

## Tokugawa Japan and Christianity

**Letter from Mr. Richard Cocks, English merchant and agent of the English East India Company, 10th March, 1620 [note: Cocks confuses the Shogun with the Emperor]**

The emperor is great enemy to the name of Christians, especially to the Japanese who have embraced the faith; so that all such as are found are put to death. While at Deshima, I saw fifty-five martyred at one time, because they would not forsake the faith, and among them were some children of five or six years old, who were burnt in the arms of their mothers, calling on Jesus to receive their souls. Also, in the town of Nagasaki, sixteen others were martyred for the same cause, of whom five were burnt, and the rest beheaded and cut in pieces, and their remains put into sacks and cast into the sea in thirty fathoms deep: Yet the priests got them up again, and kept their remains secretly as relics. There are many others in prison, both here and in other places, who look hourly to be ordered for execution, as very few of them revert to paganism. Last year, about Christmas, the emperor deposed one of the greatest princes [daimyos] in all Japan, lord of sixty or seventy prefectures, and banished him to a corner in the north of Japan, where he has a very small portion in comparison with what was taken from him, and he had the choice of this or of cutting open his own belly. It was thought that this would have occasioned great troubles in Japan, for all the subjects of Frushma-tay [Southern Kyushu] were up in arms, and meant to hold out to the utmost extremity, having fortified the city of Fushima, and laid in provisions for a long time. But the daimyo and his son, being then at the emperor's court, were commanded to write to their vassals, ordering them to lay down their arms and submit to the emperor, or otherwise to cut open their own bellies. Life being sweet, they all submitted, and those were pardoned who had taken up arms for their lord. The emperor has given their dominions to two of his own kinsmen; and this year the emperor has ordered the castle belonging to Fushima to be pulled down, being a very beautiful and gallant fortress, in which I saw him this year, and far larger than the city of Rochester. All the stones are ordered to be conveyed to Osaka, where the ruined castle is ordered to be rebuilt three times larger than before; for which purpose all the tonos or kings have each their several tasks appointed them; to be executed at their several charges, not without much grumbling: For they had got leave, after so many years attendance at court, to return to their own residences, and were now sent for again all of a sudden to court, which angered them not a little: "But go they must, on pain of belly-cutting."

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