

Resettling (1773–)

Migration to the Goto Islands

Kashiragashima Church (The easternmost church in the Goto Islands, located in Shinkamigoto-cho)

Maria Kannon Statue (Found at the Goto Islands, Sotome Museum of History and Folklore collections)

In the late eighteenth century, many people migrated from Sotome to the Goto Islands. Conditions were so severe for farmers in Sotome that, in order to survive, the ruler of the domain ordered each family to kill all but the eldest son. Unable to comply due to their Christian faith, many families moved to the Goto Islands where they were welcomed due to the lack of indigenous laborers.

The peak of this migration was in 1797 when approximately 3,000 people resettled on the Islands. However, life was far from easy there, too. The land was barren, just like in Sotome, and the people did not have what to eat. An old song describes the circumstances that the migrants faced: “Goto seems like paradise, but once you live there it’s hell.”