

## Sotome Hidden Christian Culture Museum

This single-room museum opened in 2018 as part of Nagasaki's successful push to win World Heritage status for its Hidden Christian sites. It stands at the foot of the hill where Karematsu Shrine and the Prayer Rock are located. Karematsu Shrine was built on the gravesite of San Juan, a foreign missionary who was the mentor of Japanese evangelist Bastian. Bastian is famous for compiling the 1634 Church Calendar, which marked the liturgical year for Japan's Hidden Christian community throughout its two and a half centuries of persecution. The museum has a number of Bastian calendars from the early twentieth century. Traditionally, the local religious leader, or *chokata*, would transcribe his own copy when he assumed responsibility for his community.

There are two groups of objects on display. There are artifacts from the coming of Christianity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including reliquaries marked with the Jesuit symbol; Salvator Mundi medals; and a bronze Kannon which the locals worshipped in lieu of the Virgin Mary. There are also items from the late nineteenth century, when the French priests returned to Nagasaki, "rediscovered" the Christian community, and started distributing rosaries and medals to the faithful. Since Christianity was to remain forbidden for another eight years after the Discovery of the Hidden Christians in 1865, the faithful continued their practice of concealing these religious items in hollowed-out lengths of bamboo known as *takezutsu*, some of which are on display.