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### **Amanohashidate, the Bridge of History and Cultures**

Every year thousands of Japanese tourists flock to Amanohashidate – literally translated as a “bridge built by heaven” –, a sandbar located in Kyoto Prefecture. The scenic view is designated as one of the three best sightseeing spots in the country and as such, it attracts not only local but also international attention. Furthermore, the stunning scenery has inspired Utagawa Hiroshige, the 19th-century the great master of the tradition to depict the area in an *ukiyo-e* in 1853.

The bridge connects the two sides of Miyazu Bay which is rich in culinary offerings and historical sites. Besides the various Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, the area boasts of two prestigious *kakure kirishitan* – “hidden Christian” – locations: the hiding place of the samurai noblewoman Hosokawa Grazia Tama in Kyotango city’s Yasakacho Sugawa district during the religious persecution in the 16th century; and the Miyazu Catholic church, which is the second oldest surviving of such a building in Japan, erected in 1896 by the French Father Louis Relave.

This presentation is going to address the conditions in which the hidden Christians lived in the Amanohashidate area and the roles the bridge played in local social dynamics at the beginning of the *sakoku* – “closed country” – period which lasted for 250 years. Moreover, the arrival of the *Missions Etrangères de Paris* at the outset of the Meiji Restoration and the renaissance of Christianity heralded a different era that allowed for fresh cultural interactions and ideas to flourish in the bay.