

The Site of the Church on the Cape

Many European merchants and missionaries began living in Nagasaki from 1571 because of the trade brought by Portuguese ships. In 1580 the Christian daimyo Omura Sumitada ceded Nagasaki to the Jesuits, who administered the city directly until 1587. At that time, this site was in the sea just off the tip of the long, thin cape of Nagasaki. (Nagasaki actually means “long promontory.”) The wall here, the lower part of which is four hundred years old, marked the end of the land at that time.

Above the wall, somewhere at the end of the cape, stood a church known as Misaki no Kyokai, literally “the church at the end of the promontory.” This became the Church of the Ascension in 1601 and served as the center for the Jesuits in Japan. The church was destroyed in 1614 when the second shogun Tokugawa Hidetada (1579–1632) banned Christianity; the land was taken over by a thread-trading company. (Silk thread was brought from China by the Portuguese and the Spanish to exchange for domestically mined silver.) The Nagasaki Magistrate’s Office was moved here in 1633; later it was replaced by the Nagasaki Prefectural Office, which stood on this site until a few years ago. An archaeological survey is currently being conducted, and a number of walls and roof tiles have been discovered.