

The Intellectual World of Late Tokugawa

Ideological Foundations of the Tokugawa Regime

- The Tokugawa system did not simply rely on the samurai force (coercion) but also on the accepted concept of legitimate rule.
- Even Nobunaga promoted himself as a divine ruler when he went to war against popular religious sects and killed tens of thousands. He demanded that samurai “venerated” him.

The “Realm”

- Nobunaga rejected the shogun position because the title would have placed him symbolically subordinate to the emperor.
- He identified himself with the realm (*Tenka*), as Louis XIV of France did (“L’etat, c’est moi”).
- Hideyoshi presented the Korean invasions as sacred national campaigns.

Personal Deification

- Hideyoshi constructed a shrine for himself as a god “Great August Deity (豊国大明神)”.
- Tokugawa continued the program of personal deification.
- Tokugawa constructed the grand shrine Nikko to worship Ieyasu as the god “Great Incarnation, Shining over the East (東照大権現)”.

Grand Shrine at Nikko



The Samurai Ideology

- It is a mixture of Buddhism, Shinto, and neo-Confucianism.
- A samurai-turned-zen priest, Suzuki Shosan, argued that the present life was an occasion to repay obligations to benefactors (lord, parents). One existed not for oneself, but for lord and society.

The new-Confucianism

- The new-Confucians emphasize the importance of direct reading of ancient Confucian texts.
- The idea was mainly studied by Buddhist monks in Japan.
- Hyashi Razan convinced the bakufu to support their endeavors in the form of officially favored think tank.
- The Hayashi academy (The “Sage Hall” at Yushima) was officially recognized as a shogunate university.

Cultural Diversity and Contradictions

- Even the neo-Confucian scholars understood their world as a complex.
- Debate began just as neo-Confucian teachings were being validated with bakufu patronage.
- The school of Ancient-Thought (*kogaku*) was perhaps the most significant challenge to neo-Confucian thought.

Ogyu Sorai

- He was the academic leader of Kogaku, and claimed that neo-Confucianism failed in interpreting the true meaning of old words.
- He also argued that the present political institutions should be based on the “way” the ancient kings had created.

Popular Culture

- Bunraku puppet shows and kabuki, in scripts with scandalous gossip and flamboyant crime to address profound conflicts between duty and desire, between public laws and private loyalty.
- Ihara Saikaku wrote popular fiction that focus on people at the bottom of society.

The Haiku

- *Matsuo Basho* celebrated the natural world and a vanishing past with his short poem “haiku”.
 - an old pond...
 - a frog leaps in,
 - the sound of water.

ふるいけや
かわず とびこむ
みずの おと



Ukiyo-e (Pictures of Floating World)

Landscape:

Ando Hiroshige

Katsushika Hokusai

Actor's picture

(yakusha-e):

Kitagawa Utamaro

Toshusai Sharaku



Hiroshige

Ukiyo-e (Pictures of Floating World)



Hiroshige

Ukiyo-e (Pictures of Floating World)



Hokusai

Ukiyo-e

(Pictures of Floating World)



Utamaro



Sharaku

Kabuki

- Kabuki began as means by which prostitutes drew crowds to purchase sexual services.
- Bakufu then banned females actors to suppress prostitution.
- *Onna-gata* (male actor who plays female roles) is the defining highlight of of the Kabuki theater

坂東玉三郎

Bunraku



- The bunraku puppet is manipulated by three men.
- The story is narrated by Tayuu, accompanied by shamisen.



Chikamatsu Monzaemon

- The puppet theater was very attractive to writers, because they can concentrate on literary quality, neglecting actors' complaints.
- Chikamatsu, the most famous Bunraku writer, describes the tragic lives of common people.
- Chikamatsu captures the tensions (conflict between duty and human feeling) within Tokugawa thought and society.

Love Suicide at Sonezaki

(by Chikamatsu)

- A merchant falls in a hopeless love with a prostitute.
- He is criticized by his relatives and business rivals.
- Finally he and his lover, torn by guilt and desire, run away to commit suicide.

The Tale of the 47 Ronin or Chushingura

- The play is based on a true story which occurred in 1703, relocating the events several centuries earlier.
- The story celebrates the loyalty of samurai warriors whose master was disgraced and executed by harakiri at the hands of a political enemy.
- The 47 samurai are required to take their own lives by Bakufu as the price of their successful pursuit of personal revenge.
- The play exposes a crucial tension in the Tokugawa political regime: To whom is ultimate loyalty owed?

Bakufu on theater

- Kabuki and Bunraku were enjoyed by majority of people living in cities (Edo and Osaka)
- The bakufu isolated the entertainment quarters on the edges of the town, and prohibited samurai from approaching them.
 - *Noh* is the only performing art which samurai were allowed to watch and play.

Ogyu Sorai on the 47 ronin

- Sorai viewed that the revenge addressed the tension between the virtue of loyalty to a particular lord and the value of order to society.
- He acknowledged that their deed was righteous, but finally concluded that they must be punished because social order and law were more important.

Conflict between merit and heredity

- A Confucian ruler must be qualified for his status by merit (examination).
- But samurai's promotion was rigidly limited by heredity (or family's rank).
- Scholars and rulers alike preached the importance of recruiting the wise and the strong to domains and bakufu offices, but heredity rank was not affected.

Tensions between shogun and emperor

- The imperial court was supervised by the bakufu.
- But the emperor in theory had appointed Iyasu and his successors as shogun.
- The Mito domain was a branch of the Tokugawa house, but its daimyo (including Mitsukuni) sustained the idea that the Tokugawa authority was delegated and conditional.

Ineffective Reforms

- The eighth shogun, *Yoshimune*, initiated the Kyoho reforms (1716-45).
- A shogunal advisor (roju), *Tanuma Okitusgu*, took a number of unorthodox economic policies (1767-86).
- Another shogunal advisor, *Matsudaira Sadanobu* launched the Kansei reforms to cut bakufu budgets (1787-93).
- The last reform of the Tempo era had the same goal, initiated by *Mizuno Tadakuni* (1841-43).

Conflicting Ideas behind Reforms

- Hardline Confucianism (*Yoshimune*, *Sadanobu*): praising austerity, ruling out luxury, cutting government costs, persuading morals, strict censorship on unorthodox doctrine and porno, etc.
- Mercantilism (*Tanuma*): the state promotes economic development.

Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801)

- He was a leader of the emerging *School of National Learning*.
- He held a view against the extreme worship of Chinese thought such as Ogyu Sorai.
- He insisted that Japanese people should learn not from alien Chinese sources, but from our native ancient texts such as *Kojiki* (historical chronicles written in the 8th century) and the *Tale of Genji* (prose fiction in the 11th century).

National Learning (国学)

- Norinaga found in those texts the core values of the Japanese people:
 - A sympathetic, emotional understandings of others.
 - The intuitive ability to distinguish good and evil without complex rationalization.
 - *Shinto* as a tradition of a gradual continuum from gods to humans.
- *Hirata Atsutane* politicized Norinaga's idea: Loyalty to "Japan" is beyond the narrow loyalty to the daimyo or the shogun.
- National Learning formed a climate of opinion that made great upheaval and change.

Dutch Learning (蘭学)

- Knowledge produced in the West was imported through Nagasaki port.
 - Christian books were banned.
 - Practical books such as surgery or navigation were welcomed.
- Along with the National Learning, the Dutch Learning nourished critical views on the Tokugawa regime among well-educated people.