

SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS DURING THE ANCIENT AGE: THE ROOT OF THE JAPANESE FEUDAL SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT: *Although Japan has been "westernized" to some extent and has a different political system than China, both countries share similar characteristics of administrative geography. Why do the Japanese have elements of administrative geography similar to the Chinese? When did Japan absorb these elements from China? To answer these questions, this paper focuses on the root of the Japanese feudal system during the early age and examines how Japan absorbed administrative geography from China. It demonstrates that Sino-Japanese relations in an ancient age provided the basis of the Japanese feudal system during the medieval period.*

INTRODUCTION

Even though Japan has been "westernized" to some extent and has a different political system than China today, both countries share similar characteristics of administrative functioning. Although Japan has a well-known hierarchical system, people, especially in the West, often wonder where the Japanese system comes from. Did the Japanese invent their own indigenous political and social structures by themselves? This research demonstrates that the Japanese did not develop political and social systems, but rather, copied from China. In addition, this paper illustrates that the Japanese modified the system after copying from China. Eventually, they created a Chinese system with "Japanese characteristics".

For instance, when Confucianism was first introduced in Japan during the ancient era, the Japanese strove to erect a single monolithic structure of bureaucratic power. Soon, however, they reverted to their more natural feudal system, with autonomous lords commanding separate fiefdoms. As a result, Confucianism became the moral basis for a system of decentralized and highly competitive power. Confucian principles turned into a warrior's ethic and dictated the struggle between the *daimyos* and their *samurai* knights to dominate one another (Pye, 1985). Ultimately, military might became the major driving force for Japanese foreign

policy. Japan began, not only to conquer its neighbors, such as Korea, but also to challenge its master -- the Ming Empire.

Importantly, this study shows that every society has its own evolution. Although the Japanese system has elements of administrative geography similar to the Chinese, the Chinese system with "Japanese characteristics" facilitated Japanese modernization during the Meiji Restoration in the nineteenth century.

THE COPY OF THE CHINESE SYSTEM

The two most important Japanese accounts of early times: the *Kojiki* [Records of Ancient Matters] compiled in 712, and the *Nihonshogi* [Chronicles of Japan] in 720 (*Kojiki* [712] 1967; *Nihonshogi* [720] 1967) describe a picture of a long-centralized ruling family, comparable to that of China. Together with other Chinese historical records, these two works reveal that Japan had a ruler at the beginning of its early ages. During this ancient period, Japan was divided into a number of families or family groups called *uji*, whose members were not necessarily hereditary family (Tsuji, 1960; Hirano, 1962). Each *uji* had a chief who received orders from the emperor and controlled his family members on a particular piece of land. As a result,

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Japan was divided into one hundred "countries" (Ban [126], 1962). However, there was significant Chinese influence. Indeed, Chinese coins and mirrors of the Earlier Han Dynasty (202 BC - 8 AD) have been discovered in Japan and agriculture as well as bronze and iron, were no doubt ultimately derived from China (Fairbank et al., 1989).

When Prince Shotoku, who had half Soga-shi blood, defeated Mononobe-shi, a powerful *uji* in 587, Shotoku, in reality, took power even though Empress Suiko (r. 593-628) was formally in charge. Together with the Soga family, Shotoku proceeded to carry out a series of significant innovations, such as learning from China and shaping Japanese society and government; this was the zenith of *uji* society (Wada, 1992). Shotoku realized that Japan was underdeveloped compared to China; the state system and social structure of Japan had to reform and the nation be restored (Tsuji, 1960). To reach these goals, Shotoku declared that Japan had to adopt the Chinese calendar and *kanbun* [The Chinese language] as an official language. Second, Prince Shotoku ordered the compilation of the *Kokushi* [National History]. Third, by copying Chinese centralized bureaucratic rule, Shotoku established bureaucratic ranks (Tsuji, 1960; Mayuzu, 1962). Fourth, and most importantly, Shotoku issued the *Kenbo Junana Jo* [Constitution of Seventeen Articles] in 604. The main principles of this constitution were derived from Confucian philosophy from the *Book of Documents* to *Zhuangzi*. The constitution emphasized four points: harmonization of society (Articles 1 and 14); reverence of Buddhism (Article 2); supremacy of imperial rule (Articles 3, and 12); and fairness of politics (Articles 5, 6, 11, and 17) (Shotoku Taishi [604], 1960).

In addition, Japan also allowed a number of immigrants from Korea and China to assist with reform. Moreover, to copy the Chinese system, Japan dispatched large scale missions to the Sui Dynasty. After only 29-years of the Sui history, four missions to China (in years 600, 607, 608, and 614) were dispatched from Japan (*Nihonshogi* [720], 1967; Nishijima, 1963). The missions led by Ono no Imoko, in 607, and 608, were the most famous. In particular, the Chinese emperor was impressed by the 608 mission which was accompanied by hundreds of people and native products (Wei [656],

1973; Du [801], 1992). The major purpose of these missions was neither political nor economic, but was to learn the Chinese political and social structures. The significance of these missions was their size, which included several ships, hundreds of people, members of missions, students and Chinese scholars. In order to study, the missions stayed in China for several years until the next mission brought them home. These men acquired knowledge and skills that were highly regarded by the Japanese court and contributed greatly to the cultural transformation of the country (Yoshida, 1992; Fairbank et al., 1989). By the time Prince Shotoku passed away at age forty-nine, many people thought that Japanese reform was over. However, the second great wave of Chinese learning continued.

After the death of both Shotoku and Empress Suiko, the Soga family alienated the other court families. Eventually, Prince Naka no Oe [later Emperor Tenchi (r. 661-71)] and Nakaomi no Kamatari staged a *coup d'etat* and overthrew the Soga family. As a reward, the Kamatari was given a new family name, Fujiwara no Kamatari. His family dominated the Japanese court for centuries. As soon as the Soga-family was removed, the new regime pushed reform into a new stage. In 645, Japan began to adopt the Chinese style calendar by using the emperor's name to indicate the year, such as Hongwu sannen [the third year of Hongwu reign]. This year was also the year of the *Taita Kaishin* [Great Taika Reform]. Under this reform, Japan reshaped its government structure: first, a capital with Chinese-style buildings was erected in Naniwa (today's Osaka); second, central government ministries were set up; third, land was redistributed to people based on gender; fourth, the centralized Chinese taxation system was established; and finally, Chinese-type law codes were drawn up. The significance of this reform was that Japan, for the first time, began to establish a Chinese-style centralized feudal monarchy system. Before the Taika reform, there was a well-organized central government in Japanese society. But, after this reform, the structure of the central government (Seki, 1962) in Japan was established based on copying the Tang system which contained only six ministries:

The Central Government in 701

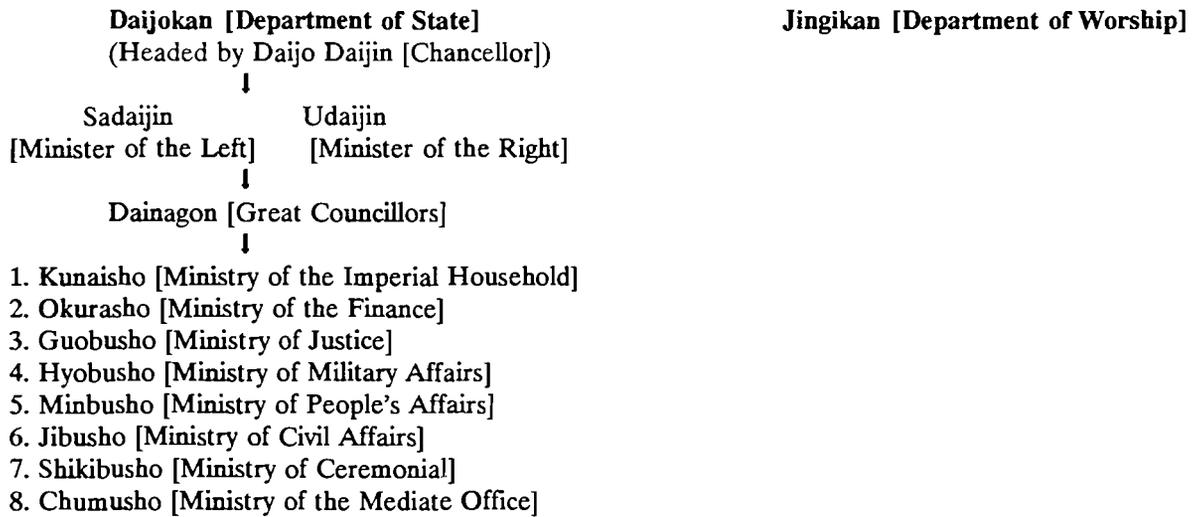


Figure 1: The Central Government in 701

The Department of State was concerned with all secular aspects of government, from military to civilian services. The Department of Worship was concerned with performance of the great religious ceremonies, the upkeep of shrines, the discipline of shrine wardens, and recording observances of oracles and divination. The Department of Worship also had power to rule over the Department of State (Sansom, 1958). The fundamental principle of this structure originated from the principle of Confucianism. For instance, officials in the Ministry of the Mediate Office were required to study Confucianism and Chinese Yin-Yang philosophy (Yoshida, 1992) because the Japanese believed, according to Chinese cosmology, that the interaction of Yin-Yang controlled many national events.

Under the Taika reform, the local government was also reshaped. The whole country was reorganized into Chinese-style provinces, which were subdivided into districts and subsequently into village units. Japan was divided into *kuni*[provinces] administered by *Kami* appointed by the central authority. The provinces were divided into *gun* administered by *Gunshi* who were usually locally appointed from the rural gentry. By the beginning of the eighth century, 592 *guns* divided Japan. The

major duty of provincial and district officials was to collect taxes, recruit labor and to keep the peace (Kishi, 1962).

Since Shotoku sent many students and scholars to study in China, the number of missions continued. The "products" of reforms since Shotoku's era began to appear after the first mission returned from China in 608 (*Nihonshogi* [720], 1967; Tsuji, 1960). Without these highly talented scholars, the Taika Reform could not have successfully been carried out. By the time the first mission, led by Inukami no Kimimitasuki, to the Tang was dispatched in 630, some scholars, including monks who were dispatched during the Sui Dynasty, had already begun to return to Japan and contribute their knowledge to society. Importantly, the Japanese court continued to send missions to China during Tang times (Nishijima, 1962: Ou [1060], 1975; Du [801], 1992). Those who were accepted to study in Chang'an, capital of the Tang, gained an extremely good reputation in the Chinese court. The Japanese students received, not only scholarships every year, and clothes every season, but also, were provided mentors to help with their studies and granted use of the national library. Even in the end of the Tang Dynasty, foreign students including those from Japan and Korea,

continued to be supported by the Chinese court, creating a huge financial burden (Tsukamoto, 1974). The earnest Japanese students stayed in China for long periods (ranging from 10 to 40 years), immersed in their studies. For instance, Ono no Imoko studied overseas more than 30 years. Japanese students studied various fields ranging from economics, history, law, and literature to paint, music, engineering, and even fortune telling. By the time they returned to Japan, they not only brought precious books with them, but also were able to describe the institutions of a highly organized state and to report upon what they had observed of the administrative methods of the Tang government (Tsuji, 1960). Thus, their knowledge became a fundamental tool used to develop Japanese society and culture.

THE MODIFICATION OF THE CHINESE PATTERN

From the start, the Japanese copy of the Chinese political system was far from exact. Chinese institutions in Japan became so modified that new borrowing from the mainland seemed somewhat irrelevant. First, the failure of land reforms created a new *Shoen* [Manorial System], which dominated Japan for about eight centuries (from the late eighth century to the end of the sixteenth century). Because of the imperial government's inexperienced administrative system, land reforms copied from the Chinese system did not perform as well as the government expected, especially in the countryside. Under the Taika Reform, the plan to redistribute land once every six years to prevent land concentration was not vigorously enforced.

The government eventually permitted private ownership of land in 743 (Tanahashi, 1992). Once land became private, people began to seek ways to evade land tax. The following examples of *shoen* demonstrate their efforts: A) The monastic *shoen*: Since the lands of the Buddhist temples and Shinto Shrines were free from taxation, some landholders sought to have monasteries become the legal owners of their estates. By paying nominal rents to monasteries, the landlords retained tax-free

lands. In addition, many monasteries purchased lands illegally from other landowners and acquired additional plots as gifts. Consequently, the larger monasteries, such as Todaiji, became huge landholding institutions. Some of them had as many as 10,000 acres (Nishioka, 1957). B) The court aristocratic and magnate *shoen*: Court nobles, such as the Fujiwara family became enormous landholders because they could offer protection to the local landowners against provincial governors, whose duty was to collect taxes. Local landholders made the same kind of arrangements with court nobles as with monasteries. The landowners would donate or offer land in commendation to a powerful court noble and then be given back the land as benefice in exchange for a nominal rent. In addition, the imperial court granted thousands of acres of tax-free land to members of the imperial family and court favorites (Murai, 1962). Local governors and magnates had a similar arrangement with landholders. As a result, a large amount of land maintained tax-free status (Nishioka, 1957).

Eventually, most land in Japan was freed of official supervision; the *shoen* owners came to exercise complete police and judicial authority over their individual estates. The emergence of the *shoen* resulted in a decrease of the authority and tax revenue of the central government. At the same time, the local magnates enjoyed increased power in terms of, not only finance, but also military forces. Thus, Japan moved far from the Chinese pattern of centralized political control and back toward private and personalized relations reminiscent of the *uji* era. Land tended to become concentrated in the hands of local magnates, Buddhist monasteries, court aristocrats, and high government officials. Eventually these *shoens* became the fundamental basis of the Japanese-style feudal system (Maki, 1936).

The rising *shoen* system resulted in the emergence of the *bushi* [warrior] or *samurai* [retainer] class in Japan. As the authority of the central government declined, the *shoen* proprietors and managers had to rely upon their own resources to protect their property and to keep peace and order. During this era, the few honest farmers whose land remained taxable shouldered the burden of the heavy tax. Eventually, many farmers fell into debt; as a result, a large number of people left their

land and joined the military of the *shoens*. At local levels, huge numbers of *samurai* groups were formed. Most warriors had direct or indirect connections with powerful local noble families. In addition, due to declining revenue, the central government neglected local institutions, including the military system, and members of the military decreased (Tsuji, 1960). Furthermore, because of inability to enforce law at the local level, the whole local civil service system was destroyed (Tsuji, 1960; Gomi, 1992). At the same time however, the local powerful families gradually increased power.

When rebellions occurred, the central government did not possess the power to suppress them and had to rely on local chieftains. For instance, two rebellions, one led by Fujiwara no Sumitomo, and another led by Taira no Masakado in 939, were subdued by the central government in conjunction with other provincial magnates (Yasuda, 1962). Although all the posts and titles of the central government were carefully preserved, they became the inherited possessions of family lines such as Minamoto, Fujiwara, and Taira, who served Japan under the name *shogun*. Furthermore, contradictory to the Chinese court, the Japanese imperial court had virtually no power and nominal status for many centuries allowing *shoguns* to manage Japan.

The achievements of the Taika Reform are surprising in that they were done without the stimulus of conquest from abroad and because of the wide expanse of open sea between Japan and China. Since Shotoku's era, Japan never developed indigenous institutions or cultural values. Rather, Japan enthusiastically shaped the imported superior culture from China (Pollack, 1986). Thus, the Japanese created a Chinese System with "Japanese characteristics."

THE DEPARTURE FROM THE SINIC WORLD SYSTEM TO THE FEUDALISTIC SYSTEM

With the wide spread *shoen* system, the power of warriors increased. Because of the expansive Fujiwara family or the imperial line itself, excess members of the imperial family were cut off

and given the family names of Minamoto (also called Genji), who descended from Emperor Seiwa (r. 858-76) and Taira (also called Heike), who descended from Emperor Kammu (r. 781-806). Since these people could not achieve high office in the imperial court, they went to the provinces to make their fortunes as provincial officials or managers of the *shoens*. With the prestige of the court and imperial descent, they became the top layer of provincial aristocracy (Fairbank et al., 1989). The *samurai* class also included descendants of former members of the imperial family and old provincial aristocracies. The *samurai* class entered the center of the historical stage due to the weakness of the central government and imperial court. As a result, Japanese political and social organization came to resemble feudal Europe more than the Chinese centralized bureaucratic state.

Around the middle of the tenth century, two powerful provincial *samurai* families: Minamori and Taira entered into large-scale power struggles. The Taira family, led by Taira no Kyomori, eventually brought down the Fujiwara family and eliminated a strong Minamoto leader in West Japan. The Taira family became prominent in the capital as military supporters of the retired emperors. In 1167, during the heyday of the Taira family, Taira no Kyomori was inaugurated as Daijo Daijin, possessing whole power over Japan (Takeuchi, 1962) despite the continued efforts of emperors, retired emperors, and Fujiwara regents to maintain their respective positions.

The heyday of the Taira family was ephemeral when, along with anti-Taira forces in the court, Minamoto no Yoritomo, a surviving son of the former Minamoto leader, raised the standard of revolt in the mountainous Izu Peninsula in 1180. Only four months after raising the rebellion, Yoritomo's forces dominated the whole Kanto region (Ishii, 1962). Ultimately, Minamoto no Yoshitomo unified a number of small *samurai* groups and his military force became one of the most powerful organizations in Japan's history (Yasuda, 1962). Five years later, the Taira family was destroyed and another four years later, Minamoto totally eliminated the Fujiwara family. After his victory over the Tairas, the court bestowed on Yoritomo high court posts, ranks and special titles to signify his military control over Japan. In

THE SYSTEM OF KAMAKURA
BAKUFU (1192-1330)

SHOGUN

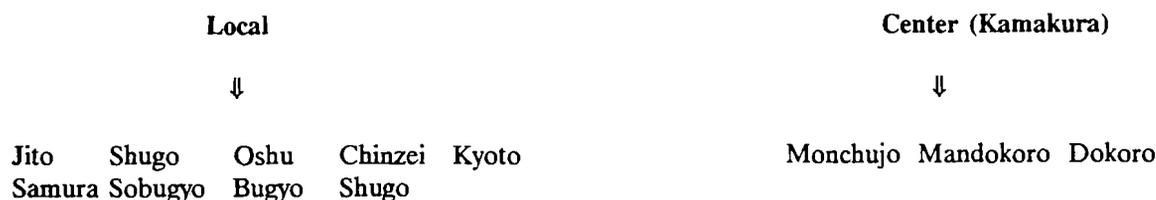


Figure 2: The System of Kamakura Bakufu (1192-1330).

1192, Yoritomo was given the title of *Seii Taishogun* [Barbarian-Quelling Generalissimo], once assigned to leaders of expeditions against the Ainu, who were native Japanese. As soon as Yoritomo became *shogun*, he opened Kamakura Bakufu [Kamakura Tent Government], distinct from the Kyoto civil government. The "curtain" of the feudal system raised.

According to one theoretical account (Ishii, 1962) the word *bakufu* originated in China. The headquarters of the Tang emperor's inner palace army was called *Shiliuwei* [Sixteen Guards], and *Zhuoyuweif* [Left and Right Guards protected the Forbidden City in Xi'an, where the emperor and his family lived (Li [984], 1960; Dai, 1993; Du [801], 1991). The Japanese simply copied the Chinese system and named imperial guards of the *Shugunate* headquarters as *Konoe fu*. In November 1190, Yoritomo was appointed *u konoe taisho* [an imperial guards captain], and officials began to use the word *bakufu* (Mass, 1985). Two capitals: *shogun* in Kamakura, and emperor in Kyoto were created, with *shogun* having ultimate power. The structure of Kamakura Bakufu in the early period was the following (also see Figure 2): At the top, *shogun* controlled both central and local governments and appointed administrative personnel to each division. At the local level, the jurisdiction of *Jito* mainly managed *shoens* and tax collection, and *Shugo* primarily dealt with law enforcement and justice. Three ministers were sent to three regions: Oshu, Chinzei (or Kyushu) and Kyoto. In the central government, *Monchujo*, which chiefly dealt

with justice; *Mandokoro*, whose role was organization of *Shogun's* financial and general administrative matters; and *Samuraidokoro*, whose jurisdiction was to enforce the law, were set up (Gomi, 1992).

However, the Bakufu relied ultimately on the threat of military force to maintain its preeminence; force could not be employed indiscriminately, given the jurisdictional complexity of early, medieval Japan (Goble, 1985; Mass, 1979). Basically, Yoritomo laid down the fundamental principles of the feudal structure and began to enter the feudal era (Maki, 1936) when he became *shogun* controlling Japan.

Under the Muromachi Bakufu, the Japanese feudal system began to strengthen under the rule of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. When Yoshimitsu was bestowed the title of the *Seii Taishogun* [Barbarian-Quelling Generalissimo] in 1368, and received Daijo Daijin [Chancellor] in 1394, he stood at the highest position in both military and government. What was in Yoshimitsu's mind when he resigned the post of the Daijo Daijin a half-year later after the inauguration and became a monk? Since the power of the *shoens* had risen, many monastic temples had economically kept their might centered upon the Kyoto region including Hieizan and Biwakohan areas. Yoshimitsu started to challenge these powerful temples by entering the Hieizan in November 1393. He confiscated the right of levy; only the bakufu had the right to collect tax (Nagahara, 1963). This policy attacked the fundamental economic basis of temples. By 1400,

Yoshimitsu had visited all powerful temples and donated all the money to build the Kinkakuji [Golden Pavilion. Consequently, Yoshimitsu topped the powerful temple class and became the first feudal king in the history of Japan (Nagahara, 1963). He stood at the peak of all three powerful classes: military, government, and religion; Yoshimitsu was equivalent to the position of the father of the emperor or the retired emperor. No one could afford to criticize Yoshimitsu or to oppose his ideas in Japan (Nagahara, 1963). As a result, Yoshimitsu could independently command both domestic and international policies without imperial decision, and aimed at gaining recognition as the "king of Japan" internationally (Nagahara, 1963). In a sense, the Ashikaga era had many similar elements to European history of the middle ages (Hara, 1930), rather than the Sinitic world system.

After the heyday of the Yoshimitsu's era, the Ashikaga *Shoguns* began to lose control over the provincial lords and Japan entered the age of *sengoku daimyo* [warring states *daimyo*] from 1467 to 1568. The drastic decline of *shogunal* power merely reflected the rising power of local military leaders who began to develop into true territorial lords. The emerging *daimyo*, such as Shimazu of Satsuma in southern Kyushu wiped out the *shoens* and reduced the power of the imperial court and its aristocratic families (Imai, 1963). This was a period when control of regional territory changed very rapidly. Rank and position counted for nothing. Many newly risen warrior lines overthrew the local protectors and peasants defied *shoen* officials and proprietors. This era came to be known as the period of *gekokujo* [the inferior overcoming the superior], and the only thing that counted was power (Wakita, 1992). Thus, Japan entered a chaotic period.

Eventually, Oda Nobunaga (1534-82) emerged triumphantly in Japan. Nobunaga started the country on its path to re-unification and order. The men who completed the task were Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542-1616). These three men laid the foundation for the establishment of the Tokugawa Bakufu, which lasted for more than 250 years, and created the pattern of centralized feudalism. Their technique was to develop a strong coalition of *daimyo* under their

own hegemony (Naramoto, 1963). Hideyoshi was Nobunaga's most able and trusted general, and Ieyasu was at one time held captive by the Oda clan and later became Nobunaga's ally (Asao, 1993). Hideyoshi succeeded Nobunaga as the military chieftain of the entire land and in turn, was succeeded by Ieyasu (Zheng, 1986).

By 1590, Hideyoshi had accomplished what Nobunaga had failed to achieve; he had completed the task of unifying Japan for the first time since Minamoto no Yoritomo. All of his former rivals recognized his supreme authority as overlord and became his vassal, holding their domains as fiefs. Hideyoshi was made *kampaku* [regent] in 1585, and was appointed Daijo Daijin in the following year; he was bestowed a new family name -- Toyotomi (Zheng, 1986). Like Nobunaga, he did not take the title of *shogun* -- he was considered ineligible since he was not of Minamoto descent. However, Hideyoshi ruled as a king in Japan and was ruthless. For instance, he adopted his nephew Hidetsugu as his successor, but when his own son Hideyori was born, he eliminated his adopted son by accusing him of disloyalty and forcing him to commit suicide (Asao, 1983). He then had 39 people, including Hidetsugu's wife, three young children, mistresses, and servants put to his sword (Asao, 1963). Their bodies were thrown into a pit as if they were animals.

Hideyoshi's rule was basically personal and maintained by a heavy-handed threat of overwhelming military power. The *daimyo* domains constituted autonomous units of local government and the supporting component of Hideyoshi's armies. Hideyoshi's army grew from 60,000 in 1586, to 280,000 at the time of the invasion of Korea (Asao, 1963). He did not tax them directly, but forced them to bear heavy military burdens and the costs of his ambitious construction projects. Furthermore, he changed the nature of the court's holdings from public and *shoen* land to fiefs held under his seal, and aristocrats were no longer allowed to levy urban taxes (Susser, 1985). In 1591 Hideyoshi started a new cadastral survey of agricultural areas to ascertain and regularize tax yields. All lands were registered uniformly according to their productivity by *koku* (4.96 bushels) of rice. A *daimyo* by definition had to have a domain of at least 10,000 *koku* (49,600

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bushels) yield. By 1598, Hideyoshi had 2,200,000 *koku* out total 18,570,000 *koku* in Japan, which sustained his fundamental financial power (Asao, 1993).

Like Hideyoshi, Shimazu of Satsuma in Kyushu, a local *daimyo*, coveted the Liuqiu (Nagahara, 1963). While Hideyoshi unified Japan, Shimazu demanded the king of the Liuqiu send congratulations on Hideyoshi's success in 1589, and to pay tribute to Japan (Zhang [1739], 1991). When the King of the Liuqiu received Hideyoshi's request to support a military invasion of Korea, he dispatched a mission to China to ask for protection (Yokoyama, 1915). As a result, the king of the Liuqiu delayed the reply to Hideyoshi, enraging Shimazu. Eventually, the Liuqiu became the victim of Shimazu when Satsuma launched the war against the Liuqiu in 1609, under the Tokugawa Bakufu.

Hideyoshi took a firm attitude toward foreign policy. He was an ambitious ruler who was desperate for new territories such as the Liuqiu Kingdom and Korea. In the Spring of 1592, Hideyoshi sent an expeditionary force of over 150,000 men into the Korean peninsula. His armies, led by Kato Kiyomasa and using guns copied from the Portuguese in 1543, were able to move rapidly north and capture Seoul in less than a month (Asao, 1993). The King of Korea went to China to ask for military support, and the Ming emperor dispatched a mission to negotiate the Korean issue with Japan. In 1593, Hideyoshi drafted the "hungry" treaty with the Ming. These proposals included the marriage between the daughter of the Ming emperor and the Japanese emperor, licensed trade between the two countries, the division of southern Korea between Japan and China, and the retention of a Korean prince in Japan as a hostage (Asao, 1993; Zheng, 1986). Hideyoshi's idea was to be revived some centuries later when the imperial army conceived the notion of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Sandom, 1958). When Hideyoshi realized that Japan was treated as a member of the tributary nation under the Chinese world order, he was outraged and sent his army to Korea again. At this time, Hideyoshi declared that the Japanese soldiers would receive distinguished war services by accumulating Korean noses; as a result, a number of Korean lives, including old people, children, and women, were lost to Japanese soldiers. Thousands,

perhaps tens of thousands of Korean and Chinese noses were sent to Hideyoshi's mansion (Asao, 1993). In fact, the invasion of Korea was just the tip of the iceberg for Hideyoshi's ambitious plan; Hideyoshi desperately coveted the land of the Ming Empire (Zhang [1739], 1991). He planned to send the Japanese emperor to Beijing (Asao, 1993; Zheng, 1986) and even began thinking of the possibility of conquering India. However, these fantastic plans became a piece of plain paper when Hideyoshi died in 1598.

CONCLUSION

Starting in the early ages, Japan maintained a passive position while absorbing elements of the Chinese system ranging from politics to culture. During Shotoku's era, Japan declared a state emergency to learn from the Chinese; Prince Shotoku initiated the way of Japan's future. Upon return from China, hundreds of talented people contributed their efforts to develop and organize the Japanese system. These people created a second wave of Chinese learning in Japan and successfully carried out the Taika Reform. After the Japanese absorbed and refined Confucian values and concepts of authority, however, they started to modify the Chinese System with "Japanese characteristics." With individual cultural tradition, the Japanese also mixed Confucianism and Buddhism to define their own culture, as well as find a new political structure. These "Japanese characteristics" of the Chinese system created a new era in Japanese history -- the *shogun* era.

Whereas the Chinese world order was static, Japanese foreign relations were dynamic. Under *Pax Sinica*, the Chinese practiced the investiture-tribute system for centuries, and most countries recognized the Chinese world order. During the Sinitic World era, the Japanese transformed their system from one dependent on the Chinese civilization to an independent feudal system. During the early ages, the Japanese learned and copied the advanced elements of the Chinese system. After Yoshimitsu demonstrated the ability of the first feudal king in Japan, the principles of the feudal structure were laid down by three men:

Oda Nobunaga; Toyotomi Hideyoshi; and Tokugawa Ieyasu. In particular, Hideyoshi's firm attitude toward foreign countries, such as Korea, illustrates that Japan began to operate in its own independent way, departing from the Sinitic world and daring to challenge the Ming Empire.

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