

## The Tokugawa Shogunate

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During the Ashikaga Shogunate, there was civil strife and by the late 15<sup>th</sup> century Japan fell into the hands of local warlords. There were three leaders that rebuilt Japan. Nobunaga began to reunify Japan. He was followed by Hideyoshi, who had gained control of all of Japan. After his death, the struggle for control was won by Ieyasu, who gained the title of Shogun and created Japan's last Shogunate the Tokugawa. A strong central government was established. The Tokugawa ruled for a 250 year stretch of peace and stability. They did this by imposing controls designed to preserve the social and economic order as it existed in 1600. These controls included:

1. The system of *alternate attendance*: Each of the daimyo was required to spend every other year in Edo, and his family was required to reside in Edo at all times as hostages.

2. *The class system of the nation became a caste system*. Membership in a class was made hereditary, and classes were ranked according to their value to society. At the top were the samurai; second were the peasants; third were the skilled workers; and fourth were the merchants.

3. *Japan was isolated*. Portuguese traders came in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and were followed by Christian missionaries. Fearing the foreign influences that came with Christianity, the Tokugawa persecuted Christians. The Tokugawa feared all types of foreign influence. Because of this the Japanese were forbidden to go abroad, and Japanese in other countries were forbidden to return.

Although the Tokugawa controls were designed to prevent change in Japan, change did take place. The 250 years of imposed peace and isolation led to an increase in internal commerce, the development of cities, and the strengthening of the economic power of the merchants. Most of the samurai, with no wars to fight became scholars and teachers, and the literacy rate increased considerably. During their long period of isolation, the Japanese developed a strong feeling of their own uniqueness.

1. Describe the Japanese caste system.
2. How did the Tokugawa feel about foreigners?
3. What changes took place under Tokugawa control?

### Tokugawa Rule

The Tokugawa rulers set out to establish control like that of the feudal system that governed Japan for more than 300 years. The state was divided into about 250 separate territories, called **hans** or domains. A daimyo ruled each individual han. The Shogunate used a hostage system to control the daimyo, which were required to have two residences. One was to be located on their own land and the other was in Edo, the location of the Shogun's court. When the daimyo were away from the Edo residence, his family was forced to stay there, thus preventing rebellion by the daimyo.

Under the Tokugawa, trade and industry began to flourish. Paper money became the usual medium of exchange in business. Banking flourished and a Japanese merchant class developed. Some farm families benefited from the growing demand for cash crops. Most peasants, however, experienced both declining profits and rising taxes and costs. Many were forced to work as hired help or become tenants. When conditions grew desperate, some peasants revolted. During the Tokugawa era, nearly 7,000 revolts against high taxes occurred.

1. What was the hostage system?

2. What economic changes occurred under the Tokugawa?

### The Class System

Japan had four main classes: warriors, peasants, artisans, and merchants. The emperor and the imperial court were at the very top of the political and social structure. Second in line was the warrior class, composed of the shogun, daimyo, samurai and ronin. Below the warriors were the farmers, or peasants. The artisan class included craftspeople such as carpenters. The merchants were at the bottom because they profited from the labor of others. Below these classes was the eta, Japan's outcasts. The Tokugawa regulated the eta's residence, dress, and hairstyles.

Women in Tokugawa society became more restricted. Men had broad authority over marriage, divorce and property. Parents arranged marriages, and a wife was expected to move in with her husband's family. A wife could be divorced if she did not meet the expectations of her husband or his family. Among the people, women were valued for their work as child-bearers and homemakers. But both men and women shared work responsibilities in the fields.

1. What role did merchants play in society?
2. Who were the eta? How were they treated?
3. What role did women play in Japanese life?

### Tokugawa Culture

1. Literature—works of Ihara Saikaku are the best examples of the new urban fiction. His greatest novel, *Five Women Who Loved Love*, is a tragic tale. Poetry was considered serious literature. Matsuo Basho, the greatest Japanese poet, lived during the seventeenth century.

2. Theater and Art—Kabuki theater, which is full of action, music, and dramatic gestures, began appearing in the cities. Women were forbidden to act on stage, because the government feared these dramas would corrupt the nation's morals. This ban led to a new class of professional actors, the men who assumed female roles.

The Shogun's decree that all daimyo must have homes in Edo resulted in an increase in building. Nobles competed to build the most magnificent mansions, lavishly furnished.

Other cultures influenced Japanese art. From Korea, the Japanese borrowed pottery techniques. The Japanese also studied painting styles, languages, medicine, and astronomy from Western nations. Those nations in turn wanted Japanese ceramics.

1. What literature was created under the Tokugawa?
2. How was theater affected?
3. What did they borrow from outside cultures?

### Tokugawa: The Closed Country Edict of 1635

During the early years of the Tokugawa Shogunate the new leaders were open to foreign ideas. Portuguese and Christian missionaries brought trade and ideas that were accepted by the Japanese. But as time passed the Tokugawa became suspicious of the Western visitors and eventually closed the Japanese ports. This edict was created to keep foreign influence out of Japan and was instituted by Tokugawa Iemitsu, the grandson of Tokugawa Ieyasu.

1. Japanese ships are strictly forbidden to leave for foreign countries.
2. No Japanese is permitted to go abroad. If anyone attempts to do so secretly they will be executed...
3. If any Japanese returns from overseas after residing there, he must be put to death
4. If there is any place where the teachings of the Catholic priests are practiced, men must order a thorough investigation.
5. Any informer revealing the whereabouts of the followers of the priests must be rewarded accordingly. If anyone reveals the whereabouts of a high ranking priest, he must be given one hundred pieces of-silver. For those of lower ranks, depending on the deed, the reward must be set accordingly.
7. If there are any Southern Barbarians who propagate the teachings of the priests, or otherwise commit crimes, they may be incarcerated in the prison. . . .
8. All incoming ships must be carefully searched for the followers of the priests.

#### Questions

1. What is the purpose of this document? What are they targeting?
2. Why does the Tokugawa Shogunate feel it is necessary?
3. In order to understand this document better, what TWO views would be necessary to gain a full perspective on the edict?