SACRED SPACE AND RITUAL IN EARLY MODERN JAPAN: THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF NAGASAKI (1569-1643)

CARLA TRONU MONTANE

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Department of History
School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London
Abstract

This thesis argues that the production of sacred space and ritual is crucial to understanding the formation of Christian communities in early modern Japan. An analysis of the production of churches in Japan (chapter 1) lays the ground for a thorough exploration of the particular case of the Christian community of Nagasaki from 1569 to 1643 in the following chapters, I first address how Christians were involved in the foundation and design of the port and town, with a church as its symbolic centre (chapter 2), and the consequences for the Christian community when the administration rights over Nagasaki were donated to the Jesuits in 1580 (chapter 3). A decade of significant instability began in 1587, when Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the unifier of Japan, appropriated the town and issued a decree expelling the foreign missionaries, followed by an order in 1597 to close the Christian churches and to execute the recently-arrived Mendicant missionaries in Nagasaki (chapter 4). A golden decade began in 1601. After the bishop of Japan established his see in Nagasaki, the city became the centre of Japanese Christianity (chapter 5). Most significantly, the Catholic parish system was implemented, with the support of lay confraternities, between 1606 and 1612 (chapter 6) and, despite some internal rivalries (chapter 7), Nagasaki functioned as a ‘Christian town’ until 1614, when the Tokugawa government banned Christianity from Japan. The production of new spaces and rituals played a key role in both the de-Christianization of Nagasaki by the Japanese authorities and the formation of underground Christian communities, which produced and preserved secret Christian spaces and rituals until the prohibition of Christianity was abolished in 1873 (chapter 8).
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Introduction

The first encounter between Christianity and Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is a fascinating episode in the history of cultural interaction. In 1549 the first Jesuit missionaries arrived at Kagoshima, in southern Kyushu, and the propagation of Christianity in Japan started, moving to northern Kyushu and western Honshū. In 1614 Tokugawa Ieyasu issued an edict proscribing Christianity and expelling the missionaries from Japan. Most of the missionaries, and also some Japanese Christians, were exiled to Macao and Manila, and the ban on Christianity was not removed until 1873, under the Meiji government. In spite of the systematic proscription of Christianity by the Tokugawa government, certain communities of Christian Japanese preserved their Christian beliefs and practices for more than two centuries, and in 1865 a community of underground Christians revealed its faith to the French missionaries of the Société des Missions Étrangères de Paris in Nagasaki.

During this process of propagation, proscription and re-emergence, it was Nagasaki that became the centre of Christianity in Japan. This thesis focuses on the first century of this history, exploring the dynamic process that turned a natural port into what scholars call a ‘Christian town’. Only later did Nagasaki become ‘a common Japanese shinbutsu town’, i.e., a town that revered the buddhas and the kami, where the public rhythm was marked by community rituals centred in Buddhist temples and Shintō shrines.1 The main research question I address is: ‘How did Nagasaki become a Christian community?’ There are almost no written sources where the voices of lay Japanese Christians can be traced, making the access to their articulated thoughts and beliefs very difficult. Nevertheless, their actions do speak of their engagement with Christianity as well as their formation and functioning as

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1 (Kudamatsu 2004)
community. This is why, in order to address my research question, I analyse the involvement of the Nagasaki citizens in the production, maintenance and transformations of sacred spaces.

In order to explore the creation and evolution of Christian spaces in Nagasaki, this thesis takes an historical approach, building on the previous work on Christianity in early modern Japan and on Nagasaki city. Rather than a new periodization of the so-called Christian Century, I propose an historical narrative organized in terms of spaces and the actions that produced them, distinguishing among three main actions: the entry of Christianity into the Japanese public sphere, its later expulsion from Japan, and finally its withdrawal into a private, secret sphere. These actions produced different kinds of places where the missionaries and the Christian and non-Christian Japanese interacted.

To introduce Christianity to Japanese society, missionaries constructed residences, churches, hospitals and schools in villages and towns, interacting with the Japanese. The prohibition of Christianity by the Japanese authorities involved not only the desacralization, dismantling, and appropriation of all Christian spaces, but also the production of Buddhist temples and civil authorities’ buildings in their stead. Other new spaces were also produced, such as prisons, torture sites and execution grounds for Christians. The Japanese Christians reacted to and resisted the prohibition by turning the execution grounds into martyrdom sites through worship, and by producing new private Christian spaces both within their households and in secret communal spaces like caves and Christian cemeteries. Moreover, the ‘hidden Christian communities’ exerted a passive resistance to the prohibition by refusing to engage in the construction process of public spaces, such as Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, which the Tokugawa government fostered as a way to counter Christianity.

To presuppose a strict chronological order on these three main actions and their corresponding spatial processes would be simplistic. Although the building of churches can be clearly delimited in time, since no Christian churches were built

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2 Ikuo Higashibaba acknowledges the lack of written sources by sixteenth and seventeenth centuries lay Japanese Christians and argues that their participation in Christian ritual, which can be traced in missionary sources, allows us to understand their beliefs. (Higashibaba 2001)

3 (Boxer 1974)
after 1614, desecration and dismantling occurred at several stages, and vary greatly by region. For instance, more than 200 churches were closed after the 1587 edict of expulsion of foreign missionaries by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, but very soon after that, new churches and hospitals were built by Franciscan missionaries in Kyoto and Osaka, while the Jesuits in Kyushu retired from the public sphere. Thus, although the process of withdrawing into the private sphere was certainly accentuated by persecution, when it became the only possible sphere of action for Christians, the development of private Christian spaces and rituals was a process that started long before 1614. In sum, although it is possible to identify periods in which one or another of these actions is most representative, it is clear that they overlap in time.

To analyse these general actions at a local level it is necessary to study the actions involved in the production of specific spaces. This is why I focus on the Nagasaki Christian community as a case study. Nagasaki presents three distinctive characteristics that make it richly suited for such a spatial analysis. First, its foundation and rapid growth as a town was intimately linked to the close collaboration between Jesuit missionaries and Portuguese merchants. Second, most of its population was Christian since its foundation: the Christian community of Nagasaki included not only missionaries and Japanese Christians, but also the Portuguese and Spanish merchants who resided in Japan temporarily or permanently. Finally, when the Bishop of Japan established his See in Nagasaki, it became the centre of Japanese Christianity. Nagasaki was the only Japanese town in which the Bishop of Japan applied the Catholic Church’s parish system, a parish being the body of Christian faithful within a territory with well-defined boundaries, to which the Bishop appoints a parish priest. When Bishop Luis Cerqueira established his See in Nagasaki, he divided the town into parishes, erected parish churches and appointed parish priests, so that most of the inhabitants of Nagasaki were affiliated with a specific church, usually the one closest to their street. These features make Nagasaki a rather atypical Christian community, unrepresentative of most early modern Japanese Christian communities. However, Nagasaki deserves a prominent place within the historiography of Christianity in pre-modern Japan, since many of the events, as well as the spatial and ritual transformations that took place there, were often directly connected to the fate of Christian communities elsewhere in Japan.
Previous Research

The first encounter between Christianity and Japan has been approached from various perspectives. In western scholarship Charles Boxer’s socio-economic studies are still considered reference works. He was mainly interested in the relationship between Portugal and Japan, and emphasized the role of the Christian missionaries as mediators in trade and diplomacy between the Portuguese and Spanish civil authorities abroad (in India and the Philippines respectively) and the Japanese rulers.\(^4\) Japanese historians such as Takase Kōichirō, Gono Takashi, and Murai Sanae have mainly focused on the engagement of the Japanese elite with Christianity, or on the political and economic initiatives of the Christian missionary orders.\(^5\) More recently, Ōhashi Yukihiro and Murai Sanae have shifted the focus of attention to the lower classes by relating their reception and appropriation of Christianity to popular resistance and social change.\(^6\) The introduction of Christianity in Japan has also been widely studied from a missiological point of view. Jesuit scholars like Schurhammer and Schütte worked on biographical studies of the greatest leaders of the Jesuit mission in Japan, Francis Xavier, its founder, and its reformer, Alessandro Valignano.\(^7\) However, Higashibaba Ikuo, in reaction to such an approach, centred on the great personalities and the conversion of the Japanese elites, asserted the need to analyse popular Christianity in early modern Japan, and focused on ritual and belief among the Japanese Christian laity.\(^8\)

Since the Jesuit archives were not open to the public until the 1960s, the main task for the first Japanese scholars on the history of Christianity, like Murakami Naojirō and Anezaki Masaharu, was basically to gather and translate missionary sources in western languages.\(^9\) Ebisawa Arimichi also had a relevant role in the compilation and publication of both Japanese and missionary sources related to Christianity, and studied the contacts between Japanese religions and Christianity.\(^10\) Most of these early studies stressed the success of evangelization and the positive

\(^4\) (Boxer 1929, 1974)
\(^6\) (Ōhashi 2001; Murai 2002)
\(^7\) (Schütte 1951, 1980; Schurhammer 1982; Moran 1993)
\(^8\) (Higashibaba 1999)
\(^9\) (Murakami n.d.)
\(^10\) (Ebisawa 1944, 1960; 1970; 1971a; 1971b)
response of the Japanese Christians. Among those who studied the cultural exchange between Christianity and Japan, George Elison was the first to stress the negative response of Japanese society at large during the Tokugawa period, from government ideologues to anonymous popular authors.\textsuperscript{11} Elison's ground-breaking book \textit{Deus Destroyed} challenged the idealised vision of the Jesuits in previous Western scholarship by analysing the main anti-Christian works of the Tokugawa period authored by Buddhists, Confucians, and apostate Jesuits.\textsuperscript{12} Recently, Kiri Paramore has analysed thoroughly the relationship between anti-Christian ideas and the construction of political thought in the early Tokugawa shogunate as well as in the modern Japanese state.\textsuperscript{13}

Scholars of religion have approached theological and doctrinal aspects of the encounter between Japan and Christianity from a linguistic perspective, addressing the complex and problematic process of translation and definition of the concept of ‘God’ into Japanese; borrowing doctrinal terms from Buddhist, Confucian, and even Shinto traditions was indeed a key element in the introduction of Christianity in Japan.\textsuperscript{14} The role of ritual has also been stressed. While the Jesuit scholar Jesús Lopez Gay has studied thoroughly the Jesuit sources of Christian liturgy in Japan, Minako Debergh has explored Christian ritual on the basis of material culture, and Higashibaba has done so within the field of cultural anthropology, comparing the popular practices of Japanese Christians with popular Japanese religious practices.\textsuperscript{15}

In sum, in the last few decades the Eurocentric and social biases of earlier scholarship have been challenged in both historical and religious studies. Nevertheless, none of these scholars has discussed the importance of ritual in the production of sacred space. In fact, the spatial dimension has not received the attention it deserves to explain the introduction of Christianity in Japan, which has usually been presented as a chronological narrative. Although my focus on sacred space provides a new perspective, my exploration builds upon previous scholarship, since ritual and socio-political aspects are key elements to understanding the construction of a place for Christianity in Japanese society.

\textsuperscript{11} (Elison 1991c)
\textsuperscript{12} (Toynbee 1953)
\textsuperscript{13} (Paramore 2009)
\textsuperscript{14} (Schurhammer 1928; Oyama 1984; Moran 1992; App 1997-1998)
\textsuperscript{15} (Debergh 1980, 1984; Higashibaba 2001)
The importance of Nagasaki for the Christian missions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been emphasised by many scholars. Charles Boxer and Takase Koichirō were interested in Nagasaki as Japan’s only international port, where the silk trade with the Portuguese merchants took place. Nagasaki has also been given a prominent place in studies of the life and work of the most important ecclesiastical personality in seventeenth-century Japan, Bishop Luis Cerqueira, who is the subject of the Ph.D. theses of Kataoka Rumiko and Joao Oliveira e Costa. Furthermore, Nagasaki has a prominent place in the hagiographical literature by confessional scholars about Christian martyrs in Japan. The Japanese scholar Kataoka Yukichi was the first to publish a monograph on martyrdom in Nagasaki and in the whole of Japan.

There are a few works that address specific Christian spaces in Nagasaki, such as the article in Spanish by the Jesuit Diego Pacheco on the churches of Nagasaki, and another in German and Japanese by the Franciscan Bernard Willecke about the Franciscan convent in Nagasaki. In addition, recent archaeological findings in Nagasaki town have provided details about the Dominican church of St Dominic. Finally, Kataoka Yukichi deals briefly with the early development of Nagasaki town and its churches, as an introduction to his thorough study of martyrs and underground Christians in Nagasaki prefecture. Nevertheless, in all these treatments, Nagasaki is presented mainly as a passive place, as the mere background for what the authors consider truly important, whether it be trade, missionary activity, or martyrdom.

In contrast to the former approaches, George Elison emphasized the active role that Nagasaki had in the historical development of the Christian mission in Japan, dedicating a whole chapter of his abovementioned book, Deus Destroyed, to the donation of Nagasaki to the Jesuits, and arguing that the resemblance of Nagasaki to a Japanese temple town (jinai) was an important factor that prompted Hideyoshi to issue the 1587 edict expelling the missionaries from Japan. Building on this

16 (Kataoka 1985; Oliveira e Costa 1998)
17 (Jimenez 1867; Pérez 1914; Puebla 1989; Tellechea Idígoras 1998; Ruiz de Medina 1999)
18 (Kataoka 1970, 1979)
19 (Pacheco 1977; Willeke 1994a)
20 (Nagasakishi 2011)
21 (Kataoka 1970)
contribution, an exploration of the historical development of Nagasaki town and its sacred spaces sheds light on the formation, the structure, and the changes of its Christian community, since the spatial perspective that I employ stresses the active role that space itself played in the development of the community.

Recently, later periods of the history of Nagasaki have attracted interest in Japan and abroad, as suggested by the recent publication of a monograph on the foreign settlement in Nagasaki (1854-1945), and the preparation of a revised edition of the multi-volume Nagasakishishi [History of the city of Nagasaki] by the Nagasaki city hall, to be published beginning in 2013. Nevertheless, both Japanese and western scholarship lack a comprehensive study on the Nagasaki Christian community. This thesis is the first in-depth study of how the production of space and ritual in Nagasaki town actively shaped the internal dynamics of the Christian community and its relations with the central administration. I will next discuss the theories of space that inform the methodological frame of my research.

Theories of Space

In the last decades researchers in a number of fields have started to integrate theories of space into their methodology. Although most of them engage with spatial theory within a discussion of modernity, different authors understand and use the concept of ‘space’ differently. My understanding of sacred space in early modern Nagasaki is informed by Henri Lefebvre’s definition of ‘social space’ as the space of experience, in which people live, as opposed to ‘representational space’ or geometrical space, as in abstract or ideal spatial representations. To look at churches, temples and shrines in this light means to consider how they form and are formed by the actions of religionists (Jesuits and Mendicant missionaries, Buddhists and Shinto priests), the Nagasaki citizens and the local and central authorities, and to take into account the ideologies or policies that moved them. I believe that the construction of churches in Nagasaki cannot be understood without taking into account the Jesuit policy of accommodation or cultural adaptation, while the anti-

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22 (Nagasaki City History Compilation Office 2010)
23 (Hubbard et al. 2004)
24 (Lefebvre 1991a, 33)
Christian policy of the Japanese central government is crucial in order to understand the production of temples and shrines in seventeenth-century Nagasaki. Indeed, according to Lefebvre, social space ‘has, after all, been “composed” by people, by well-defined groups’, so that to account for social space, mediators and mediations must be taken into consideration, including action groups as well as ideological factors.  

The distinction between ‘map’ and ‘itinerary’ according to Michel de Certeau is also useful in identifying the mechanisms through which the ‘spatial story’ of this thesis emerged. This distinction originates in de Certeau’s distinction between ‘place’, understood as a static order with fixed positions, where it is not possible for two elements to be in the same location, and ‘space’, understood as a dynamic context, which exists when change, through movement and actions, is taken into consideration. While ‘place’ implies a location of stability in which elements have a ‘proper’ position, practices orient place, situate it, temporalize it, and make it into a ‘space’, ‘a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities’. At the same time, by spatializing place, the stable positions and boundaries of a place might be confirmed, challenged or modified, so that practices, transform places.

A Christian church in Japan is, as a building, a place, in the sense that the position of certain sacred objects is clearly stipulated, and fixed boundaries establish separate areas. Nevertheless, when ritual is performed in a church, the relationships created through movement, actions and interaction among the participants either confirm or challenge the boundaries. Thus, through ritual, a church becomes a dynamic space, as is argued in chapter 1. On a larger scale, Nagasaki town itself can be taken as a ‘place’, in which various elements (Christian churches, Buddhist temples and Shintō shrines) have specific positions (locations). But the town can likewise be seen as a ‘space’ when exploring the actions and negotiations among the different buildings and their communities that were necessary to make the decision to locate a sacred space in a particular geographical location. Such exploration is the subject of the remaining chapters, 2 through 8.

In accordance with this distinction between place and space, Michel de Certeau classifies verbal spatial descriptions, what he calls ‘spatial stories’, into two

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25 (Lefebvre 1991a, 74, 77)
26 (de Certeau 1984, 117)
elementary forms: ‘itinerary’ and ‘map’. An ‘itinerary’ is a discursive series of operations, a description of the actions through which the depicted ‘space’ is organized, while a ‘map’ is a plane projection with totalizing observations that depicts a ‘place’ basically through attributive clauses: ‘there is…’. However, de Certeau considers that maps presuppose or are conditioned by itineraries, since itineraries are in fact the condition of possibility of maps. As an example, he mentions early maps, which conserved reminiscences or traces of the practices — navigation routes, ‘itin eraries’, ships— through which they were created and which made them possible, although such reminiscences were gradually erased. Thus, maps are intimately linked to practices, but avoid making them explicit, trying to exhibit only the outcomes of practice or, in his words, the ‘products of knowledge’. Thus ‘maps’, like tables, present a ‘place’, while ‘space’ is better expressed through ‘itineraries’, namely, stories or narrative diagrams, exhibiting the practices and operations at work.27

The concepts of ‘map’ and ‘itinerary’ can illuminate our understanding of how primary and secondary sources describe churches in Japan. On a smaller scale, the description of the interiors of churches and the instructions for ritual in churches point at the relationships established between missionaries and Japanese Christians. On a wider scale, taking primary sources on churches in Japan as ‘spatial stories’ in the de Certeau sense, the ‘Catalogues of the number of churches in Japan’ written at different periods can be considered ‘maps’, since they present Japan as a ‘place’ in which churches have stable positions. Accordingly, marginal notes on how or why churches had been destroyed or newly created can be seen as ‘map reminiscences’ that point to interactions and negotiations between the Christian community and the Japanese central authorities. Likewise, letters, annual reports and historiographical works by the missionaries, which explicitly detail the routes, actions, and negotiations of the missionaries constructing churches, can be seen as ‘itineraries’. Secondary sources have carefully compiled the various synchronic lists and ‘maps’ provided in the Jesuit Catalogues, and have turned the ‘itineraries’ in the missionary narratives into totalizing diachronic maps highlighting the places where churches were constructed. This kind of research has been used to emphasize either the

27 (de Certeau 1984, 120-121)
propagation or the persecution of ‘Christianity’ and proof its success quantitatively, but it fails to show the complex interactions involved around and within churches. I intend to make explicit the ‘itineraries’ behind the ‘maps’ of sacred spaces in Nagasaki as a way to understand the formation and development of this particular Japanese Christian community.

**Organization of the thesis**

This thesis is structured in eight chapters. The first examines synchronically the role of space and ritual in the production of Christian sacred space in Japan, laying the groundwork for the remaining chapters, which focus on the particular case of the Christian community of Nagasaki port town from 1569 to 1643. The production of churches in Nagasaki and the formation and diachronic development of its Japanese Christian community are explored in chapters two through seven, which are organised chronologically, divided according to relevant turning points for the Christian community or Nagasaki itself. Finally, the eighth and last chapter deals with the production of new spaces in both the enterprise of de-Christianizing Nagasaki by the Japanese authorities and the formation of underground Christian communities, which produced and preserved Christian spaces and rituals secretly.

More specifically, chapter 2 deals with the early years of Nagasaki Christendom, from the first Jesuit mission in Nagasaki ‘castle-village’ (jōkamura) in 1567, to the port being opened and the town established with a Christian church as its symbolic centre. The tensions between Nagasaki castle-village and the new Nagasaki port-town (minatomachi) characterize the spatial dynamics of the initial period, since Nagasaki village was under the rule of Nagasaki Jinzaemon, a local lord, but the port town was administered by its own citizens. Furthermore, in 1580 Omura Sumitada, the lord of the province, gave the Jesuits jurisdiction over the port town. Chapter 3 explores the changes after 1587, when the most powerful military lord in Japan, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, put Nagasaki port town under his direct control and issued an edict of expulsion of the foreign missionaries, so that the Jesuits abandoned their principal church and residence in the port-town and retired to a peripheral church in the castle-village. Chapter 4 looks at the dynamic decade of the 1590s. The Jesuits recovered the central church in the town, but their religious monopoly over the
population was challenged both by Franciscan missionaries and by the arrival of the first Buddhist preachers. Nevertheless, Jesuit influence remained preeminent and Nagasaki became the centre of the Jesuit mission in Japan. Chapter 5 assesses how, after 1598, Nagasaki also became the centre of the Japanese Church Hierarchy as the See of the Bishop of Japan. A period of instability and political transition (including a war) followed Hideyoshi’s death in 1598, but still the Christian community in Nagasaki flourished after 1601.

The complex religious and administrative dynamics made Nagasaki a ‘Christian town’ are described in chapter 6. New churches were built; the Bishop ordained native Japanese as diocesan priests and implemented the Catholic parish system, with the support of lay confraternities. He also published a Catholic calendar adapted to the Christian community of Nagasaki and a handbook for the administration of sacraments, with the formula translated into Japanese. By 1612 Nagasaki incorporated eleven parishes, and functioned as a Christian city. However, the establishment in Japan of missions belonging to the mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians) challenged the Jesuit monopoly of the Christian mission and catalysed a confrontation between them, which crystallised in Nagasaki, where each of the orders was in charge of at least one parish church. Chapter 7 analyses the rivalry between the missionary orders, and how those rivalries affected the lay population. When Bishop Luis Cerqueira died in 1614, the internal tensions surfaced dividing the Nagasaki Christian community. In that same year, however, Tokugawa Ieyasu issued a ban on Christianity, which was immediately implemented and gradually systematised by subsequent shoguns.

Finally, chapter 8 deals with the first three decades after the prohibition. All missionaries and some prominent Japanese Christians who refused to apostatize were expelled. All Christian churches in Nagasaki were dismantled and magistrates’ offices and Buddhist temples were built in their place. All Nagasaki’s inhabitants were forced to apostatize, and new rituals, religious and secular, were imposed upon them to guarantee their affiliation to Buddhism. Thus the Christian community was practically dismembered through systematic searches, executions, expulsions and torture. By 1640 the Christian parish system had been replaced by the Buddhist *danka* system, forty-four temples and fifteen shrines had been established, and the
kunchi festival of the Suwa shrine had become the most important religious and social event of the city. Nagasaki was simply one more Japanese shinbutsu town. Nevertheless, some Christians, who had apostatized publicly, secretly organised themselves into underground Christian communities that openly appeared to adopt Buddhist ritual and spaces, but secretly kept their Christian beliefs, transforming Christian ritual and creating new secret Christian places that would be transmitted from generation to generation beyond 1643.