

The Christian heritage of Amakusa through its museums' collections: a comparative approach

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Amakusa was, for more than a decade, between 1588 and 1600, and thanks to the protection and support of Konishi Yukinaga and various *Kokujin*, the place where the Jesuits developed their activities. It was here that Bishop Luís Cerqueira lived from 1598 to 1600 and this was also the place where the novitiate ran from May 1591 until the autumn of 1597 (with the exception of the year 1589, when it was installed briefly in Kawacinōra). Also the College (Colégio) has been installed in Amakusa between 1591 and 1597, as well as the typographical park (from 1592 to 1598) and the school (“seminário”) of painting.

The visit to the museums of Amakusa – the Collegio Museum, Santa Maria Museum, Rosario Museum and the Amakusa Christian Museum – and their important and distinctive collections allows the visitor to see the material and visual culture of the Christian heritage of this fascinating territory.

The aim of this paper is to highlight the significance of these collections to the understanding of the interaction between the European missionaries and the local people during the late Momoyama and early Edo periods, as well as to the practices of the “Hidden Christians” after the ban of Christianity in 1614 and of the Portuguese in 1639. On the other hand, if we compare these collections with the ones in Hirado (Neshiko Museum) and Ikitsuki Island Museum, we can put this unique heritage in the larger context of Eastern Kyūshū's distant and near past.