# 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 leyasu 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.

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ふるいけや
かわず とびこむ
みずの おと
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Landscape:

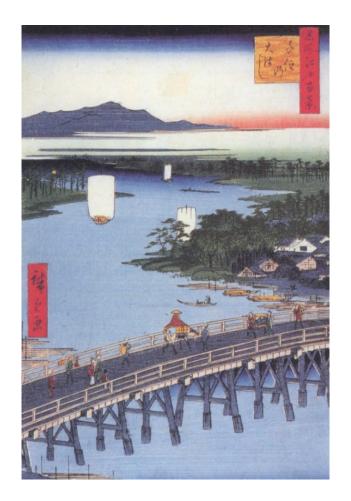
Ando Hiroshige

Katsushika Hokusai

Actor's picture

(yakusha-e):

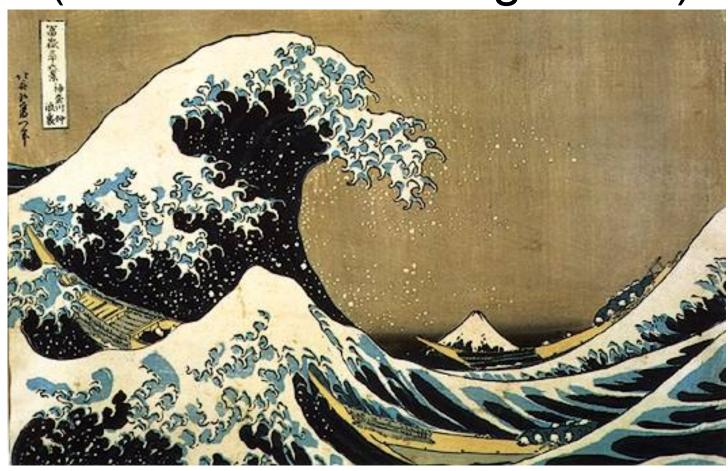
Kitagawa Utamaro Toshusai Sharaku



Hiroshige



Hiroshige







Utamaro Sharaku 15

#### 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 leyasu 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 adivisor, 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 8<sup>th</sup> century) and the *Tale* of Genji (prose fiction in the 11<sup>th</sup> 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 welleducated people.