
Contact Between The Dutch Empire And Japan While Under The Tokugawa Shogunate

The Dutch and Japanese relation dates back over 400 years ago back in 1609 when the Dutch first arrived in Japan. This occurred during the Tokugawa shogunate. A shogunate was the government of the times of Feudal Japan, at these times Japan was ruled by a shogun or the highest-ranked military leader. The Tokugawa shogunate was the last shogunate of traditional Japan which gave Japan peace and strong economic growth. Its rule was extremely strong and this strength was admired throughout the world, it had allowed trade connection with the Netherlands which were part of the Dutch East India Company, a massive megacorporation that allowed the Dutch to continue in their spice trades across Europe. This began a very close relationship of trade, military and education between the Dutch and Japanese which can still be seen today.

Now, to begin with, the sources. One of the pre-contact sources of Japan before the Dutch came were the many pieces from the Jomon period. Jomon means 'rope patterned' which are seen on the earthenware pottery with the many rope indents that can be seen in nearly all Jomon potteries. The Jomon period spans over 14,000 years however most of the final works are the most detailed. As you can see from the two images provided from the same period, they have evolved from simple potteries to intricately detailed sculptures. These two pieces show the creativity and ability to create beautiful things from natural things around them. This shows the sophistication in their society and their ability to evolve their artistic abilities and become better and do more. Their advancements in such a short time to make pottery like this, they even had many more tools at the early stages of the Jomon period including baskets, needles, cooking ware and storage vessels. These advancements have created an extremely developed nation to this day. This style of pottery has not been lost in modern-day culture either however improved on and many people can still be seen creating earthenware just like this.

The Sengoku period was another stage in Japan's history defined by the military and political conflicts. This is more commonly known as the 'Age of the Warring States,' a time when the Tokugawa shogunate was able to rise to power. This war lasted over 100 years over a petty dispute between two strong powers within the previous shogun, the Ashikaga shogunate. From this, we can see Japan's strong military and fighting influence on their culture and lifestyles. Both of these are Tatami gusoku, a form of lightweight Japanese armour. This was worn by the samurais, paid soldiers of daimyo families who were used in battles especially at the time of the warring states. The tatami armour is made up of many individual pieces and many are decorated as well to show the status of the soldier used for ceremonies. Battle armours, however, are quite simple and plain sewn garments and much easier to manoeuvre in. This armour was quite effective during the war and the art of the samurai and the culture of fighting was very complex. These soldiers would study and train extremely hard to impress the families they serve however, were also quite rich and kept very high reputations. The samurai's sword was practically a samurai's pride there were a few different types of blades. Samurais were very honoured and respected many rules known as the Bushido. This was a code of honour, discipline and morality which must've been respected to keep their own honour. This was the 'way of the warrior,' it explained many things about their society. Japan had a strong connection to the military and abiding by rules showing that they would be ruthless soldiers and

able to win battles with methodically thought plans and strategies.

The Dutch came to Japan during the Tokugawa shogunate when Tokugawa Ieyasu's rule. This was a very harsh and strict time. The Dutch were the only ones allowed to trade in Japan due to strict laws set in place by the shogunate. This was a long period of isolation, so the government could control merchants, spread religion and gain more money for themselves. The shogunate wanted to make sure that there was no Christianity spread in Japan. The Portuguese had previously been into Japan and they had spread the religion throughout Japan but this shogun thought of Christianity as un-Japanese and foreign, undermining the Buddhist and Shinto religions. So they persecuted all Christians and as Dutch were more neutral and focused on trade they struck an agreement that would last over a hundred years. However, they were only allowed to trade in Dejima, this contact source proves the very fact of the Dutch presence in Japan. China and Korea were also administering their trade through this trading post off of Nagasaki. This source shows how small this trading post was but how much it brought to Japanese society. This place was very important as it expanded the reach of the Dutch East India company and allowed Japan to gain high riches. The Dutch brought many technological advancements to shoguns in their times of trading which proved to revolutionise the Japanese culture, including weapons, guns and so much more. Like the Tanegashima which was originally the Arquebus which was traded by the Dutch and modified by Japan for their use especially in the war.

The Rangaku was, in literal translation, Dutch learning. The Rangaku is a compilation of different bodies of varying topics and information found in the Western world, to learn for the Japanese. Its information was created during the time of the Dutch trade in Dejima. This allowed people in Japan to understand western concepts including medical sciences, biology and chemistry, geography, physical and electrical sciences and the western world. It was created by Japanese scholars trying to learn the Dutch language. These pioneers of knowledge helped the development of Japan and its overall understanding of the world. Through these scholars, people were able to learn about sciences, the geography of the world, advanced technologies, history, art and language. It mostly consisted of different aspects of science, medicine and botany. Many books of this could be found all across Japan to teach the nation about the wonders outside its borders. Rangaku was a form of learning for the Japanese to learn about the outer world as they had minimal interactions with other societies and ethnicities.

The whole trade system affected Japan, the old feudalism system was soon to be abolished due to the high wealth and economic growth, trade became very pressured and tensions grew within Japan. After the fall of the Tokugawa Shogunate during an overthrow movement of the last shogun, there was a period of fighting before the emperor, Emperor Meiji took control. This is known as the Meiji restoration when power was finally taken away from the shoguns and back to the emperors. As you can see in this source of the Emperor's victory over the shoguns as he parades to the imperial palace in Edo or Tokyo. The new emperor practically demolished all pre-existing rules and laws and old lifestyles and completely replaced them with a more western-styled democratic system and western systems. This has allowed Japan to grow so exponentially to become one of the biggest, wealthiest nations in the world. With their technological advancements and modernizations, in less than 200 years it has become from a once medieval country in constant dispute and war to the serene place we see today.