The Roots of Proto-Industrialization in Japan

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Trendy cell phones, cheap and durable cars, nifty and fun cameras – these are just a few of the many products that are commonly associated with Japan. The export of such goods has allowed Japan to stand at similar heights in comparison to other world powers today. Yet despite these worthwhile achievements, many individuals fail to remember Japan's most laudable exploit. Unlike her neighboring countries, Japan was the first nation in Asia to enter into the era of modernity through rapid industrialization. Such brevity in the modernization of Japan overshadows the centuries of time it took the West to achieve the same feat. Ultimately, the overthrow of the *bafuku* (Tokugawa Shogunate) and the establishment of Emperor Mutsuhito as the sole ruler of Japan resulted in a unified and centralized government that provided impetus for capitalism, as well as industrialization into the 1900s. And so, by the end of the 19th century, the presence of such developmental revolutions were evident: railroads and steamships provided efficient and speedy transportation of goods; the installment of banks supported the population and its growing levels of consumerism; the mass dissemination of information informed the remote areas of Japan through telegraphs and newspapers; and lastly, the implementation of clocks and compulsory education transformed society and laid the foundation for many of Japan's modern industries.[1] Together, these were a few of the plethora of factors that changed Japan from a conglomerate of rulers into a unified nation that would eventually become a world power.

At this point, it's crucial to step back and reflect upon these accomplishments that were made in such a short span of time. How did the Land of the Rising Sun thrust itself into the age of modernity so quickly?[2] How was Japan able to modernize if it was isolated from the rest of the world? And above all else, how was Japan able to industrialize if it experienced no growth during the Tokugawa period? Such topics have evoked significant levels of controversy between scholars and historians alike.

The idea that *sakoku* was beneficial to Japanese development parallels the arguments that many modern scholars have proposed. This is not a new argument. Tashiro Kazui provides how *sakoku* protected the Japanese economy during the Tokugawa period. Kazui as well as Ronald Toby attribute *sakoku* as a policy of foreign relations in which Japan sought to free itself from Chinese control and influence. Whereas Kazui and Toby emphasize on the economic benefits of *sakoku*, I focus more on the political aspects during this period of time which parallels Toby's notion of *sakoku* as a means of legitimacy. Unlike Toby however, I go beyond to propose how the mixed political success of the Tokugawa regime caused the *bakufu* to shift its focus towards internal developments such as the relocation of the capital to Edo. As Kato Hidetoshi perfectly states, the

[1] Michael Smitka, introduction to *Japanese Economic History 1600-1960: Japanese Economic Ascent* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), xvii-xviii.
[2] Japanese modernization took less than a century.

period of *sakoku* should be viewed not as a "contraction… we should probably refer to it [*sakoku*] as intensification or concentration. The energies that until then had been allowed to dissipate toward the outside were redirected internally where they now had to be coped with."[3] Such energies and concentration manifested in the form of societal, economic and above all else, political developments. The capital was relocated and power was centralized. Thus, all roads pointed to Edo. Like Gilbert Rozman, my argument takes into account the significance of Edo in the development of Japanese society. Whereas Rozman provides how Edo's significance as capital led to internal progression, I go beyond that to suggest that such progressions were specifically the proto-industrial sectors that led to Japan's rapid modernization. My research on preindustrial Japan has provided me with the belief that true isolation did not occur between Japan and the rest of the world. On the contrary, the misconstrued notion of isolation, or *sakoku*, was not a period of seclusion. Rather, it was a time of controlled economic and political policies that allowed for the establishment of trade as the foundation for political ties and foreign recognition of Tokugawa sovereignty. The ultimate result of these ties was the centralization of power in Edo. Tokugawa's relocation of the capital subsequently catalyzed proto-industrialization developments within the nation.

The rapid development that occurred puts into question the portrayal of Japan as a stagnated and backwards state prior to its modernization during the Meiji Era. As a result, Japan must have established certain proto-industrial sectors during the Tokugawa Era in order to have laid the foundations for its later industrialization. Furthermore, *sakoku* (or Japanese isolationism) must not have prevented the development of society but rather, potentially furthered internal progress to some degree. Thus, this essay seeks to dissipate the inaccurate portrayals of Tokugawa Japan as a stagnated and backwards state through the analysis of the following topics: the traditional view of *sakoku* as an economic and political tourniquet that prevented Japanese development, as well as the importance of Edo as a catalyst for proto-industrialization during the Tokugawa regime. Together, the careful examination of these two topics will not only demonstrate how Japan continued to develop during the Tokugawa period, but also suggest how *sakoku* brought about an area of focused and controlled development that was beneficial to Japanese industrialization.

The traditional view of *sakoku* not only fails to take into account the rapid development and industrialization that occured 200 years after the edict of isolation was passed, but also oversimplifies the economic and political objectives of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Such a perspective, albeit incorrect, is completely understandable as the literal translation of *sakoku* is "closing the country"; from such a definition, the connotation of restricted isolation became associated with this period of time from the 1600s until the Meiji Restoration in 1868.[4] According to this perspective, the hypervigilized imposition of *sakoku* was a reaction against the influence of Western ideas.[5] The result of this was a geopolitical lockdown in which Japan was able to better

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[3] Kato Hidetoshi, "The Significance of the Period of National Seclusion Reconsidered," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 7 (1981): 101.

[4] Tashiro Kazui, "Foreign Relations During the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 8 (1982): 283.

[5] Specifically Portuguese Christianity due to a rebellion of 40,000 converted Japanese farmers that not only threatened the shogunate but also the political stability of the nation.

monitor the incoming and outgoing of goods, people and subsequently, foreign (especially Western) influences. With the restricted flow of ideas, goods and people under the overly restraining control of the *bafuku* (Tokugawa Shogunate), the nation lost its prestige and power as it slowly failed to absorb technological, economic and scientific advancements accomplished by the rest of the world. Thus, the period of *sakoku* from the 1600s until the Meiji Restoration of 1868 is characterized as a time in which economic and societal progression was stifled by government intervention due to xenophobia. Contrary to this traditionalist belief, history provides that the *bakufu* attempted a different approach towards foreign relations that not only counters the common notion of restricted trade and subsequent stunted growth, but also reduces the restrictive environment in which the *sakoku* allegedly imposed.

In short, trade is observed to have occurred within and beyond governmental regulation, and relations with other nations were not completely severed during this period of time. In fact, the *bakufu* established and maintained "formal relations with two of its neighbors in Northeast Asia: Korea and the Ryukyus. With each of these the "Bakufu established different kinds of relationships, handling each in a distinctive way."[6] This aspect is not only exemplified by political tension that existed between Japan and the majority of its trading partners, but also the exchange of goods that flowed between these neighboring kingdoms and Japan.[7] The Tokugawa Shogunate promoted the trading interests of certain *daimyo* (feudal lords) in an attempt to diversify and further trade. History provides that "It was the Bakufu that authorized [*daimyos*] Satsuma to trade with Ryukyu and China, and Tsushima to trade with Korea."[8] At the same time the "Korea trade, a monopoly of the *tozama* fief of Tsushima, was greater in volume than the Nagasaki trade, which the Bakufu controlled only administratively."[9] Thus, it becomes clear that the *bakufu* did not exercise complete control over all exchanges of goods between the Japanese and its neighboring countries. Rather, the Shogunate allowed levels of independence in trade between neighboring kingdoms and its own *daimyos*. Another example of extensive trading is again evident in Korea as Tsushima "maintained a permanent trading factory… and ceramics manufactory in Pusan, Korea."[10] This clearly challenges the overly restrictive and closed portrayal associated with *sakoku* as Japan possessed trade relations with neighboring countries during this period of time. *Sakoku* did not prevent trade; rather, it granted the Japanese government control of whom to trade with.

As a result of its trade relations, the Shogunate sanctioned, established and regulated specific ports for other kingdoms besides that of Korea and Ryukyu. As mentioned before, the port city Nagasaki was one of the few windows to the world in which foreign nations, specifically the Dutch East India Company and private Chinese trading partners of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, would be permitted access to the exchange of goods.[11] Historical evidence of *rangaku* (Dutch learning) in the form of medicinal practices, military science, geography and politics also existed as a byproduct of the exchanges of goods between the Japanese and the Dutch. Such

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[6] Kazui, "Foreign Relations During the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined," 284.
[7] The only exception to this political tension is observed in Japan's relationship with Korea.
[8] Ronald P. Toby, "Reopening the Question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the Legitimation of the Tokugawa Bakufu," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 3 (1977): 326.
[9] *Ibid.*, 326.
[10] *Ibid.*, 326.
[11] Kazui, "Foreign Relations During the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined," 288-89.

evidence reduces the xenophobic fears that the traditional view associates with *sakoku* and clearly demonstrates how the diffusion of ideas was still absorbed into Japanese learning and culture. The transmission of ideas and technologies is also observed between Japan and China. The exchange of ideas and goods revolutionized farming practices within Japan, due in part to the Chinese farming techniques that "were imported in book form during the seventeenth century, and were localized and elaborated throughout the Tokugawa period."[12] Not only did such techniques transform agriculture within Japan, it eventually led to the development of proto industrial institutions that would eventually act as the primary impetus in propelling Japan in the modern age. This is another source of evidence that reduces the severity in which *sakoku* was enforced and observed in maritime policies, especially with regards to Japanese sailors. With goods constantly traveling between Japan and these northeastern Asian countries, it was inevitable that accidents would have resulted in the displacement of Japanese seamen. As a result, the notion that Japanese individuals could not travel in and out of the country is somewhat unfounded as Japanese history provides instances in which displaced Japanese seamen were repatriated.[13]

Ultimately, the evidence provided above supports the notion that the Tokugawa Shogunate pursued security, trade and economic as well as cultural goals, which clearly challenge the closed nation policy that *sakoku* is commonly associated with. In one sense, it is true that the *bakufu* maintained foreign relations, albeit limited, to East Asian countries and the Dutch; however, to suggest that such ties were only maintained for economic reasons fails to acknowledge the true objective in imposing *sakoku* in the first place. From its inception, *sakoku* was a means to achieve political recognition domestically and internationally from China, Korea and the rest of East Asia. Japan's greatest goal would be to obtain political recognition from the most powerful state in East Asia, Ming China. And so, it becomes clear through these political deeds that *sakoku* was not an attempt to isolate the nation; rather it was an endeavor to control trade and political ties to obtain legitimacy within and beyond the nation. Unfortunately for the Tokugawa Shogunate, "such temporal legitimacy as existed on the national level was entrusted to Hideyoshi's seven year son Hideyori, even after… Hideyoshi's seven year war in Korea had left Japan the outlaw of northeast Asia."[14] As a result, the *bakufu* was required to rebuild the bridges in which the Hideyoshi had so conveniently destroyed. Resulting tensions between Japan and her neighbors only increased the difficulty in establishing political recognition from her trade partners after the rise of the Tokugawa regime.

Much of Japan's mixed political success in acquiring foreign recognition of its sovereignty was based on the nature of its economic relations. Spending the most effort in reestablishing ties with the Yi dynasty because of its history of economic relations with Korea, Japan sought to build upon this foundation in order to earn Yi recognition of the Tokugawa Shogunate in hopes that the Ming Dynasty would eventually follow. And so early negotiations were made with Korea even before and while the *bakufu* came into power starting in the "1590s, through the missions of 1604-05 and 1607, the Trade Articles of 1609, and the reopening of trade in 1611.[15] Eventually, ties

[12] Kaoru Sugihara, "The State and the Industrious Revolution in Tokugawa Japan" (paper presented at the first GEHN Conference, London, England, September 17-20, 2003).
[13] Toby, "Reopening the Question of Sakoku: Diplomacy in the Legitimation of the Tokugawa Bakufu," 326.
[14] *Ibid.*, 329.
[15] *Ibid.*, 329.

were established during *sakoku,* through the help of the daimyo of Tsushima, who acted as the mediator between Korea and Japan. Evidence of renewed relations is observed in Korea's presents to Japan:

> The new Bakufu was successful in bringing to Edo and Sunpu an extravagant embassy of some 467 persons, bearing eltters and presents from Korea's King Sonjo to the Shogun. This act was to be interpreted by some Japanese as recognition of the Ieyasu's unification of Japan[16]

This ultimately fulfilled one of the primary goals that Japan attempted through *sakoku*: political recognition by an international power. In this sense, *sakoku* acted not as an obstacle that prevented the development of political ties, but as a selectively permeable barrier that allowed relations with the Yi Dynasty to be possible. The "Bakufu regarded the restoration of Korean relations as a major victory" along with Korean sent embassy as evidence of Korean recognition.[17] Such an emphatic response is hardly observed in the Ryukyu's formal acknowledgement of Japan. On the contrary, the Ryukyu kingdom did not to acknowledge Tokugawa sovereignty over Japan. As a result, the Tokugawa Shogunate invaded its own vassal country in order to force King Sho Nei to "pay tribute... to submit as a vassal of Japan."[18] Regardless of the aggressive coercion of its own territory, Japan viewed this "submission to vassal-state status... as further evidence of the legitimacy of the Bakufu in correspondence with the Ming."[19] Contrary to the seclusive portrayal of *sakoku*, Japanese efforts clearly demonstrated an attempt towards the establishment of political ties between Japan and its neighboring countries. Ultimately, these attempts were just a few of the many ways in which Japan attempted to politically persuade the Ming dynasty to recognize the sovereign power of the Tokugawa Shogunate.

Unfortunately the *bakufu's* endeavors were for naught, as the Ming dynasty never fully recognized Tokugawa sovereignty. Japan also never entered legitimate trade with the Ming; from the perspective of the Ming Dynasty, all trade that occurred with China was reduced to smuggling. As a result, instead of recognizing the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Chinese offered the opportunity to be a vassal state in which the Chinese would not only acknowledge the Shogunate, but also provide direct trading through the administration and distribution of *kango*: licenses that authorized the exchange of goods for Japanese merchants.[20] Obviously, acceptance of such condescending terms would have challenged the notion of Tokugawa sovereignty and contradicted *bakufu's* desire to legitimize itself as the sole authority of Japan. Had the Tokugawa Shogunate accepted such conditions, the newly formed nation would have existed as an extension of Chinese power, rather than an autonomous and developing new nation. The Tokugawa Shogunate would have ultimately compromised "the very independent legitimacy and sovereignty it was seeking to establish... at the price of injuring that legitimacy in the eyes of Japanese political society."[21] Due to the failure of the Chinese to meet Japanese expectations, the Tokugawa changed its focus from

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[16] *Ibid.*, 330.
[17] *Ibid.*, 330.
[18] *Ibid.*, 330.
[19] *Ibid.*, 330-31.
[20] *Ibid.*, 332.
[21] *Ibid.*, 332.

exogenously obtaining international political recognition (especially relative to China), to endogenously legitimizing its power through domestic endeavors that transformed Japanese society.

Thus the Land of the Rising Sun began to shift its focus away from adherence to Sino-centric policies and recognition, towards establishing its own means of legitimacy through internal measures.[22] In the early years of the Tokugawa Shogunate, Japan's identity was relative to the economic and diplomatic recognition it earned from neighboring countries. Due to the lack of Chinese recognition, an identity crisis ensued and manifested, as Japan had focused on obtaining external recognition to bolster support for internal legitimacy. As a result of the varying levels of success in obtaining internationally recognized legitimacy, the Tokugawa Shogunate began to focus on developing its own identity through internally based measures. Thus, one of the most important measures in developing an internally nationalistic identity was for Tokugawa to bestow himself a title: the "result of this identity crisis was the title *Nihon-koku Taikun* (Great Prince of Japan)."[23] This was not only a response to the limited success of its international economic endeavors in obtaining foreign legitimacy, but also an attempt to distance itself from sovereign-vassal implications that king or Shogun implied. The designation of king had been abandoned, as such a status had become tarnished with the Yoshimitsu regime's submission to the Ming dynasty as a vassal state in order gain political legitimacy and trading benefits.[24] Furthermore, the acceptance of such a title not only indicated Japanese compliance to the Ming dynasty, but also revealed how politics were Sino-centrically oriented.[25] The Tokugawa regime refused to follow such means in establishing legitimacy. Even the title of Shogun was abandoned as the Chinese had (perhaps unknowingly) and disrespectfully addressed members of Tokugawa's cabinet as such when it was exclusive to Tokugawa.[26] And so, the fruition of the new designation of Great Prince of Japan not only marked Japan's new internally based developmental approaches, but also represented a significant divergence from its previous adherence to sinocentric policies. Japan's rejection of Ming order and titles demonstrates how it "was unwilling to maintain diplomatic relations [that challenged its sovereignty]...with China, once revered as its suzerain, and seems to have had no desire to take part again in an unequal liege relation."[27] In the purest sense, this rejection of foreign influence epitomizes the policy of *sakoku* as the Japanese abstained from adopting the identity that China had offered that ultimately would have challenged the legitimacy and sovereignty of the *bakufu*. Shifting its policies, the Tokugawa Shogunate was able to focus on internal development as a means for obtaining internally recognized legitimacy through the reorganization of the *daimyos* into a relatively stable and centralized government. In doing so, the Tokugawa Shogunate gained greater administrative control through the bureaucratizing of government that led to "economic growth and urban development", as well as "peace for two and

[22] Japan had sought external recognition to bolster internal acknowledgement from its populace.
[23] *Ibid.*, 349.
[24] *Ibid.*, 332.
[25] Compliance to the Ming Dynasty through the physical need to pay tribute and the adoption of a Chinese bestowed status.
[26] A letter written to Tokugawa Hidetada was identical to the one sent to Hasegawa who was the Nagasaki deputy at the time; both were addressed as *nihon shogun sama*, which is translated as Japanese king. Through this, the Chinese failed to differentiate the status between lord and subject which the Japanese deemed extremely disrespectful in the diplomatic context.
[27] Kazui, "Foreign Relations During the Edo Period: Sakoku Reexamined," 289.

a half centuries."[28] The lack of international acknowledgment (even though economic relations were successful) of Japanese sovereignty ultimately drove the nation to focus on internal development as a means for the support of the populace.

Thus, in the end *sakoku* did not stifle the development and growth of Japan but rather acted as the primary factor in encouraging internal development through the reestablishment of economic relations with neighbors and the subsequent recognition (or lack thereof as demonstrated by China) of Tokugawa sovereignty. *Sakoku* was not an attempt to isolate Japan. History has demonstrated that it acted as a selectively permeable barrier in which the Shogunate was able to control and monitor the flow of commodities, people, and ideas in an effort to develop economic ties. Through the establishment of economic relations between Japan and its neighbors, Japan sought to build upon such ties in order to obtain recognition of its sovereignty. The mixed success of these political endeavors caused Japan to shift its focus from obtaining international recognition to domestic developments that would justify its sovereignty. Trade in turn was controlled. In doing so, the result was the growth and development of Japan's proto-industrial institutions that would eventually allow for rapid modernization.

And so proto-industrialization occurred in Japan. During the Tokugawa period (1600s-1868) the nation transformed and experienced revolutionary levels of growth and development. Standards of living changed as cities and villages became intertwined into more networked markets. Despite all of these laudable accomplishments, what exactly constitutes as proto-industrialization? How is it defined and what are characteristics of pre-industrialization? In a broad yet simplistic definition, proto-industrialization can be defined as the movement from subsistence level living towards a lifestyle dictated by mass consumerism. Franklin Mendel postulated that

> Pro-industrialization was an identifiable stage in industrialization, characterized by the rapid growth of traditionally organized by market oriented, principally rural industry. It was accompanied by regional specialization, some regions turning to industry and others to commercial agriculture. And it fostered industrialization proper (factory production of foods for national and international markets) by creating "capital accumulation, market connections, entrepreneurial skills, and agricultural progress[29]

The result of this progression is commercialization observed in two specific forms. The first is the decline of regional self-sufficiency as "each region no longer produces all the food and manufactured goods it needs, but has begun to depend on other regions for some of its needs" (Moulder, 31).[30] The second form of commercialization is observed in the decline of local self-sufficiency through the agricultural lifestyle in which peasants

> no longer produce simply for their own consumption and no longer consume only what they have themselves produced; they are part of a trading network or hierarchy of urban

[28] Thomas C. Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization, 1750-1920* (Berkley, California: University of California Press, 1988), 137.
[29] Gay L. Gullickson, "Agriculture and Cottage Industry: Redefining the Causes of Proto-Industrialization," *The Journal of Economic History* 43 (1983): 831.
[30] Frances Moulder, *Japan, China and the Modern World Economy: Toward a Reinterpretation of East Asian Development ca. 1600 to ca. 1918* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 31-32.

> centers, producing goods that are shipped "upward" to the higher urban levels and consuming goods that are produced in or channeled through large urban centers[31]

Cities develop not only as urban centers, but also as hubs for local goods to be sold and transported. As history has demonstrated, these features of pro-industrialization defined by Moulder and Mendel were apparent in Japanese society during the Tokugawa period. The following paragraphs will not only illuminate such characteristics that were present during this time, but also demonstrate how the designation of Edo as the capital catalyzed the development of proto-industrialization.

Without a doubt, one of the primary factors that allowed proto-industrialization to be feasible was the organization and bureaucratic structure of the government between the 1600s until 1868. Prior to the Tokugawa period, Japan was a land plagued by incessant wars between local warlords for hundreds of years. Upon his ascension into power, Tokugawa declared the capital of his nation to be Edo and shortly after, implemented the *bakuhan* system, in which a *daimyo* was granted rule over a specific region. At first glance, the *bakuhan* system was, from a structural perspective, almost identical to the feudal castle towns that predominated Japan for most of its history; the addition of Tokugawa as the head and unifying authority of these warlords was greatest structural difference. Furthermore, *daimyos* were given relatively high levels of independence in governing their own provinces, evident through the levying of taxes, the administration of justice and the legislation of laws.[32] From this perspective, there appear to be no distinct changes at all, relative to the centuries prior to Tokugawa rule. However, careful analysis demonstrates subtle differences that allowed significant economic growth to be possible.

Upon declaring Edo as his new capital, Tokugawa strategically implemented the *sankin kotai* system, one that "required the daimyo to install their families in residences at the capital and to divide their time between the capital and their domains."[33] This forced the *daimyo* to prostrate themselves to the Shogunate's rule as their families, in a manner of speaking, were held hostages. Tokugawa even went further to control the marriages of his subjects in an attempt to establish familial ties and squelch potential sources of rebellion. Together, these aspects controlled and insured the cooperation of the *daimyo* with their new lord. Furthermore, it becomes clear through the implementation of these edicts that Tokugawa sought to control his subjects from his domain and castle in his newly declared capital; the reorganization of government and the subjugation of the *daimyo* allowed Tokugawa to control Japan. Thus, Edo became the center of the nation as it not only housed the ruling families, but also opened high levels of consumerism and demand for this new economically dependent population. Rozman attributes "the system of alternate residence ranks as the single greatest accomplishment of Japanese leaders precisely because it built on the already considerable scale of urban and commercial development to accelerate the mobilization of

[31] *Ibid.*, 31-32.
[32] The *daimyos* were able to exercise their own discretion with regard to the legislation and execution of laws in their region so long as they did not conflict with Tokugawa's decrees.
[33] *Ibid.*, 82.

resources at both national and local levels."[34] The establishment of Edo as the capital would, in turn, transform and revolutionize Japanese society more than ever before.

And so centralization of Edo, along with its subsequent growth during Tokugawa rule, was impetus to the commercialization of agriculture and the manufacturing of goods in order to meet the demands of the city. Prior to his ascension, Edo was a small and prolific fishing town. However over time it was "transformed from a small town into vast city of over a million. Over half the population was composed of the families of the Tokugawa rulers, the daimyo, and their retainers; the remainder consisted of artisans and merchants.[35] Obviously, such a population was unable to sustain a self-sufficient lifestyle. To meet the high levels of demand, agriculture efficiency and productivity, along with the manufacturing of goods, increased in order to supply the consumerist attitudes in Edo. Thus, Edo's significance epitomizes Moulder's notion of a dependent population that was unable to provide for itself through the production of its own goods and crops. The following excerpt epitomizes its role in being the center of economic change within the nation:

> During the seventeenth century Edo's special significance for overall urban growth in Japan stemmed above all from new patterns of elite migration associated with *sankin kotai* system of alternate residence from the continually rising demand for goods and revenues to meet the responsibilities commensurate with each elite position with the city's finely stratified population.... Daimyo transformed their castle cities to support new mobilization of local resources to meet expenses in Edo. Centralization in Edo spurred increased accumulation and production also in Osaka and Kyoto and in smaller cities, reaching eventually the local commercial nexus subordinate to castle cities[36]

And so, the once independent provinces in Japan became intertwined with one another, as economic dependency, as well as consumerism demanded the establishment of trade between these regions. Out of this necessity came the development of specialized regions that focused on one industry, rather than multiple ones to sustain themselves. Large cities such as Osaka and Kyoto became hubs in which local a substantial amount of goods would be gathered, sold and shipped to Edo. Agriculture, in turn, proliferated during this time period due to the needs of those residing within capital as well as the growing populations of other major cities. Thus, it becomes clear that the economic needs of Edo stimulated the development the nation. Much of the origins of proto-industrialization can be thereby attributed to reorganization of the government and more importantly, the establishment of Edo as the capital. In doing so, the non-productive population residing in the capital became a rapid source of change in Japan through a "rapid increase in demand, caused by the sudden urbanization of much of Japan's upper class at the outset of the Tokugawa regime.[37] The nation, in turn, developed. Growth and increase in standard of living spread from Edo into other cities as well as rural areas.

Away from the urban cities and within the rural regions of Japan, agricultural efficiency as well as productivity increased substantially during this period of time. Much of this was due to the

[34] Gilbert Rozman, "Edo's Importance in the Changing Tokugawa Society," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1 (1974): 100.
[35] Moulder, *Japan, China and the Modern World Economy*, 82.
[36] Rozman, "Edo's Importance in the Changing Tokugawa Society," 97-98.
[37] Moulder, *Japan, China and the Modern World Economy*, 82.

increased demand from the economically dependent urban centers in Japan; at the same time, agricultural technology improved, which also gave way to commercialization as well as capital accumulation.[38] And so the lifestyle of farmers changed drastically, as many of them turned to commercialized farming in order to provide for themselves. This emphasizes one of the many aspects that characterizes proto-industrialization as farmers began shift from subsistence level farming towards commercialization as well as specialization. Evidence of this change is highlighted by the agriculturally focused regions of Japan, such as the Bizen province in which over "80 per cent of the population was engaged in agriculture in 1707; even at the end of the Tokugawa period, Bizen was overwhelmingly rural."[39] At the same time, the emergence of other forms of agriculture also emphasized the growing proto-industrial sectors. Cotton became an increasing lucrative crop, one in which many regions sought to capitalize and base their lives around, as exemplified by the regions of Kojima, Kamimichi, and Oku.[40] Ultimately, Hanley attributes and notes how the "development of cotton cultivation and the commercialization of agriculture fostered the emergence of a cotton textile industry as a handicraft enterprise in the home."[41] And so, Japan experienced levels of diversification with regard to regional industries due to the growing Japanese consumerist market. Families shifted from subsistence level farming towards more lucrative and commercialized means in order to better sustain themselves.

At the same time farmers began to invest in new industries in order to provide for their families during seasonal periods in which there was no harvest. The structure of individual farming units also encouraged the expansion of industries as "family farming was essential to the integration of farming and other occupations, since it was by the discipline and sentiment of the family that nonagricultural earnings, often the product of highly individual skills and work way from the farm, were captured for the benefit of the farmer."[42] And so began the investment in other forms of capital during this period of time as it became clear that "rural Japan shared in dynamism with respect to population growth [especially with regards to Edo], to commercial specialization, and to social differentiation in the seventeenth century."[43] Thus began the development and proliferation of nonagricultural related industries as well as the foundations for specialization. Evidence of this is observed in the varied sources of incomes of districts within the Yamaguchi prefecture in southwest Japan. Smith provides how the incomes of some districts were overwhelming rooted in agricultural profits, while others were based on nonagricultural related goods:

> About three-quarters of income in Ohana and Kamitafuse came from farming, but less than one-quarter in Murotsu, Befu, and Sone. Despite these differences, most districts earned a substantial amount of income from nonagricultural production, but they earned it in notably varied ways. Industry accounted for the largest single share of income in Saga, Hirao, and Sone; trade contributed more than all other work combined in Murotsu. Wage

[38] Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization,* 51.
[39] Susan B. Hanley, "Population Trends and Economic Development in Tokugawa Japan: The Case of Bizen Province in Okayama," *Daedalus* 97 (1968): 629.
[40] *Ibid.*, 629.
[41] *Ibid.*, 629.
[42] Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization,* 84.
[43] Rozman, "Edo's Importance in the Changing Tokugawa Society," 98.

remittances were a significant source of income in Usanagi, Ogori, and Okuni, earnings from transport in Befu and Okuni[44]

Based on this excerpt, it becomes clear how commercialization changed the way in which many individuals chose to orient their lifestyles. As sources of income gradually changed, new occupations developed. No longer were these families focusing on subsistence level farming. Rather, a division of labor became apparent, which signifies the development (or even the foundations) of specialization. And this manner, proto-industrialization is again exemplified by the change in self-subsistence towards a greater perspective of the network of interregional economic relations. In short, "market consciousness, active participation in rural trade and handicraft production, and integration into regional market systems characterized the economic activities of many villagers by the end of the Tokugawa period and provided a head start on both human capital and capital stock, which would be essential to the post-1868 experience of modern economic growth in Japan."[45] Families sought to capitalize on these changes in order to maximize profit. In doing so, they left behind the tradition of regional as well as individual self-sufficiency and entered the network of economic and interregional dependency that had begun to permeate all of Japan.

Beyond this change in market orientation (from self towards commercialization), the family structure of the rural community began to transform as well. While some families sought other industries to sustain themselves seasonally, others hunted for work in nearby cities. The occupations in which these individuals participated included the production of sugar, salt, tea, oil, sericulture, textile industries, as well as alcohol and the production of wax.[46] Studies have demonstrated how "men and women who left their districts to work outside for a year or more regularly sent their earnings home" in order to supply the family with a means to survive."[47] In fact, some would claim that "more and more peasants were neglecting farming to spend additional time at by-employments because the latter were more lucrative and physically less taxing."[48] As a result, a mobile labor force of sorts was formed. Migration towards major cities (especially Edo), as exemplified in the following excerpt, became another opportunity for individuals to earn an easier (relative to farming) and high paying income through participation in other industries:

> While the number of individuals moving in and out of Edo each year totaled some tens of thousands, a much larger number, certainly reaching into the millions, participated in the production, transportation, and exchange of goods bound for Edo. Indirectly nearly everyone in Japan contributed in some way to the sizable *han* revenues and the lively national commerce which supported new habits of consumption in Edo. In turn, behavior and attitudes reflected the decreasing self-sufficiency and growing outside orientation.

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[44] Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization,* 87.
[45] William B. Hauser, "Some Misconceptions about the Economic History of Tokugawa Japan," *The History Teacher* 16 (1983): 574.
[46] Smith, *Native Sources of Japanese Industrialization,* 93.
[47] *Ibid.*, 85.
[48] *Ibid.*, 91.

> Changing family patterns resulting from popular aspirations for a higher living standard most likely closely corresponded to the commercialization of rural life[49]

Again, the notion that Edo as well as urbanization of the upper class stimulated the economy is apparent, as these migrant workers sought industries that were directly involved in production, transportation and exchange of goods going into Edo. Participation in such fields provided substantially easier work and also added another source of income during off seasons of agriculture. Much of this can be attributed to the increased efficiency and productivity of farms. On the other hand, the notion of dependent cities with growing consumerist attitudes also promoted the opportunity of alternate sources of income through migration. Ultimately, these proto-industrially induced features were based on the relocation of the nation's capital to Edo.

As time progressed, the foundations of proto-industrialization that Japan had developed during this period of *sakoku* would prove to be the primary factors in propelling Japan into modernity. *Sakoku* provided and allowed for the inflow of economically beneficial ideas, goods, techniques as well as peoples. At the same time, Japan would also benefit from its economic relations with other nations, as it too exported a substantial quantity of crops and goods to its neighbors. *Sakoku* not only protected the political interests of the *daimyo*, but also prevented the establishment of foreign policies or ideas that could have easily undermined and destroyed the initially fragile state the Tokugawa had conquered. While *sakoku* provided economic benefits to the nation of Japan, it also was an attempt on the *bakufu's* part to earn the recognition of its neighboring countries as the legitimate ruler of Japan. Due to the mixed successes of its diplomatic relations with China, Japan, Ryukyus and the Dutch, Japan thereby shifted its focus from obtaining foreign recognition towards internal developments that would justify its legitimacy. The first step towards this was not only through the self-bestowed title of "Great Prince of Japan", but also evident through the relocation of the capital to Edo. Ultimately, these two actions can be characterized as a shift away from a Sino-centrically oriented diplomatic policy that had dominated Asia for centuries. Japan's reluctance to establish equal diplomatic relations with China marked its newfound independence that did not revolve around the Middle Kingdom, but rather around the interests and policies of an exclusively Japanese approach towards development.

Much of the economic as well as societal developments occurred as a response to the designation of Edo as the new capital of Japan. The consolidation of the large populations of non productive workers (officials, *daimyos*, artisans, merchants, etc) and the implementation of the *sankin kotai* system created extremely high levels of demand that forced the rural areas and nearby cities to change. To capitalize on this new market, the lifestyles of farmers changed drastically, which ultimately laid the foundations for proto-industrial sectors. No longer was agriculture the exclusive way to earn money for peasants in Japan. Rather, a diversification of occupations became available through the advancement of agricultural technologies as well as the need to fulfill other industries that the cities demanded, or that the farmers deemed as more lucrative than farming. Thus came about the shift from subsistence level farming to commercialized agriculture and industries. Evidence of "increased commercial agriculture, handicraft production, and trade all run counter to the image of a static society in rural Japan. Most villages were integrated into local marketing networks and many were tied into one of the large regional networks focusing on

[49] Rozman, "Edo's Importance in the Changing Tokugawa Society," 105.

Osaka, Kyoto, Edo or the local castle town… The image of self-sufficient villages with subsistence levels of living conflicts with evidence on market responsive cropping patterns and new sources of non-agricultural income."[50] In short, this newfound economic orientation towards Edo marked the development and existence of proto-industrial sectors within Japan. On the regional level, castle cities that the *daimyo* ruled became hubs for collecting revenues to send towards Edo. In major cities, farmers as well as merchants from nearby locales would travel to sell their goods in which a substantial quantity would go directly to appease the highly marketable population in Edo.

And so, it becomes clear that Tokugawa era was a period of growth in which Japan developed many of its industries that would eventually lead to its modernization in the late 19th century. Traditional views of this period of time portray the Japanese economy as stagnated and backwards due to the restrictive environment that *sakoku* imposed. However, history suggests that *sakoku* was extremely beneficial for the development of Japan and its proto-industrial sectors. The Tokugawa Shogunate's shift from exogenously derived sovereignty towards an endogenous one allowed the nation to focus on internal developments. Because of its strong economic foundations during the Tokugawa era, Japan would rapidly industrialize during the Meiji at a faster rate than the Western world; the rapid economic growth of the Meiji period (1868-1912) was a continuation of trends visible during the Tokugawa period.[51] What specific features within Japanese society allowed it to modernize so quickly? Although this essay does not exemplify nor highlight any of these possibilities, it does raise this new question for future scholars to debate upon.

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[50] Hauser, "Some Misconceptions about the Economic History of Tokugawa Japan," 572.
[51] *Ibid.*, 575.