

Outside Tokyo

Nagasaki: International "Old Japan"

A three-day weekend is staring you in the face, challenging you to travel someplace new and different, to a city steeped in old traditions, even exotica: the kind of place answering to some of the images Japan used to overflow with. Most people, Japanese included, would quickly pick Kyoto to meet the call, never minding its sleek subways, congested traffic, and smug cosmopolitan air. Practically no one would even consider Nagasaki as a contender. After all, hasn't it been open to the usurping tendencies of the West for the last three centuries, not to mention being completely devastated by the atomic bomb?

Luckily, for both the curious traveler as well as for the overall cultural gestalt of this country, both assumptions are only partially correct. What substantial character and charm there is to Nagasaki, and what makes it worth a visit despite its distance from the major business centers, lies just behind these stereotyped preconceptions.

It has a lot to do with geography. The isolation of Nagasaki at the extreme western tip of Japan allowed it a unique role for several hundred years as the main free port of a mostly sequestered nation. It was through the artificial-island trading community of Dejima (a small-scale reconstruction can be found near the Tsuki-machi streetcar stop) that Japan's international commerce with the West first began. But in addition to commodities (which included firearms), a steady flow of medical knowledge and religion were also channeled into the country, all having a gradual but very real effect on the course of Japanese history. As the trading restrictions were slowly lifted over the years, the foreign communities grew into prosperous and well-established neighborhoods. What you find today is a decidedly European feel to certain areas: a combination of nineteenth-century colonial-style houses, Catholic churches, convents, and flagstone streets. To the millions of Japanese who visit every year, the city's uniqueness lies solely in these well-preserved and stately artifacts.

But there is also a considerable Chinese influence, one which has found its way into the local architecture, cuisine and culture. The O-Kunchi festival in the first week of October has dragon dances, fireworks, and distinctly Chinese costumes even though it is a function of the city's main Shinto shrine. Anyone with an interest in Buddhism knows that it found its way to Japan via China and Korea. In Nagasaki, you can see temples free of Japanese adaptation—Saikoji and Fukoji, to name two, look as if they had been picked up and trans-

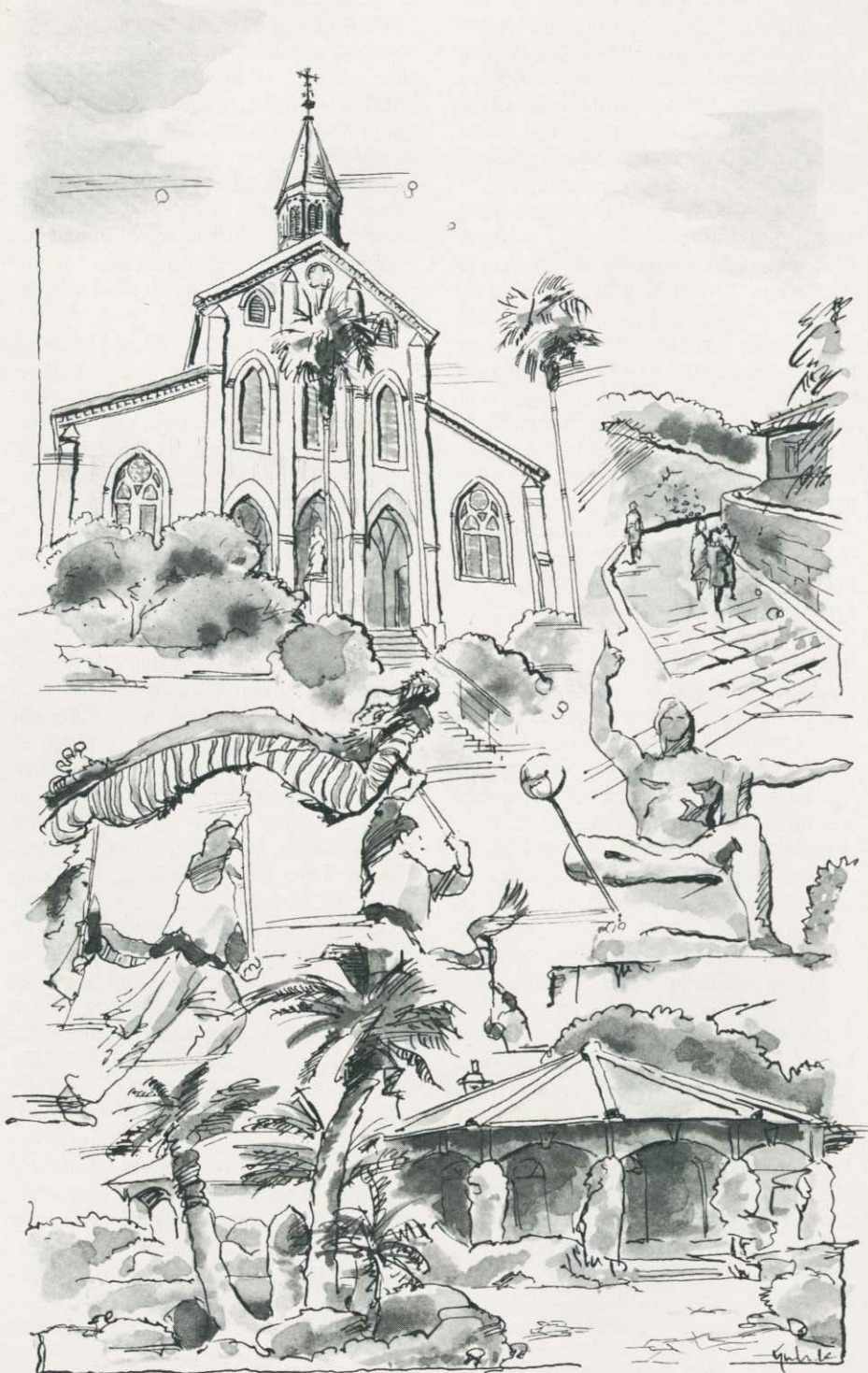
ported here from the Chinese countryside. Ochre-colored edifices, lofty ceilings, stone floors (instead of *tatami*), even one (Koshi-byo) whose roof swarms with gaudy ceramic flora and fauna, all call out to the old country with authentic voices.

These European and Chinese elements of the city, its main selling points (in addition to the Atomic Bomb Artifacts Museum and Peace Park), are, of course, worth seeing. But there is another aspect which needs mentioning, one your travel agent and guidebook are

both likely to overlook. You still want that three-day weekend to reward you with something more than mere sightseeing.

Time stopped

The images and activities we usually find resigned to pictorial histories or overtouristed temple towns still exist in Nagasaki as authentic and vital parts of everyday life. Because the geography of the local terrain—mountains slicing into the harbor at sharp angles—has imposed a severe shortage of habitable land,



many neighborhoods were forced to creep up the sides of these mountains. (Thanks to their shield, the older southern part of the city escaped the obliteration of the north when the bomb fell in 1945. Hiroshima, located on a wide plain, had no such protection.) The laissez-faire attitude of city planners, if ever there were any, has, in combination with the slopes, created a density but also an intricacy of human habitation unmatched anywhere else in Japan. (The only exception is Tera-machi/Templetown, where 14 temples line one street. On the slope above it, shaded by aged camphor trees, sprawls one of the largest and oldest cemeteries in all the nation.)

Nearly half of these neighborhoods remain forever inaccessible to cars and motorcycles; jumbles of houses and lives woven together by little lanes and stairways whisk one away from the Japan of Tskuba and Shinjuku with their surprises. The rhythm of life is slower-paced and quieter, the finding of small shops, little shrines, and secret gardens more pleasing than when dogged by taxis or tour groups. Even the panoramas of the harbor and city seem more satisfying than if you had been programmed to expect them according to the gospel of the guidebook. You need only orient yourself by keeping a mountain or two in mind, then proceed to become happily lost, drifting in and out of the 20th century as these old Japanese and Chinese neighborhoods lure you on.

A leisurely ten-minute stroll from Glover's Mansion, the house of an English trader steeped in the "Madame Butterfly" myth, would take you, in the course of a minute, past a Catholic church with reportedly the finest stained glass in the Orient, a Buddhist temple and, nestled beside it, a Shinto shrine from whose steps a fine view of the Higashi Yamate area awaits. Religious needs disposed of, saunter along the hillside lanes toward the trees of the foreigners' cemetery at Kawakami, then back to the bustling Oura street market, the nearby Chinese temple/museum of Koshi-byo with its fantastic roof, and last, return to the streetcar line at Ishibashi which will carry you to the city center.

Another walk that captures the essence of Nagasaki's old-world charm is along the Tera-machi street beginning at the temple of Kodaiji and heading toward Tamaya department store to the north. Not only will you enjoy significant and lovely temples (Fukoji being the Chinese temple where early Christians were taken to worship after renouncing their faith) and quiet neighborhoods, a brisk, five-minute uphill climb will grant you an excursion into the shadows and lichens of the old cemetery. And, who knows, if you go at dusk perhaps you'll meet one of the more illustrious ghosts as well.

Real-life open-air museum

A suitable ending (or beginning for that matter) to your non-touristy approach to Nagasaki would be a visit to Matsunomori Shrine, a five-minute walk from the larger Suwa Shrine. Here, shaded by a magnificent camphor tree, are eighteenth-century wood carvings depict-

ing local craftsmen making paper, confections, and musical instruments, to name a few—the very activities so easy to imagine taking place in any of the neighborhoods you've walked through. The key to the success of these walks lies in keeping the name of your destination at hand so you can ask directions or point to it on your map (not the one from the tourist office, please).

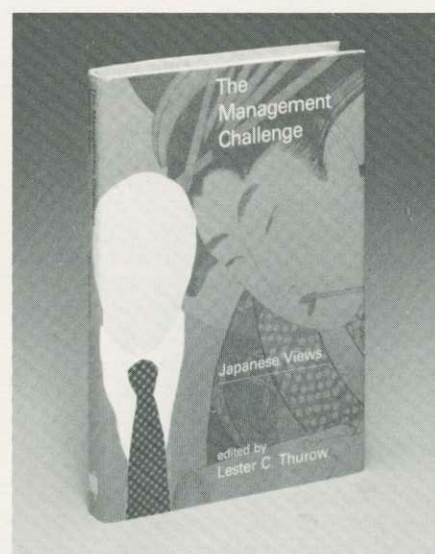
Should you have more than a weekend to spend in the area, a number of side trips present interesting possibilities. As well as being scenic wonders, the steaming fissures of Unzen hot springs (just below the still-active volcano) and the old castle town of Shimabara both figure prominently in the seventeenth-century persecution and elimination of the local Catholics by the Tokugawa shogunate. If you lack the time to make the two-and-a-half hour trip to Unzen, you can still get a taste of former times (not to mention some excellent sushi) by taking a 30-minute bus ride past bamboo, loquat, and tangerine groves to the bustling fishing village of Mogi. Ignore the new bank and city hall near the town's only traffic light and the rest of the village becomes a turn-of-the-century open-air museum.

There is one final meeting to take place before you leave, one that, like many memorable rendezvous, must happen at night. Only a handful of the world's cities can boast of their night views as being truly splendid—and Nagasaki is one. From Mt. Inasa's ropeway, Kazegashira Park (above the cemetery), or the sky lounges of Hotel Nagasaki or Yataro Inn, you simply must gain altitude to see the "upturned jewelbox of lights" spilling over the slopes around the harbor. Only then can you gain privileged membership into the small club of visitors going beyond the tourist sights to savor a bit of the elusive soul of a city. Aged with tradition and history and seasoned with several cultures, few cities retain such exotic spirits, unwarped by modern life, as does Nagasaki.

John Nelson

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divided roughly into three categories. The first consists of attempts by Westerners and Japanese to analyze and explain the nuts and bolts of Japan's remarkable post-World War II recovery, and emergence as an economic powerhouse. A second type of work attempts to explain various motivations for why the Japanese people seemingly have been more successful managers than others.

A third group of authors tends to borrow bits and pieces of the above two in order to tell Americans, Europeans, Southeast Asians and, presumably in the not too distant future, the Chinese and Russians, what's wrong with their own economies, industries or societies.

Japan's success, and the presumed reasons for it, are held up as a rallying cry for change and fine tuning at home. Books of this sort are extremely popular among Japanese businessmen (the Japanese version of Ezra Vogel's *Japan As No.1* was a bestseller), who presumably take a certain amount of pride in the comparisons.

The Management Challenge, Japanese Views, a lively collection of 12 essays written by prominent Japanese scholars, economists, and businessmen, manages to some degree to fit all three of the above categories. The Japanese writers provide the analysis and theories; the editor of the book, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Professor Lester C. Thurow, exploits the essays as a vehicle for advocating his own somewhat fuzzy idea of "Reblending the American Economic Mixture."

Thurow's introduction tells the (American) readers that it is necessary to take a lesson from Japanese industry and to disassemble Japan, as if they were examining a competitor's metaphysical car. They can then pick up and modify what ideas can be learned, and then try to make a better American model. The value of this book is that the disassembly is done by many of the same people who helped build the Japanese "car" in the first place.

The essays overlap at times, but as a collection provide a balance of sound analysis and, for the most part, readable interpretations.

One is offered a clear assessment by Dr.

Bookshelf

The Management Challenge Japanese Views

Edited by Lester C. Thurow
Published by the MIT Press
1985, Massachusetts
237 pages; \$14.95

Books and articles written about how Japan manages its economy—and how Japanese businesses manage themselves—can be