

Creating an Organizational Structure to Spread the New Faith

The missionaries' preferred method for securing converts worked like this: First, they would expound the teachings of Christianity to the local daimyo and get him to convert; then, through him, they would get his retainers and the general populace to convert en masse. If the daimyo proved unwilling, the missionaries would shower him with gifts from Europe until they secured permission to proselytize in his domain.

The missionaries active in Kyushu, Yamaguchi, and Kinai (territories in the vicinity of the capital), would select a small number of people from the most influential residents of the towns and villages where they preached and appoint them as leaders of the faith. In this way, they were able to create a self-sustaining organization that could keep the faith going without their presence. These local groups were known as *misericordia*, and they continued to operate even after Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 1587 edict to expel the Christian fathers. In the provinces of Arima, Ōmura, and Amakusa, brotherhoods known as *confraria* were also set up to maintain and reinforce the faith.

Thanks to these vigorous efforts, Valignano was able to detach the operations of the Society of Jesus from the Goa missionary district, making Japan into a quasi-ecclesiastical province divided into the three dioceses of Ximo (present-day Arima and Nagasaki), Bungo (present-day Beppu and Ōita), and Miaco (present day Kyoto). With this system, the Jesuits were able to compile detailed reports, not just on the spread of Christianity but on Japanese politics and society, which were dispatched every year to the order's headquarters in Rome.