

The History of Christian Culture in Nagasaki

The propagation of Christianity in Japan began with the arrival of Francis Xavier in 1549, and the religion thrived for a short period. In 1587, however, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the effective ruler at the time, issued an edict to banish the Catholic fathers. The Tokugawa shogunate, which succeeded his rule, gradually took an increasingly repressive stance, eventually implementing a complete ban on Christianity that lasted for around 260 years.

The Nagasaki region was the center of Christianity in Japan, even being referred to as “Japan’s Rome.” As a result, it was the Nagasaki magistrates who had primary responsibility for controlling Japan’s “Kirishitan” (as the Christians were called). Any religious images and other articles of devotion that were confiscated from the Christians were held in custody at the *shūmongura* (religious-sect storeroom) at the Nagasaki magistrate’s office, which once stood on this site.