

The Tokugawa Period in Japan (1603–1868)

I. Introduction to the Tokugawa Period

- A. Also known as the Edo Period
- B. Began in 1603 when Tokugawa Ieyasu became shogun
- C. Ended in 1868 with the Meiji Restoration
- D. Period of peace, stability, and isolation after centuries of civil war

II. Political Structure and Rule

- A. Tokugawa Shogunate established a centralized feudal system
- B. Emperor remained a figurehead; real power held by the shogun
- C. Daimyo (feudal lords) controlled domains but were closely monitored
 - 1. Alternate attendance (sankin-kotai) system required daimyo to spend every other year in Edo
- D. Strict social hierarchy:
 - 1. Samurai
 - 2. Farmers
 - 3. Artisans
 - 4. Merchants (lowest, despite growing wealth)

III. Social and Economic Developments

- A. Long period of peace promoted economic growth
- B. Development of roads, trade networks, and cities like Edo (Tokyo), Osaka, and Kyoto
- C. Rise of a wealthy merchant class
- D. Cultural flourishing, especially in urban areas
 - 1. Kabuki theater
 - 2. Ukiyo-e woodblock prints
 - 3. Haiku poetry

IV. Isolationist Foreign Policy (Sakoku)

- A. Japan closed to most foreign influence from 1630s
- B. Limited trade with Dutch and Chinese through Nagasaki
- C. Christianity banned and persecuted
- D. Helped maintain stability and control over outside ideas

V. Decline and Fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate

- A. Growing internal pressures—economic hardship for samurai, unrest among lower classes
- B. Arrival of Commodore Perry (1853) and forced opening of Japan to foreign trade
- C. Unequal treaties weakened the shogunate
- D. Movement to restore imperial rule gained momentum
- E. 1868: Meiji Restoration marks end of Tokugawa rule and beginning of modernization

VI. Conclusion

- A. Tokugawa period was a time of internal peace, cultural development, and rigid social control
- B. Isolation allowed Japan to preserve traditions but delayed modernization
- C. Its legacy continues to shape Japanese society and culture today