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Title: Nagasaki: Port at the Crossroads of East and West

Abstract:

Portuguese missionaries and adventurers first sailed into Nagasaki Harbor in 1567, searching for a stable foothold on the western fringe of the still little-known Japanese archipelago. Local authorities not only granted permission for trade and missionary activity but, in 1580, transferred jurisdiction of the port to the Society of Jesus, establishing the only example – aside from the post-World War Two Allied Occupation – of foreign rule over Japanese territory. After the ban on Christianity and expulsion of the Portuguese in 1639, the Dutch and Chinese were granted exclusive rights to live and trade in Nagasaki. For the next two centuries, Nagasaki flourished as Japan's only officially open port and developed a unique eclectic culture still evident today. The Ansei Five-Power Treaty of 1858 nullified the monopoly on international contact, but Nagasaki continued to thrive as the site of a foreign settlement, as the country's closest link to China, and as a gateway for modern technology and information. The prosperity of the international port reached a peak around the turn of the 20th century but rapidly declined after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) when military priorities gradually eclipsed trade in the city's economic underpinnings.

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