MEIJI RESTORATION

(1868-1912)

Tokugawa ossified the Shogunate system (A shogun, "military commander" or "general, was a hereditary military governor in Japan during the shogunate period from 1192 to 1867. In this period, the shoguns were the de facto rulers of the country, though officially they were appointed by the emperor. The Tokugawa shogunate was very much like any domainal government in that it was responsible first for the administration of a limited territory, the fief of the Tokugawa house. As such, it concerned itself with controlling the samurai class, collecting taxes (primarily on agriculture), maintaining civil order, defending the fief, controlling the cities, encouraging commerce and manufacturing which were required by the fief, limiting undesirable types of commerce and so on. In most domains, the scope of government was similar.)

Tokugawa did not bring a new system but revitalized whole system. He wanted to collapse all differences until his period and come back to old governmental system. He prevented foreign intervention by blocking missionary and foreign trade. The main thinking was that Japan was of Japanese. The formal relations with Korea went on. There were Chinese and Dutch merchants (exceptional).

Does isolation necessarily mean stagnation? No. The country was not underdeveloped in isolation period. The population depended on agriculture. Livelyhood depened on it. Commerce and factories began to develop even there was an isolation. Welfare level increased. A new social class emerged. In a system where social classes has impact directly, emerging new classes bring new demands. That point brought the end of Tokugawa period. The system could not satisfy itself. Feudalism collapsed. There was corruption in the country. It brought non-functional democracy. In local areas, unrest had a presence because the state collected the taxes regulary but did not provide enough service. The climate was also bad and the peasants did not have a fruitful harvest. As an outcome, they began to flee to the towns. The samurais (military class) lost its power. They fighted against the state because of the breakdowns in the system. Some peasants were forced to go back to hometowns. There was a rigid structure, but it did not work in a long term.