustinians that were taking part in missionary activity in Japan established confraternities in their own churches. The Augustinian Order had initially engaged in mission work in Bungo, but it moved to Nagasaki in 1612, there establishing an “Obi no kumi” (*Cofradía de la Correa*, or Confraternity of the Belt). The Dominican Order obtained the protection of the Shimazu family and moved its centres to Koshikijima and then to Kyōdomari, but they were expelled in 1609 and moved to Nagasaki, where they formed the “Rozario no kumi” (Confraternity of the Rosary). Dramatic growth in the membership of Rozario no *kumi* took place from 1616. The activities of the organization started in Nagasaki and underwent conspicuous expansion in Ōmura and Arima, domains first opened up by the Jesuits. Dominican confraternities also included the Confraternity of the Most Holy Name of God and Jesus (“Iezusu no mina no kumi”, and after the death of the parish priest Francisco Murayama, this was joined with the Confraternity of the Cross (Kurusu no kumi) that he had established in 1615. Many of the members of the Confraternities of the Rosary and of the Holy Name belonged to two *kumi*, and they took the initiative to make the Dominican Order known. They took bold action, and in September 1622, 55 kirishitans were executed in Nagasaki in what is known as the Great Genna Martyrdom. Excluding 21 missionaries, 21 of the remaining 34 martyred were members of the Confraternity of the Rosary.

Koreans who had been brought to Japan as prisoners during Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s war of aggression converted to Christianity, and in 1610 they acted of their own accord to build the San Lorenzo Church in Nagasaki. These converts established a confraternity in this church and with guidance from the Augustinians, they engaged in assistance to Japanese kirishitan who arrived there after being expelled from various parts of the country. In November 1614, eleven churches in the city of Nagasaki were destroyed and even their charitable institutions were closed down. However, four churches including the San Lorenzo Church and others that had charitable institutions attached to them survived until they were destroyed in February 1620.

The Jesuits responded to persecution by reorganizing their confraternities, seeking to strengthen and maintain the faith of their followers. Various confraternities were formed — “Maruchiriyo no kumi” (Confraternity of the Martyrs), “Seifu Igunashio no kumi”
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(Confraternity of the Holy Father Ignatius), “Zesusu no kumi” (Confraternity of Jesus), “Seirei no kumi” (Confraternity of the Holy Spirit), and so on — and in those kirishitan communities where there were no missionaries, kanbō acted as advisers to the kumi, enacting the role of missionaries. In 1618, the Vice-Provincial Jeronimo Rodrigues wrote a memorandum regarding the “Hishōten no Seibo no kumi” (Confraria of Our Lady of the Assumption) that described the actions of the kirishitan in their faith, meaning their acts of charity, the organization of the kumi, the functions performed by their administrators, and so on. The kumi consisted of minors (menores), majors (mayores), and universals (universais), or head kumi, with the minors made up from around 50 people (50 households). The majors were made up from around 10 minors, on a scale of from 500 to 600 people, while the universals were the combination of the majors located within the same district. These confraternities were under a supervisory system from the sō-oya, to the major and then the minor heads. There were also one prefect of charitable works, corresponding to a bursar, one or two overall representatives (“sōdai”) who act as petitioners and messengers, and one or more “jihiyaku” who managed charitable activities.

There are 76 signed documents that the Jesuit Provincial Matheus de Couros collected in 1617 from influential kirishitan in 76 locations in 15 provinces of Japan. According to these documents, the village of Ishimaru at Yufuin in the province of Bungo had a supervisory system with an overall head (sō-oya), major head, and minor head. There were also a donations manager (“hōgayaku” or bursar) and jihiyaku, as well as kanbō who served as advisors (“komon-yaku”). In both village of Ōyano and Kōtsuura in the province of Higo, the three kumi functionaries were the kumi oya, the sodai, and the jihiyaku.

The hidden kirishitan in the Urakami and Sotome districts in Nagasaki guarded their faith under guidance from the three functionaries, the “chōkata” (register official), the “mizukata” (water official), and the “kikiyaku” (listener official). The register official’s register is the church calendar. Among the documents confiscated on the occasion of the first round of interrogations (“ichiban kuzure”) in Urakami is a copy of a calendar for 1634 that had been copied in 1787. This is called Bastian’s calendar, and it was the last calendar compiled by a missionary. In 1633 and 1634, 23 missionaries were executed so that there were no longer any missionaries in the Nagasaki region. The hidden activities of the missionaries largely died out by the end of the 1630s, and the dōjuku catechists who assisted them were also executed. The kanbō who advised the confraternities had also either been martyred or had died out. It was under these circumstances that the
chōkata worked out the days of celebration and the days of fasting by reference to that last calendar noted above. The mizukata carried out baptisms. There was one of these in a *kumi*, and in some locations, the same person was also in charge of the register. The kikiyaku served as assistants to the water official. They gathered at the register officials’ homes on Sunday to hear on which days of the week had things to be avoided, then went to every household to pass on the information. Over time, the kirishitan passed down prayers (“orasho” or *oratio*) such as those in the *Dochiriina Kirishitan* and “Tenchi hajimari no koto”, an account of the creation that could be considered a Bible of Japan created by the hidden Christians themselves. The Karematsu Shrine located at Kurosaki in the Sotome district enshrined Jiwan (São João), the master of the catequista Bastian who passed on the calendar. Through the link with the legend of Bastian, this became a place of pilgrimage for the hidden kirishitan.

In Ikitsuki in Hirado, confraternity functions known as “jiiyaku” (old man official), “goban yaku” (holy official), and “mideshi” (holy disciple) were to be found. The “goban yaku” was given the care of images of Christ and Mary and so on, which were kept as “nando-gami” (deities enshrined in an inner part of the house). Those hidden kirishitan of Shimoshima in Amakusa who had not taken part in the Shimabara and Amakusa rebellions of 1637‒1638 maintained small confraternities called “kogumi” (*companhia*) in which the water officials carried out the calendar duties. They fashioned religious medals out of white pearl oyster shells that used the patterns on the shell interior to depict the Holy Mother Mary. These were treated as objects of veneration. It was in 1805 when they were discovered and identified as kirishitan in the interrogations known as Amakusa kuzure.

4. Conclusion

The Tokugawa shogunate concluded a Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United States in 1858, and the following year Japan opened its ports. Priests from the Paris Foreign Missions Society came to Japan with the French consul, and in 1862 they had a cathedral built in Yokohama. It was in June of that same year that the Vatican responded to Japan’s opening to the world by canonising the 26 holy martyrs. In 1864, the priests from the Foreign Missions Society had a church built at Ōura in Nagasaki honouring the 26 saints, and in February of the following year held a ceremony dedicating a new church building. One month later, kirishitan from Urakami visited the cathedral and met...
with Father Petitjean. This occasion is referred to as the discovery and recovery of the hidden kirishitan. In July 1867, however, the fourth round of Urakami interrogations took place and 68 kirishitan leaders were arrested. Just one person, Takagi Sen’emon, withstood the torture, and the words he spoke to encourage his fellow kirishitan not to abandon their faith still remain:

It is something you cannot do penance for before our Lord (Jesus Christ), Saint Francis Xavier, and the martyrs of Japan…so I urge you, let us endure together with the strength of the Holy Spirit…

Japan’s new Meiji government inherited the kirishitan prohibition edicts declared by the old shogunate, and in 1868 the new government sentenced 114 people to penal exile. The second round of sentences to penal exile were handed down in 1870: in all, 3390 kirishitan were sent off to the charge of 20 daimyo domains. In 1873, survivors numbering 2911 people made their way back to Urakami, with which the “travels” of the Urakami kirishitan were brought to an end. Still, however, the freedom of religion was not legally ensured. In 1889, the Constitution of the Empire of Japan went into force, but it only provided for a conditional religious freedom. It was not until the new Constitution of Japan, promulgated in May 1947 after Japan’s defeat in the Second World War, that the people of Japan were finally guaranteed the freedom of religion as a basic human right. Since Toyotomi Hideyoshi’s 1587 deportation order, it took 360 years for Christians to become for the first time able to freely express their faith and practice religious rites. It is, however, probably overly optimistic to say that Christianophobia imprinted on the minds of the Japanese people throughout the Tokugawa-Meiji past has now completely been wiped out.
Cities in the mainland of Japan.
Villages and cities in Kyushu island, Japan, where many "kirishitan" were found.