
Japan: The Fall Of The Tokugawa Shogunate

In Feudal Japan, the Shogun was the absolute leader in terms of the military. During the decline of the Shogunate, specifically Tokugawa Shogunate, the emperor was not the figure with the most power. Instead, he was just a figure to be worshipped and looked up to while the Shogun ruled. Eventually, this way of running Japan collapsed due to many internal and external factors. Japan started to be criticized by other countries for being extremely closed off and not evolving in terms of more modern technology, by the 1830s, the way Japan was being run caused famines, and peasants demanded that Shogun relax the limitations on foreign trade. More natural disasters were happening, and the Shogun did not prepare Japan for possible crop losses, leaving tax increasingly impossible to pay. As peasants rioted and fought against the Shogun's rule, it finally collapsed.

Natural disasters tore Japan apart, while Shogunate appeared to be unbeknownst to the havoc it was causing Japanese citizens who weren't royalty or Samurai, (merchants, peasants & farmers) who still were asked to pay tax, which got increasingly unreasonable in quantity and was too much to ask for those struggling. Shogun continued to enlarge the tax rates during this time, although the situation was dire and people were lucky if they scraped by with anything to eat or drink during the day. Work hours got longer and taxes got higher, but it was unsustainable due to the constant natural disasters. With no clear plan of action and recovery when these disasters hit, the crisis was every day for the general public in Japan.

Peasants began an uprising of new ideas about how Japan should be run, meaning Japan was at war against itself. This internal war caused those lower in the feudal system of Japan to begin to find their voice in the hopes of bringing light to the situation the Shogunate government put them in.

Considering peasants, farmers and merchants weren't particularly powerful, it wasn't enough to change the whole system, but the government became more aware of how powerful a large group of people is if they are passionate about change. This helped in raising awareness but didn't change the government.

Towards the end of the Shogun's rule, Japan got extreme criticism regarding this system of hierarchy and how it was clearly outdated, and Japan as a whole suffered through complete isolation throughout the entire Shogun period. With no culture experienced other than their own, technologies not advancing due to it being the same constant system, and no room for uniqueness or anything out of the ordinary, peasants and those of lower class such as merchants were tired of the disappointing, repetitive lifestyle, wanting to do more than just the same things day after day. Foreign influence was a joke to the Shoguns and was simply not allowed. However, because of this, more people began to be curious about things outside of Japan and people outside of Japan became more curious about things inside Japan.

During this time, Japan continued to endure immense hardship from lack of foreign trade as a mass wave of famines and overall depression caused crops to stop growing, people got sick and tired, all the while hating the system they were living in and were fighting against the forced lack of foreign trade, caused by the Shogun being strict about what was let into the country, but

not thinking about the inability to pay taxes as the country fell apart. This crisis caused Japanese civilians to become more aware of just how bad the government they were under was, and brought more attention to the increasing problems that the Shogunate weren't controlled well enough.

Overall, Shogunate Japan collapsed due to a number of internal and external factors, including natural disasters which weren't being handled well enough, and a constant increase of taxes that were introduced, while not enough crops were growing to compensate for it, driving those who relied on crops to make a living deeper into poverty. With complete isolation and little to no foreign influence, famines, and depression, and an internal war raging due to the system that was pulling Japan backward rather than pushing them forward, Shogunate Japan collapsed in 1867 before the Meiji Restoration.

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