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Japan and its Roots  
Modern Japanese Culture and its Edo Past  
IDS 360/460

## CENTRALIZED FEUDALISM AND ISOLATION

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## What Is Feudalism?

- A set of legal and military customs in medieval Europe that flourished between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, and relied on a system of land use in exchange for the labor to work the land.



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## Other Definitions

Reciprocal legal and military obligations



Encompassing the peasants: Feudal Society



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## Japan had it, too: Feudal Japan, 1185-1868



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## The Kamakura Period, 1185-1333: Daimyo and Shogun Emerge



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- Governance of the Kamakura Shogunate
- Marks start of Japanese 'medieval' era
- Lasted for almost 700 years
- Shifts in power away from the Emperor
- The *bushi* class (samurai)
- The *shogun*: most powerful *bushi*
- How it differed from the prior period

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## The Mongol Invasions of 1274 and 1281

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- A full-scale invasion
- The *kamikaze*
- Saving Japan
- The beginning of the end of the Kamakura shogunate
  - Fear
  - Military spending
  - Economic woes
  - Fights over succession, 1272



## The Kemmu Restoration, 1333: The Emperor Returns...?

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## The Muromachi Period, 1336-1573

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- Ashikaga shogunate, ruled for 237 years
- Making Kyoto the capital
- Unfreezing trade: commerce with the Ming Dynasty
- Trade goods and Buddhism



## Portuguese traders during the Sengoku Period, 1467-1573

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- Part of the Muromachi period
- Marked by:
  - Castles
  - Contact with the west
  - Introduction of firearms to Japan
  - Intense internal warfare



## Problems with the West

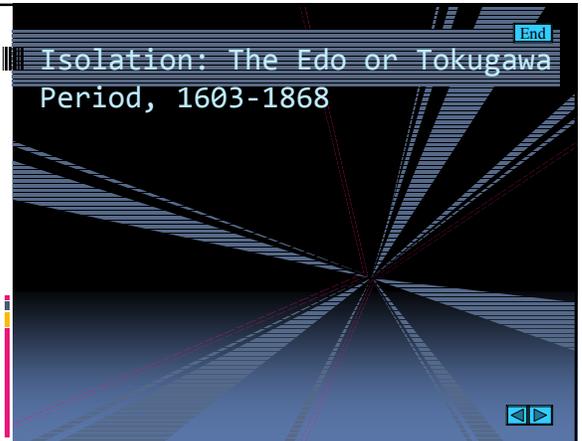
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- Portugal, the Netherlands, England and Spain arrive to trade
- Close behind: Jesuits, Dominicans, and Franciscans
- Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the expulsion of Christian missionaries
- Christianity was not re-established until after 1870.



## Isolation: The Edo or Tokugawa Period, 1603-1868

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- Characteristics:
- Centralized power
- Hereditary shogunate
- Pervasive regulation
- Isolation
- Result:
- Peace and prosperity

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## The Edo Economy

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- 80% rice farmers
- Artisans, merchants
- Samurai: no farming, no business! Could borrow, though!
- Caused social strife
- Caused economic strife
- TAXES: The Revolt of 1750
- By 1800: Commercialization



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## Edo Social Structure

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- Emperor and nobility
- Shogun, Daimyo
- Samurai
- "Lower Orders"
  - Peasants
  - Merchants and artisans
- Women



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## Literacy: Highly Prized

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- Wood block printing instead of moveable type
- 1780s: 3000 books per year (Russia, 400 per year...)
- By 1860: 40% of men and 10% of women literate
- 1871: Universal compulsory education



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## Sakoku

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- 17<sup>th</sup> century: Fears of conquest by European powers
- Fears about Christianity and the Shimabara Rebellion
- Rebellion led to restrictions on the West
- 1635: Japan is closed.



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