**Tokugawa Society after 1635 Edict**

**A QUESTION FIRST: How do you expect Japanese society would look like (economically, culturally, etc.) during isolation?**

The national economy expanded rapidly from the 1680s to the early 1700s. The emphasis placed on agricultural production by the Tokugawa shogunate encouraged considerable growth in that economic sector. Expansion of commerce and the manufacturing industry was even greater, stimulated by the development of large urban centres, most notably Edo, Osaka and Kyoto, in the wake of the government’s efforts at centralization and its success in maintaining peace. The production of fine silk and cotton fabrics, manufacture of paper and porcelain, and sake brewing flourished in the cities and towns, as did trading in these commodities. This increase in mercantile activity gave rise to wholesalers and exchange brokers, and the ever-widening use of currency and credit produced powerful financiers. The emergence of this well-to-do merchant class brought with it a dynamic urban culture that found expression in new literary and art forms.

While merchants and to a lesser extent tradesmen continued to prosper well into the 18th century, the daimyo and samurai began to experience financial difficulties. Their primary source of income was a fixed stipend tied to agricultural production, which had not kept pace with other sectors of the national economy. Several attempts at fiscal reform were made by the government during the late 18th and 19th centuries, but the financial strain on the warrior class increased as the period progressed. During its final 30 years in power the Tokugawa shogunate had to contend with peasant uprisings and samurai unrest as well as with financial problems. These factors, combined with the growing threat of Western encroachment, brought into serious question the continued existence of the regime, and by the 1860s many demanded the restoration of direct Imperial rule as a means of unifying the country and solving the prevailing problems. The powerful southwestern tozama domains of [Chōshū](https://www.britannica.com/place/Choshu) and Satsuma exerted the greatest pressure on the Tokugawa government and brought about the overthrow of the last shogun, Hitosubashi Keiki (or Yoshinobu), in 1867. Less than a year later the Meiji emperor was restored to supreme power.

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