



(Revised from the Summary of the Report of the Surveys of the Graveyard of CHIJIWA Miguel and his wife in Ikiriki Village, 2024)

The graveyard is located in the middle of a narrow flat-arranged ground at the hillside overlooking Ohmura Bay. There stands a huge gravestone (h:2.5m×w:1.2m) in the back of this yard. In front of this monument lay 2 graves which center lines stretched in parallel from east to west. The northern one named Grave 1 (l:4m×w:4m) had a wooden storage box recycled as a coffin. In it, we found a body of an adult woman crouching on her knees and laid on her side. Around her chest, we unearthed a glass fragment and some glass beads. We presumed that these were the ornaments for a Christian item. From the other one named Grave 2 (l:2.5m×w:1.5m), we unearthed a body of an adult man in a wooden coffin. He also had been buried in the same way as the woman mentioned above. On the surface of graves, stones were spread over 4.8m wide from south to north and 2.1m wide from east to west. We regard this site as a rare case to show us how the members of an upper classed samurai family had been buried at that time.

CHIIJWA Miguel had been selected as one of 4 boys sent to Europe as the proxies of the Christian Daimyos (lords) of Kyushu District at that time for the purpose of giving an audience to the Pope. Miguel had been believed to throw away his Christian faith after getting back to Japan. But the surveys shows that he had kept his faith through his life, although he had left the Society of Jesus.

The surveys gave us valuable information about the graves in the earliest Edo Period. Moreover, we believe that it will give a huge impact on the history of Japanese Christian in the earliest Edo Period. We declare proudly these surveys as a great achievement in the history of Japanese archaeology, for many ordinary people supported the surveys without any help from any public institution.

- Representative: ASADA Masahiko
- Vice representatives: IDE Norimitsu, MACHIDA Yoshihiro
- Leader of the surveys: OHISHI Kazuhisa
- PIC for excavations :TANAKI Yusuke
- Secretary g eneral: WATANABE Kyosuke
- PIC for accounting KITAJIMA Michiko
- Advisors :IKEBE Shinichiro, KATO Shigetaka, TOMONAGA Masao, MITSUTA Akimasa
- Senior advisor : ICHIRIKI Akiko
- Excavation outsourcings entrusted by Orient ING Co., Ltd.
- PR supporting services entrusted by General Incorporated Association Plus ING (Representative: NAKAJIMA Yasuhito)

■Chairman: TANIGAWA Akio ■Vice Chairman: KUDAMATSU Kazunori
■Members: ASANO Hitomi, KOBAYASHI Yoshitaka, MIYAZAKI Kentaro, YAMADA Jun

■ The English Version Published in JAPAN on the 31 July 2025, with the cooperation from the "Council of the 8 Leaders of the Areas Related to the Tensho Embassy YUKARINOCHI"
 ■ Published by 'Project for the Surveys of the Graveyard of CHUJUIWA Miguel and his Wife in Ikiriki Village' in Nagasaki Pref. JAPAN (<https://www.facebook.com/migelpjproject>)
 ■ Edited by Center for Survey and Research of Local Culture (Nonprofit Organization)
 ■ Photos taken by Ito Photo
 ■ Designed by Yamamoto Shoin Graphics (Representative: YAMAMOTO Zombi)

On the 21st of October, NAKAURA Julião was tortured to martyrdom in Nagasaki.



Located in Yamagawauchi, Tarami-cho, Isahaya City, Nagasaki Pref., JAPAN
Access : Take JR Nagasaki Main Line to Ohkusa Station, then take Nagasaki Prefectural Local Bus to Shimokawauchi Bus-stop. 10 minutes walk to south from the bus-stop

Project for the Surveys of the Graveyard of CHIJIWA Miguel in Nagasaki Pref., JAPAN

Photo: Statue of CHIJIWA Miguel standing in front of Chijiwa Branch of Unzenn City Office



Discovery and Surveys of the Graveyard of CHIJIWA Miguel and His Wife in Ikiriki Village Nagasaki Pref., JAPAN

Tensho Embassy and CHIJIWA Miguel

CHIJIWA Miguel was one of the 4 boys joined in Tensho Embassy, which is said to be sent to Europe by the Christian Daimyos (lords) of Kyushu District in 1582 for the purpose of giving an audience to the Pope. Miguel was a cousin of ARIMA Harunobu the Christian Daimyo (lord), a nephew of OHMURA Sumitada who was the first Christian Daimyo in Japan. Miguel joined the Society of Jesus after his journey to Europe, but left it about 10 years after. This fact brought him dishonor that he had thrown away his Christian faith. After leaving the Society of Jesus, he served OHMURA Yoshiaki the Christian Daimyo of Ohmura Domain, and then ARIMA Harunobu of Hinoe Domain. He was said to move to Nagasaki after he resigned to serve Harunobu, but no one was sure where he lived nor when he died.

Discovery of the Graveyard of CHIJIWA Miguel and his Wife

At the middle of the hillside full of tangerine orchards in Yamagawa-uchi area of Tarami-cho, Isahaya City, stands a huge gravestone made of a natural rock. The inscription on the front of this stone shows two posthumous Buddhist names and the dates when they died; one died on the 19th of January in A.D.1633, and the other died 2 days later. The inscription on the back shows the name 'CHIJIWA Genbanojo, the fourth son of CHIJIWA Miguel. The graveyard belongs to the ASADAs, the clan that had served Ohmura Domain as a chief councilor in charge of his master's domain. A daughter of CHIJIWA Genbanojo married to a member of the ASADAs. One of the old documents owned

by the ASADAs mentioned about the graveyard. In 2003, all the information mentioned above into consideration, OHISHI Kazuhisa, the leader of the surveys, concluded that the ones buried in this graveyard were CHIJIWA Miguel and his wife.

The 1st Survey (in September 2014) and the 2nd (in September 2016)

To examine what the graveyard was like when being constructed, the 1st and the 2nd surveys were carried out. These surveys showed us the fact that the gravestone was moved from the original position when its basement (2.8m long sides) was arranged in the early Meiji Era. Nevertheless, the research using the ground-penetrating radar suggested there might be some space for the buried under this basement.

The 3rd Survey (in August-September 2017)

We excavated under the basement of the gravestone to find 2 graves: In the northern one (Grave 1), we found a body of an adult woman with a glass fragment and some glass beads around her chest in a wooden storage box recycled as a coffin. And we made it sure that there existed another one (Grave 2) under the eastern part of the basement.

The 4th d Survey (in August-September 2021)

We excavated Grave 2 and unearthed a body of an adult man. We could determine the place where the gravestone originally stood. The 4th survey gave us the information about the process of the construction of the graveyard and its structure.



Graveyard of CHIJIWA Miguel and his wife in Ikiriki Village (under a white tarp the bottom left) and Ohmura Bay viewing from south



Location of the gravestone before the 4th excavation



Excavation of the 4th survey



Lid-stones covered over Grave 1



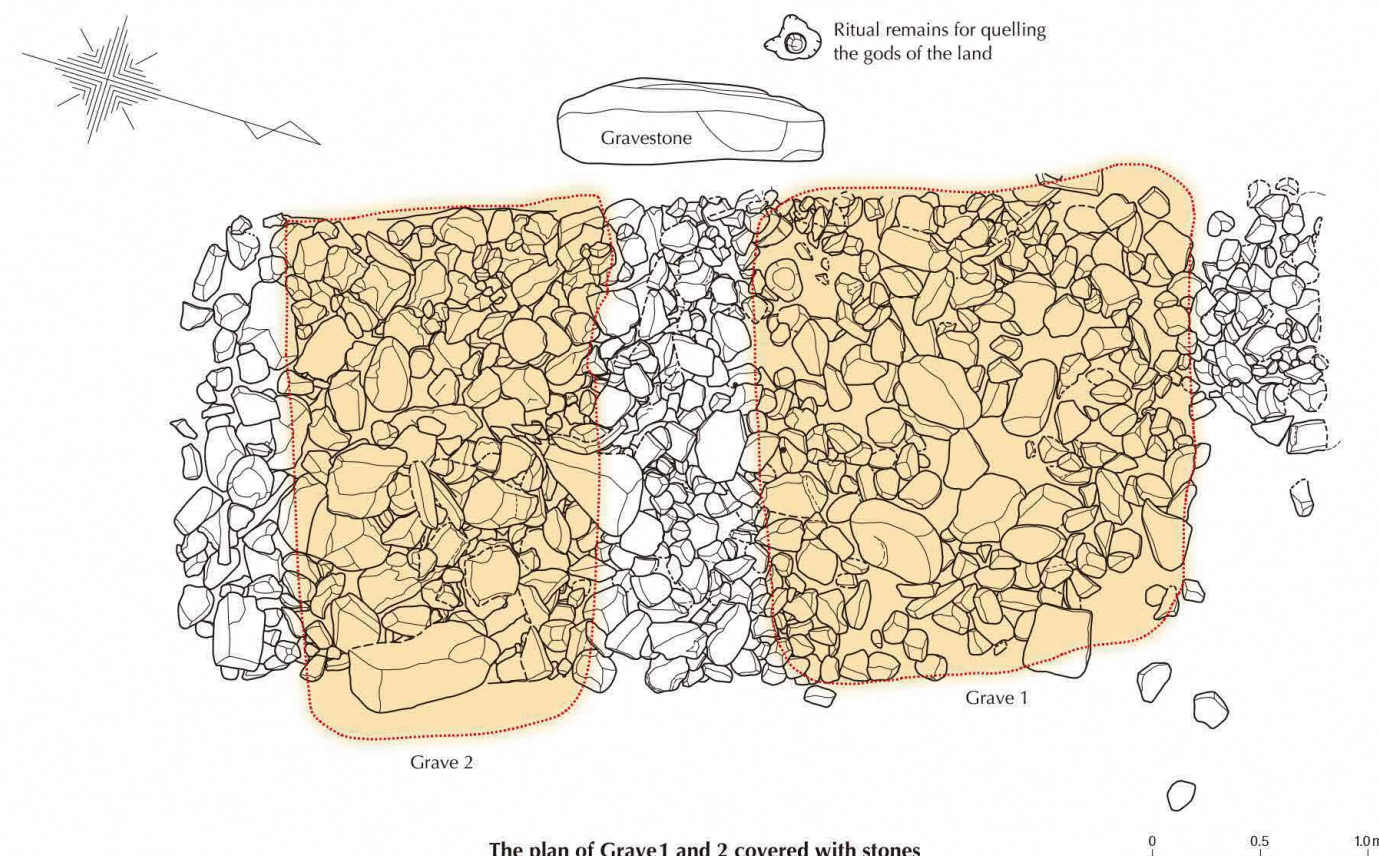
Grave 1 after removing some lid-stones



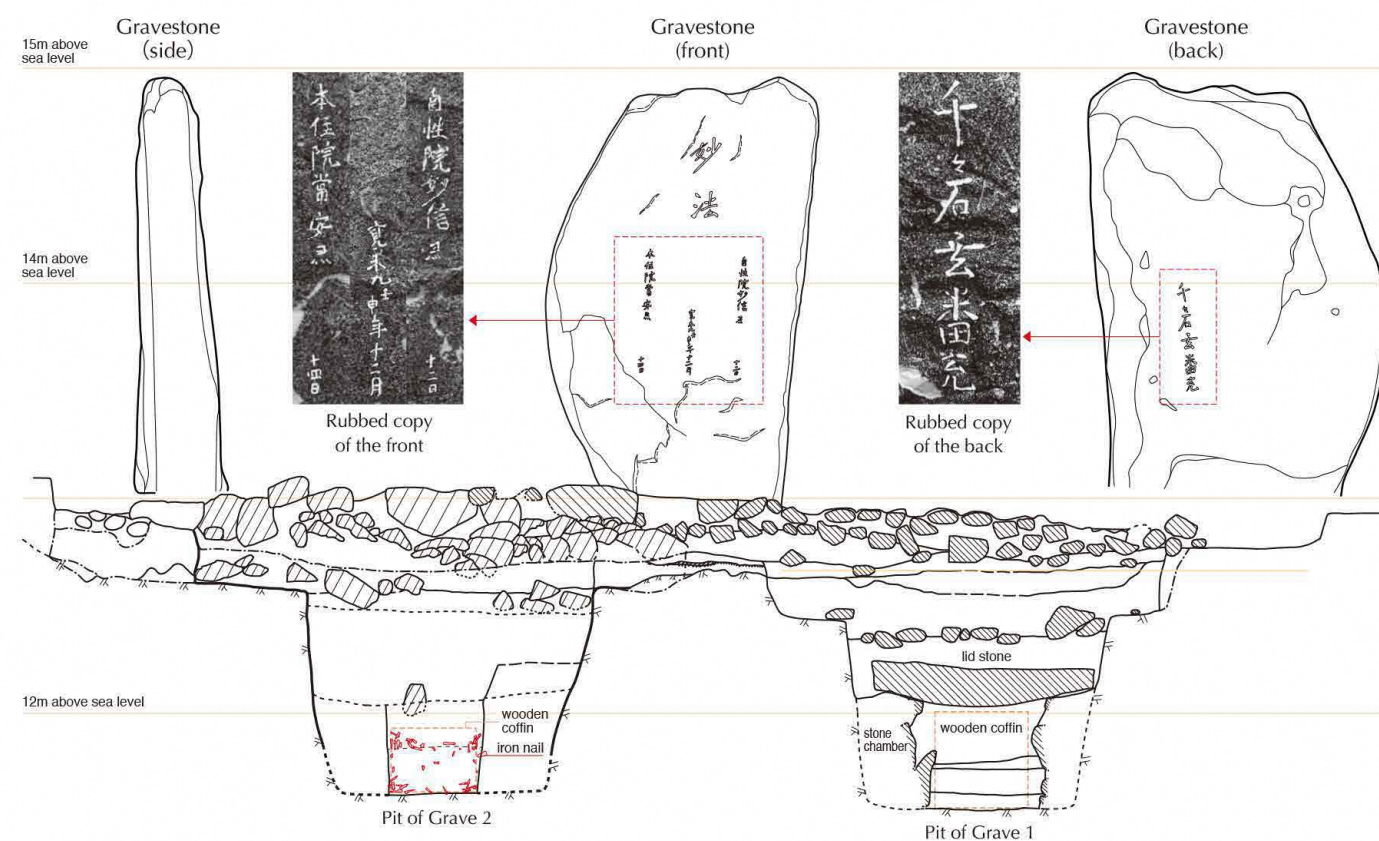
Pit of Grave 2



Remains of Graveyard of CHIJIWA Miguel and his Wife in Ikiriki Village



The plan of Grave 1 and 2 covered with stones



Gravestone and the cross-section of the graves (synthesized original position)

0 0.5 1.0m

Construction of the Gravestone and the Graveyard

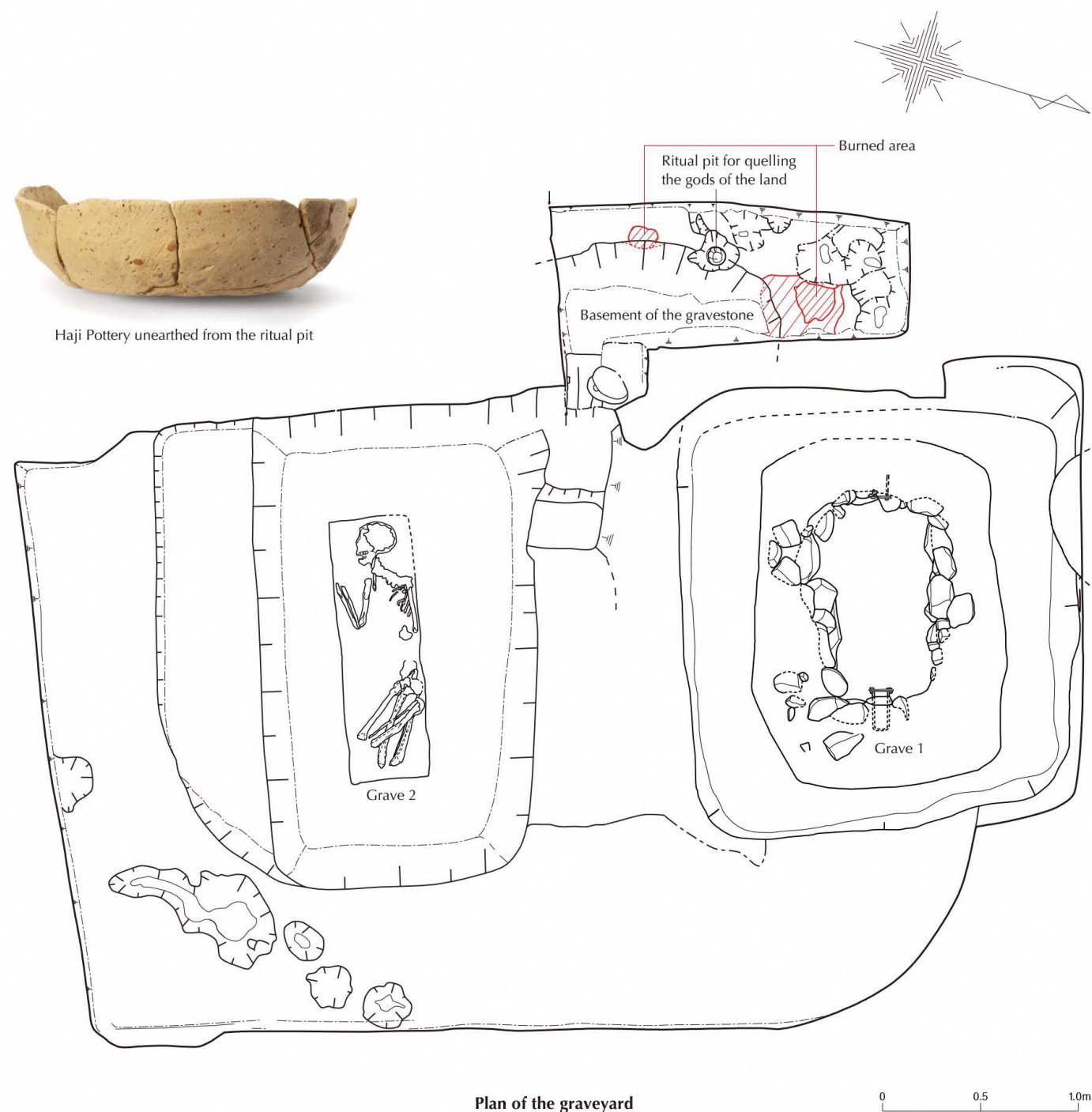
Construction of the Gravestone Before the Funeral

We unearthed an oval pit (l. 1.1m x w. 0.8m x d. 0.3m) at the northern part of Grave 1 and 2. We concluded this was an original basement of the gravestone because its scale was almost the same as the bottom of the stone. Close to this pit, we found a smaller pit in which a shallow bowl of Haji pottery lay upside down. A round pebble (9cm x 2.5cm) was set under this bowl. We presumed it was related with the ritual for quelling the gods of the land. Near around this pit we also found 2 area which ground had been burnt. We assumed that some ritual had been carried out there according with the construction.

It is clear that the gravestone was built before the funeral, for the layer including pebbles which had been formed for building this stone was partly cut when the 2 graves were dug.

Area of Gathered Stones

The surface of Grave 1 and 2 was covered with andesitic stones of fist-sized to head-sized, roughly stacked about 0.3m high. These stones were spread over a rectangular-shaped area of 4.8m wide from south to north and 2.1m wide from east to west. The burial pits of Grave 1 and 2 were dug with their center line set parallel from each other. We concluded that these 2 graves had been constructed at the same time



Haji Pottery unearthed from the ritual pit

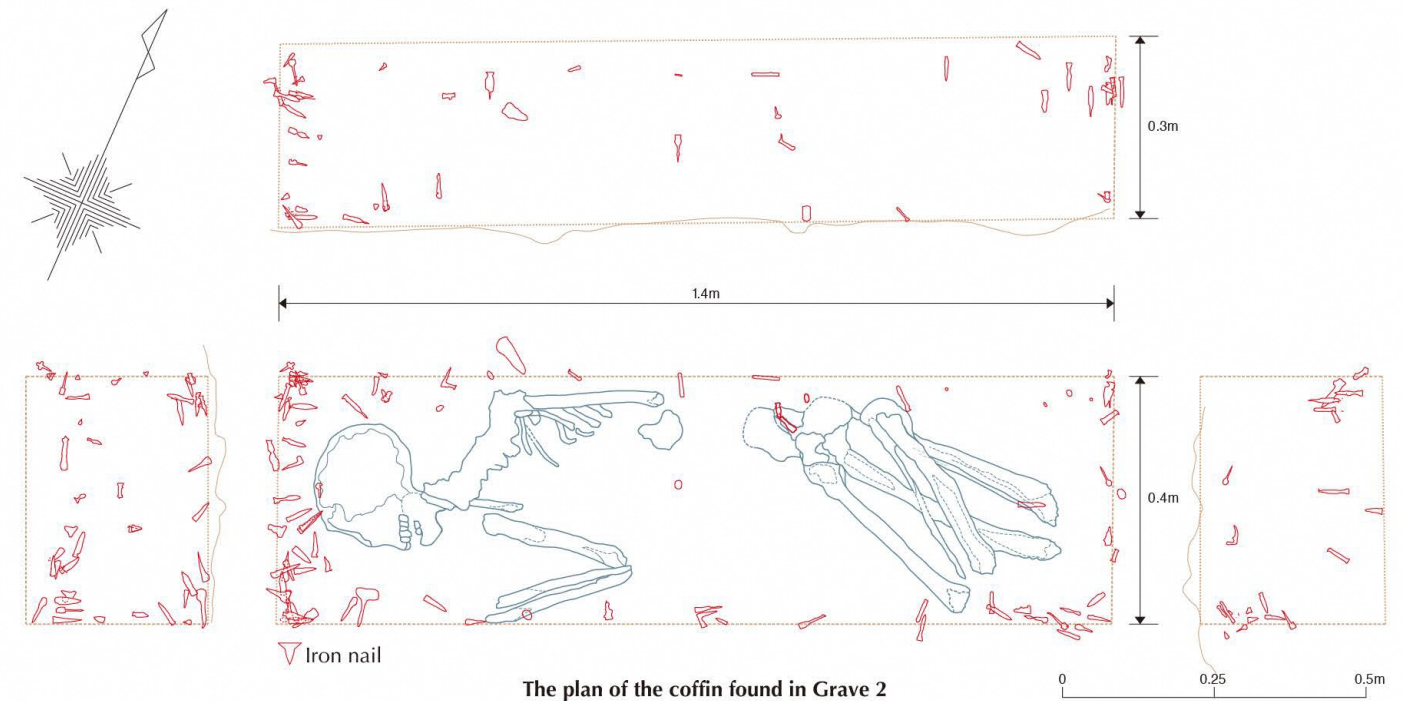
Who was Buried in Grave2?

Excavation of Grave 2

The pit of Grave 2 was 2.5m wide from east to west, 1.3m wide from south to north and 1.0m in depth. We unearthed a wooden coffin (l. 1.4 m x w. 0.4m x d. 0.3m) in this pit. Almost 100 iron nails were used for the coffin. These nails were especially concentrated at the sideboard near the skull.

Who was Buried in the Grave 2 ?

Quite many bones were left in the coffin. Examining the bones, we concluded that the buried body was an adult man. He had been laid as his head to west, with his arms bent, and laid on his side crouching tightly on his knees.



Layer of Grave 2



Upper body of the buried



Lower body of the buried



Whole body of the buried



Iron nails

Who was Buried in Grave 1?

The Excavation of Grave 1

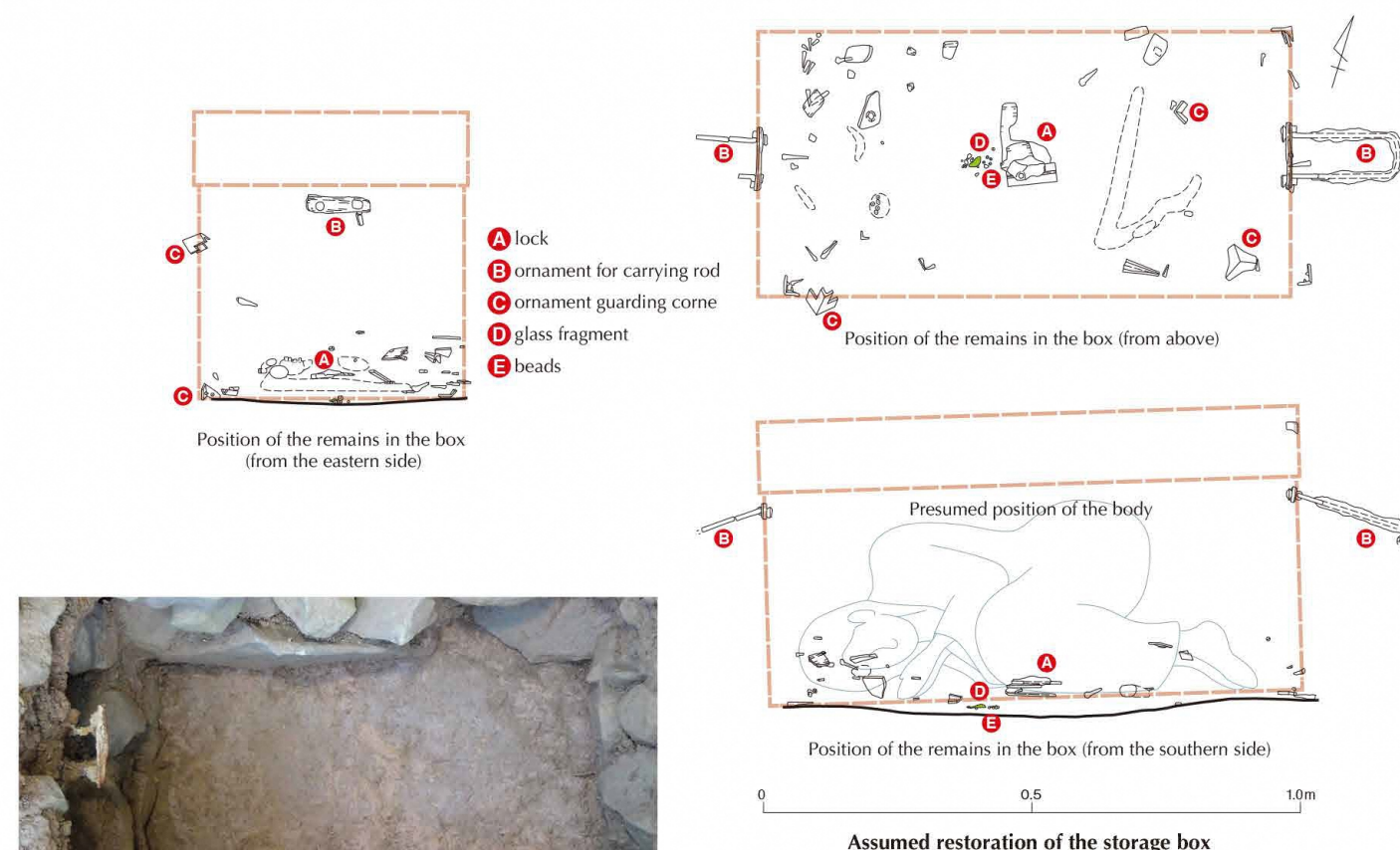
The upper part of the burial pit was 2m long sides and 0.4m in depth. The lower part was 1.6m wide from east to west and 1.2m wide from south to north, and 0.8m in depth. In this pit, we unearthed a wooden storage box (l. 1.0m × w. 0.5m × h. 0.5m) recycled as a coffin. Under this coffin spread were the stones of fist-sized to head-sized. 3 huge flat lid-stones were set beneath the coffin. These lid-stones were neatly covered with pebbles and sediment.

The Storage Box recycled as a coffin

In Grave 2, we unearthed a lock, hinges, nails and other iron ornaments attached to the storage box recycled as a coffin in situ. This box was locked and we could not find a key. It means that they buried the box after locking the dead in it.

Who was Buried in Grave 1?

The bones and teeth found in the coffin suggested us that the buried was an adult woman. The body was left in the box just in the same way as the one found in Grave 2: her head to west, with her arms bent and laid on her side crouching tightly on her knees. We unearthed 59 glass beads, a glass fragment and a piece of cloth around her chest, which might form a Christian item. We determined this woman as a wife of Miguel.



What We can See from our Surveys

The Ornaments for Christian Items Unearthed from Grave 1

Unearthed glass fragment (l. 27mm × w. 15mm × t. 1.5mm) is an alkaline one, originally had an oval shape. Its surface discolored from dirt. We assume that this glass ornament was fringed with the cloth found close to it.

Unearthed glass beads can be classified to 3 clusters based on the size of diameter: the ones which diameter is about 5mm are white or

blue colored, which diameter is about 4mm are navy or black colored and which diameter is under 3mm are amber colored. Most of them are alkaline ones although there are some leaden ones.

We presume that the fragment with cloth and the beads mentioned above form a Christian item hanging around the neck of the buried woman.



The Whole Image of 'Graveyard of CHIJIWA Miguel and his Wife in Ikiriki Village'

Our 4th survey gave us the whole image of 'Graveyard of CHIJIWA Miguel and his Wife in Ikiriki Village'

Before the construction of the graveyard, they cut and arranged the ground and carried out some rituals for quelling the gods of the land. The gravestone was set at the back of the graveyard at the foot of a mountain. Then they dug 2 graves and covered their surface with stones in a rectangle shape. We assume they intended to make the stacked stones as a landmark.

In general, a gravestone is built after a funeral. The outstanding characteristics of this graveyard is to set the gravestone and to carry out the funeral at once, as if they determined the area for graveyard based on the position of both the gravestone and the graves.

The 2 graves were set in parallel and did not cut each other when constructed, and the area of gathered stones were formed beneath them

at once. These facts suggested us that the 2 graves had been constructed almost at the same time. According to the inscriptions on the gravestone, Miguel died only 2 days later when his wife had passed away. It is likely that their funerals and burials were carried out at once.

The excavations of the graveyard proved the inscriptions on the gravestone told us the fact: the buried man and the woman were Miguel and his wife.

Miguel's wife were buried with a Christian item around her chest, locked in a storage box recycled as a coffin. The item showed her Christian faith although she had been thought to throw it away. There were no possessions accompanied with Miguel. But in general, it is quite rare to find possessions from a grave of a Christian. Miguel was buried in the exactly same way with his wife at the same time, so it is very likely that he also had kept the same faith as his wife's.