

The Tokugawas Consolidate Their Power (Primary Source Documents)



The unification of Japan and the creation of a new government in the early 1600s required more than just military victories. 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 (control) the Japanese people, who had become used to constant warfare and instability. They created the institutions and laws (edicts) necessary for lasting central rule. Although Hideyoshi and Ieyasu placed first priority on domestic affairs (issues relevant only to Japan). They focused especially on establishing authority over daimyo, samurai warriors, and agricultural villages. However, they also dictated sweeping changes in Japan's international relations.

Although the Tokugawa shogunate proved a durable political system, it lacked the elaborate legal codes and sophisticated bureaucratic apparatus of the Chinese imperial state. One of the most important Tokugawa legal documents, the Laws of Military Households (Buke Shohatto), was issued in 1615, only one year before Tokugawa Ieyasu's death, and provided basic regulations on the behavior of daimyo lords and samurai warriors.

Korō Shodan - Tokugawa Ieyasu on Military Government and the Social Order

The Tokugawa shogunate ruled Japan from 1603 to 1868. The establishment of a stable national regime was a substantial achievement, as Japan had lacked effective and durable central governance for well over a century prior to Ieyasu's rise. Creating the Tokugawa system of rule required a variety of significant political and social reforms, **none perhaps with a more profound impact than the division of society into four hereditary status groups** (often called classes). This was based on occupation, known in Japanese as the *shinōkōshō* (samurai, peasants, artisans, merchants).

... on the subject of the emperor, the shogun, and the farmer. "Whether there is order or chaos in the nation depends on the virtues and vices of these three. The emperor, with compassion in his heart for the needs of the people, must not be remiss in the performance of his duties..."

Secondly, the shogun must not forget the possibility of war in peacetime, and must maintain his discipline. He should be able to maintain order in the country;

he should bear in mind the security of the sovereign [the emperor]; and he must strive to dispel the anxieties of the people...

Thirdly, the farmer's toil is proverbial [everlasting] - from the first grain to a hundreds acts of labor. He selects the seed from last fall's crop, and undergoes various hardships and anxieties through the heat of the summer until the seed grows finally to a rice plant... The rice then becomes sustenance for the multitudes. Truly, the hundred acts of toil from last fall to this fall are like so many tears of blood. Thus, it is a wise man who, while partaking of his meal, appreciates the hundred acts of toil of the people.

Fourthly, the artisan's occupation is to make and prepare wares and utensils for the use of others.

Fifthly, the merchant facilitates the exchange of goods so that the people can cover their nakedness and keep their bodies warm. As the people produce clothing, food and housing, which are called the 'three treasures', they deserve our every sympathy."

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<p>VALUE Does the author represent a particular 'side' of a controversy or event? Is it a primary source? Can you trust the author? Did they have a motive?</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Laws of Military Households (Buke Shohatto 1615)

1. The study of literature and the practice of the military arts, including archery and horsemanship, must be cultivated diligently. "On the left hand literature, on the right hand use of arms," was the rule of the ancients. Both must be pursued concurrently. [at the same time] Archery and horsemanship are essential skills for military men. It is said that war is a curse. However, it is resorted to only when it is inevitable. In time of peace, do not forget the possibility of disturbances. Train yourself and be prepared.

2. Avoid group drinking and wild parties.

6. The castles in various domains may be repaired, provided the matter is reported without fail. New construction of any kind is strictly forbidden.

8. Marriage must not be contracted in private [without approval from the bakufu].

10. The regulations with regard to dress materials must not be breached. Lords and vassals, superiors and inferiors, must observe what is proper within their positions in life. Without authorization, no retainer may indiscriminately wear fine white damask, white wadded silk garments, purple silk kimono, purple silk linings, and kimono sleeves which bear no family crest.

12. The samurai of all domains must practice frugality. When the rich proudly display their wealth, the poor are ashamed of not being on par with them. There is nothing which will corrupt public morality more than this, and therefore it must be severely restricted.

13. The lords of the domains must select as their officials men of administrative ability. The way of governing a country is to get the right men. If the lord clearly discerns between the merits and faults of his retainers, he can administer due rewards and punishments. If the domain has good men, it flourishes more than ever. If it has no good men, it is doomed to perish. This is an admonition which the wise men of old bequeathed to us.

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The Keian Edict of 1649 - Rules for Villagers

3. Headmen should not mistreat people, including those with whom they do not get along well; no favoritism should be shown to anyone, no matter how close a friend. Headmen should be close to the small peasants and allocate tribute and corvée to each of them equally and fairly. On the other hand, the small peasants should not disobey the orders of headmen and goningumi heads.

5. To go buy and drink sake or tea is prohibited; this applies also to wives and children.

6. All seeds should be selected carefully at the beginning of the fall season. Only good seeds should be sown; otherwise one cannot expect a rich harvest.

7. One should sharpen hoes and sickles every year before the eleventh day of the first month.

10. [Everybody], from the house owner down to his children and servants, and so on, should normally eat plain food. However, at times of demanding labor, like planting rice seedlings or harvesting, slightly better food should be made available in large amounts.

11. Wealthy peasants, such as those who employ seventy or eighty male and female servants, often limit themselves to giving them orders about work but leave everything to their servants' judgment and do not check things for themselves. While they are well-off, their weak points do not reveal themselves, but when their ease and comfort have been taken advantage of and their wealth has declined, they are forced to reduce the number of servants, and finally they have to cultivate by themselves.

14. Both husband and wife should work for a living: the husband in the fields, the wife at the loom and preparing the evening meal. If a wife neglects her husband, drinks a lot of tea, and likes pleasure trips, she should be divorced even if she is good-looking.

16. Peasants can wear cotton cloth only; nothing else can be used even in sashes and collars.

18. Apart from the rich, the poor who do not own large fields should think well about a means of living throughout the year; for instance, if there are many children in a family, some can be given away and some can be sent out as servants.

23. Smoking is prohibited. Tobacco is no substitute for food; on the contrary, it causes illness. In addition, it takes time and money and constitutes a fire hazard. It is disadvantageous to everyone in every respect.

34. Village bridges and roads must always be kept in good condition. If they are bad, travelers will be inconvenienced, people and horses from the village will be troubled, and this will result in mishaps. Headmen and goningumi heads should always be concerned with this and use slack times or holidays to fix them.

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PBS Video Clips

Clip 1 The Will of the Shogun. (10:00-17:00)

What other strategies did the Tokugawas employ to control society? (use bullet points)

Clip 2 The Will of the Shogun. (18:49-29:30)

How did Tokugawa ensure what he started continued? How did his grandson Iemitsu exercise power? (use bullet points)

QUESTIONS

Read the two edicts of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Use examples from them to answer the questions. Work in groups.

1. In the Koro Shodan, how does Ieyasu justify the society hierarchy in Tokugawa Japan? Why do you think Ieyasu wanted to create a strict social hierarchy in Japan?

2. What was the Tokugawa shogunate seeking to accomplish through the other rules and regulations?

3. Do you think that the shogunate was able to enforce these laws?

4. How would it have done so?

5. How do you think you would have reacted to the Laws of Military Households if you were a samurai at the time? How do you think you would have reacted to the Rules for Villagers if you were a peasant at the time?
