

The Tokugawa Formula for Japan



5 ▼ *Tokugawa Hidetada,* *LAWS GOVERNING THE* *MILITARY HOUSEHOLDS*

In 1605, two years after defeating his enemies among the daimyo and becoming shogun, Tokugawa Ieyasu resigned the shogunate and conferred the office on his son, Hidetada, to ensure an orderly succession. Ieyasu, however, continued as de facto ruler until his death in 1616. In 1615 he issued under his son's name the following code for Japan's warrior aristocrats. Drawn up with the aid of Confucian scholars, it is a succinct statement of the Tokugawa formula for ending the social and political ills that had caused Japan's disintegration in the sixteenth century.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What provisions of this edict are meant to ensure the shogun's control of the daimyo?
2. Even though the independence of the daimyo was limited by Tokugawa policies, the daimyo still retained certain political powers. How many can be identified in this document?
3. How does the code define the ideal samurai?
4. What sort of social order does the code envision?
5. Where in this document is it possible to detect the influence of Confucian principles?

1. The study of literature and the practice of the military arts, archery and horsemanship, must be cultivated diligently. . . .

From of old the rule has been to practice "the arts of peace on the left hand, and the arts of war

the danger of war. Should we not, then, prepare ourselves for it?

2. Drinking parties and wanton revelry should be avoided.

In the codes that have come down to us this kind of dissipation has been severely proscribed. Sexual indulgence and habitual gambling lead to the downfall of a state.

3. Offenders against the law should not be harbored or hidden in any domain.

Law is the basis of social order. Reason may be violated in the name of the law, but law may not be violated in the name of reason. Those who break the law deserve heavy punishment.

4. Great lords [daimyo], the lesser lords, and officials should immediately expel from their domains any among their retainers or henchmen who have been charged with treason or murder.

Wild and wicked men may become weapons for overturning the state and destroying the people. How can they be allowed to go free?

5. Henceforth no outsider, none but the inhabitants of a particular domain, shall be permitted to reside in that domain.

Each domain has its own ways. If a man discloses the secrets of one's own country to another domain or if the secrets of the other domain are disclosed to one's own, that will sow the seeds of deceit. . . .

6. Whenever it is intended to make repairs on a castle of one of the feudal domains, the [sho-

gunate] should be notified. The construction of any new castles is to be halted and stringently prohibited.

"Big castles are a danger to the state."¹ Walls and moats are the cause of great disorders.

7. Immediate report should be made of innovations which are being planned or of factional conspiracies being formed in neighboring domains.

Men all incline toward partisanship; few are wise and impartial. There are some who refuse to obey their masters, and others who feud with their neighbors.² Why, instead of abiding by the established order, do they wantonly embark upon new schemes?

8. Do not enter into marriage privately [i.e., without notifying the shogunate authorities].

Marriage follows the principle of harmony between yin and yang,³ and must not be entered into lightly. In the *Book of Changes*,⁴ . . . it says, "Marriage should not be contracted out of enmity (against another). Marriages intended to effect an alliance with enemies [of the state] will turn out badly." The Peach Blossom ode in *The Book of Poetry* also says that "When men and women are proper in their relationships and marriage is arranged at the correct time; then throughout the land there will be no loose women." To form an alliance by marriage is the root of treason.

9. Visits of the daimyo to the capital are to be in accordance with regulations.

¹The quotation is a paraphrase from *The Tradition of T'ao*, a commentary on *The Spring and Autumn Annals*.

²From the Seventeen Article Constitution of Prince Shotoku (573-621). While serving as regent for his aunt, Empress Suiko, the prince drew up seventeen principles of government designed to strengthen central authority and end disorder. He drew heavily on Confucian principles.

³Yin and yang are the two fundamental forces, tendencies, or elements in Chinese philosophy that since ancient times have been used to explain change in natural processes of all

sorts. Yin suggests qualities that are female, weak, dark, cold, and connected with the moon; yang suggests qualities that are male, strong, warm, bright, and connected with the sun. Every being and substance contains both elements in varying proportions. As one of the elements increases within a being or substance, the other decreases but is never eliminated.

⁴*The Book of Changes*, a treatise on divination, and *The Book of Poetry*, a collection of songs, are among the oldest Confucian texts.

The Seclusion of Japan



6 ▼ *Tokugawa Iemitsu,* *CLOSED COUNTRY EDICT OF 1635*

For close to a century Japan was a European success story in Asia. Portuguese traders and missionaries began visiting Japan regularly in the 1540s, and the Spanish, Dutch, and English soon followed. The Japanese were fascinated by European goods such as eyeglasses and clocks and were quick to appreciate the military potential of European firearms and artillery. Some even adopted European dress. Daimyo on the island of Kyushu in southwestern Japan competed for European trade by tolerating the presence of Catholic missionaries and in a few cases converting to Christianity themselves. Oda Nobunaga, the military leader who unified approximately half of Japan in the 1570s and 1580s, encouraged Catholic missionary activity to weaken his rivals, the powerful and wealthy Buddhist monasteries. His tolerance of missionary activity led to numerous conversions in the district of Kyoto, Japan's capital city. By the early seventeenth century approximately 500,000 Japanese had become Christians.

By then, however, anti-European sentiment was growing. Nobunaga's successor, Hideyoshi, became suspicious of Europeans after the Spaniards conquered the Philippines, and he began to question the loyalty of daimyo who had become Christians. In 1597 he ordered the crucifixion of nine Catholic missionaries and seventeen Japanese converts. The early Tokugawa shoguns, in their single-minded pursuit of stability and order, also feared the subversive potential of Christianity. They sought to obliterate it, while at the same time limiting commercial contacts with China, Southeast Asia, and Europe.

Japan's isolation policy was fully implemented by Tokugawa Iemitsu, Ieyasu's grandson and shogun from 1623 to 1651. His edicts largely closed Japan to all foreigners and prevented his subjects from leaving Japan. The following document, the most famous of Iemitsu's exclusion edicts, is directed to the two commissioners of Nagasaki, a port city in southern Japan and an early center of Christianity.

QUESTIONS FOR ANALYSIS

1. What steps are to be taken to suppress Christianity?
2. How are commercial dealings with foreigners to be handled before they are ended altogether?
3. In what ways did the edict affect the shogun's Japanese subjects?
4. Does trade or Christianity seem to have been the greater threat to Japan according to the edict?

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 the [Catholic] priests is practiced, the two of you must order a thorough investigation.
5. Any informer revealing the whereabouts of the followers of the priests must be rewarded accordingly. If anyone reveals the whereabouts of a high ranking priest, he must be given one hundred pieces of silver. For those of lower ranks, depending on the deed, the reward must be set accordingly.
6. If a foreign ship has an objection (to the measures adopted) and it becomes necessary to report the matter to Edo,¹ you may ask the Omura² domain to provide ships to guard the foreign ship. . . .
7. If there are any Southern Barbarians³ who propagate the teachings of the priests, or otherwise commit crimes, they may be incarcerated in the prison. . . .
8. All incoming ships must be carefully searched for the followers of the priests.
9. No single trading city shall be permitted to purchase all the merchandise brought by foreign ships.
10. Samurai⁴ are not permitted to purchase any goods originating from foreign ships directly from Chinese merchants in Nagasaki.
11. After a list of merchandise brought by foreign ships is sent to Edo, as before you may

order that commercial dealings may take place without waiting for a reply from Edo.

12. After settling the price, all white yarns⁵ brought by foreign ships shall be allocated to the five trading cities⁶ and other quarters as stipulated.

13. After settling the price of white yarns, other merchandise [brought by foreign ships] may be traded freely between the [licensed] dealers. However, in view of the fact that Chinese ships are small and cannot bring large consignments, you may issue orders of sale at your discretion. Additionally, payment for goods purchased must be made within twenty days after the price is set.

14. The date of departure homeward of foreign ships shall not be later than the twentieth day of the ninth month. Any ships arriving in Japan later than usual shall depart within fifty days of their arrival. As to the departure of Chinese ships, you may use your discretion to order their departure after the departure of the Portuguese *galeota*.⁷

15. The goods brought by foreign ships which remained unsold may not be deposited or accepted for deposit.

16. The arrival in Nagasaki of representatives of the five trading cities shall not be later than the fifth day of the seventh month. Anyone arriving later than that date shall lose the quota assigned to his city.

17. Ships arriving in Hirado⁸ must sell their raw silk at the price set in Nagasaki, and are not permitted to engage in business transactions until after the price is established in Nagasaki.

¹Modern Tokyo, the seat of the Tokugawa government.

²The area around the city of Nagasaki.

³Westerners.

⁴Members of Japan's military aristocracy.

⁵Raw silk.

⁶The cities of Kyoto, Edo, Osaka, Sakai, and Nagasaki.

⁷A galleon, an ocean-going Portuguese ship.

⁸A small island, not far from Nagasaki.