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Get Out! What, We Can't Keep You Out? Isolation and Internationalism

Contemporary Japan and its Roots in the Edo Period
IDS 360/460

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Isolation: The Edo Period, 1603-1868

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Characteristics:

- Centralized power
- Hereditary shogunate
- Pervasive regulation
- Isolation
- Subordination of the nobility
- Uniform system of taxation
- Result:
- Peace and prosperity

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The Edo Economy



- 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


- Emperor and nobility
- Shogun, Daimyo
 - Han
 - Privileges and Parties
- Samurai
 - Hierarchy
- "Lower Orders"-94% of the population!
 - Peasants-80%
 - Merchants and artisans-14%
- Women



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Literacy




- Wood block printing instead of moveable type
- 1780s: 3000 books per year (Russia, 400 per year...)
- 1850s-Translating western texts
- By 1860: 40% of men and 10% of women literate
- 1871: Universal compulsory education
 - Based on a western model

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Government

- Two hundred daimyo administer...
- Tokugawa shogunate- most powerful
- Tokyo (also called Edo)- capital city
- Peace and stability nets high cultural achievement
 - Ukiyo-e
 - kabuki




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Sakoku

- 17th 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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The End of Seclusion: July 14, 1853

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Restoration and Adaptation in Japan

- By 1850:
 - Japan avoided colonization by the west
 - Japan could not avoid western culture and technology
 - “Defensive Modernization”
 - Result: Most fully westernized of all the Asian nations

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The Western Challenge



- 200+ years of isolation by 1850
- Limited commercial and cultural contact with the Dutch
- Port of Nagasaki
- Preservation and development of Japanese culture

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The US Arrives to do Business...

- President Filmore sends a letter to the emperor
- US whaling ships and merchant vessels go first
- Japan: a refuge
- 1853 and the arrival of the US ironclad steamship fleet



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Commodore Matthew Perry



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Perry Makes Two Trips...

- 1853-delivers the letter
- 1854-Demanding a response (and bringing bigger guns!)
- Compromise that satisfied no one
- Triggers a civil war
 - Samurai distressed
 - Betraying Japan?
 - Ultimate loyalty-to the Emperor or to the shogun?



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Yoshida Shoin-Rebel Leader



- Led a revolt
- Beheaded, 1859
- Followers continue the fight in the 1860s-Civil War
- 1868-Resolution
- Kyoto to Edo
- The Meiji Restoration

