FROM THE SHOGUNATE TO THE MEIJI: A STUDY OF THE SEEDS OF A REVOLUTION

ARJUN PILIKUDALE

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1 INTRODUCTION

With their mighty ships and fierce guns, the western powers of the 19th century were feared by the rest of the world. Well aware of this, they went on to impose their will as they pleased. While many of the countries across the globe were either colonized or ended up as their puppet states, Japan did not. Not only did it not fall into their hands, but within a few decades Japan joined their ranks and became a colonizer itself! It is no doubt an impressive feat given the sheer disparity in power between the East and the West. Japan was the only eastern country to bridge this gap whilst also maintaining its sovereignty.

It is true that their demonstration of unity, intellect and strategy needs to be applauded, but it was not always the case. In the second half of the 19th century when the western powers first came to their shores with the intent to impose themselves (they were present before but only to trade), Japan was going through a phase of internal turmoil. Their then government was collapsing and new actors were emerging onto the scene. Over the next few decades it was these new actors that not only protected Japan's interests but also strengthened and prepared the country for global competition. How they did it can in part be answered by looking at who did it.

Many credit the Perry expedition of 1853-54 to Japan to have caused a revolution in the country but a closer analysis reveals that the expedition served as a mere catalyst. The revolution was already in the making. For more than 200 years before his arrival, Japan had already started reshaping itself. Throughout this time, under the old regime (the Tokugawa Shogunate), Japan had already begun the process of trying to find its identity. It was the overwhelming presence of foreign bodies that formalised the already emerging norms.

The main actors involved were the up and coming samurais of the time, Yoshida Shoin, Kido Takayoshi, Sakamoto Ryoma, to name a few. They were part of the band of samurais that made colossal changes to the structure of the government, reshaped the country's narrative of the foreigners and most importantly, improved their stance in foreign relations. At the time, the whole country was in debt to these men but one need not go too far in Japan's history to see why people would not be able to comprehend men of their social status (that of low ranking samurai) taking up such important roles.

The then government, the Tokugawa Shogunate controlled Japanese territories from the early 1600s till its fall with the restoration of the emperor (Meiji restoration) in 1868. They had established themselves after the country had suffered from constant civil war for more than a century in a period termed as "warring states period" (1467-1615). At that time, before the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan followed a feudal system with a weak central power in the emperor and the noble court. True power was exercised by the samurai "warrior" class. Each domain's samurai fought for their samurai overlords, the domain leaders (daimyos). The daimyos were in constant battle with each other attempting to unify the country under their Shogunate; a form of governance where the military leader, the shogun, would hold the highest power in the land. With alliances being formed the final division remained mainly between the western Japanese domains and the domains of the soon to be unifiers of Japan. These unifiers were Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598) and the up and coming daimyo Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616). After unification of the country, Tokugawa Ieyasu would bide his time and only after defeating Hideyoshi's son Toyotomi Hideyori (1593-1615) at the battle of Sekigahara (1600), would he take the reins and go on to establish two and a half centuries of Tokugawa rule hailed as the "great peace". This he achieved by enforcing his will on the country and re-establishing the social order.

During this period, Japan would morph into a new state, one that Tokugawa Ieyasu could not have imagined. It was in the cities, towns and villages of this new state that the samurai of relatively lower ranks would be presented with the

opportunity to take hold of the country. Nearly two centuries later the changes in these spaces would occur almost independently of their location, seeming to have a cascading effect with each city affecting nearby towns and each town affecting its constituent villages.

Therefore to study the overall change taking place in any space, we must analyse the particular changes occurring across Japan as they are very much inter-related. In this paper I try to analyse the social changes across the state that would end up having such a strong effect as to change the core values in the social fabric of the nation.

While I cannot do justice to the intricate details of the whole process, I present certain changes brought in this period that would progressively change the political, economical and geographical landscape of the nation. Note that I do not cover all the events leading up to the Meiji restoration and revolution but only cite the fundamental changes that I perceive to be important to let the important actors of the Meiji government to enter the scene.

Before we begin we must understand the norms of the time for the setting of the Tokugawa rule. Therefore let us take a brief look at certain aspects that shaped the norms during the inception of the Tokugawa rule.

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2 TOKUGAWA FOUNDATION

After his victory in the battle of Sekigahara, it was time for Tokugawa Ieyasu to consolidate his power. Even though he had conquered all the lands he had not done it by himself. It was with the help of other daimyos (domain leaders), small and big, that he was able to defeat or at least subdue his challengers. Therefore, even if he wanted to break the system of clans and unite the people, he would not be supported by the majority in this quest. Also, the tradition of a samurai's loyalty to one's master meant that Ieyasu could build a state only through other daimyos and not by eliminating them. In a sense, Tokugawa Japan was never truly unified. Even though the shogun was the highest authority it was only granted by the acknowledgement of the rest of the daimyos and in turn a daimyo heavily depended on shogunal favour.

The shogun maintained his central authority while daimyos, in theory, reigned over their domains. It was a system of "centralised feudalism", a term made famous by Edwin O. Reischauer to accommodate a partial central system that overarches each feudal one. The shogunate took up a fourth of the agricultural land, the great cities, and the production sites. The real show of power came in the form of redistribution of wealth. As it was a land based economy, territories were to be redrawn. Each daimyo's future depended upon which side he had taken during the Sekigahara battle.

The domains were put into three categories: the ones ruled by Tokugawa's relatives, Ieyasu's vassals who helped him win, called the fudai and his enemies in battle termed as tozama daimyo. Lands were taken away from the tozama domains and added into the domains of Ieyasu's relatives. Some portions of the land were handed out as gifts (a method of payment) to the fudai daimyo.[1]

We must remember that most of the tozama domains were contenders for the shogun's post and were themselves quite powerful. The humiliation of losing their land was palpable in their courts. The Mori in Choshu provide an example of the resentment they felt towards the shogunate drastically reducing the land from 1,205,000 koku to 298,480 koku (one koku is equivalent to about 5 bushels and signifies the amount of land needed to grow that amount of rice) by maintaining the tradition of asking the daimyo each year, "Has the time come to begin the subjugation of the Bakufu?" which received the response "It is still too early; the time has not yet come".[2]

The shogunate was very much aware of the tozama threat and proceeded to position the major fudai and Tokugawa vassals along access routes to the shogunate capital Edo (present day Tokyo) enhancing the safety of the shogunate. However, with the innovations to come, we shall see that the importance of these access roads themselves shifted from the domains' access to Edo to Edo's access to the domains.

Even with the reduction of lands, the tozama daimyos' individual kokudaka (a system of determining land "koku" value) was far greater than that of many fudai daimyos who outnumbered the tozama by almost two to one. To qualify as a daimyo one needed to produce 10,000 koku of rice and the Tokugawa Shogunate with the purpose of enhancing their power at court, provided many Tokugawa vassals with just enough to be considered a daimyo. This meant that even though they were more in number, a substantial number of fudai daimyos found themselves to be in the lower status ranks as ranks were assigned based on the kokudaka of domains measured by surveys conducted at the beginning of the period. A daimyo's rank determined where he would be seated in the shogun's court, when he would pay homage to the shogun and most importantly, the status had a physical grounding as the location and size of a daimyo's residence in Edo depended on it. As time passed the rank of a daimyo did not truly reveal his current kokudaka as change in the status would require restructuring of the whole system, meaning that the daimyo's residence had to be reallocated.[3] Opting not to bother themselves with this, the shogunate set to maintain the initial structure, setting a tone of inertia for the governance to come.

To maintain this system and to assert their influence across domains, the Shogunate created a massive bureaucratic body termed as the Bakufu. Its functioning and purpose reveal the center's priorities.

The Bakufu's roles were fulfilled by the samurais of the domains favourable to the Tokugawa Shogunate. They carried out the shogun's will across the state. Their power was exemplified by the fact that even the heads of the most prestigious domains had to bow down to the roju, the bakufu's senior councillors. Their hierarchical structure was very much borrowed from the governing body present in Kyoto during the Heian period. Major roles in the roju were maintained by Tokugawa vassals and fudai daimyo creating a wider disparity between the shogunate and the tozama daimyo. The bakufu kept an eye on each domain by sending inspectors regularly and also each administrative body in the bakufu observed one another. Constant surveillance was deemed as a fitting method to tackle political and religious subversion. To communicate with the bakufu and keep them from micro controlling their domain, each daimyo would end up mimicking the bakufu structure and create their own governing body. The domain's government maintained the daimyo's lands as well as addressed the bakufu's needs.[4]

Their vision of the country as a central-feudalism is better understood by not what they attended to but what they left out. They wrote no constitution, created no judiciaries, opened no national treasury. Their intentions which manifested through their governance were clearly interpreted by the domains.[5]

Hidden behind most of the shogunate's actions was a craving for inertia. With the volatility of war that the country had experienced their answer for peace was an attempt to fix the world into a state with the hope of minimal transitions. No action exemplifies this better than their dealing with the social structure of society at the time.

3 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Tokugawa Shogunate did not bring about a new social structure but made the already existing structure more rigid. The structure was hierarchical and this feature existed before their establishment, what the shogunate attempted to do was define it more concretely.

In the class hierarchy, the Emperor sat at the top followed by the shogun. Then came the domain leaders, the daimyos under whom were the samurai class. Beneath the samurai came the majority of the population; the peasants (mostly farmers) and artisans. At the bottom of this hierarchy were the merchants. An individual's social class was a major part of his identity (alongside his gender) and movement to different class groups was unimaginable. The principal behind class divisions was the distinction in occupation.

Bito Masahide, a Japanese historian stresses on an individual's function in society and his perceived duty to his people. He sees the structure not so much a hierarchy but as a series of interdependent services which he terms as yaku. He writes, "the overall aim of the rulers in this period was to develop the system of 'yaku' for society, and maintain it through the strength of great military might and rule by law. Such a policy would succeed because it answered the needs of the entire populace, and achieved a political stability."[6]

Each class fulfilled a purpose in society, the merchant distributed goods, the artisan sculpted and built structures, the farmer produced grain, even the subcaste Japanese performed the necessary "odd" jobs of carrying out the carcasses of dead animals and such. The case of the samurai was quite different as he did not produce anything tangible for society rather he was to follow the way of the warrior (bushido). His contribution to society was in the form of perfecting the code of morality in himself. With this he would display to the other social groups as to how one has to carry oneself in society.

Douglas R. Howland mentions an important point saying that the hierarchy does not necessarily mean that those of higher status held any form of power over those status groups below them.[7] For example, in case of poor administration, the commoner affected would petition the related court to address the issue, wanting things to return to the way they had been earlier.[8] The fact that different social groups were allowed to seek justice undermines the rigidity of the hierarchy.

Though the above arguments might justify studying class groups as interdependent institutions, its perception as a hierarchy is also evident. Each class performed a role and each role had a degree of acceptance in the nation's religious beliefs. For example, the samurai practicing the way of the bushido was looked up to as he was doing justice to the laws of Buddhism while the merchant who himself produced nothing but made money through distributing was frowned upon as he was seen to go against certain confucian values of providing for the society. The nation's ontological commitments helped them scrutinize the roles played by each yaku.

A better understanding of the hierarchy comes with its relation to central-feudalism. The actors present as the central authority dominated the feudal ones. The emperor and the shogunate were the common link between all the domains and had the upper hand in all the discussions putting them at the top of the order. Even though the centre imposed itself on the domains, a commoner never found himself accountable to the central authorities (except in cities where the bakufu directly governed) as he was aware of only his domain. The autonomy of the domains was to the extent that a large number of them had their own currencies, administrative laws and tax systems.[9] Therefore as far as the people of the domain were concerned, their daimyo was their ruler. In each domain, the request of the daimyo was carried out by the samurai present in their government. These requests were mainly to fulfill his obligations to the central authority. The samurai would instruct the artisans to construct, the merchants to sell and the farmers to grow. The samurai wouldn't interact with every individual or family but only with the head of each group. They would address their wishes to the head of the merchant groups, or to each artisan school in the domain. In the case of farmers, they would impose on the village as a whole; issuing orders to the village headman. Each group had the autonomy to carry out these instructions as they saw fit. Each commoner was therefore linked only to the group he was working with. The commoner's representative linked the community to the domain's government. This autonomy meant that an individual

depended heavily upon his colleagues for his income. Moreover, each family was viewed as a unit, therefore one's relative's mistake would also affect an individual's social standing.

During times of hardship, this system could very well turn into a chaotic one. According to Tokutomi Iichiro (1863-1957), what ensured peace at trying times was not the shogunate. He writes:

> "Who was the actual authority or ruler of feudal society? Discerning and clear-minded individuals would certainly say the ruler of society was not the Emperor, the nobles, the warriors, peasants, or merchants. Authority lay somewhere else. The ruler of society, the repository of authority, was custom, usage, and tradition. " [10]

The hierarchy here, can be seen in the links formed within each domain and the domain's link to the centre. An individual's position in this network is his identity in society and also the level of prosperity he can hope to achieve. The same class groups lived different lifestyles based on their domain's laws. Therefore when we analyse an individual's position in society, we must not only limit ourselves to noticing his class but rather look at where he is positioned in this network. Any social, political or economical change that occurs finds itself reaching the individual by propagating through this network. Inertia in this network is what the Shogunate attempted, inertia not just in the hierarchy, but also in location. By constructing a dependent system they sought to immobilize individuals assuming that governance would become easier. This understanding of the network will help us analyse why certain individuals were able to dominate later on while others of the same class group found themselves inept to do so. With this setting, I introduce what I consider to be the main functional change introduced by the Shogunate that would produce a chain of events over the course of its existence to redefine the network in ways that the earlier shoguns could not have foreseen.

4 THE SANKIN–KŌTAI SYSTEM

Of the many innovative regulations put out by the Shogunate in its early years, none came close to being as effective as the Sankin-kotai system. Amongst samurai households a hostage system had developed where the children of a daimyo's senior councillors were brought up in the house of the daimyo. This was deemed as an appropriate measure to solidify relationships among the samurai leaders. In a way, it was able to weaken the resolve of senior councillors to become independent. With the end of the warring states period, the shogunate had to settle two major issues: prevent insurrection by any opposing domain and find an alternative lifestyle for the many samurai who were combat ready.

Shortly after the battle of Sekigahara, realising that a new political hierarchy was being established, many of Ieyasu's vassals found themselves paying regular visits to Edo. This move was highly political. Added to this, to display their allegiance to the new government they sent their family members as well. Taking advantages of this, Ieyasu's grandson (and his fanatic follower) Tokugawa Iemitsu revised the Code for the Military Houses in 1635 stating, "It is now settled that the daimyō and shōmyō are to serve in turns [kōtai] at Edo. They shall proceed hither [Sankin] every year in summer during the course of the fourth month." [11]

With the passing of this law, attendance became the daimyos' primary functionality. Over time the rules of this system attempted to suppress a daimyo's ability to revolt by reducing his capital. The bakufu laid out rules for the number of retainers one should bring with him on his trip to and from Edo. This turned out to be a costly affair as travel would take months and more the people in one's entourage, more the expense. The daimyo would stay at his Edo residence during his visit. The

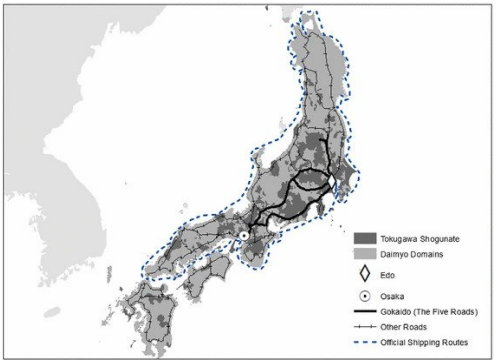

Figure 1: Major routes constructed during Tokugawa period from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10887-014-9108-6/figures/3.

residence, as mentioned earlier, would be located based on his status. The many samurai retainers of the daimyo played a vastly different role to their predecessors. With the political game being played in Edo, large numbers of samurai were stationed by the daimyo in his residence. Roughly 25-30 percent of Edo's population (about 250,000-300,000 people) lived in 600 compounds; their numbers replenished by the domains through migrations during alternate attendance.[12] The rest of his force would deal with the bureaucratic needs of the bakufu. Converting the warrior samurai to a bureaucratic one solved the issue of finding a new lifestyle for them. At its inception, the shogunate saw this as an effective method to maintain order but viewed from a different perspective, the main contribution of this system was the slow destruction of the stationary, the inertia. People from all domains would now be mobilised to satisfy the many needs of this huge operation. The consequences of this exponential rise in interactions was witnessed in the centuries to come.

For the sankai-kotai system to function smoothly, the shogunate established official channels for communication and travel. Five national highways, called the Gokaido were constructed linking central Japan and the western and eastern coast to Edo. Stations were setup along the way and manned by authorities directly under the bakufu. Domains, through which these roads ran, were in charge of their maintenance and would also end up creating internal routes to complement them. Even though the movement was made easier, the whole operation was still a very expensive one, becoming nothing short of an ordeal to many smaller domains. For example, the domain of Tawara, which was rated at 12,000 koku was about 7 days' walk away from Edo. The system choked the population so much that even the samurai families at the top of the hierarchy found themselves unable to keep up with the demands of the journey. Watanabe, a samurai belonging to one such family writes about the hardships faced:

> "The condition of our poverty was such that I cannot do justice to it in words. Because of our reduced food supply one brother had to be sent out of our home to apprentice in a temple, and later to serve in the home of a Hatamoto. I was 14 when I was told to lead this little brother to Itabashi [in Edo, where the family lived at the daimyo residence]. I remember that in a lightly falling snow this little boy of 8 or 9 was led off by a rough looking stranger. I recall as though it was yesterday how we both watched over our shoulders until we were out of each other's sight."[13]

The daimyo needed to maintain his status and would travel with a certain level of decorum. The weight of the burden would mostly fall on the leaf nodes of the hierarchical network. The village farmer found the situation most unsavoury as he had to now work twice as hard to make ends meet. The artisan communities were made to produce more artifacts to sell but mainly for them to be presented

as gifts to the bakufu. But in this zero-sum game, the kokudaka value has to flow somewhere. It found itself in the hands of the many merchants who established themselves on the new routes along the nation.

To fulfill travel requirements, they set up shops and hotels along the way. With so much being produced, the merchant, whose occupation was frowned upon, found himself to be indispensable to the daimyos as he procured necessary goods for them. With competition rising, merchants organised complex distribution and financial systems which went beyond the understanding of the samurai making the merchants important nodes in the network hierarchy.[14] These advanced merchant groups could now aid the daimyos in increasing their revenues. Domains earlier had to be self sufficient but with the boom in commerce, domains could produce what was best suited for them and commercialize their crops for greater returns. A consequence of this was that domains identified themselves more with the nation.

By the 18th century, domain merchants found themselves urging their daimyos who were concerned with rice crops to produce crops such as tobacco, indigo, etc.. as the market now let each domain to be less self-dependent. With rising competition came better tools and the farmer found himself to be in a better financial position. Given the particulars of the domain-centre relations, the bakufu did not attempt to increase tax rates along with production rates as this would change a daimyo's kokudaka and therefore his status.

What we see here is that the road, as a physical object, was constructed for a particular purpose (Sankin-kotai) but once it had manifested itself, depending on differing perspectives, it served different purposes, its underlying value being movement. This rapid economic development saw a peaceful Japan grow tremendously in population. During the Tokugawa period it is estimated that Japan's population doubled from eighteen million to thirty five million, most of it taking place in the first half of the period.[15]

The inertial network posed a huge problem as now individuals found themselves to be adversely affected by population growth. Income disparity became prevalent in each yaku having its own upper, middle and lower classes. Marius B. Jansen writes:

> "The warrior rulers, of course, enjoyed clear predominance, but one did not have to go very far down in samurai (bushi) ranks to reach forms of financial and personal insecurity. Agriculturalists ranged from village leaders whose sturdy dwellings with proud walls and massive beams were light years away from the dark and dirt-floored cabins of tenants and landless laborers. The life of artisans could range from that of contractors and specialists who purveyed by appointment to the political elite to those who cobbled together an existence from waxed-paper umbrellas and utilitarian baskets. The category of merchant included proud houses of wealth and influence like the Mitsui and Sumitomo as well as peddlers who eked out a living by hawking boiled potatoes."[16]

But unlike other social groups, the samurais found themselves in a unique position. Barred from engaging in economic activity, they were unable to even attempt to improve their lifestyle and were congregating in their respective castle towns and the city of Edo. On the plus side, they were the class of the rulers. They could penetrate different spheres of influence if given the opportunity.

Progressive alterations in the social fabric and problems which developed in the system, however, did not raise questions to challenge the system itself but the needs were naturally and inexorably directing it towards change. The system, which resonated with conditions thought to be appropriate at an earlier time found itself to be clashing with the present. While most of what we have discussed till now took part in the first half of Tokugawa rule, it is in the second half that people began maneuvering towards a change. Let us analyse what steps the community took over time to bring our revolutionary heroes into the picture.

5 THE TIMELY CHANGES

In their book - The Lessons of History, Will and Ariel Durant emphasize on the concentration of wealth being natural. The degree of the concentration varies with the economic freedom permitted by morals and the laws. If the situation becomes an unstable equilibrium then a critical situation comes into play. We either see legislation redistributing wealth or revolution redistributing poverty.[17]

Change by legislation was unlikely in tradition backed Japan, instead it is not illogical to speculate that the country might have been on course towards the latter, but for the timely interruption by the western powers. The issue of redistribution was naturally shifted from an unstable position by the events to come.

It is important to note that changes to be mentioned were not brought in as an attempt to restructure the government but in the light of social issues, they seemed to be plausible solutions to maintain order.

As discussed earlier, Confucian teaching had been very popular ever since it arrived in Japan. In China, the civil servants exam made it possible for people from diverse backgrounds to achieve social and political rewards. Japan, though it wished to mimic this system, was restricted due to the resistance put up by the rigid system in place. But by the Genroku era (1688-1704) we see Confucianism integrating more positively with governance. The fifth shogun; Tsunayoshi(1646-1709) styled himself as a Confucian sage and attempted to encourage learning. Among his advisors was Ogyu Sorai (1666-1728), whose teachings would affect generations to come. He would go on to serve the eighth shogun Yoshimune (1684-1751) as well.

Sorai, the second son of an exiled doctor, was a prominent figure at the juncture we discussed in the previous section. At the time when the social changes brought on by the economic activity was becoming obvious, it was Sorai's teachings that became widely accepted as a solution. While his teachings spanned Confucian philosophy, his main contribution was education. Not only did he establish his own school but also promoted education through his influence with the aforementioned shoguns.[18] For the next century, educational institutions became the centre to discuss ideas and current norms. With this, debate was introduced into politics. Now it was possible to stray away (but contained in Confucian teachings) from the rigid structure for the purpose of scholarly learning.

While in the Genroku era education was mostly restricted to the elite in each social class, it became more accessible over time, so much so that by the Kansei era(1789-1801) reform administrative bodies campaigned for the selection of men of ability in important offices instead of accepting well-born incompetents into office.[19]

Education seemed to be a very fitting solution to the unrest in society as we see private academies (shinjuku), temple schools (terakoya), village school (goko) and han schools proliferate all over the country.[20] The popular message was that to be illiterate was to be blind and education would put an end to this shame. While most of the teachings were about how one should lead his life, for our argument, we see these institutions as a platform where reasoning is given value. As we saw with the Gokaido road project earlier, once these bodies manifest themselves, they can pursue different objectives.

Schools would slowly deviate from teaching only morals to teaching varying concepts as deemed necessary by the actors in each school. Again, different subnetworks would draw from different sources but all of them were, knowingly or unknowingly, attempting to build a better system in place. Amongst the schools of thought that arose, two are important to our discussion.

Kokugaku or "National learning" was a school that revived the Japanese culture and traditions especially from the Heian period. While Confucian scholars were in awe of China, kokugaku gave importance to Japanese tradition. It was an attempt to distinguish the nation from foreign bodies. It deified the emperor and proposed that

the Japanese gods were second to none. This was to the extent that foreign products of value were seen as by products of the Japanese deities.[21] This undertaking of nativism is seen as one of the driving forces of Meiji restoration. It connected the people along a link of nationalistic interests by citing their unique historical practices such as the Shinto religion and poetry writing. With this we see that in the network, the heavy weightage given to the bakufu is slowly shifting to the emperor who is viewed as the central symbol of nativism.

The second school is termed as rangaku and encapsulates western studies. While it is true that the bakufu instructed domains not to engage with foreigners, they always had a link to the outside world in the form of a Dutch trading port in Nagasaki. While the method of trading itself is quite interesting, the books brought in by the Dutch were of a kind that the Japanese had never seen before. Medicine provides us with a good example. With the book Anatomical Tables, the Japanese sought to learn about parts of the body. While customs had prevented such ideas from evolving, the knowledge presented in the book was put to test in 1771 when a dissection was conducted, and the doctors, headed by Otsuki Gentaku (1757-1827), confirmed its contents. Astonished by its accuracy, Gentaku and his team proceeded to decipher other texts over the next few years. Once things became clearer he compared his joy to that of the sweetness of a sugar cane.[22] But the fear of the western 'barbarians' remained and hindered these attempts. Even with rangaku showing positive effects, seclusion was given higher importance.

Their fear is expressed in the story of Takahashi Kageyasu (1785-1829) and Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796–1866), a German savant who, due to his talents, was allowed to teach 56 students. When he was to leave they found in his possession a map which had been given to him by Takahashi. The bakufu took twenty-three of his students to custody, expelled Siebold and Takahashi died under interrogation.[23] While it is true that they were afraid of the plausible consequences in following the West, they could also not afford to ignore these textbooks as they showed the vast superiority in the practicality of western knowledge. Its presence was known to all but with no threats from the West, the bakufu could afford to not go to the extremes of fully accepting them nor expelling them altogether.

Kokugaku was not just nativism but much more than that and it is also true that nativism consists of more than just teachings in the kokugaku. Similarly rangaku only shows a facet of the acknowledgment of foreign bodies. But what these schools of thought provide us with is the essence of the thoughts prevalent at the time.

6 THE WEST ARRIVES

With all the information flowing through the network, the nation was put in a situation where the system did not resonate with the new found men of the age. The bakufu made certain changes to incorporate these new changes into the state of society but they were very much a symbol of the past, of the rigidity that had carried through years of Tokugawa rule. What the country needed was an opportunity to discuss how to proceed as a nation. Here we find the timely intrusion of the West to be the required catalyst to bring up these debates.

Warning bells were first sounded with the news of China's defeat to the western powers and its submission in the treaty of Nanking in 1842 ensuring that trade would be carried out in western terms.[24] Shocked by the defeat of their greatest neighbour an attempt was made to find out why such an event occurred. Questions were raised to the Dutch at Nagasaki, the answers to which indicated the superior military power of the West.[25]

While some favored the path of diplomacy, most of the nation, out of fear, wanted higher degrees of seclusion, requesting to send the barbarians away, even the Dutch at Nagasaki, who had been so helpful and had traded with the country for so long. Shipwrecked whalers from America became the target of this fear, and were treated

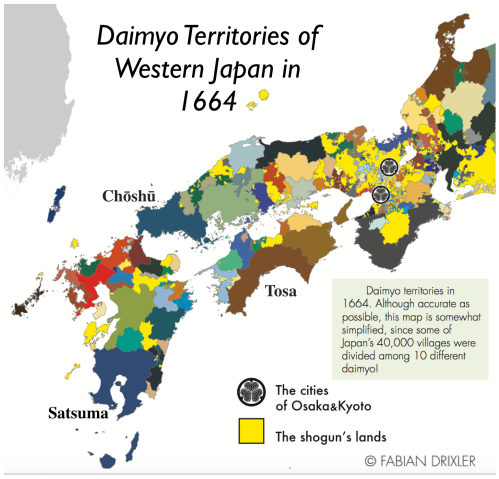

Figure 2: The revolutionary domains http://www.geocurrents.info/geopolitics/mapping-early-modern-japan-as-a-multi-state-system.

cruelly by the bakufu.[26] The Americans found it to be a valid reason to engage the nation. While the country was still debating on what actions would be appropriate, Commodore Mathew Perry led a U.S naval squadron on July 7, 1853. Requesting an audience with the bakufu, he pressed them to open up the country for commerce all the while hinting about the consequences of not heeding to his requests.

A bakufu official remembered his threats, "Our country has just had a war with a neighboring country, Mexico, and we attacked and captured its capital. Circumstances may lead your country also into a similar plight."[27]

This opened up questions about the political landscape in Japan and it is during this time that one's position in the network determined his fate in the coming years. The ever weakening grasp of the bakufu over the daimyos had meant that domains were more free to pursue their own self-interests.[28] Let us not forget that the central link had not vanished but had shifted from the bakufu to the emperor. Therefore while domains attempted to find their own solutions to the issue at hand, they did it with the vision of empowering the nation through the noble household of the emperor.

Amongst all the domains, the western tozama domains found themselves in an advantageous position. While all attempted to advance their influence, two domains were powerful enough to do so: Satsuma and Choshu.[29] The Choshu tradition mentioned earlier reminds us of their hatred of the Bakufu. While Choshu maintained a great military presence (and had re-militarised), Satsuma had samurai families everywhere, constituting 20-30 percent of their domain's population (overall percentage being 5-6 in the nation).[30] While both played court politics and would end up teaming together to put an end to the bakufu, they differed in their solutions to the foreigners.

After 1854, along with the bakufu, Satsuma sent intelligence-gathering missions to the West. While the reports of the traveling bakufu officials were cast aside (with the internal turmoil taking precedence), Satsuma officials, upon analysing the West, changed their policy from hostility to acceptance.[31] Choshu took a different route. Here a radical party had taken control of the domain and attacked the westerners, fearlessly calling for expulsion.[32]

Both domains symbolized antipodal thoughts: acceptance and rejection. With Satsuma playing better court politics, Choshu found itself unable to gain the upper hand at court, being branded the enemy of the court at one time.[33]

While it is true that the government of each domain had different plans for the future, being powerful tozama domains of Choshu and Satsuma (along with Tosa) they were able to assert their ideas for the new nation. Fudai domains were far

from able to do so as their status was linked to the power of the shogunate, which by the time was becoming a powerless identity.

Here is where I would like to view the situation within the network system mentioned earlier. Being a citizen of the rebelling domains meant that you were very much part of the coming era or so it seemed to the many inhabitants of those domains. Also, the information provided to individuals would depend on his position in the network which can be seen in their actions. Taking the case of tozama samurai (as they produced the changes in the system), their lack of work and abundant need to travel made their position in the network very unique. Not only were they "protectors" but if they chose to, they could pursue their interests, not being bound to their domain's ideologies. Their role in society had changed considerably from their ancestors as their linkage to society was more individualistic than as a group. Even as a group, they were separate from the rest of society, gathering in castle towns and cities, attempting to free themselves from the tedious system.

While these samurais attacked different problems at different levels, here I focus on a few who would influence these men and the ones who would take the lead in the new government.

One of the most influential groups at the time named themselves as Shishi which translates to "Men of high purpose". They consisted mainly of samurai from Choshu, Satsuma and Tosa and were of a relatively lower rank and they accepted ronin (samurai without a master), into their ranks. They fought the bakufu's decisions fearlessly, sincerely practicing bushido. This bravery stemmed from their intense concern for the fate of their land. [34] At the time, men such as the shishi were enlightened by the teachings of the intellectual samurai of the time. Here I discuss two of these intellectuals as they not only shaped the thoughts of the many but also through their actions described the state of affairs of the land. Also, the many leaders to come would be their disciples.

Sakuma Shōzan (1811–1864) caught the eye of his lord as he was a very gifted man. He soon found himself in the right circles to access Dutch material. Very much a nationalist, he was convinced of the importance of knowing the enemy. His preachings can be summed up by the phrase: western science, Eastern morals. It was a dialogue composed of rationality and morality. [35]

One of his students was a ronin named Yoshida Shōin (1830-1859). So convinced was he of his master's teachings that he followed his instruction to attempt and board Perry's ship only to be rejected. In one of his letters he describes his master as an extraordinary man citing that in his school, those who entered to learn gunnery were compelled to learn Chinese classics and vice versa.[36] We see that Sakuma was very much a Renaissance man and promoted this way of life for his students as well. He believed an awareness of different fields of logic was needed.

Finally, I would like to present Yoshida Shoin's message to his grateful students. This passage (condensed by Marius B. Jansen) best expresses his will and also the motive behind the leaders' actions to follow:

> What is important in a leader is a resolute will and determination. A man may be versatile and learned, but if he lacks resoluteness and determina- tion, of what use will he be? . . . Life and death, union and separation, follow hard upon one another. Nothing is steadfast but the will, nothing endures but one's achievements. These alone count in life. . . . In relations with others, one should express resentment and anger openly and straightforwardly. If one cannot express them openly and straightforwardly, the only thing to do is forget about them. [Not to do so] can only be called cowardice. . . . Those who take up the science of war must not fail to master the classics. The reason is that arms are dangerous instruments and not necessarily forces for good. . . . First we must rectify conditions in our own domain, after which conditions in other domains can be rectified. This having been done, con- ditions at the court can be rectified and finally conditions throughout the whole

> world can be rectified. First one must set an example oneself and then it can be extended progressively to others. This is what I mean by the "pursuit of learning." . . . As things are now the feudal lords are content to look on while the shogunate carries on in a highhanded manner. Neither the lords nor the shogun can be depended upon, and so our only hope lies in grass- roots heroes. . . . If one is loath to die at seventeen or eighteen, he will be equally reluctant at thirty, and will no doubt find a life of eighty or ninety too short . . . Man's life span is fifty years; to live seventy is a rarity. Unless one performs some deed that brings a sense of gratification before dying, his soul will never rest in peace. [37]

These heroes would later be assassinated but their words were the words by which the Meiji leaders would live by.

During the internal turmoil, in the sequence of events that was to occur, these samurai would find themselves placed at the top of the political order. The country would send missions to foreign lands, learn their ways and come back to implement the superior technology that they borrowed. Acceptance would be the path chosen but it very well could have gone the other way as the victory of these intellectuals had not been a foregone conclusion.

Here is an example. Nishi Amane(1829-1897), one of the few who had accepted the West confided to his Dutch teacher that the country had been seized by anti-foreign zealots.[38] He would fear for his life, instead he would go on to be one of the leading intellectuals in the new Meiji government.

Therefore, while we acknowledge the rise of these samurai and their way of acceptance, we must realise that their path was paved by the unique circumstances in which the restoration took place. This paper does not attempt to dive into the details of the restoration but narrates how such men had the opportunity to even attempt the change.

We see how a strict system morphs into one which would allow the future leaders to arise, to cross borders, be educated and debate existing notions of society, all events being stimulated by the change in the inertial nature.

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