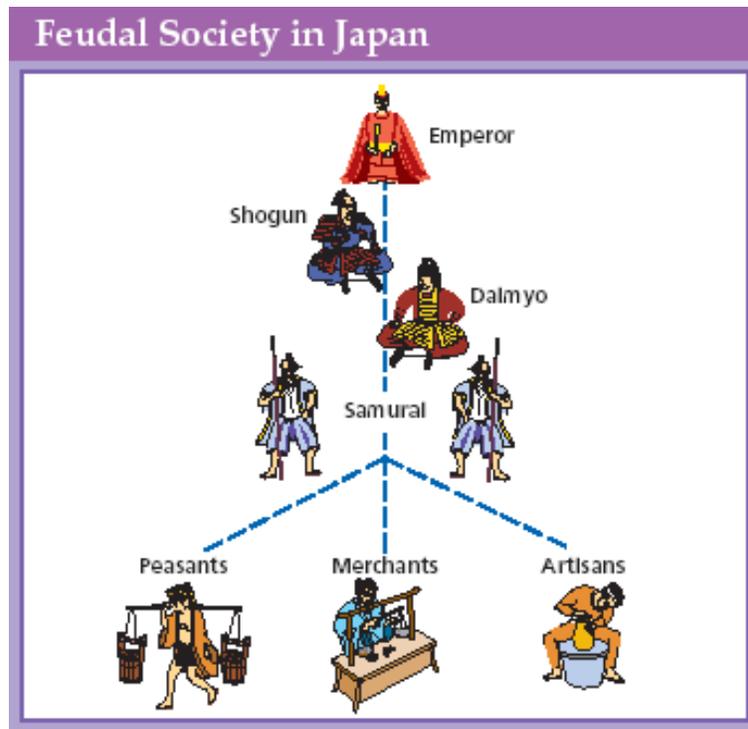


The Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan

According to the Nihon Shoki, the history of Japan, the Yamato clan were an immigrant clan since the Kofun period (250 C.E. to 538 C.E.) whose chief became the first emperor of Japan. They were original scribes but soon became known as great warriors. Local clans still ruled the lands but overtime they became loyal to the Yamato emperor.

Part of their legacy was from selective borrowing of culture and ideas from other regions of Asia and adapting them to a new, and unique Japanese culture. Some of the ideas transformed was Buddhism from China by way of the Korean Peninsula, becoming Shintoism and Zen Buddhism. Confucian ethical and political thought, Chinese writing and the Mandate of Heaven were assimilated into Japanese ways of life. However, after the Yamato clan lost its power to rule, civil wars were common in Japan and no powerful leadership emerged until the Tokugawa clan of 1603 C.E.

The chief task of the Tokugawa clan was to restore internal peace by stopping rivalries between the daimyo (feudal lords) who had their own soldiers (samurai). The emperor remained worshipped by the people but had little or no power. The real ruler was the shogun. The most famous shogun during these times was **Tokugawa Ieyasu** who ruled during the Edo period.



To further keep law and order in Japan, the Tokugawa made the daimyo take second homes in the capital city of Edo where they had to live during alternate years. Their families had to stay behind, making them "hostages" of the Shogun. During this time there was no national army, no uniform currency, and little central authority. Tokugawa Japan was "pacified by not really unified."

During the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan saw great economic growth, commercialization, and urban development. Peasants began using fertilizers and grew more rice than ever before. By 1750, Japan had become the world's most urbanized country as approximately 10% of the population lived in large towns or cities. Confucianism created excellent education systems where 40% of the men and 15% of the women could read and write. Many merchants in the Japanese feudalism system were wealthy but they were still seen as lower class as they did not produce anything of importance for the economy. As the Tokugawa Shogunate restored peace, there was little need for the samurai class so many took jobs in the government or administrative sectors yet remained loyal to their daimyo.

Japan remained **ethnocentric** (isolated and closed to foreign nations) during these times. Spanish and Portuguese missionaries had tried to convert Japanese to Christianity but the **Exclusion Edicts** passed in Edo prevented them from entering the country. There was one exception, this being the Dutch who were allowed to trade only in the port of **Nagasaki**. They could not make contact with the local population. They were only allowed to trade with specific merchants. They could not go inland and there was to be no mention of religion or other restricted practices.

The Tokugawa Shogunate remained in power until 1853 and the arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and his "Black Fleet" from the United States of America who opened the doors of Japan to trade with the West. However, prior to this, around the 1830's, the Tokugawa lost a great deal of their internal power and change was imminent.



Tokugawa Iyeyasu



Dutch merchant ship in Nagasaki harbor