

Tokugawa Ieyasu

1542–1616



WHY HE MADE HISTORY Tokugawa Ieyasu became the most powerful shogun in Japan. In 1603, through brilliant administrative strategies, he united Japan and established the absolute authority of the Tokugawa shogunate, which lasted 250 years. Ieyasu began a period of peace, prosperity, and increased isolation in Japan.

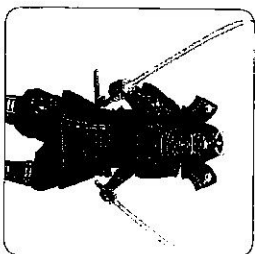


As you read the biography below, think about how Tokugawa's administrative brilliance contributed to the stability of Japan.

In the mid 1500s Japan went through a period of political and civil clashes. By the late 1500s the emperor ruled Japan in name only. The real ruling power was in the hands of the shogun, the daimyos (the chief landowning nobles), and the samurai.

Tokugawa Ieyasu was born in 1542 into a warrior family. Starting at a young age, Tokugawa received training in military and governmental arts. He slowly gained more land for his family and by the early 1580s he was the most important and powerful daimyo in Japan. He was a brilliant administrator and military strategist. By the end of the 1500s his army and lands were the most extensive and organized in Japan.

In 1603 the emperor named Tokugawa Ieyasu shogun. Although Tokugawa “retired” and passed the title of shogun to his son in 1605, Tokugawa remained the real power in Japan. Tokugawa continued to consolidate his power. In 1614 and 1615 Tokugawa led two attacks on his last big rival for power. At the end of those battles, Tokugawa had succeeded in unifying Japan under one ruler.



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VOCABULARY
consolidate unify, join
shogunate military
dictatorship

Tokugawa Ieyasu, continued

During his rule as shogun and as the power behind his son's **shogunate**, Tokugawa took steps to increase the power of the shogun and to decrease the power of the daimyos. The peasants were disarmed to reduce the possibility of a rebellion.

Tokugawa established his capital at Edo, which later became Tokyo, and built the largest castle in the world at that time. He developed Edo carefully and turned it into a thriving center for the arts and trade. Tokugawa was the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, which lasted more than 250 years.

Tokugawa Ieyasu strongly promoted foreign trade, especially with the English and the Dutch. On the other hand, Tokugawa enforced the suppression and persecution of Christianity beginning in 1614. He began to ban Christian missionaries from Japan.

Tokugawa's son continued this policy until there was a complete ban on Christianity. After Tokugawa's death Japan began a policy of isolation from other countries. But because of the unity that Tokugawa Ieyasu achieved in Japan while he was alive, Japan began a period of national peace, stability, and growth that lasted 250 years.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. **Recall** What shogunate did Tokugawa Ieyasu establish in Japan? How long did it last?

2. **Draw a Conclusion** How did Tokugawa Ieyasu achieve unity in Japan?

ACTIVITY

Imagine that you are writing a newspaper editorial about dictatorships. Write a short editorial giving your opinion about the positive and negative aspects of Tokugawa Ieyasu's dictatorship.