

TOYOTOMI HIDEYOSHI OF JAPAN

The Edicts of 1587 and 1635

The unification of Japan and the creation of a lasting national polity in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries required more than just military exploits. Japan's "three unifiers," especially Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), enacted a series of social, economic, and political reforms in order to pacify a population long accustomed to war and instability and create the institutions necessary for lasting central rule. Although Hideyoshi and Ieyasu placed first priority on domestic affairs — especially on establishing authority over domain lords, warriors, and agricultural villages — they also dictated sweeping changes in Japan's international relations.

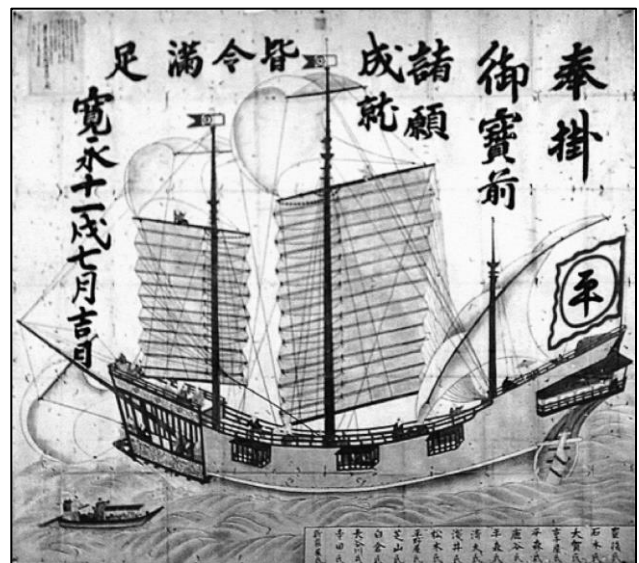
The years from 1549 to 1639 are sometimes called the "Christian century" in Japan. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, Christian missionaries, especially from Spain and Portugal, were active in Japan and claimed many converts, including among the samurai elite and domain lords. The Edict of 1587 was issued by Hideyoshi. The Edict of 1635 was issued by the shogunate to the officials administering the busy port of Nagasaki, the site of most of Japan's foreign contacts at the time.

Excerpts from Limitation on the Propagation of Christianity, 1587

1. Whether one desires to become a follower of the padre is up to that person's own conscience.
2. If one receives a province, a district, or a village as his fief, and forces farmers in his domain who are properly registered under certain temples to become followers of the padre against their wishes, then he has committed a most unreasonable illegal act.
3. When a vassal (kyūnin) receives a grant of a province or a district, he must consider it as property entrusted to him on a temporary basis. A vassal may be moved from one place to another, but farmers remain in the same place. Thus if an unreasonable illegal act is committed [as described above], the vassal will be called upon to account for his culpable offense. The intent of this provision must be observed.
4. Anyone whose fief is over 200 chō and who can expect two to three thousand kan of rice harvest each year must receive permission from the authorities before becoming a follower of the padre.
5. Anyone whose fief is smaller than the one described above may, as his conscience dictates, select for himself from between eight or nine religions.

Excerpts from the Edict of 1635 Ordering the Closing of Japan: Addressed to the Joint Bugyō of Nagasaki

1. Japanese ships are strictly forbidden to leave for foreign countries.
2. No Japanese is permitted to go abroad. If there is anyone who attempts to do so secretly, he must be executed. The ship so involved must be impounded and its owner arrested, and the matter must be reported to the higher authority.
3. If any Japanese returns from overseas after residing there, he must be put to death.
4. If there is any place where the teachings of padres (Christianity) is practiced, the two of you must order a thorough investigation....
7. If there are any Southern Barbarians (Westerners) who propagate the teachings of padres, or otherwise commit crimes, they may be incarcerated in the prison maintained by the Ōmura domain, as was done previously....
10. Samurai are not permitted to purchase any goods originating from foreign ships directly from Chinese merchants in Nagasaki....



PETER THE GREAT OF RUSSIA

Edicts and Decrees: Imposing Western Styles on the Russians

Peter the Great's reign (1682-1725) marked Russia's emergence as a major European power. Russia defeated Sweden in the grueling Great Northern War (1700-1721) and acquired a "window on Europe" at the head of the Gulf of Finland, where Peter built a new capital, St. Petersburg. In order to defeat the Swedes, who had routed his ill-trained army at Narva in 1700, Peter had reformed and modernized his military along western European lines. His enthusiasm for western technology and tactics extended also to other realms, including education, dress, and economic programs, as can be seen from the following excerpts.

Decree on Western Dress, 1701

Western dress shall be worn by all the boyars, members of our councils, and our court ... gentry of Moscow, secretaries ... provincial gentry, and **gosti**. Government officials, **streltsy**, members of the guilds purveying for our household, citizens of Moscow of all ranks, and residents of provincial cities ... excepting the clergy and peasant tillers of the soil. The upper dress shall be of French or Saxon cut, and the lower dress... — waistcoat, trousers, boots, shoes, and hats — shall be of the German type. They shall also ride German saddles. Likewise the womenfolk of all ranks.... It is also forbidden to ride Russian saddles, and the craftsmen shall not manufacture them or sell them at the marketplace.

gosti: Merchants, who often served the tsar in some capacity
streltsy: Members of the imperial guard station in Moscow

Decree on the Invitation of Foreigners, 1702

Since our accession to the throne all our efforts and intentions have tended to govern this realm in such a way that all of our subjects should, through our care for the general good, become more and more prosperous. For this end we have always tried to maintain internal order, to defend the state against invasion, and in every possible way to improve and to extend trade.

...[W]e have endeavored to improve our military forces, which are the protection of our State, so that our troops may consist of well-drilled men, maintained in prefect order and discipline. In order to obtain greater improvement in this respect, and to encourage foreigners, who are able to assist us in this way, as well as artisans profitable to the State, to come in numbers to our country, we have issued this manifesto, and have ordered printed copies of it to be sent throughout Europe.... And as in our residence of Moscow, the free exercise of religion of all other sects, although not agreeing with our church, is already allowed, so shall this be hereby confirmed anew in such manner that we, by the power granted to us by the Almighty, shall exercise no compulsion over the consciences of men, and shall gladly allow every Christian to care for his own salvation at his own risk.

Decree on Shaving, 1705

Henceforth, in accordance with this, His Majesty's decree, all court attendants ... provincial service men, government officials or all ranks, military men, all the **gosti**, members of the wholesale merchants' guild, and members of the guilds purveying for our household must shave their beards and moustaches. But, if it happens that some of them do not wish to shave their beards and moustaches, let a yearly tax be collected from such persons; from court attendants... Special badges shall be issued to them from the Administrator of Land Affairs of Public Order... which they must wear.... As for the peasants, let a tool of two **half-kopecks** per beard be collected at the town gates each time they enter or leave a town; and do not let the peasants pass the town gates, into or out of town, without paying this toll.

half-kopecks: One-twentieth a ruble, the basic unit of Russian money



EMPEROR QIANLONG OF CHINA

Two Edicts on the Occasion of Lord Macartney's Mission to China, Sept. 1793

In the later half of the eighteenth century, the British East India Company sought to expand their trade with China, but the British traders soon found that they had little to offer the Chinese other than silver — and opium. Furthermore, the Qing emperors stipulated that the British trade only with a limited number of licensed merchants, did not allow the British to communicate directly with Qing officials, and limited the trade to the adjacent ports of Macao and Guangzhou (Canton). Furthermore, the taxes and fees charged by Qing officials in the port of Guangzhou were not to the liking of the British. The British East India Company continued to come to China because the tea trade was — despite the terms of trade — quite profitable. Nonetheless, the British East India Company was not satisfied with the terms of trade. Accordingly, with the cooperation of the British Crown, Lord Macartney was commissioned to go to the court of the Qianlong emperor as representative from George III of England. Lord Macartney was received with great ceremony by the Qing officials and by the elderly Qianlong emperor himself. Lord Macartney thus was able to communicate King George's wishes to the Emperor: namely, that Britain desired a convenient offshore island as a permanent trading post, more ports opened to trade, and diplomatic representation in Beijing. The documents below communicate the Qianlong emperor's responses to these and related requests.

You, O King, live beyond the confines of many seas, nevertheless, impelled by your humble desire to partake of the benefits of our civilization, you have dispatched a mission respectfully bearing your memorial. Your Envoy has crossed the seas and paid his respects at my Court on the anniversary of my birthday. To show your devotion, you have also sent offerings of your country's produce. ...

As to your entreaty to send one of your nationals to be accredited to my Celestial Court and to be in control of your country's trade with China, this request is contrary to all usage of my dynasty and cannot possibly be entertained....

You, O King from afar, have yearned after the blessings of our civilization, and in your eagerness to come into touch with our converting influence have sent an Embassy across the sea bearing a memorial. I have already taken note of your respectful spirit of submission, have treated your mission with extreme favor and loaded it with gifts, besides issuing a mandate to you, O King, and honoring you with the bestowal of valuable presents.

... Hitherto, all European nations, including your own country's barbarian merchants, have carried on their trade with Our Celestial Empire at Canton. Such has been the procedure for many years, although Our Celestial Empire possesses all things in prolific abundance and lacks no product within its borders. There was therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians in exchange for our own produce. But as the tea, silk, and porcelain which the Celestial Empire produces are absolute necessities to European nations and to yourselves, we have permitted, as a signal mark of favor, that foreign **hongs** should be established at Canton, so that your wants might be supplied and your country thus participate in our beneficence. ...

Your Ambassador requests facilities for ships of your nation to call at Ningpo, Chusan, Tientsin and other places for purposes of trade. Until now trade with European nations has always been conducted at Macao, where the foreign **hongs** are established to store and sell foreign merchandise. Your nation has obediently complied with this regulation for years past without raising any objection. In none of the other ports named have **hongs** been established, so that even if your vessels were to proceed thither, they would have no means of disposing of their cargoes. Furthermore, no interpreters are available, so you would have no means of explaining your wants, and nothing but general inconvenience would result. For the future, as in the past, I decree that your request is refused and that the trade shall be limited to Macao.

hongs: trading firms licensed by the Chinese government.

