### CHINA

**Introduction:**
Beginning in the late 16th century, Portuguese merchants began coming to trade in southern China, bringing Jesuit priests along with them. Jesuits, notably Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), aimed to convert members of the scholar-gentry elite who, they hoped, would then assist in spreading their religion among the people. While welcomed by the late Ming and early Qing emperors for their expertise in areas of astronomy, calendar-making, cannon and other firearms, and mathematics, the Jesuits made relatively few converts. By the late 17th century, Christianity faced growing opposition among the officials and from the imperial government.

The following document concerning Christianity was written by the official Yang Guangxian (1597-1669) and is part of a series of essays written between 1659 and 1665.

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**I Cannot Do Otherwise,** by Yang Guangxian

“...according to a book by [the Christian scholar] Li Zubo, the Qing dynasty is nothing but an offshoot of Judea; our ancient Chinese rulers, sages, and teachers were but the offshoots of a heterodox [heretical] sect; and our classics and the teachings of the sages propagated generation after generation and are no more than the remnants of heterodox teaching. How can one abide by these calumnies [lies]? ...

Our Confucian teaching is based on the Five Relationships (between parent and child, ruler and minister [government official], husband and wife, older and younger brothers, and friends), whilst the Lord of Heaven Jesus was crucified because he plotted against his own country, showing that he did not recognized the relationship between ruler and subject. Mary, the mother of Jesus, had a husband named Joseph, but she said Jesus was not conceived by him.”

### JAPAN

**Introduction:**
The unification of Japan and the creation of a lasting national polity [state] in the late 16th and early 17th 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 16th century, Christian missionaries, especially from Spain and Portugal, were active in Japan and claimed many converts, including among them the samurai elite and daimyo. The following edicts were issued by Toyotomi Hideyoshi in 1587.

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**Limitation on the Propagation of Christianity**

1. Whether one desires to become a follower of the padre [a Catholic priest] is up to that person’s own conscience.

2. If one receives a province, a district, or a village as his fief (shoen), 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.

4. Anyone whose fief (shoen) is over 200 cho 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 from between eight or nine religions.

8. If a daimyo who has a fief (shoen) over a province, district, or a village, forces his retainers to become followers of the padre, he is committing a crime worse than the followers of Honganji [a Buddhist sect] who assembled in their temple [to engage in a riot]. This will have an adverse effect on the welfare of the nation. Anyone who cannot use good judgment in this matter will be punished

**Expulsion of Missionaries**

1. Japan is the country of gods, but has been receiving false teachings from Christian countries. This cannot be tolerated any further.

2. The [Catholic missionaries] approach people in provinces
and districts to make them their followers, and let them destroy shrines and temples. This is an unheard of outrage. When a vassal receives a province, a district, a village, or another form of a fief, he must consider it as a property entrusted to him on a temporary basis. He must follow the laws of this country, and abide by their intent. However, some vassals illegally commend [to place one’s land under another’s protection] part of their fiefs to the church. This is a culpable offense.

3. The padres, by their special knowledge in the sciences and medicine, feel that they can at will entice people to become their believers. In doing so they commit the illegal act of destroying the teachings of Buddha prevailing in Japan. These padres cannot be permitted to remain in Japan. They must be prepared to leave the country within twenty days of the issuance of this notice.

**Question:**
1. On what grounds does Yang Guangxian criticize Christianity?

**Questions:**
1. On the basis of these two edicts, how do you think Hideyoshi viewed Christian missionaries and Japanese converts?

2. What reasons do you think Hideyoshi had for limiting the spread of Christianity and the activities of missionaries in Japan?

3. Who is Hideyoshi more concerned about becoming Christian – daimyo, samurai, or the common people?

4. Why do you think that so many Japanese embraced Christianity at this particular time?

5. How do Hideyoshi’s arguments against Christianity in Japan compare to Yang Guangxian’s arguments against Christianity in China?