

Arima Flourishes as a Base for Christian Missionaries

At the time, Japan was divided into multiple fiefdoms controlled by feudal lords known as daimyo. While many daimyo in and around the Kyushu region welcomed the missionaries because of the opportunities for commercial gain, others became stalwart believers in the new religion. Those feudal lords who converted to Christianity and did their best to help the missionaries with the work of propagation are referred to as Christian daimyo. The four best-known in Kyushu were Ōmura Sumitada, Arima Harunobu, Ōtomo Sōrin, and Konishi Yukinaga.

When Father Alessandro Valignano, the Jesuit Visitor overseeing all the order's activities in Asia, came to Japan for the first time in 1579, he met Arima Harunobu, the daimyo of the Nagasaki region. Valignano converted Harunobu and baptized him at Hinoe Castle, the seat of the Arima clan. Harunobu continued to welcome missionaries even after Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 1587 edict to expel the Christian fathers, and the province of Arima prospered as a base for the propagation of Christianity.

Many people living in the domains of the Christian daimyo followed in their masters' footsteps and converted to Christianity. Many churches were built in the Nagasaki region; seminaries and colleges opened in Arima and Nagasaki, Urakami, and Amakusa; and European culture, in the form of painting, music and printing, began to spread.