CHAPTER 1

from Mikiso Hane

Modern Japan: A Historical Survey

JAPAN BEFORE THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

EARLY HISTORY OF THE JAPANESE PEOPLE

There is no definitive evidence concerning when and from whence the original inhabitants arrived in Japan, but it is assumed that they came from different areas of the Asian continent and the South Pacific region. The predominant strain is Mongoloid, including a considerable mixture of people of Malayan origin. The Japanese language appears to be related to both the Polynesian and the Altaic languages. Evidence suggests that as early as 200,000 years ago, paleolithic man (who used chipped stones for tools) inhabited the islands. Also among the early inhabitants of Japan were the ancestors of the Ainus, a people of proto-Caucasian origin who live in Hokkaido today. Currently only about 16,000 Ainus remain. Their early history and their relationship with the neolithic people who inhabited the islands are not known.

Jōmon and Yayoi Periods (ca. 8000 B.C. to A.D. 250)

The early stage of the neolithic age in Japan is known as the Jōmon period. It is believed that Jōmon culture started as far back as 7000 or 8000 B.C. and survived until about 250 B.C. The term *Jōmon* (meaning cord-marking) describes the type of decoration found on potteries of this age. The people of the period were hunters and food gatherers, and they lived in pit-dwellings.

The next stage in neolithic Japan was the Yayoi period, which extended roughly from 250 B.C. to A.D. 250. This culture is believed to have been the product of a new wave of immigrants of Mongoloid stock who came to the islands in the third century B.C. Yayoi pots (named after the place in which they were first found in 1884) were wheel-made and less elaborately decorated than Jōmon pots. They were fired at a higher temperature and are technically superior to Jōmon pieces. Around the second century B.C. bronze and iron tools filtered into Japan from the continent. The rice culture, which originated in South China or Southeast Asia, filtered in around 100 B.C. This latter development revolutionized the entire Japanese way of life, for it established the basis for the economy until the industrial age.

The first written accounts about Japan are found in two historical records of ancient China: *The History of the Kingdom of Wei* (a kingdom in north China, A.D. 220–265), written in A.D. 297, and *History of the Later Han Dynasty*, compiled around A.D. 445. According to these histories, Japan underwent a period of civil strife in the second century A.D., but the land was eventually unified under a queen named Pimiku (Himiko in Japanese). Pimiku, as *The History of the Kingdom of Wei* relates, was a shaman who "occupied herself with magic and sorcery, bewitching the people." Whether or not Pimiku was related to the clan that established hegemony over Japan is impossible to verify, but in the years after the Second World War a great deal of speculation has taken place about the origin of the early Japanese rulers, in particular their links to Korea.

Yamato Period (ca. 300–710)

The period in which regional forces began to emerge in the Yamato area to roughly the time when a fixed capital was established in Nara is known as the Yamato period (ca. 300 to 710). It is also referred to as the age of Tomb Culture because huge tombs were constructed to bury the chieftains of the time. Numerous artifacts such as ornaments, tools, and weapons, as well as clay figurines known as *haniwa*, were buried with the dead.

From the fifth century on, Japan was exposed steadily to Chinese and Korean culture as immigrants from these countries arrived in fairly large numbers. The social, material, political, intellectual, and cultural life of the Japanese was profoundly influenced by these immigrants. Prince Shōtoku (574–622) is traditionally credited with having played a major role in adopting Chinese civilization, strengthening the imperial authority, and propagating Buddhism. He is also credited with promulgating the "Constitution of Seventeen Articles," a series of moral injunctions.[1] In 645 Nakatomi-no-Kamatari (614–669), the founder of the Fujiwara family, removed his rivals from the court and gained political supremacy. His descendants dominated the court down through the ages. Kamatari and his followers are credited with having instituted the Taika Reforms, which involved the adoption of Chinese (T'ang and Northern Wei) political institutions and policies as well as their land and tax policies.

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Nara and Heian Periods (710–1185)

One of the practices adopted from China was the construction of a fixed capital city. In 710 Nara was made the seat of the imperial court, and it remained so until 784, when the capital was moved briefly to a community near Kyoto. In 794 the capital was moved again—this time to Kyoto, then known as Heiankyō. From then until 1868 the emperors resided in this city. The period from 794 to 1185 is known as the Heian period, or the era of the court aristocracy, because the court nobles led by the Fujiwara family dominated the political and cultural life of the society. During the Nara and Heian periods Japan continued to adopt and assimilate Chinese culture and institutions as well as Buddhism. The Heian court aristocrats cultivated a highly refined taste in art and literature, and placed great emphasis on form, appearance, and decorum. Extravagant luxury, ostentatious display, and decadent sensuality prevailed at the court in its heyday.

Among the measures adopted from China during implementation of the aforementioned Taika Reforms was nationalization and equalization of landholdings. But this policy was not fully implemented, and land soon came to be concentrated in the hands of the court aristocrats and Buddhist monasteries. Eventually privately controlled estates, or *shōen*, came into existence. The estates were not taxed; they were also free from the jurisdiction of government officials. Estate managers, district officials, and local estate owners began to emerge in the form of local magnates with private coteries of warriors. Eventually major military chieftains, with large circles of warriors, managed to control numerous estates and challenge the authority of the central government.

In the 1160s one of the samurai chieftains, Taira-no-Kiyomori (1118–1181), gained control of the imperial court and had himself appointed chancellor. The Taira clan (also known as the Heike) soon found its supremacy challenged by the leader of a rival military clan known as the Genji (or Minamoto) family, led by Yoritomo (1147–1199).

Kamakura Period (1185–1333)

After Yoritomo defeated the Taira forces, he established his headquarters in Kamakura in 1185. Theoretically, he performed the role of supreme military commander (shōgun) in the service of the emperor, a post to which he was appointed in 1192. But his Bakufu (tent headquarters) became the *actual* locus of power. He controlled a large part of the land as his own *shōen*, and acquired the right to appoint constables and land stewards (whose chief function was to collect taxes) throughout the land. Yoritomo's assumption of the position of shōgun, then, marked the beginning of rule by the warrior, or samurai, class. Thenceforth, except for brief periods, power was retained by the shōgun until 1867, while the emperor remained in Kyoto as the nominal ruler and high priest of the Shinto religion.

After Yoritomo died in 1199, actual power of the Bakufu was taken over by his wife's family, the Hōjō clan. Until 1333 the head of the Hōjō family wielded power as regent to the shōgun. Following an abortive attempt by the imperial court to regain power in 1221, the Hōjō family consolidated its control over the land both by confiscating the *shōen* of those who had supported the imperial cause and by tightening its surveillance over the imperial court.

With the emergence of the warrior class in the last years of the Heian period and during the years of warrior rule in the Kamakura period, political, social, and economic institutions and practices similar to those associated with European feudalism began to evolve. In 1232 the Hōjō government issued the Jōei Code, which defined property rights, land tenure, inheritance, and other social economic rights and obligations, thus laying the basis for later feudal laws and practices.

In the Kamakura period, popular Buddhism emerged and the code of the warriors began to take form (see Chapter 2). It was also during this period that the Mongols attempted to invade Japan in 1274 and again in 1282. Both attempts failed because devastating typhoons (known as *kamikaze*, or divine winds) destroyed the Mongol fleet.

Between 1333 and 1336 the imperial court led by Emperor Godaigo managed to regain power briefly with the assistance of certain disaffected military chiefs. But in 1336 one of these chiefs, Ashikaga Takauji (1305–1358), decided to take power himself; it was then that he drove the emperor out of Kyoto and established his own Bakufu. Godaigo fled south to the mountains of Kii Peninsula while Takauji placed another member of the imperial family on the throne. As a result, until 1392 there were two imperial courts—one in the north and one in the south. In 1392 the two courts merged with the understanding that the two branches would alternate in occupying the throne. But this agreement was not kept, and the northern court members hold the throne to this day.

The Muromachi Period and the Era of Warring States (1336–1590)

The Ashikaga shogunate, also referred to as the Muromachi Bakufu (after the district in Kyoto where the shōgun resided), remained in existence until 1573. In that year the last Ashikaga shōgun was driven out by Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), a military chief who aspired to become shōgun himself. The Ashikaga family had failed to gain a firm grip on the land and was plagued by contentious lords. Eventually regional lords, known as *daimyō* (great lords), emerged. The country fell into a state of chaos as regional chiefs contended for power. This dog-eat-dog period, known as the era of the Warring States, lasted from the later years of the fifteenth century until the nation was unified under Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598) in 1590. It was during this era that feudalism became firmly entrenched throughout the land.

During the same era, the economy expanded as a result of improvements in agriculture and increased trade with China. Money came to be used more widely, and commercial cities and market towns sprung up throughout the land. Some cities—notably, Sakai (near Osaka)—became autonomous

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political entities with their own military forces. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese traders arrived. They were soon followed by merchants from other European countries as well as by Christian missionaries led by the Jesuit, Saint Francis Xavier (1506–1552).

Oda Nobunaga, a daimyō in central Japan, managed to extend his power by making effective use of the firearms introduced by the West. He appeared to be on the way to establishing his hegemony over the land. In 1568 he succeeded in gaining control of Kyoto and soon deposed the last Ashikaga shōgun. However, he was attacked and killed by one of his generals. Then Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who rose from the peasantry, subdued the regional lords and completed the task of national unification. He subsequently decided to conquer Korea and China and launched an invasion of Korea in 1592. His grandiose plan was frustrated, however, when the Ming forces moved into Korea to stop his warriors.

Hideyoshi came up from the peasantry himself. But in order to prevent the political order he had established from being disrupted by free-wheeling peasant-warriors, he launched a campaign to confiscate all weapons from the peasants. He also forbade them from moving off the land and instituted a nationwide cadastral survey for tax purposes, thereby establishing the social and economic policies that his successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616), eventually adopted to ensure social stability in his regime.

Ieyasu was one of Hideyoshi's major rivals. Because of Ieyasu's formidable power base in the Kanto region, Hideyoshi did not try to eliminate him by force but, instead, allowed him to retain his holdings in return for recognition of Hideyoshi as the suzerain lord. Ieyasu, through patience, cunning, and good fortune, gained power after Hideyoshi's death. Thereafter, he established a sociopolitical system that enabled his descendants to remain in power for two and a half centuries, thus ushering in the Tokugawa period (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 2).

TRADITIONAL CULTURE AND INSTITUTIONS OF THE PRE-TOKUGAWA YEARS

The social systems, the culture and literature, the intellectual currents, and the political institutions that evolved in the pre-Tokugawa years not only persisted but also profoundly influenced the lives of the Japanese people through the ages.

Shinto

The indigenous religion of Japan is known as Shinto (the way of the gods). Starting as an animistic religion, which incorporated the shamanism that came in from Southeast Asia as well as from the northern Tungus, Shinto eventually became a part of the Japanese culture. The people go to Shinto shrines to pray, and during harvest festivals join with other villagers to celebrate and give thanks to the gods for their bountiful harvest. The Japanese, like the Chinese, see no conflict in paying homage to different deities in numerous shrines and temples.

Before the imperial clan established its hegemony over the land, a number of clans contended for supremacy. Each clan worshipped its own patron god. The patron god of the imperial family was the Sun Goddess (Amaterasu Ōmikami), and the emperor or empress served as the high priest or priestess of the cult of the Sun Goddess. To this day the emperor undergoes the ritual of planting rice seedlings every spring and harvesting a few ears of rice in the fall. It was not until the Meiji period that this cult was elevated to the level of State Shinto, when the government designated most Shinto shrines as state institutions.

In short, the inhabitants of ancient Japan believed that gods and spirits were present in all aspects of the natural world. Some were cosmic forces; others resided in the woods, streams, and rocks and in animals such as foxes and snakes. The ancestral spirits were also respected and revered. Great military and political leaders were enshrined as *kami* (gods or superior beings). Even modern leaders like Emperor Meiji and General Nogi Maresuke, who captured Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, were honored in this way. Soldiers who died in the service of their country have been similarly enshrined (i.e., as *kami*) in Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo.

Shinto, in contrast to other major religions, is not founded on complex metaphysical and theological theories. A Western visitor once asked a Shinto priest about Shinto ideology, upon which the priest replied with a smile, "We do not have ideologies, we do not have theology. We dance."[2] Although his answer may be an oversimplification, Shinto is indeed based upon a sense of affinity with nature and the universe. As one scholar has explained it, "Where the Christian theologian explains Nature in the light of the numinous, the Japanese reach the numinous through their experience of nature."[3]

Shinto rituals are rather austere: the priest simply waves a sacred wand (made of *sakaki* branches) over the worshippers' heads to expel the evil spirits and thus to purify them spiritually. Purity and cleanliness are cardinal elements in Shinto thought; to this day, abhorrence of pollution by unclean things remains an important concern. This idea is reflected in the moral thought recorded through the ages. "To do good is to be pure; to commit evil is to be impure," asserts a thirteenth-century Shinto tract. A good person, then, is a person with a "clean" mind and heart.

This emphasis on purity, of course, posits the presence of the unclean. And, indeed, it is the function of the many shamans of the village shrines to exorcise the darker forces that possess the spirit. Charms and amulets are also utilized to ensure good fortune and stave off evil spirits. On the other hand, to prompt the gods to cure a family member's illness, a person might be advised to run around the compound of a shrine one hundred times each night; or, in the ground-breaking ceremony preceding construction of a new house, a Shinto priest will bless the site. (Such manifestations of "superstition" are not unique to Shinto, of course.)

Even after the members of the imperial clan gained political hegemony, they did not seek to compel others to worship their deity, the Sun Goddess; nor did they ban the worship of other gods. In fact, when Buddhism was

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introduced into the country, the struggle that occurred between the supporters of the new religion and their opponents had more to do with political control than with any effort to impose religious orthodoxy. The two religions coexisted down through the ages. Some effort was even made by the Shintoists to create a more philosophical religion by borrowing certain concepts from Buddhism. In this way, doctrinal Shinto came into existence. But common people continued to practice their traditional "folk" Shinto.

The Emperor System

The imperial family was closely linked to Shinto. The scholars of National Learning, who emerged in the Tokugawa period, made Shinto and the emperor system the core of their thinking. The emperors, after all, were the direct descendants of the Sun Goddess, who sent her grandson to Japan from heaven to rule over the land. Because of his "divine" descent, the emperor had a dual role to perform—a role both religious and political. In fact, these role functions were regarded as one and the same: political functions were called *matsuri*, a word that means worship of or service to the gods. Shinto festivals are also called *matsuri*. Moreover, the state of being possessed by the gods when receiving their words is called *noru*. The noun of the word, *nori*, means law. Shinto prayers are called *norito*. Thus the laws themselves were divine decrees.

According to the mythological account, the founding of the imperial dynasty occurred in 660 B.C., when the first emperor, Jimmu, the great grandson of Ninigi who descended from heaven, established his rule. In addition, the Shinto nationalists insisted (until the end of the Second World War) that the imperial dynasty persisted, unbroken, from that date to the present. These accounts of the founding of Japan and the history of the imperial rulers were taught in the schools before the Second World War as factual truths.

But the imperial clan did not rely on ancient myths alone to buttress its authority. Upon the advent of Chinese culture in the fifth century, and from that time on, Confucian concepts about loyalty to the lord were utilized to indoctrinate the people. For example, the "Constitution of Seventeen Articles," ascribed to Prince Shōtoku, states, "When you receive the imperial commands, fail not scrupulously to obey them. The lord is Heaven, the vassal is Earth. Heaven overspreads, and Earth upbears." Then, too, "In a country there are not two lords: the people have not two masters. The sovereign is the master of the people of the whole country."[4] It was in the early seventh century that the term *tennō* (heavenly prince) was adopted from China and used to refer to the emperor.

Even though the court authorities formulated an ideology that was designed to strengthen the imperial institution, the practice of personal rule by the emperor did not come about. Only in rare instances did the emperor seek to exercise authority directly. During the Heian period the heads of the Fujiwara family wielded power as regents while the emperor merely sat on the throne. When Taira-no-Kiyomori took power, he married his daughter to the emperor and exercised power himself. Once the shogunate had emerged, the emperor in Kyoto remained merely a ceremonial head. That situation, except for a short interregnum in 1333–1336, prevailed until the end of the shogunate in 1867. However, although the shōgun became the real wielders of power, no shōgun ever tried to eradicate the emperor system. Even Ashikaga Takauji, who turned against Emperor Godaigo, did not attempt to eliminate the institution but, instead, established a rival court in Kyoto. The Tokugawa rulers also kept alive the fiction that they were ruling on behalf of the emperor.

Buddhism

Buddhism originated in northern India in the sixth century B.C. The founder, referred to variously as Gautama, Shakyamuni, or Siddhartha Buddha, taught that the way to overcome suffering was to rid oneself of the sense of the "self." The self that we think of as being real, permanent, and absolute is merely an illusion. Rather, all things are in a constant state of flux; all things are ephemeral. Our suffering comes from the cravings of the self, to gratify the ego. To extinguish the ego one must follow the eightfold path as taught by the Buddha—that is, right views, right intentions, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. In this way we will become free of our illusion and thus able to achieve the state of bliss known as *Nirvana*.

Originally, the Buddha taught that enlightenment could be acquired only through self-effort. He did not speak of the existence of any gods or other superhuman beings. Later, however, there arose the Mahayana school—a school of Buddhism that posited the existence of many Buddhist deities. Gautama Buddha himself came to be looked upon as a divine being. Also assumed to exist were people who had achieved enlightenment but were postponing their entrance into the state of Nirvana in order to help others attain enlightenment. These compassionate beings are known as Bodhisattvas. The school is known as Mahayana Buddhism (the Greater Vehicle) because it opens the way to salvation for everybody. The tenets of this school spread into and flourished in Tibet, China, Korea, Vietnam, and Japan.

When Buddhism was introduced from Korea in the sixth century, the ruling class of Japan was impressed by the beautiful artifacts, rituals, and scriptures associated with it; hence the religion received strong support from the rulers. Initially it was the magical aspects of the religion that were emphasized by the several sects that entered from China. The religion not only influenced the moral outlook of the people; it also had a significant effect on the art and culture of the society.

Two sects became prominent during the Heian period. One was the Tendai sect, whose founder, Saichō (767–822), emphasized the significance of the Lotus Sutra, taught that salvation was possible for all living creatures, and upheld Mahayana Buddhism over the Hinayana school, which preached salvation through self-knowledge and self-effort. The other sect was the

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Shingon sect, whose founder, Kūkai (774–835), taught that all forms of the Buddha emanated from the Dainichi Nyorai (the Great Illuminator). Kūkai also stressed the importance of mystic formulas by which one could achieve salvation and also gain mundane benefits.

During the Kamakura period several new sects emerged and gained acceptance among the masses. Among the Buddhist deities that gained a wide following was Amida (Amitabha)—Buddha of infinite light—who, it was said, resided in the Western Paradise where all the faithful can enter. Among the preachers of Amidism was Hōnen (1133–1212), who started a sect known as the Pure Land sect. The Pure Land is where Bodhisattvas who are "pure in body, voice, and mind" reside. Hōnen taught that a person can enter the Pure Land by having complete faith in the Amida Buddha and by sincerely invoking his name.

For Hōnen's disciple, Shinran (1173–1262), salvation was even more easily attained than was taught by his teacher: if a person has complete faith in the Amida Buddha, one sincere invocation of his name would be sufficient to permit the entry of that person into the Pure Land. Rituals, knowledge of the scriptures, and ascetic behavior, Shinran insisted, were not essential for salvation; indeed, people could eat meat and imbibe alcoholic drinks, and monks and priests could marry—and still be saved.

Shinran taught that salvation was easily attainable because he wanted to help the suffering masses. Appalled by the hardships, misery, and poverty of the peasants he encountered during his exile in the provinces, he concluded that it was senseless to preach self-denial to people who were leading a beggarly existence. Because the good and bad alike are being put through the crucible of hardship, they all deserve salvation. The only thing they need is faith in the saving power of the "external" being, the Amida Buddha. Wicked persons know that they cannot gain salvation on their own merit so they are more likely to rely totally on the mercy of the Amida Buddha. Thus Shinran said, "If even a good man can be reborn in the Pure Land, how much more so a wicked man."[5] Because his followers claimed that his was the "true" path to the Pure Land, his sect came to be known as the True Pure Land sect. Now that salvation was made possible for the humblest and the most ignorant of the masses, the two Pure Land sects gained a strong following, particularly among the peasants.

The other major sect was started by a monk named Nichiren (1222–1282). Nichiren taught that salvation could be achieved through the repeated invocation of the Lotus Sutra, a scripture that emphasizes the importance of the three forms of the Buddha—that is, the Body of Universal Law, the Body of Bliss (Amida Buddha), and the Transformation Body (historical Buddha, Shakyamuni). The other sects were in error, Nichiren claimed, because they emphasized only one of these forms. He too stressed faith—faith in the Lotus Sutra—as the only path to salvation.

Nichiren's movement is unique among Buddhist sects specifically because of the extremely dogmatic, intolerant, and fervently nationalistic character of its originator. Nichiren not only proclaimed, "I will be the Pillar of Japan. I will be the Great Vessel of Japan";[6] he also believed that Japan was a unique and sacred land, the center of the true faith, his own sect. He too gained a wide following, and the Nichiren sect remains a major movement today. Unlike other Buddhist sects, however, the Nichiren sect is aggressively proselytistic.

Zen Buddhism was another sect that won strong adherence, particularly among the samurai during the Kamakura period and after. This sect is distinguished by the fact that it emphasizes self-reliance and achievement of enlightenment (*satori*) through self-effort. Satori entails the gaining of insight into one's true or original nature and into the nature of reality, that "great void" underlying the surface manifestations. This insight is to be achieved through an intuitive grasp of reality, not by relying on the intellect or reasoned knowledge, nor by studying or performing rituals. Just as the hand that grasps cannot grasp itself, the reason that seeks to comprehend cannot comprehend itself. For "reality" is the Mind. As a Chinese Ch'an (Zen) master once said, "Buddha and sentient beings both grow out of One Mind. . . . This Mind is pure and like space has no specific form. As soon as you raise a thought and begin to form an idea of it, you ruin reality itself, because you then attach yourself to the form. Since the beginningless past, there is no Buddha who has ever had an attachment to form."[7]

A person who achieves satori cannot transmit it to others by words. Such is the message of Bodhidharma, who is said to have brought Ch'an Buddhism to China in the sixth century: "A special transmission outside the scriptures; No dependence upon words or letters; Direct pointing at the soul of man: Seeing into one's nature and the attainment of Buddhahood."[8] To achieve satori, then, one must meditate, contemplate, or work out enigmatic statements (*kōan*) designed to break one's habit of ratiocination (e.g., "What is the sound of one hand clapping?").

The state of enlightenment is acceptance of nothing else but this world as it actually is. When asked what enlightenment was, the Chinese Zen master Yung-Chia replied, "It is the flute behind the dead tree; it is the eyes behind a skeleton." Another Chinese Zen master, Hui Neng, said, "Walking is Zen, sitting is Zen."[9]

Zen's demand for stern discipline, total concentration and meditation, and a decisive approach to life appealed to the samurai, who, while constantly facing death on the battlefield, had to act resolutely and courageously. Zen also influenced Japanese art and culture in a profound way, as discussed later in the chapter.

Literary Tradition

The Japanese had no written history or literature until the Chinese writing system entered by way of Korea around the fourth or fifth century. The first extant written works, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, were compiled in the 670s and completed early in the eighth century. These "histories," including the stories of the imperial ancestors' descent from heaven, have been treated as authentic accounts by nationalist historians, although they are based as much on oral tradition, Chinese and

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Korean tales, and myths and legends as on actual events. The compilers, it is believed, tampered with the facts to legitimate and glorify the imperial ruling house.

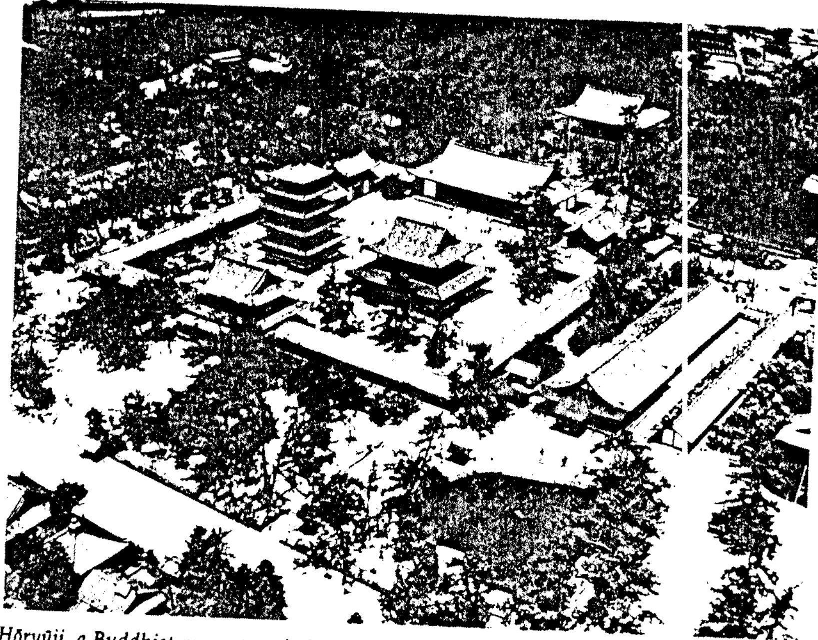
An important literary work of the eighth century is the *Man'yōshū*, a collection of over four thousand poems that have been regarded as expressions of "pure" Japanese sentiment in the time before Confucian "moralism" influenced Japanese literature. Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), the seminal mind among scholars of National Learning (see Chapter 2), asserted that the *Man'yōshū* embodied the quintessence of the Japanese spirit. Recent scholars have argued, however, that the influence of Korean poetry in the collection was much greater than traditional Japanese literary scholars have been willing to admit.[10] Be that as it may, its literary value is unquestioned and the work itself is regarded as one of the world's great collections of poetry.

As the Chinese cultural influence permeated the circle of the court aristocracy, efforts to compose poetry in the Chinese style became popular and T'ang poets such as Li Po, Tu Fu, and Po Chu-i were emulated. At the same time *waka*, a Japanese style of poetry wherein each poem takes thirty-one syllables, grew in popularity. This development was facilitated by the formulation of a Japanese phonetic writing system (*kana*). It was also partly the result of a movement to assert the indigenous tradition against the excessive dependence on Chinese culture. At the beginning of the tenth century, an anthology of *waka* called the *Kokinshū* (*Collection of Ancient and Modern Poetry*) was compiled. As its editor, Ki-no-Tsurayuki, noted: "The poetry of Japan has its roots in the human heart and flourishes in countless leaves of words."[11]

The most extraordinary literary creation of the Heian period was *The Tale of Genji*, written by Murasaki Shikibu (978–1016?), a lady-in-waiting to Empress Akiko. It is still recognized as one of the world's masterpieces. Lady Murasaki's story, set in the court life of her day, centers on the love life of Prince Genji and other members of his family circle. The author's graceful, poetic style has been admired and emulated by all literary aspirants of Japan ever since. Other distinguished works of prose, poetry, essays, and diaries were produced in the Heian period; many of these were authored by women who created the golden age of Japanese literature.

The romantic war stories written during the Kamakura period reflected the turbulence of the late Heian and Kamakura years. The greatest of these is *The Tale of the Heike*, which depicts in melancholy tones the fall of the Taira clan. The Buddhist belief that all things are ephemeral permeates much of the writing of this period. For instance, *The Tale of the Heike* starts, "In the sound of the bell of the Gion Temple echoes the impermanence of all things. . . . The proud ones do not last long, but vanish like a spring night's dream. And the mighty ones too will perish in the end, like dust before the wind."[12]

The distinguished literary creations of the Ashikaga period are the Nō plays of Kan'ami Kiyotsugu (1333–1384) and his son, Seami Motokiyo (1363–1443). The latter was strongly influenced by Zen, and his work is



Hōryūji, a Buddhist monastery in Nara. Founded in 607 by Prince Shōtoku, the principal buildings were constructed over a period of several centuries. Courtesy of the Consulate General of Japan, New York.

permeated with a sense of *yūgen*, or mystery—that which lies beneath the surface.

The Fine Arts

The beautiful natural environment of Japan undoubtedly fostered a sense of closeness to nature as well as an appreciation of natural beauty. But the Japanese did not simply imitate nature in their art. They added and subtracted from things in nature to create or reproduce the essential principles perceived there. The art of placement and design (i.e., decorative art) is an important aspect of Japanese life, as revealed not only in the fine arts but in everyday life as well.

In their fine arts the Japanese have also accentuated such qualities as the color, texture, and shape of natural objects. For example, in an art object constructed from a piece of wood, the grain will likely be accentuated and the natural color brought out by polishing. Although colorful and vibrant creations do occur in Japanese art, restraint and understatement are perhaps the most important elements in Japanese aesthetic taste. Simple, neat lines and forms, as well as plain, unmixed colors, are common

characteristics as well. (Even in culinary dishes, meticulous attention is paid to the arrangement of form and color to make them aesthetically appealing!)

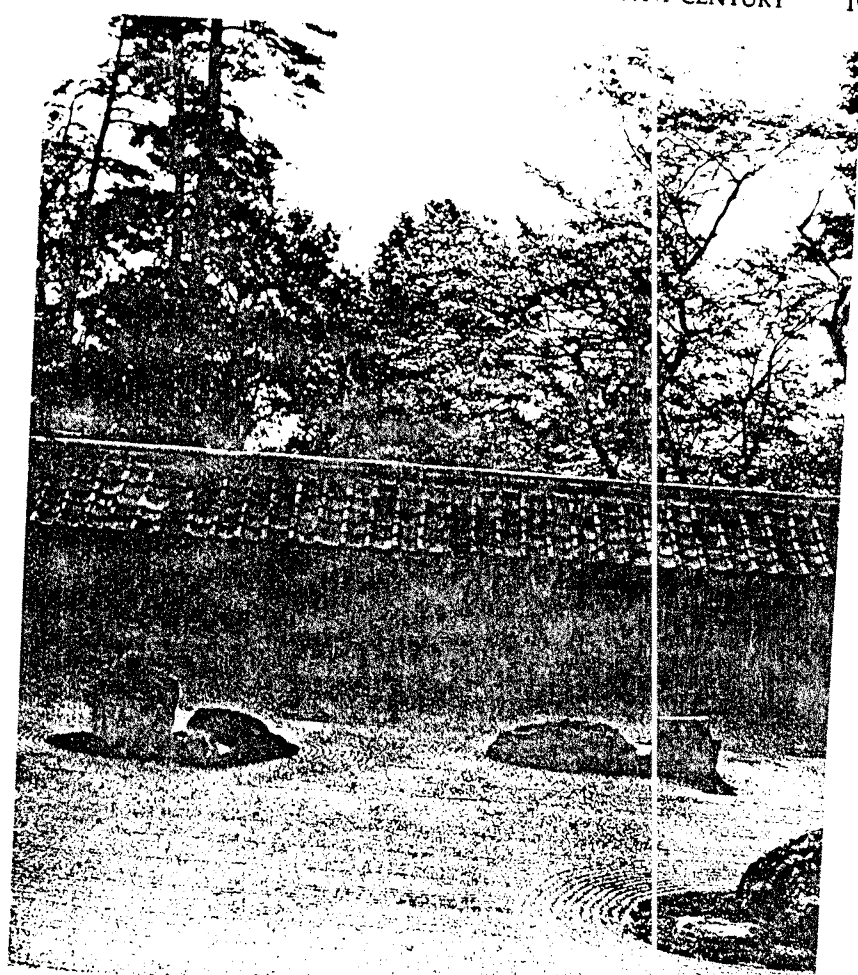
Another noteworthy characteristic of Japanese art is the careful attention paid to details—and, indeed, the miniature arts such as *bonsai* (dwarf trees cultivated in pots) and *netsuke* (miniature carvings), as well as flower arrangements, ceramics, and so on, have flourished. These creations are designed not so much for public display as for private appreciation. Aesthetic appreciation as a private matter is also evidenced in the beautiful gardens of the temples and private homes, which are enclosed behind walls and thus hidden from public view.

The aesthetic sensibilities of the Japanese have been regarded by some observers as unique national characteristics. Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet, called aesthetics "the unique Dharma of Japan." And D. T. Suzuki contended that "if Japan did not produce any philosophical system of her own, she was original enough to embody in her practical life all that could profitably be extracted from Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism and turn them into the material for her spiritual enhancement and artistic appreciation."[13]

In the Japanese mode of thinking, the world is not seen in dualistic terms as it is in the West. As one scholar has noted, "Westerners tend to look at life, at the world, as though sitting in a helicopter above it, while the Japanese swim in the actual flow of events. This gives them great sharpness of intuition and the power to build things, to make things with their hands."[14] It is this trait, perhaps, that accounts for the many superb artisans and craftspeople in Japan, whose work is elevated to the level of artistry and who, it might be said, are in total unity with—and completely immersed in—the material they are working with. In combination with the obvious concern for detail, craftmanship, and quality, this trait may also account for the current Japanese economic success.

The origins of Japanese art can be traced back to the Jōmon and Yayoi pots, and to the *haniwa* (clay figurines) placed around the ancient burial mounds. In architecture the Shinto shrines, with their pure, clear lines and forms, their beauty of proportions, and their natural settings, remain distinctive features of the landscape. The arrival in Japan of Chinese and Buddhist cultures added new dimensions to the art and architecture of the country. The most visible consequence of the continental impact were the Buddhist temples and pagodas that were constructed first in the central region and then throughout the land. The most renowned of these is the Hōryūji, built in 607. Although the buildings were arranged in a relatively asymmetrical manner, they convey a sense of order, balance, and cohesion. Indeed, they were designed to blend harmoniously with the natural setting. The five-storied pagoda in particular has a stately dignity and grace.

Buddhist sculptures, paintings, scrolls, and images also became integral elements of Japanese life. The scroll paintings that originated in China, for instance, were modified through distinctive use of color, lines, forms, and concern for placement. These narrative picture scrolls, known as *Yamato-e*, depict events of the Heian era such as those related in the *Tale*



The rock garden of Ryōanji, a Buddhist temple in Kyoto. Sōami (?–1525) is thought to have designed the garden. Courtesy of the Consulate General of Japan, New York.

of Genji. The art of calligraphy, too, came to be prized by the court aristocrats. Elegance in calligraphy was equated with good breeding and refinement of character.

In the Kamakura period, the influence from Sung China (960–1279) and Zen Buddhism had a powerful impact on the culture. This dual impact is seen most strikingly in such art forms as black and white ink-painting (*sumi-e*). The greatest of the Japanese sumi-e painters was Sesshū (1421–

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Himeji Castle in Hyōgo Prefecture took nine years to build; it was completed in 1609. Courtesy of the Consulate General of Japan, New York.

1508), who emerged during the Ashikaga period. Ernest Fenollosa, a Western authority on Japanese art, describes Sesshū as "the greatest master of straight line and angle in the whole range of the world's art."[15] The influence of Zen can also be seen in the art of flower arrangement, ceramics, landscape gardening, architecture, and Nō drama, and especially the tea ceremony. As Suzuki has noted, "What is common to Zen and the art of tea is the constant attempt both make at simplification." The aesthetic qualities that Zen masters prized were *wabi* and *sabi*. Sabi is associated with "age, desication, numbness, chilliness, obscurity." It is also the quality of mellowness and depth that comes from aging. Wabi is related to a sense of serenity, rusticity, solitude and even melancholy. Both signify the "aesthetical appreciation of poverty."[16]

As noted, the art of gardening that flourished in the Ashikaga period is associated with aesthetic principles linked to Zen. Again, it is the art of placement that is critical in the gardens constructed in Zen temples. A striking example is found in the Rock Garden of Ryōanji in Kyoto, which reveals nothing but sand and fifteen natural stones arranged in groups of five.

In the sixteenth century the daimyō contending for power built massive castles that served not only as fortresses but also as edifices by which to display their power and glory. Hideyoshi, for instance, built two such castles—one in Osaka and another in Fushimi-Momoyama near Kyoto. The Osaka castle featured forty-eight large towers; the main tower stood on a stone base 75 feet high, above which it rose 102 feet. The interiors of these castles were decorated elaborately with painted walls, sliding doors, folding screens, and wood carvings by way of the art style developed by Kanō Eitoku (1543–1590), who was called upon by Nobunaga and Hideyoshi to embellish the interiors of their castles. Eitoku, departing from the monochrome style of his predecessors in the Kanō school, used bright colors against luminous gold backgrounds, and bold, simplified forms.

Although no abrupt shift in cultural development occurred in the transition from the pre-Tokugawa to the Tokugawa era (indeed, the social, political, and economic institutions that had evolved in the previous centuries provided the basis for the policies and institutions adopted by the Tokugawa rulers), the hegemony established by Ieyasu marked the beginning of an order of things that would leave a lasting imprint on Japanese life. The peace and stability that characterized this period lasted for two and a half centuries. The Tokugawa rulers had set about deliberately to freeze the political and social order, and they achieved their objectives with remarkable success. Virtually cut off from the rest of the world, Japan emerged as a small "world state."

NOTES

1. Some scholars have recently concluded that Shōtoku's role has been exaggerated and, indeed, that many of the reforms and policies attributed to him by the court historians may have actually been the work of the Soga family. See Kim Sok-hyong and Matsumoto Seichō, *Kodaishi no Naka no Chōsen to Nihon (Korea and Japan in Ancient History)*, Chūō Kōron, December 1972, pp. 2[illegible]4–86. For the

Korean influence on early Japan, see Gari Ledyard, "Galloping with the Horseriders," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 1975, pp. 217 ff.; Chong-sik Lee, "History and Politics of Japanese-Korean Relations," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, October 1983, pp. 69 ff.; Kim and Matsumoto, *op. cit.*

2. Joseph Campbell, *Oriental Mythology* (New York: Viking Press, 1962), p. 476.

3. Fosco Maraini, in Ronald Bell, *The Japan Experience* (New York: Weatherhill, 1973), pp. 13–14.

4. Ryusaku Tsunoda *et al.*, eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 50–52.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

6. Masaharu Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion* (Tokyo and Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1963), p. 198.

7. D. T. Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. 2, 112–13.

8. The quotation is attributed to Bodhidharma, in William Barrett, ed., *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D. T. Suzuki* (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), p. 61.

9. Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, p. 94.

10. Some scholars believe that one of the three main poets of the *Man'yōshū*, Yamanoe Okura, was of Korean immigrant origin. See, for instance, Roy Andrew Miller, "Plus Ca Change," *Journal of Asian Studies* (August 1980), pp. 771ff.

11. Earl Miner, *An Introduction to Japanese Court Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 18.

12. A. L. Sadler, trans., *Heike Monogatari* [*The Tale of the Heike*], in *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, vol. 46, part 1 (Tokyo: Asiatic Society of Japan), p. 207.

13. D. T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), p. 307.

14. Maraini, in Bell, *The Japan Experience*, pp. 16–17.

15. Ernest Fenollosa, *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*, vol. 2 (New York: Grove Press, 1963), p. 81.

16. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, pp. 271, 284, 285.

CHAPTER 2

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TOKUGAWA BAKUFU

THE SHŌGUN OF THE TOKUGAWA BAKUFU

In 1600 Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated his rivals and the supporters of the Toyotomi family in the Battle of Sekigahara. In 1603 the emperor designated him shōgun, and he made Edo (Tokyo) the seat of government. By 1615 he had eliminated the Toyotomi family, and he tightened his grip on the entire country by establishing a political and social order that brought all segments of the society under his firm control. He and the third shōgun, Iemitsu (1604–1651), adopted and implemented measures that would ensure the security of Tokugawa hegemony.

Ieyasu froze the social order, adapting Confucian China's four-class system—that is, scholar-officials (samurai), peasants, artisans, and merchants. In his Testament to his descendants, he stated: "The samurai are the master of the four classes. Agriculturists, artisans and merchants may not behave in a rude manner towards samurai. . . . A samurai is not to be interfered with in cutting down a fellow who has behaved to him in a manner other than is expected."[1] In other words, the samurai were to be at the top of the social hierarchy, the peasants were to remain on the land, and the artisans and merchants were to keep their places and behave in a manner expected of humble people.

In order to control the feudal lords (daimyō), of whom there were 295 in the early seventeenth century and 276 at the end of the Tokugawa era, the Tokugawa rulers adopted the following measures. They classified the daimyō into three categories: members of the Tokugawa clan (*shimpan*), lords who had been followers of the Tokugawa family before the Battle of Sekigahara (*fudai*, or hereditory lords), and those who submitted to or joined the Tokugawa family later (*tozama*, or outside lords). The fudai lords' domains (*han*) were placed in strategic places, whereas the tozama lords were placed in outlying regions or between two fudai lords' domains. In

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1635 Iemitsu issued the "Laws Governing the Military Households," which required that the feudal lords spend every other year in Edo and that their families remain in Edo (known as sankin kōtai); the feudal lords and their families were also forbidden to form marital ties with other daimyō families, or to build or repair castles without the Bakufu's permission.

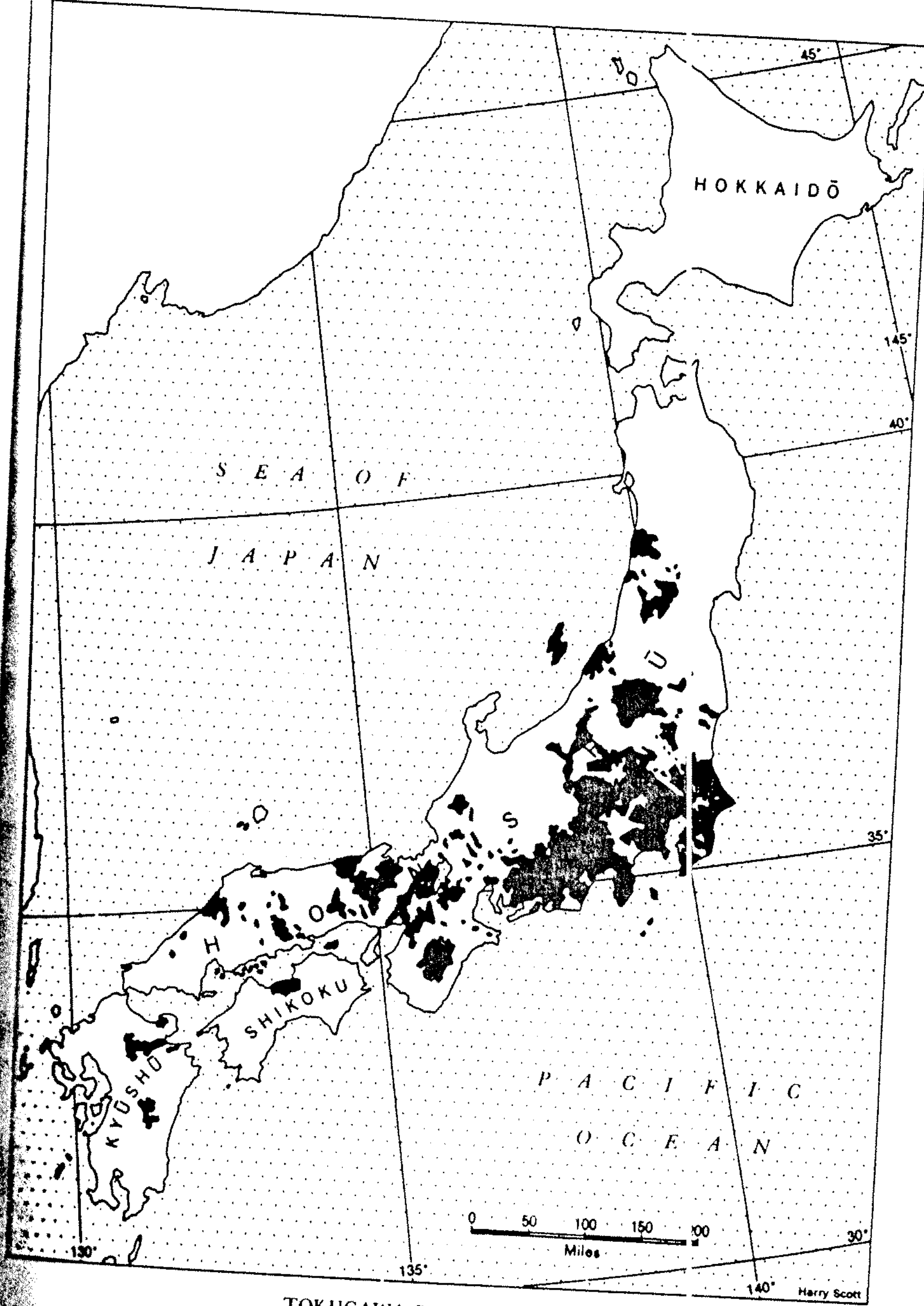
Of the 30 million *koku* (1 koku = 4.96 bushels) in rice, or rice equivalents, produced nationwide, the Bakufu's own holdings yielded 7 million koku. It also retained control over foreign relations, controlled coinage, and regulated inter-han transportation. The local lords were allowed to manage their own internal affairs and to retain their own vassals, who, in most instances, received stipends in rice rather than land allotments as fiefs.

In foreign relations Shōgun Iemitsu decided to virtually seal off the country from the outside world in order to prevent Christian influences from seeping into the country. Restrictions against Christians had started under Hideyoshi, who in 1587 ordered the missionaries to leave the country; but the edict was not stringently enforced until the last years of his life, when he crucified twenty-six missionaries and converts in 1597. Ieyasu initially pursued a policy of toleration, but in 1614 he issued an edict banning Christianity because he had come to believe that Christians were a threat to his plan to establish absolute control over the society. Thus commenced was a policy of ruthless persecution of Christians, who at that time numbered about 300,000. Iemitsu continued this policy with even less mercy than that shown by Ieyasu. In the years from 1614 to 1640, between 5,000 and 6,000 Christians were executed. In 1637-1638 a peasant rebellion against the local lord erupted in the Shimabara Peninsula and the Amakusa Islands. As the leadership was Christian, Iemitsu's distrust of Christians was reinforced. In 1639 he decided to virtually isolate Japan from the rest of the world. Only the Dutch and the Chinese were allowed to come to Nagasaki to trade in a limited fashion. The Koreans were permitted to trade through Iki Island off Honshu. In addition, books from the West were banned until 1720, when nonreligious works were allowed to enter Japan.

The shōgun was assisted in his administrative tasks by a group of councillors known as *rōju* (senior councillors). To deal with extraordinary matters a great councillor (*tairō*) was appointed, but this action was taken only rarely. Usually four or five rōju were chosen from the fudai domains. The three collateral houses of the Tokugawa clan (Mito near Edo, Owari around Nagoya, and Kii in Kii Peninsula) provided successors to the shōgun if he did not have an heir.

Once the foundations of the Bakufu were laid, the actions of succeeding shōgun did not seem to alter the course of events significantly. The difficulties that eventually confronted the Bakufu derived from objective and external developments such as the changing economic situation and the arrival of the Western powers in the nineteenth century.

The fourth shōgun, Ietsuna (1641–1680), failed to play an active role in the affairs of the state and left the business of government to his uncle and other Bakufu officials. During his reign neo-Confucianism began to gain official sanction as the orthodox philosophy of the realm. During the



TOKUGAWA DOMAINS, 1664.

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reign of the fifth shōgun, Tsunayoshi (1646–1709), the culture of the townspeople flourished—a period known as the Genroku era. Tsunayoshi fostered learning and encouraged the study of Confucianism. But he was imprudent in managing the Bakufu's finances and left his successor with a huge deficit.

Ienobu (1666–1713), who followed Tsunayoshi, employed an erudite Confucian scholar, Arai Hakuseki (1657–1725), as his adviser. Hakuseki hoped to solve the growing difficulties besetting the society by revitalizing Confucianism. He also adopted measures to strengthen the currency and check the outflow of gold and silver from the country. But he, too, failed to solve the growing economic difficulties of the Bakufu.

The eighth shōgun, Yoshimune (1684–1751), personally took charge of the affairs of the state and introduced a series of reform measures, known as the Kyōho Reforms (named for the Kyōho period, 1716–1736), to increase government revenues. He encouraged the reclamation of the new land and sought to prevent the peasants from illegally leaving the villages for the cities. He also issued sumptuary laws and censored literature in an effort to "uplift" the morality of the people. But his measures merely dealt with external symptoms, and the Bakufu's economic difficulties continued to mount.

TOKUGAWA INSTITUTIONS

Modern Japan cannot be comprehended without an understanding of the social, economic, political, intellectual, and cultural forces that emerged in the Tokugawa period. The hierarchical outlook and behavior, the emphasis on class order and social cohesion, the demand for obedience and submissiveness that the Tokugawa rulers insisted upon—all of these forces molded the values and attitudes of the people of the time and, in fact, have persisted to the present day. Specifically, it was during the Tokugawa period that the Confucian and samurai values and ideals became ingrained in the society.

Confucianism

With the advent of Chinese civilization, Chinese classics, history, and poetry entered Japan. Confucianism, however, did not affect the cultural and intellectual life of Japan as quickly as Buddhism had done. Nevertheless, because the Tokugawa rulers encouraged the study and propagation of Confucian values, Confucianism became the predominant intellectual force in this era—even though the early Tokugawa rulers had used Shinto and Buddhist concepts as well to legitimize their hegemony.[2]

Ieyasu wanted his vassals not only to be well trained in the martial arts but also, like the Chinese scholar-officials, to be steeped in Confucian learning. The Confucian school that received official backing was Confucianism as interpreted by the Sung Confucian, Chu Hsi (1130–1200). As the pursuit of Confucian studies continued for two-and-a-half centuries, the Japanese intellectual frame of reference came to be largely Confucian.

Confucian values continued to be instilled in the society after the Meiji Restoration (1868) because they were incorporated in the school textbooks until the end of the Second World War.

Confucius and his followers were interested primarily in man's relationship with his fellowmen and in maintaining social and political order, stability, and harmony. They believed there are five basic human relationships: those between lord and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend. Of these, the relationship between father and son was the most important, and filial piety was considered the cardinal virtue.

Like their Chinese counterparts, the Japanese Confucians emphasized filial piety; but the Tokugawa rulers made loyalty to the lord equally or more important than filial piety. The two were linked together as *chū-kō* (loyalty and filial piety). Social order was to be maintained by means of a hierarchical order in which the relationship between superior and inferior persons was strictly preserved. The superior person was expected to be benevolent and to set a moral example to those below, while those below were to be respectful, deferential, and obedient toward the superior.

Chu Hsi designated a universal force, the Supreme Ultimate, as the basis of morality and the font of the principle of all things. The Japanese Chu Hsi scholars equated the Supreme Ultimate with heaven. In this system of thought, the ruler governed in accordance with the Principle of Heaven, so the people were duty-bound to obey him. Thus Chu Hsi philosophy provided the ruling class with a moral anchor with which to preserve the established order of things. The Chu Hsi scholars also stressed the importance of the concept of *taigi-meibun*. *Taigi* means the highest principle of justice, and *meibun* means name and place (i.e., knowing one's proper place). *Taigi-meibun* thus means doing one's duty in accordance with one's status in society. Of course, this concept necessitated the stifling of both individuality and individual interests. The emphasis was instead directed to the "group" or class to which one belonged—an emphasis that also characterized the other schools of Confucianism as well as the imperatives of Bushidō and of Buddhism, which stressed denial of the self.

A rival school of thought to Chu Hsi Confucianism was the Wang Yang-ming school. Wang Yang-ming (1472–1528) of Ming China emphasized the subjective basis of moral principles. The Confucian concept of *Li* (Principle) is in the mind, he asserted. "Mind is *Li*. How can there be affairs and *Li* outside the mind?" he asked. "Since there is the mind of filial love, there is the *Li* of filial piety."[3] Wang Yang-ming also emphasized the importance of acting upon the truth as perceived by the individual. His teaching that truth is subjective and that the individual must act upon this truth appealed to many Tokugawa samurai. It became the creed of the militant activists of the late Tokugawa period who challenged the legitimacy of Tokugawa rule.

Another Confucian school that gained adherents among Tokugawa scholars was the school of Ancient Learning, which stressed a direct reference to the texts of the ancient philosophers rather than a reliance on the

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interpretations of later scholars. Among these scholars was Ogyū Sorai (1666–1728), who rejected the Chu Hsi concept that a natural basis exists for moral principles. Rather, Sorai insisted, all rules, regulations, and institutions are man-made. This idea opened the way for later thinkers to challenge the idea of the existing order of things, which, after all, are man-made and not ordained by nature or heaven. The emphasis of this school on the importance of studying ancient texts also contributed to the rise of the school of National Learning.

The Samurai and the Way of the Warriors

During the years of Tokugawa peace, warrior-philosophers began to formulate what they considered to be the ideal mode of conduct for the samurai. Of course, even before the Tokugawa era, righteous and unrighteous conduct had been defined, and the samurai was expected to live by the principles of duty, loyalty, integrity, honor, justice, fidelity, and courage. In the Kamakura period, the life of the samurai was spoken of as *yumiya no michi*, the way of the bow and arrow. The lord-vassal relationship that constituted the basis of the feudal system rose out of familial relationships. A follower of the lord was called *gokenin* (man of the house), or *ie-no-ko* (child of the house). Hence the relationship between lord and vassal was akin to that of father and son. Like the European medieval knight, the samurai pledged allegiance to his lord in a ritualistic ceremony. In return, the lord was expected to reward the vassal with land, stipends, or the right to collect taxes.

In relating tales of warriors who were engaged in the power struggles of the late Heian period and after, storytellers have often idealized the conduct of the warriors, who were depicted as being chivalrous, selfless, and heroic. But, in reality, some samurai were motivated not by noble ideals but by self-interest. In times of strife the principle that prevailed for such samurai was the law of the jungle. What really counted were physical strength and martial skill. Expediency and opportunism guided the actions of many warriors who were ready to shift with the changing tide of fortune. For this reason, the period between 1337 and 1392, when the northern and southern imperial courts were in conflict, is referred to as the "great age of turncoats." The same situation prevailed during the years of the Warring States in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The strong conquered the weak; the powerful destroyed the helpless. Given the opportunity, a vassal would likely turn against his master. Thus, in order to ensure his vassal's loyalty, the master had to reward him properly. The vassal then was obligated to him; he owed him *on*. Eventually the concept of *on* became a cardinal virtue in the Japanese value system. A person owed *on* to his feudal lord, parents, teachers, emperor, society, and so on.

The samurai's interests were closely bound to the interests of his family. If he died in battle he expected his family to be properly rewarded. But self-interest caused frequent conflicts among family members, conflicts in which sons turned against fathers and brothers fought brothers.

As noted earlier, Zen influenced the life of the samurai during the Ashikaga period, for it disciplined the warrior to concentrate, control his emotions, and overcome the fear of death. One sixteenth-century warlord exhorted his retainers to "devote yourselves to the study of Zen. Zen has no secrets other than seriously thinking about birth and death."[4] Unfortunately, this belief reinforced the samurai's rather cold-blooded attitude about killing people, despite the fact that, ideally, the samurai was expected to behave in a compassionate and magnanimous fashion.

Among the Tokugawa warrior-philosophers who reflected upon the proper mode of conduct for the samurai (*bushidō*) were Yamaga Sokō (1622–1685) and Yamamoto Tsunetomo (1659–1719). In his *Hagakure (Hidden Among Leaves)*, the latter wrote, "As long as a person values his master, his parents will be happy and the Buddha and the gods will respond to his prayers. I have no other thought but to serve my master." He also remarked, "I have discovered that *bushidō* means to die." The implication is that by thinking constantly about death, a person will become free and manage to perform his duties more perfectly.[5]

The samurai's code of proper conduct persisted through the years to the modern age. As one modern Christian writer, Nitobe Inazo (1862–1933), wrote in his book entitled *Bushidō*:

> Chivalry is a flower no less indigenous to the soil of Japan than its emblem, the cherry blossom. . . . It is still a living object of power and beauty among us; and if it assumes no tangible shape or form, it not the less scents the moral atmosphere, and makes us aware that we are still under its potent spell.[6]

Bushidō, if strictly adhered to, was a stringently demanding code of life. It required the samurai to fulfill his responsibilities and obligations scrupulously. If he failed to do so, or if he disgraced himself in any manner whatever, he was expected to assume full responsibility and take his own life by means of a highly ritualized mode of disembowelment with a sword (*hara-kiri*, or *seppuku*). This custom evidently first came into existence in the twelfth century, when the samurai chiefs were contending for power. The defeated warriors, rather than be taken captive, committed seppuku. The vassals often joined their masters in death. Even during the early years of the Tokugawa era, vassals often committed seppuku upon their lord's death, thus compelling the Bakufu to prohibit this practice.

In the Tokugawa period seppuku was used to punish warriors who committed serious offenses. But it was regarded as an honorable way of dying; indeed, samurai of their own free will often committed ritual suicide to uphold their honor, to prove their sincerity, or to protest the unjust actions of their superiors. The occasional practice of seppuku continued into the modern era. After the end of the Second World War, a number of army and navy officers committed seppuku, taking responsibility for Japan's defeat. The most recent instance of ritual suicide was that of the novelist Mishima Yukio, who in 1969 committed seppuku to protest the

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decline in traditional values and the absence of the spirit of patriotism among his young compatriots.

A possession of the samurai that distinguished them from the commoners was the sword—the samurai's symbol of superior status. (The common people were prohibited from bearing a sword.) The sword supposedly embodied the spirit of the samurai. It was the emblem of their power, honor, and status, but for the common people it was an instrument of terror because the samurai were given the right to cut down any commoner who offended them. Thus, it might be said that the courtesy, politeness, humility, and subservience of the common people were instilled in them at the edge of the sword.

National Learning

In the Tokugawa period, when the scholars of National Learning began to emphasize the unique nature of Japanese culture and religion, the nativistic aspects of Shinto were also emphasized. The scholars were influenced by the Confucian school of Ancient Learning, which, as noted, stressed the importance of going back to the original teachings of Confucius. In addition, Shinto scholars began to stress the need to return to the roots of Japanese culture and religion, to the time before Japan had become overwhelmed by Chinese culture and thought. Thus, the "native" texts of Japan, the *Man'yōshū* (*Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves*) and the *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Matters*) were extolled as true embodiments of the Japanese spirit because, according to these scholars, they were free of foreign contamination.

Among the pioneers of the scholars of National Learning was Kamo-no-Mabuchi (1697–1769). He rejected Confucianism for having made people "crafty," in contrast to the ancient Japanese who were simple, honest, sincere, and free from abstruse teachings. The scholar who came to be regarded as the sage of National Learning was Motoori Norinaga. Norinaga devoted his life to the study of the *Man'yōshū* and the *Kojiki*. The latter, he asserted, embodied "The Way of the Gods," and what was recorded in it were absolute truths. One such truth concerned the founding of Japan by the Sun Goddess, who was the Sun itself. Hence Japan, as a land favored by the gods, was believed to occupy a unique place in the world. Norinaga's followers then insisted that Japan was superior to the other nations of the world. This mode of thinking culminated in the movement in the 1930s to bring "the eight corners of the world under one roof," so that the world could benefit from the "benevolence" of the descendant of the Sun Goddess (namely, the emperor).

Norinaga believed that, previous to the advent of Chinese civilization, the Japanese behaved in a natural and uninhibited fashion and that this natural way was distorted by Chinese thought and culture—especially Confucianism, with its artificial rules and regulations about decorum and propriety. It was important to allow one's true feelings to have free play, he insisted, for only in this way could one be fully sensitive to all facets of life.

Even though Norinaga spoke of the sacred origin of Japan and the imperial dynasty, he did not call for the restoration of political authority to the imperial court. Instead, he accepted the existing political order. This he justified by asserting that "great shōgun have ruled the land ever since Azumaterunokami [Ieyasu] founded the government in accordance with the designs of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, and by the authority vested in him by the imperial court. . . . The rules and laws of the founder and succeeding shōgun are all rules and laws of the Sun Goddess Amaterasu." Hence "to obey the laws of the day is to follow the true way of the Gods."[7] It was not until the later stages of the Tokugawa era that Shinto nationalists began to urge the restoration of authority to the emperor.

THE STRUCTURE OF TOKUGAWA SOCIETY

The Peasants

During the years of the Warring States the peasants were exploited ruthlessly by the local warlords, who taxed them heavily. They were also victimized by the marauding samurai who came to their villages to loot, pillage, and kill. Often the peasants armed themselves to defend their villages against the brigands. They also united under the leadership of one of the popular Buddhist sects and waged war against the warlords. Some became foot soldiers and joined a warlord's troops; others joined the ranks of the samurai. The most striking example of a peasant rising to the top as a warrior was that of Hideyoshi. Thus, despite their poverty, privation, and victimization by the brigands, the peasants of this period retained considerable freedom and social mobility. With the centralization of power, however, they lost their freedom. Hideyoshi took away their weapons and bound them to the soil, and Ieyasu subsequently froze the social and political order and kept the peasants tied to the soil.

In adopting the aforementioned four-class system of Confucian China, Ieyasu identified the samurai with the scholar-officials. Class divisions were to be maintained rigidly: a person's status was fixed by birth, class lines were not to be transgressed, and interclass marriages were forbidden. A decree of the Bakufu stated, "Each person must devote himself to his own business, without negligence; and in all respects keep within the limits proper to his social position."[8] It was Ieyasu who gave the samurai permission to cut down any commoner who behaved "in a manner other than expected."

Confucian scholars upheld the class system. One Tokugawa Confucian wrote, "The samurai use their minds, the peasants and those below use their muscles. Those who use their minds are superior; those who use their muscles are inferior."[9]

Like the other commoners, peasants were forbidden to use surnames, bear swords, or fix their hair in samurai style. They had to be subservient and humble, and to bow deeply or kneel on the ground when the samurai came strutting by. Theoretically, the peasants, who constituted about 80 percent of the population, ranked above the artisans and merchants, but in reality they were worse off than the others. Their sole function was to

work the land and provide for the economic needs of the ruling class. One official was reputed to have said, "Sesame seed and peasants are much alike. The more you squeeze them, the more you can get out of them." The idea, then, was to tax the peasants as much as possible. The average rate of taxation was between 40 and 50 percent of the harvest, but as the economic needs of the daimyō grew, some lords took substantially more. The Bakufu, however, kept its share to 40 percent throughout its reign.

In addition to taxing the harvest, many other forms of taxes were imposed. One Bakufu official in the late eighteenth century observed that there was "a tax on the field, a tax on doors, a tax on windows, a tax on female children according to age, a tax on cloth, a tax on *sake*, a tax on hazel trees, a tax on beans, a tax on hemp. . . . If a peasant added a room to his hut a tax was levied on it."[10] In addition, peasants were required to provide corvée whenever the lords or officials needed the services of such labor.

Because the peasants were the primary source of revenue for the Bakufu and the daimyō, they were encouraged to be as frugal and thrifty as possible—so as to leave more for the ruling class. The rulers not only regulated the peasants' mode of farming and other work but also told them what to eat, drink, and wear and what kind of hut to live in. The ruling class was particularly anxious to keep the villagers from being "contaminated" by the "extravagant" ways of the townspeople. They also preferred to keep the peasants ignorant and ill-informed so that they would not be exposed to "subversive" ideas. "A good peasant," it was said, "is one who does not know the price of grain." The ruling class believed that the peasants should not receive any education beyond learning the virtues of obedience, docility, humility, loyalty, frugality, and hard work. Some insisted that both peasants and townspeople should be forbidden from studying. However, the village elders who served as local agents for the ruling class were educated enough to oversee village affairs.

The status and condition of the peasants varied to some degree, of course. In most villages there were two classes of peasants: those who farmed their own land (although, in theory, the land was not theirs because it belonged to the shōgun or the daimyō) and those who were tenant farmers. The former were regarded as "regular" farmers and had a voice in village affairs, whereas the latter did not. The average holding varied from place to place, but the norm was about 1 *chō* (2.45 acres). The peasants were forbidden to leave the villages; however, as commerce grew and jobs became available in the towns and cities, tenant farmers, hired workers, and younger sons (who had no place in the economic life of the village) left for the cities to seek work.

In the later years of the Tokugawa era, the peasants grew increasingly discontented with their plight, and peasant disturbances began to break out with increasing frequency and greater magnitude (see Chapter 3).

The Townspeople

The artisans and merchants were placed below the peasants in the social hierarchy because the peasants provided the economic wherewithal for the samurai class whereas the merchants were regarded as a parasitic class. The Tokugawa rulers adopted the Confucian thesis that money-making is a demeaning preoccupation. As a Japanese Confucian moralist, Kaibara Ekken (1630–1714), wrote, "The enlightened kings of the ancient period valued agriculture and curtailed industry and commerce. They respected the five grains and held money in disdain."[11]

The Tokugawa ruling class was not indifferent to profits. If any profits were to accrue from commerce and industry, the members of this class intended to be the beneficiaries. Thus, they regulated commerce and industry and maintained monopolistic control of enterprises that were profitable.

The merchant class tried to make the best of the restrictive system that hedged them in and set out to acquire as much wealth as possible. As Ihara Saikaku (1652–1693), a writer who depicted the life of the townspeople, asserted, "Money is the townsman's pedigree, whatever his birth and lineage. No matter how splendid a man's ancestor, if he lacks money he is worse off than a monkey-showman."[12]

A philosophical school upholding the way of the merchants even came into existence. Its founder, Ishida Baigan (1685–1744), came out of the peasantry, was apprenticed in a merchant house, studied independently, and eventually became a teacher of the common people. His school of thought is known as *shingaku* (teachings of the heart) because, as he asserted, in reading books the "heart" of the writer must be understood. This school of thought also came to be known as *chōnin-gaku* (creed of the townspeople). Baigan argued that the merchants' pursuit of profits was part of the Principle of Heaven. After all, the townspeople, like other members of the society, were performing useful tasks and should not be denigrated; moreover, the principle of frugality that guided the merchants was beneficial to all classes, including the government.

The vigor and determination with which the merchants pursued profits enabled them to gain wealth and, indirectly, power. They began to cause serious difficulties to the ruling class later in the Tokugawa era, for despite the Bakufu's policy of keeping the economy basically agrarian, internal commerce began to flourish. Both the Bakufu's capital, Edo, and the daimyō's castletown became centers of large populations. The vassals of the shōgun and the daimyō resided in these cities, and merchants, artisans, and servants congregated there. The towns along the major roads traveled by the daimyō and their entourages during their regular trips back and forth to Edo flourished as rest stops.

Rice and other products from the villages had to be transported to the castletowns and major distribution centers. Despite their haughty attitude toward the merchants, the members of the ruling class had to rely on them to serve as wholesale dealers, brokers, and money-changers to market

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the products of their domains. As a result, some of the merchant houses became extremely wealthy. In some instances, the Bakufu confiscated the properties of merchant houses to whom the samurai class had fallen heavily in debt. But a number of merchant houses managed to prosper and survive and eventually emerged in the modern era as major business firms. Such was the case with the House of Mitsui.

The major cities of Tokugawa Japan were among the largest in the world during these centuries. In the early eighteenth century, the population of Edo was estimated at 1 million, Osaka at about 400,000, and Kyoto at 350,000. By contrast, the population of London in 1700 was about 600,000 and in Paris, about 500,000.

The Outcastes

Beneath the four classes of Tokugawa society was another consisting of people treated as outcastes. The Bakufu classified people broadly into *ryōmin* (good people) and *semmin* (base people). At the end of the Tokugawa period, out of a population of 28 or 29 million people about 380,000 were classified as semmin—the antecedents of the people known today as *burakumin* (hamlet people). In the Tokugawa period they were designated as *eta* (unclean people) or *hinin* (nonhumans). In the years before the Tokugawa period the two groups were not sharply differentiated, but the Tokugawa rulers classed the former as outcastes by birth whereas the latter were defined as such because of the occupation they held or as the result of some social infraction they had committed. In some instances the latter were able to rejoin the ranks of the ryōmin in the early Tokugawa years, but their status eventually became hereditary as well. The reason for which certain people came to be labeled as *eta* is not entirely clear, but in many instances the designation may have been related to occupations viewed as unclean, such as butchering, leather work, and so on. However, other occupations that had no stigma of uncleanliness, such as those held by basket makers, bamboo workers, and footwear makers, also became associated with this class. The hinin were itinerant entertainers, beggars, scavengers, prostitutes, and castoff commoners. The Bakufu used the hinin to work in prisons and to execute and bury criminals.

The government did not recognize the outcastes as legal entities. They were ignored in official surveys, and entire outcaste communities were left out of some official maps. A host of discriminatory measures were imposed on them. They were restricted in the kind of work they could engage in, they were forbidden to intermarry with other classes, and they were segregated in ghettos. In many places they were forbidden to wear footwear, or to enter the grounds of shrines and temples. The commoners expected them to bow and scrape and to move aside when their paths crossed. The treatment that the burakumin experienced would be similar, then, to the abuse suffered by the outcastes of India. As one Tokugawa official observed when an outcaste member was killed for trying to enter the grounds of a shrine, "The life of an *eta* is worth about one-seventh the life of a townsman. Unless seven *eta* have been killed, we cannot punish a single townsman."[13]

The Women

The Tokugawa social system was based upon the segregation of "superior" and "inferior" persons, but there was also a hierarchy of sex and age. The attitude about male-female relationships differed between the samurai class and the townspeople, and the attitude of the ruling class tended to influence the thinking of the peasantry.

It appears that women were accorded better treatment in antiquity than during the Tokugawa period. After all, the "ancestor" of the emperors is the Sun Goddess, and the ruler mentioned in *The History of the Kingdom of Wei*, Pimiku, was a woman. The occasional occupation by women of the imperial throne persisted into the Tokugawa period (although only one woman took the throne within the era itself). Ancient Japan was a matrilineal, if not a matriarchal, society. Until the eleventh century or so, upon marriage the husband and wife lived apart, the husband visited the wife in her home, and the children stayed with the mother. In the twelfth century the husband and wife began living together, but, again, it was the husband who joined the wife's household. With the ascendancy of the samurai class, however, the patriarchal structure became stronger. By the fifteenth century the custom whereby the bride went to live with the husband's family became the norm. Among the peasant families of northeastern Japan, however, the eldest daughter carried on the family line—a custom that persisted into the Tokugawa period. Vestiges of this custom are seen today in the practice by which the daughter takes a husband to carry on the family line when the family has no male heir.

With the rise of the samurai, physical strength and martial prowess became essential. Then the status of women began to decline. The growing influence of Confucianism also fortified this trend toward masculine ascendancy, for Confucianism insisted upon the maintenance of a rigid hierarchy of sex and age. Generally speaking, Buddhism also placed women in a disadvantageous position insofar as it held that salvation was not possible for them. These concepts permeated the thinking of the Heian court circle. For example, as Prince Genji in *The Tale of Genji* mused at one point, "But what was the good of trying to please women? If they were not fundamentally evil, they would not have been born women at all."[14] Moreover, Heian men believed that women were incapable of mastering the complex Chinese writing system. Thus, they were expected to rely primarily on the phonetic *kana* system. And yet it was Heian women who produced the masterpieces of Japanese literature.

The worsening of the status of women as the samurai class gained ascendancy was revealed in the growing difference between male and female speech during the Kamakura period. Women were increasingly expected to show their humility and subservience by using honorific speech when addressing men and by referring to themselves in humble terms. The end result was the evolution of the Japanese language in such a way as to include the most minutely differentiated styles of speech between men and women, and between "superior" and "inferior" persons, by

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means of intricate levels of distinctions between humble and honorific words, phrases, and speech patterns.

In the early stages of samurai ascendancy, the women of the samurai class were expected to be skilled in the martial arts. Masako, the widow of Yoritomo, led her warriors against the foes of Kamakura. The Jōei Code of 1232 provided for women's right to inherit property and serve as vassals. But their rights were increasingly curtailed as the rule of the swordsmen gained in strength. By the Tokugawa period the status of women, especially upper-class women, had reached its nadir.

Even before the Tokugawa era, in the period of the Warring States, the samurai men were treating women as semislaves. As a Portuguese trader observed in the mid-sixteenth century, "Her husband may kill [his wife] for being lazy or bad. For this reason women are much concerned with their husband's honor and are most diligent in their household duties."[15]

The Tokugawa rulers gave the male family head absolute authority over all family members. In sexual relations the husband could be as promiscuous as he pleased, but even the slightest hint of infidelity on the part of the wife could result in her being executed by her husband. Ieyasu's Testament states, "If a married woman of the agricultural, artisan, or commercial class shall secretly have illicit intercourse with another man, it is not necessary for the husband to enter a complaint against the persons thus confusing the great relations of mankind, but he may put them both to death."[16] In one of his plays, Chikamatsu, a Tokugawa playwright, has a samurai mother tell her daughter, "When you are alone with any other man—beside your husband—you are not so much as to lift your head and look at him."[17] Moreover, a samurai woman was expected to kill herself if her chastity was threatened.

Marriages were arranged by the parents, and daughters had no say in the decision. The husband could easily divorce the wife, but the wife had to endure with self-sacrificing stoicism all forms of injustice and abuse at the hands of her husband and his family. In the samurai family, when the husband committed ritual suicide, the perfect wife would join him in death. This practice continued into the modern period. For instance, Mrs. Nogi joined her husband in death when he committed suicide upon Emperor Meiji's death—and, indeed, she was lauded as a paragon of the loyal Japanese wife. At the end of the Second World War, when General Sugiyama Hajime committed suicide, his wife joined him in death too.

As Kaibara Ekken wrote in his *Onna Daigaku* (*Great Learning for Women*), "From her earliest youth, a girl should observe the line of demarcation separating women from men. . . . In her dealings with her husband both the expression of her countenance and the style of address should be courteous, humble and conciliatory. . . . A woman should look upon her husband as if he were Heaven itself."[18]

The townspeople adhered to a much less rigid and moralistic position about male-female relations. As Ihara Saikaku (1642–1693), a popular writer, remarked, "For the husband to love his wife, and the wife to be affectionate towards her husband and maintain a gentle and friendly relationship is the proper way." He also believed that widows should remarry. "We cannot label as immoral the longing of a woman for another man, or her desire to have another man after her husband's death." Some townspeople disagreed with the Confucian thesis that the cardinal human relationship was that of father and son. Rather, they contended, it was that of husband and wife. "The way of humanity originated with husband and wife. First there was man and woman, and then husband and wife. After that came the gods, Buddha and the sages. Thus husband and wife constitute the source of all things."[19] Whereas in the samurai class the practice of primogeniture was rigidly adhered to and women had no property rights, among the townspeople the parents could choose a younger son to carry on the family business or divide the family property among their sons and daughters.

The Tokugawa ruling class tried to instill in the peasants the same restrictive practice and attitude that they had imposed on samurai women. Peasant women were denied property rights, and the practice of primogeniture was enforced. In 1649 the Bakufu advised the peasants, "However good looking a wife may be, if she neglects her household duties by drinking tea or sight-seeing or rambling along the hillside, she must be divorced."[20]

The Tokugawa samurai's thinking on the male-female relationship persisted into the modern period. Even Nitobe Inazō, a Christian, remarked around the turn of the twentieth century that "[Feudal] woman's surrender of herself to the good of her husband, home and family, was as willing and honorable as the man's self-surrender to the good of his lord and country. Self-renunciation . . . is the keynote of the loyalty of man as well as the domesticity of woman."[21]

THE CULTURE OF THE TOKUGAWA PERIOD

Literature

The literary creations of the pre-Tokugawa years were products largely of the upper classes, but during the Tokugawa period the creative energies of the common people gushed forth. This culture flourished against the wishes of the Tokugawa ruler. As one Japanese authority has indicated, "The austere and moralistic regime despised and discouraged social intercourse. . . . The Tokugawa regime stopped giving public support to all cultural activities, expelling them into a narrow, private world. . . . The leading arts, such as kabuki, ukiyo-e, the love novels, and most of the musical works, were exiled from public places and confined to the world of the pleasure quarters."[22]

The period during which the Tokugawa townspeople exhibited their creativity and vigor most dramatically was the Genroku era, which extended from the end of the seventeenth century to the beginning of the eighteenth century. During these years the townspeople not only displayed their wealth in an extravagant, ostentatious fashion but also expressed their creativity in such diverse fields as puppet theatre, kabuki, haiku, novels, woodblock printing, ceramics, and other areas of arts and crafts. What they depicted

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