

Dejima Dutch Trading Post

The shogunate faced a dilemma after its 1614 edict to expel the Christian missionaries. On the one hand, it wanted to keep trading with the Portuguese. On the other hand, it wanted to make sure that no priests or religious artifacts could be smuggled in to corrupt the general populace. Dejima—an artificial island constructed between 1634 and 1636—was their solution. The Portuguese merchants would be concentrated in one place, isolated from the general population, and the ships' crews and cargoes could be checked carefully as they came ashore.

Things were thrown off track by the outbreak of the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637, the year after Dejima was completed. Although Christianity was only one of the factors that led to the uprising, the shogunate chose to see the rebellion as motivated solely by religion. Portuguese ships were therefore completely banned from Japan in 1639, leaving Dejima unoccupied. This was a double blow for the merchants of Nagasaki. Not only did they depend on the Portuguese for trade, but they had also actually financed the construction of houses on Dejima for the foreign traders. They lobbied to move the Dutch Trading Post from the island of Hirado to Dejima, and the shogunate complied in 1641. The Dutch were accepted because they were regarded as pragmatic and willing to prioritize trade over religion. Dejima was thus established as the sole conduit for goods and knowledge from the West for the rest of the Edo period (1603–1868).

An Island of Two Halves

The island of Dejima can be divided roughly into two halves. On the western half are buildings from the Edo period. Of particular note are the Chief Factor's Residence and the First Ship Captain's Quarters with their *garasu no shoji* ("glass sliding doors," as the Japanese called windows) and hybrid interiors with period Dutch furniture sitting on top of tatami mats. The sea gate at Dejima's western tip used to look directly onto the sea (after land reclamation projects, it now faces a road). Goods for import came in through one door and goods for export went out through another, making it easy to check for Christian contraband such as crucifixes and medals.

On the eastern half of the island are buildings from the Meiji era (1868–1912). The Dejima Protestant seminary dates from 1878, five years after the ban on Christianity was lifted. The

Nagasaki International Club, which dates from 1903, was an institution modeled on an English gentleman's club; it was designed to give Japanese and Westerners the opportunity to mingle socially. It was moved to this site from Oura.

The various buildings on Dejima contain a range of exhibits informing visitors about Japan's imports (sugar) and exports (silver; later copper and porcelain) during the island's heyday, as well as everyday items used by the Dutch.