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A REVIEW OF FEUDALISM IN JAPAN

When one speaks of feudalism in Japan, one must always bear in mind that "Japanese" feudalism is as peculiar as "European" feudalism which exhibits different patterns in different countries at different times. The Japanese example is no exception in exhibiting different patterns and features at different regions and times. This study aims at discovering the periodic differences seen within the general framework of Japanese feudalism, especially in the domains under shogunal control by comparing the pre-Edo and Edo patterns of feudal structures. These differences in the administrative organization of the military and bureaucratic structures give Japanese feudalism a peculiar form different from Europe. Despite the seeming similarities attested by early modern European travelers to Japan and 19th century historians, as the comparative approach demonstrates, what was called as Japanese feudalism by the early western visitors of Japan was in fact a culmination of a centuries long process. This article approaches the theoretical framework of Japanese feudalism in a comparative perspective between different periods.

Key words: Japanese feudalism, Kamakura period, Muromachi period, Edo period, shogunate.

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Жапониядағы феодализмге шолу

Жапонияда феодализм туралы айтқанда, «жапон» феодализмі әр түрлі уақытта әртүрлі елдерде әртүрлі модельдерді көрсететін «еуропалық» феодализм сияқты ерекше екенін әрқашан есте ұстаған жөн. Жапондық мысал әр түрлі аймақтарда және әр түрлі уақытта әртүрлі модельдер мен ерекшеліктерді көрсететін ерекшелік емес. Бұл зерттеу Эдо мен Эдоға дейінгі феодалдық құрылымдардың модельдерін салыстыру арқылы жапон феодализмінің жалпы аясында, әсіресе шогунның бақылауындағы салаларда байқалатын мерзімді айырмашылықтарды анықтауға бағытталған. Әскери және бюрократиялық құрылымдардың әкімшілік ұйымдастыруындағы бұл айырмашылықтар жапон феодализміне еуропалықтардан өзгеше форма береді. Жапонияға ерте еуропалық саяхатшылар мен XIX ғасырдың тарихшылары куәландырған айқын ұқсастықтарға қарамастан, салыстырмалы көзқарас көрсеткендей, Жапонияның алғашқы Батыс келушілері жапон феодализмі деп атаған, шын мәнінде ғасырлар бойғы процестің шарықтау шегі болды. Бұл мақалада әртүрлі кезеңдер арасындағы салыстырмалы перспективадағы жапон феодализмінің теориялық негіздері қарастырылады.

Түйін сөздер: жапондық феодализм, камакура кезеңі, муромачи кезеңі, эдо кезеңі, сегунат.

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Обзор феодализма в Японии

Когда говорят о феодализме в Японии, всегда следует иметь в виду, что «японский» феодализм столь же своеобразен, как и «европейский» феодализм, который проявляет разные образцы в разных странах в разное время. Японский пример не является исключением, демонстрируя разные узоры и особенности в разных регионах и в разное время. Это исследование направлено на выявление периодических различий, наблюдаемых в общих рамках японского феодализма, особенно в областях, находящихся под контролем сёгуна, путем сравнения моделей феодальных структур до Эдо и Эдо. Эти различия в административной организации военных и бюрократических структур придают японскому феодализму своеобразную форму, отличную от европейской. Несмотря на кажущееся сходство, засвидетельствованное европейскими путешественниками раннего Нового времени в Японию и историками XIX века, как показывает сравнительный подход, то, что первые западные посетители Японии называли

японским феодализмом, на самом деле было кульминацией многовекового процесса. В этой статье теоретические основы японского феодализма рассматриваются в сравнительной перспективе между различными периодами.

Ключевые слова: японский феодализм, период Камакура, период Муромати, период Эдо, сёгунат.

Introduction

Japan has been considered to be the only country outside of Europe which has developed a native feudalism without being affected by Europe. The feudalism in Japan and its feudal instituttions has long been a subject of study both inside and outside of Japan. The works that mention it in the west, in most cases, mostly simply touch upon the situation in the Tokugawa Shogunate briefly before continuing on to the Meiji Restoration and the Japanese modernization. In this regard, a throrough examination of the development and the basic characteristics of Japanese feudalism throughout its history will contribute to the state of history and Japanese studies. While Japanese feudalism displays similarities to its counterpart in Europe, especially during the Muromachi period, it is predominantly different both in its formation during the Kamakura period, and its maturation during the Warring States and Edo periods. Unlike Europe, most of the Japanese feudal practices and institutions were deliberately developed thorugh conscious actions and plannings of the Japanese rulers rather than a natural development in response to military external threats or economic and social developments. Therefore, Japanese feudalism along with English feudalism, is dubbed as "bastard feudalism" by some historians since it is an artificial structure rather than a natural native development (Coss 1989:82). However, this fact still does not render Japanese feudalism unworthy of the historians' attention.

Justification of the choice of article and goal and objectives

Japanese feudalism in many ways deserve more attentions than it has so far received since it is one of the rarely successful consciously constructed social and political structures on such a scale in a premodern society of this dimension. In fact, along with Britain, Japan is one the few countries where feudal tradition is "alive" in daily life practices ranging from language to etiquette despite it demise in the political and legal areas. This study examines and compares the different stages of the development of Japanese feudalism with a focus on the administrative structure of the warrior class and the control of land and taxation rights. Feudalism is taken as is used by Ganshof rather than a Marxist or other definition with an emphasis on the military class while retaining the Ecole Annales' idea that feudalism also existed in Japan. Although the military class which came to be called as the samurai existed since the Heian period, this study begins with the Kamakura period when military class ruled in its name rather than ruling in the name of the royal court or the aristocracy in Kyoto. The consequent eras are compared to the Kamakura period and are not taken as mere extensions of the Kamakura feudalism. The study rather makes a distinction between the Edo and pre-Edo feudal structures and examines Japanese feudalism as decentralized, and centralized modes of feudalism.

Materials and Methods

The term "feudalism" is taken as in the sense of the analles school of history's definition rather than a wider definition by the Marxist school which put the modes of productions at its centre when defining feudal structures, or the narrower definition by Genshof and others who consider feudalism to be endemic to only certain parts of Western Europe basing their definitions on the political and administrative structure of the areas under question (Ganshof 2015:12–19). This article on the other hand develops a midway approach. Taking into account both the legal and the political structures that determined the sui genesis nature of Japanese feudalism. At the same time, different approaches to feudalism during different periods will be discussed by referring to the more recent publications and studies on the subject. In this respect, this article does not aim to be a chronological sketch of events, but rather to develop a new approach to the definition and boundaries of Japanese feudalism. In this regard, how the feudal regimes legitimized their rule and the tools and methods that they utilized to gain moral ground rather than use sheer military power or economic incentives will be at the center of the theoretical discussion of this paper.

Literature Review

Japanese feudalism is one of the most contested issues in the historical theories concerning feudalism. While Marc Bloch maintains the idea that Japan is the only country outside of Europe with a feudal past (Bloch 1968:43). In recent years many scholars in and outside Japan have contributed greatly to the discussions on Japanese feudalism. Among them Peter Duus with his brief but influential book *Feudalism in Japan* dealt with the main issues and definition of feudalism in Japan along with the institutions related to feudalism such as *daimyo, shugo, han* etc. (Duus 1993) in addition, John Whitney Hall who not only edited the Cambridge History of Japan series, but also wrote influential articles on medieval Japan and the feudal institutions of Japan remains to be an important figure in the field. His article "Feudalism in Japan a Reassessment" was one of the influential works of its time when it was published, questioning the theories revolving around feudalism in Japan (Hall 1962). Later on, Peter Arnesen published a paper on the early roots of feudalism in Japan during the late Heian period which was supposed to be a centralized government. His paper "The Struggle for Lordship in Late Heian Japan: The Case of Aki" demonstrated the emergence of local strongmen by the end of the Heian period and sought the roots of feudalism in the Heian practices (Arnesen 1984). However, recently Karl Friday challenged these ideas in the west in his article "The Futile Paradigm: In Quest of Feudalism in Early Medieval Japan" which challenges the ideas of comparison between medieval Europe and Japan (Friday 2010). In Japan however, the idea of a feudal system went back to the 19th century and is still predominantly accepted by historians belonging to various schools from the Marxists to the legal school. However, in Japn the more recent arguments resemble the arguments in Europe. While Yamada Kuniaki in his book *Warring States Period in Japanese History/*日本史のなかの戦国時代 argues that it was the warrior class and the relations between the warrior houses (武家) that defined the feudals system in Japan (Yamada 2013:27), Watanabe Shoichi in his more general book on Japanese historiography, has a more *analles* approach (Watanabe 2014:23–37). Seki Yukihiko has views more similar to Yamada Kuniaki in his book *The Formation of the Warrior Class/*武士の原像 in contrast to Sato Shinichi who in his 1983 book *Medieval Japanese State/*日本中世国家 (Sato 1983) and in his 1990 work *Articles on Medieval Japan/*日本中世史論集 argue that Japanese feudalism is more complicated than simple warrior rule

and the role of the cities and merchants are often overlooked along with the vestiges of older aristocracy among whom rose some of the most prominent warrior houses (Sato 1990:91–107). Sato and Kasamatsu Hiroshi also had another book published on the issue as a two volume work on the political ideology of medieval Japan, which remains to be the most detailed wok on the issue some of whose articles touch upon the issue of warrior rule and feudal institutions (Kasamatsu, Sato, and Momose 1981). Finally, another work worth mentioning in Japan is Kimura Shigemitsu's book titled *The Formation of the Medieval Society/*中世社会の成り立ち which approaches feudalism in a way more reminiscent of but with differences to Bloch (Kimura 2009). Of course it is possible to dedicate a whole volume of a book on the bibliography of Works published in Japanese related to feudalism in Japan, but due to the limited space of this article, the above mentioned Works along with the ones already cited below would help as a reference guide for introduction to the discussions on the issue.

Results and Discussion

The Kamakura Bakufu

Japan was initially under tribal rule rather than a unified state. The clans were fighting for domination with each other according to the earliest records mentioning the name of the country. The first mention of Japan appears in the Chinese chronicles as 邪馬台/Yamatai (Chen 1971:97). There are references to different tribes and tribal organizations in Chinese chronicles following this account. There are even mentions of envoys from tribal chieftains (Kidder 2007:47). It can be deducted from these documents that Japan was far from being a politically and ethnically homogenous and united society back then (Mass, 1980, p. 240). The origins of these clans are unknown today and are a source of debate. But it is mostly accepted that they were modeled after Polynesian, South Chinese and Altaic clan structures (each clan showing distinctions). All these clans began to become more homogeneous as they interacted and their clan structure began to be based on the Altaic model in time as it was more successful in military defense organizations. This meant making up tribal confederations to conquer others or to defend oneself (Imamura 1996:38). However, the Yamato clan from the central plains of the Honshu Island managed to conquer and unite the other clans under its banner. As it is the case with all other political entities, this Yamato rule also felt the need to base its sovereignty not only on military power but also

on legitimate grounds to persuade its subjects not to return to their tribal rule whenever the Yamato clan was militarily weak. The first step was the codification of the native Japanese myths and putting the Yamato clan who traced their ancestry to the Sun Goddess Amaterasu at the center of human creation and to derive a divine right to rule the people from these legends which were codified as Kojiki (古事記) and Nihonshoki (日本書紀). The Yamato clan's and its allies' ancestral deities were given important places within the native myths and the belief system later on called as Shinto (神道) most probably by distorting the original myths (Atik 2012a:107). Thus the Yamato clan was successful in basing its rule not only on military power which would later on fade away but on a divine root which even today continues for many modern Japanese (Naumann 2000:199–201). Of course the codification of these myths were rather a later development after the unification. A central government did not come to occur all of a sudden and there was a transition period from a tribal federation to a centralized bureaucratic government modelled after China (Sato 1983:37). Like all other countries in East Asia, the Yamato rulers also modelled their state after China, and the Japanese myths on which the Yamato rule was ideologically based was merged with and supported by other religions and ideas such as Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism were flowing from China mostly through the way of Korea.the Heian period was the apex of this centralized bureaucratic government. Japan was modeled after China like a miniature copy of it. Even the capital city Heian was the exact copy of the Chinese capital Chang'an. The students and embassies who went to China brought many aspect of this high civilization and as the Chinese civilization entered its so-called golden age during the Tang period, the process of transformation from tribal rule into centralized state was also being completed (Kasamatsu et al. 1981:59).

But by the eleventh century the court nobility in Heian who adopted Chinese traditions and culture to such an extent that they would speak Chinese instead of Japanese, began to losen its grip outside of the capital. The governors and mayors who were appointed to the provinces would rather stay in the capital and send their representatives to the provinces. On the eastern border of this miniature empire lay the vast plains which were agriculturally rich yet open to raids from the Ainu, who spoke a different language and constantly raided the eastern parts of the Honshu island occupied by the Japanese. After the unification process was complete and the Ainu who refused to surrender or assimilate were driven

north during the 7th century, the Yamato nobility rather entertained itself with the more refined Chinese everyday activities instead of military training and the central army in Heian which was initially modelled after the Chinese army was unsuccessful in preventing the Ainu raids. Thus a local military class of warriors emerged in the Eastern parts of Japan headed by the younger sons of the imperial family or the court nobles who did not inherit anything in the capital and sought to gain success in these eastern borders. They were given land on the eastern plains and soon the great military lines would descend from these disinherited younger sons (Arnesen 1984:107).

By the eleventh century, this new class of warriors were already widespread in the provinces and these warriors called as "samurai" (侍), meaning retainer, were hired by the court nobility as guards (Duus 1993:23). These warriors who resided in the provinces were also collecting the surplus agricultural production for the nobility (Friday 1996:57). The Chinese system adopted during the early Heian period and the reforms following this adoption dictated that all land belonged to the emperor, so the peasants were giving tax to the court (Adolphson, Kamens, and Matsumoto 2007:91). But in time they began encroaching on the rights of the court nobility on these land rights seeing that the court nobility both did not have the military power to enforce its will on these provincial warriors and would not go to the provinces themselves even when they had the power to enforce their will. However, at this point any student of Chinese history -not knowing the developments in Japan- will be bewildered to see that the court aristocracy owns lands in the provinces and collects tax from these estates as a personal income, which would be unthinkable for such a miniature copy of the Tang China. Of course, China had private land ownership throughout its whole history, and in certain periods, the local warlords would collect tax in their name, but this was not the case in Tang China. Only the central government would collect the taxes through its meticulous bureaucratic organs (Adshed 2004:61). Yet any student of Japanese history will note that initially the Japanese also adopted the Tang central tax collection bureaucracy yet were unsuccessful in maintaining this system (Murakami 1986:52) and there arose the shōen system which will be explained briefly in the following paragraph.

A certain Japanese noble sent to China as an envoy and a student is responsible for many of the reforms undertaken by the Heian court to centralize its rule. This student is known as Shotoku Taishi as one

of the most well-known figures in Japanese history. "His" reforms reshaped the political landscape in Japan during the Heian period. Among these reforms was the confiscation of all the private lands and the collection of the surplus production by the government instead of local landholders and tribal chieftains who managed to maintain their power in the provinces even after unification (Morris 1994:38). But this system would fail in time due to many reasons. The local chieftains who managed to maintain their power either through allying themselves with the Yamato or accumulating their power in time accepted the confiscation of their lands in exchange for court ranks or governorships in their own provinces whose income and prestige would compensate for the economic and political power they handed over to the Heian court (Arnesen 1984:108). Thus these locals continued to wield their political power in the provinces for a while but in the end they were absorbed and assimilated by the Heian court once they began to send their children for education to the Heian court and its universities. However, the disintegration of the system rooted mainly from the very court itself. Since the Heian court did not have the enough cash to fund this centralized bureaucracy and the court, it began to distribute these lands to the court nobles who would fulfill their duties thanks to the income from these lands. But these lands were mostly given to them for the length of their lifetime or only as long as they continued their position on that specific duty. These court ranks and official positions were not hereditary and the land whose income these court nobles depended on were not attached to individuals but rather to those court ranks and official positions (Arnesen 1984:109). However, the emperors began to donate lands to courtier as favors for their services as well as the Buddhist temples. Thus the private land ownership began to reemerge. The nobility did not only receive these lands, but in time they managed to have immunity from taxation for these lands just as the Buddhist temples did. The aristocracy also had another source of land acquirement. The reclaimed lands were given to the ones who reclaimed these lands as private property but they had to pay taxes. These peasants would opt for giving these lands to the nobility who would manage to have tax immunity for these lands and lease these lands back to the peasants who surrendered them to him (Duus 1993:37). And finally, the court ranks as well as the lands attached to them began to become hereditary thanks to the efforts of the Fujiwara family who would marry their daughters to the imperial family and in time manage to become the real ruling power from behind the scenes. The result

was the emergence of great manorial estates called shōen (荘園).

The nobles as explained before would not go to the provinces, but rather appoint some representative who would collect the revenues in the name of the Heain aristocracy. And in time, these nobles accumulated great lands in their hands and called these private lands as shōen. And the representatives going to the provinces in their name were called jitō (地頭). These representatives or rather the constables were almost always of the warrior origin. After keeping a certain amount of the revenue for their livelihood, they were expected to send the rest of the revenue to the capital. However, as might be expected, the jitō were quick to understand that the nobles could be powerless at the face of their military power in times of crisis. So, in time the jitō began violating the rights of the proprietors. Thus, the medieval shōen was a manor owned by someone in the capital, yet shared by the owner and the warrior constable (Cornelius 1988:104).

Looking at these developments, one might rather think that the central government in Heian collapsed or was close to collapsing by the twelfth century, when the Kamakura Bakufu was established. Bakufu/幕府 means tent government. But in Japanese historiography it is used for the military governments in Japan ruled by the shogun. (Kimura 2009:12). But a closer study of the Kamakura Bakufu will show us that there was rather a dual locus of power and authority and the court sometimes even managed challenge the bakufu at times. As Jeffrey P. Mass asserts:

"Until quite recently, studies of Kamakura Japan have tended to overstate the warriors' achievement, by equating the creation of a new form of government with the simultaneous destruction of the old. As is now clear, not only was the Heian system of imperial aristocratic rule still vigorous during the twelfth century, but also it remained the essential framework within which the bakufu, during its lifetime, was obliged to operate. In this sense, the Heian pattern of government survived into the fourteenth century to be destroyed with the Kamakura bakufu rather than by it." (Mass 2000:84).

But before analyzing these dual loci of authority, one in Heian which was later on named as Kyoto and shall be cited as such in this paper and the other in Kamakura, a brief examination of the establishment of the Kamakura Bakufu, the conditions for the foundation of which were given above, will be useful to understand it within a historical context better.

The civil war called the Genpei War set the outset for the foundation of the Kamakura Bakufu. As noted before, the military houses in the provinces were headed by the nobles coming to the provinces seeking for advancement in these underdeveloped areas. And as noted before, the Fujiwara clan was controlling the state from behind the scenes by marrying their daughters to the emperors. In time the Fujiwara clan grew to such an extent that two of its branches named as the Taira and Minamoto came to rival each other for supremacy. In fact, even the military houses in the provinces which had no blood relation to these two factions took Minamoto and Taira surnames for prestige (Arnesen 1984:122). The head of the Minamoto faction, Yoritomo Minamoto was initially exiled to Kamakura under the custody of the Hōjō clan who were an allied clan of the Taira. Yet, Yoritomo married the daughter of the Hōjō chieftain and marched against the Taira with his allies (Yamada 2013:27). The war was rather like a civil war where some Taira could ally themselves with the Minamoto or vice versa in accordance with their local interests (Seki 2014:35). The Taira were strong in the capital and its surroundings whereas the Minamoto were strong in the East. In the end, Yoritomo was triumphant, yet instead of abolishing or totally destructing his rivals, he came to absorb them into his own flanks and was appointed as Shogun along with other court ranks legitimizing his rule in the eastern provinces. Thus, there was a geographical division of these two capitals. The main authority bestowed upon the Kamakura bakufu in the east was the right of jurisdiction, especially over the land rights. Thus the Kamakura bakufu became an arbiter between the warrior jitō and the Kyoto aristocracy. The judicial powers of the Kamakura bakufu would later on extend to even Kyoto and the Western parts of the country as more and more families saw it to their advantage to become the vassals (gokenin/御家人) of the Minamoto (Seki 2014:19). This might seem to be on the disadvantage of the Emperor and the aristocracy. However, this situation proved to be on the contrary, the bakufu was neutral in its dealings with the aristocracy and in fact, the nobility had a higher chance to win when they went to the bakufu courts for their land rights which they would otherwise not be able to take from the encroaching jitō (Mass 1971:48). In time, a mutually beneficial relationship developed between the bakufu and the court, and the bakufu acted as the military, police and judicial organs of the court. The Kamakura bakufu only set the wheel in motion rather than totally establishing a feudal government. It would be during the Muromachi government that the feudal institutions of Japan would come to a maturity.

According to most of the traditional scholarship, the fall of the Kamakura bakufu was the result of the Mongol invasions. Yet, a closer study of the economic, social and political developments within Japan reveals that the inherent developments within Japan and especially the further rise of the samurai power made it unavoidable for the Kamakura Bakufu to collapse with its semi-dependent nature on the imperial court in Kyoto. However, it would be wrong to argue that only the inherent developments within Japan were the real cause of the decline and the fall of the Kamakura bakufu. The developments outside Japan were also influential in changing the balances of power not to mention raising the questions of legitimacy. As Nagai suggests, the decline of the Kamakura Bakufu was rather a combination of internal and external developments (Nagai 1984:58). The technological and agricultural changes caused the shōen system to change irreversibly. The agricultural surplus resulting from these technological and agricultural developments made it possible to import coins from China. Thus the use of money became more diffused and the taxes began to be collected in cash rather than in kind (Nagai 1984:97). This made the job of the jitō more difficult rather than easing it. They had to rely more on the local warriors, merchants and other middlemen in the provinces. As the shōen system disintegrated, there were disputes between the land proprietors and the jitō as well (Ito 1948:99). The political developments and the Mongol invasions in China and Korea added more to these internal problems. The two invasion attempts by the Mongols were overcome, and the bakufu began to increase its power in the western regions where the Mongols attacked and were thought to attack again and Kyoto. At first glance, the power of the Kamakura bakufu increased in these regions, but an anti-bakufu movement was taking place in all the provinces, especially in the west where the bakufu power was not so strong before. But this caused more resentment in the western provinces making the opposite effect of what was aimed (Kimura 2009:106). The increased military presence of the bakufu in the western regions as well as the heavy-handed approach of the shogunal appointees to these regions stirred uprisings in Kyushu and other western provinces. In addition to these rebellions, the court politics also became a major issue for the bakufu. The succession of the emperors

were checked and in most cases recommended by the bakufu (Aida 1982:27). But when emperor Go-daigo decided to change this course and rule as an emperor in ernest, war was inevitable. Although the imperial court itself was economically and militarily weak, the unsatisfied samurai from all the provinces of Japan rallied to his call (Asami 2008:32). He was eventually defeated and exiled, but he managed to show that the bakufu was not irresistible and the Kamakura Bakufu ended in 1333 giving its place to a more decentralized Muromachi bakufu which was ironically less dependent on the imperial court. The decline of the Kamakura Bakufu began following the Mongol invasions.

Muromachi Bakufu

After the Mongol armies were defeated, the pariticpants in the war expected rewards for their aissistance. Since there was no land which was gained from the Mongols, the bakufu rewarded the participants with land and other gifts from the bakufu and imperial holdings. However, this further cripled the Kamakura bakufu making it harder fort he bakufu to effectively control and limit the other military houses from either grabing the lands of the Kyoto aristocracy or fighting with each other for regional supremacy. By this time however, the Minamoto house's power was also lost to the Hôjô clan who acted as regents to the shoguns whom they married of their daghters to. As a result, the other military houses saw the bakufu as an extension of the Hôjô clan who lacked the imperial legitimacy that the Minamoto or the Taira had. The ensuing battles between the clans vying for power ended with Ashikaga supremacy. The Ashikaga were given the title of shogun by the emperor, and a new bakufu was established. The new Bakufu is called as Muromachi Bakufu by the historians after the governmental seat of the Muromachi district in Kyoto which became headquarter for the Muromachi bakufu. According to Hall, this period was marked with two features of the era: political instability, and cultural vitality (Hall 1962:79). Yet these two were not necessarily opposing each other. It was the direct rule of the samurai class which led to both of these. Yet the Muromachi bakufu was not so weak either. It in a way completed the process of taking the power from the imperial court to the hands of the bakufu (Hall 2003:29) paving the way for the supreme authority of the Edo bakufu. The main problem with the Muromachi bakufu was not the lack of legal structure to enable it direct rule or other problems deriving from legitimacy but rather the lack of the bakufu power to enforce these

laws or taxations (Grossberg 1976:31). Since the controlling power of the bakufu began to decrease in the provinces, the samurai class began to gather more power and wealth in their hands by usurping the property rights. This was not always necessarily by use of power against the bakufu or the other superiors such as the jitō or the shugo. At the initial stages, the bakufu relied on the power of these local warriors for extracting the taxes from the peasants. And as a result of this cooperation, the bakufu had to give more and more local authority to these newly emerging daimyo (Hall 1961:322).

The daimyo (大名) were the representative of the Japanese feudalism. While the European feudal institutions had a set of hierarchies at least in nomenclature such as counts, barons, earls, kings, lords going all the way to knights at the lowest end of the scale to the emperor and the pope on the top of the scale, Japan mainly had daimyos and the shogun who was simply a *primus inter pares* among the other daimyo and could be changed. Although the daimyo had retainers under his command who would in some cases hold lands along with hereditary titles, the military establishment was under the strict control of the daimyo which differed from Europe. Also, unlike in Europe where one person could become the vassal and the lord of different people as in the case of the English kings who were at the same time vassals of the French kings, in Japan a Daimyo was only responsible for his *han* or domain which mostly responded to a province. Another difference was that, unlike the jito who were appointed from the center, or the European case where a person from Norway could become the count of Normandy like Rollo, the Muromachi Daimyo were predominantly local warriors, and were not appointed from the center. In addition, as the Kamakura bakufu fell, so did the system of control and bureaucracy in the provinces fall with it. In most cases, the representatives of the bakufu were either overthrown or absorbed by the daimyo administrations. As a result, the Muromachi daimyo administrations were different from the Kamakura or the Edo counterparts due to a lack of certain degree of bakufu control over them. This was mainly due to the situation the bakufu found itself in from the very beginning. As emperor Go-daigo planned to overthrow the Hôjô regents, the Hôjô asked Ashikaga Takauji to crash the imperial forces. However, Takauji instead joined the emperor and the period known as the Kenmu restoration began. However, unlike the Meiji restoration of the 19th century, the emperor was unpopular and a second emperor was crowned who supported Takauji,

while Go-Daigo and his followers went to Yoshino. Although this southern "dynasty" continued only for a little while (1136-92), his struggle drained the remaining power of both the imperial house and the bakufu. In this respect, the relatively weak imperial court and bakufu compared to the local rulers during the Muromachi and Sengoku (which is an extension to it since the Ashikaga Shogunate continued at least on paper) periods set them apart from the Kamakura and Edo periods in terms of feudal administration. The shôen system lost its importance and began to disappear since the imperial house and the court aristocrats of Kyoto lost their political power along with the bakufu. The daimyo on the other hand, established miniature states in their provinces modeled roughly after the Kamakura bakufu, but with a tighter central control since the size of their domains permitted them to control their vassals from their castles more easily. Lastly, not only the military, but also the judiciary and fiscal administrations of the provinces passed into the hands of the daimyo essentially by the bakufu decrees and the lack of economic and military power of the imperial court to appoint governors to the provinces. In a way, though adversaries, the fate of the Ashikaga Shogunate and the imperial court, both located in Kyoto (unlike the Kamakura and Edo Bakufus which were located in the East both near the location of modern day Tokyo) were interlocked as the daimyo power rose and the bakufu's power declined. This in turn caused rising tensions and feuds among the daimyos who were now left unchecked by the bakufu.

The rising tension between the daimyo and lack of bakufu power to curb their power or prevent wars between them culminated in the Ônin wars (1467-77) which began as a succession struggle within the Ashikaga house and spread to the whole country resulting in the total loss of bakufu control over the daimyo and the Ashikaga shoguns turning into local daimyos in Kyoto despite retaining the title of shogun.

As explained before, the decline and the fall of the Muromachi bakufu led to a civil strife within the whole country. It was mainly the daimyo and the samurai under them that were vying for power. But the peasants who organized themselves especially around the Buddhist temples and united their villages around the so-called "Ikki groups" were also to be counted in the balance of power struggle among the daimyo. This period of constant warfare between 1467-1573 saw the total political disintegration of the country (Ito 1948:58). The year 1467 was the beginning of the Onin Wars which continued for

10 years and started over a shogunal succession dispute and then spread to the whole country. Once the war machinery of the daimyo and the agitated peasants was set in motion, it was impossible for the Muromachi bakufu already weakened by internal strife amongst its cadet houses to prevent the powerful daimyo from fighting each other or even the bakufu itself. This was due to many reasons. Not only was the Muromachi bakufu weakening for the last century, but also the local daimyo were gaining more power and vying for more autonomy due to economic developments. The spread of Chinese coins thanks to the increasing trade with China and Korea accelerated the monetazition of the economy. The era of warring states made it possible for the warrior class to fully assert its power and it is no surprise that most of the powerful daimyo that survived the civil strife were mainly from lesser known warrior houses with a strong local support from the samurai of their own provinces while the older and more prestigious houses vanished in time since they were mostly appointed to their seats of power and did not have a genuine support from the local samurai (Hall 1961:86). As the local warriors got hold of more power and economic means to enrich their provinces, the commerce of commodities developed further. Unlike the court aristocracy who constituted only a small number in and around Kyoto, the local samurai in the provinces were now larger in number and were diffused all over the country. As a result of their increasing consumer needs and refined taste for different commodities, the commerce flourished in Japan during this period. Yet it was still frequently interrupted by constant warfare and local daimyo trying to hinder the enrichment of their neighbors through trade.

Edo Bakufu

The era of the warring states came to an end with the brief period of Azuchi-Momoyama in which the country was unified again under three successive strong generals who managed to become shoguns. First it was the turn of Oda Nobunaga. Oda Nobunaga was a daimyo in central part of the Honshu island. He initially unified central Japan and was appointed as Shogun by the emperor. He increased his economic and military power through trade with the Portuguese and the Spanish who arrived in Japan and were selling firearms in return for other commercial commodities. However, he fell victim to a treason by one of his generals and was succeeded by Toyotomi Hideyoshi who unified Japan under his banner and went on to attacking Korea and China. At the initial stages of the war, the Japanese forces

were successful in invading Korea in a short tie but the war came to a stalemate when Chinese Ming forces intervened (Atik 2012b:109). This war ended after the death of Hideyoshi without an adult heir. Since he was coming from a peasant background and even at the height of his power could only be appointed as kanpaku (関白) meaining chie advisor to a child emperor (Berry 1989:27). The country could have fallen into chaos again if it were not for the policies of Tokugawa Ieyasu who first united the stron eastern clans and won the defeated the other daimyo opposing him in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 (Sansom 1961:79).

The capital city for the Bakufu was Edo and as a result the period came to be called as the Edo period in Japanese historiography. The Edo bakufu demonstrates marked differences compared to the preceding ones. Initially having a look at its resemblances to the Kamakura and Muromachi bakufu might be confusing since the Edo bakufu was strongly centralized like the Kamakura Bakufu and was dominated by the military class and unquestionable to the court authority in Kyoto like the Muromachi bakufu. Yet, the Edo bakufu combined the strengths of these bakufu while taking lessons and avoiding from their sources of weakness. Edo bakufu was announced in 1603 after the last remnants of the resisting daimyo in the west were defeated and the Emperor appointed Tokugawa Ieyasu as the Seii Tai Shogun (征夷大将軍: Great General who conquers the barbarians). Immediately following this he began to codify the household laws of the Tokugawa family as a constitutional law for all the daimyo (Butler 1994:517). He continued with levying the other daimyo. As explained above, the rule of the samurai was complete by the 16th century thanks to the Muromachi bakufu and the developments taking place so far. Thus, the Edo bakufu did not need to assert its power with imperial edicts thanks to its military power. At the battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the Tokugawa house with its allies won the battle against a coalition of western clans. The result was a total defeat and subduing of nearly all the clans by military power. There were certain reasons such as the use of fire arms by the Tokugawa that contributed to the Tokugawa victory (Kadıoğlu 2018:5), but since Tokugawa Ieyasu, head of the Tokugawa house and the first Tokugawa shogun was clever enough to see that military power alone would not last long, he took legitimacy with an imperial edict as the newly appointed shogun. Then he continued with new regulations and arrangements which made a centralized rule and a centralized feudalism possible.

After the battle of Sekigahara and the establishment of the Edo Bakufu, Tokugawa Ieyasu organized the bakufu in a different manner than his predecessors. The first and the most important difference was that, there were no more jito or shugo who were directly appointed by the bakufu or the imperial court. Since the imperial power vanished to a degree that it only served for ceremonies and held nearly no land at all, there was no need to appoint anyone to the provinces in their name. The jito and the shugo were devoured by the daimyo and the Tokugawa house itself was a daimyo house and saw the futility of an attempt to revert the course of daimyo rule (Broadbridge 1974:84). After the establishment of the Tokugawa Bakufu, the feudal system and the political structure began to be more similar to Tudor England with different groups of daimyo constituting fractions as in Turdor England during the reign of Elizabeth as Öğütçü points out (Öğütçü 2019:181).Thus, Ieyasu classified the Daimyo into three categories. The first group of daimyo were called the shinpan (親藩). They were the branches of the Tokugawa house and were trusted the most. And were given large estates to counter balance the tozama daimyo. They were created by giving the confiscated lands of the losing parties in the battle of Sekigahara. The second group was the fudai daimyo (譜代大名). These were the household vassals of the Tokugawa house who allied themselves before the battle of Sekigahara. They were holding small estates which were situated at strategic points that would help the bakufu to control the third group of daimyo, the tozama daimyo (外様大名). The tozama daimyo were the ones who fought against the Tokugawa or were neutral and were least trusted. They were mostly holding large lands and could pose a threat at any time. So they were more strictly controlled and their power was curbed as much as possible. One of the most important measures taken by the bakufu was the order to raze down all the castles of the Tozama daimyo and to order their samurai to retreat to the capital cities of the han (Osamu 1982:84). In addition, semi-spy officials called metsuke were appointed to each daimyo's domain to inspect and report the actions of these daimyowhich was unthinkable during the Muromachi period (Atik 2020:25). These samurai were to become bureaucrats rather than soldiers. Another very important measure was the sankin kotai system. According to this system, every daimyo had to have double residences. One at his home prov-

ince and the other in Edo. His family would live in Edo as hostages, but the daimyo had to live in Edo and his han in turn at three years intervals (Tsukahira 1966:34). Thus, the daimyo would not rebel by putting their families at peril, and since the next generation after the establishment of the Edo bakufu would grow up in Edo, they would be more estranged to their home provinces. Of course all these did not yield the desired results immediately. But with the elapse of time, the Edo bakufu managed to be more and more powerful in enforcing its will on the local daimyo (Ravina 1995:139). The main difference that the Edo period brought to Japan in terms of vassalage bonds was that, the samurai were no more military vassals holding fiefs in return for their service. They were given two options. They could either give up arms and become peasants or merchants, or else they had to become paid retainers of the daimyo or the bakufu (Sho 1936:81). Thus, the samurai who were originally a military class became tenured bureaucrats in time. For the first four to five decades, the daimyo were still on alert for a disruption of peace and they tried to maintain their military power. But as it became apparent that the pax-Tokugawa would continue, so was the military organization of the daimyo decreased to a minimum level since keeping an army was seen as a useless burden for the daimyo. Most of the samurai became bureaucrats rather than soldiers by the mid-eighteenth century. Except for the Shimabara uprising which was limited to the Christians of the Shimabara peninsula in Kyushu island, the bakufu did not face any military threat after 1638 until its overthrow in 1868. Thus the Edo period was marked by peace, increase in commerce and agricultural production and the growth of economy. Another important difference of the Edo period from the preceding ones was the sakoku policy after the Shimabara uprising (Laver 2011:147). The country was closed to foreign trade except for Korea, Ryukyu islands and the artificial Dejima island near Nagasaki created for the Dutch and the Chinese merchants. This was unprecedented in Japan. Yet contrary to the the general ideas about this policy, sakoku policy did not necessarily affect the growth of the Japanese economy during the Edo period. In fact the Edo economy was perhaps the most vivid period of economic expansion compared to the Kamakura and Muromachi periods. This can be explained by the fact that most of the foreign trade commodities sought in Japan were luxury goods which were not needed in great quantities and could mostly be substituted with the goods produced in Japan such as tea, silk, chinaware etc. (Kang 1997:76).

On the other hand, the growth of domestic commerce would have great impact on the Edo society. As the samurai class gathered wealth in its hand, the desire for the luxury goods increased. Most of the samurai lived in the villages before the Edo period, but it became compulsory for them to live in the cities and within a generation, this class of simple and uneducated warriors was transformed into refined city dweller bureaucrats with a salary rather than a fief unlike their fathers or grandfathers (Howland 2001:92). The income of the samurai was measured with koku which is used for measuring the weight of the rice. Instead of collecting the rice themselves, the samurai class would receive it as a salary, but the rice did not necessarily come from a certain fief. So, instead of, for instance, being given a village as a fief, a samurai was given 400 koku of rice annually as a fixed salary for your post in the bakufu governmental system or his own han.

All these measures contributed the absolute authority of the Edo bakufu and this made it possible for the bakufu to establish a strong centralized government and bureaucracy unseen in Japan before. One might expect that the feudal ties between lord and vassal should have weakened in such a society, especially the cold bureaucratic structure and formalization of affairs made it nearly impossible to build a personal bond between the lord and vassal, not to mention the possible dissolution of ties between the peasants and their lords. However, the ties of bondage were still very strong thanks to the state ideology of the Tokugawa. Neo-Confucianism founded by Zhu Xi was adopted in Japan soon after it arrived to the islands via Confucian scholars both Chinese and Japanese (Atik 2012a:107). Although Confucianism is not a religion, it deeply shapes the way of life and way of thinking for the individual in Japan. The Neo-Confucianism originally born in China was a mixture of Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism. But in Japan, this was modified and was transformed into a state ideology where the individual's loyalty to his superior was encouraged and any individual showing betrayal was literally isolated by the society (Atik 2012a:112). Of course such a strict society did not emerge within a day, but within a century, Japan was more strictly a Confucian society in which betrayal to one's superior was a very rare exception rather than a daily event like in the days of Sengoku period. Unlike Europe, in Japan the samurai would have only one master and

they would hold their fief or position from only one master. And this case was true for the peasants as well. In one occasion, peasant's of a village rebelled when the bakufu wanted to replace them to another han claiming that "even the peasants know only one master" (Duus 1993:28).

But the only cast outside of this "perfect" order of a Confucian world view was the merchants. According to Confucianism, the merchants were the lowest caste and they were given rights accordingly. A merchant was supposed to hold a lower social status than a peasant even when he was richer than a medium scale daimyo (Sheldon 1983:57). The samurai on the other hand, had the legal right to execute kiritsuke gomen which literally means the pardon to cut. If he felt disrespected or not respected enough by a peasant or a merchant, he had the right to cut that peasant or merchant without trial. And at the early stages of Edo period, this right was abused by the samurai causing resentment and anger among the peasants (Atik 2012a:103). This was one of the reasons why the samurai were compelled to live in towns rather than villages (Sansom 1978:128). However, both the samurai and the peasants needed the merchants. Since the samurai were living in the cities and in many han were forbidden to go to villages lest they cause resentment and rebellion amongst the peasants with their attitude (this was especially true at the beginning of the Edo period) they were compelled to rely on the merchants for collecting the taxes in their name and cashing this crop. Secondly, they needed the merchants to provide them the necessary goods for their refined life style. The peasant also needed the merchants for cashing their crops (Brown 1988:65). Thus, the merchants gathered more wealth in their hands. The bakufu tried to prevent these developments but it was impossible to prevent the rise of the merchant class in this growing monetary economy. Many historians in this respect argue that the overthrow of the bakufu was inevitable and the American intervention or the foreign interventions to open Japan to trade were not so pivotal, but it only triggered the inevitable (Broadbridge 1974:83). The economic rise of the merchant class eventually led to the Meiji restoration. It is no wonder that the uprising to the Shogunate began in the Satsuma and Choshu domains both of which were hubs of foreign commerce and were backed by the merchants not only economically but also politically and militarily through helping in arms acquisition of western weapons from the Ryukyus through contraband trade in sugar cane (Atik 2020:29).

Conclusion

Feudalism in Japan has often been compared to feudalism in Europe due to the similar institutions on the outset and the similar outcomes stemming from these feudal institutions. However, Japanese feudalism has peculiar character resulting from the unique historical experiences of Japan which are unlike the European experiences such as external threats, continuation of native customs (i.e Germanic war band), and religious conversion. Even the closest neighbor of Japan, Korea, does not have any experience such as a Shogunate (disregarding a 10 year period under military rule), and in this regard Japanese feudalism is in many ways unique. However, Japanese feudalism did not always demonstrate a stable characteristic. It changed throughout the ages of its development beginning from the 10th century until 1868 which also makes the longes period of feudalism. In this regard, it is essential to divide Japanese feudalism into eras of its own rather than to classify it in euro-centric terms such as medieval or early modern. Although the feudal institutions of Japan were very robust which were formed by the rulers consciously unlike their European counterparts which formed naturally as a result of political and economic developments, the economic developments resulting in the rise of cities and the merchant class brought about the decay and the end of Japanese feudalism. Compared to the Kamakura and Muromachi periods, it is true that Edo period was economically the most prosperous of all. The use of coins was widespread even in the remotest rural areas. Yet with or without the economic prosperity in the country, the samurai were mostly indebted to the merchant class and were having difficulty to repay their debts. But it would be wrong to argue that it was only the economic developments that led to the fall of the bakufu and the feudal structure. In fact, the faction that overthrew the bakufu rebelled against the renovations and aimed at preserving the old order (especially the closed country). Yet once they came to power, they saw that these developments were irreverisble. Perhaps the feudal structure seen before the Edo period could have continued were it not for the combination of reforms undertaken by the Tokugawa, internal social and economic developments in Japan and foreign enforcement to open the gates of the country.

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