

## **The Beginning of Christian Suffering: From Toyotomi Hideyoshi to the Early Days of the Tokugawa Shogunate**

### **Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the Edict to Banish the Catholic Fathers**

The propagation of Christianity in Japan began with the coming of the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier in 1549. The new religion quickly spread until Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who was battling to unify the country, unexpectedly banned the faith with an edict to expel the Christian fathers in 1587. In 1588, Hideyoshi took direct control of Nagasaki, Motegi and Urakami—lands which had all been ceded to the Jesuits by Ōmura Sumitada, his son Ōmura Yoshiaki, and Arima Harunobu.

Sparked by the February 1596 shipwreck of the Spanish ship *San Felipe*, which led to rumors of military conquest following religious infiltration, Hideyoshi crucified 26 Catholics at Nishizaka in Nagasaki in February 1597. (They are now known as the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Japan, and included Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries and laity.) Because Hideyoshi was keen to keep trading with Europe, however, the prohibition on Christianity was implemented somewhat halfheartedly, and missionary work continued despite the ban.

### **The Tokugawa Shogunate and the Ban on Christianity**

Hideyoshi died in 1598. His successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu, who founded the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603, was initially accepting of Christianity, motivated by the same desire for trade as his predecessor. As a result, the number of Japanese Christians kept rising, exceeding 300,000 at its peak.

Events like Arima Harunobu's assault on the Portuguese ship *Nossa Senhora da Graça* in January 1610, and the resulting intrigues involving Christian daimyo (such as the Okamoto Daihachi incident) prompted second shogun Tokugawa Hidetada, who took over when Ieyasu retired in 1605, to take the Christian religion more seriously. In 1612, he published an edict banning Christianity in places under direct control of the shogunate, including Edo and Kyoto, before banning the religion throughout Japan in 1614. Japan's Christians were about to enter an era of suffering that was to last until the ban was lifted some 260 years later.

## **CAPTIONS**

### **PICTURE 1**

Ōmura Sumitada was the first Christian daimyo. He opened up Nagasaki, giving Portuguese vessels permission to dock there, which they did in 1571.

From the 1650 edition of *Fasciculus e Iapponicus floribus, suo adhuc madentibus sanguine compositus*, first printed in 1646.

(Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture)

### **PICTURE 2**

The martyrdom of the Twenty-Six Martyrs of Japan at Nishizaka, Nagasaki, in 1597. The martyrs were canonized in 1862.

*The Martyrs of Japan*, 1628

(Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture)

### **PICTURE 3**

A depiction of Jesuit missionaries (on the left, dressed in black) and Franciscan missionaries (on the right, in gray)

Kanō Naizen, *Nanban Byōbu* (screen detail)

Momoyama period (1573–1615)

Important Cultural Property

(Kobe City Museum)