

NEWS & EVENTS > Spain and Japan celebrate 400 years of exchanges

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Spain and Japan celebrate 400 years of exchanges



 Dual-Spain-Japan

Between June 2013 and July 2014 **Spain and Japan** are doubly celebrating the year of Spain in Japan and the year of Japan in Spain to mark the 400th anniversary of the sending of the *Keicho* Embassy to Europe (Spain and Rome). Both are intended as a commemoration of 400 years of exchanges between Spain and Japan.

Accion Cultural Espanola is joining in this celebration with several projects that reflect the drive of our most contemporary creators and convey an image of modernity far removed from the usual stereotypes. Design, architecture, contemporary art and young creators will be the backbone of a programme designed to bring these aspects of our culture closer to the Japanese people, in order to foster mutual understanding between our countries and open up new horizons in bilateral relations.

In 1613 (the 18th year of the Keicho Era) Date Masamune (1567–1636), feudal lord of Sendai, received permission from Tokugawa Ieyasu (retired shogun, 1592–1616) to send a delegation to Europe (Spain and Rome) to request the establishment of trade relations with New Spain (Mexico) and the sending of missionaries to Japan. This mission, known as the ‘Keicho Embassy to Europe’, was headed by the Samurai Hasekura Tsunenaga (1570–1621) and the Spanish Franciscan friar Luis Sotelo.

The mission, which departed from Sendai, Japan, in October 1613, arrived in Spain in October 1614 after crossing the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Hasekura Tsunenaga later travelled to Madrid and was granted audience by King Philip III in January 1615. Hasekura was baptised in Madrid and visited Pope Paul V in Rome. After remaining for a time in Coria del Río, Seville, he returned to Japan in 1620. His trip lasted seven years.

The *Keicho* Embassy was the first official diplomatic mission sent to Spain by Japan and has gone down in history as an important event in bilateral Spain-Japan relations.

Crown Prince Naruhito serves as Japan’s honorary president for events marking the 400th anniversary of the nation’s exchanges with Spain, which will be commemorated between June 2013 and July 2014.

The Japan-Spain celebrations will feature a string of concerts and exhibitions including a collection of Japanese prints going back to the 17th century to go on display at the Prado museum in Madrid and a sumptuous **exhibition of Japanese lacquer** at the National Museum of Decorative Arts in Madrid.

More information on **Japanese arts events in Spain** [in Spanish]

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