The bakuhan system
The establishment of the system

The ancestors of Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Edo bakufu, were the Matsudaira, a Sengoku daimyo family from the mountainous region of Mikawa province (in present Aichi prefecture) who had built up their base as daimyo by advancing into the plains of Mikawa. But when they were attacked and defeated by the powerful Oda family from the west, Ieyasu’s father, Hirotada, was killed. Ieyasu had earlier been sent to the Imagawa family as a hostage to cement an alliance but had been captured en route by the Oda family. After his father’s death Ieyasu was sent to the Imagawa family and spent 12 years there under detention. When, in 1560, Oda Nobunaga destroyed the Imagawa family in the Battle of Okehazama, launching him on his course of unification, Ieyasu was finally released. Ieyasu returned to Okazaki in Mikawa and brought this province under his control. As Oda’s ally, he guarded the rear for the advance on Kyōto, and he thereafter fought his own military campaigns, advancing steadily eastward. By 1582 he was a powerful daimyo, possessing, in addition to his home province of Mikawa, the four provinces of Suruga and Tōtômi (modern Shizuoka prefecture), Kai (Yamanashi prefecture), and southern Shinano (Nagano prefecture).

When Hideyoshi seized power, Ieyasu at first opposed him. But he then submitted, and, rising to be the most powerful daimyo among Hideyoshi’s vassals, he became chief of the five tairō (senior ministers), the highest officers of the Hideyoshi regime. After Hideyoshi’s death the daimyo split between those supporting Hideyori and those siding with Ieyasu. Matters came to a head at the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, where Ieyasu won a decisive victory and established his national supremacy. Ieyasu had seen the failure of both Nobunaga and Hideyoshi to consolidate a lasting regime, and in 1603 he set up the Edo bakufu (more commonly known as the Tokugawa shogunate [1603–1867]) to legalize this position. Assuming the title shogun, he exercised firm control over the remaining daimyo at this time. On the pretext of allotting rewards after Sekigahara, he dispossessed, reduced, or transferred a large number of daimyo who opposed him. Their confiscated lands he either gave to relatives and Tokugawa family retainers to establish them as daimyo and to increase their holdings, or he reserved them as Tokugawa house domains. Furthermore, Hideyoshi’s son and heir Hideyori was reduced to the position of a daimyo of the Kinkō (Ōsaka area) district. Two years after the establishment of the bakufu, Ieyasu relinquished the post of shogun to his son Hidetada, retiring to Sumpu (modern city of Shizuoka) to devote himself to strengthening the foundations of the bakufu. In 1615 Ieyasu stormed and captured Ōsaka Castle, destroying Hideyori and the Toyotomi family. Immediately afterward, the Laws for the Military Houses (Bukeyashiki) and the Laws for the Imperial and Court Officials (Kinshu Narabini Kuge Shohatto) were promulgated as the legal basis for bakufu control of the daimyo and the imperial court. In 1616 Ieyasu died, the succession already having been established.
Under the second and third shoguns, Hidetada and his successor Iemitsu, the bakufu control policy advanced further until the bakuhan system—the government system of the Tokugawa shogunate, literally a combination of bakufu and han (the domain of a daimyo)—reached its completion. By reorganizations in 1633–42 the executive of the bakufu government was almost completed, as represented by the offices of senior councillors (rōjū), junior councillors (wakadoshiyori), and three commissioners (bugyō) for the temples and shrines of the country, the shogun’s capital, and the treasury of the bakufu. Confiscations and reductions of domains continued, and wide-scale transfers of daimyo also took place, distributing the strategic districts of Kantō, Kinki, and Tōkaidō among the daimyo who were relatives and retainers of the bakufu, thus keeping the “outside” (tazama) lords in check. Along with the rearrangement of the daimyo, the lands under the direct control of the bakufu also were increased at key points throughout the country. The most important cities—Kyōto, Osaka, and Nagasaki—and mines (notably, the island of Sado) also were placed under direct bakufu administration and used to control commerce, industry, and trade.

The bakufu also revised the Laws for the Military Houses and established a system called sankin kōtai (alternative attendance), by which the daimyo were required to pay ceremonial visits to Edo every other year, while their wives and children resided permanently in Edo as hostages. The system also forced the daimyo—especially the potentially dangerous tazama who lived farthest away—to spend large sums of money to support two separate administrative structures and trips to and from Edo. In addition, the daimyo were forced to assist in such public works as the construction of castles in the bakufu domains, thus being kept in financial difficulties. Tokugawa bakufu domains now amounted to more than seven million koku—about one-fourth of the whole country. Of these lands, more than four million koku were under its direct control, and three million koku were distributed among the hatamoto and geikenin, the liege vassals to the bakufu. In addition, because the bakufu declared a monopoly over foreign trade and alone had the right to issue currency, it had considerably greater financial resources than did the daimyo. In military strength as well it was also far more powerful than any individual daimyo.

In step with the structural organization of the bakufu as the supreme power, the domain administration (hansel) of the daimyo also progressively took shape. The relationship between the shogun and the daimyo was that of lord and vassal, based on the feudal chigyō system. In theory, the land belonged to the shogun, who divided this among the lords as a special favour, or go-on. In order to rank as a daimyo, a warrior had to control lands producing at least 10,000 koku. In return, the daimyo incurred the obligation to provide military and other services to the shogun. Precisely the same connection existed between the domain lords and their retainers: and for the daimyo to concentrate and strengthen their rule, it was necessary for them to tighten this connection. In order to restrict the traditional right of their vassals to chigyō, or subdomains, daimyo rewarded them instead with rice stipends (ikurama), thus increasing their dependence on the daimyo. At the same time, this policy increased the lands under the direct control of the daimyo, strengthening the economic base of the domain. Thus, the daimyo employed the same methods toward their own vassals as the bakufu used to control them. In this way, a hierarchical “feudal” regime was established by means of the kokudaka system, which extended from the shogun through the daimyo to their retainers.

Control over the agricultural populace was now further strengthened. The Taikō land survey had recognized the rights of the peasants as actual cultivators of the land and made them responsible for taxes. Similar in intent, the land surveys of the bakufu and the daimyo were much more detailed and precise, concerned, as they were, with extracting the greatest possible tax yield. Tokugawa villages thus differed from those of the preceding ages, which had been controlled by local landlords, or myōshu. The Tokugawa villages were composed of a main core of small farmers, generally called hyakushō. Since villages were now administrative units of the new regime, a three-tiered system of village officers was established—nanushi (or shōya), kumigashira, and hyakushōdai—to carry out its functions. The inhabitants of towns and villages throughout the country were required to form gōjin-gumi (“five-household groups”), or neighbourhood associations, to foster joint responsibility for tax payment, to prevent offenses against the laws of the overlords, to provide one another with mutual assistance, and to keep a general watch on one another. Economic controls over peasants were further strengthened. They were strictly prohibited from buying, selling, or abandoning their land or from changing...
The enforcement of national seclusion

The 1630s also marked an important dividing line in foreign relations with the issuance of a series of directives enforcing a policy of national seclusion, later called sakoku (literally, “closed country”). The seeds of this policy had been sown in trade control and in measures against Christianity by the Nobunaga and Hideyoshi regimes. Hideyoshi, although strongly attracted to trade as a source of national wealth and military strength, had issued an order for the exclusion of the missionaries. Ieyasu, even more strongly attracted by profits, made efforts to trade not only with the Portuguese Roman Catholics but also with Protestant Holland and England, protecting trade with the southern regions by granting special licenses, or shumis (‘red seal license’), to oceangoing merchant ships. But Ieyasu’s encouragement of trade was aimed at establishing a bakufu trade monopoly. In 1604, for example, a special system for the purchase of silk was established. Chinese silk imported to Japan by Portuguese ships was sold at fixed prices to the powerful merchants of Kyōto, Sakai, and Nagasaki, who formed a guild and then distributed this silk to the domestic retail merchants. Ieyasu, however, enjoyed a preferential purchase of a part of the imported silk (the goyo ito or ‘official silk’) prior to the guild’s allotment and reaped a huge profit on releasing this to the domestic markets.

Eager for trade, Ieyasu was initially tolerant of Christian proselytization, but later he came to fear that the Christians would join Hideyoshi’s heir Hideyori to resist the bakufu. and he took steps to prohibit Christianity before his destruction of the Toyotomi family. Decrees prohibiting Christianity were promulgated in 1612 and 1614, and the persecution of its adherents began immediately thereafter. Persecution became much more severe under Hidetada and Iemitsu, until, at length, it became official policy to stamp out Christianity even at the sacrifice of trade. This policy became manifest with the seclusion orders of the 1630s. Thus, in 1635 Japanese were forbidden to make overseas voyages or to return to Japan from overseas, which was a severe blow to Japan’s traders.

In 1637, in resistance to heavy taxes and the prohibition of Christianity, Amakusa Shingū, a Christian masterless samurai (ronin), led an uprising of peasants and Christians in the Shimabara Peninsula of Kyushu. For five months they put up a fierce fight before their defeat by the bakufu army. The bakufu having been hard-pressed to quell the rebellion, thereafter stepped up its strict controls on Christians and attempted to root them out by such means as fumi-e, in which one was made to trample on an image of Christ or the Virgin Mary. The system of registration at Buddhist temples was instituted: all Japanese were required to register as parishioners to a parent Buddhist temple, called a dan-na-dera (‘family temple’), which every year had to guarantee that the parishioner was not a Christian. When in 1639 Portuguese ships were forbidden to visit Japan, the sakoku orders were completed. The Dutch and the Chinese were allowed to trade as before, although this trade was restricted and confined to the island of Dejima at Nagasaki. Iemitsu also allowed a certain amount of trade with Korea and the Ryukyu Islands.

Scholars continue to debate the effects of national seclusion, but its impact on Japan was profound. The vigorous desire of the Japanese of the Sengoku era to expand overseas was thenceforth transformed into an attitude hostile to foreign trade, if not to foreigners themselves. On the one hand, the seclusion policy was instrumental in enabling the Tokugawa bakufu to establish a prolonged peace of nearly 300 years; yet on the other, it has been argued that this simply prolonged a rigid feudal system to an extent unknown elsewhere in the world. Pax Tokugawa may have helped foster commerce and given rise to a unique popular culture, but it also was a narrowly chauvinistic culture with no international dimension. Certainly, one viewpoint is that it produced in the Japanese a unique sense of insularity.

The Tokugawa status system

Thus, the bakuhun system was firmly solidified by the second half of the 17th century. The establishment of a strict class structure of warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants (shi-nō-kō-shō) represents the final consummation of the system. Distinctions between the statuses of warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants were strictly enforced, but the distinction between the samurai and the other three classes was especially strict. Forming barely 7 percent of Japan’s total population, warriors levied taxes on the farmers, who formed more than four-fifths of the population and who thus provided the economic foundation of the system. Symbolizing their dominance by force of arms, samurai wore two swords: by law, the other classes were forbidden to wear them, thus

sunaga and Hideyoshi to their logical conclusion. Concern for strict status differentiation was evident even in absolute obedience was demanded from members of the family toward the house head (kachō). Among atus of women was especially low, and the idea of danbon-johi (‘respect for the male, contempt for the

Tokugawa regime created a need for legitimation, a new worldview, and a system of ethics to support its Buddhist ideologies of the earlier medieval society was adequate. But the ideas of Neo-Confucianism, as in the Chu Hsi school (Shushigaku)—which had been well-known to political and ethical thinkers since the intellectual rationalization for the status-oriented social structure of the bakuhun system. Shushigaku feudal rulers because, among the various schools of Confucianism, it was the most systematic doctrine, as the father of Tokugawa Neo-Confucianism, lecturing even to Ieyasu himself. Sekia’s student, the Chu Hsi

red as advisor to the first three shoguns. He established what was to become the official Confucian school.
works as Honchô hennen roku ("Chronological History of Japan") and Honchô tsugan ("Survey History of Japan"); completed by his son, Hidetada, in 1657. This rational justification for the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate, based upon the concept of tendō, essentially took on the connotation of the Chinese term tien-ming ("mandate of heaven"); Japanese: tenmei), which Confucian thinkers provided an explanation and justification for changes in rulers through the process of succession by succession by inferior to inferior), of the Sengoku period. But the role of Chu Hsi political ethical thought in Tokugawa revolutionary idea of gekokujō by stressing the legitimacy of Ieyasu's new regime, emphasizing instead "loyalty," linking this to Confucian moral concepts. Razan stressed the Chinese idea that just as sun and earth, there needed to be order between rulers and subjects. Thus he argued that the separation was in accord with the teachings of Confucius. The two central moral ideals of Confucianism were chū or obi. But in contrast to China, Tokugawa thinkers like Razan placed more emphasis on chū as a support for than ko, which was a family ethic. Chu Hsi studies opposed the new worldview and logic introduced by the philosophy to Confucianism and also bitterly criticized the other-worldly had been the ideology of the medieval era. Orthodox Chu Hsi thought was a perfect conservative it valued loyalty and order above all else.

In the early 17th century, the Tokugawa regime brought to an end the period of violence and cemented domestic peace. As a result, commerce was promoted and cities developed. Widespread in the latter half of the 17th century, centred in the Kinki region, where productive capacity was the most wide farming populace (hyakusho) of independent landowners, although subject to heavy taxes and duties, sought the means to enjoy a better standard of living. In addition to their primary efforts as new lands and produced various commercial crops and handicrafts for sale in the city and town. Commercial crops were cotton and rapeseed oil in the Kinki region and silk in eastern Japan. Importation also developed for the circulation of such goods thanks to the earlier efforts of various daimyo and their domains and to the increased mobility caused by the sankin kotai system. As a result of the communications, new-style merchants such as wholesalers and brokers to handle commercial crops and financiers also appeared.

Urban centres in the first half of the Edo period, mainly represented by the castle towns of various boroing some 250 for most of the period, were allowed by the bakufu to have but one castle, and thus own other castles and concentrate the samurai of each han in a capital castle town. These castle towns gradually came to acquire the character of commercial cities, as some farmers abandoned the countryside and merchants emerged to serve the needs of the burgeoning urban population. Purely commercial cities and post towns (towns along highways) also arose throughout the country as part of this massive urbanization. While most cities averaged between 10,000 and 20,000 inhabitants, many had populations exceeding 100,000. The three main cities of Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto, under the direct control of the bakufu, were especially developed. When its warrior inhabitants are included, Edo in the early years of the 18th century had a population of more than one million and thus became one of the largest cities in the world.

The early and mid-Edo periods produced many remarkable figures in the fine arts and crafts. Perhaps the three artists most representative of the culture were Ihara Saikaku in ukiyo-zōshi ("tales of the floating world") genre novels. Chikamatsu Monzaemon, in joruri ("puppet play") drama, and Matsuo Bashō in haiku poetry. All three flourished during the Gennō era (1688-1704), the name more broadly denoting a golden age of cultural development roughly 50 years long during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Saikaku was an Osaka townsman who first aspired to write haikai—humorous renga (linked verse) poetry from which the more serious haiku was derived—and for more than 30 years he was active as a haikai composer. He was especially skilled at yakazu haikai, a competition to compose as many haikai as possible within a fixed period of time that derived its name from a popular arrow-shooting competition (yakazu). Saikaku set a new record by composing 23,500 haikai in a single day and night—one verse every four

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kana zōshi (storybooks written in kana script) into a more thoroughly urban commoners form of literature after the latter had themselves replaced the previous ukyō zōshi ("fairy tale books") in popularity. The unique urban spirit of the age can be seen in the word ukiyo, which had meant "sad world" in Buddhist terms during medieval times. Written with a different Chinese ideogram in Edo times, it now came to mean "floating world" and implied pleasure—specifically from the pleasure quarters of the great Edo cities. Saikaku consistently attempted to create an accurate depiction of the human desire for love and profit. His works offer sharp criticism of the Edo samurai as men so bound by social status and moral principles that they could not live a free life.

Matsuo Bashō became closely attached to haiku (although the word itself was not coined until the 19th century) and fashioned it into a popular form of poetry. Bashō was born into a warrior family, but after becoming a rōnin he devoted himself to the development of haiku as a literary form. Bashō found the existing haikai style unsatisfying. He began writing hokku (17-syllable opening verses for renga) as separate poems, developing a new style called shōtō or Bashō style. Bashō proclaimed what he called makoto no ("true") haiku, seeking the spirit of this poetic form in sincerity and truthfulness. He also introduced a new beauty to haiku by using simple words. Bashō essentially grafted the aristocratic conceptions of medieval poetry onto the more mundane feelings of Tokugawa urban culture, creating a highly popular poetic form. Rather than repudiating tradition, Bashō's haiku brought it to completion.

About the turn of the 17th century, the Tōrōshime monogatari (a type of romantic ballad), which drew on the traditions of the medieval narrative story, was, for the first time arranged as a form of dramatic literature accompanied by puppetry and the samisen (a lute-like musical instrument). It continued to develop until the three great masters—Takemoto Cidayū as narrator, Chikamatsu Monzaemon as composer, and Tatsumatsu Hachirobei as puppeteer—made jōruri into a highly popular Tokugawa performing art, enjoyed by all classes of society.

Chikamatsu, like Bashō, came from a warrior family. Chikamatsu, a prolific writer, wrote more than 80 jidaimono (historical dramas) and 20 sewamono (domestic dramas focusing on urban society), both for jōruri. He also wrote more than 30 kabuki plays. The chief theme running through Chikamatsu's works is the idea of giri ("duty"), which is to be understood not so much as feudal morality enforced from above but rather as the traditional consciousness of honour and dignity in one's motives and of social consciousness in human relations. The compositions of Chikamatsu's later years seek the motif of tragedy in the fact that this giri, while proof that people have humanity, cannot be thoroughly achieved because of their immorality and lack of principle. Giri is constantly in conflict with ninjō ("human feelings," especially love), and this tension provides the drama in many of his works. Beginning with his Shinjū ten no Amijima (1720, The Love Suicide of Amijima), the leading male and female characters in his sewamono dramas are unable to resolve the contradictions between giri and ninjō in this world and so die by shinjū (a suicide pact between lovers) in order to realize their love in a future life. While Buddhist elements can be detected in these tragic endings, they also graphically capture the unresolvable contradictions that faced townspeople in Edo society.

Besides the licensed quarters for prostitutes, theatrical districts also flourished in the Edo era. Kabuki drama also developed in the early Edo period. Okuni kabuki, named for the female dancing troupe led by Izumo Okuni, became popular at the turn of the 17th century and is conventionally regarded as the origin of this dramatic form. Other troups imitated her work, developing into yūjo ("prostitutes") kabuki, run by brothel owners. Ultimately, women were banned from kabuki, and actors and prostitutes separated into distinct quarters. A further development was the wakahā ("young man style") kabuki, in which the young men were also available as sexual partners; this was also prohibited because of widespread homosexuality. All kabuki was banned following the death of the shogun lemitsu in 1652. It was allowed once again, but only after substantial reform, in which even women's parts were played by adult males (who were distinguished from the wakahā by shaved forelocks). Kabuki now developed from its previous dancing-act form into a theatrical form centred on a dramatic plot with realistic acting. In western Japan (Kyōto and Osaka), the style that emerged was called wagoto ("tender business"), which had a pronounced comical element and concentrated on love, by contrast, the popular form of Edo kabuki was aragoto ("rough business"), which focused on the rash actions of historical heroes. This Edo form of kabuki seemed to suit the rowdy elements of society. Indeed the word kabuki itself (using different Chinese ideograms), meaning "inclined," was first used by wild gangs of outrageously dressed young men called kabukimono.
Despite the popularity of these new theatrical forms, traditional arts of nō drama, the tea ceremony, and flower arrangement also reached new stages of development in the period. The tea ceremony (cha-no-yu) in particular became popular and was practiced not only by the shogun and daimyo but also by the newly risen merchants, who used their wealth to become eager collectors of famous antique tea ceremony utensils. As the tea ceremony became popular, many schools emerged, most notably the Sen-ke (Sen house), the school of Sen Rikyū. The art of the tea ceremony came to be monopolized by the house heads of the various schools, fostering the development of the ‘profession’ of tea master. This “house head” (iemoto) system also spread to flower arrangement and to other arts and became a distinguishing feature of the Edo period. One result of this segmentation into tradition-conscious schools was that it inhibited further development of these artistic forms. Often, it was only by breaking away from the iemoto that innovation could proceed.

Distinctive development also occurred in the fine arts and crafts. Ogata Kōrin, for example, brought decorative painting to its highest stage of perfection, bequeathing to posterity many splendid masterpieces in gold lacquer (maki-e) and other media. Techniques of dyeing and weaving were also improved in the Edo period. In Kyōto, Miyazaki Yūzen developed the splendid techniques of yūzen-zome (a rice-paste batik method of dyeing), and the weaving and decorating of the traditional kimono became even more colourful. In Edo, drawing in traditional styles was further developed by Hishikawa Moronobu, who not only depicted the usual courtesans and actors but also vividly portrayed various aspects of the lives of ordinary people. But Moronobu’s real contribution was to develop the Chinese technique of wood-block printing to produce the ukiyo-e (“pictures of the floating world”) style, which met a growing popular demand. Many great Edo-period artists—e.g., Andō Hiroshige and Katsushika Hokusai—developed the ukiyo-e genre into a unique Japanese art form. Famous centres of pottery production also flourished at various places throughout the country; some ancient, like Seto, but others, like Hagi, stimulated by the influence of Korean potters captured during Hideyoshi’s invasions.

Both the old ceremonies of the imperial court and the various forms of warrior etiquette developed by the successive bakufu were codified, studied, and even extended to the common people, helping to shape manners throughout the country. Indeed, Japanese customs in dress, food, and housing became established and somewhat standardized during the Edo period. Even eating habits changed from two to three meals a day, in the cities rice became the standard food, and a rich variety of cakes and sweets were consumed by urban dwellers.
The weakening of the bakuhan system

As Japan entered the 18th century, the bakuhan system began to show signs of weakness. The finances of both the baku and the han were theoretically based on a rice-producing economy, in which administrators endeavoured to levy taxes to be paid in kind, mostly in rice, centred on the annual crop. Rice and other crops were then transported to the great central cities of Edo and Osaka, where they were exchanged for money. The extremely diverse economic and social life of these cities was based upon a money economy in which people and produce were constantly exchanged. This activity radiated outward to the various daimyo castle towns and, inevitably, into the countryside as well. Thus, even the rural areas of Japan were increasingly drawn into a monetized economy, and peasants everywhere paid part of their taxes in money. If commercial development had been largely a phenomenon of the cities in the 17th century, in the 18th and 19th centuries it spread to the hinterlands of Japan, where small-scale producers of goods, distributors, and even retailers appeared. Inevitably, it meant the rise of some wealthy members of the rural populace, who used their wealth to invest in land and commercial ventures and to “ape their betters” in the cities in both custom and culture. Few farmers, however, prospered through producing commercial goods, and the majority of peasants remained impoverished. Rural villages were characterized by a few wealthy farmers, a majority of small-scale independent landholders, and a growing number of impoverished tenants. Many small-scale farmers, squeezed by the demands of commercial development, were forced to part with their lands and fell into tenancy.

Thus, as the commercial economy extended into rural villages, social divisions arose among the farmers. Tax collection became unstable, and many warriors—whose stipends, still calculated in koku, depended upon taxes paid by the farmers—found themselves in serious financial difficulty. Despite the general improvement of agricultural technology and the spread of such knowledge through manuals and handbooks among an increasingly literate populace during the Edo period, productivity was uneven, and in many areas, and especially during certain eras, periodic crop failures and famines exacerbated by excessive taxation, resulted in people starving or fleeing their villages. The abandonment of cultivated land also became conspicuous. As noted above, the samurai class had long since taken up normal residence in the cities. With the development of the urban way of life, they now incurred increasing expenses, despite a spate of baku and domain exhortations to practice frugality. Living on fixed incomes, many became greatly impoverished. At times, both the baku and the domains tried to suppress commercial production as a means of alleviating the suffering of their vassals, but this met with great resistance from merchants and affected the self-sufficient economy of the farmers as well. It was, in any event, a hopeless effort, given the scale of commercial development nationwide. When attempts to restrict production failed, baku and han administrators encouraged such production, seeking to supplement their finances by monopolizing the farmers’ commercial goods and selling them themselves. Thus, on top of excessive taxes, farmers also were sometimes deprived of the profits of their commercial goods.

Ultimately, such rural conditions led to major outbreaks of violence. Stratification of rural villages—a growing gap between wealthy and poor farmers—tenancy, the inability of many to survive the harsh realities of commercialization, and exploitation by feudal lords forced some peasants into uprisings (hyakushō ikki). Even in early Edo times, there were localized demonstrations against daimyo for excessive taxation, but from the 18th century peasant protest became increasingly violent and widespread. Some uprisings were directed at local lords, some were more widespread, and some were directed not at feudal warrior overlords but at wealthy peasant landlords and village headmen who also had become exploitative. Meanwhile, economic conditions in the cities—to which frustrated peasants often fled seeking a better life—were hardly better. While many wealthy merchants enjoyed luxurious lifestyles in...
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