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Consuming rural places and heritage tourism

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The expectation that local economies will positively benefit because of a World Heritage designation is usually high, with some believing that it will lead to local revitalization through the promotion of tourism. Nowadays politics surrounding World Heritage designations has resulted in the important challenge of conserving and using cultural landscapes such as rural space. This paper examines the World Heritage registration movement of the Nagasaki Church Group and Christian Related Cultural Assets as a case study and the meaning of and problems that local faith-related heritages in rural areas and their cultural landscapes can expect, including the attention they will be exposed to as a cultural heritage site. In this presentation, I focused on the role of three main actors, World Heritage Association that hopes to achieve the goal of World Heritage registration for the Nagasaki Church Group, the administration that wishes to create an opportunity to promote tourism while conserving them as cultural properties, and the Catholic Church that wishes people to understand Christianity while remaining in harmony with tourism. Culture attracts the attention of others and changes itself, so the problem of being treated as a consumer item can occur. When the value of being a World Heritage site is bestowed upon a cultural landscape such as the Nagasaki Church Group, ever larger waves of commodification can sweep over it. Generally, to commercialize something, it needs to be exchangeable after being separated from the context of its production. A church could be separated from the context of life in which it is rooted and that has maintained its vocational activities, climate and accumulation of history, and the place itself then produced and consumed as information. The concept and philosophy of being a World Heritage site may be part of human wisdom, but the more strongly heritage is connected to a region, the broader will be the influence on the region by being registered as a World Heritage site.

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