

JAPANESE HISTORY –Early Modern Era (1560-1800 CE)

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Overview

The three great unifiers Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu brought peace back to Japan after more than a century of political chaos. Japan was unified and poised to grow. However, there was a cost. The long-lasting Tokugawa regime was authoritarian and can fairly be described as a military *junta*. The samurai, as a caste of society, initially maintained law and order and only later became government bureaucrats. They lived under a different set of rules than the vast majority of society. And, though they represented only 7%-8% of the population, they exercised extensive control of society. Once the system was in place, however, the energies of the Japanese people was loosed and the country grew and developed in all ways. The early years of the Tokugawa Period (1600-1750) are understood to have been some of the best in the entire history of Japan. Agricultural development allowed for a dramatic increase in the population, and though there were still periodic times of hardship, periods of widespread hunger, as compared to earlier periods, temporarily diminished. Commerce grew along with the cities of Edo, Kyoto and Osaka and produced some of the great trading houses we still know today. Culture matured and provided us with expressions of world-class literature and theater. It was a good time to be alive in Japan as long as one didn't criticize the government or plot "changes," which was the government's way of silencing critics.

Events

Oda Nobunaga. After the Ōnin War was over in 1477, national power politics had become very Darwinian. For nearly a century, great *daimyō* (feudal lords) had schemed to destroy their rivals and be the one to reunify Japan. Treachery, invasion and war were constant threats. *Daimyō* formed alliances and broke them as they saw fit. They meddled in the internal politics of their adversaries. They married daughters to competitors as a gesture of good will and then when lulled into a sense of security, proceeded to attack and assassinate rivals and take their land. They burned each other's fields and castles, poisoned water supplies and disrupted irrigation infrastructure. In this environment, it would have been nearly impossible to believe that Oda Nobunaga, the young lord of the very small domain of Owari would be the one to start the process of reunification.

The Battle of Okehazama. Nobunaga inherited the lordship of Owari domain upon the death of his father in 1551. He was under 20 years of age. Because of his relative youth and inexperience, he spent a few years destroying his familial rivals. By the time he was roughly 29, his brother had finally been eliminated. In the process, he had learned how to command men and the efficacy of showing little or no mercy. Indeed, Nobunaga came to be known for his excessive brutality. In 1560, one of the greatest and most powerful *daimyō* in Japan, Lord Imagawa Yoshitomo (1519-1560), determined to seize the Owari domain in a larger effort to dominate central Japan. Nobunaga's retainers were concerned that his small force of less than 3000 would not be able to defend against Imagawa's 25,000 men. Nonetheless, Nobunaga would not join the Imagawa cause and an invasion began. At the Battle of Okehazama (in Oda's domain) in 1560, Nobunaga's small force surprised and destroyed the Imagawa. The final and decisive act of the battle for Japan, however, took place not with a member and supporter of the Oda's clan, but with the lord of a neighboring clan. Some of the chronicles tell us that Imagawa's head was taken by his nominal ally—Matsudaira Motoyasu, who turned on the battlefield to support the Oda (this is disputed by some historians). This Matsudaira (a neighbor and old rival of the Oda clan) would later come to support Nobunaga and change his name to Tokugawa Ieyasu.

Partial Unity. Over the next two decades, Nobunaga and his soldiers began the military unification of Japan. Nobunaga was perhaps the most ruthless man of a very ruthless era. He very often massacred the survivors (and sometimes the wives and children who accompanied them to the field) and the civilian population who Nobunaga perceived had supported his enemies. Nobunaga's most famous general was an orphan named Toyotomi Hideyoshi. By the time of Nobunaga's death, roughly half of Japan was under his control or allied with him.

Hideyoshi Toyotomi. In 1582, Nobunaga was assassinated by one of his allies—Akechi Mitsuhide and several of the Akechi clan. Hideyoshi then immediately hunted down and destroyed all of them he could find—and seized their land and that of their Akechi allies. Though Hideyoshi had not received permission from Nobunaga's other

generals for this action, his boldness had led to success. Over the next months, he moved to consolidate his power and to continue the military unification of Japan. By the late 1580s, all of Japan was controlled by one man for the first time in more than two centuries. Peace had arrived. But Japan had become a nation of warriors in a time of peace. In part to give the warriors something to do, Hideyoshi decided to invade Korea as a stepping stone to the invasion of Ming China. This action, bold though it was, reflected a growing megalomania and unpredictability that characterized Hideyoshi as he aged. In his delusions, Hideyoshi came to see himself as the descendant of the Mongol warrior Genghis Khan and rightful heir to the Celestial Kingdom of China. Though initially successful in Korea, when the Koreans began to use guerilla tactics and Ming troops arrived to repel the Japanese near the Yalu River, the invasion(s) of Korea became a disaster. Though reliable numbers are virtually impossible to determine, tens of thousands of Japanese samurai became casualties.

In 1598, one of the most dynamic personalities in all of Japanese history, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, passed from the scene. His final months had been dedicated to making sure that his heir (the five year old Hideyori) was properly cared for and that the group of trusted elders (the generals he was closest to) allowed him to inherit his titles and lands. Indeed, he made them publically swear more than once that they would carry out his wishes. He must have perceived that there were those among them, such as Tokugawa Ieyasu, who would not.

The Battle of Sekigahara. Tokugawa Ieyasu was initially allied with Imagawa against Nobunaga at the Battle of Okehazama in 1560 but had later come to support the Oda clan. Since that time, the Tokugawa had been a loyal ally in the struggle to reunify Japan. However, the relationship between Oda and the Tokugawa predated Hideyoshi and any of his more recent decrees. Tokugawa Ieyasu and Hideyoshi had a complicated relationship. They had been both allies and rivals—and had even battled each other. Both realized that the best course of action was an uneasy peace. Still, Tokugawa Ieyasu was perhaps the most astute politician between the time of Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1028) and the modern era. He treated his allies well but was cunning and ruthless with his enemies. He was meticulous in his planning and careful to work behind the scenes to make sure that at the most important time, he could count on his allies. An example of his planning can be seen in one of the most consequential battles of all Japanese history: the Battle of Sekigahara in the year 1600. This was the final conflict associated with reunification and resulted in Tokugawa Ieyasu becoming the most powerful general in Japan. It set the stage for the creation of the Tokugawa shōgunate. Before hostilities commenced, Tokugawa Ieyasu had made an agreement with one of his enemies, Lord Kobayakawa, to turn on the field of battle. This surprise resulted in the Tokugawa victory.

The Battle of Sekigahara had settled who would lead Japan for two and a half centuries. Revolts and rebellions still occasionally happened, such as the Siege of Osaka in 1614 which resulted in the death of Hideyoshi's heir, Hideyori. Another was the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637-1638, which solidified Tokugawa resolve to eradicate Christianity in Japan. After Shimabara, the military in Japan increasingly sought out another role in society, for there was little unrest to quell. The Tokugawa dynasty would rule Japan without interruption until 1868.

Government

System. While the fighting for reunification raged during a two decade period under Oda Nobunaga and Hideyoshi Toyotomi, each *daimyō* more or less ran their own fief as they saw fit. It is understood that many used some form of martial law, with close control of all areas of life essential to the continued support of military units in the field. Nobunaga had begun to institute reforms, but his efforts were truncated because of his untimely death. When Hideyoshi proclaimed the ending of hostilities in 1583 (something that wasn't exactly true), he began the process of creating a state apparatus for the peacetime administration of Japan. Given that there had not been a central government in Japan for more than a century, there were many options. However, he didn't stray too far from the existing system. Hideyoshi governed as shōguns had in the previous era, but he never assumed that title. In general, he ruled through existing *daimyō*. Though he was more than the first among equals, as long as individual domain laws didn't interfere with his own decrees, each *daimyō* enjoyed considerable autonomy to govern. Hideyoshi had a council of elders, composed mostly of generals who had long served with him, and who advised him in matters of state.

Reforms. The two main governing initiatives nationwide that Hideyoshi is known for are the Great Sword Hunt (*Taikō no katanagari*) and the Land Survey (*Taikō no kenji*), both of which had long lasting and very far reaching consequences. In 1588, Hideyoshi issued a decree that required all peasants to turn over their weapons to the authorities. This demilitarized society and had the effect of giving the government a monopoly on the tools with which to commit violence and engage in uprisings. At the same time, all warriors who still had a lord were to move to castle towns and out of the rural areas. *Rōnin*, or masterless samurai, were to quickly find a lord or become a

farmer and turn in their sword. This had the effect of removing the samurai from part-time farming and removing farmers from part-time soldiering. Peasants were not allowed to leave their domains without permission and all samurai were to be under the direct supervision of their lords. It is not entirely clear if it was intended or not, but this edict effectively created the upper two classes of society, a condition which would be codified into the four classes of society under the Tokugawa. The Land Survey was just as important for the health and wellbeing of Hideyoshi's government. All peasants had to return to their ancestral lands, register and recommence farming. This allowed the government to know who was on the land, and later, how much they were producing. Given that no survey had been conducted in approximately 500 years, this was sorely needed. Peasants had long resisted thorough land surveys and hid or camouflaged their land under cultivation while they waited for a different lord to take power. Hideyoshi, however, was persistent and sent the hated surveyors around several years running, and at unpredictable times. In this way, his government was able to determine with some level of accuracy who lived in Japan and how much to tax them.

The Tokugawa Consolidation of Power. After Hideyoshi's death in 1598 and subsequent Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu very slowly moved to consolidate his own position. First, he removed all *daimyō* who opposed him at Sekigahara and confiscated their lands as spoils of war. This made him the single largest landholder in the country. In addition, those *daimyō* who remained neutral at the time of Sekigahara were understood to be of questionable loyalty. Second, he demanded the emperor name him shōgun, a title he made sure was given to his son, Tokugawa Hidetada, in 1605. Even though he didn't know he would live another decade, this had the effect of solidifying Hidetada as his successor upon Ieyasu's death in 1616. Third, he (and his successors) began to hand down edicts such as the *Buke sho hatto*. These were initially rather minor laws and addressed the behavior of samurai, appropriate attire for samurai, marriage guidelines, rules for turning in neighbors who might be lawbreakers and the like. Later expanded, they acted as the legal basis for increasing the power of the central authorities in the city of Edo (Tokyo) and the continued diminishment of the power of the *daimyō* in the provinces.

By the turn of the 18th century, the Tokugawa enjoyed a fully functioning government. Over a period of a hundred years, they had discovered through trial and error what was and was not working. The feudal system that the Tokugawa had inherited from Hideyoshi slowly evolved under the Tokugawa and came to be known by historians as "centralized feudalism." Though this would seem to be an oxymoron, it describes a system where local control was the ideal, but where the central government increasingly assumed more and more power.

Culture

Religion. Buddhism enjoyed a renaissance during the Tokugawa era, but its role had changed from the Warring States Period (1477-1600). Before the reunification process began under Oda Nobunaga in 1560, Buddhist sects played a prominent role in the political milieu. Given that there was no central state and little in the way of law and order, abbots, priests and monks moved to protect their own interests and prerogatives. In order to do this, they contracted mercenaries and engaged warrior monks, both of which become a security threat in their own right. Nobunaga, however, made it one of his highest priorities to break the power of the church and to remove them from the governmental sphere. He is well known for engaging in acts of excessive brutality and viciousness against Buddhist institutions. Arson, wanton slaughter and vile acts such as the large scale burning at the stake of survivors, the total destruction of temple complexes and the like were all a part of Nobunaga's military campaigns. Buddhism thereafter returned to its more traditional role.

The Tokugawa later found Buddhism to be useful as a tool for social and cultural control. State sanction was returned to the faith. Every family had to register with the local Buddhist temple, which became a repository for recording births, deaths and marriages. It was a way for a non-governmental organization to maintain records which could be used by the state but which cost to the state very little. In a spiritual sense, adherence to the Buddhist faith was mandatory because priests were to interact with parishioners on a yearly basis. Nonetheless, state obligation facilitated perfunctory adherence to the faith, which minimized personal observance.

Christianity. Christianity first arrived in Japan during 16th century and was very well received. Christians of all sects, Roman Catholics and Protestants, alike appeared and began to make converts among the people and among a number of powerful *daimyō*. These western missionaries and merchants also brought innovations in metallurgy and weaponry, and were willing to sell them to the highest bidder. Oda Nobunaga was an enthusiastic adopter of western military technology. The Tokugawa, however, were very suspicious of all religions other than Buddhism and the indigenous faith, Shintō. Christianity was suspect because Christians believed all authority was derived from Christ—not a secular lord. This was made manifest in the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637 in which several

daimyō rebelled, in part, against increasingly strict rules on religion. This was the largest conflict between the Battle of Sekigahara and the battles associated with the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Christianity was then outlawed and all missionaries were expelled. Many Japanese Christians were martyred.

Kabuki. The Genroku years (between 1688 and 1704) are considered by scholars to have produced some of the greatest works of art (visual, dramatic and literary) of the age. Included among the great artists was the dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725), who is often compared to Shakespeare. Kabuki theatre was the most popular of the dramatic arts in the Tokugawa period. It is distinguished (even today) by the prohibition of women on the stage, a ban that took effect in 1629. Chikamatsu is well known for bringing Kabuki to the masses. In particular, his narratives were written to appeal to the average man. Stories about the pleasure districts of Edo (Yoshiwara) or Osaka (Shinmachi) were particular favorites, as were stories of unrequited love and suicide. Kabuki can be rather bawdy, is colorful, fast moving and sometimes brash. It is always interesting and fun to watch. Chikamatsu is very well known for tragedy, for creating a setting in which duty is set against the extremes of human feelings. It is this conflict that produces such a poignancy and intensity of feeling that Chikamatsu excelled at—and it also appealed to a very broad audience. Chikamatsu's ability to move an audience was unrivaled for his time. He occasionally ran afoul of the authorities because he had a tendency to address contemporary issues (something the authorities frowned upon) but placed them in historical settings.

Bunraku. Bunraku is best described as puppet theatre. It is believed to have originated in Osaka in the 17th century, a city in which it thrived in the Tokugawa period and still thrives today. Chikamatsu also wrote for this genre. Indeed, some of his best known works were written for Bunraku. Bunraku was surprisingly popular and allowed Chikamatsu and other dramatists greater control of the presentation of their works (in addition to the narrative). Like modern *anime*, Bunraku frees characters from the constraints of the physical human condition and allows for more stylized, fanciful elements of a narrative to find expression. Bunraku requires two or three artists/actors to manipulate the doll. It is accompanied by a chanted narrative, and various instruments such as the *samisen* and drums.

Censorship. A number of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's plays were censored. The most well-known example was *Love Suicides at Amijima*. However, self-censorship was practiced more often than actual censorship. Chikamatsu's political satire entitled *The Sagami Lay Monk and the Thousand Dogs* is one such example. This was a dangerous work which criticized the policies of a shōgun soon after his death. Nonetheless, the audience seemed to understand that the work was critical of an ordinance issued by the shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646-1709) that forbade the killing of any beast. When there was actual censorship, it occurred most often when a dramatist had slightly overstepped the bound of acceptable public speech or when there was a crackdown—usually associated with a change in leadership or when it appeared that society was being inappropriately influenced by a play.

Chūshingura (The Forty-Seven Rōnin) is, without question, the most famous dramatic work of the entire Tokugawa period. It found resonance with the people of Japan in the 18th century and has been rewritten, reworked and revised on numerous occasions—but its popularity has endured. It first appeared as a bunraku play in 1748 and has since found expression as a kabuki play, a movie (many times) and even a television series. It is also well known in the western world. Indeed, a movie starring Keanu Reeves on the topic was released in 2014.

Society

Structure. Hideyoshi Toyotomi's Great Sword Hunt (*Taikō no katanagari*) of 1588 at the end of the Warring States period (1477-1600) had the effect of demilitarizing the population and of returning to the government the monopoly on the tools with which one could commit violence. It also had the effect of separating the peasantry from the military. All peasants were required to turn in their weapons to the authorities and all warriors were to move to castle towns and submit to the authority of their lord. Warriors were also not allowed to do any job that was not a part of their military training or otherwise sanctioned by the state. In this way, most members of society became a part of an accountability unit. Over the course of the first few decades of the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), the four classes of society were clearly demarcated. One was not free to move between classes of society, thereby making them almost castes.

The Samurai. Samurai were at the top level of society during the Tokugawa period. They represented between 7-8% of the population and it was their job to keep the peace. After the Siege of Osaka (1614-1615) and the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-1638), however, there was little for warriors to do. There were no significant external

threats and, though very small domestic uprisings sprang up from time to time, the country was largely at peace. Indeed, some would say that the late 17th and 18th centuries in Japan represented a second golden age. The *daimyō* paid stipends to most of their retainers, money that came from taxation, and the samurai then sought out positions working for the government. The samurai lived under a different set of rules than the peasants and, though they could summarily execute a peasant if they presented a threat, that was an extremely rare event which later required a full investigation, potential sanction for the samurai a great deal of trouble. Samurai and most peasants did not run in the same social circles and did not regularly interact on a daily basis. The one exception was samurai who acquired a bureaucratic position (a not insignificant number) who might have cause as a government official to regularly encounter a member of the peasantry. This changed later in the period. In addition, sons and daughters of peasants and samurai occasionally married, but it was frowned upon—and samurai had to get permission to marry in advance from their lords.

The Peasants. Peasants were at the second level of society in the Tokugawa period. They represented 80%+ of the population. The life of the peasant had not much changed over the previous millennium. Their job was to work the fields and produce the food that they and other members of society consumed. The plight of the peasant was intimately tied to agricultural and weather patterns. Unlike in the Warring States period when a rival lord might unexpectedly seize their entire crop, burn it in the field, poison their water supply or otherwise disrupt the cycle, the Tokugawa period was more predictable. In most years, the peasants produced enough to feed themselves and pay the tax. There might be a little left over to trade for fabric, farm implements or other items they themselves could not make. Some farmers were naturally more adept than others and acquired land and material goods. In very bad years, the weather might not cooperate or insects might decimate a harvest. In these dark times, peasants succumbed to malnutrition, illness and starvation. Things could get so bad that families would result to selling children or infanticide.

Craftsmen and Merchants. Skilled laborers made up the third level of society. This group mostly lived in large villages and in the cities. They were masons, carpenters, coopers, smithies, and the like. They were an essential part of society and provided goods and services that were necessary in an agrarian age. The lowest class of society was the merchants. According to the ideology of the day, they were perceived as producing nothing of value and lived off the labor of others. Peasants grew the food. Skilled craftsmen did specialized jobs and the samurai acted as a constabulary and bureaucracy. Merchants only moved goods from place to place and bought and sold items. Because of this, they were understood to be the least important class of society and were treated as such.

Economy

Sankin kotai. The economy of Japan in the years between 1560 and 1800 was largely agrarian. 80%+ of the population were peasants who produced mostly rice and vegetables. 7-8% of the population were samurai who worked in the public sector. A small percentage of skilled laborers toiled forging iron and steel, making barrels, brewing sake, weaving straw mats (*tatami*) and the like and an even smaller percentage were clergy. Still, the one element of the economy that had yet to mature was commerce. Commerce required law and order, a stable government, standardized currency and a transportation infrastructure. As Japan moved into the Tokugawa period in 1600, the environment was finally right for it to emerge. In part, this was facilitated by the Tokugawa requirement known as *sankin kotai*. This transformed a fragmented country and tied it together in an unexpected way.

In the years after the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the Tokugawa began to require that all *daimyō* maintain a residence in Edo and live in the city for one year out of every two. In the year that they were back in their domains, they had to leave in Edo as a hostage their first wife and oldest son (and heir). In this way, the Tokugawa could keep watch on the *daimyō* and if one initiated an uprising back in his domain, the first casualty would be his heir. This led to great processions as *daimyō* traveled back and forth to their provincial lands. Good roads, bridges, ferries, inns, weigh stations and the like became an essential part of life. Porters were engaged to carry goods, restaurants served food and livery stables cared for horses. Great houses were also built in Edo for these lords, which put to work carpenters, servants, farmers on the outskirts of town who provided food and a whole host of other supporting professions. Banks and other financial institutions created rice or silver paper certificates. But government officials and *daimyō* were not the only ones who benefited from this system. Merchants were able to ship goods between the rapidly growing urban centers of the country. It is believed that Edo's population began to approach one million during this period, Osaka and Kyoto 400,000 each. Over the course of time, some merchants came to be quite wealthy, influential and extraordinarily successful, so much so that by the late 18th century, they

were challenging the concept that merchants should be at the bottom of the social structure. A number of Japanese firms from this period still exist and are household names worldwide: Sumitomo, Mitsuzakaya, Kikkoman, Mitsui, and Mitsukoshi—to name just a few.

Over the course of the 17th and 18th centuries, the economy of Japan grew dramatically in virtually every sector. Though the Tokugawa policy of *sakoku* (seclusion) meant that there was international trade largely with Korea and China only, domestic commerce thrived. Advances in agriculture allowed for a dramatic and unparalleled increase in population from approximately 15 million in 1600 to approximately 30 million in 1800. Silkworm production increased dramatically and sericulture became a thriving element of the economy. Indeed, some scholars argue that Japan had already taken the first step in industrialization because rapid advances in agriculture freed increasingly large segments of the population who were no longer needed in the fields and rice paddies. The Japanese economy suffered from the same cyclical problems that all economies endured. But, in general terms, the Japanese economy grew along with the population and reached a level of maturity that matched a number of western European countries.

Readings

- 1) Karl Friday, ed. *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, (Westview Press, 2012), pp. 309-426.
- 2) Jeroen Lamers, *Japonius Tyrannus: The Japanese Warlord Oda Nobunaga*, (Brill Press, 2000).
- 3) Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Hideyoshi*, (Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1989).
- 4) Ronald Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*, (Stanford University Press, 1991).
- 5) Brett Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Land: Ecology and Culture in Japanese expansion, 1590-1800*, (University of California Press, 2006).
- 6) Constantine Vaporis, *Tour of Duty, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan*, (University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

Questions for Discussion

- 1) Hideyoshi began the process of dividing Japanese society into what later became codified under the Tokugawa as the four classes: samurai, peasants, skilled craftsmen and merchants. For more than two centuries, there was little intermarriage between these groups and virtually no social mobility. It created stability in a country that had enjoyed very little in the previous century. However, it also came at a cost. What were the advantages and disadvantages of such a system? Did the system stifle or facilitate technological innovation? Was the economy negatively or positively affected by it? Was cultural growth stifled or promoted by it? How might it have been modified to minimize the worst abuses evident in the system? In the final analysis, was the division of Japanese society in the Edo period a positive or negative policy.
- 2) The Edo period is known primarily for the policy of seclusion (*sakoku*). All foreign interaction was strictly controlled by the state. This policy allowed for the development of a distinctive Japanese culture. However, it also cut off Japan from most of the rest of the world. Was this policy wise? Did it achieve its objectives? What were those objectives? Was it a wise policy for a few years, but perhaps should have been discarded long before it was? In other words, provide an evaluation of its effectiveness.
- 3) The process of reunification in Japan during the 16th and early 17th centuries took many decades to complete. Why did it take so long? Which of the three great unifiers do you think did more than the others to complete the process? In order to answer this question you will need to give me a narrative of how it occurred and provide details of the various struggles/battles/movements which made it possible. Which of the three great unifiers was the least important? In other words, how should historians of East Asia consider the legacy of the three men?

Texts

1) “The Edicts of Toyotomi Hideyoshi: Excerpts from Collections of Swords, 1588” Found in *Japan: A Documentary History: The Dawn of History to the Late Tokugawa Period*, edited by David Lu (New York: M.E. Sharp, 1997), pp. 191-192.

(a) The Edict:

1. Farmers of all provinces are strictly forbidden to have in their possession any swords, short swords, bows, spears, firearms, or other types of weapons. If unnecessary implements of war are kept, the collection of annual rent (nengu) may become more difficult, and without provocation uprisings can be fomented. Therefore, those who perpetrate improper acts against samurai who receive a grant of land (kyūnin) must be brought to trial and punished. However, in that event, their wet and dry fields will remain unattended, and the samurai will lose their rights (chigyō) to the yields from the fields. Therefore, the heads of the provinces, samurai who receive a grant of land, and deputies must collect all the weapons described above and submit them to Hideyoshi’s government.

2. The swords and short swords collected in the above manner will not be wasted. They will be used as nails and bolts in the construction of the Great Image of Buddha. In this way, farmers will benefit not only in this life but also in the lives to come.

3. If farmers possess only agricultural implements and devote themselves exclusively to cultivating the fields, they and their descendants will prosper. This compassionate concern for the well-being of the farms is the reason for the issuance of this edict, and such a concern is the foundation for the peace and security of the country and the joy and happiness of all the people. All the implements cited above shall be collected and submitted forthwith.

Vermillion seal of Hideyoshi Sixteenth year of Tenshō
[1588], seventh month, 8th day

(b) Commentary

All the swords possessed by farmers in this country have been collected for the ostensible purpose of making nails for the erecting of the Great Image of Buddha. ... But truthfully, this is a measure specifically adopted to prevent occurrence of peasant uprisings (ikki). Indeed various motivations are behind this.

2) “The Buke Shohatto” (Laws for the Barons), promulgated by the shōgun Iemitsu Tokugawa on August 5, 1635. Found in *Asiatic Society of Japan, Transactions*, 38:4, 1911, pp. 293-297. In the public domain

1. The taste for the Way of literature, arms, archery and horsemanship is to be the chief object of cultivation.

2. It is now settled that the Daimyō and Shomyō (i.e., the greater and lesser Barons) are to do service by turns at Yedo. They shall proceed hither on service every year in summer during the course of the fourth month. Latterly the numbers of their followers have become excessive. This is at once a cause of wastefulness to the provinces and districts and of hardship to the people. Henceforward suitable reductions in this respect must be made. On the occasions of going up to Kyoto, however, the directions given may be followed. On occasions of government service (i.e., military service) the full complement of each Baron must be in attendance.

3. The erection or repairing of new castles is strictly forbidden. When the moats or ramparts of the present residential castles are to be repaired, whether as regards the stonework, plaster, or earth-work, a report must be made to the Bugyōsho (i.e., the Mag-istracy at Yedo) and its direction taken. As regards the (Yagura, hei and mon) armories, fences and gates, repairs may be made to restore them to their previous conditions.

4. Whether at Yedo or in any of the provinces whatsoever, if an occurrence of any sort whatsoever should take place, those (Barons and their retainers) who are there at the time are to stay where they are and to await the Shogun's orders (from Yedo).
5. Whenever capital punishment is to be inflicted, no matter where, nobody except the functionaries in charge is to be present. But the coroner's directions are to be followed.
6. The scheming of innovations, the forming of parties and the taking of oaths is strictly forbidden.
7. There must be no private quarrels whether amongst the (Kokushu) greater Barons or (Ryoshu) the other Feudatories. Ordinary circumspection and carefulness must be exercised. If matters involving a lengthy arrangement should arise they must be reported to the Magistracy and its pleasure ascertained.
8. Daimyō of over 10,000 koku income, whether they be lords of provinces (domains) or lords of castles, and the heads of departments (monogashira) in personal attendance on them are not to form matrimonial alliances (between members of their families) at their private convenience (i.e., they must apply for the Shogun's permission before doing so).
9. In social observances of the present day, such as visits of ceremony, sending and return of presents, the formalities of giving and receiving in marriage, the giving of banquets and the construction of residences, the striving after elegance is carried to very great lengths. Henceforth there must be much greater simplicity in these respects. And in all other matters there must be a greater regard for economy.
10. There must be no indiscriminate intermingling (of ranks) as regards the materials of dress. Undyed silk with woven patterns (Shiro-aya) is only to be worn by Court Nobles (Kuge) and others of the highest ranks. Wadded coats of undyed silk may be worn by Daimyō and others of higher rank. Lined coats of purple silk; silk coats with the lining of purple; white gloss silk, colored silk coats without the badge are not to be worn at random. Coming down to retainers, henchmen, and men-at-arms, the wearing by such persons of ornamental dresses such as silks, damask, brocade or embroideries was quite unknown to the ancient laws, and a stop must be put to it.
11. Those who may ride in palanquins are all persons of distinction who are connections of the Tokugawa clan; lords of domains (Kuni) and lords of castles having 10,000 koku and upwards; the sons of provincial Daimyō (beneficiaries), lords of castles; chamberlains and higher functionaries, and the legitimate sons of such (i.e., sons by their wives; but not sons by their concubines); persons (of any rank) above fifty years of age; of the two professions of doctors of medicine and soothsayers (astrologers, onyoshi) and invalids and sick persons. Apart from the above named, irregularities must be prohibited; but those who have applied for and received official permission to ride are not included in the prohibition. As regard the feudal retainers in the provinces, those who may ride are to be definitely specified in each fief. Court Nobles, Abbots of royal or noble birth, and ecclesiastics of distinction are not to be included in this regulation.
12. Retainers who have had a disagreement with their original lord are not to be taken into employment by other Daimyō. If any such are reported as having been guilty of rebellion or homicide they are to be sent back (to their former lord). Any who manifest a refractory disposition must either be sent back or expelled.
13. When the hostages given by sub-vassals to their mesne lords have committed an offence requiring punishment by banishment or death, a report in writing of the circumstances must be made to the Magistrates' office and their decision awaited. In case the circumstances were such as to necessitate or justify the instant cutting down of the offender, a personal account of the matter must be given to the Magistrate.
14. The lesser beneficiaries must honestly discharge the duties of their position and refrain from giving unlawful or arbitrary orders (to the people of their benefices): they must take care not to impair the resources or well-being of the province or district in which they are.

15. The roads, relays of post horses, boats, ferries and bridges must be carefully attended to, so as to ensure that there shall be no delays or impediments to quick communication.
 16. No private toll-bars may be erected, nor may any existing ferry be discontinued.
 17. No vessels of over 500 koku burden are to be built.
 18. The glebelands of shrines and temples scattered throughout the provinces (domains) having been attached to them from ancient times to the present day, are not to be taken from them.
 19. The Christian sect is to be strictly prohibited in all the provinces and in all places.
 20. In case of any unfilial conduct the offender will be dealt with under the penal law.
 21. In all matters the example set by the laws of Yedo is to be followed in all the provinces and places.
- All the foregoing provisions, being in conformity with the previous enactments of this (Tokugawa) House, are hereby reimposed and definitely established and must be carefully observed.

3. "Text of the Sakoku, or Closed Country Edict of June 1636." Found in *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*, by C.R. Boxer, (University of California Press, 1967), pp. 439-440.

1. No Japanese ships may leave for foreign countries.
2. No Japanese may go abroad secretly. If anybody tries to do this, he will be killed, and the ship and owner/s will be placed under arrest whilst higher authority is informed.
3. Any Japanese now living abroad who tries to return to Japan will be put to death.
4. If any Kirishitan believer is discovered, you two (Nagasaki bugyō) will make a full investigation.
5. Any informer/ revealing the whereabouts of a bateren will be paid 200 or 300 pieces of silver. If any other categories of Kirishitans are discovered, the informer/s will be paid at your discretion as hitherto.
6. On the arrival of foreign ships, arrangements will be made to have them guarded by ships provided by the Omura clan whilst report is being made to Yedo, as hitherto.
7. Any foreigners who help the bateren [Christian missionary] or other criminal foreigners will be imprisoned at Omjra as hitherto.
8. Strict search will be made for bateren [Christian missionary] on all incoming ships.
9. No offspring of southern Barbarians will be allowed to remain. Anyone violating this order will be killed, and all relatives punished according to the gravity of the offence.
10. If any Japanese have adopted the offspring of southern Barbarians they deserve to die. Nevertheless, such adopted children and their foster-parents will be handed over to the Southern Barbarians for deportation.
11. If any deportees should try to return or to communicate with Japan by letter or otherwise, they will of course be killed if they are caught, whilst their relatives will be severely dealt with, according to the gravity of the offence.
12. Samurai are not allowed to have direct commercial dealings with either foreign or Chinese shipping at Nagasaki.

13. Nobody other than those of the five places (Yedo, Kyoto, Osaka, Sakai and Nagasaki) is allowed to participate in the allocation of ito-wappu.
14. Purchases can only be made after the ito-wappu is fixed. However, as the Chinese chips are small, you will not be too rigorous with them. Only twenty days are allowed for the sale.
15. The twentieth day of the ninth month is the deadline for the return of foreign ships, but latecomers will be allowed fifty days grace from the date of their arrival Chinese ships will be allowed to leave a little after the departure of the (Portuguese) galliots.
16. Unsold goods cannot be left in the charge of Japanese for storage or safekeeping.
17. Representatives of the five (shōgunal) cities should arrive at Nagasaki not later than the fifth day of the long month. Late arrivals will not be allowed to participate in the silk allocation and purchase.
18. Ships arriving at Hirado will not be allowed to transact business until after the nineteenth day of the fifth month of the thirteenth year of Kwanei (June 22, 1636)