

Rediscovery of “Namban culture” in Amakusa

Amakusa, located in the southern end of Japan, is well known as the place for “Hidden Christians”. The history of Christianity's development in Japan started from the time of the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier's arrival in 1550, and then “Namban culture”(the combination of Christianity and state-of-the-art western culture) flourished across the Amakusa-Nagasaki region, but marked the end with the tragic rebellion in 1638. Under the 250 year long ban on Christianity in Japan after the rebellion, Hidden Christians passed on their Catholic faith in secret amid severe persecution and oppression, until the miraculous discovery of Christians community in 1865.

Kyoto University Graduate School of management has been working together with Amakusa city to run the entrepreneurs' program every year. One of the graduates launched the project in 2015, financed by Japanese government, to invite 15 professionals in various field from Portugal, with the presence of their majesties Mr. and Mrs. Xavier the ambassador of Portugal in Japan, to rediscover the “Namban culture” in Amakusa. It was the historic reunion of Portugal and Amakusa/Japan after the 450 years of their history.

The main purpose of this project was creating a brand “Amakusa Namban” to accelerate the local business in each field, and there are some challenges still remains. On this conference the project overview and our experience will be shared, as a case study of globalization and rebranding of suburban city in Japan.