HISTORY OF JAPAN

JOMON PERIOD TO THE END OF AMERICAN OCCUPATION

BENARD OCHIENG'

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Benard Ochieng' Omondi

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This is a book for beginner learners on the history of Japan from the Jomon Period to the end of the American occupation of Japan after the Second World War. It gives an overview of Japan's geography and administrative division , highlights the evolution of the political system of Japan from ancient times through medieval times to modern times, international relations between Japan and the outside world - the wars with Mongolia and significantly, the influence of China, Korea and the Western world in shaping the culture and history of Japan, Japanese internal political turmoils manifested in the form of violent struggles for power and dominance, Japanese socio-cultural practices from pre-historical times to modern times, and Japan's 20th Century militarism, expansionism, their defeat in the Second World War and the American occupation after the war.

Second Edition (2.1)

Benard Ochieng', Year 2025

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Benard Ochieng' Omondi is a dedicated enthusiast of history, politics, international relations and affairs. He holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Biochemistry from Kenyatta University and by the time of authoring this book, he pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations and Diplomacy at Maseno University. You may connect with him on social media via the following channels:

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INSPIRATION

I wrote the first edition of this book, having been touched by Japanese History and Culture, notably the Samurai, in my much younger days, from other reading material, NHK World TV, magazines, music video, animations, Television Series and Film. I wrote the first edition of this book, after having for the first time in my life, taken a deeper look at Japanese History and Culture in my time at Kenyatta University studying Bachelor of Science Biochemistry in 2018.

This second edition was inspired by re-watching the 2013 Keanu Reeves film: **47 Ronin** and watching gameplays of the videogame: **The Ghost of Tsushima** on the YouTube Channel:

The RadBrad(https://www.youtube.com/@theRadBrad).

DEDICATIONS

This book is dedicated to the following people:

Joseph Omondi Muchura – Dearest father, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you, after 6 years of writing the first edition which you endorsed. It is also sad that you are no longer here with me to witness the publishing of the ultimate version of the book. May the Lord God rest your soul in eternal peace.

Margaret Anyango Omondi Okul – Dearest mother, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards your material and financial support for my education and publishing of this book. May the Lord grant you more life and good health.

The Omondi, Andrea Muchura and Andrea Okul Families At large

Christine Omondi Achieng' – Dearest sister, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards your material and financial support in the publishing of this book and previous ones as well. May the Lord God reward you greatly for your acts of generosity.

Yvonne Aginga – Dearest Love, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards the love and kindness you have shown me since we were children growing up in the same neighbourhood. If it is in your wishes to remain by my side, it is in my prayers that we shall find peace, love and joy together in the midst of our challenges for as long as we both live.

Julie Oracho - Dearest friend, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards the love and kindness you showed me as a childhood best friend. I will cherish the memory of you and all the good times we had and love you showed me for as long as I live.

Nelly Opondo - Dearest friend, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards the love and kindness you showed me as a childhood best friend. I will cherish the memory of you and all the good times we had and love you showed me for as long as I live.

Margaret "Maggy" Wambui Wanjiru – Dearest Margaret, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards the love and kindness you showed me when we were together briefly in Kenyatta University campus. It is with a heavy heart in equal measures that I acknowledge that you made a choice to part ways with me for reasons you best comprehend. Your absence left a hole in my heart that I am struggling to fill. Wherever it is that you are, may the Lord protect you, bless you with more joy and success.

Bismarck Ouma - Dearest friend, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards the kindness you showed me as roommate and friend. May the Lord God bless you more for the generosity you have shown me.

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Naserian Simat - Dearest friend, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards the love and kindness you showed me as a friend and classmate. May the Lord God bless you more for the generosity you have shown me.

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Diana Otieno - Dearest cousin and friend, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards the love and kindness you showed me as a friend and cousin. May the Lord God bless you more for the generosity you have shown me.

Victor Otieno Okul – Dearest cousin and friend, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you as a show of gratitude towards the love and kindness you showed me as a friend and cousin. May the Lord God bless you more for the generosity you have shown me.

Hiroyuki Sanada – Dear Mr. Sanada, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you to say thank you for the big and wonderful performance you have given me in the Japanese-themed motion

picture- **47 Ronin** (2013), that primarily inspired me to author this book, right from the first edition. May God grant you more life and good health so that you continue with the good work on screen.

Scarlett J. - Dear Miss Johansson, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you to say thank you for the big and wonderful performance you have given me in the Japanese-themed motion picture – **Ghost in a Shell** (2017), that primarily inspired me to author this book, right from the first edition. May God grant you more life and good health so that you continue with the good work on screen.

Tom Cruise - Dear Mr. Cruise, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you to say thank you for the big and wonderful performance you have given me in the Japanese-themed motion picture - **The Last Samurai** (2003), that primarily inspired me to author this book. May God grant you more life and good health so that you continue with the good work on screen.

Keanu Reeves - Dear Mr. Reeves, it is with great joy that I dedicate this book to you to say thank you for the big and wonderful performance you have given me in the Japanese-themed motion picture- **47 Ronin** (2013), that primarily inspired me to author this book, right from the first edition. May God grant you more life and good health so that you continue with the good work on screen.

All those, in the history of man, who have played roles in the production of Japanese-themed motion pictures or other creative works of entertainment or education, do not feel left out, this book is for you as well.

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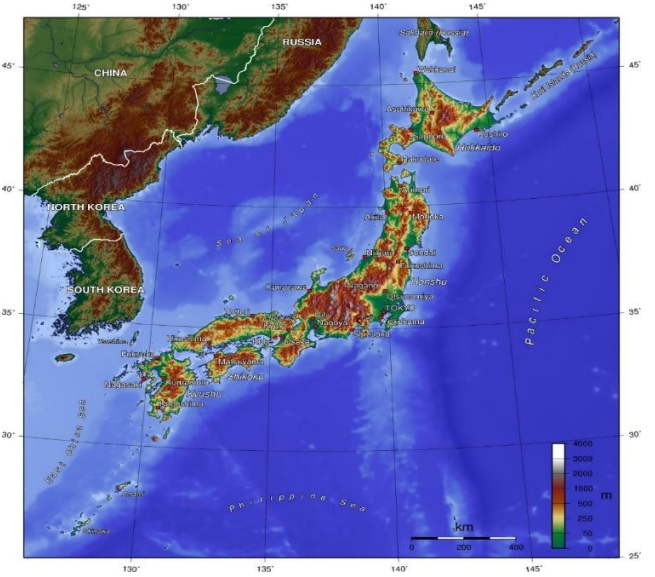
TOPOGRAPHY MAP AND ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS MAP OF JAPAN

Topography Map and Administrative Divisions Map of Japan



A topographic map of Japan, by Captain Blood at en.wikipedia.org via the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license.

Japan has a topography that entails a landscape filled with mountains, active volcanoes, rivers and coastal plains. About 70-80% of this landscape consists of mountains. This mountainous nature of Japanese terrain shapes significantly the human settlement patterns in Japan, for instance, most of the human settlements are located in the coastal plains like the Kanto Plain adjacent to Tokyo and the Kansai Plain close to Osaka (Petry, 2003).

Japan is located within the Pacific Ring of Fire, which is a tectonic belt of volcanoes and earthquakes stretching for a length of 40,000 km with a width of about 500 km, surrounding much of the Pacific Ocean. This accounts for high levels of seismic activity (earthquakes) and volcanic

eruptions in the area. There are over 100 active volcanoes in Japan, such as Mount Fuji, which is the tallest peak in Japan at a height of 3,776 metres. The main island of Honshu in Japan has a series of mountain ranges called the Japanese Alps which bisect the main island and boast some of the country's highest peaks (Petry, 2003).

Japanese rivers typically are short and swift and flow from the high mountainous areas down to the coastal plains. The Shinano River which runs for 367 km is the longest in Japan and like all the other rivers flowing from the high mountains, it provides water for both agricultural and hydroelectric power generation purposes (Long 1992, p.74).

Below is an administrative divisions map of Japan showing the prefectures:

Prefectures of Japan with colored regions. By Tokyoship - Own work, Public Domain,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15683093

Contemporary Japan's administrative structure and divisions is governed by the Local Autonomy Act, which was passed by Japan's House of Representatives and the House of Peers on the 28th of March 1947 (National Diet Library, *Nihon hōrei sakuin*, 2017).

On the 17th of April 1947, it was promulgated as Law No. 67 of 1947 (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 2018). The Act is responsible for the devolution of power from the central government to the local governments at sub-national levels, and the establishment of administrative divisions such as **prefectures** and **municipalities** and sub-municipal divisions as well.

The Act divides Japan into **47 prefectures** and each is governed and headed by an **elected governor.** Examples of prefectures include Hokkaido, Kyoto, Okinawa, Fukushima, Nagano etc. Prefectures are further divided into **municipalities** which consist of **cities**, **towns** and **villages**. Of the 47 prefectures, only 43 are "true" prefectures (prefectures proper), and of the remaining 4, two are **urban prefectures** (Osaka and Kyoto), one is considered a **metropolis** (Tokyo) and the last one (Hokkaido) is considered a **circuit**.

Tokyo Metropolis is further divided into **23 special wards**, which are the lowest level of government and as well considered municipal divisions. There are 20 most populated cities outside of the Tokyo Metropolis and these are called **designated cities** which are further divided into **wards** which are also the lowest levels of government in Japan.

PRE-HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 1

EARLIEST JAPANESE CIVILIZATIONS

EARLIEST JAPANESE CIVILIZATION

Earliest Japanese civilization is referred to as the Jomon who lived in the Jomon Period (15 or 13,000BC to 300BC). They are known for their highly detailed artifacts pottery and statues.

They lived on the Japanese archipelago uninterrupted for over 10,000 years. This came to an end with the migration of the Yayoi into Japan (1000-300BC). They brought bronze and iron technology into Japan and also advanced farming techniques. This in turn led to high crop yields and rise in the human population on the Japanese archipelago. They also played a role in producing large amounts of wealth and power for the land owners.

Actually, Japan was initially divided into 100 kingdoms as per the accounts from The Book of Han completed around 82 AD. In 240 A.D, the Yamato Clan had hegemony over other clans in Japan and began to be referred to as a single Kingdom by the Chinese, the Kingdom of Wa. This is true as per the accounts from a Chinese work of History, the Wei Zhi.

2.1 Pre-Jomon Palaeolithic (Old Stone Age) Period (??-13,000BC)

According to **Kenneth G. Henshall's *A History of Japan, From Stone Age to Superpower, 2nd Edition*** (2004), there is no certainty when humans first settled in Japan. There are suggestions ranging from 500,000 to 1 million years, with little to no evidence yet to be uncovered. It is commonly agreed upon that this number could be 200,000 years ago in as much as the fossils the earliest fossils uncovered are dated to be roughly 30,000 years old.

The first human migrations into Japan were facilitated by the fact that Japan was directly connected to mainland Asia by land bridges before and to the end of the last glacial period that occurred approximately 15,000 years ago. These land bridges include Sakhalin to the north, Tsushima to the west and Ryukyu Islands to the south. After the end of the last glacial period, these land bridges were largely submerged

underwater as a result of rise in sea levels due to melting of glacial ice on earth at the time (Henshall, 2004 p.8).

The land ridges allowed easier movement of people into Japan, with people from east and south east Asia being the first, arriving in waves, nearly 30,000 years ago, followed by people from north-east Asia 14,000 years ago (Henshall, 2004 p.8). The fact that much of the coastline before the end of the last glacial period is now underwater, makes it much harder to get evidence useful in providing a clearer picture of what life was in Palaeolithic Japan. What is presently evident is that the palaeolithic inhabitants of Japan were organised into small and seasonally mobile groups of hunters and gatherers involved in hunting of smaller animals like deer and boar, and also bigger ones like elephants and bison, whose populations were reduced as a result of warming climatic conditions and increased hunting by an ever-growing human population (Henshall, 2004 p.8).

Gathering involved activities like picking berries and nuts. The family composition of these palaeolithic inhabitants consisted of a small number of extended families numbering 20 to 150 individuals. Extended families played an important role of rearing orphaned children as most of the parents died before reaching their thirties (Henshall, 2004 p.8).

These inhabitants being nomadic hunters and gatherers, had temporary seasonal settlements, meaning they moved from one place to another with the changes in seasons. However, towards the end of the Palaeolithic Period, there existed a limited number of permanent settlements. Their societies involved specialization, meaning every individual had some work to specialize in, for instance, tool production. This created room for trading as different individuals had something unique to offer to those who did not specialize in their area of work/production (Henshall, 2004 p.8).

The Stone Age is universally characterised by use of caves as permanent shelters, however, in the case of Japan, stone age people in this part of the world, used these caves as temporary shelters, in most cases. It is suggested that instead, there was inclination towards more creation of artificial shelters in open spaces. People of palaeolithic Japan are believed to be around 1.55 metres in height as per measurements of an excavated skeleton in Minatogawa, much shorter compared to modern

people but of roughly the same height as other palaeolithic people in other areas of East Asia (Henshall, 2004 p.9).

Japan has a number of palaeolithic sites and they include Babadan and Takamori in Miyagi Prefecture, Hoshino in Tochigi Prefecture, Fukui Cave in Nagasaki Prefecture, Nagawa in Tokyo Prefecture, Iwajuku in Gunma Prefecture and Minatogawa in Okinawa (Henshall, 2004 p.9).

2.2 Jomon Period (13000 BC to 400 BC)

This period is characterised by the making of pottery that have cord patterns referred to as "Jomon", from around 13,000 BC (Henshall, 2004). These potteries are believed to be the oldest in the world. Their existence suggests that the Jomon people had a settled lifestyle and, hence an increase in human settlements since the pre-Jomon palaeolithic period from around 5000 BC. The small groups of seasonally mobile hunters and gatherers of the pre-Jomon palaeolithic period expanded into larger communities. The largest village settlement of the Jomon period as of 2004, was discovered in Sannai-Maruyama in Aomori Prefecture, and it is believed to have been populated between 3500 BC and 2000 BC. It is approximately 100 acres in size. This village is believed by some experts to be putting Japan on the world map as the cradle of early civilization (Henshall, 2004 p.9; Habu, 2008).

Image: Jomon Pottery. Incipient Jomon rope pottery 10000–8000 BCE. By User:PHG, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31533

Image: Jomon vessel 3000–2000 BCE, Flame-style Pottery [de; ja; pl] (Flamboyant Ceramic, *Kaen-doki*). By Daderot - Own work, License: CCO 1.0 : https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en. Find image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31396630

Agriculture became a practice in this period as a result of the rise in human settlements. The oldest evidence of prehistoric farming in Japan was discovered at Bibi in Hokkaido in 1997. Around 1000 BC, rice farming was introduced from mainland Asia to the southwestern region of Japan, from China probably through Korea; however, some scholars suggest a different route other than Korea (Henshall, 2004 p.9). Other crops introduced alongside rice but not heavily farmed include millet and barley. Rice was grown, not in paddies, but in the dry fields or marshes (Henshall, 2004 p.9; Takamiya, 2001; Crawford, 1998; Shen, 1998; Crawford, G.W. & G.-A. Lee, 2003).

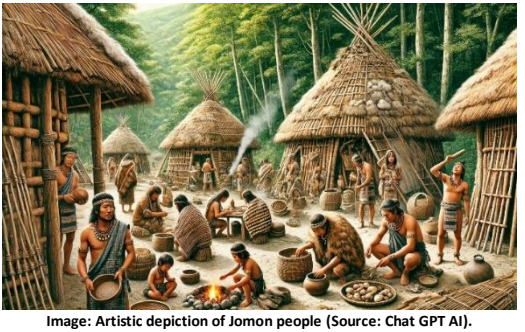


Image: Artistic depiction of Jomon people (Source: Chat GPT AI).

Many Japanese people believe rice farming in Japan began there from a time no one can remember, but actually the Japanese were the last to adopt rice farming in Asia. Other than farming the Jomon also practised

hunting and gathering, mostly along the Japanese coast. Their settlements were semi-permanent. They lived in camps over an area of land, and each camp had about 12 dwellings which were pit-dug houses with thatched roofs. Bows and arrows were useful to them in hunting boar and deer. They are almost all kinds of animals in Japan including frogs, wolves, badgers, and the Siberian lion. Dogs happen to be the only animal they domesticated (Henshall, 2004 pp. 9-10; Moriya, 2015).

The Jomon people loved to settle along the coast because they were in need of marine resources such as shellfish and oceanic fish. The warming climate at this time, around 15,000 years ago, not only over-swept the land-bridges to mainland Asia underwater (due to global melting of ice in the last glacial period), but also led to an increase in marine life due to warming of the seas and oceans. 5000 years ago, the climate began to cool, forcing many Jomon settlers to leave the coast for inland Japan to make good use of inland resources there, probably because the climatic cooling might have reduced the availability of marine resources. Some, however, decided to return to the coast after nearly a thousand years (Henshall, 2004 p.10).

The Jomon people believed in the existence of the supernatural. They are believed to have practised **shamanism**, rituals including burial rituals for the dead, and made use of mysterious stone circles like those in northern Japan for religious purposes. Snake images and representations discovered in some areas, suggest the Jomon people practised snake worship (Henshall, 2004 p.11; Pilgrim &Ellwood, 1985).

The Jomon people as mentioned earlier were shorter in height as compared to modern Japanese and other people from Asia. Towards the end of the Jomon period, males were approximately 157 cm in height and females 148 cm. The Yayoi people, who arrived in Japan around 400 BC, marking a new era (the **Yayoi Period**), were approximately 3 cm or 4 cm taller, and slightly different from their modern Japanese descendants at the start of the 20th Century. The Jomon people were also typically muscular in appearance, with heavy skeletons, flat leg bones and wide square faces. The Jomon people are quite similar to the modern Ainu Japanese people. This marks them as different from the modern inland Japanese people, who are morel likely to be descendants of the Yayoi people. There is no certainty when the Ainu people appeared in Japan or where they exactly arrived from, but they are known to have been inhabitants of Japan for a very long time.

This confirms the Ainu people as the original indigenous people of Japan. For many centuries, the Yayoi-descendent Japanese people denied this fact and even marginalised the Ainu people until 1997, when the Ainu people were officially recognised as the true indigenous Japanese people (Henshall, 2004 p.11).

In conclusion, as much as the Ainu people are direct descendants of the Jomon people, and the original inhabitants of Japan, they are not credited for the emergence of the modern Japanese nation-state, instead, the credit goes to the immigrant Yayoi people.

2.3 Yayoi Period (400 BC – 250 AD)

This is a period in Japanese history that is marked by the arrival of the Yayoi people into Jomon-occupied Japan. Their arrival is estimated to have happened around 400 BC, though some scholars suggest they arrived around 1000 BC. The Yayoi arrived in large numbers from mainland Asia. They stood out from the Jomon people in terms of physical appearance and culture. They were taller, lighter and with narrower faces in comparison with the Jomon people. They introduced new technologies to Jomon-occupied Japan in terms of iron and bronze, and they utilised these technologies to engage in rice farming more extensively than the Jomon people who never had this advantage (Henshall, 2004 p.12).

The Yayoi Period takes its name from the Yayoi people, who were given this name from the Yayoi District in Tokyo, because a new plain and reddish type of pottery that is different from the Jomon pottery was discovered there in 1884 (Hoang, 2016; Henshall, 2004 p.12; Imamura, 1996). The Yayoi period is commonly associated with rice farming, with the Yayoi immigrants initially being given credit for introducing rice to Japan, however, this is not accurate as rice farming was already practised in the Jomon Period even though in smaller scales in marshy areas compared to the Yayoi immigrant settlers who practised it on larger scales in paddies (Henshall, 2004 p.12). Rice farming ever since has remained a key culture of Japanese people to this day. The Yayoi immigrant settlers practised rice farming significantly in southern and western Japan from where rice farming spread faster to the middle of Honshu, prior to the beginning of the 1st Century AD. The spread to the north was much slower, despite the limited presence of iron and bronze technologies and limited rice farming in these areas as early as the Jomon Period. Northern Japan was therefore largely left “stuck” in the

Jomon Period until somewhere in the 8th Century AD or maybe later on, and this happened as the South continued advancing its culture, creating a cultural gap between northern and southern Japan, that is evident by the presence of the Ainu Japanese people in Hokkaido (Henshall, 2004 p.13).

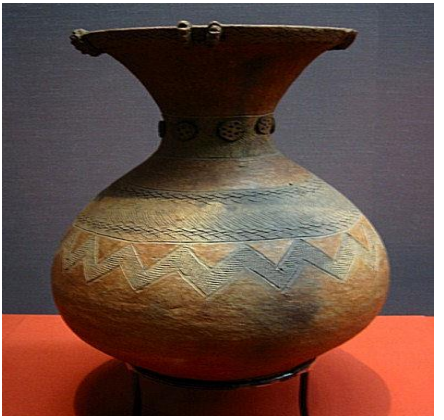


Image: Yayoi Pottery. Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=322700

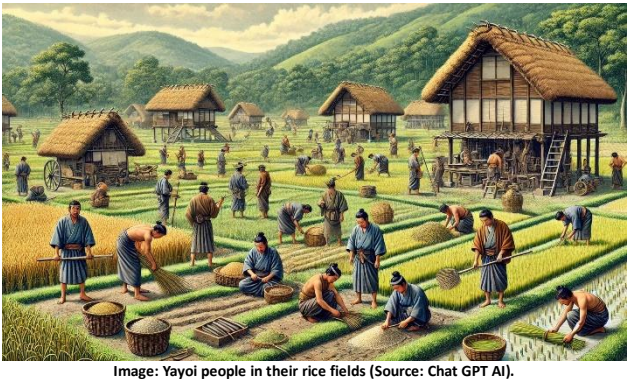


Image: Yayoi people in their rice fields (Source: Chat GPT AI).

Social stratification in this era was driven by a number of factors. First, we have metals. Metal ores are rear in Japan and therefore, people who had metal products or technologies were given higher social status than

those without. Metal as a factor as gave rise to other smaller factors for social stratification in this era. For example, metal technologies influenced agricultural production and since metals were rare, rice production resulted in a narrowing of resource base in the community, creating a good environment for the social elites to place control over the limited resource base. Agricultural production led to the development of more permanent settlements and higher territorial identification. And as the Japanese population rose to around 2 million, there grew the need to defend existing communal territories and expand into others. This led to frequent wars between communities, and communities that had more and better metallic weapons and warriors were given higher social status. Tribes or communities that won battles were also given higher social status than those that lost them (Henshall,2004 p.13; Hoang, 2016).

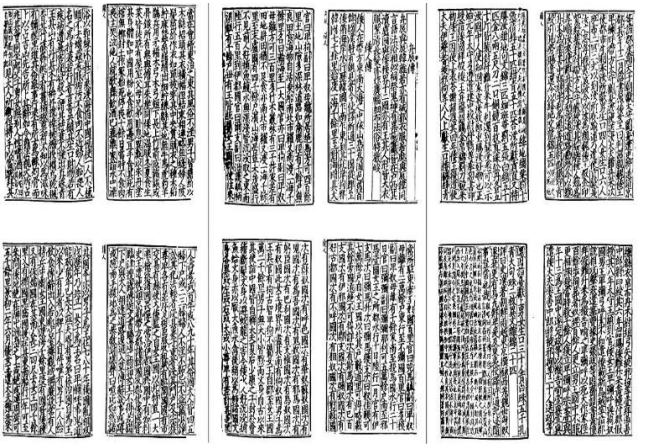
Social status was also determined by the magnitude of freedom an individual had, for instance, slaves were given lower social status compared to free people and lower-ranking people had an obligation to bow to higher-ranking people whenever and wherever they crossed paths. This practice was maintained up to the 19th Century AD (Henshall,2004 p.13; Hoang, 2016).

Social status was also determined by the number of wives a man had. A man who had 4 or 5 wives was given a higher social status than a man who had 2 or 3 wives (Henshall, 2004; Hoang, 2016). Social status for an individual or a tribe was also determined by the amount of wealth accumulated in through trade, as those with more wealth were given a higher social status than those with less or none. Trade was enabled by the fact that there was diversity of products to trade in i.e. metals, silk, glassware etc. This trade was conducted domestically within Japan and also with other civilizations on mainland Asia. Each Japanese district had a market centre where traders met to exchange goods, an example being Asahi in Aichi Prefecture which was the largest Yayoi settlement ever uncovered as of 2004(Hoang, 2016; Henshall 2004 p.13).

As a result of an interplay of several factors like increased inter-tribal warfare, social stratification, the emergence of social elites, and competition over who would control communal resources, there was increased politicization evident in the merging of smaller chiefdoms to form various small kingdoms in Japan. Much information about these

kingdoms is sourced from ancient Chinese texts (Henshall, 2004 p.13; Hoang, 2016).

The first of these ancient texts to mention Japan is the ***Han Shu*** (History of Han), entailing the history of China and completed in 82 AD. This ancient text referred to Japan as the land of *Wa* (the land of dwarfs), which was made of 100 kingdoms that regularly sent envoys to pay tribute to the Chinese base at Lo-lang in Korea (Hoang, 2016; Henshall, 2004 p.14). Another ancient Chinese text is the ***Wei Chi*** or ***Wei Zhi*** (History of Wei). *Wei* was one of the Chinese kingdoms at the time. The ancient text provides more detailed information concerning Japan in a section written on "Eastern barbarians" and other peoples of Manchuria and Korea. The *Wei Chi* mentions a visit by Wei Chinese to *Wa* (Japan) in 240 AD and gives a description of *Wa's* strongest kingdom- the ***Hsieh-ma-t'ai***, referred to as ***Yamatai*** in Japanese (Henshall, 2004 p.14; Hoang, 2016).



Text of the Wei Zhi (魏志, Records of Wei). Kidder, J. Edward. *Himiko and Japan's Elusive Chiefdom of Yamatai: Archaeology, History, and Mythology*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 2007. 11. Print (Public Domain, Source: Wikimedia.org)

This kingdom was under the rule of a shamanist queen by the name **Himiko**. She is described as one who is full of mystery and one who rose to power through years of warfare. She largely pre-occupied herself with magic, sorcery, practising witchcraft and casting spells on people. She was thus concerned more with spiritual matters leaving her younger brother to take care of administrative duties in the governing of the kingdom (Hoang, 2016; Henshall 2004 p.14).

Queen Himiko lived permanently in a fortress guarded by 100 men, with 1000 women available to serve her needs and a single male attendant through whom she made her communications to the rest of the world. Queen Himiko built strong ties with the Chinese Empire by sending delegates to pay tribute to the Chinese Emperor, like in 238 AD. This is a practise that is believed to have been in place as early as 57AD, even by other rulers from other kingdoms of Wa. In turn, the Chinese Empire recognized Queen Himiko's regal status officially and was also recognized as the sole sovereign monarch ruler of all of *Wa*. Queen Himiko and the Chinese Emperor exchanged gifts, with the emperor receiving clothes, cinnabar and slaves, and Himiko receiving mirrors, clothes and jewels. In 248 A.D, according to historians from China, Queen Himiko passed away, aged 65 years. 100 slaves were offered as human sacrifice following her death which also resulted in chaos, which was resolved when Himiko's 13-year-old female relative named Iyo, ascended to power to take the place of a ruler who was not popular with the people (Henshall, 2004 p.14; Hoang, 2016). The Yamatai Kingdom became Japan's centre of power as many other kingdoms in Japan chose to swear loyalty to the Yamatai. It is not clear as of the true location of the Yamatai kingdom, but some historians think it is the pre-cursor to or the foundation for the Yamato State in the Nara basin, others believe it might have been located in northern Kyushu (Henshall, 2004 p.14).

The Yayoi period of Japanese history as described in ancient Chinese texts marks a huge leap from an era of pre-history (unrecorded history) to that of recorded history, thus distinguishing the Yayoi period from earlier periods in Japanese history like the Jomon Period and the pre-Jomon Palaeolithic Period. Other significant transformations include shifts from hunting and gathering and limited agricultural production of the Jomon period to the extensive agricultural production of the Yayoi period, the shift from Jomon stone-based tools to the Yayoi metal-based tools, the shift from Jomon temporary settlements to the Yayoi

permanent settlements, and the emergence of social stratification, all of which created good grounds economically and technologically for the creation of a politically and socially unified state – the Yamato State, in the next era/period of Japanese history – the Kofun Period (Henshall, 2004 p.15).

ANCIENT HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 2

KOFUN PERIOD (250 – 538 A.D)

THE KOFUN PERIOD

250-538 A.D. marked the Kofun Period which saw the unification of Japan by the **Yamato** and construction of massive burial mounds, present to this very day. The rulers of the Yamato gained power over all of Japan through military conquest and also convincing local clan leaders to bow to their authority and in exchange to receive influential positions in the Yamato government. These clans who supported the Yamato became known as the ***uji***, they include: the **Soga**, the **Mononobe**, the **Nakatomi**, the **Kasuga**, the **Ki**, the **Otomo** and the **Haji**. Rulers of the Yamato state, consisting of a hereditary line of Emperors still reign today as the world's longest dynasty. They were ranked in hierarchy or titled depending on their level of kinship (blood relations) or service (loyalty). Below the uji clans was a category of clans referred to as the ***be*** groups which were purely occupation groups, meaning a group of people with professional specialization i.e. papermakers, scribes, blacksmiths, pot-makers etc. Some immigrants from China and Korea were included in the ***uji*** and ***be*** because of their desirable professional skills in papermaking and metalworking. Below the ***uji*** and the ***be***, was the slave group whose members were born into slavery or were captured enemy warriors (prisoners of war) (Hoang, 2016).

This period borrows its name from large burial mounds or tombs known as ***Kofun*** that were commonly used in the era. Burial mounds were erected mostly for the elite members of the society upon their deaths, in the early Kofun Period. The mounds were different in size and shape, ranging from round or square mounds that were several meters long to those whose shapes resembled that of a key-hole. The earliest-built mounds were rather simple and the coffins buried in them were placed in the mound's summit, alternatively in the stone chamber. Later in the Kofun period, the deceased were buried in the mounds with burial goods placed inside as well ranging from weapons to personal belongings depending on the social status of the deceased. In the late Kofun Period, the sizes of the mounds reduced and their usage amongst people of lower social status increased (Hoang, 2016).

Image: Kofun burial mound (Daisen Kofun) in Osaka Japan, tomb of Emperor Nintoku Osaka. Source:(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kofun#/media/File:NintokuTomb_Aerial_photograph_2007.jpg).

There was the use of iron and other metal technologies adopted in the previous Yayoi period. The use of iron became more widespread than previous metals like bronze because the tin metal required to make bronze was very scarce at the time and iron was readily available in plentiful. Rice paddies were constructed at higher elevations and irrigation systems employed became more complex. The society became largely aristocratic with military rulers. There were newly adopted military practises, for example, warriors wore metal armour, carried swords and used other advanced weapons of the time, rode on horses and borrowed advanced military methods from North East Asia. These progressive changes in Japanese society of the time are evidenced by the ***haniwa*** clay funerary statues or figures found in thousands of Kofun tombs (burial mounds) (Hoang, 2016; Worden 1992, p.6).

Image: Kofun haniwa clay funeral statue. By Daderot - Own work, Licence: CC0 - https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31441340

The Kofun Period marked a period of transition towards a more unified and **recognized** state- which was the **Yamato State**, thus the Kofun Period is also sometimes known as the **Yamato Period** which includes the Asuka Period as well according to some scholars, since the two periods overlap and the transition from Kofun to Asuka Period was gradual and interconnected with some trends continuing into the Asuka Period from the Kofun Period. The Yamato State has origins which are believed to stem from an early federation or federal state- the **Yamatai Kingdom** led by **Queen Himiko**, who consolidated power through military conquest of other kingdoms of Yayoi Japan and/or consolidating allegiance from them as well. The Yamato had a system and organization of government in the mid-Kofun period which comprised several aristocratic powerful clans (the uji) which were extended families headed by a patriarch chieftain(chief) who was to ensure the future well being of his clan by performing sacred rites to the ***kami*** (gods) as part of **Shinto** religious worship**.** Shinto is a Japanese religion that emerged during the Kofun Period but with roots in earlier periods of Japanese history such as the Yayoi Period. The word "Shinto" literally means "the way of the gods." It primarily involves diligent ritual performances to the "kami" in order to maintain a proper lifestyle and a proper connection to the gods as well. The kami, according to Shinto beliefs are gods or spirits who posses the natural objects like the sun, moon, sea, wind and phenomenon like storms, and their respective powers as well. They are also believed to possess or embody things like war or the underworld. The Kami were also believed to come in the form of objects or people of great social status, living or dead i.e. emperors, warriors etc. In the earlier years of Shinto worship, shrines or temples were not needed, instead worshippers carried out their sacred activities in open spaces or in places considered sacred like the forests, but this trend changed when temples and shrines were built. It was believed by Shinto worshippers that the Kami did not dwell in the temples or shrines or sacred places, instead the spirits of the kami visited these places and dwelt in the statues that depicted them (Hoang, 2016; Worden 1992, p.7).

Image: Shrine in Kyoto, Japan. Fushimi Inari-Taisha Shinto shrine in modern-day Tokyo Japan. authored by Pixabay Artist Michelle Raponi. The image was made available on Pixabay.com under the Pixabay Content License**.**

The clan members were the aristocracy. This aristocracy was dominated by the royal family that maintained control of the Yamato court, and at this time, the royal family was at the peak of its reign. The Yamato Court became the central government and thus centre of power in all of Japan. (Worden 1992, p.7)

The system of administration and writing they employed were influenced by Chinese models. The Yamato central government (imperial court), exercised power over the clans and exerted control over the agricultural lands. There was decentralization of power to the chieftains of the clans who attended the imperial courts to represent their respective clans in matters of policy-making. The **county was the basic administrative unit** and **society was organized into occupation**

groups, suggesting professional specialization, as people played different roles to sustain the society, for instances, some people became farmers, others fishermen, artisans and so on. Each clan

formed an occupation group headed by a chieftain i.e. a clan of farmers, warriors, artisans, fishermen and so on. (Worden 1992, p.7)

In the late Kofun Period, there was increased interactions and exchanges between Japan and mainland Asia, for example the introduction of Buddhism to Japan from Korea, around 538 A.D, which marked the beginning of the transition to the **Asuka Period** of Japanese History. The Yamato clan, according to some historians, managed to create diplomatic relations with the **Paekche Kingdom** of Korea in 366 A.D. They established an outpost in southern Korea which was in their jurisdiction until 562 A.D, when the **Silla Kingdom** of Korea pushed them out. Japan and China, according to some Chinese records, established diplomatic relations for their mutual benefit. According to these records, five Japanese kings between 413 A.D and 478 A.D, sent nine ambassadors with tributes to China in exchange for Chinese support towards Japanese interests in the Korean Peninsula. As China received tributes from Japan through Korea, Japan received immigrants from Korea and China who possessed the necessary knowledge and skills needed by the Japanese to make improvements on their culture i.e. paper-making and metalworking (Hoang, 2016).

The rise of **Emperor Kimmei** in Japan at around 531 A.D coincided with the rise of the Soga Clan and their influence in the Imperial Court. They took advantage of this to facilitate the introduction of beliefs and practises from China in Japan. The Soga Clan advocated for the introduction of Buddhism, Chinese cultural and government models based on Chinese Confucianism. The Soga also introduced other reforms based on Chinese models i.e. Chinese-based fiscal policies, a newly established national treasury and redesignation of the Korean Peninsula as a trade route from previously being an “object” of territorial expansion (Worden 1992, p.8).

Why did the Soga advocate for the introduction of Buddhism to Japan? Firstly, the Soga were of Korean ancestry, and Buddhism being of Korean origins, they felt more comfortable with the religion than the native Japanese clans who were mostly Shinto believers. Secondly, the Soga desired that Buddhism as a religion be Japanese state religion and thus, they would easily accomplish their goals in establishing political control over Japan, a goal that they also attempted to achieve by marrying off their daughters to the nobles of the Yamato imperial family. They persuaded Emperor Yomei to accept the introduction of

Buddhism to Japan and the imperial family realised that associating wit Buddhism was a promising tool in enhancing and cementing their legitimacy(acceptance) and political power in Japan. They also believed that Buddhist ideologies would help them unify the country of Japan (Henshall, 2004).

Apparently, some of the clans represented in the Imperial Court stood against these reforms. They include the Nakatomi Clan that were tasked with performing Shinto religious rituals in the court and the Mononobe Clan which was a military clan. This discord amongst the clans represented in the Imperial Yamato Court continued for more than a century with the Soga Clan remaining the most influential in the court, long into the Asuka Period. (Worden 1992, p.8).

ANCIENT HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 3

ASUKA PERIOD (538 – 710A.D)

ASUKA PERIOD

In 538 A.D, Buddhism arrived in Japan, introduced by a Korean King of the **Paekche Kingdom**, marking the beginning of the Asuka Period, which saw centralization of power. Buddhism managed to co-exist with Japan's initial religion – Shinto, even though there was resistance to its introduction to Japan by some opposing Shinto believers.

Images above: Buddhist monk meditating at the high mountain temples. This image was authored by the Pixabay Artist Sasint and made available under the Pixabay Content License. Find the image here: https://pixabay.com/photos/buddhist-monk-sitting-meditation-1807526/

It was the Soga clan, amongst all the clans that were represented in the Yamato imperial court, that advocated for the introduction of Buddhism to Japan from Korea. They managed to become the most influential clan in the imperial court and used this position to influence the imperial family to introduce Buddhism to Japan. Both the Soga and the imperial family believed Buddhism would help them enhance political control of Japan and enhance the legitimacy of the imperial family's political rule over Japan. The Soga used intermarriages between their daughters and the nobles of the imperial family as a tool of acquiring and maintaining influence on the imperial family and thus shaping policy-making in the Yamato imperial court for generations (Worden, 1992 p.8).

Image: Buddhist Temple of Kinkaku-ji declared World Heritage Site by UNESCO. This image was authored by Vesna Vujicic-Lugassy and published under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO license. The image was made available as part of the Connected Open Heritage project. The project is led by Wikimedia Sverige in cooperation with UNESCO. (Source: Wikipedia.org).

In 587 A.D, a Soga chieftain(chief) by the name **Soga no Umako** gained sufficient power and influence to have his nephew as emperor but later had him assassinated and had him replaced with **Empress Suiko**. Suiko was reduced to a ceremonial figurehead by Soga no Umako and the Prince Regent **Shotoku Taishi** (574A -622 A.D). Prince Shotoku was an intellectual well-educated in Chinese philosophy and practises, including Buddhism and **Confucianism**. His beliefs in Confucian principles such as the "**Mandate of Heaven**" led him to assert the rule of the sovereign leader was mandated by supreme supernatural force (a god). Prince Shotoku championed the adoption of Confucian models of rank and etiquette and came up with the **Seventeen Article Constitution** (*kenpo jushichijo*), which highlighted the means of bringing harmony through Confucianism, to a chaotic society. He adopted the Chinese calendar, developed a system of highways, built many Buddhist temples, ordered the compiling of court chronicles, sent students to study Buddhism and Confucianism in China, and he also established formal diplomatic ties with China. Other than students being sent to China, there were many official missions of envoys and priests as well.

These people stayed in China for twenty years or more, learning Chinese philosophy and practice, and when they returned home, they proved to be great reformers. Prince Shotoku then sought to put himself and Japan on an equal standing with the Chinese emperor and China at large, refusing subordinate status in relations with the Chines, a move that was met with sentiments from the Chinese. Prince Shotoku continued sending students and envoys to China, who then returned with Chinese knowledge and influence, and consequently, the influence of Korea on Japan suffered a decline after years of maintaining influence on Japan from the early Kofun period (Worden, 1992 p.8).

The deaths of Prince Shotoku (622 A.D), Soga no Umako (626 A.D) and Empress Suiko (628 A.D), created power vacuums and succession disputes in the Yamato imperial court which invited the threat of military invasions by China. Therefore, to restore order and deter a foreign Chinese invasion, Prince **Naka no Oe,** and **Nakatomi Kamatari** led a successful revolt and a palace coup against the oppressive Soga family in 645 A.D. and they introduced the **Taika Reforms** aimed at centralizing the state from the decentralized system of administration of chieftains that had been traditionally in operation. The Taika Reforms which were rooted in Chinese philosophy and practices involved the following; firstly, abolishment of aristocratic chieftains and their control over domains, occupation groups, and land of the clans. This was aimed at providing the imperial court with **direct rule** over the people and direct control over all lands, thus the decentralized power of clan chieftains was negated and that power transferred to the central Yamato imperial government, and land was no longer in private hands and control by the clans and their chieftains, instead it was made public and under the control of the Yamato imperial court (central government). Hereditary inheritance of land after the death of the owner was negated and land reverted to the state (imperial court) (Worden, 1992 p.9).

Secondly, the state introduced taxes on harvests, silk, cloth, cotton, thread and many other raw materials and finished goods. The labour tax (**corvée tax**) was established for military conscription and the construction of public infrastructure. This means, the population was needed to work on public infrastructural projects and serve in the military as conscripts, as a means of substituting paid tax with labour and military service to the state (Worden, 1992 p.9).

Thirdly, following the abolishment of hereditary titles of clan chieftains and their roles in representing their clans at the imperial court, three ministries were created to provide advice to the imperial court, headed by three ministers – **Minister of the Right, Minster of the Left and Minister of the Centre** (the **Chancellor**) (Worden, 1992 p.9).

Fourthly, the reforms divided Japan into administrative provinces each headed by a **governor** appointed by the imperial court. Below the province were smaller administrative units in the name of districts and villages. Prince Naka was made the Chancellor (Minister of the Centre) and Nakatomi Kamatari was given a new name, and that is – **Fujiwara**, as a reward for his great service to the imperial family, and under his new name- **Fujiwara Kamatari**, he became the first court aristocrat of all that followed him in line. Finally, in the last reform, Japan's name was changed from ***Wa*** to ***Nippon*** or ***Nihon*** and sometimes refereed to as ***Dai Nippon*** to mean **Great Japan**, as recorded in diplomatic documents and chronicles (Worden, 1992 p.9).

After Prince Naka's uncle's and mother's reign as emperor and empress respectively, Prince Naka became emperor as **Emperor Tenji** in 662 A.D, and assumed an extra title of "tenno" meaning – the "heavenly sovereign". He assumed this new title to enhance the public image or perception of the Yamato Clan and to put emphasis on the beliefs of divine origins of the imperial family so as to avoid the imperial family from being involved in a lot of politics as witnessed during the height of the Soga influence over the imperial family and imperial court. Power struggles persisted within Emperor Tenji's (Naka's) family, with his son and brother competing for the throne (Worden, 1992 p.9).

The Taika Reforms were further built upon by the **Taiho-ryoritsu** meaning "the Great Treasure Code" and was also known as the **Taiho Code**, which remained in place until the introduction of modernization reforms by the Meiji Oligarchs in what is remembered as the **Meiji Restoration**(Worden, 1992 p.9), which ushered in the Meiji Period of Japanese history and saw the cancellation of the centuries-long feudal system of **daimyos** (landlord-warlords) holding decentralized power below the Shogun and the Emperor, as we shall see later on. The feudal system was replaced by Western-style legal and administrative structures in the Meiji Restoration.

What are the key features of the Taiho Code? Firstly, we have a criminal code that stated clear penalties for committed crimes, favouring lighter

punishments rather than heavier or harsher ones, thus drawing influence from Confucian philosophy. The code also established a legal framework for resolving disputes and ensuring uniform application of the law across the entirety of Japan. Secondly, we have Chinese-styled centralized administration(bureaucracy), which consisted of the **Department of Rites**, that was devoted to Shinto religion and performing rituals in the imperial court, and then the **Department of State**, which was further divided into eight ministries, namely; Ministry of Central Administration, Ceremonies, Civil Affairs, the Imperial Household, Justice, Military Affairs, People's Affairs and the Ministry of Treasury. Each ministry had specific responsibilities and all ministries answered to the emperor. The Taiho Code failed to address how the sovereign ruler (emperor or empress) would be selected, and therefore many females managed to ascend the throne as Empress of Japan from the 5th Century A.D. to the 8th Century A.D (400s to 700s A.D) until 770 A.D and beyond, when the succession became strictly to males, occasionally from father to son, some other times even to a brother or to an uncle (Worden, 1992 p.10).

ANCIENT HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 4

NARA PERIOD (710 -794 A.D)

THE NARA PERIOD

The capital of Japan, before the establishment of the Taiho Code, was shifted from place to place occasionally following the death of the emperor. The capital was then placed permanently at **Heijokyo** (present-day Nara) in 710 AD. Previously, it was situated in and around a place called Asuka. The Nara Period therefore borrows its name from the permanent capital of its time. The imperial capital of Nara was built with influence from and styled after **Chang 'an**, which was the grand capital pf the Chinese **Tang Dynasty**. Nara is remembered as Japan's first true urban centre. Nara's human population grew to 200,000 which was about 4% of the national population of the time, and around 10,000 were employed by the government. The Nara Period witnessed a rise in economic and administrative activities. Roads were constructed between Nara and provincial capitals, there was higher efficiency in tax collection and the collection was done more routinely. There was also minting and use of coins. The areas outside of Nara, however, did not have a significant number of economic activities (Worden, 1992 p.10).

The land reforms introduced by Prince Shotoku alongside the Taika Reforms by Prince Naka no Oe and Nakatomi Kamatari (later known as Fujiwara Kamatari), began to crumble in the provinces of Japan. Japan therefore began to look for a more manageable land-holding system, leading to the emergence of the ***shoen*** (land estate) system, where private landlords (*shokan*) owned and distributed land. Administrative authorities at the local levels gradually became self- reliant and sufficient and many people began to abandon their land because of increased land taxes. The Taika Reforms of the Kofun Period had declared that all lands were made public under the imperial court, but these reforms increasingly became irrelevant, crumbled and all lands eventually reverted to the *shoens* (Worden, 1992 p.10).

The Nara Period witnessed increased in-fighting and scramble for power in the imperial court by different groups such as members of the imperial family, senior court families like the Fujiwara and Buddhist priests. The late Nara Period witnessed the sate suffer heavy financial constrains leading to the dismissal of non-essential government officials, an end to military conscription, the 792 AD establishment of private militia forces for local community policing (law enforcement) by

district heads who were permitted by the imperial court (Worden, 1992 p.11).

Despite the reforms that were put in place during this period, decentralization of power became the norm. There were efforts to restore centralized power back to the imperial court by moving the capital again from place to place, for instance, in 784 A.D, the capital was moved to Nagaoka and to Heian-Kyo /Heian (present-day Kyoto) in 794 A.D (Worden, 1992 p.11).

The Nara Period is remembered for being rich in literature and some of the notable works include the ***Kojiki*** (Record of Ancient Things) by the court scholar **Ona Yasumaro** in 712 A.D. Another work of literature is the ***Nihon Shoki*** (Chronicles of Japan), sometimes also referred to as the ***Nihongi***, written in 720 A.D by a committee of court scholars. This literature gave a description of the "Age of the gods" during the creation of the world and how the gods ruled the world and later on leaving humanity to govern itself. These literature materials also say the imperial lineage descended directly from the gods, and this was the main purpose for which they were composed - to give the people a godly impression of the imperial family (Cartwright, 2017).

There were also anthologies of poems that were written in this era and they include the ***Kaifuso*** (Fond Recollections of Poetry) written in 751 A.D by the Japanese emperors and princes in Chinese language. There was the Manyoshu (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves), written in 760 A.D which is an anthology of 4,500 poems that have themes of various nature. A series of separate work of literature, the ***fudoki*** were created in 713 A.D, and they gave records of the local kami (spirits/gods) and associated legends that were told in the many provinces of Japan at the time (Cartwright, 2017).

One big socio-cultural development in Japan during the Nara period was the establishment of Buddhism as a permanent religion of Japan. Buddhism was introduced during the transitionary period between the Kofun Period and Asuka Period through influence of the Soga clan on the imperial family in the 6th Century A.D in 538 A.D. This introduction of Buddhism marked the beginning of the Asuka Period. When the Soga introduced Buddhism to Japan, the religion was met with skepticism and sentimental reactions, especially by hard-line believers of the Shinto religion like the Shinto priests of the Nakatomi Clan and the Mononobe military clan. Attitudes towards Buddhism shifted from

negative ones to positive ones in the Nara Period when Emperor Shomu, whole heartedly embraced the religion and converted to it. Emperor Shomu and his wife, the Empress consort-**Komyo**, were firm believers and advocates for Buddhism, thus promoted the religion and made it the "guardian of the state", and believed in the adoption of more Chinese culture to strengthen Japanese institutions (Worden, 1992 p.11).

The Empress Consort Komyo (701-760 A.D) had significant power in her time, influencing politics and economic policy of Japan extensively. She directed immense amounts of state funds towards the construction of Buddhist temples such as the **Kofukuji** in addition to clinics and orphanages. She also financed sutra-copying to encourage devotion to Buddha. During the time of her life in power, she empowered her nephew Fujiwara no Nakamaro (706 -764 A.D) who was beheaded following her death (Farris, 2009 p.44).

Sutra in Buddhism is a scriptural text that keeps records of teachings of the founder of Buddhism – Sidharta Gautama, popularly known as Buddha and those of his closest disciples. Sutra-copying therefore refers to the practice of manually (by hand) making copies of these sutra scriptural texts, which in Buddhism is considered an act of devotion, merit-making (bringing good luck /fortunes) and spiritual discipline. In the reign of Emperor Shomu and his Empress Consort -Komyo, the state promoted Buddhism, with the belief that it would bring peace and prosperity for Japan, and therefore Buddhist practices like sutra-copying were encouraged to bring fortunes and spiritual merit, not only to the individual involved in copying sutras but also to the state at large. Sutra-copying in Japan by use of hand became known as ***shakyo*** and was done as an act of devotion. Similar to *shakyo* was ***kangyo*** which was the printing and publishing of Buddhist sutras with the aid of woodblock printing techniques. *Kangyo* involved mass production of the sutra scriptures for the purpose of spreading Buddhist teachings unlike shakyo which was limited to use of the hand for copying for the purposes of spiritual devotion and merit-making for the individual and the state. Both *shakyo* and *kangyo* techniques of sutra-copying originated from China and were introduced to Korea and then made their way into Japan. *Shakyo* was prominent in Japan from the Nara Period onwards while *kangyo* was introduced and became prominent in Japan during the Heian Period (794 – 1185 A.D) (Atkinson, 1994 p.294;

Levering, 1989 pp.73-74; Stevens, 1981 pp101-102; Sansom, 1978 p.141).

The reign of Emperor Shomu saw the construction of the **Todaji** temple (Great Eastern Temple). The Buddha Danichi (Great Sun Buddha), which is a 16-metre-high gilt-bronze statue, was placed in the temple. Harmony and reconciliation between Buddhists and Shinto worshippers began to take shape, because the Buddha Danichi became identified with the Sun goddess who is revered in Shinto worship. This was followed by a declaration by Emperor Shomu that he would become the Servant of the Three Treasures of Buddhism, namely: the Buddha, the law (teachings of Buddhism) and the Buddhist Community (Worden, 1992 p.11).

Despite these developments, Buddhism failed to become the state religion but instead increased the social status of the imperial family. During the two reigns of Emperor Shomu's daughter - **Empress Koken** (reigned 749 to 758 A.D), many Buddhist priests were brought into the imperial court at her command. She then chose to abdicate from the throne as advised by her cousin – Fujiwara Nakamoro in 758 A.D. Koken then had an affair with a Buddhist faith healer by the name **Dokyo**, a decision that was met with sentiments by Nakamaro who took up arms in an effort to challenge her in 764 A.D, but unfortunately suffered a quick defeat (Worden, 1992 pp.11-12).

Koken accused Nakamaro of colluding with the ruling emperor hence the emperor was deposed and Koken ascended back to the throne for the second time as Empress Shotoku, in a change of titles, reigning from 764 to 770 A.D. Empress Shotoku then ordered the printing of a million prayer charms in honour of the Buddhist clergy. Some historians say she had the intentions of making Dokyo the emperor but her death in 770 A.D prevented her from accomplishing this, and in addition the imperial court rejected the proposal. The Japanese people of her time were left in shock by her actions and this precipitated the exclusion of women from imperial succession and this remained in effect for about 800 years. Women had more rights during the Nara Period of Japan during the reign of female emperors than in today's China, for example, women were permitted to own land in Nara Japan. Empress Shotoku's actions also precipitated the expulsion of Buddhist priests from political offices, and their exclusion from exercising political authority. However much setbacks Buddhism suffered because of these reforms, the spread

of Buddhism in Japan picked up pace in the following Heian Period (794 – 1185 A.D) (Worden, 1992 p.12; Cartwright, 2017).

The Nara Period witnessed a lot of trouble for Japan. Most of the local people in rural areas lived in poverty or slightly above the poverty line. Agricultural production was limited by availability of mostly primitive farming tools, insufficient land ready for crop production, and limited irrigation techniques which did not help in preventing crop failure and famine. There was also smallpox epidemics that largely affected the rural populations in 735 – 737 A.D. These epidemics are approximated to have resulted in a decline of the Japanese population at the time by 25 -35% (Cartwright, 2017).

The temple-building projects by Emperor Shomu, also burdened the people with over taxation. Shomu's conversion and adoration of Buddhism was merely an attempt to invoke a spiritual intervention in averting the country's many disasters and increase the country's fortunes. The poor peasants were denied tax immunity unlike the many religious sites and aristocrats who were treated contrastingly. To make things worse, the government suffered financial accountability problems in the face of excessive fiscal expenditure on temple construction projects. The imperial court was also plagued by in-fighting amongst aristocrats of the time over favours and positions from the imperial family. This necessitated Emperor Kanmu (rarely or mistakenly written as Kammu) (reigned 781 – 806 A.D) to move the capital to Heian-Kyo in 794 A.D, marking the onset of the Heian Period (Cartwright, 2017).

MEDIEVAL (FEUDAL/MIDDLE AGES) HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 5

HEIAN PERIOD (794 -1185 A.D)

HEIAN PERIOD

This period of Japanese history began in 794 A.D with the relocation of the imperial capital to Heian-Kyo by Emperor Kanmu. This period witnessed vibrant display of Japanese culture in the fields of literature and art. The Fujiwara clan was the dominant force in the imperial court but this position was contested by the Taira and Minamoto clans, leading to the **Genpei War** of 1180 to 1185, that was won eventually by the Minamoto clan, and thus the Minamoto leader – Minamoto no Yoritomo was appointed *shogun* of Japan by the imperial court, and he established the Kamakura Shogunate. A *shogun* was a military dictator who wielded power on behalf of the emperor, and his military government is called a shogunate (Cartwright, 2017).

In early Heian Period, Emperor Kanmu conducted military offensive operations to subjugate the Emishi of Honshu regions of Japan. After some partial success in 794 A.D, the emperor appointed a military commander with the title ***seii tai-shogun***, which translates to "barbarian-subduing generalissimo" a title popularly known as *shogun*. The shogun managed to lead his army of warriors to score battlefield victories over the Emishi people and conquering their lands thus extending the imperial court's jurisdiction to the eastern ends of Honshu (Worden, 1992 p.13).

The previous Nara Period was marked by aristocratic scramble for power, influence, favours and positions in the imperial court. There was also too much influence from Buddhists in policy-making. All these compelled Emperor Kammu to move the state capital to Nagaokakyo temporarily, and then to Heian-Kyo in 794 A.D as a fresh start to free the imperial court of Buddhist influence, corruption and aristocratic scramble for power and influence. Heian-Kyo literally translates to "the capital of peace and tranquillity", and the city's architectural designs were largely influenced by Chinese models. The city was divided into Eastern and Western quarters by a central avenue. Palaces were built for aristocrats and were rich in carefully land-scaped gardens, and also there were modest private homes with roofs that were thatched or made of tree barks. To the south of the royal palace, was a pleasure park for recreation. Artisan quarters were made available for artists, metal workers and potters, and were fitted with workshops to aid them in their professional undertakings. Buddhists were denied the right or

chance in having their temples in the city's central locations (Cartwright, 2017).

Image: Artistic depiction of a samurai warrior in colourful armour. Source: Microsoft Image Creator AI).

The imperial government of the Heian Period had a hierarchy of authority, with the emperor at the very top. Below the emperor was his high ministers from the eight ministries, followed by a council of state and the eight ministries, and at the bottom was a large administrative bureaucracy. The human population of Japan at this time was estimated at 7 million, distributed over 68 provinces. Each province was ruled by a governor and was divided into eight or nine districts. The peasant population suffered, as the nobles and aristocrats in the imperial court were over concerned with the aesthetic beauty of their palaces and administrative buildings, and their elegant looks, dressing, artistic or poetic creativity, and lavish lifestyle in general. Meanwhile, the peasants were heavily burdened with taxes and banditry (Cartwright, 2017; Henshall 2004 pp.27-28).

The notion of public land as proposed in the Taika Reforms, continued to decline in popularity as witnessed in the Nara Period, and by the 10th Century A.D, it had mostly come to an end, land increasingly became

privatized in the form of estates (s*hoen*) which were exempt from taxation by the state, thus financially draining the state. Because of this increased private land ownership, there was the rise of provincial warriors known as ***samurai***, whose rise coincided with the decline of the powers and influence of the imperial court. The owners of the large provincial land estates spent most of their time in the capital at the imperial court and they appointed estate managers to manage the *shoen* in their absence and this involved hiring large private armies of *samurai* warriors to provide security for the *shoen* (Henshall, 2004 p.28; Worden, 1992 p.15).

The emperor did maintain significance at the imperial court but was overshadowed by powerful bureaucrats from the Fujiwara family. The Fujiwara such as Fujiwara Michinaga, were the dominant force in government institutions and in policy-making. They married off their daughters to the imperial family to maintain influence over the emperor. They further weakened the emperor's power by ensuring that a Fujiwara regent (***sessho***) was appointed to rule on behalf of child emperors, considering the fact that many emperors ascended the throne in childhood. Even after the child-emperor attained adulthood, a Fujiwara advisor (***kampaku***) was appointed to advise the emperor but always manipulated the emperor to make policies that were of Fujiwara interest. The Fujiwara perpetuated these tricks in maintaining power and influence in the imperial court, by ensuring that new emperors were nominated by their sponsors and not by birth. When the emperor reached his thirties, he was forced or enticed to abdicate in favour of a much younger successor. An example is that of Emperor Fujiwara Yoshifusa, who abdicated and allowed his seven-year-old grandson to ascend the throne in 858 A.D and he then made himself regent of the young emperor. The power and influence of the Fujiwara did not go unchallenged and some emperors attempted to achieve independence of action from the Fujiwara. For example, Emperor Shirakawa who abdicated in 1087 A.D and put his son Horikawa on the throne from where he supervised his son on administrative and governance issues, rather than being a regent of his emperor son. This is a strategy that has

remained in practice to this day and is known as "**cloistered government**" ***(insei*)** and the emperor supervises from behind the closed monastery doors. Emperors like Daigo (897- 930 A.D), however succeeded in suspending the Fujiwara regency and exercised his authority without Fujiwara influence (Cartwright, 2017; Worden 1992 p.14).

Image AI-generated art of a Samurai warrior. This image was authored by Pixabay Artist Iffany with the aid of AI and made available on Pixabay.com under the Pixabay Content License**.**

In the Heian Period, two powerful clans of minor nobility, who were removed from the aristocratic or imperial line of succession/inheritance because the aristocrats or the emperor had too many offsprings, emerged as power brokers and were hired by rival Fujiwara clan members in their violent struggles for power. These two power-broking clans were the **Minamoto** (the Genji) and the **Taira** (the Heike) clans who had their own private armies of *Bushi* or *samurai* warriors. The Taira and Minamoto often fought each other on behalf of their rival Fujiwara masters to help them fulfil their goals of obtaining power and influence in the imperial court thus the outbreaks of the **Hogen Rebellion / Disturbance** of 1156 A.D and the **Heiji Rebellion/Disturbance** of 1160 A.D, all of which were won by the Taira.

The Taira clan who were under the leadership of **Taira no Kiyomori** enjoyed dominance over the Minamoto for the next twenty years, with

Kiyomori gaining dominant power in the imperial court and settling in the capital, until the end of the **Genpei War** (1180 – 1185) when the Minamoto emerged victorious after the death of Kiyomori due to an illness. Kiyomori in 1180 before his death in 1181, installed his two-year old grandson - **Antoku** as emperor. Kiyomori's place as Taira clan leader was taken by his son **Tomamori** who in the face of defeat committed suicide in the war's final sea battle- The **Battle of Dannoura**, by jumping into the waters off his ship, off the coast of the Western tip of Honshu, alongside Kiyomori's widow holding her young grandson Emperor Antoku, consequently leading to their deaths (Cartwright, 2017; Henshall, 2004 pp.30 -32).

The imperial court appointed Minamoto no Yoritomo as ***shogun*** of Japan. The shogun wielded power as a military dictator on behalf of the emperor. The reign of Minamoto I ushered in the Kamakura Period (1185-1333A.D) and the Kamakura Shogunate, which was a military government (Cartwright, 2017; Henshall, 2004 pp.30-33).

In the religious world, Buddhism remained dominant in the Heian Period, with some level of support from the imperial court, which was also weary of the possibility of that Buddhist clergy would become too powerful, and so, the imperial government appointed **abbots** and confined monks inside their monasteries. Buddhism has different sects which were gaining political power significantly during the Heian Period. So, the imperial court placed an embargo on Buddhists, barring them from owning weapons or killing, but instead they were allowed to hire novice monks or mercenaries to do the fighting and killing for them in the scramble for power in the Heian Period, which also involved imperial and aristocratic nobles, shoen managers, private and imperial government's military forces, the emperor, ex-emperors, pirates and warring clans. Chinese Confucianism and Taoism also maintained some level of influence in the imperial government's day-to-day operations. Japan's old and initial religion of Shinto still remained in place and popular amongst the general population. Despite Buddhism being the most dominant religion at the time, all these religious faiths were practised all together by most individuals, right from the poorest farmers at the lowest levels of society to the emperor (Cartwright, 2017).

Regarding Heian Japan's relations with China, Japan shutdown their last embassy to the Tang Dynasty of China in 838 A.D, effectively shutting

down all diplomatic relations with China and embracing isolationism. Despite this diplomatic scale-back, Japan continued with cultural exchange and trade with China. The Chinese exported goods to Japan such as medicine, worked silk fabrics, ceramics, weapons, armour and musical instruments, and they imported goods from Japan such as pearl, gold dust, amber, raw silk and gilt lacquerware. Emissaries in the name of monks, scholars, musicians and artists were sent on missions to China to learn from the more advanced Chinese culture and bring back home new ideas and lessons they learnt to enrich Japanese culture. As from the 10th century onwards, these cultural exchanges declined and so did the influence of Chinese culture in Heian Japanese society, as the Japanese people began to find their own unique path of cultural development. Some of the cultural achievements of Heian Japan include the creation of the Japanese writing system (***kana***) with the use of Chinese characters, mostly phonetically, and this enabled Japan to be the first civilization to have the first fictional novel book – **The Tale of Genji**, in human history, authored by **Murasaki Shikibu**, in 1020 A.D. Other literature works produced include noted diaries(*nikki*) authored by court ladies – for example, **The Pillow Book** by Sei Shonagon in 1002 A.D. Others include the **Izumi Shikibu Diary**, **Kagero nikki** by Fujiwara no Michitsuna and Akazome Emon's **Tale of Flowering Fortunes**.

To conclude the Heian Period, the origins, evolution and roles of the *samurai* during the Heian Period is crucial and cannot be overlooked. The name *samurai* sometimes is used interchangeably with the name ***bushi*** and is used to refer to the traditional warrior class in Japan. The name was initially used to refer to the civilian bureaucracy serving the imperial court in the Asuka and Nara period, and would later be used to refer to the warrior class serving the emperor (Henshall, 2004 p.30).

Their origins can be traced back to the private militia forces that were created by local authorities on behalf of the imperial court in the provinces and districts for community policing and enforcement of the Taiho Code during the Nara Period, when the imperial court was focused more on directing state funds towards constructions of Buddhist temples and spreading Buddhism, than in security and law enforcement. These private militia became the warrior class serving the emperor's interests and would later be known as the *samurai* (Worden, 1992 p.11).

In the Heian Period, Emperor Kanmu would use the *samurai* in attempts to extend the court's jurisdiction into remote areas of Japan such as Honshu occupied by the Emishi people, who the imperial court perceived as rebels against imperial rule. Emperor Kanmu appointed a military commander with the title *sei-i taishogun* (barbarian-subduing generalissimo) popularly known as *shogun*. The shogun was to lead the emperor's *samurai* warriors in defeating the Emishi people, conquering their lands and bringing them under the jurisdiction(rule) of the imperial court, since the Emishi people were resisting the rule of the imperial court, and they are more indigenous to Japan(actually the descendants of the first stone age settlers-the Jomon people) than the other Japanese populations who are mostly descendants of the Yayoi settlers, who immigrated to Japan and brought iron and bronze technologies that revolutionized farming in Japan (Worden, 1992 p.13; Henshall, 2004 p.12).

Image: AI-generated art of a Senior Samurai officer. This image was authored by Pixabay Artist Iffany with the aid of AI and made available on Pixabay.com under the Pixabay Content License**.**

It is difficult to determine who the first *shogun* of Japan was, as different sources give varying information. Some sources say it was **Tajihi no Agatamori** even though there is insufficient evidence to support this claim, others say **Otomo no Otomaro**, others say it was **Sakanoue no Tamuramaro**. Others by-pass this uncertainty by giving credit to the first Kamakura *Shogun* – **Minamoto no Yoritomo**. For sources that say it was Otomo no Otomaro being the first shogun appointed in the Nara-Heian transition period in 794 A.D, they say Sakanoue no Tamuramaro was appointed second shogun by Emperor Kanmu because he was the first to successfully subdue the Emishi of Honshu, and for this achievement, some sources claim he was the first to be appointed shogun by Emperor Kanmu.

Uncertainty over who the first shogun was, arises from several factors including the fact that the title *sei-i taishogun* ("barbarian-subduing generalissimo"), shortened as *shogun*, was not initially a formal hereditary title, hence the debate of who was the first *shogun*. The title of *shogun*, apparently was also a military designation given for specific campaigns, usually against the Emishi, and thus came in various variations.

The variations include the following:

Seitō Taishōgun ("Commander-in-chief for the pacification of the East")

Seisei Taishōgun ("Commander-in-chief for the pacification of the West")

Chinjufu Shōgun ("Commander-in-chief of the central peacekeeping headquarters")

Seiteki Taishōgun (lit. "Commander-in-chief Subjugator of the barbarians")

Mochisetsu Taishōgun "Commander-in-chief of the Temporary Office")

Mutsu Chintōshōgun ("Great General of Subduing Mutsu")

Over time there was the transition from a temporary military title to a ruling office, leading to different sources of information giving variations in who is credited as the "first" *shogun*.

In the Heian Period, the Taika reforms continued to fall apart as in the Nara Period and what was referred to as public land in the Taika Reforms, became increasingly privatized and many continued to abandon their land due to increased land taxes. Land was therefore taken up by the rich aristocrats (especially the Fujiwara) in the imperial court and managed them indirectly as *shoen* (land estates) by appointing estate managers who managed the *shoen* as the aristocrat owners were away in the imperial court in the capital – Heian-kyo. The *shoen* needed security and therefore the samurai warrior class were hired by *shoen* managers for the purpose. This increased the status and power of the *samurai* warrior class, and contributed to the decline of the imperial power, as they could not entirely and directly control the *samurai* warrior class, who performed functions like offering security to the *shoen* and populace, that ought to have been done by the imperial court. The samurai though historically were formed in Nara Period as private militias with the direction of the imperial court through local administrative authorities in the provinces and districts, the imperial court/government was partially losing control of them to the aristocrats (especially the Fujiwara) who also wielded power in the imperial court, and needed them to protect their private *shoen* (Worden, 1992 pp.10-11, p.14, pp.15-16).

The samurai then managed to become part of the aristocracy when they were hired by the Minamoto and Taira aristocrats who were excluded from the line of succession of the emperor, despite being of blood and ancestral relations to the imperial family. The Taira and the Minamoto clans were bitter rivals who were also hired by rival members of the Fujiwara aristocrats who were violently scrambling for power, influence and favours in the imperial court. The Taira and the Minamoto faced each other occasionally in battles or disputes as they were hired by rival members of the Fujiwara aristocracy in their political struggles such as in the Hogen Rebellion (1156 A.D) and the Heiji Rebellion (1160 A.D), all of which the Taira, led by Taira no Kiyomori, emerged victorious and the Taira holding the real power, managed to dominate the imperial court and enjoyed dominance over the Minamoto for 20 years, thus the *samurai* emerged as a powerful aristocratic warrior class. The Taira dominance lasted until the outbreak of the Genpei War (1180-1185 A.D) when the Minamoto fought back the Taira and emerged victorious at the end of the war, with their leader Minamoto no Yoritomo being appointed the *shogun*, ushering in the Kamakura Shogunate and the Kamakura Period (1185-1333 A.D).

The emergence of the Kamakura Shogunate placed the *samurai* beyond the ruling aristocracy class, higher up into the ruling military class (Cartwright, 2017; Henshall, 2004 pp.30-33).

Image: Samurai armour. This image was authored by the Pixabay Artist Delo and made available on Pixabay.com under the Pixabay Content License.

The samurai later on developed their own ethical code of conduct and values at the end of the Heian Period, and this ethical code of conduct later evolved into the ***Bushido*** (Way of the Warrior**)** code of conduct, that every *samurai* was expected to abide by. This code was established with focus on loyalty, martial skill, honor, and a sense of duty. Samurai way of life also was inspired by **Buddhism**, which emphasized discipline, mental focus, and a stoic attitude toward death (Lovatt, 2009)**.**

Image: Artistic depiction of a samurai in brown armour (Source: Chat GPT AI).

MEDIEVAL (FEUDAL/MIDDLE AGES) HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 6

KAMAKURA PERIOD AND THE KAMAKURA SHOGUNATE (1185 -1333)

KAMAKURA PERIOD AND THE KAMAKURA SHOGUNATE (1185-1333)

This medieval period of Japanese history began with the victory of the Minamoto clan led by Minamoto no Yoritomo, over the Taira clan in the 1180 -1185 Genpei War followed by the appointment of Minamoto no Yoritomo as *shogun* of Japan in 1192 by Emperor Go- Toba (lived 1180-1239, reigned 1183 – 1198). The Kamakura period witnessed significant developments in governance, agriculture and religion. Japan during this period also managed to survive two invasion attempts by the Mongols. Eventually, the Kamakura Period came to an end in 1333 A.D when the Kamakura shogunate collapsed and a new clan – the Ashikaga, rose to power and created a hereditary line of shoguns from their clan (Cartwright, 2019).

Image: Minamoto no Yoritomo. By Fujiwara no Takanobu - Unknown source, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=544482

Kamakura town became the capital of this period, and this explains how this period got its name. The imperial court however, remained in Heian-Kyo. The Kamakura shogunate was the first military government of Japan that came into effect with the imperial appointment of Minamoto no Yoritomo in 1192 A.D as *shogun* of Japan. The emperor Go-Toba appointed him the *shogun*, with the agreement that Yoritomo

as *shogun* would offer the emperor military protection. The emperor, with respect to the hierarchy of administrative authority, was above the *shogun*, but pragmatically, the *shogun* had all of the military forces under his command and exercised real power in governing the state on behalf of the emperor. The emperor was thus reduced to a ceremonial figure and exercised little to no power, but the shoguns needed his endorsements with the aim of legitimizing their authority (Cartwright, 2019).

Minamoto no Yoritomo did not spend much time as *shogun* of Japan, and apparently, he lost his life in 1199 A.D, in a horse-riding accident in a non-combat situation, an accident that was perceived with suspicion. His eldest son, Minamoto no Yorie, succeeded him as *shogun*, reigning from 1202 to 1203 A.D, after a power struggle. Yorie himself did not hold real power as *shogun*, instead, Minamoto no Yoritomo's widowed wife **Hojo Masako** (1157- 1225 A.D) and her father **Hojo Tokimasa** appointed themselves the **shogunal regents**, ruling on behalf of the young *shogun* with real power, reducing the shogun to a puppet, a practice that was common in the Kamakura Period. Masako and Tokimasa used their powerful positions as shogunal regents to serve the interests of their clan – the **Hojo** (Cartwright, 2019; Henshall, 2004 pp.35-36).

Following the death of Minamoto no Yoritomo, his wife Hojo Masako moved to a convent and became a nun, but stilled played a role in the politics of her time, and for this, she was nicknamed the "nun-*shogun*". She became an ambitious, able, ruthless and formidable politician who was ready to eliminate anyone challenging her quests, including her father whom she fell out with and exiled (Cartwright, 2019; Henshall, 2004 p.36).

Following the death of Yorie as *shogun*, at the hands of his own family, his younger brother Minamoto no Sanetomo was appointed the new *shogun* in 1203 A.D. His mother Hojo Masako and maternal grandfather Hojo Tokimasa continued ruling as shogunal regents, exercising power on his behalf. Sanetomo's reign as *shogun* lasted for 16 years until his assassination by his own nephew – **Kugyo** (son of Yorie) in 1219 A.D. Kugyo was also assassinated afterwards, thus the lineage of Yoritomo ceased, and the Hojo family members took up all the new significant positions in government (Cartwright, 2019).

Following the *shogun's* assassination, retired emperor Go-Toba and his forces conducted an attempted coup in 1221 A.D in what was called the **Jokyo Disturbance**/**Jokyo War**, which was a failure because Go-Toba's forces were no match for the Hojo's. The retired emperor after suffering a defeat and a failed coup, was exiled to Oki Islands, off present day Shimane Prefecture, where he spent the last 18 years of his life writing poems. The Hojo clan continued with their strategy of shogunal regency until the end of the Kamakura Period with Hojo Moritoki (reigned 1327 – 1333 A.D) being the last Kamakura *shogun* was killed in battle (Cartwright, 2019; Henshall, 2004 p.36).

The Kamakura shogunate (military government) became known as ***bakufu***, meaning "tent government" or "tent headquarters". The *bakufu* government retained old practices, institutions and titles which were given new meaning often, as times changed and new practices, institutions and titles emerged, and thus, the *bakufu* government mixed both old ways and new ways in governance. The term *bakufu* originally was used to refer to the tent headquarters belonging to military commanders in the field. The *bakufu* governance was necessary to enhance the legitimacy of the *shogun's* military rule and to maintain the tradition of mixing both old and new ways (Henshall, 2004 p.34).

The *bakufu* medieval military government practised **feudalism**, which was a relationship between **lords** (land owners, often nobles) and **vassals** (mostly samurai warriors, sometimes ordinary people), where the noble lords granted the vassals land (known as **fief**) and in return, the vassals offered the lords loyalty and service i.e. military service and protection (Cartwright, 2019). At the lowest levels of such a feudal society, included peasant farmers who tilled the land, paid rent and taxes; and tilled the land to produce food for nobles and vassals, and in exchange they received protection especially from bandits who raided their homes and farms to steal their fortunes.

In medieval Japan, the *shogun* and/or noble lords awarded lands, taken up by force from defeated warlords who came from clans or families that were enemies of the *shoguns*, to vassals who were loyal to the *shoguns*. Loyal vassals were not just awarded land estates, but also prestigious offices such as the ***jito*** (steward) and ***shugo*** (protector or constable). The *jito* collected taxes for the *shogun* locally, and were allowed to keep a portion of the land's agricultural produce for themselves. The *shugo* were military governors or constables who had

roles in policing and administering authority in their respective provinces (Henshall, 2004 p.34).

The powers and responsibilities of the *shogun* and shogunal regents were later reduced and handed down to newly created political institutions. There are a number of such new institutions and they include: the ***Kumonjo*** (Public Documents Office) established in 1184 A.D. It was renamed and given more functions as the ***Mandoroko*** (Administrative Board) in 1191 A.D. It became the main administrative centre. Another was the ***Monchujo***, set up in 1184 A.D to be in charge of all legal issues. Another was the office of the vice-regent to the *shogun* (***rensho***) created in 1225 A.D. Another formed in 1225 A.D was the ***Hyojoshu*** (Council of State) whose members were the best and top officials, warriors and scholars of the time. 1232 A.D saw the establishment of a new law code, the ***Joei* Code** (***Joei Shikimoku***). The law code consisted of 51 articles of law and it defined land ownership, relationship between lords, vassals, and the samurai, and also the role of the emperor which was diminished from the previous legal system. The final institution that was created was the ***Hikitsukeshu*** (High Court) which handled disputes related to the land and taxes (Cartwright, 2019).

The Kamakura period witnessed continued economic exchanges (trade) between Japan and China just like in other periods of Japanese history. Japan exported goods to China such as gold, mercury, fans, swords, timber and lacquerware; and imported goods from China such as silk, brocades, perfumes, porcelain, tea and copper coins. Land reforms were put in place to allow favourable use of neglected agricultural lands. Women were granted legal rights to own land estates, head families in the absence of male relatives and retain their own property regardless of the presence or absence of husbands or male relatives. There were improved technologies that were brought to Japan i.e. the introduction of more survivable rice strains from China in the late 12th Century, double-cropping methods, use of fertilizers in the form of manure, compost and ashes, and finally better iron tools (Cartwright, 2019).

In the urban areas, traders and crafts people formed trade guilds (trade associations or unions) known as ***za***, with the goal of securing financial support or endorsements of a monastery or a lord. The guilds consisted of 10-100 workers or companies and they functioned to increase

specialization, and to improve standards. More road networks were built between villages which increased in size as a result, and consequently Japan's human population increased from the beginning to the end of the Kamakura Period from approximately 7 million to 8.2 million as a result of the relative peace and prosperity experienced in this period (Cartwright, 2019).

The Kamakura Period witnessed two foreign invasions of Japan, by the Mongols led by **Kublai Khan** (grandson to Genghis Khan), the first in 1274 A.D and the second in 1281 A.D. Kublai Khan (reigned 1260 t0 1294 A.D) threatened the Japanese shogunate in a written warning letter, demanding that Japan must pay tribute to him or be invaded. These threats fell to the 'deaf' ears of the Japanese *shogun* and the emperor (Cartwright, 2019; Henshall, 2004 p.36).

When Kublai Khan ascended the throne as emperor of Great Mongolia, the empire was already huge, stretching into Korea, most of Eurasia and northern China. Actually, his main target was southern China where the forces of the Chinese Song/Sung dynasty were based, but he also developed an interest in the conquest of Japan. The Japanese shogunate expected the Mongols to attack from the northwest coast of Japan's Kyushu Islands, and therefore put the Kyushu military forces on alert (Henshall, 2004 pp.36-37).

The Mongols' first attack came in at the expected location in November 1274, with an attack force of 900 ship vessels, ferrying around 40,000 men. The Mongols, accompanied by foreign Korean and Chinese mercenaries, landed at Hakata Bay because of its obviously close proximity to the Korean Peninsula from where the invasion was launched (Mochida, 2024; Henshall, 2004 p.37).

The Mongols and their Chinese and Korean mercenaries surprised the Japanese forces with new and advanced weaponry and tactics that gave them the advantage over the Japanese forces who were pushed inland. The Mongol weapons included spears, short bows and exploding projectiles that sowed confusion in the battlefield. The projectiles were exploding shells filled with gunpowder that allegedly exploded with deafening loud bangs that sent the Japanese horses to wild and uncontrolled agitations and also incapacitated anyone in the blast radius. The shells were discovered to be made of ceramics encasing metallic and ceramic shards or shrapnel, and thus these shells were lethal at close range (Mochida, 2024).

Despite having the advantage in battle over the Japanese and pushing the, inward the Mongols did not press on with more attacks, but instead returned to their ships on the same night of the day of attack. A violent storm (typhoon), then came in and damaged a number of ships and many consequently, many Mongol warriors and their mercenaries on board lost their lives, accounting for about two-thirds of the invasion force. The remaining one-third sailed back to Korea. The winds of the storm became known as the ***kamikaze***, meaning - divine winds. The Japanese came to learn from their inferiority in terms of weaponry and calvary(horse-riding) battlefield tactics after the battle and made the necessary changes and preparations for an anticipated second attack (Henshall, 2004 p.37).

In 1281, the Mongol invaders launched a second attack at Hakata Bay with much larger force consisting of approximately 4,400 warships ferrying 140,000 men. By the time of the second invasion, Kublai Khan had defeated the Song/Sung Dynasty and installed a new dynasty of rulers- the Yuan Dynasty, with himself as the first emperor, ruling China directly as part of his broader Mongol Empire. The Japanese insulted twice him by beheading his envoys in 1275, six years earlier before the second invasion and once more in 1279, two years before the second invasion (Henshall, 2004 p.37).

Despite the numerical prowess the Mongols had this time round, they encountered robust resistance from the Japanese and called for reinforcements from southern China, and another storm (typhoon) came in and destroyed much their warships, as they planned a massive combined assault. This compelled the Mongols to withdraw from Japan from Japan once more, losing more than half of the initial invasion force, and that was more than 70,000 Mongol warriors dead. The success of the Japanese against the Mongols can be attributed to a number of factors including a motivated fighting force and the Mongols' blunder of incorporating subjugated Chinese and Korean people, who had no interest in serving the Mongols or their interests, as mercenaries in their fighting force. And not to be ignored, was the role played by storms (typhoons) in both the 1274 and 1281 invasions, which helped sink or damage the Mongolian warships ferrying warriors to Japan, leading to the deaths of most of the Mongol invaders (Henshall, 2004 p.37).

Image: Mongol invasion of Japan. The defensive wall at Hakata. By Author unknown. Illustration rolls were ordered by Takezaki Suenaga himself. - Mōko Shūrai Ekotoba, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8014707

After suffering two defeats in an attempt to conquer Japan, Kublai Khan was still determined to succeed, apparently, he was always distracted by occasional instability arising somewhere in his empire. The Japanese anticipated future Mongol attacks and remained alert until Kublai Khan's death in 1294 which was followed by a loss in interest to conquer Japan by the Mongols. The invasions distracted the Japanese from their infighting and provided a rare opportunity for unity and putting internal disputes aside but after the defeat of the Mongols, there was growing discontent directed at the Hojo clan and the Hojo shogunate. This is because of the financial cost of the war alongside the financial cost of heightened post-war long term security strategies, depleting the shogunate of finances needed to award promised payments to the warriors and their families, and also their basic compensations for the sacrifices they made to defend their nation. This discontent was common amongst those who believed they ought to be credited more for the successful defence of the nation against the Mongols than the Hojo clan. Nevertheless, the Hojo shogunate's financial problems did not stop Japan's economy of the time from improving, partially because of the relative peace and stability that arose from the *jito-shugo* system. The Japanese increased productivity of their shoens, bringing fortunes to maritime traders distributing rice and other goods around Japan, and also, they enhanced their trade guilds (Henshall, 2004 pp.37-38).

Different forms of Buddhism emerged in Japan, and Zen Buddhism became more popular amongst warriors than common people of the

time. This is because Zen Buddhism focuses on austerity (simplicity, restraint and minimization of material comforts and desires) and self-discipline (Henshall, 2004 p.38).

Capitalizing on the dissatisfaction with the Hojo, was the emperor Go-Daigo (1288-1339A.D) who was encouraged by previous failed attempts by past emperors like Go-Toba in challenging the authority of the Hojo shogunate with the goal of restoring full imperial power and authority without the shogunate. Go-Daigo ascended the throne in 1318 A.D, determined to re-store full and direct imperial rule in Japan (Henshall, 2004 p.39).

Go-Daigo just like Go-Toba failed in his quest and was banished to Oki Islands in 1331 A.D (Worden, 1992 p.21) but unlike Go-Toba who resigned to his failure and fate, Go-Daigo was persistent and determined to succeed and he managed to escape Oki Islands and gathered enough support from loyal forces in Western Honshu. The Hojo shogunate grew weary of Go-Daigo's potential and sent one of the best generals named **Ashikaga Takauji** (1305 -1358) to deal with the threat poised by Go-Daigo. General Takuji was the young head pf the branch of a Minamoto family and was characteristically an opportunist. It dawned upon him that Go-Daigo had a strong military force behind him just as himself, and sought to avoid a bloody clash with Go-Daigo and thus, he betrayed the Hojo shogunate, giving his full support to Go-Daigo. He proceeded to attack the Hojo shogunate's offices in Kyoto. Joining Ashikaga in rebellion against the Hojo shogunate was another young general of Minamoto descent named Nitta Yoshisada (1301 - 1338 A.D) who directed his forces to destroy the Hojo shogunate's base at Kamakura, paving way for a new era or period of Japanese history – the **Muromachi Period** (1333 – 1568 A.D) (Henshall, 2004 p.39).

Emperor Go-Daigo's quest to defeat the Hojo shogunate and restore full direct rule of the emperor from the shogunate became known as the **Kenmu Restoration** (1333-1336 A.D) and was also aimed at restoring the superiority of the court nobles over the shogunate's *bushi*/*samurai* warriors (Worden, 1992 p.21). The Kenmu Restoration began two years after the 1331 exile to Oki Islands in 1333 A.D and lasted 3 years till 1336 A.D.

Emperor Go-Daigo returned to Kyoto in 1333 alongside Ashikaga Takauji and Nitta Yoshisada with the hopes that he would fully re-establish direct imperial rule, apparently, it all took an ugly and frustrating turn

when his new ally Takauji demanded to be appointed the *shogun*. Emperor Go-Daigo refused because he was determined to eliminate the shogun's office and the shogunate system at large from Japan's administrative structures. He also sought to eliminate the offices of the regents and retired emperors as well. Takauji after failing to find favour with Go-Daigo, went back to Kamakura to seek help, from the Hojo clan he had betrayed, in bringing down Go-Daigo and his ambitions. Go-Daigo feeling betrayed by Takauji, sent the loyal Nitta Yoshisada to deal with the treacherous Takauji. Takauji and his forces defeated Yoshisada and his forces compelling Yoshisada to flee and eventually was killed in 1338 by one of Takauji's allies (Henshall, 2004 p.39).

One strategy that was devised by the Hojo shogunate earlier to weaken the imperial court was to permit two rival imperial family lines to ascend the throne alternately. The two imperial family lines were named the Northern Court (senior line) and the Southern Court (junior line). Each court therefore had its time for presenting their nobles to ascend the throne as emperor of Japan. Go-Daigo was of the Southern Court and was determined to overthrow the Hojo shogunate and defied the shogunate's imperial succession policy by appointing his son as his successor (Worden, 1992 p.21).

General Takauji led his forces to capture Kyoto city, compelling Go-Daigo to escape south 100 kilometres to Yoshino City to establish the Southern Court there. Takauji once victorious in Kyoto, quickly appointed an imperial family noble of the Northern Court named Komyo as the new emperor. Emperor Komyo in 1338 A.D then appointed Takauji the new shogun, a position he coveted long enough, and he would hold this office for 20 years until 1538 A.D (Henshall, 2004 p.40; Cartwright, 2019).

Ashikaga's ascendancy to power as *shogun*, marked the beginning of the Ashikaga shogunate (1338 – 1573 A.D) even though the new era – The Muromachi Period is dated by some scholars to have begun in 1333 A.D.

MEDIEVAL (FEUDAL/MIDDLE AGES) HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 7

THE MUROMACHI PERIOD AND THE ASHIKAGA SHOGUNATE (1333 -1568)

THE MUROMACHI PERIOD AND THE ASHIKAGA SHOGUNATE (1333-1568)

This period pf Japanese history overlaps with the previous one Kamakura Period and in some scholarly literature like *Japan A Country Study* (1992) ed. Ronald E Dolan and Robert L. Worden, the Kamakura and Muromachi Periods are grouped and studied together to maintain continuity of the flow of historical events.

The Muromachi Period got its name from the Muromachi District of Heiankyo (Kyoto), where the Ashikaga shogunate placed their new capital, moving the capital from Kamakura after 1378 (Worden, 1992 p.21; Henshall, 2004 p.41).

The Muromachi Period is dated to have begun in 1333 A.D, same year as the Kenmu Restoration of the Kamakura Period and the same date marks the end of the Kamakura Period, and therefore the events of the Kenmu Restoration and its failure with the fleeing of Emperor Go-Daigo southwards from Tokyo to Yoshino City are within the transitionary period to the era of the Ashikaga shogunate which begins with the appointment of General Ashikaga Takauji as shogun by his puppet emperor of the Northern Court – Emperor Komyo. As a scholar of Japanese history, I personally dispute the widely accepted starting dates of the Muromachi Period, because the new capital of the Ashikaga was moved to Muromachi District of Kyoto from Kamakura after 1378, and therefore the Muromachi Period ought to be dated from 1378 onwards, bearing this shift in the location of the state capital city, and if not maybe from 1338 when Ashikaga Takauji was appointed shogun.

As of the Ashikaga shogunate, it exercised power independently of the imperial court, choosing to sideline it in administrative affairs of the state, unlike the previous Kamakura shogunate that exercised power in cooperation with the imperial court (Worden, 1992 pp.21-22; Henshall, 2004 p.34).

The Ashikaga shogunate was much weaker in comparison to the Kamakura shogunate, and during its reign over Japan, there was

constant civil wars all over the country, until the reign of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu as shogun (1368 -1394 A.D) and Chancellor (1394 – 1408 A.D) did orderliness begin to take shape in Japan (Worden, 1992 p.22).

Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1392 succeeded in reconciling and unifying the Northern Court (Kyoto) and Southern Court (Yoshino). He promised the imperial line of the Southern Court an alternating ascension to the throne with the imperial line of the Northern Court, however, this promise was not fulfilled and the Northern Court gained total reign in the throne, thus the Southern Court's imperial line was written off effectively, from succession of the imperial throne (Worden, 1992 p.22; Henshall, 2004 p.40).

Under Yoshimitsu's reign as shogun, the shugo (constables), who were provincial military governors, became more powerful and they later were known as "daimyos", and as time went by, a power balance arose between the shogun and the shugo. The privilege of being deputy to the shogun at Kyoto was rotated amongst the three most powerful shugo families, an example being the Hosokawa and the other - the Yamana (Worden, 1992 p.22; Henshall, 2004 p.41).

Yoshimitsu attempted to reduce the powers of the shugo by reinstating the old practices of the Yamato state of giving powerful groups or individuals positions in the imperial court, compelling the appointees to reside in Kyoto, from where they could be monitored. Yoshimitsu also attempted to strengthen his position and power by creating the office of "retired shogun" which he occupied in 1395 after abdicating from his position as shogun, in favour of his nine-year old son who became the new shogun. Yoshimitsu then constructed for himself a retirement palace-estate which still stands today and is known as the ***kinkakuji*** or the **Golden Pavilion**. Yoshimitsu then decided to sideline the imperial court in dealing with foreign affairs of the state. He did this when he wrote a letter to the imperial court of China's Ming Dynasty in 1403 A.D, expressing his fealty or loyalty, addressing himself as "Your subject, the King of Japan." This did not just mean the imperial court of Japan was ignored in foreign affairs of the state, but also it means Ashikaga Japan's sovereignty was already undermined by Yoshimitsu's foreign policy (Henshall, 2004 p.41).

Image: The Golden Pavilion (***kinkakuji***). Author: Jaycangel. (License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en). Find image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kinkaku-ji_the_Golden_Temple_in_Kyoto_overlooking_the_lake_-_high_rez.JPG

Following the death of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1408 A.D, there was a significant decline in the powers of the shogun and thus the orders from the shogun were frequently ignored and over-ruled by the weak imperial court sometimes (Henshall, 2004 p.41).

Weakening of the shogun's powers precipitated frequent in-fighting between the shugo provincial families who formed and broke alliances with another in conflicts. An example of such conflicts is the **Onin War** of 1467- 1477 A.D (Henshall, 2004 p.42). The Onin War was fought by bitter rivals and saw treachery amongst Japanese warlords and samurai. The spillover effects included increased hardship, cases of robbery and brutality affecting even ordinary civilians. The Onin War stemmed from bitter rivalry between the Hosokawa and Yamana shugo family groups, but with time, most of the influential clans got involved, and the war resulted in the massive burning and destruction of Kyoto (Heiankyo) to the ground. The war was rooted in competition between rival groups to install their preferred candidate as shogun and this was a meaningless conflict because the power of the shogun was significantly reduced with little to no administrative nor political impacts. Many historians and scholars therefore tend to speculate that the real cause of the war was fuelled rather by blood lust and the desire by aggressive warlords to find the finest excuse, good or bad, to throw their samurai warriors into combat, just for the thrill or love for violence. The war lasted ten years, ending in 1477 A.D with no victor and the persistent militaristic nature of the Japanese society went unresolved, leading to the political

fragmentation of Japan, and more constant infighting for the next century and additional years, in what became known as the ***Sengoku-jidai***, meaning the *Sengoku* period (the Age of Warring States) and it marked the golden age of *samurai* warfare. (Cartwright, 2019). The sengoku-jidai also saw the rise of the Ninja assassins who also were great spies. They were hired by daimyos in conflicts against other daimyos.

Image: Photo depicting the portrayal of a typical ninja assassin. (Source: This image was authored by the Pixabay Artist Kyraxys with the aid of AI, and made available on Pixabay.com under the Pixabay Content License)

Other than the **Kinkakuji** (Golden Pavilion) which was built as a retirement palace-estate for retired shoguns in 1397 A.D, another architectural achievement of the Muromachi Period was the twin palace-estate known as the ***Ginkakuji*** (The Silver Pavilion) was finished in 1483 A.D. Both palace-estates were later converted to Buddhist temples, and thus their names redefined as the Temple of the Golden Pavilion and the Serene Temple of the Silver Pavilion (Cartwright, 2019).

Image: The Silver Pavilion (*Ginkakuji*). Author: Oilstreet (via Wikimedia.org). License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en . Find image here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ginkaku-ji#/media/File:Ginkakuji_Kyoto03-r.jpg

Cultural achievements of the Muromachi Period include the establishment of the tea room and the **Japanese Tea Ceremony**, even though the ceremony had been introduced earlier in Japan (probably the late Kamakura Period) by monks of Zen Buddhism. The Tea Ceremony became more prominent in Japanese culture because of the joint efforts of the Buddhist monk – Murato Shuko (1422 – 1502 A.D) and the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimasa (reigned 1449 – 1473 A.D). The tea ceremony earned the name *chanoyu*, which is still in use today. The tea rooms were specially furnished to invoke calmness or relaxation during the tea ceremony (Cartwright, 2019). Other cultural achievements of the period included literature material, ***no*** drama, comedy, poetry, landscape gardening, flower arranging and painting (Worden, 1992 pp.22-23; Cartwright, 2019).

Image: Tea Ceremony in Kyoto in Japan which found its first foundations on Japanese Culture during the Muromachi Period. This image was authored by Unsplash Artist Romeo A. and made available on Unsplash.com under the Unsplash License.

Image: Artistic depiction of guests seated to receive tea by Japanese Yoshu Chikanobu (Toyohara Chikanobu), born 1838, died 1912. His artwork is in the Public Domain in its country of origin (Japan) and other countries and areas where the copyright term is the author's life plus 70 years or fewer.

Trade between China (Ming Dynasty) and Japan took place in this period with the Chinese exporting porcelain, silk and bronze coins to Japan, and the Japanese exported swords, copper ore and timber (Cartwright, 2019).

Despite the constant civil wars and weather-induced famines, Japanese famers kept up their agricultural efforts with innovations such as double-cropping methods and utilization of fertilizers, practices thar were introduced during the Kamakura Period (Cartwright, 2019).

Women's rights during the Muromachi Period suffered some setbacks compared to the Kamakura Period. An example is the declaration made demanding that brides alongside their mothers-in-law be part of the husband's household and submit their obedience to him. Women were still legally allowed to own and inherit property, but the previously held legal right in the Kamakura Period, to own and inherit land regardless of the presence or absence of a husband or male relatives, was revoked to avoid or minimize the fragmentation of land into parcels that are too small to be put into good use for different siblings (Cartwright, 2019).

The Muromachi Period saw the first contact with and the arrival of Europeans to Japan. This happened in 1543 A.D when three Portuguese of traders accompanied by a Chinese crew of three in a Chinese junk ship were blown off their intended course to Ningpo (Ningbo) in China, by storms and winds, and they landed on the shores of the island of Tanegashima in southern Kyushu. The visitors carried with them firearms that were more sophisticated than those the Mongols used to invade Japan in 1274 A.D and 1281 A.D. The Japanese warlords took interest in these firearms, adopted them and locally manufactured similar designs for use in the *Sengoku* internal wars. The Japanese exported their goods like gold and silver to the European visitors and obtained firearms, fabrics, glassware, clocks, tobacco and many other Western innovations. Other European powers also came after the Portuguese, such as the Spanish in 1587 A.D, followed by the Dutch in 1609 A.D. Christian missionaries from Europe also came in to Japan to preach Christianity, which was first introduced by the Jesuit Francis Xavier (1506 -1552 A.D). Daimyos and merchants alike, began converting to Christianity as it enhanced their trade relations with the Europeans who were sailing across the seas of East Asia. The Christian missionaries managed to extend their operations to Kyoto by 1560 A.D. In 1568 A.D, a Christian daimyo established the port of Nagasaki and then turned it over to the Jesuits for administrative purposes in 1579 A.D. The number of Christian converts in Japan grew gradually with as many as 150,000 by approximation, which is about 2% of the approximated total human population in Japan at the time, and over 200 Churches were constructed. The Ashikaga shogunate then began

growing weary of the influence of Christianity in Japan with prohibitions against Christianity by the shogunate beginning in 1587 A.D and persecutions in 1597 A.D. In the period of Japanese history known as the Tokugawa Period or Edo Period (1600 -1867 A.D), the exclusion and suppression of Christianity as a religion had been made a national policy by 1640 A.D (Worden, 1992 pp24-25; Henshall, 2004 p.43; Cartwright, 2019).

The Muromachi Period eventually came to an end with the termination of the Ashikaga shogunate by the warlord Oda Nobunaga who rallied his forces to conquer territories held by other warlords or daimyos from his base of operations at Nagoya Castle in the 1550s and 1560s A.D. In 1568 A.D, he seized the capital – Heiankyo (Kyoto) and sent the last Ashikaga shogun – Ashikaga Yoshiaki to exile in 1573 A.D. Nobunaga for sometime before sending him to exile, used him as a puppet ruler, and Yoshiaki technically remained the shogun even in exile until 1588 A.D. Nobunaga did not complete his quest of conquering all Japanese lands and unifying all of Japan, and he could only exert his rule over the lands that he managed to conquer and unify, until his death in 1582 A.D, when he was betrayed by his once loyal General Akechi Mitsuhide at Honnoji Temple, where Nobunaga died by suicide to avoid capture or death by the traitor's hand. The unification of the country was a tasked left to his other loyal followers such as Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1573 - 1598 A.D) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543 - 1616 A.D) in the next period of Japanese history following the Muromachi Period (1568 – 1600 A.D) whose beginning is also dated by some sources as 1573 – 1600 A.D (Cartwright, 2019; Henshall, 2004 p.44).

MEDIEVAL (FEUDAL/MIDDLE AGES) HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 8

AZUCHI-MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1568 -1600)

AZUCHI-MOMOYAMA PERIOD (1568 -1600)

This period of Japanese history is significantly remembered for the unification of Japan after centuries of having a weak central government and numerous cases of infighting in the scramble for power and dominance. The contributions to the unification of Japan are majorly credited to warlords of the time in the name of **Oda Nobunaga**, his successor **Toyotomi Hideyoshi** and **Tokugawa Ieyasu** who succeeded Hideyoshi and fulfilled Oda Nobunaga's dream of a unified Japan. This period gets its name from the castles used by Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, and thus the **Azuchi Castle** for Nobunaga and the **Momoyama Castle** for Hideyoshi. Azuchi Castle lies east of Kyoto and the Momoyama Castle lies south of Kyoto. This period came to an end when Nobunaga's loyal general and Hideyoshi's successor – Tokugawa Ieyasu completed the unification of Japan by conquering and bringing into control all other lands not conquered by Nobunaga and Hideyoshi. He then established the Tokugawa shogunate that reigned over a more peaceful Japan in the **Edo Period** also known as **Tokugawa Period** of Japanese history (1600-1867 A.D) when the shogunate was abolished as part of the **Meiji Restoration** which was an effort in restoring imperial authority to the emperor from the shogun in Japan (Cartwright, 2019).

Image: Replica of Azuchi Castle in Ise City, Mie Prefecture, from the South. By Taro Nagoya. GNU Free Documentation License and Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported, 2.5 Generic, 2.0 Generic, and 1.0 Generic licenses via Wikimedia Commons.

In this chapter, we shall examine the historical roles played by each significant personalities of the Azuchi-Momoyama Period sequentially from Oda Nobunaga to Toyotomi Hideyoshi and finally Tokugawa Ieyasu in the shaping of Japanese politics, economics, socio-cultural beliefs and practices; and most importantly at all their efforts in conquering and unifying all of Japan.

Oda Nobunaga (1534 – 1582 A.D) was a *daimyo* whose origins were in Owari Province in present day Aichi Prefecture. He came from a position of lower social status and rose to a position of prominence in victorious battles against other daimyos (Henshall, 2004 p.44). In 1568 A.D, Nobunaga led his forces and took control of the state capital – Kyoto, where he gained support from the emperor and gave support for his preferred candidate for the position of the *shogun* – Ashikaga Yoshiaki (1537 -1597 A.D). Yoshiaki was appointed the *shogun* and became Nobunaga's puppet ruler, effectively allowing Nobunaga to control the shogunate indirectly. Yoshiaki did not enjoy his position long enough as *shogun*, and was exiled by Nobunaga five years later in 1573 A.D, accusing him of being an ally of the Takeda family who Nobunaga considered his enemies. Yoshiaki technically remained the *shogun* even in exile until 1588 A.D and the Ashikaga shogunate was terminated (Henshall, 2004 p.44; Worden, 1992 p.25).

Nobunaga is remembered for his ruthlessness against potential threats and rivals in his quest for power, and not even his family was spared. He arranged for the murder of his own younger brother Nobuyuki in 1557 A.D. He formed a habit of giving orders for the burning of defeated enemies, as many as 20,000, not sparing any civilians caught up in the massacres (Henshall, 2004 p.44). Amongst his perceived threats to power, influence and dominance was Buddhism and therefore he massacred Buddhist priests and monks, and this was also motivated by the fact that historically, Buddhists played roles in inspiring uprisings in the previous one hundred years, and therefore Buddhists were potential sources of trouble for his rule. He began by attacking the militant **Tendai Buddhists** and vanquished their monasteries at **Mount Hiei** near Kyoto and massacring thousands of monks in 1571 A.D. Among the monasteries destroyed was the **Enryakuji,** going down with the lives of 25,000 men, women and children. Other perceived threats included rival daimyo and hostile merchants (Worden, 1992 p.25; Henshall, 2004 p.44; Cartwright, 2019).

Image: Ukyo-e of Oda Nobunaga. Attribution: By Utagawa Kuniyoshi - https://risingsunprints.com/blogs/read/introducing-our-new-collection-kuniyoshis-warriors , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=83634206

Nobunaga's brutality and cruelty also came to astonish the European visitors to Japan. He established himself a god, constructed a temple where he was worshipped and had his birthday declared a national holiday. Nobunaga's belief in his ultra-supremacy made him ignore pursuing the title of *shogun* for he believed it would paint a picture of inferiority on him in the eyes of the people. Nobunaga found the course of Christian missionaries in Japan valuable to his quest of unifying Japan, as they brought with them other European visitors like merchants who provided him with firearms that proved effective in his conquest of Japan (Cartwright, 2019).

Nobunaga sent 3,000 musketeers (infantry/foot warriors wielding firearms) to defeat Takeda Katsuyori (1546 -1582 A.D) in the **Battle for Nagashino**, marking the very first extensive use of firearms in Japanese warfare, and it was after this that Nobunaga took a strong interest in firearms brought by Europeans. Nobunaga's policy of surveying agricultural lands as early as 1571 A.D and the policy of confiscation of weapons from peasants in 1576 was akin to the **Taika Reforms** introduced by Prince Naka no Oe and Nakatomi Kamatari (later changed name Kamatari to Fujiwara) in the Asuka Period (Henshall, 2004 p.45).

In 1576 A.D, he came up with standardized metrics for measures and he commenced the construction of the Azuchi Castle, east of Kyoto, near the shores of Lake Biwa. The castle was surrounded by stone walls and

was built to withstand damage from firearms. It earned its place as a symbol of Japan's re-unification. The construction of heavily fortified castles with modernized garrisons, then became a trend in Japan (Henshall, 2004 p.45; Worden, 1992 p.25).

In 1577 A.D, Nobunaga entrusted one of his loyal generals -Toyotomi Hideyoshi with the mission of conquering 12 provinces in Western Honshu. Toyotomi encountered stiff resistance that prolonged the war, and thus led his army to provide reinforcements to Toyotomi's military conquest (Worden, 1992 p.25). In 1582 A.D, Nobunaga on his way to assist Hideyoshi against the **Mori family**, camped at Honnoji Temple and was betrayed by one of his officers – **Akechi Mitsuhide** (1526 – 1582 A.D), who ambushed him and set the temple of fire, compelling Nobunaga to end his life by suicide presumably in a Japanese traditional manner of self-disembowelment known as seppuku. Nobunaga's son – Nobutada, was also caught in the attack and flames, and he died alongside his father who had chosen him as his heir (Henshall, 2004 p.45; Cartwright,2019).

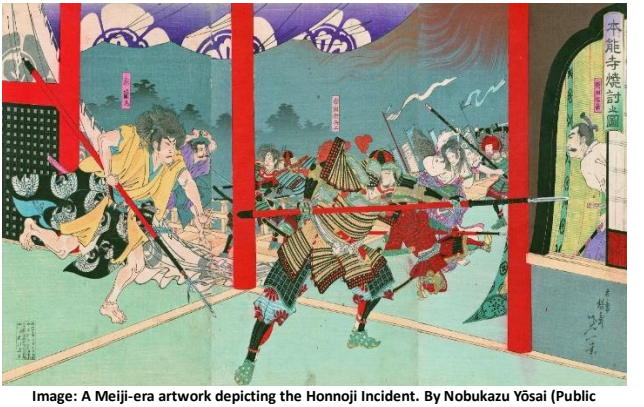


Image: A Meiji-era artwork depicting the Honnoji Incident. By Nobukazu Yōsai (Public Domain) https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=4365002

Toyotomi Hideyoshi, grieved with the death of his master, sought to avenge his master's death and pursued Akechi Mitsuhide and the rest of his treacherous forces, and defeated them at the **Battle of Yamazaki**, and declared himself Nobunaga's successor. Hideyoshi ruled Japan (only the territories they conquered), from 1582 A.D to 1598 A.D from his

castle (Momoyama Castle) in Fushimi, south of Kyoto (Worden, 1992 p.25; Cartwright, 2019).

Toyotomi Hideyoshi was born to parents of low social status, and thus he grew up a commoner. He had no surname, and thus was named Hideyoshi at birth and earned the surname Toyotomi after having been made part of the Fujiwara family later in life (Worden, 1992 p.26). Hideyoshi found himself work as a foot-soldier or an infantry man from humble beginnings in Nobunaga's army. He was highly skilled in combat and this prowess was noticed by his master – Nobunaga, who adored and admired him for his capabilities as a warrior. Nobunaga nicknamed him "monkey" or *saru* in Japanese because in Nobunaga's opinion, Hideyoshi had a monkey-like appearance. Hideyoshi earned his place as an excellent strategist, and was promoted to become one of Nobunaga's top generals. After avenging Nobunaga's death, Hideyoshi made peace deals with the Mori family he had been trying to conquer on behalf of Nobunaga (Henshall, 2004 p.45; Worden, 1992 p.26).

Hideyoshi was granted the privilege of being a custodian to the heir left by Nobunaga, in a joint custodianship with three other custodians whom he eliminated by 1584 A.D (Worden, 1992 p.25). Nobunaga was a father to three sons, namely: Nobutada (1557 – 1582 A.D) who died with him at Honnoji at the hands of the treacherous Akechi Mitsuhide, Nobutada (1558 – 1630 A.D) who was killed in a plot by Hideyoshi and Nobunaga's third son Nobukatsu (1558 – 1630 A.D) who desired to be the head of the Oda family and heir but was denied the opportunity by Hideyoshi, who installed Nobunaga's infant grandson – Hidenobu, who was son to Nobutada, as heir to Nobunaga. Hideyoshi appointed himself as retired regent (Taiko) to the young heir, and did not bother going for titles like the shogun just like Nobunaga (Henshall, 2004 p.46; Cartwright, 2019).

Hideyoshi continued with Nobunaga's dream of bringing into control unconquered lands if Japan by forming alliances like with the Mori family or through military conquest of daimyos' lands when they could not cooperate. Conquered lands were then distributed amongst his vassals who were most loyal to him, including his generals. To minimize rebellion from the daimyo, he held hostage their families at his headquarters in Momoyama Castle and to minimize rebellion from the local populace, he issued orders in 1588 A.D for the confiscation of

weapons from peasants countrywide in what became known as the "Sword Hunt" or *katanagari* in Japanese (Henshall, 2004 p.46).

Hideyoshi like many rulers before him, had policies and reforms of his own. He collected taxes from peasant farmers and from traders in large cities of Japan, to obtain funds for his government. He introduced a social classification system often referred to as the ***shi-no-ko-sho*** system that segregated samurai warriors(*shi*), farmers (*no*), artisans (*ko*) and merchants (*sho*) and nobody was allowed to leave their social class into another social class. For example, those born into families of farmers could only become farmers and not samurai and vice-versa. This classification system was carefully devised by Hideyoshi to make the samurai dependent on him for pay if they chose the path of being a samurai. This system however was not strictly obeyed and enforced, and remained a trend long enough into the Edo Period also known as Tokugawa Period (1603 – 1868 A.D) (Cartwright, 2019).

Hideyoshi's policy on Christianity, unlike his former master – Nobunaga, was unwelcoming even though at first, he tolerated the religion. Nobunaga contrastingly found Christians useful in his campaigns against Buddhists. Hideyoshi first passed an edict in 1587 A.D ordering the expulsion of all Christian missionaries in Japan, but there was laxity in enforcing this edict, and it was more of a warning message. Hideyoshi's negative attitudes towards Christianity deepened with the arrival of the Franciscan Christians in 1593 A.D, which brought the monopoly of the Jesuit Christians in Japan to an end, and both the Jesuits and Franciscans developed sentiments towards each other. In 1597, Hideyoshi had suspicions on Christian missionaries to be preparing the way for European invasion (as with the invasion and colonization of Africa), in addition he was worried of the persecution of Buddhists and Shinto worshipers being encouraged by Jesuit missionaries and also concerned about the involvement of Portuguese slave traders in selling off Japanese people as slaves. He therefore passed another edict in the same year and this time sending a serious message to the Europeans by crucifying 26 Christians including 9 Europeans in Nagasaki, and this marked the first case in Japanese history of the persecution of Europeans for professing their Christian faith (Henshall, 2004 p.47; Worden, 1992 p.27; Cartwright, 2019).

With time, Hideyoshi came to realize that his brutal persecution of Christians would interfere with Japanese silk-for-silver trade with the

Portuguese settled in Macao. Hideyoshi had paramount interests in preserving trade relations with the outside world and securing sea trade routes from the *wako* pirates that roamed the seas of East Asia. As an alternative to wiping out the pirates, he allowed them to engage in trading activities for as long as the pirates carried his personal red seal, and this earned them name *shuin-sen*, meaning – red-seal ships (Cartwright, 2019).

Hideyoshi like all dictators in human history was filled with constant paranoia and suspicion of who might be plotting to take away his power and influence. He therefore conducted purges that did not spare his own family members, members of his inner circle, their wives and children. His behaviour began to bear resemblance to that of his deceased master -Oda Nobunaga. He became so cruel and developed a personal sense of splendour or very high greatness that ought not to be challenged nor disappointed. He would order the execution of his messengers who presented him bad news by having them cut in half with a sawing tool (death by sawing) alive. He became suspicious of his young nephew Hidetsugu (1568 – 1595 A.D) of plotting against him, and ordered Hidetsugu to commit suicide. Hideyoshi in an attempt to tie loose ends ad guarantee his security and grip on power ordered the execution of Hidetsugu's wife and children. He then had Hidetsugu's head put on public display to send a chilling warning to anybody who sought to conspire against him. Hideyoshi did not spare even some if his most loyal men who even had served under Nobunaga. An example was Sen no Rikyu (1522 – 1591 A.D), grandmaster of the tea ceremony who had served Nobunaga till his death at Honnoji, and continued to serve Nobunaga's successor – Hideyoshi. Hideyoshi became suspicious of him, regardless of how old and seemingly harmless he was and was ordered by Hideyoshi to commit suicide (Henshall, 2004 p.47).

In the year 1590 A.D, Hideyoshi gathered a fighting force of 200,000 warriors and led them to victorious battle against a key rival daimyo who held territories in the Kanto region of Eastern Honshu (Worden, 1992 p.26). The last daimyo were cowered into submission, and thus the provinces in the far north of Honshu came under his rule, marking the end of Nobunaga's and Hideyoshi's mission to control and unify all of Japan (Worden, 1992 p.26; Henshall, 2004 p.46). In the previous year, that is in 1590 A.D, Hideyoshi carried out a population census, continued the land-surveying policy of Nobunaga and instituted new standards of measurement known as ***koku***. One koku was considered

equivalent to 180 litres of rice. One was considered a daimyo only if the lands he held had the potential to produce 10,000 koku or more of rice. Hideyoshi's lands was estimated to be worth 2 million koku out of the 18.5 million koku of all Japanese land as per surveys done in 1598. Nobunaga's loyal ally and partly-ally, partly-rival of Hideyoshi – Tokugawa Ieyasu's land was estimated to be worth 2.5 million koku and these lands were partially not in Hideyoshi's control (Worden, 1992 p.26; Henshall, 2004 p.46).

Hideyoshi was never certain of Tokugawa's loyalty to him since Tokugawa challenged him unsuccessfully in 1584 A.D, and thus Tokugawa yielded to him and accepted him as his lord in 1585 A.D. In 1590 A.D, because of his doubts over Tokugawa's loyalty, he reassigned and relocated him from his (Tokugawa's) central territory near Shizuoka to territories far away in the Kanto region which was conquered already, and then surrounded Tokugawa's new territory with daimyo or vassals that were more loyal to him. This decision to relocate Tokugawa to the Kanto areas proved to be an unwise decision as it put Tokugawa at a position of greater power than Hideyoshi because Tokugawa's new territories were worth 2.5 million koku, bigger than Hideyoshi's 2 million koku worth of land. This helped Tokugawa strengthen and solidify his position and gain loyalty and lordship over as many as 38 daimyo or more amongst his vassals (Henshall, 2004 p.48; Worden, 1992 pp.226-27).

Hideyoshi after successfully completing his and his former master's ambitions of unifying all of Japan, trained his eyes on acquiring more territories outside Japan. He set his eyes on conquering China ruled by the Ming Dynasty, but first, had to march in through Korea, which his forces invaded in 1592 A.D. His forces landed in Korea in Busan/Pusan, and they marched quickly crushing the Korean forces, pushing them back across the country. The Japanese took Korean cities like Seoul and Pyongyang, and if anything, the invasion caught the Koreans by surprise, compelling Korean King – Seonjo to flee to northern parts of Korea. Firearms were the biggest advantage that the Japanese had over their enemies thus the quick overrunning of Korea. The Japanese invasion however stalled after the entry of a large Chinese Ming army, the Korean navy with *kobukson* (turtle-ships) armed with cannons, and well organized and motivated Korean rebels into the war. In addition, the Japanese developed supply and logistic problems to support their warriors in northern Korea as they occupied the southern parts of

Korea. Peace talks then were organized with Hideyoshi putting on the table a demand to divide Korea, establish free trade, and for a Chinese consort to be married off to him. These demands were ignored by the Chinese, putting peace talks to an end. The Japanese therefore mounted a second invasion of Korea in 1597 A.D, which was less successful, five years after the initial invasion. Hideyoshi apparently fell ill and died the following year in 1598 A.D, compelling the Japanese forces to withdraw their forces from Korea, bringing the war to an end. The invasion led to permanent deterioration of Japanese-Koran relations felt to this day. The war led to financial loses and much more in terms of resources for the Chinese Ming Dynasty, contributing to its decline (Cartwright, 2019; Worden, 1992 p.27; Henshall, 2004 p.47).

In 1595 A.D, three years before he died, Hideyoshi arranged for and created a council of five of the greatest daimyo in Japan, who became referred to as the **Five Great Elders** or **Ministers** (*Tairo*) who were tasked with ensuring the continuity of Hideyoshi's lineage of rulers and had them share the role of regent for his young son – **Toyotomi Hideyori** (1593 -1615). On his deathbed, Hideyoshi requested the Five Great Elders to take good care of his infant son – Hideyori, whom he designated his heir. The Five Great Elders took their pledges before a dying Hideyoshi, promising to fulfill his last wishes. Amongst the Five Great Elders was Tokugawa Ieyasu, who upon death of Hideyoshi, broke his oath, resulting in a dispute of who should be Hideyoshi's successor. War broke out between forces loyal to Hideyori and those loyal to Tokugawa Ieyasu, and thus the **Battle of Sekigahara** in 1600 A.D, which was won by Tokugawa and his forces. Following this victory declared himself the shogun in 1603 with the approval of the emperor and established the Tokugawa shogunate. This finally marked the full solidification of control of all Japanese territories previously held by rival warlords and brought some 250 years of peace to Japan (minimal samurai warfare/infighting), in what is remembered as the **Edo** or **Tokugawa Period**.

The state capital was shifted from Kyoto to Edo (present-day Tokyo) during this period, and thus the period is named Edo Period. The three key leaders who played significant roles in the unification of Japan – Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu, are remembered by the following traditional saying that summaries their role in the unification of Japan:

"*Nobunaga mixed the cake, Hideyoshi baked it, and Ieyasu ate it*."

This saying highlights Ieyasu to be having the least struggles in the unification process and lived longer enough than the other two, to enjoy the fruits of their combined efforts in the unification of Japan. Tokugawa's position of shogun became hereditary and thus only members of his lineage could qualify to become shogun and they ruled Japan until the end of 1867 (Beasley, 1999 p.117; Cartwright, 2019; Henshall, 2004 pp.47-48; Worden, 1992 pp.27-28).

On June 4, 1615, Toyotomi Hideyori passed away during **the Osaka Siege**. Realizing that the Toyotomi clan's continued power would be a constant threat to his rule, Tokugawa Ieyasu renewed hostilities in the summer of 1615, following the truce that ended the winter siege of 1614. The battle reached its climax during the summer campaign when Tokugawa's army broke through the fortifications of Osaka Castle. Hideyori and his mother **Yodo-dono** decided to end their lives, following a custom among samurai to prevent dishonour from being captured, in response to the overwhelming might of the Tokugawa army and the **fall of Osaka Castle**. Their demise sealed the Tokugawa Shogunate's rule over Japan and brought an end to the Toyotomi lineage. This rule persisted until **the Meiji Restoration** in 1868 (Turnbull, 2012).

MEDIEVAL (FEUDAL/MIDDLE AGES) HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 9

THE EDO PERIOD AND THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE (1600 – 1868)

THE EDO PERIOD AND THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE

This period of Japanese history began in 1603 A.D when Tokugawa Ieyasu declared himself shogun with the approval of Emperor Go-Yozei, following Tokugawa's victory in the Battle of Sekigahara of 1600 A.D, that was a contest for succession and fought between forces loyal to Toyotomi Hideyoshi's heir -Hideyori and those loyal to Tokugawa Ieyasu who had broken his oath to a dying Hideyoshi, an oath he to took to ensure the continuity of Hideyoshi's lineage of rulers (Squires, 2022; Henshall, 2004 p.53).

This period is named after the city of Edo (present-day Tokyo), where the Tokugawa shogunate was based. In as much as the Tokugawa family became the most powerful in Japan at the time, they did not have the capacity or will to destroy the other powerful daimyo and their families to create a more centralized state. Tokugawa Ieyasu alternatively allowed the daimyo to govern their territories provided they acknowledged the legitimacy of his national rule of Japan. The Tokugawa apparently controlled 30% of all Japanese sovereign land, and the rest controlled by approximately 270 daimyo families. Tokugawa proceeded to divide the daimyo into 3 groups: the first group being the ***Sankei*** or the ***Shinpan*** daimyo who consisted of the branches of the Tokugawa family, the second group was the ***Fudai*** daimyo who consisted of the daimyo who were loyal to Ieyasu before the Battle of Sekigahara and the third and last group was the ***Tozama*** daimyo who consisted of the daimyo that were loyal to Ieyasu after the Battle of Sekigahara. The land or domains governed by the daimyo became known as ***han***, and the land size were measured not in terms of area size but by the amount of rice each *han* could produce. The *daimyo* who were more trusted like the Fudai were given smaller han than the least trusted like the Tozama (Squires, 2022; Henshall, 2004 p.54; Worden, 1992 p.28)

The system of governance became known to historians as the ***baku-han*** which comes from the combination of the terms *bakufu* and *han*, where *bakufu* refers to the shogunate or military government of Japan at the time and *han* refers the land/domain governed by the daimyo. The Tokugawa bakufu (shogunate) thus comprised the national government

while the daimyo formed the regional government in the *han*. Thus, there was both centralized and decentralized administrations in Japan in this period (Worden, 1992 p.28; Squires, 2022).

The Tokugawa shogunate fearful of uprisings, came up with policies to contain the daimyo and the population at large. To contain the daimyo, the Tokugawa shogunate passed edicts to restrict the size of armies under the daimyo, to limit the number of castles for the daimyo to one castle per domain (*han*), and the *daimyo* were not allowed to repair their fortifications without permission from the shogunate. Another policy introduced in the 1630s A.D, required the daimyo to alternate their residence between Edo and their respective territory, which was a policy known as ***sankin kotai***. In addition, they were required to permanently station their families in Edo as hostages of the shogunate. This was a means that the shogunate used to keep an eye on the *daimyo* and ensure their loyalty. The *sankin kotai* was also designed to drain the daimyo financially in terms of the financial costs of movement between their respective domains and Edo with their staff (bureaucrats) and the financial costs of maintaining both residences in Edo and back in the home domains. This kept the daimyo from gathering too much financial power above the shogunate. They were required to travel along specific routes that were guarded by the shogunate's *samurai*. To contain the population at large, the Tokugawa shogunate continued with Hideyoshi's *shi-no-ko-sho* social classification system where the samurai (*shi*) were at the top of the lower-class society, followed by farmers (*no*), and then artisans (*ko*) and finally merchants (*sho*). This system was designed not only to keep the samurai dependent on the shogunate for payments for loyalty and service to the shogunate, but also to keep weapons off the hands of as many people as possible. Restrictions were also imposed on the samurai on when and when not to engage in violence. The shi-no-ko-sho system was intended to prevent people from shifting from one social class to another, even though practically this was not impossible. The population was divided into the samurai (*shi*) and non-samurai (*no, ko* and *sho*) social classes, with the samurai comprising about 6-7% of the total population in Japan at the time by approximation. The non-samurai class comprised countryside dwellers and town dwellers. Other means used to contain the population include: checking of compulsory travel documents at the checkpoints between the domains, imposing night curfews and no authorized movements were allowed at night, destruction of bridges to minimize movement of people, prohibition of wheeled transport i.e.

chariots, and finally the deployment of secret police to contain suspicious movements and activities. The shogunate came up with policies because they believed people posed a lesser threat if they moved about less than when allowed to roam freely. The Tokugawa shogunate was also fearful of the European traders and Christian missionaries, suspecting them of potentially sponsoring the daimyo to rebel against the shogunate and thus Christianity was banished and all European settlers were expelled from Japan, with the exception of the Dutch whose trading activities were limited strictly to Nagasaki in 1616 A.D (Squires, 2022; Henshall, 2004 pp.54-55, p.59; Worden, 1992 p.30).

With the ban of Christianity and in Japan, by 1612 A.D, all Japanese people including commoners and shogunate officials were ordered to abandon Christianity. In 1622 A.D, 120 Christian missionaries and converts were executed, and again thousands more were executed in 1629 A.D (Worden, 1992 p.30).

Between the years 1600 A.D and 1700 A.D of the Edo Period, Japan experienced the doubling of human population from 15 million to 30 million people. The doubling of the population is credited to the Tokugawa shogunate for having created a more peaceful Japanese society after centuries of infighting. Reduced infighting means farmers could increasingly channel their energy into food crop production to feed themselves, their families and the society at large (Squires, 2022).

The daimyo also made efforts in promoting the increase of land productivity in their domains (*han*). The daimyo themselves were not taxed directly by the shogunate. They were made to pay levies needed to fund the military and its logistics, and also to fund public projects like construction of roads, castles, bridges and palaces. The Tokugawa shogunate sought to limit the financial power of the daimyo and enhance its own financial power, and in addition to the levies on the daimyo, the shogunate employed the alternate attendance system known as sankin kotai discussed earlier, to drain the daimyo of finances up to about 40% of their income. The daimyo tried to overcome this challenge in two ways – firstly, increasing taxes on the farmers, which did not work because of sentiments and resistance from farmers. Secondly – improving land productivity in their domains. They did this by promoting the opening of new agricultural land, introducing irrigation methods, employment of better farming methods and also practising cash crop production like cotton farming, and also production

of silk, wax, paper and salt, which could be exported to other domains, and thus the growth of trade at all levels in the country – locally, regionally and nationally, and therefore, a commercial economy emerged (Squires, 2022; Worden, 1992 p.29).

The population increase and rise in trading activities in Edo Japan led to the enhancement of urbanization. Towns at regional levels emerged and grew around castles whose size were determined by the amount of wealth in the hands of the daimyo in charge of the respective castles. The towns were inhabited by the samurai warrior class who gradually became administrative bureaucrats for the local governments. The fact that the samurai warrior class were in need of various products i.e. weapons etc. and services i.e. blade sharpening etc., necessitated the arrival of artisans to settle in the same class. They were located given sections of the town to live in separately from the warrior class and other social classes of the *shi-no-ko-sho* system. Such sections of towns are still found today in towns like Hagi and Kanazawa. Large cities such as Edo, Osaka and Kyoto developed during this period and gained recognition nationally as some of the key cities of Japan. Edo became the largest city in the world with a population greater one million people by the end of the 17th Century A.D. Each of these cities were known for their importance i.e. Edo was the political centre of Japan (being the headquarters of the Tokugawa shogunate) and was dominated by the samurai warrior class dwellers. Osaka was the major centre for commerce in western region of Japan and was dominated by merchants. Kyoto remained the state capital and city of residence for the imperial family and aristocrats. The last half of the 17th Century A.D saw the emergence of new cultures. Prostitution became legal in Edo and was restricted to 'pleasure quarters' where the prostitutes offered their services. Women working in these 'pleasure quarters' suffered poor working conditions and despite this, the business was booming and this business sector formed part of the entertainment and pleasure world which became known in Japanese as the ***ukiyo***, which translates to 'the floating world' in English. Two other new forms of entertainment emerged in addition to the prostitution, and they are the ***bunraku*** and the ***kabuki*** theatre. The *bunraku* theatre was a puppet theatre and the *kabuki* theatre, utilized actors and actresses. **Chikamatsu Monzaemon** (1653 -1724 A.D) became the most famous playwright of the time and his theatrical works of entertainment are reflective of the Edo society of his time. Other notable figures in the entertainment world of the Japanese society at the time included **Ihara Saikaku** (1642- 1693 A.D)

who authored novels highlighting the lives of the new urban class, another notable figure was **Matsuo Basho** (1644 -1694 A.D), who is credited with developing *haiku* poetry into a refined art form and finally, **Hishikawa Moronobu** (1618 – 1694 A.D) who came up with a new art form called ***ukiyo-e*** (pictures of the floating world), which depicted scenes of the ukiyo (the floating world) and these pictures were mostly sexually explicit. Actresses of kabuki theatrical shows were less distinguishable from the prostitutes and their performances in stage could get into the extremes involving sexual acts including orgies. The Tokugawa shogunate thus banned all female actresses and replaced them with male actors who proved to be no different. The shogunate demanded that they tone down and avoid the sexually explicit acts but 'all fell to deaf ears' and there was nothing much the shogunate could do. Another category of entertainers was the ***geisha*** who were often male but females also got into the profession. They were entertainers who also played the roles of prostitutes. They entertained people with musical instruments like the *shamisen* and recited *haiku* poetry verses. Unlike the kabuki actors and actresses that proved difficult to be controlled, the shogunate found the geisha much easier to control in comparison, and confined them to 'pleasure quarters' in every city i.e. Yoshiwara in Edo City (Worden, 1992 p.32; Henshall, 2004 pp.63-64; Squires, 2022).

Image: Artistic depiction of a *geisha* in a red and white *kimono* (dress). (Source: AI-generated art -OpenAI's Chat GPT).

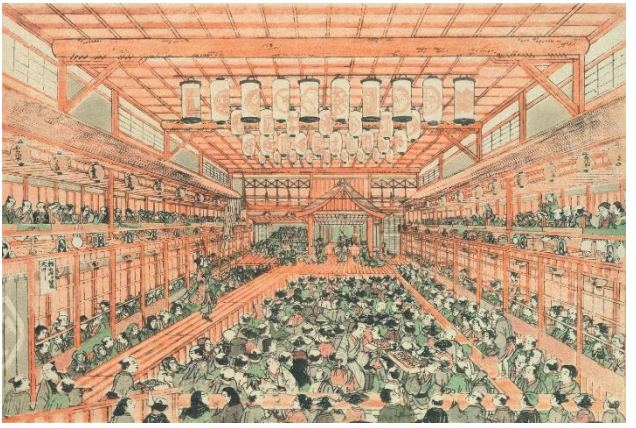


Image above, Japanese Art depicting Kabuki Drama. Artist Utagawa Toyoharu Title Perspective Picture of a Kabuki Theatre (Uki-e Kabuki shibai no zu) Place Japan (Artist's nationality:) Date 1771–1781 Medium Color woodblock print; oban. Published on April 28, 2024 by the Art Institute of Chicago on Unsplash.com, under the Unsplash License.

The Japanese society was initially dominated by Shinto and Buddhism religions, but from the 17th Century, Confucianism – a system of intellectual beliefs and practices from China gained prominence in Edo Japan. Confucianism began in China somewhere in the 5th Century B.C and was mainly concerned with ethical rules for individuals and rulers. Following the arrival of Buddhism from India in China in the 2nd Century A.D, intellectuals of Confucianism were inspired and began expanding Confucianism to encompass more complex ideas. This was followed by the evolution of Confucianism into neo-Confucianism which included a comprehensive theory of the individual man, society and the universe at large. Neo-Confucianism, amongst many propositions, proposed that human nature is good but because of worldly influence and interactions, the goodness in man is diminished, and this goodness can be restored when the individual engages in self- reflection and cultivation. Neo-Confucian ideas managed to find their way into Japan during the Kamakura Period (1185 – 1333 A.D) and the Muromachi Period (1333 – 1573 A.D) together with some Buddhist ideals. In the early Edo Period, Confucianism was separated from Buddhism as a pure school of thought. The Tokugawa shogunate which was critical of Christianity became suspicious of Confucianism because of its ideological resemblance with Christianity which the Tokugawa

shogunate abolished in the 1620s A.D. Teachers of Confucianism gradually increased in Japan, and gave their teachings at a fee (Squires, 2022).

The samurai warrior class had their own code of conduct in the Heian Period that was influenced by Buddhism and later on by Confucianism in the Edo Period, and thus the samurai code of conduct evolved into an 'ethical' (Japanese societal ethical standards) code of conduct in the Edo Period which became known as the ***bushido*** which means 'the Way of the Warrior' and it entails qualities such as diligence, honesty, honor, loyalty and courage. The bushido itself inspired the development of the ***chonindo*** (way of the towns people) in the urban centres such as Edo, Kyoto and Osaka. The chonindo mixed Shinto, neo-Confucian and Buddhist beliefs in its principles (Worden, 1992 pp.31-32; Henshall, 2004 pp.59-60).

In the Edo Period, samurai warfare in Japan declined and the samurai thus practised bushido and became bureaucrats and administrators in the office of the Tokugawa shogunate (Henshall, 2004 p.60). They were involved in community policing which involved light-intensity combat in putting down peasant uprisings and tackling banditry, and thus they practised a swords martial art form known today as ***kendo*** for combat-readiness and as an art that imparts all the qualities of the *bushido*. *Kendo* evolved from the swords martial art known as ***kenjutsu*** which utilized actual swords, where as *kendo* utilizes bamboo sticks for swords.

Image above- Japanese present day martial art students practice Kendo. This image was authored by the Unsplash Artist B Vi and made available on Unsplash.com under the Unsplash License.

During the Edo Period, there was the emergence of the ***kokugaku*** – which means 'national learning', and was a scholarly movement aimed at the study of Japan's classical literature and native traditions. The emergence of *kokugaku* was a response to the centuries-long domination of Japanese society by Confucianism and Chinese influence. The scholars of *kokugaku* therefore desired to restore Japan to its classical traditions and restore its original cultural identity. They sought to accomplish this by rediscovering and reinforcing native Shinto beliefs and mythology recorded in ancient Japanese texts like the ***Kojiki*** (Records of Ancient Matters) and the ***Nihon Shoki*** (Chronicles of Japan). Among the notable scholars of *kokugaku* included Motoori Norinaga (1730 -1801 A.D) and Hirata Atsutane (1776 -1843 A.D). The *kokugaku* was responsible for Japan's nationalistic adoration of the emperor and the revival of Shinto as a national religion in the 18th and 19th Centuries A.D. The main purpose for the establishment of the *kokugaku* was to

put in place a unique sense of Japanese identity, promoting native traditions and laying the groundwork for cultivating Japanese nationalism that would spring up later in the Meiji Period and beyond (Squires, 2022; Henshall, 2004 pp.62-63; Worden, 1992 p.32).

The Ako Incident

One notable event in the Edo Period concerning the samurai and the bushido was the **Ako Incident** which took place at the start of the 18th Century A.D. This incident involved **Lord Asano Naganori** (1665 -1701 A.D) – Lord of Ako domain in Western Japan, his 47 samurai warriors and a shogunate official by the name **Kira Yoshinaka** (1641 -1703 A.D). The main scene of the incident was the Edo Castle belonging to the *shogun* of the time. The tale goes that Kira Yoshinaka in 1701 A.D, insulted Lord Asano who in anger drew out his sword and injured Kira Yoshinaka at the *shogun's* castle in Edo. Yoshinaka was the *shogun's* chief of protocol and was attacked when preparing for a court ceremony. Drawing out a sword and disturbing peace in the *shogun's* castle was by law a capital offense, meaning the offender, Lord Asano in this case, was to be sentenced to death for his capital offense. Lord Asano was ordered to take his own life by *seppuku* and his family was stripped of the possession of his domain and his 47 samurai warriors became ***ronin***, meaning 'masterless samurai'. The 47 ronin angry after their master's death and putting the blame on Kira Yoshinaka, they quietly and without drawing any suspicion from the authorities, plotted to kill Yoshinaka to honour their fallen master and avenge his death. They lived their lives quietly for two years, pretending they were moving on with life but secretly drew a plan to kill Yoshinaka in his guarded area of residence in a surprise attack when he was most vulnerable. Their plan worked when they stormed Kira's residence, killed him and carried his head to their master's grave in a nearby temple. While at Asano's grave, they waited for the shogunate's authorities who arrested them and after an investigation and trial, they were sentenced to death by *seppuku* despite their show of courage and determination to honour their master in death, expressing values enshrined in the *bushido*. This is because they took the law into their own hands and the shogunate had no tolerance for random acts of violence. This historical event forms a tale that is told from generation-to-generation and is widely romanticized by works of fiction including novels and motion pictures such as **47 Ronin** – a film starring

Keanu Reeves and released in 2013 produced by Universal Pictures and directed by Carl Rinsch (Henshall, 2004 p.60; Squires, 2022).

Fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate and End of Edo Period

Japan's rapid population growth that began around 1600 A.D, began to slow down after 1720 A.D, remaining stable at approximately 30 million people until the end of the Edo Period. This decline in population growth rate is attributed to many factors including the fact that a number of Japanese people chose to have fewer children so that they could sustain good standards of living. There were also a number of famines including more natural disasters that led to the deaths of many people. The resulting economic crisis turmoils became a big problem for the Tokugawa shogunate in addition to the threat of invasion by Western foreign powers (Squires, 2022).

The Tokugawa shogunate in the early Edo Period largely succeeded in expelling most of the European settlers because Japan's technological advancements could rival Europe's at the time. The shogunate imposed a policy on Dutch traders in Nagasaki demanding that they give the shogunate information about the developments and conditions of the outside world. Tokugawa Yoshimune, the eighth shogun in the Tokugawa lineage, allowed for the importation of foreign books which were translated to Japanese and this promoted rangaku, meaning 'Dutch Learning' that enabled the learning of European scientific concepts (Squires, 2022).

In the late 1700s A.D onwards, foreigners arrived in ships with the demand that Japan be opened up for trade and these demands were rejected (Squires, 2022). This is because the Tokugawa shogunate imposed a closed country policy known as ***sakoku***, and thus the ***sakoku jidai*** (closed country period). The sakoku policy was aimed at minimizing Japan's contact with the foreign world by expelling foreign settlers, especially the Europeans with the exception of the Dutch who were allowed in Nagasaki. The Chinese and the Koreans were also allowed to trade with Japan. The *sakoku* policy also involved rejecting some foreign ideas or practices to avoid contamination of Japanese ways of life. The *sakoku* policy also barred Japanese people from travelling outside Japan and those who left mostly went somewhere in South East Asia, and anyone who left was not allowed to return and

intimidated with death. The *sakoku* policy banned the building of ocean-travel ships to prevent Japanese people from leaving Japan and only ships that bore the shogunate's official seal were allowed to move along the Japanese coast for trading. The Tokugawa shogunate believed that the *sakoku* policy was the only way to guarantee the safety of Japan, and thus minimizing contact with the foreign world was paramount (Henshall, 2004 p.59).

The industrial revolution in 18th Century A.D Europe gave the Europeans an edge in industrial development and military capabilities over other civilizations as it was witnessed in the British Opium Wars (1839 – 1842 A.D) against China which ended in a British victory and British colonization of China. This British victory over China sent alarm bells ringing in Japan and the shogunate grew weary of the potential threat presented by the foreign European powers to Japan. Japan thus adopted economic reforms to help mitigate the threats emerging from the West (Squires, 2022; Worden, 1992 p.34; Henshall, 2004 p.66)

The shogunate took a staunch anti-Western stance to an extent that those who sought a compromise in relations with the West were purged. For example, for proposing that Japan be opened up to foreign contact and trade, Takano Choei (1804 – 1850 A.D) was imprisoned and later ordered to commit suicide (Henshall, 2004 p.67). The United States (U.S) which was establishing a foothold in the Asia-Pacific region, sent Commodore James Biddle to Japan, to demand the establishment of diplomatic between the two countries. Commodore Biddle arrived in July 1846 at Edo Bay with two warships but Japan turned down this demand (Worden, 1992 p.34). The U.S in response, sent Commodore Mathews C. Perry who arrived at Edo Bay in July 1853 with a squadron of four warships with a set of demands, which were:

- Opening up Japanese ports for trade.
- Humane treatment of shipwrecked American sailors (castaways).
- Opening up Japanese ports for fuel and other provisions.

Commodore Perry was ready to use force if the Japanese were not ready to comply with his demands, thus expressing his determination and making the Japanese aware of the destructive power of his weapons. He went further to issue the Japanese with white flags in case they wanted to surrender. He finally issued a letter from the U.S

President addressed to the Emperor of Japan, and then sailed off Japan promising to return the following year to get a reply from the Japanese. Commodore Perry's departure created confusion and disagreements amongst the Japanese leaders on how to respond (Henshall, 2004 p.67).

Abe Masahiro, Japan's Chairman of the Senior Councillors, was put in charge pf handling the Americans. He made attempts to find a solution to the crisis that would satisfy and appeal to all parties involved (the Americans who wanted Japan opened up for trade, the emperor who wanted to maintain the *sakoku* policy and the *daimyo* who wanted to wage war on the U.S) and compromise with the desires of the Senior Councillors. And because he did not find a consensus, he tried to compromise by accepting Commodore Perry's demands and preparing a military response (Worden, 1992 pp.34 -35). Commodore Mathews returned in February of 1854 in a larger fleet of nine warships. In March 1854, the Tokugawa shogunate officially accepted Commodore Perry's demands in the **Treaty of Kanagawa** (**Treaty of Peace and Amity**) which resulted in the opening of two ports to U.S ships in need of provisions, guaranteed the humane treatment of American castaway sailors (shipwrecked sailors) and permitted the stationing of the first American consul – **Townsend Harris**, his consulate and residence in the port of Shimoda in 1856. Shimoda is a sea port in the Izu Peninsula, southwest of Edo City. Five years after the Treaty of Kanagawa, another commercial treaty was imposed on Japan by the U.S to open up more Japanese areas for trade with the Americans (Henshall, 2004 p.68; Worden, 1992 p.35).

Other world powers signed similar treaties with Japan afterwards i.e. Britain (1854 A.D), Russia (1855 A.D), France and Holland (modern day Netherlands) later on. These 'unequal treaties' felt more like humiliations amongst the Japanese. In the treaties, was the right of extraterritoriality, which exempted foreigners from being tried in Japanese courts under Japanese laws for violating Japanese laws, and would be rather tried by their consul under the laws of their home country. The Japanese perceived this as an insult to their national pride and a demonization as an uncivilised society whose laws were not deemed fit for judging and punishing foreign settlers (Henshall, 2004 p.68; Worden, 1992 p.35).

The Westerners arrived in Japan and their presence was a source of sentiments especially amongst the samurai, who could attack them

with little to no provocation. And, the fact that the *shogun* was unable to deal with the foreign threat as the entrusted military protector of Japan, resulted in sentiments against the shogunate, and thus an opposition consisting of the daimyo was mounted against the shogunate, some with genuine concerns for the state and others merely being political opportunists (Henshall, 2004 p.68).

Abe Masahiro (Chairman of the Senior Councillors) out to seek new allies, made consultations with the *shinpan* and *tozama* daimyo and thus weakened the power and influence of the Tokugawa shogunate over the daimyo. Abe instituted the **Ansei Reform** (1854 – 1856 A.D) with the aim of empowering the regime, when he placed orders for Dutch warships and weapons from Holland (present-day Netherlands) and constructed new port defenses. He set up a naval training school with Dutch naval instructors in Nagasaki in 1854, in addition to a Western-inspired military school in Edo in 1855 A.D. The *fudai daimyo* mounted opposition towards Abe Masahiro for opening up seats in the shogunate's council to the *tozama daimyo*, and therefore Abe Masahiro was deposed as Chairman of the Senior Councillors and replaced with Hotta Masayoshi (1810 – 1864 A.D) (Worden, 1992 p.35).

Opposition and dissatisfaction towards the shogunate, for failing to expel the Western foreigners, majorly came from the *tozama daimyo* who controlled the domains of Satsuma (southern Kyushu) and Choshu (Western tip of Honshu) which were large and powerful (Henshall, 2004 p.68). As the Tokugawa shogunate approached its final years, more foreigners arrived in Japan and in 1859 A.D, the U.S signed a treaty with Japan, permitting the opening of more ports to diplomatic missions, unrestricted trade at four new ports and the establishment of foreign residences in Osaka and Edo. It was this treaty that imposed the policy of extraterritoriality where foreigners were prosecuted by their own consul with the laws of their home-state and not Japanese laws in Japanese courts (Worden, 1992 p.35).

Of all the nationalists who opposed foreign contact and opening up of Japan for foreign trade, there were extremist nationalist factions that popularized the slogan ***sonno joi***, which means 'revere the emperor, expel the barbarians. This conveys the fact that they felt the shogunate's powers were to be restored to the imperial family (the emperor to be specific) and the Western foreigners were to be expelled (Squires, 2022; Henshall, 2004 p.67).

The fact that the shogunate was unable to expel the Western foreigners created a weak perception of the shogunate, and thus the extremist nationalists desired the restoration of real power from the shogunate back to the emperor thus the slogan *sonno joi* (Squires, 2022). The extremist nationalists carried out violent attacks on both shogunate officials and foreign settlers, with their resistance being most pronounced in Satsuma and Choshu, where the anti-shogunate and anti-foreigner sentiments were greatest and the desire to restore real power to the emperor was strongest in these regions as well. An example of a strong nationalist was Yoshida Shoin who was a radical thinker from Choshu who in a failed attempt to stow away (get onboard with no authorization) on one of Commodore Perry's ships to learn ways of the Westerners, advocated for a stronger Japan capable of pushing out Western influence. In 1859 A.D, he was executed by the shogunate for conspiracy to kill a shogunate official and this got him elevated to martyrdom by the nationalists affirming the *sonno joi* slogan (Henshall, 2004 p.68). These sentiments boiled into direct military action, with the Choshu forces taking action in 1863 A.D and 1864 A.D by opening fire on foreign ships in the Shimonoseki Strait. The Western forces (British and American) responded with punitive military actions on Choshu's defenses, inflicting great destruction on their (Choshu's) naval fleet and fortifications. The shogunate attempted to suppress the Choshu forces by opening offensives against them in 1865 A.D and 1866 A.D but encountered stiff resistance from the Choshu, who brough onboard samurai warriors and peasant militias (Henshall, 2004 pp.68 - 69; Worden, 1992 p.36).

This proved a pivotal moment, as the Satsuma and Choshu forces formed an alliance against the shogunate, despite being rivals previously who fought over favours of an imperial court. This alliance would later prove fatal to the Tokugawa shogunate by dismantling it totally. The fate of the Tokugawa shogunate was at a critical juncture in 1867 A.D, when Tokugawa Yoshinobu, who was also known as Keiki, became the *shogun*. He instituted reforms that could help the Tokugawa shogunate reach a compromise with the imperial court, and thus increasing the chances of survival and stabilization of the Tokugawa shogunate, and this became the greatest fear of the Satsuma-Choshu alliance who were hell-bent on dismantling the shogunate and restoring real power to the emperor. They were assisted by a court noble named Iwakura Tomomi in securing an imperial rescript demanding the dismantling of the Tokugawa shogunate. With these

written orders from the emperor, they took over the imperial palace on 3rd January, 1868 A.D and made a declaration of the restoration of imperial rule, laying the groundwork for the Meiji Restoration (Henshall, 2004 p.69; Worden, 1992 p.36).

The takeover of the imperial palace and declaration of restoration of imperial rule prompted the dismantling of the Tokugawa shogunate after more than 250 years of Tokugawa rule. Despite the resistance from pro-shogunate forces lasting for sometime, Tokugawa Yoshinobu the last shogun of Japan, abdicated from his position of shogun and peacefully handed over power to the emperor's court. The emperor was a young 15-year-old boy by the name Mutsuhito (1852 – 1912 A.D) who was later after his death known as Emperor Meiji which means 'enlightened rule'. This event which marked the transition from shogunate rule to imperial rule in Japan became known as the Meiji Restoration of 1868, and it opened a new chapter and era in Japanese history that saw rapid modernization and profound social changes in Japan. Emperor Mutsuhito ascended the throne one year before in January 1867 after the death of his father Emperor Komei (1831 -1867 A.D) (reigned 1846 – 1867 A.D), whose death was full of controversy in a suspected act of poisoning. Emperor Komei in his reign, did not support the full restoration of imperial power championed by the Satsuma and Choshu forces, and instead championed for a compromise between the imperial court and shogunate. The fact that he died (naturally or in an assassination attempt by poisoning) was convenient for the Choshu and Satsuma forces in that they could obtain the imperial rescript calling for the dissolution of the shogunate with much ease and it was good riddance of a reluctant, uncooperative and difficult adult emperor, to create room for a young and easy to manipulate emperor who could prove to be cooperative in matters of restoring full imperial power and rule from the shogunate (Squires, 2022; Henshall, 2004 p.69).

MODERN HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 10

MEIJI PERIOD (1868 – 1912)

THE MEIJI PERIOD (1868 - 1912)

Introduction

This period of Japanese history begins with the Meiji Restoration of 1868 that saw the peaceful transfer of power from the last shogun of Japan – Tokugawa Yoshinobu to the 15-year-old emperor – Mutsuhito. Yoshinobu abdicated from his position of shogun and spent the rest of his life peacefully in retirement at Shizuoka (Henshall, 2004 p.69). It is during this period that Japan experienced rapid modernization in a transformative move from a feudal society to a modern industrial society and power. Japan's modernization efforts were built upon practices borrowed from the Western world and they include Western political, military and industrial practices. This modernization was deemed necessary by the ruling class to ensure Japan was strong enough to resist Western imperialism or any other foreign threat. The modernization of modernization of Japan's military forces (army and navy) came with successes in wars against China in 1894 A.D and Russia in 1905 A.D. By the time this period was drawing to close in 1912, Japan had been transformed into a world power and the mightiest country in East Asia (Squires, 2022).

Solidifying the Imperial Restoration

All the modernization reforms could not have been effected by the decisions of a young and inexperienced 15-year-old Emperor Mutsuhito. He was surrounded by advisers who were mainly the samurai class from Choshu and Satsuma who were die-hard advocates of the slogan *sonno joi* (revere the emperor, expel the barbarians), and thus championed the restoration of power from the shogun to the emperor and also championed the expulsion of foreigners from Japan. Others who supported this course were from other domains like Tosa in Shikoku and Hizen in Kyushu. Court nobles like Iwakura Tomomi made contributions to this course and enhanced the legitimacy of the new imperial government. This group of advisers became known as the **Meiji**

Oligarchs and they included the following from Satsuma – **Okubo Toshimichi**, **Saigo Takamori** and **Matsukata Masayoshi**; and from Choshu were – **Kido Koin**, **Inoue Kaoru**, **Ito Hirobumi** and **Yamagata Aritomo**. These men, were averagely young in their thirties and originally were samurai of low ranks. Ito Hirobumi who was from impoverished backgrounds rose to become a low-ranking samurai and was later appointed the first Prime Minister of Japan in this period of Japanese history (Henshall,2004 p.73; Squires, 2022). This group of advisers to the emperor had both national agendas for the good of the country and personal agendas for their own individual benefits. In as much as they fought to free their country from foreign threats and imperialism, they had personal desires for success they could not achieve under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate. They took advantage of the young emperor's age and inexperience to manipulate him in adopting whatever proposals they laid before him in the name of the nation (Henshall, 2004 pp.73-74).

In as much as imperial authority had been restored from the shogunate, there was a section of the Japanese who were not ready for this political change and sought to reverse it through armed resistance consisting of about 200 troops in Edo and thus they were shogunal loyalists. One of such loyalists named Enomoto Takeaki fled Edo with a fleet of warships for refuge to Hokkaido which he declared a republic. His republic received limited recognition of sovereignty by the U.S and apparently was defeated the following year in June. This change in political order from the bakufu (shogunate) government to an imperial government was therefore not entirely peaceful, despite the peaceful handover of power by Tokugawa Yoshinobu, the last shogun of Japan and these turbulent times of conflict between pro-shogunate and pro-emperor forces began to worry members of the public who needed assurances that it was stability and peace that were restored to Japan but not just the rule of the emperor. Even after the defeat of Takeaki, resistances somehow did not stop over the years. The emperor was also expected to state clearly how he would handle the foreign threats to Japan. He therefore with the aid of his advisers, came up with the **Charter Oath of 1868**, 3 months after the Meiji Restoration. This charter entailed 5 articles that promised the following:

- All matters concerning the state to be discussed publicly.
- Inclusive governance bringing on board all the social classes of Japan.

- All Japanese people to enjoy occupational freedom in choosing their desired professional careers
- The outlawing of past evil customs
- The pursuit of knowledge from every corner of the world with aim of empowering Japan.

The content of the fifth article of the Charter Oath, suggests the emperor was having a change of heart in handling the foreign threat, that is, avoiding confrontation with the foreigners and instead sought to learn from them and empower Japan with lessons learnt from the foreigners. This marked the death of the slogan *sonno joi* (revere the emperor, expel the barbarians), which was replaced by new slogans like ***Wakon Yōsai***, meaning 'Japanese spirit, Western learning.' The new approach in handling the foreigners adopted by the imperial government was nothing new at all, in fact, it was nothing but a return to the old approaches of the ancient Yamato state and imperial governments of the Nara Period (Henshall, 2004 pp.74-75).

In the preamble of the Charter Oath, was the pledge of a constitution which was hurriedly promulgated 3 months down the line, with minimal public awareness, contrary to the first article of the Charter Oath on public participation in state affairs. The constitution outlined the need for a national assembly, public voting and a **Grand Council** of the state, whose members were the Meiji Oligarchs surrounding the young and inexperienced emperor -Mutsuhito. This constitution was later replaced by the Meiji Constitution of 1868, which proved to be better and was promulgated by a Cabinet which was first created in 1885. The members of Cabinet were direct appointees of the emperor. In 1890, Japan had its first democratic elections and only about 1% of the population were given the right to vote. The elections involved political parties which were formed in competition for influence. Just like in the historic Yamato and Nara states, the Meiji government sought to have a single capital city rather than dual capitals, as this was necessary for the centralization of power. Kyoto and Edo had operated as dual capital cities of Japan for quite sometime but the Meiji government chose Edo as the new capital and renamed the city **Tokyo** meaning – 'eastern capital'. The imperial residence (palace) was thus moved from Kyoto to Edo (Tokyo) in 1869 A.D. The Grand Council was also given a base in Tokyo. Another policy that resembled that of the Nara Period was the nationalization of all Japanese sovereign land, with land belonging to the dismantled shogunate (about 25% of all Japanese land) being the

first to be nationalized. In March 1869 A.D, the *daimyo* were persuaded to surrender their *han* (domains) to the new imperial government, notably the daimyo in Choshu and Satsuma regions were persuaded by imperial government officials from these two areas. The imperial government persuaded them to do so because it sought to reorganize the han (domains) into the modern-day Prefectures of Japan. When the daimyo from Choshu and Satsuma complied, other daimyo in Japan complied as well. Some daimyo gave up their land reluctantly but had no choice because they did not want to stir tensions and disappointments in the imperial government and they had very little to no stake in the policy-making decisions at the time. To avoid the possibility of armed resistance against the state, the imperial government coupled the relinquishing of the han (domains) by the daimyo with incentives such as making financial arrangements with the daimyo and their samurai retainers (servants), awarding the new title of **Governor Of Prefecture** to the daimyo, a title that came with good salaries, and finally, taking up the debts of the han (domains) and taking up the responsibility of paying wages to the daimyo's samurai retainers, wages that were lowered by a third (Henshall, 2004 p.76; Squires, 2022).

These incentives were financially exhausting for the new government which inherited a state that was not financially in good 'health', from the Tokugawa *bakufu* (shogunate). The new imperial government came up with new financial reforms that saw the establishing of new mints for coin production, a new banking system and a standardised decimal currency which was founded on the Japanese Yen. Behind these reforms were figures in Japanese history such as Okuma Shigenobu, who was then the Minster of Finance and Ito Hirobumi who travelled to the U.S to learn more on the American currency system as part of the **Iwakura Mission** of 1871 A.D to 1873 A.D. Another financial reform was the 1873 fixed land tax which was calculated from a percentage of the determined value of a piece of land. This reform rubbished the previous feudal land tax system of a variable tax calculated from the volume of the harvest. Among the reforms introduced to enhance the modernization of the Japanese society was the 1869 A.D abolishment of the restrictive *shi-no-ko-sho* class system that prohibited people from having a choice on professional occupation and one was assigned to the professional occupation to which he or she was born to, that is the profession of their parents and ancestors. The *shi-no-ko-sho* class system introduced in the era of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi

was replaced by the ***kazoku-shizoku-heimin*** system where ***kazoku*** were the nobles and the *daimyo*, ***shizoku*** were the samurai and the ***heimin*** the commoners. The switch from the *shi-no-ko-sho* class system was a fulfilment of the emperor's pledges in the third article of the Charter Oath of 1868. The imperial family was assigned their own separate class at the highest levels of Japanese society, and this class was known as the ***kozoku***. Another reform was the permission of commoners to have surnames in 1870 A.D, a break from an old tradition in Japan. Past leaders like Toyotomi Hideyoshi who succeeded Nobunaga was born a commoner and did not have a surname at birth as per the traditions of Japan's society of his time. He got the surname- Toyotomi, from a Fujiwara family that adopted him later in life. Outcasts in Japanese society who were traditionally classed into the ***eta*** and ***hinin*** were grouped together with the commoners (*heimin*) and granted full equality with the commoners, even though, this was just on paper. In reality, discrimination against these outcasts remained vibrant. Universal education for all people of Japan was proposed in 1872 A.D but this took years to bring into reality. One of the major setbacks for tradition in Japan at the time was the gradual extinguishing of the samurai class. The Meiji Restoration dismantled the shogunate that was responsible for the payments to the samurai class, and thus many in the samurai class found themselves jobless and were compelled to seek jobs in other professions like farming, law enforcement, and a few lucky ones became administrative bureaucrats for the new imperial government. In 1873 A.D, military conscription was announced by the new government and entry was open to all, including those who had no experience as samurai, thus the samurai's traditional position as the sole warrior class was diminished. The new government trashed the samurai class's regular payments and substituted them with a one-time payment in government bonds which was made compulsory in 1876 A.D, and those who opposed this were banished from wearing swords (Henshall, 2004 p.77).

Some peasants did not welcome the idea of military conscription which they referred to as a 'blood tax' in addition to the new land tax reforms. They therefore protested against these reforms in violent ways. The samurai were more critical to these developments than the peasants. This incited the outbreak of the **Satsuma Rebellion** in 1877 A.D with **Saigo Takamori** in the lead. Saigo was an outstanding personality in the early Meiji government who fell out favour with the new regime when his proposal for an invasion of Korea in 1873 A.D was rejected by the

Grand Council. Saigo believed that Korea had insulted Japan for failing to establish open relations with the new imperial government of Japan. He sought to provide the samurai with relevance and a sense of purpose through military action in times of inevitable social changes. Saigo felt he was cast out of favour with the new regime and went back to Kagoshima alongside his followers, where he became a unifying figure for the hopeless and resented samurai, whose negative attitudes towards the new imperial government was growing. Kagoshima became a hotbed for tensions over the years that exploded into full-blown war in January of 1877 A.D, when the imperial government made attempts at removing munitions stored in the city. Saigo's army consisting of 40,000 men fought government forces in a six-week battle at Kumamoto with the government forces emerging victorious despite having an army of conscripts. Saigo and his remaining forces retreated to Kagoshima, where he committed suicide on 24th September in 1887 A.D after attempting to fight back with no success. The disgruntled samurai continued resistance with isolated acts of violence such as the assassination of Okubo Toshimichi in 1878 A.D. The Satsuma Rebellion became the last significant uprising by the traditionalist samurai class and Saigo alongside his followers acknowledged that the era of the traditional samurai as they knew and lived it was over, and they decided that their lives should end with the end of the era as well (Henshall, 2004 pp.78-79; Squires, 2022).

Modernization of Japan's Society through Westernization

The Meiji period marked the transformation of Japan extensively, with its society shifting mostly from its traditional culture and adopting reforms based on Western culture, thus the modernization of Japan. The purpose of this modernization was primarily to put Japan at an equal standing in terms of power with the Western world, and if possible, to gain more power and dominance than the Western world. This was an idea that was promoted through the slogan – ***oitsuke, oikose***, meaning – 'catch up, overtake.' Japan also sought to revise the 'unequal treaties' that were signed with the Western powers and became a source of humiliation to Japanese people. The modernization reforms brought in Western standards and influence in every sphere of

life in Japan, from politics to the military, the economy and society. Examples of changes introduced include the adoption of the Western Gregorian calendar in 1873 A.D, which replaced the traditional lunar calendar, the 1869 A.D introduction of the telegraph to enhance communication, alongside postal service in 1871 A.D and the introduction of newspapers in the 1870s A.D, with more than 100 circulation by 1875 A.D. Western fashion standards were also adopted and it was mandatory for government officials and civil servants to adopt these standards to the detriment of indigenous Japanese traditional attires. There was also adoption of Western hairstyles and dietary customs. Another development in the modernization process was the construction of the Rokumeikan ('Deer Cry Pavilion') – a grand hall symbolic of Western influence and was finished in 1883 A.D. It was designed by Joseph Conder, a British architect. This hall served to host social events for foreign dignitaries and earned its place as a cultural icon of its time but was criticized heavily for having been too much Western-centric (Henshall, 2004 pp.79-80).

Another progress was the introduction of railway transport in 1872 A.D that served the cities of Tokyo and Yokohama but was later expanded to other areas with time. This was useful in lowering costs of transportation and enhancing movement of people and goods in Japan, for instance, a two-week journey from Tokyo to Kyoto or the other way was reduced to less than a day's journey. Another development in the transport sector was the 1869 A.D introduction of the rickshaw known in Japan as the *jinrikisha* to mean – a human-powered vehicle, which is a small two-wheeled cart with a carrying capacity for one passenger and pulled by a single person. Other forms of transport such as steamships further enhanced the movement of people and goods in Japan. These developments expanded population settlements around railway and other transport stations thus urbanization took shape (Henshall, 2004 p.80).

There was also the inflow of Western intellectual ideas in Japan as a result of the Meiji government's modernization efforts. Intellectuals like **John Stuart Mill**, **Jean Jac Rousseau** and **Charles Darwin** found a strong audience and following in Japan. Charles Darwin's **theory of evolution** and **natural selection** resonated strongly with the Meiji leaders and scholars in Japan at the time. The same was true for the concept of **social Darwinism**. This was promoted by other intellects like **Herbert Spencer**, a British philosopher who was a highly sought private adviser

to the highest leadership circles of Meiji Japan, and the Meiji leadership believed he had the best policies for the betterment of Japan. Spencer is credited with coining the term 'survival for the fittest' based on Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection and evolution. Related to Herbert's term 'survival for the fittest' was the self-help philosophy by **Samuel Smiles** in his work Self-Help (1859), a philosophy that was endorsed by Japanese scholars like Fukuzawa and Yukichi, who was among Japan's most influential educators and patrons of Westernization. Herbert Spencer gave pieces of advice to the Meiji leadership in a tone that would label him a traitor in the Western world, and thus his letter of advice to the Meiji leadership was kept a secret until his death as he requested. His policy advice to the Meiji government was that the Westerners should be kept at some distance and not drawn too close to the Japanese. This involved imposing restrictions on foreign ownership of property, business rights and prohibiting marriages and child-bearing between Japanese people and the Western settlers to keep the Japanese race pure. This drew heavy criticism on Japan's government by foreign states like Britain, that somehow persists to the present day. Other than Herbert Spencer, many other Western specialists were invited to Japan by the Meiji leadership as government advisers in the fields of mining, navigation, coin-minting, transport, banking, law, political science, agriculture, education and the military. Japanese people were also sent out in study missions by the state to the Western world to learn the ways of the Western society and bring back the acquired knowledge home for nation-building. The largest and most of familiar of such missions was the **Iwakura Mission** of 1871 -1873 A.D which comprised 50 officials including key political personalities like Ito Hirobumi, Okubo Toshimichi, Kido Koin and Iwakura Tomomi. Accompanying them were students who were unofficially invited to be part of the mission. Such academic missions to the foreign world resulted in significant progress but also created challenges in Japan, as the rapid social changes rendered others slow to accept and adapt, and thus feeling alienated in their own country. This sparked conflict between Japanese traditional culture and values; and the foreign modern influences, of which the latter prevailed and laid the groundwork for the rise of Japan as a modern regional and world power (Henshall, 2004 pp.81-83; Squires, 2022).

Making Good Use of the Potential of the People

The 1870s A.D in Japana witnesses the growing prominence of Samuel Smiles' self-help philosophy which promoted hard work, self-improvement and strife for personal success. This proved to be a good tool in building strong and capable individuals but the Meiji leadership thought it would come with setbacks for the government. Too much independence granted to individuals would make them a lot harder to govern, potentially resulting into chaos and inefficiency which again would compromise national unity and leave Japan susceptible to invasions and colonization by foreign powers. This left the Meiji government in a dilemma, in that it needed strong and independent citizens for the growth of the nation but this independence needed to be limited, guided and controlled in a manner that would prove conducive for the realization of national goals. This approach in limiting individual independence was borrowed from Tokugawa-era policies (Henshall, 2004 p.83).

The Meiji leadership resorted to nationalism as a unifying ideology to achieve the balance in having strong and independent individuals; and achieving national goals. Nationalism proved a good course and source of pride for the nation in the face of the return of foreign threats to Japan. This nationalism was reinforced by earlier nationalist movements such as the *kokugaku* (national learning). The government resorted to slogans such as *Fukoku kyohei* (rich nation, strong army) and *oitsuke, oikose* (catch up, overtake) with the aim of making the people understand that their individual success is linked to the success of the nation, and thus their strength and hard work had the potential in putting Japan at an equal standing with the foreign Western powers and deter any thoughts of aggression on and colonization of Japan. The Meiji government reinforced nationalism by making use of symbols of national unity in a manner that strengthened the government's legitimacy and national cohesion. Among the symbols of national unity utilized for this was the emperor. The people's support for the emperor meant supporting the nation and all those officials who worked under him. The emperor himself was depicted as the living embodiment of Japan's identity and destiny (Henshall, 2004 pp.83 -84).

Achieving national unity was a great challenge for the Meiji government as they sought to use indoctrination as a tool to achieve this in the light of the fact that the Japanese society had high rates of literacy and education, making it harder to control and shape public thought or opinion. Another challenge was competition from other ideologies of the time, in shaping public opinion and thought. The Meiji leadership therefore resorted to controlling education by shaping what learners were taught in schools, ultimately to control their world view and the perception of their place in it. Universal education was announced as a national goal in 1872 A.D and by 1879 A.D, about two-thirds of boys and one-quarter of girls had access to education, with elementary education being the least they could attain. Earlier textbooks were merely translation of Western textbooks and thus, Japanese learners were exposed to Western ideologies and qualities such as equality, individual rights and liberties. These Western qualities became a bother for the Meiji leadership including the emperor because they felt these foreign values were compromising traditional Japanese values such as obedience and respect for elders and parents. Key in dealing with this challenge were advisers like **Motada Eifu** who urged the Meiji government to opt for moral education based on Shinto and Confucian principles. This policy was implemented by revising school textbooks to reflect Japanese values and to replace Western heroes in the textbooks with Japanese personalities like **Ninomiya Sontoku** who was revered as a symbol of diligence and virtue. The Japanese national flag was incorporated into textbooks, and students in schools were paraded to sing songs that encouraged loyalty and moral conduct (Henshall, 2004 p.84).

Japan like the great Western powers of the time like Great Britain, embarked on stirring nationalistic feelings in its citizens. It implemented this through indoctrination to control greatly, the world view of its students in education centres. At the forefront of this indoctrination program was the **Imperial Rescript on Education** of October 1890. It was drafted significantly by Motada Eifu and Yamagata Aritomo, not just for the students in Japanese schools but for the society at large. The Rescript spelt out the moral and civic responsibilities of all Japanese people. It encouraged the honor of parents, social harmony, making efforts for the public good and for the citizens to sacrifice themselves for the good of the state if it became necessary. The Rescript associated these values with the emperor who was depicted as a national paternal personality whose authority had roots in the ancient traditions of

Japan. Students were expected to memorize the Rescript, as it was recited every time there was a significant school function. The Rescript was not entirely welcomed by some in the Japanese society including school teachers, however it earned its place gradually a foundation of Japan's national ideology. The Rescript fused Shinto religion with Confucianism, where Shinto stressed on the divine origins and union of the emperor and the state and Confucianism stressed on the emperor's position as a paternal figure for the nation and promoted values that encouraged respect for the family and social harmony. The Rescript's stress on Shinto was a violation of Japan's constitution which guaranteed the freedom of religion and worship and to avoid skepticism, the Meiji leadership declared Shinto an expression of patriotism, and not much of a religion, thus the birth of '**State Shinto**'. 'State Shinto' proposed that service given to the emperor was the greatest duty an individual could perform and the best way of proclaiming or expressing one's Japanese identity. The Rescript was shy of labelling foreigners as threats to Japan and provided national pride to those who may not have achieved material or financial success by making them believe that service to the emperor was the greatest of all achievements. The Rescript and other past Japanese documents such as the *Kojik*i and the *Nihon Shoki*, contributed to the creation of a collective sense of purpose amongst the Japanese people. It was their source of pride and identity that had roots in both ancient traditions and modern goals. The Meiji government encouraged loyalty to the emperor as a way of enhancing its own legitimacy and laying the foundation for national unity. Such efforts mirror those of ancient rulers of the Yamato state and Nara Period who relied on indoctrination in governing their people (Henshall, 2004 pp.84-86).

Attempts in Democratization in Meiji Japan

The self-help philosophy by Samuel Smiles proved to be a good tool for the Meiji leadership in nation-building efforts but still came with setbacks for the leadership, as it promoted the ideas of human rights and democracy which were less familiar to the Japanese people. These foreign ideas thus were seen by the Meiji leadership as challenge in achieving national cohesion and governing the nation. The Meiji leadership believed therefore that in as much as these foreign values would make Japan appealing to the Western powers and hasten the revision of the 'unequal treaties' so that Japan be treated as an equal partner and taken seriously as a modern and civilized state, it was necessary that the foreign values be contained and controlled just like the self-help philosophy. Among the perceived foreign setbacks for the Meiji leadership was Christianity. The Meiji government became aware that the West believed Christianity was intertwined with democracy and that the Westerners gauged the extent of civilization of nations by assessing the nation's attitudes towards Christianity. Christianity was secretly practised in the Tokugawa era and some secretive 60,000 Christians and samurai converts finally came out a few years before the Meiji Restoration. The Meiji government initially placed a ban on Christianity in 1868 A.D but reversed this decision in 1873 A.D after criticism from foreign powers. With time, Christianity managed to prove less of a threat to Japan, as less than 1% of Japan's population at the time embraced the religion. Christianity in Japan was refined and stress was put on shared values as commitment to duty and hard work. The Meiji leadership therefore brought into the awareness of the Western world that it was ready to welcome Christianity to Japan. A much bigger challenge to the Meiji leadership were the non-Christians part of the 'freedom and human rights movement' (*jiyo minken undo*) of 1870s A.D and early 1880s A.D (Henshall, 2004 pp.86-87).

This movement sought to expand political participation and establish constitutional governance. At the forefront of the movement were intellectuals, activists and emerging political parties such as the Liberal Party (*jiyuto*) and Constitutional Reform Party (*Rikken kaishinto*). The movement became popular amongst Japanese people who longed for change and the movement set the demands for the creation of a national assembly and more civil liberties to the people. The response to these developments by the Meiji leadership was a mixture of repressive approaches and concessions. Repressive measures include

censorship or limiting free speech and the arrest of activists thus the kind of democracy in practice was an '**authoritarian democracy**.' Concessions from the Meiji leadership to the people included provision of civil liberties, even though limited, a pledge from the emperor to establish a national assembly, an agreement for the establishment of a senate to discuss legislative issues, the creation of a court that would later become the Supreme Court, and the promise to hold conferences for governors who ruled the prefectures. In 1889 A.D, the **Meiji Constitution** was promulgated, after a debate on whether it should be drafted along British or Prussian (German) influences. Ito Hirobumi opted for a constitution based on Prussian (German) influence while Okuma Shigenobu preferred one based on British influence. A British-style constitution would take more power from the monarch (the emperor) and entrust it with the people, while the German-style constitution would retain much power in the hands of the emperor and limit the involvement of political parties of political parties in the cabinet. German influence began to spread everywhere in government including the military under Yamagata Aritomo. Ito Hirobumi travelled to Europe to study various types of constitutions and gave priority to the Prussian (German)-style constitution. When he travelled back home to Japan, a new constitution was drafted with the help of German advisers (Henshall, 2004 pp.88-89).

Ito Hirobumi led the drafting of the constitution at his own pace purposely to implant constitutional safety measures that would help the Meiji leadership manage the risks that would come with democracy. The drafting was finished in April 1888 A.D and promulgated on 11th February 1889 A.D on the anniversary date of the founding of the Japanese state, which is 11th February 660 BC according to the ancient document of *Nihon Shoki*. The constitution balanced modernity with Japanese traditional power structures. It made a declaration that the emperor was Japan's sovereign ruler in control of all Japanese military forces, foreign policy of the state, and had the right to dissolve the national assembly. The absolute power constitutionally granted to the emperor was only in theory but not practical, as the emperor's decree had also to be signed by a minister of state. The constitution's creation of the **Diet** (Japan's first modern legislature) was a significant step in entrenching democracy in Japan, but the power of the legislature was heavily in the hands of the oligarchs in the Diet's Upper House (House of Peers) consisting of nobles and imperial appointees who were mostly scholars and had the power to veto decisions made by the Lower House

(House of Representatives), consisting of elected representatives. The establishment of the Diet in 1890 A.D came along with a lot of political tensions. There were clashes between the oligarchs and representatives from new political parties who called for better fiscal responsibility and policy forms. The oligarchs were not in anyway ready to make concessions to their political rivals and resorted to illegal tactics in suppressing dissent such as voter intimidation, imperial decrees and blatant violence. The government was accused of killings and interference in the 1892 Japanese elections during clashes between political groups. These setbacks did not hinder the determination of the democratic movement which contributed to the gradual reshaping of Japan's political arena. The first parliamentary elections of 1890 A.D marked a shift in the balance of power as many more party politicians gained more seats in the Diet's (Parliament's) House of Representatives, and they were determined to vanquish the authoritarian rule of the oligarchs, and this is when the oligarchs resorted to illegal and violent means to have their policies passed and enacted. This changed when Ito Hirobumi became Prime Minister for a second term in 1896 A.D and embarked on a pragmatic approach in handling the conflict between the pro-democracy politicians and pro-authoritarian oligarchs. His pragmatic approach involved making concessions through dialogue and cooperation with the Diet which was already full of pro-democracy politicians and even went ahead to propose the creation of a government party to secure more seats in the Diet. Ito Hirobumi's proposals and approaches in handling the Diet came to shock the rest of the oligarchs who resolved to hold his plans in check (Henshall, 2004 pp.89-91).

In response to the results of the 1890 elections that saw the takeover of the Diet's House of Representatives mostly by pro-democracy party politicians, the Meiji leadership issued the Imperial Rescript on Education to contain any excesses from and liabilities of democracy and its associated foreign values to imperial rule and the oligarchy. The Rescript was a tool of ideological control of the entire Japanese society as it proposed a national education system designed to teach loyalty to the emperor and encouraged social harmony, a proposal that was implemented by the Meiji government. The Rescript achieved its goals by encouraging virtues such as filial piety (respect for elders and parents), patriotism and obedience to authority. To balance between traditional and modernity the Rescript borrowed ideals from Shinto, Confucianism and Western educational practices, thus showcasing a

pragmatic approach in modernizing Japan under the Meiji leadership (Henshall, 2004 p.85, p.90).

War and Politics in Japan's Rise to Power

At the end of the 19th Century, Japan had both internal political problems and external threats as challenges that shaped Japan politically and militarily. The Meiji leadership began to shift public attention to Japan's external affairs when the internal turmoils became too difficult to handle. The concern of a possible invasion and colonization of Japan by Western powers was diminishing but still a little more persistent as the Western powers were expanding their colonies in mainland Asia and there was the fear in Japan that the Western powers might use Korean Peninsula as a staging point to weaken Japan, thus the popular metaphor in Japan that Korea was "a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan." Meiji Japan maintained an interest in occupying the Korean Peninsula despite failing to approve the invasion proposals by Saigo Takamori in 1873 A.D. Japan confronted Korea with the same 'gunboat' diplomacy employed on Japan by American Commodore Mathews C Perry as leverage on U.S relations with Japan. In the same manner that the U.S imposed the 'unequal treaties' on Japan, Japan did the same to Korea in what became known as the **Kanghwa Treaty**. Under this treaty, Japan enjoyed similar trade privileges as the U.S did under the 'unequal treaties' imposed on Japan, including other similar privileges like the right of extraterritoriality that exempted Japanese citizens in Korea from prosecution under Korean laws. This became the beginning of Japanese involvement in Korean politics and the first step to additional future involvement in the region which included a coup attempt against the Korean ruling regime in 1884 A.D. Japan's involvement in Korea, created Japan-China tensions over control of the Peninsula (Henshall, 2004 p.91).

As Japan's interests grew in Korea, it found itself on a collision course with China who had interests in Korea as well. In as much as Japan had preferences in avoiding war with stronger states like China, Japan considered the China of the 18th century a weaker state because of Western invasion and colonization and also because of internal fragmentation. When a Korean King requested the Chinese for military in putting down a rebellion by a powerful religions sect in 1894 A.D.

Tensions escalated as Japan also sent in its military forces, and neither was willing to pull out its troops. Japan opened hostilities on China in July 1894 A.D when it struck and sunk a Chinese troop transport ship, and officially declared war on China on 1st August 1894, hence the commencement of the Sino-Japanese War. This war showcased Japan's military prowess both on land and at sea, especially naval capabilities at sea being the war's decisive factor. This naval success is largely attributed to the borrowing of British naval tactics for the Japanese navy. The Japanese heavily damaged Chinese naval ships at the mouth of the Yalu River and the Chinese naval base at Port Arthur in South Manchuria fell to the Japanese in September 1894 A.D. The Japanese dealt the final blow to Chinese navy in February 1895 A.D at Weihaiwei when they destroyed the remaining Chinese naval ships stationed there. The war officially came to an end with the signing of the **Treaty of Shimonoseki** in April 1895 A.D. The treaty was used to force China in paying Japan war reparations (indemnity), ceding territories to Japan i.e. Taiwan and the Liaotung Peninsula in Southern Manchuria. Japan's victory in this war was the beginning of Japanese expansionism and imperialism in Asia that took the attention of Western powers, especially Russia (Henshall, 2004 p.92).

Following Japan's victory in Korea over China, Russia's ambitions grew in Chinese Manchuria and Korea. Russia led a diplomatic intervention inviting France and Germany to join in persuading Japan to give up acquired territories of the Liaotung Peninsula, not more than a week after the Treaty of Shimonoseki. The Russian-led diplomatic intervention was proclaimed as one seeking to instil regional stability and the Meiji leadership decided to comply with the Russian advice against the wishes of the public opinion back in Japan, thus public outrage. Russia finally took control of Liaotung Peninsula with Japan, leasing it for 25 years. In as much as this was a setback for Japan, it came with diplomatic gains and so did the victory over China in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 A.D. Japan earned its place as a rising Asian power in the eyes of the Western world, and thus the 'unequal treaties' imposed on Japan by Western powers were gradually revised. The British withdrew their rights of extraterritoriality in Japan, weeks before the Sino-Japanese War and other major powers took similar steps by 1897 A.D. Britain partially restored Japan's tariff autonomy and fully restored it in 1911 A, and this showcased changes in attitudes towards Japan and consequently elevating Japan's position in the global stage (Henshall, 2004 p.92).

In as much as Japan enjoyed military victory over China and gained respect from the Western powers, the internal political atmosphere in Japan remained volatile and hopes for stability went low. Parties were formed, some disbanded or reformed. Japan different prime ministers between 1896 A.D and 1901 A.D in a period characterized by several resignations a d changes in political affiliations and politicians moving from one party to another. Ito Hirobumi orchestrated a significant development in these times in 1900 when he formed the *Rikken Seiyukai* (Association of Friends of Constitutional Government). This new party did bring some political stability to Japan but this did not stop Ito Hirobumi is from resigning from his office of the prime minister in 1901 A.D – his fourth resignation from the office because of his weariness of politics and discomfort from more staunch conservative politicians like Yamagata Aritomo. Ito Hirobumi remained the party's president till 1903 A.D. Following this resignation. Yamagata was offered the position of prime minister, but he too felt exhausted as he had occupied the office years prior. Yamagata's disciple -**Katsura Taro** was then offered the position. He was from a Choshu samurai family and considered a second-generation leader. Katsura succeeded in establishing relative stability in Japan's political scene and remained in office for as long four years and half, being the longest serving prime minister at his time. The era of oligarch rule began to gradually dissipate. Contributing to this relative internal political stability was an external factor in the name of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 -1905 A.D (Henshall, 2004 p.93).

From the time of the Tripartite Intervention of 1895, there emerged tensions between Japan and Russia. Russian expansionism continued in Asia marked by construction of Russian railways throughout their regions of interest on the continent. The year 1900 witnessed the outbreak of the **Boxer Rebellion** in northern China as a result of anti-foreigner sentiments. The rebellion was crushed by a combined force of 8 nations including Russian and Japan. Russia declined to pull out its forces after the rebellion, a move that became a concern for the other powers and most especially Japan. Ito Hirobumi proposed an agreement with Russia where Japan ought to recognize Russian interests in Manchuria and Russia in exchange, would recognize Japan's interests in Korea. Russia rejected this proposals and so did Yamagata and Katsura who foresaw the inevitability of war with Russia. They

proposed that Japan should enter an alliance with Great Britain thus the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of January 1902 A.D, which was the first military pact between a Western and a non-Western power on equal terms. This alliance did not guarantee the recognition of Japan's control of Korea but guaranteed recognition of Japanese interests in the Peninsula. It also failed to guarantee direct military support for Japan in case of war with Russia, but it provided confidence that the other Western powers would not attack Japan in the event of war with Russia. January 1904 A.D saw Japan increase its military budget allocations and spending to more than half of national budget since 1897 A.D. Japan broke diplomatic relations with Russia on 6th February 1904 A.D and attacked Russian naval ships at Port Arthur on 8th February and declared war on 10th February, commencing the **Russo-Japanese War**. Japanese troops were deployed to Korea in the next month from where they made advances north into Chinese Manchuria after crossing the Yalu River. This was done simultaneously with the landing of sea-borne troops on Liaotung Peninsula and they captured Nashan and Dairen. The Japanese laid a siege on Port Arthur which fell in January 1905 A.D. The Japanese then captured Manchuria's capital – Mukden, in a not so decisive victory with both sides losing about 70,000 soldiers in March 1905. The war became that of attrition as both sides struggled to carry the fight on with Russia suffering the setback of a domestic revolution which necessitated the call for reinforcements against Japan. Russia's Baltic Fleet was summoned and was compelled to take a short cut through the British-controlled Suez Canal but was denied passage, hence had to take a long way to the theatre of war in Asia. The fleet was intercepted and destroyed in the Straits of Tsushima by the Japanese Combined Fleet, commanded by **Admiral Togo Heihachiro**, as the fleet was making its final route to Vladivostok. This became a decisive victory for the Japanese that elevated their global power ratings and leverage in any potential negotiations with Russia when they called upon U.S President **Theodore Roosevelt** to mediate the conflict, which he did successfully hence a victory for Japan followed by the **Ports Mouth Treaty** in September 1905 A.D. The treaty restored China's nominal sovereignty, recognized Japan's interests and dominance in Korea and granted Japan control of the Liaotung Peninsula and the South Manchurian Railway built by Russia. The war was financially costly to Japan and thus Japan expected war reparations from Russia. To the disappointment of the UN Japanese, they were not granted these but instead were given the southern half of the Sakhalin Island (Karafuto) which lies north of Hokkaido (Henshall, 2004 pp.93-95).

Despite the heavy financial and human loses that Japan suffered against Russia, which was not really the most powerful in the Western world but the largest, Japan earned the respect in the international arena and recognition as a global power. Japan's initial goal of being taken seriously as a strong nation now had been achieved, with the threats of invasion and colonization by the West reduced to extreme lows or none. Japan gained control of new territories in Manchuria, and Southern half of Sakhalin and was granted control of Korea. This in someway sent worries to the West that Japan was likely to set eyes on colonizing their territories in New Zealand. In November 1905 A.D, Japan successfully compelled Korea to become its protectorate, assisted by the fact that Japanese troops occupied the Korean royal palace. Former Japanese Prime Minister Ito Hirobumi was made resident general and Japanese officials took the place of Korean officials in government. Japan ensured that the Korean military was disbanded to make the Koreans dependent on Japan for security. The international community turned a blind eye on Korean protests against Japanese subjugation and occupation. The international community also ignored the numerous suppression of Korean protests by Japanese military forces between 1908 and 1910. The only success the Koreans had in this foreign occupation was the **assassination of Ito Hirobumi in 1909 A.D**. The following year in 1910 A.D saw the full annexation of Korea by Japan with no opposition from the international community. In the same manner the aftermath of the 1894-1895 A.D Sino-Japanese war created domestic anti-government sentiments and dissatisfaction in Japan, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 A.D had somehow a similar aftermath. The public in Japan felt glorious for the victory over Russia but felt glorious for the victory over Russia but felt humiliated by the failure of the Meiji government in securing an indemnity (reparations) from Russia. This resulted in mass anti-government protests in the country resulting in about 1000 casualties in Tokyo. Martial law was declared to contain the situation and Katsura felt compelled to resign in January 1906 A.D. The court noble **Prince Saionji Kinmochi** mentored by Ito Hirobumi rose to take the position of prime minister. Saionji Kinmochi mentored by Ito Hirobumi rose to take position of prime minister. Kinmochi brought back relative political stability in Meiji Japan and his governing practices retained authoritarianism elements, as the military's influence grew simultaneously. When Katsura who was a hard-liner came back to office as prime minister for another term between 1908 and mid- 1911 A.D, it became clear that democracy in Japan would always be accompanied

by elements of authoritarianism. In 1910 A.D, there was an alleged plot to assassinate the emperor of Japan which became known as the **High Treason Incident.** The accused were largely left-wing sympathizers and were interrogated in hundreds. 26 of them were put on secret trial. Evidence levelled against the 5 main suspects appeared strong but remained questionable for the remaining ones. Regardless, 24 of the accused were sentenced to death and 12 of them had their sentences reduced. The unlucky 12 were executed in January 1911 A.D. Before the high treason incident, the Meiji leadership had engaged in suppression of left-wing activities pertaining to party politics and socialism. Socialism just like Christianity never gained much following and was never given a chance, and out of fear of repression, socialists had to keep themselves and their ideologies a secret in Japan until the end of World War 2 (Henshall, 2004 pp.95-96).

Meiji-era Economic Development

Economic development in Meiji Japan is said to be one of the most impressive aspect of the country's modernization which was faced with a number of challenges and brought about numerous successes in the shift from a feudal and an agrarian society to a modern and industrialized one. The speed of this transformation was rather impressive and worth noting in the eyes of the Western powers, considering the fact that Japan had mostly been in isolation for quite some years and had very little resources at its disposal in the dawn of its modernity. To facilitate the modernization process, Japan had already a number of significant factors of production that provided a foundation for the modernization process and they include a large educated and obedient workforce that could support both the agrarian and industrial sectors, accumulated capital in the private sector, primarily by merchants of the time, established business practices developed from centuries-long experience in trading, and finally reasonably sufficient access to natural resources and basic energy resources such as wood, water, coal and iron in the form of iron sands. Despite the fact that Japan was not so much blessed with natural resources, it made good use of the little it had, to lay the groundwork for modernization through industrialization. One big challenge for modernization was the lack of technology because the Japanese never

had advanced machinery or technical expertise that was essential in launching full-scale industrialization (Henshall,2004 pp.96-97).

Japan needed access to good reliable technology to facilitate the modernization process through industrialization. To solve the problem of technological deficiency, Japan resorted to the importation of foreign technology made in the Western world. Another measure was the invitation of foreign technical experts to provide the knowledge needed in operating and maintaining foreign technology. Students from Japan were also sent on study missions in Western countries to learn new skills and knowledge that was necessary to facilitate the industrialization process in Japan., skills and knowledge that proved effective when they returned home. The fact that Japan did not labour much in research and development of modern technology like the Western world but relied on importation, gave Japan an easier time in facilitating the modernization and industrialization process, which was achieved in a relatively short period. As the government stepped up to introduce modern technology in Japan, there was another issue that became a setback to these modernization efforts. Japan was short of a strong entrepreneurial spirit in dealing in modern industrial technology as the merchants with experience since the Tokugawa Period believed this was a big risk. They believed it was better to carry on with their businesses in trade and the finance sector, which they believe were more stable. The government stepped up to fill up this gap by setting up industrial enterprises to entice the private sector in doing the same. Some entrepreneurs were drawn in by the example set by the government and set up their own private industrial enterprises utilizing modern technology. They were typically low-ranking *samurai* with peasant backgrounds. They rose to play crucial roles in the industrial revolution of Japan. Two of the most prominent personalities in this group were **Iwasaki Yataro** - founder of **Mitsubishi Motors**, and **Shibusawa Eiichi**, founder of **Osaka Spinning Mill**, who was also a pioneer in the development of other companies. Both were advocates of the self-help philosophy. Shibusawa was known for his entrepreneurial achievements in addition to his philosophical approach to entrepreneurship. He proclaimed that business success is not just for individual gain but should also be for the benefit of the nation as well. His ethical approach to entrepreneurship encouraged companies to contribute to the well-being of the society at large. This approach to business made him more appealing to the government because he said what the government needed to hear from entrepreneurs as his

ideology was instrumental in helping the government realize economic growth aligned with national strength. Shibusawa did more than just business, he engaged in social welfare and philanthropic activities such as building of schools and homes for the elderly, and this boosted his business efforts. His ethical approach to business was instrumental in changing public perceptions of entrepreneurship which had always been understood as a selfish and dishonest endeavor since the Tokugawa era. The change in public perception of entrepreneurship was instrumental in ensuring Japan's modernization through industrialization. This paved way for economic progress in Meiji Japan (Henshall, 2004 p.97).

In as much as the government took the initiative in setting up industrial enterprise to entice the private sector in doing the same, there was reluctance in the private sector in doing so. The government ended up setting up numerous industrial enterprises in the early stages of the Meiji Period, with the results being rather less motivational and less inspiring. However, the railway system was a successes as the government had been the sole constructor and manager of all railways in the 1870s and by the 1890s the private sector took an interest and was managing over 75% of the railway construction. The government attempted setting up textile industries but achieved little success. Shibusawa's Osaka Spinning Mill, a privately owned enterprise, was however successful. The 1870s saw the Meiji government open up manufacturing industries in the production of munitions, bricks, cement and glass; and also acquired several mines and ship-building yards. Despite the Meiji's government efforts to industrialize Japan, there was not much economic progress as expected. A financial crisis emerged by the end of the 1870s as a result of underperforming government industrial enterprises, heavy spending on foreign advisers, salary payments to the former *daimyo* and *samurai*, costs that came with the Satsuma Rebellion and absence of hard currency to back up paper currency. Japan then experienced a significant inflation with the prices of rice doubling between 1877 and 1880 A.D hence bringing pain and suffering to the people. In response to these economic challenges the Meiji leadership came up with a series of measures to mitigate the challenges and stabilize the economy. One of the measures was the sale of underperforming government enterprises at prices cheaper than expected. This was seen as necessary to reduce state expenditure and financial burdens; and to have the private sector more engaged in the industrial sector competitively. The sales of these state-owned

industrial enterprises were made occasionally with no formal tenders to individuals who well connected to the Meiji leadership and were known to be reliable. The end result was the industrial power being concentrated in the hands of a small number of increasingly large organizations which became known as the ***zaibatsu*** or **financial cliques.** Another measure against the economic challenges was the establishment of a central bank known as the Bank of Japan in 1882 A.D, which was instrumental in stabilizing the country's financial system. This resulted in the production of Japanese hard currency reserves hence a budget surplus. Japan's financial system was stabilized by 1886 A.D and economic recovery was initiated putting the currency on a steady growth curve. Japan's Gross National Product (GNP) began growing averagely at a rate of 3% per year till the end of the Meiji Period, with a steady rise of exports, valued at 6-7% of GNP in the late 1880s, rising to about 20% by end of the Meiji Period (Henshall, 2004 pp.98-99).

In as much as Japan was making advances in the industrial sector, the agricultural sector remained dominant in Japan's economy all through the Meiji Period. Most of Japan's workforce were in the agricultural sector by the end of the 19th Century A.D. The contributions of agriculture to Japanese began to decline in 1885 A.D at a measurement of about 42% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to 31% of GDP by the close of the Meiji Period. In the same period of time, the industrial manufacturing sector rose from 7% of GDP to 16% GDP, indicating the growth of the country's industrial sector. The government also ventured into the textile industry, to ramp up the domestic textile production and reduce reliance on imports. The government provided incentives like providing entrepreneurs with cheap equipment. Cheap labour was provided by women especially in mills, which were also relocated to the rural areas and thus easily making employment and opportunities available to workers and farmers in the agricultural sector. This helped improved the textile output from 25% of overall manufacturing output in 1880 A.D to 40% by 1900 A.D. A survey of privately owned industrial enterprises in 1884 A.D showed that 61% were involved in textile manufacturing. This was a developmental that proved instrumental in reducing textile imports and provide a good textile base. Between 1890 A.D and 1900A.D, there was rapid development in the manufacturing of electrical goods. There was prohibition of Western ownership of Japanese enterprises, instead Japanese firms were allowed to form joint ventures with Western firms, with the aim getting hold of Western

technologies. An example was the Nippon Electrical Company (NEC) which was established in 1899 A.D between a Japanese firm and the Western Electric company. Another was **Toshiba**, a joint venture between the American General Electric and two Japanese firms – Tokyo Electric and Shibaura Electric. Japan of the 1870s heavily imported finished (manufactured) goods with 91% of these being textiles, and was also an exporter of primary goods (raw material) with silk constituting 42% of total exports. This highlighted a shortage of industrial capacity to convert raw material into finished goods. By the time World War I began, there was a complete reversal of this, just after the 1912 end of the Meiji Period. Primary goods constituted more than 50% of Japanese imports, and manufactured (finished) goods comprised about 90% of all Japanese exports and around half of these finished goods were textiles. This highlighted Japan's acquired industrial capacity to process raw material into finished goods, which was instrumental in realizing economic development. This industrial capacity to process raw material was key to boosting the textile industry. Japanese domestically grown cotton was rather of poor quality and therefore raw cotton had to be imported while good quality silk was domestically produced. Towards the end of the Meiji Period, the heavy industry especially ship-building industry grew strongly in Japan. The government provided subsidies for Japanese-made iron and steel ships. The state-provided subsidies for these ships accounted for 75% of all government subsidies. Japan relied heavily on imported iron and the state established processing plants that converted raw iron ore to finished iron and steel products for export and domestic consumption, through to the late 1930s. All through the Meiji Period, the Meiji government was actively involved in guiding economic development as it opened relations with enterprises, and offering assistance where it believed was pivotal. This guidance or assistance was not totally beneficial or successful and was and still reluctant to leave Japan's economy in the hands of the market forces (Henshall, 2004 pp.99-100).

In an overview of Japan's industrial revolution, Japan of the 1870s is said to be economically dependent on industrialized nations of the Western world for manufactured goods such as textiles, while exporting them raw materials like silk used to produce finished (manufactured) goods. This according to the **Dependency Theory of Economic Development** by scholars such as **Andre Gunder Frank** or the **World Systems Theory of Economic Development** by scholars such as **Wallerstein Immanuel** puts early Meiji Japan in the category of

peripheral (Dependency Theory) or semi-peripheral (World Systems Theory) nations who are exploited by wealthier and industrialized nations referred to as the **core**, when the peripheral or semi-peripheral nations export raw material to the industrialized core nations, who process these into finished goods and export expensively for profit to the peripheral and semi-peripheral nations and this allows the core nations to accumulate wealth through profits from exports (**Mercantilism**) while the semi-periphery and periphery nations are drained of wealth through expensive imports from the core resulting in financial losses (Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2013).

Japan managed to break free from this cycle of dependency and exploitation primarily because of state-led interventions in the economy that involved the implementation of mercantilist and protectionist policies that saw the growth of domestic industrial enterprises that grew to have the capacity to process domestic and imported raw material into finished goods for export. Mercantilism ensures the accumulation of a nation's wealth through a **trade surplus** – that is, exporting more and importing less (earn more than you spend), thus manipulating the **balance of trade** (export-import ratio) in a nation's favour. It also involves state intervention in protecting and promoting domestic industries through methods already mentioned before such as providing cheap equipment, establishing good infrastructure i.e. roads, telegraph communications networks; establishing financial institutions such as the Bank of Japan in 1882 A.D and good educational system to create a well-educated workforce, state-led industrialization that saw the creation of industries that were later privatized.

State intervention in Japan's economy also involved protectionist policies such as tariffs on imported goods before the 'unequal treaties' imposed by the West and after these 'unequal treaties' were revised and Japan granted tariff autonomy. Tariffs made it more expensive to buy imported goods and easier to buy domestic goods, thus protecting domestic industries from foreign competition. State intervention also involved state-sponsored study missions in the Western world that saw experts leave Japan for the Western world to learn about Western industrial and political systems and brought home the knowledge and skills needed for national progress. The state also hired foreign experts and advisers to aid in the political and economic development of the nation. Many more state-led intervention policies are already

mentioned in this chapter and they contributed to the industrial modernization of Japan.

End of the Meiji Period

On the 30th of July 1912, Emperor Mutsuhito passed away from diabetes. Upon his death, he was granted a name that was assigned to the period of his rule which was *Meiji*, meaning the 'the age of enlightened rule.' His death marked the end of the Meiji Period of Japanese history and paved way for the beginning of a new era in Japanese history – the **Taisho Era** or **Period**. His loyal general Nogi Maresuke on the funeral day committed ritual suicide (seppuku) as part of the samurai tradition of ***junshi*** which required a vassal to follow his deceased master to death, as a way of expressing loyalty to his deceased master. In a similar fashion, his wife – Shizuko, also committed ritual suicide to honour her deceased husband and lord. In as much as industrial modernization of Japan took shape under his reign, it is not clear to what extent the deceased emperor – Mutsuhito (Meiji) should be credited personally with this success (Henshall,2004 p.100).

In as much as emperor Meiji (Mutsuhito) was greatly respected, his reign did not pass without criticism which was rear in Japan and the worst punishment was death for offenders found guilty of directly criticizing the emperor. Some intellectuals and writers in their works criticized the quick changes in Japanese society during the Meiji era and some criticized him directly. One poet by the name Yosano Akiko in a poem she composed during the Russo-Japanese war, criticized the emperor openly for being a coward in not leading his military forces in the frontlines of war. Another poet by the name **Natsume Soseki** who happened to be the most famous novelist of the Meiji era, also voiced his concerns but not in a way that directly criticized the emperor. He appointed out the role of Westernization of Japan in promoting a culture of self-interested or individualism and disconnecting them from their cultural roots. In his 1909 novel titled *Sore kara* – meaning, 'And Then', he metaphorically compared Japan's attempt at Westernization to a frog attempting to grow as large as a cow, but later on will inevitably burst under pressure. He makes his argument that the rapid modernization of Japanese society came with widespread social anxiety and uncertainty; and feelings of isolation and disconnectedness from the traditional values that once held the country together. There emerged a trend in criticizing these modernization reforms through

popular songs in a satirical manner. There was a lot of frustrations directed at the governments failures such as failing to secure benefits of military victories such as war reparations (indemnity) and failing in doing much to end the 'unequal treaties' imposed on Japan by the Western powers. This was a testament of the intensity in national pride experienced at the time. The combination of all these – the tensions, frustrations and national pride were reflective of a complex emotional response to the burdens that came with Westernization of Japan. In as much as there was a lot of sentiments towards the rapid modernization and its social impacts in Japan, national pride and optimism 'carried the day' as the Meiji era drew to a close. This was expressed in the works of some writers like **Tayama Katai** who expressed his deep admiration for the achievements of Japan in the Meiji era, especially after the death of emperor Meiji. He reminded the people of how the emperor's reign began with struggles of the Restoration and created a Japan that was respected as a world power. His words were reflective of the pride of the Japanese people in their national progress despite the setbacks that came with the modernization reforms. He shared his personal connection to the successes of the emperor and his personal experience as a photographer in the Russo-Japanese war which gave him an opportunity for a first-hand account of the Japanese military victories and sense of national pride. He writes a tribute to the emperor on how his spirit was deeply entrenched in Japanese nationalism in as much as it was subject to Western influence. With the death of the emperor, questions on the fate of Japan as a nation emerged. Would Japan be satisfied with its achievements as a nation? Or would it seek more and meet a retrogressive fates as predicted by the novelist Natsume Soseki in his metaphor of Japan being a frog attempting to enlarge to the size of a cow and burst? This uncertainty was carried on into the next era of Japanese history – the Taisho era and the future of Japan remained unknown. Japan had achieved great industrial and economic progress that made it a strong nation in the international arena during the Meiji Period, whether Japan could maintain the momentum set in the Meiji era into the next era was unknown (Henshall, 2004 pp.101-102, Squires 2022).

MODERN HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 11

THE TAISHO ERA (1912-1926)

THE TAISHO ERA (1912-1926)

The Taisho Era's Fragile Democracy

Introduction

The Taisho Period/Era was marked by the reign of **Emperor Yoshihito** between 1912 and 1926. This era was a period of transition from political traditionalism to the rise of democracy ad its ideals. The name *Taisho* translates to 'Great Righteousness' and it was chosen to signify the new era following Emperor Meiji's (Mutsuhito's) death. The name was chosen because the new era was to provide Japan with self-assurance as a global power and its leadership was to be guided by wisdom and principles of justice. The Taisho Period came after the Meiji Period and was expected to continue with the momentum of industrial modernizations and Western-style political reforms introduced in the previous Meiji era. The trajectory of this era came under the influence of several factors such as a fragile leadership, political upheaval, public opinion and changes in the domestic and global arena.

Emperor Yoshihito and His Challenges in Leadership

As soon as Yoshihito was crowned the new emperor, there were high hopes for his reign which later proved to be rather fragile. In his reign, Yoshihito was rather a less commanding figure unlike his predecessor - Emperor Mutsuhito (Meiji) who was revered for his vigour and decisiveness in taking action. Yoshihito's fragile leadership stemmed from the fact that he suffered mental impairments and physical ones as well, which were caused by the meningitis he contracted in infancy. His health continued to deteriorate and the political and military elite began to fill the growing void in governance. And because the emperor could not fully perform his official duties because of his health complications, his son Hirohito the crown prince was appointed in November 1921 as the emperor's regent to perform official duties of the incapacitated emperor (Henshall, 2004 p.106).

Political Instability and Influence of the Army

The beginning of the Taisho Period came at a time of great political tensions. These tensions were between the civilian political elite and the military elite over the balancing of military demands with civilian governance. This was evident in the 1912 collapse of Prime Minister Saionji Kinmochi's cabinet over a dispute with the Japanese army. The army felt empowered as its role in shaping national policy grew and they placed demands for the formation of two new army divisions. These demands were rejected by Saionji's government because of financial complications in the government. The army retaliated by compelling the army minister to resign from the Saionji cabinet, and refused to offer a replacement, and thus the cabinet of ministers was paralysed and collapsed, forcing Prime Minister Saionji to resign. Following this resignation, a veteran Meiji oligarch and statesman by the name Katsura Taro was appointed as the new prime minister. His return to the arena of politics and power was met with public sentiments. His appointment as prime minister was publicly perceived as an insult to the principles of constitutional governance because it was in the interest of the oligarchy and military elites at the expense of the interests of the public (the people) who were represented by elected representatives in parliament. This conflict of interests created a public backlash that was intense hence the rise of the '**Movement to Protect Constitutional Government**' (***Kensei Yogo Undo***) which became a far-reaching campaign demanding for greater accountability and commitment to parliamentary procedures (Henshall, 2004 pp.106-107).

The political parties behind the *Kensei Yogo Undo* brought a motion of no confidence against Prime Minister Katsura who sought the aid of the emperor in withdrawing the motion. Angry demonstrators in February 1913 gathered around the Diet building and Prime Minister Katsura was compelled to resign not more than 2 months in office. This marked the first time in Japanese history when a government was brought down with public pressure. This was a sweet victory for the believers of constitutionalism, and this underscored the rise of the influence of public opinion in the political processes of Japan (Henshall, 2004 p.107).

The Struggle for Parliamentary Democracy

The fact that Prime Minister Katsura resigned proved a good step towards democratic governance but still, the Taisho era remained an era of political volatility as the office of the Prime Minister changed hands from person to person. Katsura was replaced by Admiral Yamamoto Gonbei as prime minister in 1913. Yamamoto proved himself politically neutral and showed a greater willingness to accommodate political parties. Yamamoto was replaced as prime minister by the old Okuma Shigenobu in 1914, who previously favoured party politics but fell into the influence of the oligarchs. Shigenobu was replaced as prime minister by Terauchi Masatake who made a strong stand against party politics thus, he became unpopular as prime minister, ruling from 1916 to 1918. His tenure saw the practice of authoritarianism and the serving of interests of the military elite. Terauchi was succeeded as prime minister by Hara Takashi in 1918 whose allegiance to democracy was to some extent ambiguous as he was a common man's politician but became prime minister after vetting and ratification by the oligarchs. He descended from a high-ranking samurai family and was well connected to the powerful and influential elite of Japan at the time. He relied on intimidation tactics in dealing with his political opponents and was assassinated in 1921 (Henshall, 2004 p.107).

Japanese Racial Discrimination of Koreans

One of the greatest disasters of the Taisho era was the Great Tokyo Earthquake that resulted in the deaths of more than 100,000 people and more injuries. Fires that resulted from the earthquake displaced more than 3 million people from their homes. Allegations targeting Korean residents over some of the fires, emerged. The allegations went further to state that they (Koreans) were inflicting more damage and suffering to the Japanese people by looting and poisoning water wells belonging to the Japanese people. There was the emergence of a superstitious belief that the Koreans were responsible for the earthquakes when they upset the gods by being present on Japanese soil. Lawlessness broke out shortly after the earthquake and martial law was declared. About 6,000 Koreans are believed to have been murdered by angry anti-Korean Japanese people taking the law into their hands. Even the police and military forces of Japan are believed to have participated in the killing of radicals and all those who had links or

associations with the Koreans in Japan, such as Osugi Sakae, his wife and very sadly, his six-year-old nephew (Henshall,2004 p.108).

Japanese Expansionism in Asia in the First World War

The Taisho Period also saw the limiting of state funds spent on the military and expansion of the military as well. Diplomacy was more preferred than military force in some occasions, especially in the final years of the period during the tenure of Shidehara Kijuro as Foreign Minister. Despite the checks and limitations imposed on Japan's military, there was some level of advocacy for aggressive military expansionism by some senior figures in Japan. In the First World War, Japan decided to side with the British but did not actively fight alongside them and their allegiance with the British was rather strategic to legitimize their seizure of German territories in China such as Shantung/Shandong Peninsula and German territories in the Pacific as well, as the Germans were at war with the British in Europe. This therefore portrayed Japan as to be assisting in the war effort against Germany but in the actual case, Japan was expanding its territories overseas. Japan presented the **Twenty-One Demands** to China in 1915. Among the demands were the Chinese recognition of Japan's newly-acquired territories in Shantung, and for further territorial concessions in Manchuria and Mongolia. The demands also called for inclusion of Japanese advisers in the Chinese government, military and police. These demands caused sentiments in China who pleaded for Western intervention that did not come in the form of any decisive action. China was pressured to sign a revised version of the Twenty-One Demands that negated the inclusion of Japanese advisers in Chinese government. The West increasingly became concerned with Japan's Twenty-One Demands to China and grew weary of their intentions. The U.S became critical of these demands and put Japan on its watchlist, observing the nation with great suspicion (Henshall, 2004 pp.108-109; Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2013 p.27).

Japan's Search for Equality of Status with the Western World

The Taisho era was also marked by Japan's quest for equality of status with nations of the West in international relations. Japan allied conveniently and strategically with the British in the war effort against the German Empire during World War One (1914-1918), at least in the Asia-Pacific Theatre. Upon the Allied victory in the war over Germany, Japan earned a prestigious place at the **Versailles (Paris) Peace Conference** in 1919 and given voting rights of equal power as of the Western Allied nations. Similarly, Japan was awarded prestigious rights in the Washington Conference of November 1921 to February 1922, as in the Versailles Peace Conference. The subsequent conference was held to help create a new world order that was to be more stable with the aid of multilateral agreements amongst states in international relations, rather than agreements that were bilateral in nature. In the Washington conference, a resolution was passed compelling Japan to put limits on the size of its naval military forces and this was met with sentiments back home in Japan by the Japanese people who desired an equal status with the West in terms of naval power. The period between World War One and Two (the interwar period) in Japan was characterised by constant sense of disturbance from the unequal treatment of Japan by the West. Japan took key steps to outshine some Westerns states like the U.S in the international system, by becoming a key founding member of the **League of Nations** as the U.S was never formally a member. Japan made efforts to have a racial equality clause inserted in the Charter of the League of Nations, unfortunately never succeeded. This failure is attributed to the wishes of Australia which had been implementing a racially-biased 'White Australian' policy for decades at the time. Japan was also disturbed by racially-biased acts passed in the U.S. In 1924, an immigration act was passed to deter Japanese people from immigrating into the U.S. The Japanese people immigrated into the U.S extensively following the U.S annexation of Hawaii in 1897. Over 100,000 Japanese immigrants had settled in U.S state of California where their settlement in large populations was met with a backlash from U.S citizens of California. This anti-immigration act targeting Japanese immigrants to the U.S caused anger back in Japan amongst the Japanese people and further led to the silencing if those who opted for a foreign policy of cooperation with the U.S in a world that was increasingly falling to the influence and control of the U.S

through multilateral treaties. The Japanese themselves were rather hypocritical with their demand for racial equality with Westerners, when they (the Japanese) actually victimized Koreans on racial basis, only to see the sense of fair and equal racial treatment, when they became victims of Western racial discrimination. Japan slowly began to accept that on the table that is the international system, it was never going to be treated equally by the West but could only be revered for its achievements and for its rise as a global power simply because they were Japanese and not white Westerners, and they accepted that however much they Westernize themselves, they would never be a real Western nation. They contend that Westernization in some way was necessary to keep Japan strong in the modern Westernized world, but began to question if democracy was one of these Western ideals that was necessary (Henshall, 2004 pp.109-110).

In conclusion, the Taisho era was a period of a struggle between progressive democratic proponents (political parties) and conservative authoritarian proponents (oligarchy and the military elite) with both having made achievements in their struggles. The progressive democratic proponents sowed successfully the seeds of contemporary Japanese political culture built on democratic principles such as accountability, transparency and the rule of law; and also practices such as parliamentary procedures. The conservative authoritarian proponents succeeded in their expansionist campaigns to acquire territories in Asia, especially from the German Empire during World War One, under the guise of Allied partnership with Britain against Germany in the war.

MODERN HISTORY OF JAPAN

CHAPTER 12

THE SHOWA ERA UP TO THE END OF AMERICAN OCCUPATION (1926 -1952)

A TROUBLED BEGINNING OF AN ERA

Following the death of Emperor Taisho (Yoshihito) on 25th December 1926, his son- Hirohito was crowned Japan's emperor. Hirohito began his reign as emperor fairly with good experience because he served as regent emperor for his father who was incapacitated health-wise in fulfilling his official duties. He had numerous travels abroad where he learned from many cultures. He developed an admiration for the British monarchy and thus he sought to learn from the British monarchy in order to become a constitutional monarch just like the British monarch. The Japanese constitution at the time did not clearly define the exact roles of the emperor, creating room for interpretation. Hirohito was brought up with the influence of military figures such as General Nogi and Admiral Togo. He was educated by nationalist figures like Sugiura Shigetake. Hirohito like emperors before him was perceived as a 'living god' with divine origins and kept distance from the people and understood less about their daily lives. The reign of the new emperor was named *Showa* which translates to 'Illustrious Peace' which ironically contradicted the unpeaceful atmospheres of the time, as Japan faced crises both in the domestic and international arena (Henshall, 2004 p.110).

Economic Challenges in Post World War One Japan

World War One created good economic opportunities for Japan because the European powers were bogged down in war against each other leaving much of the market opportunities open to Japan. Japan's industrial production capacity increased five times and export volumes tripled. This meant the *zaibatsu* (industrial corporations/conglomerates) were benefiting from these opportunities largely, as they experimented with new technologies and diversifying their industrial operations. All these benefits disappeared after World War One came to an end in 1918. Global prices of goods went down and Japan entered a long period of economic recession (economic decline). There grew a gap between the *zaibatsu* and smaller companies, resulting a 'dual economy' where the elite enjoyed more prosperity. The efforts on reconstruction after the 1923 Tokyo Earthquake in the Taisho era provided an economic boost for Japan but this was followed by an economic setback in the form of a banking crisis in 1927 that saw a

quarter of banks in Japan fail. In this economic crisis, rural areas of Japan suffered the most as the plummeting prices of silk and rice created hardships for farmers. Income in the rural area dropped by two-thirds between 1926 and 1931, a rate higher than in the urban areas. The rate of urbanization was also in the rise with nearly half Japan's 70 million people living in the cities, as of the time. There was a gap between dwellers of the rural areas and urban areas in terms of wealth ownership and standards of living, even though not all urban dwellers lived wealthy lives. Rural life was characterized by traditionalism or conservatism, lower standards of living; and urban life was that which promised wealth, modernity and westernization (Henshall, 2004 p.111).

Political Instability and Growing Discontent

The opinion that Japanese politics was falling into the influence of big business owners grew in Japan in the Showa Period. The influence catalysed the growth of corruption in Japanese politics. For instance, the Seiyukai Party's government (1927-1929) was labelled a 'Mitsui Cabinet' by the Minseito Party, meaning the Mitsui enterprise had won influence over the government. In retaliation, the Seiyukai Party labelled the Minseito Party's government (1929-1930) a 'Mitsubishi Cabinet.' There was growing opinion in Japan that Western influence was the actual source of corruption, which stemmed from Western-style parliamentary institutions, corporations, individualism and urban liberalism. The Japanese began to question the effectiveness of the adopted Western economic and political systems because these systems could not avert the Great Depression in the West. The success of fascist regimes in Europe such as the Nazi Party in Germany and the Fascists of Italy, made the Japanese believe that may be the solution to their domestic problems was to choose a less democratic path. As dissatisfaction with democracy grew, elements in Japan's military elite fuelled support for militarism and territorial expansion as the solution to Japan's economic problems. The target of Japan's militarism and expansionism became China as the military grew independent of civilian political control (Henshall, 2004 pp.111-112).

In 1928, a red flag operation to justify the deployment of Japanese military forces in Mukden, China was carried out when extremist figures in the Japanese Kwantung Army used explosives to blow up a train near Mukden, resulting in the death of Chinese warlord **Chang Tso-lin** (Zhang Zuolin). The Japanese military extremists accused the Chinese falsely of

plotting the incident as an excuse to have Japanese military forces deployed in the area. Moderates in the military halted the plot to avoid escalation. Emperor Hirohito was disappointed in how Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi handled the matter with less firm action hence Giichi resigned. The emperor equally failed in holding the plotters to account, as the plotters faced little consequences for their actions. Hamaguchi Osachi became prime minister following Giichi's resignation. His entrance in the office was welcomed with a crisis concerning the limitations on Japan's naval power imposed through treaties with Western states like the Washington Conference. His failure to improve on his situation at the 1930 London Naval Conference created a crisis full of resentment bac home in Japan which led to his assassination when he died from gunshot wounds in a right-wing youth attack. Japan shortly in a few days trashed all international treaties that limited its naval power. In September 1931, the Japanese staged another railway attack near Mukden to justify the Japanese invasion of Chinese Manchuria. The **Manchurian Incident** as it is known to historians, was staged by rogue elements in the Japanese Kwantung Army in 1928 with tacit/limited approval of senior Japanese military commanders, and again the blame was put on the Chinese. The staged incident was carried out by a group consisting of middle-ranking Kwantung Army officers led by Lieutenant-Colonel Ishiwara Kanji. Moderates in the Japanese military did not succeed in thwarting this plot this time round. The senior rogue elements of the Japanese military quickly approved a military intervention within hours. Political figures in the civilian Japanese government made attempts at stopping the intervention in Manchuria but realized they had no power to reverse the course of events. The inability of the civilian government to resolve the crisis led to the resignation of the Minseito Party's cabinet of ministers led by Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi. Following Wakatsuki's resignation, Inukai Tsuyoshi of the Seiyukai Party became prime minister. He attempted exerting control of the military but was assassinated a few months of entering office by extreme right-wing naval officers. Inukai became the last civilian prime minister till end of World War Two. The emperor was shocked by the military's campaign into Manchuria. His brother – Prince Chichibu tried urging him to intervene and stop the military campaign but he ignored his advice. The emperor took a silent and ambiguous approach concerning the Japanese military campaign in Manchuria. The military action in Manchuria resulted in the creation of a Japanese 'puppet state' known as the **Republic of Manchukuo** (**Manshukoku**) by the Kwantung Army in March 1932. Japan's civilian

government granted formal recognition to this state in September 1932. In March 1934, the 'puppet state' was renamed the Empire of Manchukuo, with the emperor being China's last emperor – **Pu'i** (**Puyi**) who was a puppet ruler of the Japanese. The League of Nations took notice of Japan's role in the Manchurian Incident. A commission was tasked with investigating the matter, headed by Lord Lytton from Britain. The commission's report informed the condemnation of Japan's military actions in Manchuria by the League of Nations. Japan protested against the condemnation by pulling out of the League of Nations. The military achieved unquestionable power after intimidating the opposition to submission. They employed the 'thought police' to assassinate anyone who plotted against them. The military did not find the emperor a threat to their plans and ambitions. They ensured that the emperor was kept away from Westernized and liberal advisers and influencers. Amongst such who were purged include Minobe Tatsukichi who was charged with treason because of his views on constitutionalism, and a number of his scholarly texts were outlawed. There emerged a vision within a section of the military to restore Japan's strength by restoring Japanese traditional values and shunning away Western liberalism. This became known as the **Showa Restoration**. The restoration efforts involved attempted assassinations and coups, especially in the early and mid 1930s. The most notorious coup attempt was the **February 26th Incident of 1936**. In the early hours of that day, junior military officers led some 1,400 troops in raiding several government buildings and in the process killed and wounded many senior political figures and advisers of the emperor. They sought to create a military government that would favour their ultranationalist ideals. Their efforts did not get full support of the military and government and stirred division in the senior military command. The junta declared their full loyalty to the emperor but surprisingly, Emperor Hirohito rebuked and distanced himself from them and demanded they be tried for treason against the state. He revoked their right to death by ritual suicide i.e. seppuku. The rebels' hopes for a public trial, where they could air their views, were crushed with a secret trial which ended in 19 death sentences carried out to completion and the remaining 70 sentenced to prison. This incident showcased Hirohito's rarely seen resolve in handling crises firmly and the containment of the military (Henshall, 2004 pp.112-114).

In conclusion, the first 10 years of the Showa Period were characterized by economic challenges, political instability (tensions between

traditionalist authoritarians and modern, Westernized liberals) and the repressive and uncontained rise of militarism. The intervention of the emperor in state affairs was occasional and if anything, his silence in certain occasions suggested his ambiguity in political affairs and tacit approval of the military's aggressive, authoritarian and expansionist activities in Asia, thus emboldening the military's resolve. The Showa Period which was intended to be an era of 'illustrious peace' from which it got its name, however, this became an irony as it was marked by turmoils, both domestically and in the international arena.

IDEOLOGICAL BEGINNINGS OF EXPANSIONISM

Execution of Kita and His Radical Nationalism

Included in the radical group of military officers handed death sentences and eventually executed over the February 26th Incident was Kita Ikki, a radical nationalist and a leading philosophical figure in the Showa Restoration movement. His military coup was aimed at eliminating the incompetent leaders in government and restoration of the emperor's direct relations with the people. Kita wanted the emperor to use his authority in suspending the constitution and to keep away from the corrupt politicians and business owners, to facilitate a fair and equitable distribution of national land and wealth. He also envisioned Japan to be a special nation, destined to free Asia from the burden of Western imperialism and with Japan's might fully restored it will be in a position to lead a free and united Asia. Kita's vision were significant in the igniting of inspiration and development of justifications for Japan's militarism and expansionism in Asia. --The emperor needed to be free of corrupt influence of politicians i.e. the oligarchs, and it is because of these views that placed him at odds with the state-propagated ideologies of his time. Because of his radical views against the state machinery of the time, he was put under arrest, put on trial and executed alongside other radicals (Henshall, 2004 p.114).

Emperor-centric National Ideology

The state propagated an emperor-centric ideology that conflicted with Kita Ikki's radical nationalistic ideas. The state's ideology became the

supporting pillar of Japan's militarism and expansionism in the 1930s and 1940s. The ideology was heavily influenced by profound state documents like **1890 Imperial Rescript on Education**, which described the emperor as one to be highly respected as the source of ethical and spiritual essence of the nation. A kin to the imperial rescript, the *Kokutai no Hongi* (Cardinal Principles of the Nation), was created in 1937 to be the source of guiding state ideology. *Kokutai no Hongi* portrayed the emperor as one with the divine origins traced to the sun goddess Amaterasu and stressed the fact that he was the nation's source of unity. The Kokutai no Hongi, also laid bare the concept of *kokutai* which means national essence or polity. It emphasized that Japan, fundamentally was different from the Western world because the emperor's leadership bound the nation together in harmony. The document's ideology was instrumental in the shaping of Japan's society in every aspect. Children's education included the teaching that the highest virtue they could achieve was showing loyalty to the emperor. Adults were made to believe in the collective good of the nation over personal desires or ambitions. The *Kokutai no Hongi*, thus was instrumental in shaping the public perception around Japan's militarism and expansionism in Asia as Japan's natural inherent right and divine destiny to lead the Asian continent (Henshall, 2004 pp.115-116).

Musubi-Japan's Harmony with Nature

One major philosophical dissemination of the *Kokutai no Hongi* was the concept of ***musubi***, which was to represent unity, vitality and the interconnectedness of all things. The concept of *musubi* was heavily influenced and rooted in Shinto traditions and beliefs that there was a great bond between the Japanese people and the natural environment. Kawai Tatsuo, who was a philosopher and an advocate of *musubi*, put forward the opinion that Japan was on a higher moral ground with higher moral authority to lead other nations because of the harmonious relationship and bond between the Japanese people and the natural environment. The military elite used this argument to justify Japan's militarism and expansionism in Asia as benevolent effort in the restoration of natural order and purity in Asia, in contrast with Western exploitation and colonialism in Asia. Many intellectuals readily accepted the notion of Japan as a natural Asian leader, ironically this was a mask or curtain for the real imperialist policies on the ground not any different from the Western imperialism and exploitation of Asian resources and subjugation of Asian people. The Japanese ruling elite

ironically justified their imperialism in Asia as a means to achieve harmony for the region (Henshall, 2004 pp.116-117).

Pragmatic Justifications for Territorial Expansion

Some Japanese employed pragmatism to argue and 'justify' Japan's militarism and territorial expansionism in Asia. They argued that Japan needed to adopt Nazi-style ***lebensraum*** policies to acquire territorial space for accommodating am increasingly growing Japanese population. This was seen by the Japanese as the only viable option left because emigration to the West was blocked by anti-Japanese immigration laws in the West and the option of advancing into world markets was also blocked by trade tariffs especially in the Western markets. Another pragmatic 'justification' serving to fuel Japanese war propaganda efforts was put forward by militarist leaders such as **Ishiwara Kanji**, who was a key planner behind the **Manchurian Incident** of 1931. He argued that Japanese militarism and expansionism in Asia was necessary in acquiring resources that would prove vital in the preparation of an inevitable war with the U.S and other Western states for world domination, and to end all wars, and this argument was influenced by the medieval Buddhist monk -Nichiren who believed that at one time, there would be a war to end all wars. Ishiwara believed raw materials i.e. latex, crude oil etc. would be easily extracted from China, including Chinese Manchuria and other Asian states which would be vital in sustaining Japan's military-industrial complex in the war against the West. There were other thinkers who proposed a more peaceful and less militaristic approach in achieving dominance in Asia by assuming leadership through cultural and political guidance rather than through militarism and aggressive expansionism. Such thinkers included **Tachibana Shiraki**. He had the belief that the rise of Japanese civilization as a superior cultural-political entity would counter-balance the Western cultural-political entity that had become an imperialist in dominating the Asian continent. Such moderate and peaceful means of achieving dominance in Asia over the imperialist Western powers running colonies in the continent did not gain much momentum because of their proponents such as Tachibana, did not highlight the exact steps needed to implement them to fruition, thus the militaristic approaches found more favour with the ruling class of the time (Henshall, 2004 pp.117-118).

Militarism and Indoctrination

Japan's militarist government by the late 1930s had achieved a highly doctored system of education that emphasized emperor-centric ideologies and the glorification of war. Education curricula were designed to showcase Japan as a nation with a divine mission and with a military that was the symbol and embodiment of national strength and virtue. Young men were indoctrinated to believe that giving up or sacrificing their lives in service to the emperor was the most honourable thing to do in life, hence there emerged a young generation of men with the will to sacrifice their lives for the good of the emperor's will and thus for the state as well. This indoctrination program was strengthened through propaganda that showcased Japanese militarism and expansionism in Asia as a mission to free Asia from Western domination and imperialism, a perspective that found a strong following and acceptance amongst the Japanese people. Their perspective on this did not weaken even in the face of the harsh realities of war such as growing international condemnation, economic hardship and brutal military campaigns (Powers, 2011).

JAPAN PREPARES FOR WAR WITH THE WEST

The 1930s saw Japan's economy make a recovery as the Great Depression stifled other economies of the world. This economic recovery became intertwined with Japan's militarist and expansionist ambitions, that saw the implementation of aggressive foreign policies. Economic recovery went hand-in-hand with the empowerment of Japan's military in preparation for conflict and territorial expansion in the pursuit of the resources of the East Asian nations. To deal with the economic setbacks of the great depression, Japan resorted to **Keynesian economic strategies** which involved extensive government spending in stimulating industrial output. The government delinked the Japanese Yen currency from the international gold standard and thus the Yen significantly lost value and Japanese exports became cheaper in large volumes in the international markets, a trend continuing to this date. These Keynesian policies resulted in Japan's economy experiencing significant improvements, emerging as one of the strongest globally by 1936. The GDP growth rate was at an average of

5% and Japan emerged as an upcoming key exporter of cotton goods. Industries like the textile industry grew significantly and industrial manufacturing and technology found foothold in major cities such Osaka and Tokyo. Japanese manufacturing industries benefited hugely when demand for their finished products grew in Europe and the U.S, and this also created employment opportunities for the local Japanese people in their country. In as much as Japan was enjoying an economic success, this success and its benefits were not evenly distributed across the whole Japanese population, hence an economic inequality between the industrial urban centres and the agrarian rural areas. The rural economy was largely stagnant and majority of the Japanese people resided here. In as much as agricultural productivity went higher, financial profits from farming were still low and the income for rural dwellers therefore were much lower in comparison to urban dwellers. The improvement in agricultural productivity was therefore not sufficient in bridging the economic inequality gap between the rural and urban centres and the rural farmers stuck to their traditional and inefficient farming techniques (Henshall, 2004 pp.118-119).

The Zaibatsu and Industrial Growth

Behind the industrial growth of Japan were key economic players such as the *zaibatsu* which were large family-controlled corporations or conglomerates of industrial enterprises, that were in control of a significant portion of the country's output. They included great companies such as Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo, who exerted impact on the country's economy. The government worked together with these industrial enterprises, providing them with contracts to fulfill the industrial needs of the military and also gave them access to good loans. The government empowered the *zaibatsu* by promoting monopolies in key sectors like steel, petroleum and ship construction, by 1937, one-seventh of all of Japan's total capital was in the hands of two corporations - Mitsui and Mitsubishi. This means only a few corporate families retained economic power and influence over the military-industrial complex in Japan. This means these *zaibatsu* benefited most financially from Japan's increased militarism, earning their place as key role players in building the nation's economic infrastructure. The expanding powers and influence of the *zaibatsu* became a worry for some in government with the belief that they were a challenge to the nation's sovereignty. Opposing forces within the government who feared the power of the *zaibatsu* demanded fir

industrial reform and the reduction of the *zaibatsu's* economic power. This internal struggle led the military to seek more control of the government and the economy (Henshall, 2004 p.119).

Government Intervention in the Industrial Sector

The government of Japan played significant interventionist roles in the economy of the country in the 1930s which was reflective of the needs of both the military and the economy. As Japan began to militarize, the government was quick to centralize control of major industries like the oil, steel, machine tools and shipbuilding industries. These were swiftly nationalized and put on tight state regulations. Japan made efforts in keeping away foreign competition and diverting much of the industrial production efforts to fulfill the needs of the military. This was inspired by German economic practices. Cartels ad tariffs were key tools for the government in keeping at bay foreign competition in the domestic market. To maximize the production of military goods, the government utilized incentives such as tax exemptions for companies that produced military goods. This was done because the military needed the necessary tools and material needed for a big war with the Western powers. The economy of Japan by 1937, had already experienced profound changes with the manufacturing industries diverting most of their resources to the production of military goods (Henshall, 2004 pp.119-120).

Growing Influence of the Military

The influence of the military in the government grew remarkably in the 1930s. By the end of the 1930s, the military had planted its men in the most powerful offices or positions within the Japanese government and this exposed the inevitability of Japan's militarism and expansionism in Asia. The rise of General **Hideki Tojo** with his 30th July 1940 appointment as the Army Minister marked a shift in military control of Japan. Following this appointment, Tojo led a group that increased military control of politics in Japan. The failure of the 1936 26th February Incident in the coup attempts also led to a shift towards growing military influence in politics. Militarism and expansionism became key ideologies with the influence of military officers like Tojo on the government in foreign policy-making. He argued for an aggressive

military expansion into other Asian states for the benefit of Japan. This influence managed to convince the government, after the resignation of Prime Minister **Fumimaro Konoe**, to abandon its diplomatic approach in foreign relations to pave way for the military leadership's aggressive and expansionist approaches in securing the resources of these East Asian nations for the good of Japan. Oil and mineral resources from these nations were seen as vital for Japan's industrial needs in the production of military goods (Henshall,2004 p.123).

Japanese Invasion of China

Full-scale war between Japan and China began after the 7th July 1937 **Marco Polo Bridge Incident**, widely acknowledged as a provocation by the Japanese who are accused of a false flag operation where they made false claims of an attack by Chinese troops on Japanese troops on the move near Peking (Beijing), with the aim of obtaining a justification of a war against China. This conflict was not expected to escalate in the manner that it did and the Japanese military planners expected a weak Chinese resistance and a swift Japanese victory over China and ultimately gaining control of the country. The war rather took a different turn and prolonged into that which put strain on Japan's resources and led to many costly defeats. Major cities such as Shanghai and Nanking fell to the Japanese by the end of 1937. The Japanese committed brutal atrocities in Nanking, in what is remembered as the **Nanking Massacre** or the **Rape of Nanking**. Tens of thousands of Chinese civilians and prisoners of war were brutally murdered, and thousands of women were raped. The Japanese forces looted widely in the city and then destroyed it after the capture. Japan was hoping for a quick victory in China but these hopes were diminished with a stiff Chinese resistance led by **Chiang Kai-shek**, and thus Japan was stuck in a prolonged and costly war that put strain on and stretched thin its military and economic resources (Henshall, 2004 p.120).

A Stalemate in China and Growing Concern for Soviet Intervention Against Japan in the War

Japan was already paying a costly price for its militarism and expansionism in China by 1938. The Chinese, with support from the United States and the Soviet Union, mounted a stiff resistance against the Japanese invasion in manner that surpassed Japanese expectations.

The Japanese literally struggled in capturing key areas of the country and their grip on captured territory was loosened or weakened by constant Chinese guerilla warfare and growing pressure and criticism from the international community. As the war prolonged, the possibility of a Soviet intervention in the aid of China's defense became more pronounced and the military leadership in Japan increasingly grew worried as this would mean Japan would have to fight on two major frontlines, one against China and the other against the Soviet Union which was already giving support to the Chinese in terms of weapons and advisers. These worries were magnified with the signing of the August 1939 **Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact** between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. This pact was agreement between the two states that they would not confront each other militarily and directly (a non-aggression pact) and it was followed by a joint invasion and occupation of Poland by both states (Soviets from the East and the Nazi Germans from the West). This move by both states dragged Britain into a war with Nazi Germany, thus the beginning of the Second World War. The pact was in a way an assurance for the Soviets that they would not be fighting on two war fronts against the Japanese in the east and Germans in the west simultaneously, but only on one against the Japanese and this worried the Japanese top military leadership, as it meant higher chances of direct Soviet military involvement against Japan in favour of China, thus necessitating the revision of Japan's military strategies. However, for the Soviets they were proved wrong when Adolf Hitler trashed the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and launched a surprise military invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 (**Operation Barbarossa**). The signing of the non-aggression pact between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union angered the Japanese military leadership because this was a violation of Japan's **Anti-Comintern Pact** with Germany and later with Italy as well, which was a tripartite agreement on sharing information concerning the common enemy – the Soviet Union. The Japanese were further disappointed when Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler declared superiority of the 'Aryan' race (an alleged human race of Indo-European origins) and considered the Japanese a 'second-class people.' They began to fear of a possible betrayal by Germany who possibly would turn against them. But when Nazi Germany scored successes in its war in Europe in September 1939 when World War Two began, the Japanese favoured a policy that would allow them to join the pro-Axis forces (Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy). This led to the signing of the Tripartite Pact by the Japanese in September 1940. This became an official treaty between Japan and Nazi

Germany, alongside Fascist Italy, agreeing that they would support each other in the event of an attack by a state not involved in the war in Europe at the moment, in reference to the U.S. This pact also led to the recognition of Japan's interests in Asia by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. The pact also encouraged Japan to carry on with its militarist and expansionist policies in Asia. At around the time Japan was signing the Tripartite Pact in Berlin, Japanese military forces moved to take control of the colonial territories of the French in Indochina, who were not able to mount a stiff resistance. The U.S responded with limited sanctions targeting exports to Japan that enabled their military aggression such as aviation fuel, steel and iron while refraining from any direct military intervention against the aggressive Japanese. Both Japanese aggression in Asia and German aggression in Europe caused public condemnation in the U.S. The public opinion was in agreement with the U.S government's decision to avoid direct military involvement against Japan and its Axis allies (Henshall, 2004 pp.120, 121-122).

When Nazi Germany trashed the non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union and launched Operation Barbarossa to invade the Soviet Union, the Japanese were relieved of their worries of a two-front war with China and the Soviets, and were delighted that their grip on Manchuria would not be weakened anytime soon. Japan therefore shifted its attention south to take over the Malaya and the Dutch Indies which were known to be resource-rich. Japan decided to push further south into Indochina keeping in mind that this would be treated as a provocation by the U.S and indeed it was as the U.S government responded by 'freezing' Japanese assets in America and employing economic sanctions on Japan by banning the export of US-made goods to Japan. Included in the embargo were oil exports from the U.S to Japan. Japan was heavily reliant on the U.S for oil as more than 75% of its oil imports originated from the U.S. There emerged a plan to secretly bombard targets in Japan drawn up by **Claire Chennault** who was put in charge of American mercenary pilots (the **Flying Tigers**) who were tasked with aiding the Chinese Air Force in the air war against Japan.

Image: Flying Tigers by US government employee, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11532186

Image: Claire Chennault. By Unknown military photographer - U.S. War Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21665809

There was an unofficial agreement with this plan by the U.S President **Franklin Roosevelt**. Chennault approached the U.S government for a secret support for his plan. He only got financial support for the plan but not an approval. An adviser to President Roosevelt visited China in May 1941 and on return to the U.S, he brought the plan back to the government's attention and this brought fresh enthusiasm in the U.S and British leadership but the plan was perceived as not being practical. The U.S government came up with another plan, to send U.S made bomber aircraft to Chinese government for bombing raids on strategic targets in Japan such as munitions factories. This plan however was also found to be impractical as the bomber aircraft needed fighter escorts deep into Japanese territory, which was not possible, leaving the bombers vulnerable to attack from Japanese **Mitsubishi Zero** fighter aircraft.

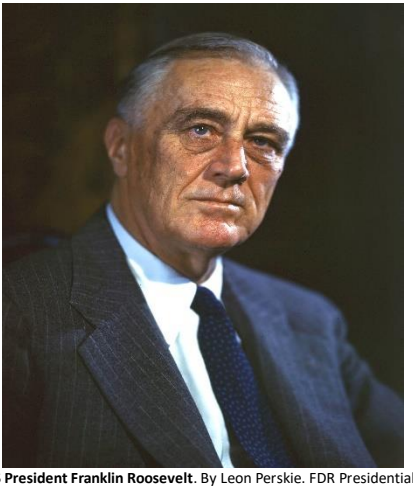


Image: U.S President Franklin Roosevelt. By Leon Perskie. FDR Presidential Library & Museum - CT 09-109(1), CC BY 2.0 (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en), https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=149575274

Image: Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter aircraft. Author: Marc Grossman. License: CC BY-SA 3.0 - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en . Find image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_Zero.jpg#/media/File:Japanese_Zero.jpg

They then decided to stick to the oil embargo as a strategy to weaken Japan's militarist and expansionist efforts in Asia, and it proved more effective in doing so as Japanese militarist leaders felt the American oil embargo was a threat to their ambitions in Asia and they made up their minds as early as September 1941 to wage war on the U.S if they could not find a solution to their oil problems by early October 1941, and this deadline was extended to November 30th, 1941. The Japanese leadership then approved the plan to attack America's Pearl Harbour which had been proposed in January 1941 by Admiral **Yamamoto**

Isoroku. The attack was rehearsed at Kagoshima Bay in southern Kyushu islands. Some Japanese leaders such as Prime Minister Konoe were still hopeful in the power of diplomacy in resolving Japan's issues. However, the U.S Secretary of State **Cordel Hull**, who alongside President Roosevelt desired to greatly punish Japan, demanded that Japan ought to reverse its militarist and expansionist policies in Asia before making any concessions to the Japanese. He demanded the withdrawal of Japan's forces from both Indochina and China all together. Prime Minister Konoe resigned from office in October 1941 and was replaced as prime minister by Army Minister**, General Hideki Tojo**. This resignation in as much as it appears in public limelight to be resulting from the failure of his government in achieving diplomatic success in negotiations with the U.S leadership, it could also be interpreted as a tacit approval of the military elite to carry on with their militarist and expansionist policies in Asia to weaken the grip of Western imperialism in the region, and after all, Konoe and the military elite shared this common goal, only differing in his diplomatic means of achieving them. Konoe also had a belligerent attitude towards China and this may have a played a role in resigning to pave way for Tojo and his militarist and expansionist plans. Konoe was also being pragmatic in the face of the harsh methods of silencing dissent or opposition to the militarist and expansionist policies of the military elite, and he had to come up with a way of allowing the military elite to implement their aggressive policies without being purged or dealt with violently for opposing the military elite and without harming his reputation as a peaceful and diplomatic leader. He sought to publicly distance himself from the military elite and their aggressive policies and to privately allow them to carry on with these policies, which could help him achieve his goals of stamping out Western imperialism in Asia, and putting Japan in a position of 'leader of the Asian world', a vision that came to be known as the **Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere**. And therefore, the best Konoe could do to walk the tight ropes of the politics of the moment was to resign from his position of prime minister and allow the aggressive General Tojo to take his place. In late November 1941, Japan made a final concession when it agreed to withdraw its forces from southern Indochina but declined to do the same in China. This concession was rejected by Secretary Hull, surprising the Japanese. Japan then flagged off a fleet of its naval ships led by Admiral Nagumo Chuichi to sail from the Kuriles to Hawaii, USA. The fleet was composed of a six aircraft carriers with a total of over 400 aircraft, two battleships, three cruisers, nine destroyers and more than twenty (a score of) submarines. On

December 1st, 1941, the emperor – Hirohito, gave his formal approval for a war against the U.S claiming he acted as a constitutional monarch who had no other choice but to approve Prime Minister Tojo's cabinet decision to go to war. One important statement from the emperor was that he possibly could have made attempts to derail the war plans and decisions if the had foreseen the future outcomes of the war. This does not imply that he had no ability to do so, rather it means he did not wish to interfere with Tojo's cabinet war plans because he thought that Japan would win the war. The emperor also had a belief that Japan had the capacity to inflict a decisive and damaging blow to the U.S and impose a peace policy on their adversary on Japan's terms, a belief that was shared with most of the Japanese. They believed that their terms of peace on a weakened U.S world would put them in better position than they were in 1941 (Henshall, 2004 pp.122 -124).

In conclusion, the 1930s were crucial in strengthening Japan in preparation for war. This period saw Japan deal with economic disparity and ensure industrial transformation by taking a series of steps that culminated in increased militarization and expansion into sovereign foreign territories of East Asian nations. Japan took steps to make final preparations for full-scale war by the end of the 1930s and joined the Axis powers in Europe in the Second World War. The military elite took control of the government of Japan to ensure the fulfilment of their militarist and expansionist goals in Asia with a mindset that prepared for full-scale war with its enemies such as China, the Soviet Union and the U.S together with other Western Allied powers.

WAR IN THE PACIFIC

Beginnings of the Pacific War

The first military action of the Pacific War in World War Two was not the Japanese assault on the U.S Navy Pacific fleet stationed at Pearl Harbour, but rather a Japanese military strike on British forces in Malaya, an attack that was carried out 1 hour 30 minutes before the assault on the American Navy at Pearl Harbor Harbour. Japan struck the British because they believed that securing resources in Malaya was key in sustaining their war efforts. They also believed that British resistance would be weak in their colonial territories in Southeast Asia. This attack

on the British forces was facilitated by intelligence shared from a German U-boat commander in a report that outlined an acknowledgment by the British that they would have serious difficulties in defending their territories such as Singapore and this emboldened the Japanese military elite in believing that they would achieve their imperialist goals in Asia with minimal difficulties. They were also made to believe that a war with one Western state would lead to a direct American involvement, and thus, this belief led them to directly attack the U.S in an attack targeting its naval ships and infrastructure at Pearl Harbour on December 7th, 1941 (Henshall, 2004 p.124).

The Attack on Pearl Harbour

Just before 8 am on December 7th, 1941, the Japanese carried out a military attack on the U.S Navy ships stationed at Pearl Harbour, and this culminated into the official entry of the U.S into the war against Japan and its Axis forces that were pitted against the Allied powers. The attack came as a surprise to an unprepared U.S forces and was conducted in two waves. The first wave of an attack comprised 183 bombers and the second wave which came an hour later comprised 167 bombers. The result of the attack was utter devastation for the U.S in form of infrastructural damage and the loss of 4,500 lives in approximate, including military personnel and civilians.

Image: Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7th December 1941. The Burning ship is USS Arizona hit by bombs dropped by Japanese aircraft. sourced from the National Archives and Records Administration (NAID 195617). This image is in the public domain in the United States as it was published between 1929 and 1977 without a copyright notice. You can view the original photo here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_USS_Arizona_(BB-39)_burning_after_the_Japanese_attack_on_Pearl_Harbor_-_NARA_195617_-_Edit.jpg

Military warcraft in the form of aircraft, battleships and cruisers were also destroyed. Essential infrastructure such as oil reserves, aircraft hangers and repair facilities however were not destroyed much and this enabled the U.S to recover much quicker than anticipated from the attack. The Japanese were not sufficiently satisfied with the results of the attack as they put blame on Admiral Nagumo for not utilizing the maximum might and military capabilities of Japan to do more decisive destruction that was not just effective in the short term but also in the long term. His failure to eliminate the military potential of the U.S Navy Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbour came with consequences, as it enabled the Pacific fleet to recover from the damages of the attack and restore its military potential, and it also led to the solidifying of the American resolve to punish Japan and thus a unified American public opinion to join the Allied powers against the Axis powers (Henshall, 2004 pp.124-125).

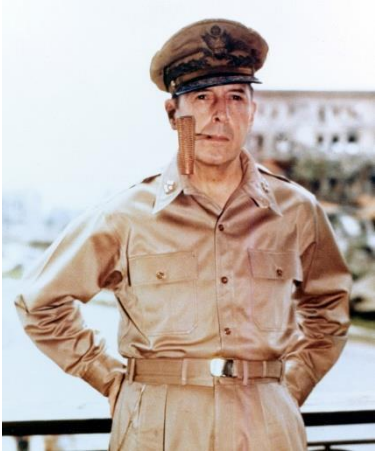
The Controversial Nature of the Surprise Attack and the American Retaliation

Years after the end of World War Two, the surprise nature of the attack became a hot discussion point in debates. The fact Japan did not inform the U.S of an impending attack was viewed as a dishonourable act. It is also debated that the U.S may have been aware of the impending attack and even the senior federal leadership including the U.S President – **Franklin Roosevelt**, allowed it to happen to find a good justification in the eyes of the American people to enter the war, in a shift of the public opinion and narrative, against Japan and the other Axis powers. This is a theory which is debated widely with evidence that both support and debunk it, and therefore it is a historical source of controversy. On the other hand, it is evident that the U.S intelligence services had intercepted 'secret' Japanese communications and intelligence reports but the senior U.S leadership took these lightly and acted less on these intelligence, and this shows a degree of reluctance blended with underestimating the military capabilities of Japan (Henshall, 2004 pp. 125 -126).

Japanese Expansionism and Early War Successes

Following their attack on Pearl Harbour, Japan quickly acquired new territories in southeast Asia and the Pacific. Thailand fell to the Japanese in a few days and in the ensuing weeks key British and American positions in Hong Kong, Guam and Malaya also fell to the Japanese. American air fleet stationed in the Philippines was badly hit in Japanese air raids a week before the overrunning and occupation of Thailand. The British suffered a huge humiliation when Singapore fell to the Japanese on 15th February 1942 because the British believed that their defenses were strong enough to withstand any assault on their positions. Many other territories of Sumatra, Timor and Bali fell to the Japanese by February 1942. Manila, the capital city of the Philippines was captured on 2nd February 1942. The U.S Commander of the Far East forces **General Douglas McArthur**, received orders from senior leaders in Washington in March 1942 to abandon his base in the Philippines and relocate to Australia. His famous message to the people of the Philippines upon arriving in Terowie, Australia when he said, **"I came**

through and I shall return." These words became a source of hope, determination, strength and courage to the Allied forces in the Pacific as they prepared punitive actions against Japan.



General of the Army Douglas MacArthur smoking his corncob pipe, probably at Manila, Philippine Islands, 2 August 1945. By Photographer not credited. - Naval Historical Center; Direct link. Photo #: USA C-2413 (Color), photograph from the Army Signal Corps Collection in the U.S. National Archives., Public Domain, Find it here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=139743720

The successes of Japan in the early stages of the war are attributed to the fact that: one, the Western Allied powers were more focused on the European theatre of war where their national security and sovereignty was paramount against the aggressive militarism and expansionism of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, and two, the Japanese military attacks on Allied positions in southeast Asia were largely of greater intensity and the Allied powers were not in anticipation of this. Furthermore, the Allied powers underestimated the military prowess of the Japanese and so did the other Axis forces in Europe, as it is reported that Adolf Hitler became greatly alarmed at how the Japanese easily defeated the great powers of the West particularly in Singapore, as he considered the Japanese the *untermenschen* to mean 'inferior people.' Japan's

treatment of Allied prisoners of war and captured civilians was brutal and this became a source of resolve to punish and defeat the Japanese in the war. They also tortured their fellow soldiers who they believed committed acts of dishonour such as surrendering to be captured rather than fighting to death. The Japanese were indoctrinated to believe that self-sacrifice when fighting for the nation was the highest sacrifice one could offer to the god-emperor, similar to the samurai traditions of old. Amongst the punishment given to 'dishonourable' Japanese soldiers other than torture or death was being assigned to duties in the prisoner-of-war (POW) camps. This contributed to the mass torture and deaths of Allied POWs as these Japanese soldiers in POW camps were themselves mistreated by their superiors and they hated themselves for being assigned duties in the POW camps and thus unleashed their anger on the captured Allied POWs. Contributing to the torture and killing of Allied POW was anti-Western sentiments stemming from previous racial humiliation or racial downgrading of Japanese people by Westerners who could not view them as equals, simply because they were Japanese and not 'white' Westerners. The Japanese also believed that they were a pure race and Westerners were of mixed races and thus impure and deserved no respect. Another contributing factor was sadism being encouraged right from the top military elite. There was a sadistic belief that war provided an opportunity to prove one's manliness by committing atrocities like torture, murder, rape etc., and this is a universal phenomenon, and the Japanese were not any different. The Japanese leadership encouraged this in a belief that it hardened the mental prowess of their troops to face the harsh realities of war (Henshall, 2004 pp.125-129; The Advertiser, 1942).

Overconfidence of the Japanese and Ensuing Setbacks

The successes that Japan enjoyed over the Allied powers in the early stages of the Pacific War came with detrimental consequences for the nation that would contribute to their ultimate defeat in the war. They began to think of themselves as invincible because of the quick victories in successions, and this clouded their judgement and ability to make effective battlefield decisions. Their practice of brutality on Allied POWs strengthened the Allied fighting spirit and resolve to defeat Japan and end the war on the Allied Powers' terms. The Japanese sense of invincibility was shuttered in the April 18th, 1942 **Doolittle Raid** that saw the aerial bombardment of Tokyo by carrier-launched B-25 American bomber aircraft under the leadership of U.S Colonel **James Doolittle**, which was a sneaky attack similar to the 1941 Pearl Harbour attack, catching the Japanese off-guard. The Japanese suffered an additional humiliation from the fact that none of the American B-25 bombers were shot down by anti-aircraft fire. The Doolittle Raid marked the first retaliatory strike by the U.S on mainland Japan, as a punitive measure for the attacks on Pearl Harbour. The raid's goal of souring doubt amongst the Japanese on their defensive capabilities and weakening their morale was met.

Japanese morale was further diminished in the **Battle of the Coral Sea** from 7th to 8th of May 1942, whose outcome prevented the Japanese capture of Port Moresby in New Guinea. The Japanese lost an aircraft carrier and another suffered heavy damage with the Americans suffering more damages, The battle resulted in the first time Japanese advances were stopped in the Pacific. Matters became worse for the Japanese following the **Battle of Midway** which took place from 4th to 6th June 1942. The Battle proved to be a decisive turning point in favour of the U.S and its allies. The Japanese had planned to take control of the island of Midway, which was just 1,500 kilometres to the West of Hawaii and unfortunately for them, Allied intelligence intercepted their plans and stopped them from accomplishing this goal in a battle that was detrimental to the Japanese war efforts with the loss of 4 more aircraft carriers, one heavy cruiser and more than 2,000 crewmen. Things began going the unexpected ways for the Japanese beginning from the Pacific theatre of war, despite the number of victories and territorial gains they made on mainland Asia, as their fortunes began to run out. They were

compelled to scale back ambitions of territorial expansion in places such as New Caledonia, Fiji, Samoa, Australia and New Zealand. They were compelled to pull out of New Guinea and Guadalcanal by early 1943, after losing 25,000 men in Guadalcanal alone in contrast to the lower casualty rates of the American who lost about 1,500 men only (Henshall, 2004 pp.129-130).

Japan's War Struggles and Desperation

Japan's resources began to dimmish in 1943. They could not directly control their colonial territories they acquired in East Asia and thus they opted for indirect control through 'puppet' governments in occupied countries such as the Philippines and Burma (today's Myanmar). The Japanese sought to keep the population under their occupation united while protecting their interests in the occupied nations. They utilized their propaganda machinery to label themselves as liberals of Asia who sought to stamp out Western imperialism. And their propaganda efforts came with some success as the 'puppet' rulers of Manchuria, China, Thailand, Burma, the Philippines and 'Free India' proclaimed the Great Asia Declaration on 6th November 1943 in Tokyo, Japan. This declaration criticized Western imperialism and promoted cooperation amongst Asian states. The populations in these occupied states at first were welcoming to the Japanese because they believed they were liberators but as the occupation carried on, the harsh realities of a cruel Japanese occupation began to take shape, as the Japanese depleted the food and other resources meant for the local population, who were also dragged into forced labour and deportation to Japan. Because Japan's resources were also diminishing, the local Japanese populations were subjected to restrictions on the limited resources and harsh labour laws were imposed on them in Japan. From September 1943, all women below the age of 25 and were unmarried were forced to offer their labour in agricultural and industrial production. Food, a basic commodity, became one of the scarce resources as calorie intake fell by almost 50% from the standard intake levels. In 1944, Japan made attempts at boosting its industrial production of military goods to serve the war efforts against the Allied powers in an act of desperation. They produced 28,000 aircraft in the same year, an improvement in comparison to just 5,000 in 1941. Between 1941 and 1944, they produced 58,882 aircraft in comparison to the British who produced 96,400 while the U.S 261,826 Japanese aircraft proved to be more

advanced technically but their production levels could not compete with that of the Allied powers (Henshall, 2004 p.130).

In as much as Japan scored some victories in mainland China, they could not succeed in destroying the U.S airbase in Szechwan which was a good take off point for American B-29 bomber aircraft in bombing targets in Japan which was done with increasing frequency and met with less resistance. The Japanese suffered a heavy blow when they lost the island of Saipan in July 1944 in the Marianas after intense battles with the Allied forces. Saipan island became a key strategic base of operations in bombing targets in Tokyo, Japan, and thus the Japanese were compelled to shift their priorities to defending their homeland (mainland Japan). General Tojo lost both of his offices of prime minister and Chief of Army Staff after showcasing his incompetence in the defence of Saipan. He had made assurances to his colleagues that Saipan would not be lost and his failure to keep his pledges led to his dismissal from his official positions in government. His official positions of prime minister and Chief of Army Staff were fille by **General Koiso Kuniaki**. The faith that was bestowed in General Tojo and the war efforts against the Allied powers largely diminished after the fall of Saipan to the Allies. The fact that Germany under the Nazis was also suffering serious setbacks in Europe further diminished the faith in a military victory over the Allies, and the notion of a peaceful settlement to end hostilities on the best terms possible was beginning to gain traction. The Japanese also in desperation, fell for a misguided and wishful belief that the Soviet Union would provide their military support to Japan after defeating Nazi Germany in Europe. In contrast to this desperate belief, the Soviet Union had promised in early 1943 to join the Allied powers in defeating Japan after they had fully dealt with Nazi Germany. The Japanese used these empty hopes as a source of motivation to continue fighting. They also clung on to the hope that if they could deal heavy damage to Allied forces advancing onto Japan, they could wear them down into a stalemate and compel them to accept a negotiated terms of peace to end the war and avoid loss of human lives. The magnitude of Japanese desperation was showcased in Japan's use of suicide pilots popularly known as ***kamikaze*** pilots and formally known as ***Shinpu Tokubetsu*** or 'Divine Wind' Special Attack Force. The word *kamikaze* translates to 'divine wind' in reference to the stormy winds that shielded Japan from 13th Century Mongol invasion, when the winds destroyed Mongol ships carrying Mongol troops and war equipment. These suicide missions targeted Allied ships in battle,

and involved the use of both ordinary aircraft and specially-crafted 'suicide-planes' that were mostly flying bombs fitted with wings and steered by a suicide pilot towards an intended target. The Japanese first employed these suicide tactics in the **Battle of Leyte** in the Philippines on 25th October 1945, 5 days after General McArthur landed at Leyte to fulfill his promise of returning to the Philippines. The Battle of Leyte Gulf became the biggest naval battle recorded in human history, running 3 days from 23rd to 26th October 1944. Its outcome was in the favour of the Allied Powers as it marked the effective destruction of the Japanese Navy, and for the scattered Japanese troops over the islands of the gulf, they gradually lost control over these islands and remained in some parts of the islands until the end of the war and even after the war ended, in some cases. The Allied Powers captured Corregidor by February 1945 and did the same for Manila by mid-March (Henshall, 2004 pp.131-132).

Image: Gen. Douglas MacArthur wades ashore during initial landings at Leyte, Philippine Islands. By U.S. Army Signal Corps officer Gaetano Faillace [1] - This tag does not indicate the copyright status of the attached work. Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3289265

Ensign-Kiyoshi- Ogawa, Japanese Kamikaze Pilot one the two who died upon smashing USS Bunker. The photograph titled "Kiyoshi Ogawa, Japanese Kamikaze Pilot" is sourced from Wikimedia Commons and is in the public domain in both Japan and the United States. You can view the photo here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ensign_Kiyoshi_Ogawa_hit_Bunker_Hill_(new).png

The Path to Defeat and Surrender of Japan

The British captured Rangoon in May 1945 from the Japanese after the capture of Mandalay in March of the same year. When the Allies uncovered the horrors of Japanese brutal slave labour in the construction of the Burma Railway, they felt more encouraged to double-down on their punitive military measures against the Japanese. The railway construction project resulted in the deaths of around 60,000 workers which included local labourers and 15,000 POWs from Britain and Australia. The Allied forces stepped up their bombing attacks on targets in Japan in early 1945 and this was enabled by the capture of Iwo Jima (part of the Bonin/Ogasawara group of islands) in early March 1945. Iwo Jima was strategically significant as it was a midway base for Allied aircraft between Saipan and mainland Japan when conducting their bombing raids which the Japanese found difficult to counter. Tokyo suffered the biggest of the attacks on 10th March 1945 which almost ended in 100,000 deaths. Cities like Kyoto and Nara were spared by the Allied Powers because of their cultural significance, but most major cities were destroyed heavily. These raids rendered homeless as many Japanese people as 13 million by the end of May 1945. The Allied forces moved to commence the invasion of mainland Japan, beginning with Okinawa Island on 1st April 1945. This compelled Prime Minister Koiso to resign and his official position was taken by Admiral **Suzuki Kantaro**. To the delight of the Allied Powers, Nazi Germany was finally defeated on 8th May 1945 and thus the Allied Powers found an opportunity to focus their war efforts on Japan. The Allied Powers celebrated another victory with the capture of Okinawa on 21st June 1945, in a battle that ended with the deaths of 110,000 Japanese troops and about 150,000 civilians while the U.S lost 13, 000 soldiers and 40,000 wounded or injured, contributing the largest American casualty figures in all of World War Two. Suicide missions were utilized by both the Japanese military and civilians indoctrinated to believe that they were facing inhuman American monsters in the Battle for Okinawa. This involved around 2,000 *kamikaze* pilots and huge numbers of panicking indoctrinated civilians. Defeat was now squarely at the doorsteps of Japan and thus was inevitable, as the Japanese had realized in their desperate efforts to defend the homeland. The military elite, especially in the Army, were engulfed in a

mood of fatalism and ordered the military to fight to the last man and surrender would be a great dishonour of the Japanese who had paid the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of the homeland. Admiral Suzuki however, had lost hope in the continuity with the war, as he was convinced that they had lost the war. Following the death of the U.S President Franklin Roosevelt in April 1945, **Harry S. Truman** became U.S President and on 17th July, President Truman had a meeting with Soviet Union's **Joseph Stalin** and British Prime Minister **Winston Churchill** at **Potsdam**, Germany over a period of two weeks, as they discussed the prevailing situation in the war. Chinese leader **Chiang Kai-shek** was invited to take part remotely via telephone. In the same month, the U.S conducted a successful test of the atomic bomb and before the results were issued to President Truman, he waited till they were ready and issued a statement to Japan, demanding an unconditional surrender or Japan would be subjected to a quick and utter destruction. This statement is remembered as the **26th July 1945 Potsdam Declaration**, which was also endorsed by the Soviets. Other details in the Declaration included post-war intentions of the Allied Powers in reforming Japan through an occupation by the Allied forces, establishing democracy, and the redrawing of Japan's sovereign borders as they were at the start of the Meiji Period. The Declaration however was silent on the emperor. Japan rejected this Declaration and the Allied Powers also grew weary of possible greater casualties if the ground invasion of Japan continued in what was termed **Operation Olympic**. The Allied Powers most likely also wanted to bring a quick end to the war to prevent the Soviet Union from making significant territorial gains in Japan once they declared war on Japan. And with the newly acquired **atomic bomb**, the Allied command were serious about using it on a real target in Japan, possibly to impress or show it off to the Soviets and also, they feared Japan may have already developed an atomic bomb, and thus a pre-emptive strike was necessary in eliminating the threat. This atomic technology was the vital key in bringing the war to a quick end and shun all the fears that came with prolonging of the war, and the final decision was made to use it on targets in Japan. The U.S forces dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 6th August 1945, marking the first use of such a weapon in human history and resulting in about 90,000 deaths instantly or shortly afterwards. Other deaths occurred post-war over the years from the impacts of radioactive radiation on human health. The city suffered heavy damage with 80% of its buildings destroyed.

Image: Aftermath of Hiroshima Atomic Bombing, August 1945. By U.S. Navy Public Affairs Resources Website - http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/images/historical/hiroshima.jpg , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=91928

Image: Hiroshima in October 1945, two months after the bombing. Author: US government, post-work: User:W.wolny . Public Domain, Find the image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AtomicEffects-Hiroshima.jpg

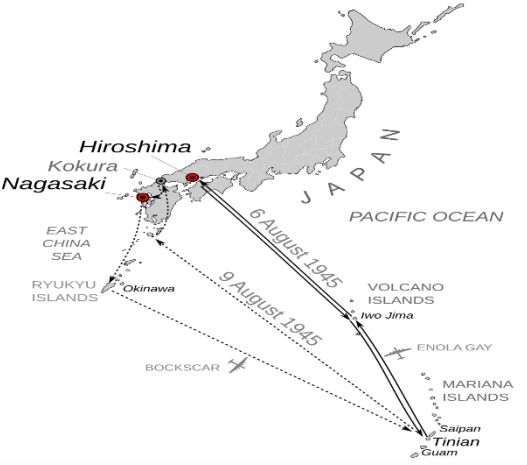


Image: The mission runs of 6 and 9 August, with Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Kokura (the original target for 9 August) displayed. By Mr.98 - Own work, Based on File:Japan_large_full.svg and this Department of Energy map. archive copy at the Wayback Machine, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11131711

The Japanese failed to inform the Allied Powers if they were willing to surrender or not and thus, the Allied Powers dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki on 9th August 1945 leading to 50,000 deaths instantly or shortly afterwards, and over the years later, more than 30,000 died.

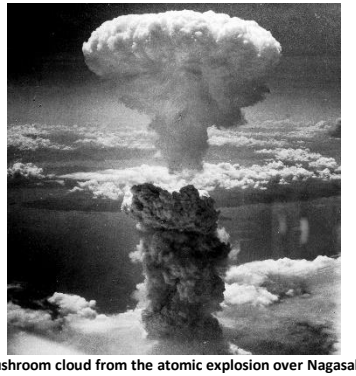


Image: The mushroom cloud from the atomic explosion over Nagasaki at 11:02 am, August 9, 1945. By James Charles - U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=56719

On 8th August 1945, the Soviets declared war on Japan and launched an attack on Japanese-occupied Manchuria Province of China, dealing a huge blow to Japan. Japan had been pushed to the brink of surrender and to escape total destruction by the Allied Powers, they decided there was no other solution but to be pragmatic enough to accept

a surrender on the terms outlined in the Potsdam Declaration in a top-level meeting that they held on the evening of 9th August 1945. There was disagreement amongst the top leaders of Japan as some wanted to carry on fighting in the hopes that the Allied powers would revise the terms of surrender to Japan's benefit, others opted for a suicidal total destruction of Japan (probably in line with the samurai tradition and spirit of *seppuku* to avoid defeat or capture in battle) than to surrender and others were prepared for a total surrender. The emperor- Hirohito came out to say he was ready to a surrender on the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, as long as the imperial institution was not dismantled. This information was relayed to the U.S leadership via envoys from Switzerland and Sweden. The U.S leadership did not give an assured response to the emperor but allowed him to rule under the authority of the Supreme Commander of the Allied forces and under the will of the Japanese people. The Japanese leadership held an additional meeting on 14th August 1945 on how to respond to the Americans. Admiral Suzuki requested the emperor- Hirohito to cast a decisive vote that called for Japan to surrender to the Allied Powers on the terms set out by the Allied Powers. This decision to surrender was criticized by some and some low-ranking military officers made a failed attempt at stopping the emperor from recording his 'surrender speech' that was to be broadcast on radio to the entire nation on the following day. Some 500 military officers then committed suicide instead of defying the emperor, including top military brass like Vice-Admiral Onishi Takijiro who came up with the idea of suicided pilots and opted for a prolonged defense of the homeland to force a revision of the terms of surrender out forward by the Allied Powers. The 15th August 1945 saw the announcement of Japan's surrender to the Allied Powers in a recorded broadcast speech of the emperor over the radio. This was the first time the emperor broadcast a message to his people over the radio and most of his people heard his voice for the first time ever. His announcement avoided the use of language and words of 'surrender' and 'defeat' and instead framed the surrender and defeat of Japan as 'a war situation that was not in favour of Japan and that Japan was compelled to end hostilities for the salvation of mankind from the threat of destruction emanating from the West and the end of hostilities did not mean Japan was defeated.' After the broadcast, it was finally obvious that Japan had surrendered and was finally defeated in the war. Two weeks later, the Japanese formally signed the **Instrument of Surrender** aboard the American navy ship- the **USS Missouri**, docked in Tokyo Bay. This came after the emperor issued an edict to allow for

the formal signing of the Instrument of Surrender and demanding that all Japanese to honour the edict. The formal signing of the Instrument of Surrender on the 2nd of September of 1945, formally brought the war to an end, after 14 years of Japanese militarism and expansionism in Asia, beginning with the 1931 Manchurian Incident and over this period of time suffered around 3 million military casualties and over half a million civilian casualties (Henshall, 2004 pp.132 – 135).

Image – Above, General Douglas McArthur signs a peace treaty with the Japanese to formalize their surrender aboard US Navy ship-USS Missouri. The photograph titled "General Douglas MacArthur signing the Japanese surrender aboard the USS Missouri, 2 September 1945" is sourced from Wikimedia Commons. This image is in the public domain as it is a work of the U.S. federal government. View the photo here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Douglas_MacArthur_signs_formal_surrender.jpg

In conclusion, the fact that Japan was defeated in World War Two signified the end of its imperial dreams. Japan's defeat was not just through the use of the atomic bomb, but also in a conventional warfare perspective. In his assessment of the defeat, Emperor Hirohito believed that Japan's loss was due to the Japanese emphasis on a strong fighting spirit rather than robust technology that would put them at a better position against the West. The defeat of Japan culminated into the first

occupation of the country by foreign powers in the nation's history, under American leadership. This occupation set the stage for post-war reconstruction and transformation of Japan into the modern and democratic superpower that it is today. It is also important to note the prediction of the Meiji-era poet – Soseki, in his analogy of Meiji Japan's modernization and Westernization efforts being compared to a frog that attempted to grow to the size of a cow and eventually burst. This is an accurate prediction as Meiji Japan's modernization and Westernization efforts propelled Japan to the world stage as an industrialized major world power. This industrialization grew the nation's military capabilities tremendously, and all that military might in the context of growing Japanese anti-Western sentiments in the 1930s, created temptations of training their newly acquired military capabilities on surrounding Asian nations, primarily to acquire their resources in preparation for a war with the West over the control of colonial territories in Asia. Possibly, the Japanese may also have desired to showcase their military prowess to the West through quick advances in conquering the surrounding Asian nations, and to assert their equality to or superiority over the Western civilization and race, in a demand to be taken seriously as major world power. Japan had indeed become a major world power but their imperialist dreams in Asia made them gobble too much than they could swallow and the Meiji poet – Soseki was right, the frog inflated itself and eventually burst open (Henshall, 2004 p.135).

FATE OF POST-WAR JAPAN

American Occupation and Transformation of Japan (1945-1947)

After Japan's surrender to the Allies in World War Two, the American occupation of Japan commenced in late August 1945, but officially from 2nd September 1945. The goal of the occupation of Japan was to reform Japan into a **pacifist** (peace-loving) and democratic state; and also, to rebuild the country after heavy damages and losses in the war. The Japanese anticipated retaliation in harsh ways from the Americans during the occupation, but the surrender-acceptance speech by U.S General Douglas McArthur who was appointed the **Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP)** in the occupation and reformation of Japan. He encouraged the Japanese to forget the bitterness of the war and focus on a peaceful and dignified nation-building. He expressed confidence in the Japanese people's resilience and this enabled cooperation between the Occupation authorities and the local populace. In as much as the Allied Occupation force generally treated the local population with fairness and kindness, there were isolated cases of misconduct. Because of this, the Japanese local population expressed a high degree of cooperation with the Allied Occupation forces, necessitating the reduction of Allied Occupation troops from 500,000 to 150,000 personnel. Among the immediate challenges for the Allied Occupation forces included rising demands for food and shelter for the local population and addressing their emotional and psychological breakdown from the defeat in World War Two. The Japanese were extensively indoctrinated to believe in divine superiority and invincibility and thus they became highly disillusioned, disillusionment that spread to the minds of their political and military leaders and resulting into the feelings of betrayal and anger amongst the locals. Criticism did not fall short of reaching the emperor – Hirohito, who was highly respected as a divine figure but the imperial institution still retained some respect. General Douglas McArthur somehow gained respect and admiration of the local population. He came out as a strong commanding figure, a kin to historical leaders of Japan. He blended authoritarianism and democratic ideals in his leadership in a country that respects and admires strong leaders. He earned the nickname "new shogun" because he was revered as a god-like figure who was to address their post-war challenges. The

occupation itself was a collective Allied effort, at least in theory, but practically on the ground, it became an American operation led by dominant figures including General McArthur. The Allies came up with councils such as the Far Eastern Commission and the Allied Council in Tokyo with a goal of providing guidance and oversight on the occupation of Japan. McArthur perceived these councils as rather less useful or less consequential and merely served as forums for debate over policies and issues in the occupation of Japan. He remained committed to a path of rebuilding Japan along his vision and that of the leadership in Washington DC of what post-war Japan ought to be (Henshall, 2004 pp.139-140).

McArthur and the leadership in Washington DC had a common goal in Japan, and that was to dismantle Japan's militaristic and totalitarian systems and replacing them with a democratic one. As early as 1942, leaders in Washington DC had began drawing a plan on how they would transform Japan after the war, drawing influence from the New Deal ideas. The New Deal was a series of economic programs and reforms by U.S President Franklin D. Roosevelt intended to address the challenges of the Great Depression of the 1930s. The New Deal advocated for progressive economic change through government intervention in the economy in promoting social welfare, economic recovery and reforms to avert any economic crises in the future. The American politicians, policy makers, advisers and intellectuals who threw support to Roosevelt's New Deal ideas became known as the **New Dealers**, and they included figures such as **Hugh Borton**, who was a State Department official and an expert who had vast knowledge of Japan who had influence in the democratization and the decentralization plans for Japan but underrecognized for his roles in rebuilding the war-torn nation.

The policies intended to transform post-war Japan by the Allied Occupation forces were enshrined in a document called the **Basic Initial Post Surrender Directive**, sometimes referred to as the **JCS 1380/15**, with JCS standing for Joint Chiefs of Staff. This document outlined reforms aimed at creating an American-style democracy in Japan. It called for the abolishment of the Japanese police and military, upheld universal suffrage (voting rights, including women's right to vote), guaranteeing civil liberties such as freedom of speech, assembly and religion. It also called for the take down of the *zaibatsu* – conglomerates or corporations of different industrial enterprises under common

ownership and run as a unified organization. The directive called for the creation of labour unions to empower workers, and the retention of the emperor as a symbolic or ceremonial figurehead. The directive called for the purging by dismissal from office any individuals in government, military and business sector who made contributions to Japanese war efforts against the Allied forces. McArthur's leadership style went hand-in-hand with the directives and he believed his role in transforming post-war Japan was historic as he compared his roles to great historic leaders like Alexander the Great and Napoleon as he put emphasis on the scope of responsibility bestowed upon him to rebuild a war-torn nation. He drafted reforms targeting the destruction of Japan's military offensive capabilities and ensuring the modernization of Japan's governance, economy and society. He believed that Japan could compromise between the very best of its traditions with modern democratic principles to establish a more stable and progressive nation (Henshall, 2004 p.141).

Amongst the initial objectives of the Allied Occupation force was the demilitarization of Japan, which saw the disbanding of the Japanese Army and Navy within months of the Occupation. Territories on the Asian continent and Pacific regions that fell to Japanese control were given back their sovereignties and freed from Japanese military control and occupation, and thus reversing the territorial expansionism of Japan to the pre-1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War borders. There was the repatriation of about 3 million Japanese military personnel and also roughly 3 million civilians from the Japanese-occupied territories in Asia and the Pacific back to mainland Japan. Japan was compelled by the directives to pay indemnity (war reparations) to nations that fell victim to Japanese aggressive militarism and expansionism during the Second World War. Some ships of the Japanese Navy were confiscated and awarded to the Allies; and some apparently were destroyed, including research technology such as Japan's nuclear particle accelerators, whose destruction was a priority for the Allied leadership and was carried out against the wishes of General MacArthur. The Allied Occupation forces carried out nationwide interrogations or screening of some 700,000 individuals and of this, about 200,000 were found to be advocates for militant nationalism and aggression (sympathetic to Japan's Word War Two war efforts and aims) and were purged by dismissal from their various offices, despite General McArthur's judgment. One key measure in demilitarizing Japan was the insertion of **Article IX** (the 'no war' clause) in the new post-war Japanese

Constitution, personally by General McArthur. This pacificist clause was drafted in 1946 by SCAP staff and it forbade Japan from maintaining a military force (army, air force and navy) or using military force to resolve disputes in international relations. The full Article IX reads as shown below:

"Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounced war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized."

The demilitarization process extended to the prosecution and punishment of Japanese war criminals. **The Military Tribunal for The Far East**, consisting of representatives from all the 11 World War Two victor nations, presided over the Tokyo War Crimes Trial between May 1946 and November 1948. 25 men were put on trial for major (Class A) crimes which involved plotting the war, directing the implementation of the aggressive war efforts against the Allied nations. All the 25 put on trial were found guilty of the charges levelled against them in varying degrees. Senior figures in the military like General Tojo and senior civilian government leaders like former Prime Minister Hirota were given death sentences in punishment for the crimes and later hanged to death. Other trials held in other states like Singapore, Philippines and British Hong Kong ended in more than 5000 Japanese people being convicted of more specific war crimes (Class B and C crimes) which include subjecting prisoners of war to gross cruelty and 900 of them sentenced to death (Henshall, 2004 pp. 142 -143).

In the eyes of both the locals in Japan and people of the outside world, there was a speculation that those who were prosecuted for war crimes were scapegoats and those who ought to be more accountable for Japan's World War Two aggression and war crimes were spared and never to face judgment of the tribunal. Examples include the scientific research and development staff of Japan's **Unit 731**, who conducted a number of chemical and biowarfare experiments with civilians and prisoners of war used as specimen. The allegations are that the U.S government offered immunity and from prosecution to the staff of Unit

731 in exchange for the data from the inhuman experiments of the unit, as American laws and ethical principles prohibited the conducting of such experiments. Another example is the immunity granted to high profile Japanese individuals, who orchestrated wide-scale looting of wealth by Japanese forces in Japanese-occupied territories of Asia in World War Two, such as members of the imperial family. The American authorities allegedly hushed up this operation, codenamed **Golden Lily**, by giving immunity to the high-profile Japanese in exchange for shares of the loot. Lastly, the greatest exemption from criminal prosecution was the emperor- Hirohito. The public opinion in the Allied states was that Japan's emperor – Hirohito was to be put on trial for Japan's crime of international aggression alongside other perpetrators and be punished for whatever roles he had in the crimes. Both the U.S leadership in Washington D.C and General McArthur, shared the opinion that the emperor ought to be granted immunity from prosecution and ought to be retained as a unifying figure in maintaining national stability and averting the rise of communism in Japan. The American specialists on Japan however were ignorant of Japanese people's tradition in having the exercise of power being legitimized by a higher authority like the emperor. It was the emperor that was the source of morale and pride for the Japanese people. Many people in Allied governments felt less empathy for the emperor and wished he was done away with either through trial and execution or by abdication (stepping down) to be replaced by a newly crowned emperor, to open the chapters of a new era of Japanese history. Many locals of Japan also shared the opinion that the emperor ought to abdicate. Despite these opinions, Emperor Hirohito remained in power. His justifications were based on the argument that he was not made aware of the war's atrocities committed by Japan's military forces and/or he had no significant participation in the war efforts and his own military generals misinformed him or misled him. He asserted that emperors, especially the divine emperors, should not just abdicate from their positions. He asserted that he was obliged by duty to remain power and assist in the reconstruction of Japan. General McArthur was central to the sparing of the emperor from criminal prosecution. The two had a private meeting in September 1945 and McArthur reportedly felt impressed by him, and thus the strengthening of a personal affinity between them as they both strongly detested of communism. McArthur believed the emperor was key in averting anarchy and the rise of communism. In his personal memoirs, General MacArthur absolved Hirohito of any crimes he was accused of with regards to Japan's war against the Allied nations. He

wrote a memorandum to the U.S Joint Chiefs of Staff in January demanding immunity for and the retention of Emperor Hirohito, threatening dire consequences for the Occupation plans if his wishes were not granted. McArthur's wishes were eventually granted, thus he successfully granted immunity from prosecution to the emperor and any death sentence that could have been issued otherwise. He also saved him from a forced abdication; thus, he remained in power. Many who opposed the emperor's continuity were not happy with McArthur's decisions to spare him. This resulted in distrust amongst Asian nations that suffered from Japanese aggression in World War Two, and those Japanese people who were progressive-minded and wished Japan to continue without the emperor. In as much as Hirohito retained his role as emperor, he had to adjust to the new realities and changes in his constitutional roles from being a descendant of the divine beings with supreme authority over the people to being a symbolic and ceremonial figurehead. He had to win the affection, support, acceptance and respect for the people rather than demand for it as a descendant of the divine beings. Both McArthur and the U.S policy makers in Washington shared the belief that emperor's status as a god-emperor was dangerous and was to be rebranded as a mere mortal to avert the comeback of imperial indoctrination as seen in the previous *Imperial Rescript on Education* of the Meiji era and the *Kokutai no Hongi.* This reversal of the emperor's status was aimed at averting the return of militarism through indoctrination in Japan. A similar safety measure was the banning of 'State-Shinto' and the restoration of Shinto as a mere religion than the expression of patriotism and loyalty to the imperial state. The national duty of every Japanese citizen to heed to a god-emperor was written off. This became known as the **Shinto Directive** and was issued by SCAP staff (Henshall, 2004 pp.143-145).

The imperial rescript also known as the *Declaration of Humanity (Ningen Sengen)* was also issued by the SCAP staff. It was broadcast by emperor Hirohito himself and the official word of the rescript was that it was drafted by the emperor himself, not the Western occupiers. He added modifications to the rescript before broadcasting to suit his preferences and the original rescript was designed to compel him in renouncing his divine origins. He added a restatement of the Meiji *Charter Oath* of 1868 to emphasize the continuity of the monarch's influence as democracy became dominant increasingly, since the Meiji Restoration. The final rescript included a section that forced the emperor to renounce his divine origins (humanization of the emperor),

as well as the perceived superiority of the Japanese race above other races, and Japan's destiny of global domination all together. McArthur and the leadership in Washington DC were delighted following the emperor's cooperation in broadcasting the final rescript. Hirohito was reduced from an absolute monarch to a symbolic, ceremonial and constitutional monarch. He became a symbol of the state and unity of the people from whose will he sourced sovereign power, rather than an authoritative figure with absolute power and ruled from his own will. The highest achievement of the Allied Occupation forces was the drafting and the promulgation for a new Japanese constitution, which to the present day stands as a testament for the democratization of Japan. The drafting was done rather by a few civilians, young and inexperienced staff of the SCAP who had little to no knowledge of Japan. Their guiding document was sent from Washington DC and numbered SWNCC 228. McArthur was not confident in having the local Japanese to participate in the drafting of the new constitution and he put pressure on the young inexperienced SCAP staff to finish up the draft fast enough which they did in less than a week. Hugh Borton of the State Department was the chief author of the guiding document that was used to draft the new post-war constitution of Japan, and the inexperience of the SCAP staff meant his suggestions in the guiding document were seen as the absolute opinions, and therefore the staff tended to believe he was absolutely right. The local Japanese were informally allowed to participate in the drafting and their informal input into the draft was exaggerated by the SCAP staff. Officially, the word was that the Japanese themselves were the key drafters of the constitution, but most people knew the Westerners were nearly or absolutely totally behind the drafting. The drafting of Japan's post-war constitution by Westerners was challenged by some Japanese leaders such as **Nakasone Yasuhiro**, Japan's prime minister in the 1980s. He accepted largely the content of the constitution but his criticism was centered in the fact that Japanese people had negligible opportunities or roles in drafting a constitution for their own country, stressing the idea that true democracy is not imposed by outsiders but should originate from within the state itself (Henshall, 2004 pp.145-146).

The new constitution for post-war Japan that was drafted fully with women's rights included was promulgated in November 1946 and took effect in May 1947. It had adopted a number of Western standards and

policies that were already put in place by the Allied Occupation forces. The new constitution emphasized the following:

- The emperor was to be a symbol of the people
- The people owned all sovereign powers
- Japan was to renounce war in international relations, and to avoid having its own military forces
- There was to be equality for all sexes
- The guarantee of human rights and liberties in general – right to life, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, thought, belief, religion and expression
- Voting rights for all adult above 20 years of age
- Separation of the church from the state
- Guarantee of labour rights
- A free and equal education
- The abolishing of peerage
- The creation of an independent judiciary
- The provision for the constitution to be revised by two-thirds majority vote in both houses of parliament and the majority vote in a referendum.

(Henshall, 2004 pp.146-147).

One paradox created by the SCAP staff in the democratization of Japan was the hypocrisy in numerous acts of censorship, as they also at the same time promoted freedom of speech and expression. In as much as the SCAP allowed the inclusion of human freedoms, expressions and dignity, in books and films, like enlightened women and kissing in love scenes, it enforced the banning of some books and films. An example of a book that was banned was *Tobacco Road* by Erskine Caldwell because it exposed the darker side of the American society. All films which the SCAP believed were promoting feudalism and militarism such as samurai films were banned. The SCAP also banned any reference that connected them to any government reforms. The SCAP did not spare school text books from censorship because General McArthur knew they were an effective took of indoctrination. He gave an order for the revision of all school text books to be done to meet democratic standards. Indigenous Japanese text books such as *Kokutai no Hongi* were replaced by American books such as *History of the War* which was

put together by the SCAP staff. Undesirable individuals were purged from educational offices in October 1945. The SCAP introduced the American education system the 6-3-3-4 education system that saw learners go through 6 years of elementary (primary) school, 3 years of junior high school, three years of senior high school and 4 years of tertiary education. Power was granted to regional authorities to select their own school board officials through organized elections to minimize the roles of the central government in education. The universities' availability were increased and modelled after American universities to eliminate the pre-war elitism in Japan's society. The Allied Occupation also saw the introduction of economic reforms. This includes a land reform bill of 1946 that granted farmers the right to own as much land as they could farm which was about 3 hectares, and also allowing them to use a small piece of land in their residential villages for rent purposes. The state controlled the rents and enforced the rights of tenants. The state took up and redistributed farmland from absentee landlords to tenant farmers thus lowering the tenancy rates from 50% to 10%. One more economic reform in post-war Japan was the dismantling of the *zaibatsu* which was a group of industrial enterprises run as a single entity (corporations). Examples of the *zaibatsu* included the Big Four – Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo and Yasuda; and there were six other minor ones. These ten enterprises were targeted with reforms which included dissolving of companies, barring *zaibatsu* family members from working for their own enterprises, cancelling war-time government debts to the *zaibatsu*, elimination of excessive war profits and the redistribution of their stocks. Labour laws were introduced between 1945 and 1947, that saw the limiting of rights of employees to strike, to safeguard public welfare and these new laws and the rights and freedoms they provided skyrocketed the labour union memberships as measured from pre-war times to post-war times. In as much as the reconstruction of post-war Japan came with challenges, the Allied Occupation forces were successful in implementing their goals of demilitarization and democratization. Most of the reforms planned by the leadership in Washington DC and McArthur were in place by 1947. The transformation and reconstruction of post-war Japan came with some resistance and controversy but it proved to be a pivotal turning point in Japanese history as it transformed the nation to a peace-loving democracy thus laying the groundwork for an outstanding post-war recovery (Henshall, 2004 pp.148-150).

Cold War Realities Reshape the Goals and Strategies of the Occupation

The late 1940s was a critical turning point for the Allied Occupation of Japan, as both domestic and global issues began to exert influence on the goals and strategies of the Occupation. The Allied Occupation under General McArthur was credited with successful democratic reforms which included universal suffrage (right to vote) for women, establishment of civil liberties- freedom of speech, religion, assembly etc., and the dismantling of Japan's military forces to avert future Japanese aggression. As the Allied Occupation force carried on with these reforms, criticism emerged from various opponents with concerns of their place and intensity. Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru's remarks was that there was an 'excess of democracy' and thus highlighting the fears on untamed democracy leading to national instability and these sentiments found favour with the local Japanese population. Even in the United States, there emerged criticism of the Allied Occupation of Japan and the policies they imposed there. A section of Americans who opposed the New Deal-inspired reforms, criticized the Allied Occupation force for prioritizing democratization of Japan rather than its economic recovery. These criticisms arose at a time when Cold War tensions were emerging between communist Eastern and liberal and capitalist Western powers. The **Cold War** (1945-1991) was visibly marked by the division of Korea into North and South Korea; Germany into East and West Germany, the civil war in China between Mao Zedong's Communist forces and Chiang Kai Shek's Capitalist forces, with the Communists enjoying dominance and emerging victorious in the end, and finally the emergence of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In the context of all these emerging issues, Japan earned its place as an important and strategic defence or shield against communism (Henshall, 2004 pp.150-151).

Pragmatism demanded that power was needed to defend the Free Capitalist World, and military power especially with regards to nuclear weapons, was a huge risk, and this called for the exercise of economic power to minimize military confrontations with the Communist world. By 1947, Japan was short of being an economic power as its industrial production was still below 50% of pre-war levels and inflation was on the rise at over 200% annually. The situation needed to be resolved and McArthur's competence in doing so was in doubt. The U.S government

was compelled to reassess its occupation strategies and policies and sent State Department official George Kennan to gather the facts of the situation in Japan 1948. Kenan was a key leading figure in the advocacy for containment policies against communism. He concluded in his report that the Occupation reforms by the SCAP laid the groundwork for a potential communist takeover of Japan. He urged the SCAP should relax its control of the Japanese government and that the Allied Occupation should emphasize the economic recovery of Japan rather than its democratization. Similar views were aired by the U.S Under-Secretary of the Army **William Draper**, who was also an investment banker, who emphasized that Japan's economic recovery was key in deterring communist influence. These recommendations were adopted in 1948 when the U.S-led Allied Occupation force shifted its occupation policies from democratization to economic recovery. The SCAP paused its purges of business leaders which was aimed at taking down persons who financed or produced war material for the state against Allied forces in the ended war. The purging of the powerful *zaibatsu* (industrial conglomerates/corporations of Japan) was slowed down because they had an economic efficiency that ought to be preserved and utilized in Japan's economic recovery. The Allied Occupation force halted the payments of war indemnity to nations that were victims of Japanese aggression, and resources diverted to support the economic recovery of Japan. The indemnity was to be paid in terms of industrial machinery rather than money. Labour laws were revised to avert the disruption of industrial production. In 1948, a legislation was passed to deny workers in public operations the right to go on strikes and workers' organizations were given limited rights in taking direct political action. In his implementation of earlier reforms centred on democratization, McArthur took caution in implementing measures that would compromise Japan's economic foundation. The fact that he was slow to fully implement the purges on the family-owned *zaibatsu* and slow to fulfill payments of indemnity to victim nations, laid the groundwork for a smoother transition to the new economic recovery policy. The leadership in Washington DC felt McArthur needed an economic adviser and thus in 1949, the Truman Administration sent **Joseph Dodge**, a financial expert to be the official SCAP economic adviser in Japan. He remained in this position until the end of the Occupation. He introduced austerity measures that reduced inflation, brought stability to the exchange rate and balanced the national budget. In as much as his measures had some effectiveness, they came with setbacks in the form of economic hardships such as increasing unemployment and

bankruptcies, which again instigated public discontent (Henshall, 2004 pp.151-153).

One big blessing and boost for Japan's economic recovery was the outbreak of the Korean War in June of 1950. The war was initiated with a North Korean military invasion of South Korea and the United States-led **United Nations Command (UNC)** forces came in to defend South Korea from the North's aggression. The war proved a blessing and a boost for Japan's economic recovery in that the U.S relied on Japan's industries to procure military equipment and war material, thus injecting some US$2-4 billion, from 1950 to 1953 when the war ended in a stalemate.

Image: General Douglas MacArthur observes the naval shelling of Inchon, in the Korean War from USS *Mount McKinley*, 15 September 1950 with Brigadier General Courtney Whitney (left) and Major General Edward M. Almond (right). By Nutter (Army). Public Domain. Find image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IncheonLandingMcArthur.jpg

The income from military procurements to the U.S and UNC forces doubled Japan's disposable income (gross income of an individual minus taxes) and gave industries the capacity to improve on their production capabilities. These economic benefits of the Korean War for Japan allowed Japan to restore its pre-World War Two industrial output levels. Other than economic consequences for Japan, the Korean War came with both political and military consequences. With the deployment of American troops to South Korea from Japan as part of the UNC force, there was a security void that was filled when General McArthur authorized the creation of a National Police Reserve consisting of 75,000 men in July of 1950 to provide domestic security. To circumvent the Article IX of the post-war constitution, the police

reserve was renamed the National Safety Forces in 1952 and again renamed the Self-Defence Forces (*Jieitai*) in 1954, consisting of 165,000 personnel. The rearmament of Japan took effect and was followed by controversies and criticism, even though it was done cautiously, as this was prohibited by Article IX of the post-war constitution of Japan imposed by the Allied Occupation force. One significant political consequence of the Korean War was the dismissal of General MacArthur as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) in the occupation and reformation of post-war Japan, and also in commanding UNC forces in Korea. He was dismissed from this position by U.S President Harry S. Truman on 11th April 1951 and was given a hero's welcome when he came back home to the U.S. The dismissal resulted from a conflict or argument with President Truman over the most appropriate military strategy to be applied in the Korean War. McArthur disagreed heavily with Truman's 'limited warfare' policies that involved ordering General McArthur to avoid further military confrontation after capturing Seoul and Pyongyang to avoid taking military action on Communist Chinese troops moving across the border to reinforce North Korea's military efforts. McArthur felt Truman was making a huge mistake by replying to naked aggression with appeasement and accused him of lacking the determination to score full victory in the war. These criticisms from McArthur were directed straight at the leadership in Washington DC including President Truman, and because of this he was dismissed including from the U.S Army, though honourably discharged. McArthur's position was filled by **General Mathew Ridgway** who did not have the charisma and vision as was expressed by McArthur, and if anything was appointed to play caretaker roles. Ridgway did not enjoy as much popularity as McArthur did during his time in office as SCAP.

Ridgway's name is even barely remembered in history. He never took his time to meet Emperor Hirohito during his term as SCAP. The Japanese population in their minds had already imprinted the legacy of McArthur with the experience of the Occupation, as in, the Occupation in a way was meaningless without the presence of the great General Douglas McArthur and his dismissal became controversial and served as a powerful lesson in democracy that no individual regardless of his or her legacy or influence could put himself or herself above the authority of the top-most selected leadership. Another political consequence of the Korean War was that it catalysed the need for a peace treaty between Japan and the Allied Occupation force in order to formally end

the Occupation. The U.S wanted to relieve itself of the burden that was the perpetual administrative responsibilities in reforming and transforming Japan. There were already such plans for a peace treaty to end the Occupation as early as 1947, but it was the Korean War that propelled the drafting and implementation of such plans. Japan and 48 other nations sent representatives to San Francisco, California USA, for a peace Conference where they signed a peace treaty on the 8th of September 1951. Behind the drafting of the treaty were prominent figures such as Douglas McArthur and Secretary of State **John Foster Dulles**; and apparently, McArthur received no invitation to attend the conference.

As per the terms of the treaty, Japan had to make territorial concessions in Taiwan, Korea, Southern Sakhalin and Kurile Islands, of which the last two were awarded to the Soviet Union. This was followed by a dispute that still remains to this day concerning the Kurile Islands, as it is not clear which islands form part of the Kurile set of islands and which ones do not. The Ryukyu Islands indefinitely were placed in American trusteeship, to mean the islands were placed under American administration under an international agreement but the U.S did not have a permanent sovereignty over them. The islands were eventually given back formally to Japan in 1972. However, it still serves as a key location of American military bases, regardless of arising sentiments. Similarly, the Ogasawara/Bonin Islands in the Pacific Ocean 1,000 kilometres from Tokyo, were given back to Japan, though earlier in 1968. The treaty demanded that Japan pay war reparations (indemnity) to nations that became victims of its militarist and expansionist aggression. Japan agreed to this but stated this will be influenced by the status of its economy. Japan however, paid nothing much as indemnity despite the massive economic growth and success over the years that followed. The treaty mostly was in favour with Japan and came into effect on 28th April 1952, and therefore on this day the Allied Occupation of Japan formally came to an end, and thus full restoration of Japan's sovereignty was accomplished. Despite this accomplishment the U.S maintained a military presence in Japan to deter any possible future communist aggression. Many Japanese leaders favoured this American policy and thus Japan entered a security pact with the U.S that allowed the U.S to indefinitely station some of its military forces on Japanese sovereign soil, especially Okinawa Island. The security agreement benefited Japan obviously in terms of security and also economically as Japan had to spend less on its national defence

compared to most nations. From this point in time all the way to 2004, Japan's budget for national defense yearly was less than 1% of its Gross National Product (GNP), compared to most nations who spend about 6-7% of GNP on national defense in peacetime. The attitudes of the general public towards perpetual American military presence in Japan was rather negative, paving way for the rise of related social and political challenges. However, it came with positive economic benefits that no one dared to question and if anything, laid the groundwork for the rise of Japan as a contemporary economic superpower (Henshall, 2004 pp.153-156; Goldstein and Pevehouse, 2013 p.31).

In conclusion, the occupation of Japan proved to be a period of transformation of Japan and the Occupation reforms were pragmatically revised to address arising challenges. The Occupation saw the dismantling of militarism in Japan that contributed to the devastation of the East Asian and Pacific nations including the U.S. Finally, it successfully established democracy and related institutions in Japan and the laid the groundwork for the birth of Japan's economic prowess in the post-World War Two era.

THE END

GLOSSARY

Aristocracy: This is a social class comprising the most powerful, wealthy, or privileged members of society, often they hold political power and influence.

Bakufu/Shogunate: This was a military government system in feudal Japan, led by a shogun. The term "bakufu" is used to refer to the government, and the term "shogunate" is used to refer to the period during which a shogun held power. The two are occasionally used interchangeably to mean the same thing in many literature material and other sources of information.

Buddhism: A major religion with origins in India and teaches the path to enlightenment through practices such as meditation, ethical conduct, and wisdom. It earned its place as an influential religious and philosophical system in Japan.

Bushido: This was a code of honor and morals that was followed by the samurai, with focus on loyalty, courage, and personal honor.

Cold War: This was a period of geopolitical tension between the Soviet Union and the United States, la beginning from the late 1940s to the early 1990s, and it had consequences on Japan's political and economic policies.

Daimyo: These were powerful Japanese feudal lords who ruled over vast areas of land and had their own samurai warriors, significantly during the Edo period.

Diplomacy: This is the practice of managing international relations and negotiations between countries.

Disposable income: This refers to the amount of income remaining after paying taxes to the state.

Economic sanctions: Punitive measures imposed by one country (or group of countries) on another or others to shape or control its behavior, often related to trade or finance.

Emperor: The ceremonial and symbolic ruler of Japan, who holds a highly respected position but had limited political power, especially after the Meiji Restoration.

Empress: The female counterpart to the emperor, typically the wife of the reigning emperor. Also applies when it is a female who inherits the throne and all authority that comes with it. Her husband becomes the **emperor consort**.

Empress consort: This refers to the wife of the reigning emperor, a title historically granted to the official consort.

Geisha: These were traditional Japanese female entertainers skilled in performing various Japanese arts such as music, dance, and conversation, often associated with hospitality.

Haiku poetry: This is a form of Japanese poetry comprising three lines, with a syllable pattern of 5-7-5, and often captures a moment in nature or human experience.

Han: This refers to a territorial division or administrative unit governed by a daimyo during the feudal period of Japan.

Haniwa: These were terracotta figures that were used as funerary objects in Japan during the Kofun period. They were often placed on tombs or burial mounds.

Imperial court: This is the official household of the emperor, consisting of the emperor's family, advisers, and high-ranking officials, rich in great influence on the country's culture and politics.

Jomon: This refers to the earliest period of Japanese prehistory, marked by the development of distinctive pottery, stone tools, and early settlements, dating from around 14,000 BCE to 300 BCE. It also refers to the people who inhabited Japan during this period.

Kabuki: This is a traditional Japanese theatrical performance. It blends music, dance, and drama, and is widely known for its elaborate costumes and makeup.

Kami (gods): This refers to the deities or spirits in the Shinto religion. They are believed to inhabit natural objects, phenomena, and places.

Kendo: This is a modern Japanese martial art of fencing. It emphasizes discipline, respect, and the mastery of swordsmanship.

Kenjutsu: Th is a traditional Japanese art of swordsmanship and it involves techniques and training with a katana.

Koku: This was a unit of measurement traditionally used in Japan to quantify the amount of rice produced or the wealth of a domain, approximately equivalent to the amount of rice needed to feed one person for one year. It therefore was used to measure the size of land not in metric measurements but in terms of the rice the land could produce.

Military invasion: This refers to the act of a country or a group of countries using force to enter and occupy another country's territory with the aim of conquering or asserting control.

Palaeolithic Period: This refers to the earliest phase of the Stone Age, marked by the use of primitive stone tools, and covers the period before the development of agriculture and settled societies.

Prefecture: This is a modern administrative division in Japan, similar to a province or state, with its own government and leadership. It evolved from the traditional domain (han) provinces ruled by the daimyo, during the Meiji Era.

Regent: This is a person appointed to govern a country or territory on behalf of a monarch who is not in a capacity to rule because of old age, illness, or other reasons.

Ronin: This refers to a masterless samurai who has lost or left his lord, and is often depicted as wandering warrior or mercenary.

Ronins: This is the plural of "ronin," in reference to multiple samurai who no longer serve a master.

Samurai: This refers to a member of the warrior class in feudal Japan, known for their strict code of honor, martial skills, and loyalty to their lords. They were also known as the bushi.

Shamanism: This refers to a spiritual practice that involves the belief in the ability of certain individuals (shamans) to interact with spirits and deities, often to heal or provide guidance.

Shinto: This is an indigenous religion of Japan, that is all about the worship of kami (gods) and rituals related to natural elements, ancestors, and sacred spaces.

Shoen: This was system of private landholding in Japan, typically controlled by powerful families or Buddhist institutions, during the Heian period.

Shokan: This is a historical term for a type of **landlord** or **administrator** in feudal Japan, particularly during the Heian and Kamakura periods. The Shōkan had responsibilities in overseeing the management of a **shōen** (a large private estate or manor) and its resources. They were appointed by the **landowners** of a **shōen** to manage the estate's day-to-day operations including the collection of taxes, the management of labor, and the administration of the land.

Shogun: This was a military leader of Japan, who held real political power during the feudal era, while the emperor remained a figurehead, ruling in the name and on behalf of the emperor.

Yayoi: This was a period of Japanese prehistory, following the Jomon period. It was characterized by the introduction of wet-rice agriculture, metal tools, and social complexity, from around 300 BCE to 300 CE.

Zaibatsu: These were large, family-owned corporations or industrial conglomerates that dominated the economy of Japan, especially during the Meiji and Taisho periods, and wielded great influence in the politics and industrial affairs of Japan.

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Image: Kofun haniwa clay funeral statue. By Daderot - Own work, Licence: CC0 - https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=31441340

Image: Minamoto no Yoritomo. By Fujiwara no Takanobu - Unknown source, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=544482

Image: Mongol invasion of Japan. The defensive wall at Hakata. By Author unknown. Illustration rolls were ordered by Takezaki Suenaga himself. - Mōko Shūrai Ekotoba, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8014707

Image: The Golden Pavilion (***kinkakuji***). Author: Jaycangel . (License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en). Find image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kinkaku-ji_the_Golden_Temple_in_Kyoto_overlooking_the_lake_-_high_rez.JPG

Image: The Silver Pavilion (*Ginkakuji*). Author: Oilstreet (via Wikimedia.org). License: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en . Find image here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ginkaku-ji#/media/File:Ginkakuji_Kyoto03-r.jpg

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Image: Major Claire Chennault. By Unknown military photographer - U.S. War Department, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=21665809

Image: U.S President Franklin Roosevelt. By Leon Perskie. FDR Presidential Library & Museum - CT 09-109(1), CC BY 2.0(https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/deed.en), https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=149575274

Image: Japanese Mitsubishi Zero fighter aircraft. Author: Marc Grossman. License: CC BY-SA 3.0 - https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en . Find image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Japanese_Zero.jpg#/media/File:Japanese_Zero.jpg

Image: General Douglas MacArthur observes the naval shelling of Inchon from USS *Mount McKinley*, 15 September 1950 with Brigadier General Courtney Whitney (left) and Major General Edward M. Almond (right). By Nutter (Army). Public Domain. Find image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IncheonLandingMcArthur.jpg

General of the Army Douglas MacArthur smoking his corncob pipe, probably at Manila, Philippine Islands, 2 August 1945. By Photographer not credited. - Naval Historical Center; Direct link. Photo #: USA C-2413 (Color), photograph from the Army Signal Corps Collection in the U.S. National Archives., Public Domain, Find it here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=139743720

Gen. Douglas MacArthur wades ashore during initial landings at Leyte, Philippine Islands. By U.S. Army Signal Corps officer Gaetano Faillace [1] - This tag does not indicate the copyright status of the attached work. Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3289265

Image: Aftermath of Hiroshima Atomic Bombing, August 1945. By U.S. Navy Public Affairs Resources Website - http://www.chinfo.navy.mil/navpalib/images/historical/hiroshima.jpg , Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=91928

Hiroshima in October 1945, two months after the bombing. Author: US government, post-work: User:W.wolny . Public Domain, Find the image here: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AtomicEffects-Hiroshima.jpg

The mushroom cloud from the atomic explosion over Nagasaki at 11:02 am, August 9, 1945. By James Charles - U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=56719

The mission runs of 6 and 9 August, with Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Kokura (the original target for 9 August) displayed. By Mr.98 - Own work, Based on File:Japan_large_full.svg and this Department of Energy map. archive copy at the Wayback Machine, Public Domain, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=11131711

RELEVANT LEARNING MATERIAL

This section contains other material that would prove useful in understanding the History of Japan:

The Ghost of Tsushima Video Game (2020)

Sucker Punch Productions' open-world action-adventure game "Ghost of Tsushima" makes several noteworthy contributions to the study of Japanese history. The game is set during the Mongol invasion of Japan in 1274, despite being a work of historical fiction. It includes a number of elements that can improve knowledge and appreciation of Japanese history and culture. Here are a few crucial elements:

1. **Historical Setting and Context**: The game takes place during the **first Mongol invasion of Japan**, giving players background knowledge on this momentous historical occasion. Despite the fact that the game's story takes some artistic license, players can still learn about the Mongol invasions' greater historical impact on Japan.

Feudal Japan: Players can fully immerse themselves in the social, political, and cultural climate of the era thanks to the setting's emphasis on feudalism. This immersion may pique curiosity about the historical realities of the time period.

2. Aspects of Culture

Samurai Culture: The game examines samurai values like honour, loyalty, and the bushido code. The game's protagonist, **Jin Sakai**, is a samurai. Players may be inspired to learn more about the real ethics and way of life of samurai by this portrayal.

Customs: Creating haiku, learning calligraphy, and participating in tea ceremonies are just a few of the in-game activities that offer players an understanding of traditional Japanese customs and arts.

Architecture and Landscape: The game provides a visual and hands-on learning opportunity regarding the aesthetics and design of the era

through its meticulous recreation of Japanese architecture, temples, shrines, and landscapes.

3. The plot and the characters

Historical Figures and Fictional Narratives: Although the primary characters are made up, they engage with the Mongol invasions' historical setting. Players may be prompted to discern between historical facts and narrative fiction by this combination of fact and fiction, which can promote critical thinking regarding historical representation.

Cultural Conflicts: Reflecting larger themes in Japanese history about adaptation and change, the story emphasizes the tension between traditional samurai values and the necessity of using unusual tactics to repel the invaders.

4. Narratives Concerning the Environment

Artifacts and Lore: Players can locate artifacts, records, and lore that offer background knowledge on historical occurrences, personalities, and cultural customs throughout the game. These in-game trinkets have the potential to be instructive and educational.

Visual Storytelling: Battle sites, abandoned villages, and historical sites are just a few examples of the visual cues used by the game's intricate environments to tell stories. These cues can help players gain a deeper comprehension of the historical setting.

5. Motivation and Engagement

Interactive Learning: Compared to more conventional approaches, the interactive features of video games can enhance students' interest in learning about history. Gamers may feel a closer bond with the historical events and cultures portrayed if they actively participate in the narrative.

Interest and Curiosity: An engrossing story and a striking visual setting can pique players' curiosity and act as a springboard for additional research into Japanese history.

In conclusion, "Ghost of Tsushima" skilfully employs its setting and characters to introduce players to important facets of Japanese history and culture, even though it is primarily a work of fiction and shouldn't be interpreted as an entirely true historical account. It encourages players to explore and learn more about Japan's rich history by fusing historical context with captivating gameplay, making it a useful teaching tool in an unusual way.

Get yourself a copy of the Ghost of Shimura here:
https://store.steampowered.com/app/2215430/Ghost_of_Tsushima_DIRECTORS_CUT/

Watch the Full Game-Play with no commentary on YouTube here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Twtys8xT_Uc

Keanu Reeves' 47 Ronin Film (2013)

The movie 47 Ronin, starring Keanu Reeves, can be a useful resource for teaching students about Japanese history because it tells the well-known tale of the Ako incident, also known as the 47 Ronin. The movie serves this educational goal in a number of ways, including the following:

1. Overview of the Historical Occurrence

Based on a well-known historical event that occurred in the early 1700s, the movie tells the story of a group of samurai who become ronin (masterless samurai) when their lord, Asano Naganori, is made to perform seppuku (ritual suicide) because he attacked Kira Yoshinaka, a court official. To honor their lord, the ronin plan and carry out a retaliatory attack against Kira. As a sign of loyalty and honor, they then commit seppuku. This incident, which exemplifies the samurai code of bushido (the way of the warrior), is an important aspect of Japanese history and culture.

2. Concepts and Values of Culture

The movie showcases a number of facets of Japanese culture, such as:

• Bushido: The samurai code of honor, duty, and loyalty.
• Seppuku: The samurai code included a ritual suicide.
• Feudal System: The class-based social structure in which samurai are subordinate to their masters.
These components help viewers comprehend the moral and social structure of feudal Japan.

3. Graphic and Creative Illustration

Japan during the Edo period is visually represented in the film through its sets, costumes, and cinematography. This comprises:
• Architectural styles include Japanese traditional homes, castles, and temples.
• Attire: Conventional samurai armour, kimonos, and other historically inspired apparel.
• Landscapes: Beautiful depictions of the forests, mountains, and villages that characterize Japanese landscapes.
These visual components aid viewers in envisioning and comprehending the historical setting and context of the time.

4. Talk and Analysis

Even though the movie includes fantastical elements (like mythical creatures and supernatural aspects) and takes significant artistic license, these departures can serve as a springboard for conversations about historical accuracy. This promotes considering critically about:
• Disparities between historical accounts and the movie: Examining what was omitted or exaggerated for dramatic effect.
• Historical accuracy: Examining the real events and contrasting them with how they are portrayed in the movie.

5. Involvement and Appeal

A well-known actor like Keanu Reeves and a dramatic, action-packed storyline can draw in viewers who may not have been initially

interested in historical subjects. This interaction may spark additional research and study of Japanese history outside of the movie.

6. Myth versus Truth

The film can introduce viewers to Japanese folklore and supernatural beliefs by fusing history and mythology. This feature demonstrates how different interpretations and retellings of history can be made by highlighting the interaction between historical events and cultural storytelling traditions.

In conclusion, 47 Ronin can be used as a starting point for studying Japanese history because it offers a framework for the well-known story of the 47 Ronin, highlights cultural norms and values, and promotes additional study and debate regarding historical accuracy and how historical events are portrayed in the media.

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