

13.3 First Contact with the West

What threats had the Japanese government faced from contact with a different culture?

The "Southern Barbarians"

In 1543, a Portuguese ship was wrecked on a small island of Japan. The first contact with the Japanese was to discover what the Japanese had that the Portuguese had and to trade for new goods. Shortly after this, more traders from Spain, the Netherlands and England arrived with seeking goods, land and bringing their Christian missionaries.

How do you think the Portuguese and Japanese cultures contrasted?

Since the Portuguese were motivated by the Renaissance values and ideals, there was a drive for more "things", a drive for competition and the understanding that each person was an individual. This contrasted completely with the Japanese worldview.

New kind of Belief

Looking to convert the daimyo and samurai to Christianity, Francis Xavier— a Jesuit missionary. Many more priests followed soon after.

What contributing factors do you think decreased the odds of Christianity becoming a welcomed religious choice in Japan?

Although there were similarities between Christianity and the Japanese religious values. Both had ethical codes that were based on what was right and wrong (stealing, murder, disrespect of their god), but the idea of having only one god was new to Japan.

Another significant difference was where loyalty lay; the Japanese held high regard and reverence to the daimyo, emperor and shogun, while missionaries taught that spiritual loyalty was toward God in heaven.