

## **Hidden Christian Villages Take Shape in the Gotō Islands**

From the 1630s, the prophecies of the Japanese evangelist Bastian spread throughout the Sotome region of Nagasaki. Among the prophecies was this belief: “When seven generations pass, priests will appear and the day will come when you can be open about your faith.” Other ideas that were transmitted orally include the contents of a pamphlet providing guidance on contrition when priests were not available for confessions, and a catechistic book on the Old Testament, called *Concerning the Creation of Heaven and Earth*. These traditions show the symbiotic relationship that developed between Christianity and Japanese culture and how certain beliefs were passed down to later generations.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, peasants from Sotome in the Ōmura domain migrated to the Gotō Islands at the request of the Gotō domain. Since many of these peasants were Hidden Christians, their migration resulted in the text of *Concerning the Creation of Heaven and Earth* also being transmitted to the Gotō Islands. The settlers who clustered in family units to cultivate the cramped hillsides formed Hidden Christian communities throughout the Gotō Islands.

Thanks to the detailed instructions provided by the missionaries when Christianity first reached Japan, the Hidden Christians were well equipped to keep their faith going in a systematic way.

## **CHRONOLOGY**

1797 Migration from Sotome to the remote islands gets underway.