

ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE FOREIGN AND
JAPANESE OUTLOOK ABOUT THE CAUSES THAT LED
TO THE BAKUMATSU

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EMDI SCHOOL.2016

WORD COUNT:3336

History Extended Essay

Abstract

This essay examines an “Analytical overview of the foreign and Japanese outlook about the causes that led to the bakumatsu”. The essay start with an overlook of Japanese society within the years of Shogunate`s mandate. The essay outset the lifestyle on the Tokugawa`s period, over social class divisions, economy, and regulations by the Shogunate. The topic develops to the development and new regulations held by Japan and International Relationship for cultural stability and analyzing it`s effect over their economy. Then it state the factors for the response by the lower classes and future implications of Japanese Isolation on their relationship with other nations and new treaties of trade. For the next part, is the evaluations of the opposition as the Shimazu`s Clan and how their new relationship will led for Bakumatsu started, being a major opponent with new armistice form western society, as Great Britain. As a final part, it was outline one of the most important battles held for the fall of the Shogunate leading to the Meiji`s Restoration to star, it evaluates how weak new government after the last shogun abdicate and the actions held by the unconformity of the people. The event develops to the role on army forces and political activities took from other nations such as France, Great Britain and The United States for the opening of shores for trade. The conclusion will led to identify that after over 700 years of oppression over people, leaving upon their poor quality life, the decisions made by the government led for the growing unhappiness. After the unstable government and economical interest by other nations to support the opposition, the Bakufu finally resulted

Word Count: 276

Key words: Shogunate fall, Bakumatshu, Tokugawa, Japanese History, Iyeyasu, International Relationships, Simazu Clan, Boshin wat,

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*ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW OF THE FOREIGN AND JAPANESE
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A. Introduction

For many years by now, Japanese history has always being of mine interest as it has one of the major knowledge acquiring, spiritual development and cultural richness. As one of the first major cultures of Human kind has an extensive history which has been documented on a development language. This essay has been targeted on one of a major transition on Japanese history of an ancient society to a globalized major industrialized nation.

Analyzing the causes that have been developing on the last years of mandate that had rules since the XII century until 1896, at the Bakufu. The objective of this essay is to determine the roles of every party to this event to happen. From the internal to the external influences.

B. Life Style under the Shogunate

To further bolster social stability, the Togukawa demanded rigid conformity to conservative doctrines values and habits of behavior. It settled the ideology under the people that their life was not for self-fulfillment, but with the performance of obligation

they had within their country.¹

As duty called for loyalty and obedience towards their leader there was no room on people's minds for education and knowledge gaining, concluding that freedom of thought was extinct. As there was no other ideologies than the one gave by the Tokugawa's shogunate, it converted into a stable government. Under those circumstances, as also taking into account the fear people struggled due to the samurai's harsh punishments; there were low possibilities for a revolt as people lived in conformity, fear and ignorance

After Ieyasu was brought to power, he replaced the opposing feudal lords with his allies. This coadjutors were free to domain under few restrictions. As a way to avoid alliances, he banned marriage among other feudal lord's family members.²

One of the bakufus aims to produce social stability by imposing on the Japanese people a social order based on clearly defined and rigidly maintained class lines.

For example, the Tokugawa will demand and maintain every social class in a quite determined fashion rule for each one of them and keeping the things as they are by also categorizing the capital city by social classes, with varieties on the quality of the streets, building and granting a street for each type of labor (carpenters, etc.)

¹ Bowen, J. (14 de May de 2010). Recuperado el 25 de October de 2015, de Pacific War Historical Society: <http://www.pacificwar.org.au/Introduction.html>

² " Hauser, W. B. (1997). "Tokugawa Japan, 1600-1867. En A. E. Armonk (Ed.), *In Asia in Western and World History*. N.Y: Sharpe.

Upon the Edo period, there were quite clear social level, each one with their own rights and duties. At the top of the pyramid, was located the emperor and his court nobles. On the next position was settled the Warrior class, whose leader was the shogun. He might be the second in category but he was the first on power and privileged. In a total population of roughly thirty million, about two million Japanese was part of the samurai class. No one who did not belong to a samurai family could reach these social level. Below the samurai where the common people who did their best to survive at the lowest social level, worked as a craftsman, artisans, fishermen, and finally, merchants, this people were despised as parasites by the samurai. Although at the lowest rank of the social barrel were the entertainers, leather workers, beggars and executioners. Social mobility was excluded.

C. International Relationship of Japan

“The third dimension of the Tokugawa obsession with order, in addition to politics and society, was in international relations.”

(Robert Oxnam, 2005)

The third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, was the one who forced the partial isolation in the seventeenth century. His reasons for taking action is because he believed that the influences from abroad could shift the balance that existed between the shogun and the feudal lords.

The Shogunate sought a new approach for maintaining their culture and political order, by partially closing its borders to western nations and by seeking a reorganization of their international relations with other East Asian countries.³ Isolation did not concealed into neighbor countries because Japan considered just the west as an unsettling, disordering.. This idea was originated by the thought of whether colonization or the spread of Christianity will create revolt against his mandated towards an equalitarian society.⁴ Whereas, The Tokugawa shoguns had the aim to regulate trade for their own advantage, by building the: East Asian Cultural Sphere”, as it’s called. This is because East Asian countries were accepted for their ideology and cultural similarity. By this means, there is a hierarchy within Asian’s country, eventually with China at the top of the triangle.⁵ Having most of the revenues from this trade agreement. Nevertheless, it was not a complete isolation as Dutch trader were allowed to trade at a small port at Nagasaki, while Japanese trade continued with Chinese and Koreans.

As the desired for cultural and ideological preservation, the shogun created an artificial island on Nagasaki where trade would happened. Here was settled the Dutch trading post. Over this island the Dutch had all the facilities they needed, avoiding them to enter Japan. There were housed and Dutch official’s offices. There were separated rooms for Japanese interpreters and officer of the Shogun. There were also storehouses for their imported products, as sugar, copper and cloth.

Some samurai leaders demanded a change in the leadership, while people were

³ Robert B. Oxnam (President Emeritus, A. S. (2002-2015). “*An Online resource for Asian History and Culture*”. Obtenido de <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/at/>

⁴ Carol Gluck A. S. (2002-2015). “*An Online resource for Asian History and Culture*”. From <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/at/>

⁵ Henry D. Smith (2002-2015). “*An Online resource for Asian History and Culture*”. from <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/at/>

impoverishing, and educating themselves thanks to the books imported by the Dutch.⁶

Isolation within years, maintain Japan preservation until the mid-19th century. In contrast with Europe, Japanese artisans still produced their items by hand, while in Europe this custom has being lost because of the Industrial Revolution. The crafters had to prepare themselves for years before being qualified as artisans. This is because samurais demanded products of great elegance and taste. Even every-day objects were required to be created with a well-thought design, which will represent their reality. This increasing prosperity of the merchants gave the crafters a new level on their market.⁷

One of the greatest products of the 18th and 19th century was the woodblock print. This was used by artisans to produce mass art. Was a perfect tool for recording Japanese life in the most vivid way. But, as the years passed the nation had fallen on technology and army.⁶ Which, at the end will affect negatively to Japanese business as the competitiveness from foreign countries will decrease their demand.

On July of 1853, the isolation state of Japan was abolished. Since Commodore Mathew Perry, of the United States of America's Navy, sailed into Edo, commanding a squadron and two sailing vessels. Samurai's were discontent but helpless, as, thanks to isolation, they had no defense towards American guns. Perry, with the support of the United

⁶ Carol Gluck A. S. (2002-2015). "*An Online resource for Asian History and Culture*". from <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/at/>

⁷ Video © Australian Broadcasting Corporation (except where otherwise indicated). All images copyright their respective owners

States government. Forced Japan to sign a treaty permitting trade, opening the boards for the U.S exporter ships. Due to the reality lived in western powers, pursuing to open new markets for their goods as well as raw materials for new industries.⁸

Furthermore, a major factor was the belief on the *Manifest destiny*, which means that American settlers were destined to expand over several continents.⁹ Japan did not have any navy for defending themselves from the threat, thus they had to agree with the American's demands.¹⁰

Russia, Britain, France, and Holland followed Perry's example and used their navies for forcing Japan to sign treaties that stated regular relations of trade. As a contrast with thee the United States, they did not just threaten Japan, they combined navies on several occasions to defeat and disarm the Japanese feudal domains that attacked them.

When Japanese saw a Perry's fleet sailing into their harbor, the used to called them "The Black Ships of evil mien (appearance)". This shows how unpleased people were, they were afraid of them and they did not wanted any western on their country. As it was stated before on this essay, they were used to their orthodox traditions and way of living. The cultural shock that was suffered made them had a sense of oddity towards them. In 1858, there was another treaty signed which opened more ports and led more foreign currency to enter the country which weaken the Japanese one, disrupting their monetary system. Indeed, the shogun was unable to act towards the problems brought

⁸ Video © Australian Broadcasting Corpoation (All images copyright their respective owners)

⁹ Robert J. Miller (2006). *Native America, Discovered And Conquered: Thomas Jefferson, Lewis & Clark, And Manifest Destiny*. Greenwood. p. 120

¹⁰ © 2009 Asia for Educators, Columbia University

by this trade as Japan was threaten with navy and weaponry.

D. Factors for the Revolutions, Wars and other political changes to start.

While under the Ashigawa shoguns, cultural pursuits flourished at Kyoto, effective central control from Kyoto began to break down during the fifteenth century, and civil disorder increased as the provincial samurai clan lords or daimyo contended for land and power.

These civil disorders tended to concentrate power in the hands of a few daimyo of unrivalled strength who ultimately fought in order to achieve the control of Japan itself. A general named Tokugawa Ieyasu won this battle to control of Japan. He was appointed shogun by the emperor and established his military government at Yedo (now Tokyo).

The powerful Tokugawa clan, with the support of its branch families and allied clans, would provide shoguns to rule Japan from 1603 to 1867. It needs to be mentioned that there were other clans which had submitted to Tokugawa rule only after being defeated by them in battle. They were mostly in western Japan, and included the powerful Satsuma and Choshu clans. These defeated western¹¹ clans would patiently bide their

¹¹Bowen, J. (14 de May de 2010). Recuperado el 25 de October de 2015, de Pacific War Historical Society: <http://www.pacificwar.org.au/Introduction.html>

time to seek revenge against the Tokugawa until the middle of the 19th century, when they would play vital roles in the overthrow of rule by shogun, restoration of the emperor as sole ruler, and the modernization of Japan.

Because of the opening of foreign trade, which was out of Japanese controlled, led to economic instability for the nation. As people preferred to buy imported materials and products, many businesses were now bankrupt. As unemployment rose, inflation also did. Japanese currency was based on Tokugawa coinage, at the year of 1861, international rates of trades between gold and silver was 1:15, while traditionally was 1:5. Because of this, foreigners bought massively gold, due to this, Japanese were forced to devalue their currency.

The Tokugawa bakufu's time of trouble began early in 1862. The regime came under pressure from the court. Certain daimyo and shishi or samurai activists to change policies and initiate reforms. That pressure surged upward as the year progressed and by the autumn it had given rise to the bunkyu reform, a renovation effort led by one of the most active daimyo, Matsudaira Shungaku of fukui. Part of the reform was a series of political changes that within six months reduced the bakufu to a secondary role in national politics. Part of it however, was a set an administrative, fiscal and military changes.

E. Shimazu Clan

Shimazu's clan has been considered as of the tozamas, outsider daymiō clans. They were not part of the Tokugawa's clans. The Shimazu became one of the families to hold their territory at the Edo period since the Kamakura period, and also was the wealthiest family which was not part of the Shogunate allies in the entire nation.

Hisamitsu was a samurai and daimyō of this clan until 1887 at his death. In 1862, Hisamitsu went to the capital of Kyoto and was part of the kōbu-gattai. Which was a policy adopted, which forced the Bakufu to soften their politics. Upon the suggestions of Satsuma, Japanese domain which was ruled by Hisamitsu since 1854, and Mito Domains. As a result, The shogunate and the Imperial Court had now the political supremacy at the same time.

In contrast with, the Tokugawa's family this clan has been progressive and interested on foreign culture and technology. They were the ones who have welcomed St. Francis Xavier, which was the first Christian missionary to ever come to Japan. By the late 1850s they had steel furnace, used for casting cannon. Later, Great Britain gave to the clan a glass factory and a spinning mill which was stream driven. Because of the active relationship between Shimazu clan and Great Britain, the British began to supply a more sophisticated weaponry, as they had common interest towards the actual government. By 1867 the anti-Shogun forces were marching on Kyoto, the imperial capital. The end of the Shogun's rule came at Nijo Castle, the residence he used when he visited Kyoto.

F. Boshin War

The Boshin War (戊辰戦争) better known as the Japanese Revolution, a civil war that was fought in 1868 lasting for a whole year ending in 1869. A war fought between the Tokugawa shogunate forces and the civilian rebels that wanted the return of the political power to the imperial court.

The war started as the noble class found dissatisfaction as well as the last generation of young samurai of the time with the ruling empire. Due to the fact that the Tokugawa's shogunate changed their policies in an international context, making the handling of foreign people not as strict as before, opening Japan to the world. Leading to the increase of western influence in Japan's economy, making it to decline as well as many other Asian countries at that time. An alliance was created between the *daimyō* which belonged to Chōshū, Satsuma and Tosa, and court officials on western Japan, secured the control of the imperial court and had the objective to influence the future Meiji's Emperor. The young Yoshinobu Tokugawa, as analyzing the unprofitable situation, decided to abdicate from his position. With the sake of his action to preserve the Tokugawa and its position on a future government order.¹²

Despite the late Tokugawa's intentions, military actions from the royal forces and violence in Edo, encourage the abolished on the Tokugawa's by Satsuma and Chosu. Forcing Yoshinobu to create a military movement for the conservation of the emperor's court at Kyoto, Japanese capital. After a series of battles, Yoshinobu finally surrender, the people who were loyal to the shogun mobilized to Honshū at the north and later to Hokkaidō. On this location was where the Ezo Republic was located.

¹² Hagiwara, p. 50.

Finally, the desires from the opposition were acquired. With the modernization of Japan by opening its ports and conclude their actions of expel of foreigners. It was also applied a new negotiation to the Unequal treaties that were created years before between Western nations.

Thanks to the actions held by a permanent leader of the imperial court, Saigō Takamori, the people who were loyal forward the Tokugawa's shogunate, were shown clemency, and some characters who were part of the Shogun mandate, were given new positions for the new Japanese government.

G.Foreign military assistance

Even though with the bombardment of Kagoshima, the Satsuma domain got even closer to the British, looking forward to the modernization of the army and the navy with the support of them.¹³ The Scottish Thomas Blake, a gun dealer, sold millions of guns and warships to the southern domain.¹⁴The ambassador Harry Smith Parkes from Britain, supported the rebel anti-Shogunate forces seeking the establishment of a legitimate, unified Imperial rule in Japan, and to counter influence the French from the Shogunate.

¹⁵During this period, important southern Japanese leaders such as Itō Hirobumi or Saigō Takamori of Satsuma, and Inoue Kaoru of Chōshū built strong and personal

¹³ Satow, Ernests, A diplomat in Japan: The Inner History of the Critical Years in the Evolution of Japan When the Ports were Opened and the Monarchy Restored, Stoned Bridge Press, 2006.

¹⁴ Claim of Jules Burnet to Napoleon III

connections with important British diplomats, one of the most notable Ernest Mason Satow.¹⁶

The modernization of the Shogunate forces was a plan for a further conflict. In line with Parke's designs, the British, previous to that, the Shogunate's primary partner, proved to be a confident ally by providing their assistance at all times. The Tokugawa reached to the point of trust mainly in the French forces and combat experience due to the historical prestige given by Napoleon III armies at that time, acquiring its success and fame in the war of Italy as well as in the Crimean war¹⁷

The Shogunate took an advantage in the construction of a modern and even more powerful military force, a navy fleet of eight steam warships, which were built over several years and was already the strongest ships in Asia. In the year 1865, in one of Japan's biggest cities, Yokosuka, was created the first modern naval arsenal by the so-called French engineer Léonce Verny. In January of the year 1867, the French arrived in Japan in order to make a military mission, reorganize the shogunate's army and at the same time helping in the creation of the *Denshūtai* elite force. There was a new order upon the United States for the bought a CSS Stonewall, which was a relic from the American Civil War. Although the declaration of neutrality by the western Powers, The United States of America declined to release the CSS Stonewall. After finally the neutrality upon those nations was lifted, imperial Japanese leaders obtained the ship.

¹⁶ Gardiner, M. (2011, Dic 2011). *Japan Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2011/12/11/general/the-scot-who-shaped-japan/#.VqGXEBjhBdh>

¹⁷Polak, pp. 53–55

Which was employed in Hakodate engagements, it was named kōtetsu, which translated literally means Ironclad.¹⁸

After the conclusion of the war, Meiji restoration or modernization of Japan was held. Which still, had an involvement within France and Great Britain, there were new policies created upon international trade, with the objective of the empowerment of their currency. The countries politics may not be well-defined yet after the installation of a new imperial power.¹⁹

G. Conclusion

The conclusion was based on the limited information gained, as the most primary sources and different points of view of the historic event are presented on the mother tongue, Japanese. While a limitation on the interpretation at the translation of the text may lead to a change to it's sense.

As the shogunate mandate to the rigid doctrines, valued and different habits of behavior, as well as a unique believe for the Japanese society, there was a sense of oppression towards people as well as fear for the punishments from samurais. These actions will lead for the unhappiness of their people, leading to the new sake of power on the future. Another factor was the pressure on the countries relationship evolving but the limitation on international business with other nations, which will affect their future economy.

¹⁸ Keene, *Five modern japaneses Novelist*, p. 73

¹⁹ Abe, "Zoku, uchinaru henkyō", pp.341. Translation in Calichman. *The Frontier within*, pp. 165-166

Which after strengthening people struggling towards the government by the opening borders to other nations by the treaties created by the threat of the armament of other nations, which will finally have devalued the currency falling into reemployment and bankrupt of many microeconomics. This action brought pressure under the court were many damyos and samurais will lead to the change of policies and taking into action new reforms. With the new international policies and the opposition clans such as the Shimazu, created a new relationship between the rebels and foreigners giving the group a new support on armament to the bakufu to be held. As well as other nations under the Boshin war, which is a representation of the modernization that Japan held after the isolation, which was not similar between nations located at the West. But still rejecting and creating new restrictions on international trade for the empowerment under their currency, although there was a strong develop relationship between the new Japanese nations and Britain and France.

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