

Social and Economic Transformations

The 17th Century Boom

- Urbanization and Economic Integration of Separate Domains was promoted by the system of alternate attendance (sankin kotai).
- Edo was the largest urban center. Its population amounted to 1 million.
- By 1700, roughly 5 or 6 percent of Japanese people lived in cities, while only 2 percent of people lived in cities in Europe at that time.
- Edo was the the world's largest city, and Kyoto and Osaka were comparable to London and Paris.

The Economic System

- Travel was facilitated by an extensive road system (Tokaido, Nakasendo, Sanyodo, etc.)
- Agricultural products were shipped to Edo and Osaka.
- Daimyo sold their rice in Osaka and spent the proceeds in Edo.
- Rice trading created a rice-futures market in Osaka.

Villages and Agriculture

- Villages were relatively independent of cities and the samurai rules.
- The village headmen were responsible for collecting taxes. The tax authority or police did not intervene in village matters.
- Agricultural output and population had dramatically increased (almost 4 times) since 1700 until 1800.
- Behind increasing productivity, there was high literacy of people.

Stagnation

- Since late 17th century, population growth was stagnated, due to several devastating famines.
- (Infanticide) It was not unusual for peasants to abandon or kill their unwanted infant children.
- Poorer peasants had few effective means of legally protesting.
- Even if taxes and debts were too heavy, they could simply run off to another domain.
- However, the trends was toward more protests.
(TABLE 2.2)

Smashings (打ちこわし)

- Poor peasants attacked rich neighbors, stole money and/or agricultural products, and distributed them at a roughly calculated “fair price”.

Women

- Women should be kept ignorant and in the kitchen, according to *The Greater Learning for Females* by Kaibara Ekiken, the most popular text at that time.
- But women played the most productive role in agriculture.