



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

The roots of prejudice in Japan

Where it all began

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í Japanskt Mál og Menning

Saga Roman

January 2016

Háskóli Íslands
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Ritgerð þessi er lokaverkefni til BA Japönsku Máli og Menningu
og er óheimilt að afrita ritgerðina á nokkurn hátt nema með leyfi rétthafa og
viðeigandi tilvísun sé við höfð.

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Abstract

Japan was able to maintain peace for over two centuries having been secluded from the world, but did this seclusion stem from blissful ignorance of the outside world or was it self-preservation? The forceful ending of the *sakoku* may have initiated a feeling of prejudice towards foreigners; however, it is far from being the start of discrimination in Japan. Prejudice can be found in various forms in any given country, Japan being no exception. Whether it is Japan or any other country, fear of the unknown can always be found often hidden away. The subsequent research will show that this feeling of prejudice which, some individuals in Japan seem to hold, superseded *sakoku* and its forceful ending and is still visible in today's modern day Japan revealing that the roots run deep though they are also diverse and wide spread. Analyzing these roots in regards to prejudice in Japan reveals the range and extent of its effects. This self-imposed isolation, or *sakoku*, is thought to have affected numerous areas in Japanese society; among those areas is the education system and foreign language learning, particularly English learning. In view of this, a small survey was made and sent to fifteen university students of Japanese ethnicity, who were asked questions in relation to their English education and its relevance to *sakoku*. The survey was written in both English and Japanese.

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Introduction

During the advancement of the West on Japan in the 1600s, it became evident to the Japanese government that these ‘visitors’, when in actuality they were uninvited guests, were not arriving solely to explore and acquaint themselves with Japan, their people and language but rather to expand the influence of their respective countries as had occurred in other East-Asian countries that had already been colonized. The early visitors were religious in nature, seeking to spread Christianity. Some of the country representatives demanded¹ the acceptance of their religion and as an indirect consequence the exchange for material goods. Consequently, this may have been the reason for the Japanese governments, or *bakufu*, deliberate attempt to isolate the country from foreign contact, giving rise to the two century long *sakoku* (c. 1600-1853). The Japanese *bakufu*, or *shogunate* as it was also called, was the *shogun*’s government. The *shogun* was the hereditary military leader of the *bakufu* which was established from the end of the twelfth century and lasted until 1868 (Hendry, 2013: 13).

The policy of seclusion, known as *sakoku* in Japanese, literally means “closed/chained country”. The policy was enacted for mainly two reasons: the first being “that Christianity was by its nature antithetical to Japan’s traditional social order and religious beliefs” (Varley, 2000: 165). Secondly, the ruling *shogun* at the time, Hideyoshi, feared that the *daimyos* situated in western Japan might join forces with the foreigners and endeavor to overthrow the Edo regime. Taking this into consideration, it can be assumed that the *bakufu*’s enemies were the Westerners allies and that the seclusion policy was not approved by all. Despite maintaining said policy of seclusion, the government still maintained a steady flow of information exchange with Asian countries, primarily mainland China and one western country, Holland. The *sakoku* lasted for over two centuries and was later pressured to end by the same people who caused it, the Westerners. In this thesis, we will examine whether it was it the *bakufu*’s intention to chain their own country and people which is the literal meaning of the term *sakoku*, “chained country”, or if it was for self-preservation. Historian Ronald Toby argues that if anything the relationships that Japan decided to maintain and nurture to other countries are the ones that should be granted more assiduity (1984: 8). Emeritus Professor of

¹ Upon arriving in Japan they wished for the spread of Christianity.

Japanese History, Marius B. Jansen has likewise argued that Japan was not actually sealed off during the Tokugawa period (1600-1868) and that there was in reality an active foreign policy, just not directed towards the west so much as other Asian countries (Jansen, 2000: 64). Was it because Japan severed its contact with the most prominent countries at that time, being America, England, Portugal, Spain and France, that these countries saw little reason to observe Japan's foreign relations after these countries mentioned above had been excluded from the inner circle themselves? Why would the great world leaders of the most prominent countries deem it necessary to semi-colonize a small country, such as Japan, not once but twice since its appearance as a major country? The reason for which the Japanese government distanced itself from the outside world became more coherent. Despite the policy of seclusion officially ending in 1853 the question arises, has it *de facto* ended? Japan's immigration policy is, according to Professor Takeyuki Tsuda, a very prohibitory and unwelcoming system, making it a formidable foe for foreigners wishing to move to Japan. This, along with influence from western religions, had a major impact on Japan's society as a whole, and is still prominent in modern day Japan. Moreover, as Japan is described as a homogeneous country by many scholars², its somewhat lacking English education and current status of immigrants will be addressed in this thesis and could show that Japanese society continues to distance itself from foreign influences whilst giving the illusion of being open to internationalization.

In this thesis, the *sakoku* will be examined with a possible view of it having strongly influenced modern day attitudes of foreigners or „the other“. A wide area of research has been done on discrimination in Japan but there seems to have been no research done in connection with *sakoku* and its continued effect on modern day Japanese society. This research paper will examine whether, and if so how, this has affected Japan and what societal influence *sakoku* has had on Japan as a whole and if this is possibly the result of Japan's wariness of foreign influence that may follow global internationalization.

Methodology

I chose to conduct a survey on English education in Japan and to inquire whether or not *sakoku* played any part in Japan's modern day perception on foreigners and their foreign relations. It was conducted in a class on Language and Linguistics at Ritsumeikan

² As an example, scholars such as Sugimoto (2009: 2) and Yamamura (2008a; 2008b).

University, during my exchange in Japan, with professor Kanduboda's³ permission to connect the research done for that class and this research paper. Students in the Language and Linguistics course were asked to conduct a survey and write a short research paper with the acquired results. Due to this, I decided to kill two birds with one stone and conduct one class related survey, given to fellow students at the University, and use the results for this research paper. The reason for this questionnaire was to gain a better understanding of the participants' current opinions on Japan's English education system and possible effects from the *sakoku*. The survey was done so that the participants could answer anonymously over the span of one week. I decided to have the survey accessible for a week so the students interviewed had enough time to answer without having too much time to over contemplate the answers given. After having compared various online survey programs, I thought Google Forms to be the most convenient due to the unlimited amount of questions I could have, getting notifications of participation via email and so forth. I wanted to have this questionnaire as an anonymously answered online survey so as the participants could answer the questions without constraint or fear of repercussions depending on each given answer. Upon opening the questionnaire the questions were both available in English and Japanese so as to give the participants plenty of leeway if they did not feel adequate to express their views in one language or the other. To insure that the survey results would not change after translation from Japanese to English, a native Japanese speaker was asked to look over the translated material. The questionnaire can be viewed in appendix I.

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Historical overview

“The Son of Heaven in the land of the rising sun addresses a letter to Son of Heaven in the land of the setting sun. We hope you are in good health.” (Wang, 2005: 141)

In the aforementioned letter from the son of heaven in the land of the rising sun (Japan) to the son of heaven in the land of the setting sun (China) what looks like a kind greeting has been interpreted as an insult in disguise (Wang, 2005: 141). When Emperor Yang of China read this letter from Japan, he found it deeply insulting. This occurred in 608 and is an example of Japan and China’s constant rivalry.

Japan’s foreign relations did not only clash with their fellow Asian neighbors but also with Westerners. In order to attempt to understand the historical and political reasons that lead to the isolation of Japan it is first necessary to examine its history. Japan’s documented history is divided into 13 periods. The first period, spanning from c.11.000 to 300 BCE is called *Jōmon* named after a distinctive “rope pattern” found on pottery dating from this time. Following the *Jōmon* culture was the *Yayoi* period (c. 300 BCE–250 CE), then *Kofun* or *Tomb*, period (c. 250-552). Historian Paul Varley argues that the emergence of the Japanese state was during the fourth through the sixth centuries (2000: 49): the successive periods are referred as the *Asuka* period (552-645 CE), *Heian* period (794-1185), *Kamakura* period (1185-1333) and the *Muromachi*, or *Ashikaga* period (1338-1573) (Japan, 2015). For the purpose of the current research the 9th and 10th periods, *Tokugawa* (1600-1868) and *Meiji* (1868-1912) up until modern day form the most significant role (Schirokauer, 1993: 7).

The lineage of the imperial family is strongly related to the myth of creation of Japan, as the emperor is, according to the oldest existent records of Japan, the *Kojiki* (712) said to be descended from the Sun-Goddess *Amaterasu* as well as the deities, *Izanagi* and *Izanami*. The first descendent of the gods according to the *Kojiki* was Emperor Jimmu who is attributed with founding the Japanese state in 660 B.C., which supported the imperial family’s right to rule (Hendry, 2013: 9). This was a strong element of Japanese culture up until the end of WWII when the then current Emperor Shōwa, known then as Emperor Hirohito, at the request of the Allied Powers, denied his, and the imperial family’s, godly lineage (Dower, 1999: 308). Japan’s native animism, which later became identified as Shinto, or “the way of the gods” (*kami*), is the belief that

natural objects such as trees, lakes or even rocks possess souls or spirits (Lowell, 1895: 16, 20). This combined with Japan's emperor godly descent meant that the government, if supported by the emperor, could not be defied, as opposing the emperor meant opposing the gods.

Before the *Kamakura* period (1185-1333) the Emperors' rule remained unchallenged but there were some who wished for that to change. Subsequently, the rapid development from emperor rule to warrior power began in the *Tokugawa* period (1600-1868). This would later result in the establishment of the great *bakufu* and its many *shoguns*. The *bakufu*'s establishment was not as Japan's military government, literal meaning of the name being "tent government". It was not until the end of the twelfth century when the emperor, albeit reluctantly, approved of the new order and thus leading to the appointment of Yoritomo, leader of the Minamoto family, as *shogun*. The emperors became figureheads, "legitimizing symbols of the authority of the ruling elite." This allowed the shogun's government to delegate power as it saw fit. This feudal system was to stay intact up until 1968 (Hendry, 2013: 12-13).

To understand the *bakufu*, or *shogunate* as it is also called, one must understand the *shogun*. The *shogun* was considered the emperor's surrogate, and leader of the country but he would never be able to replace the emperor. This *de facto* situation was known by every *shogun* for the emperor's alleged divine lineage made it impossible to take the emperor's place on the throne. The *bakufu* was the government of the *shogun*, who was the hereditary military dictator of Japan (Shogunate, 2015). The *shogun* was not only the emperor's surrogate but also sovereign over all the *daimyo*. *Daimyo* were military lords who sought territorial control as the country was divided and constantly in a state of war as a result (Daimyo, 2015). For the sake of uniting the country the *shogun* was given absolute power by the emperor, which lasted until the Meiji restoration in 1868.

From the evolvment of agriculture, consequential societal, political and governmental evolvment to the godly descent of the emperor, these events are what influenced the modern Japanese psyche. As with any nation, the history of the country colors the perceptions of Japanese people. The Japanese people's interaction with the outside world may have been the spark that led to Japan being the nationalistic country it

is today: by means of the way of the warrior, in other words the *bushido*⁴ code as well as the Shinto religion, in other words worshipping the emperor. The events mentioned above shed light on how history seems to repeat itself through international conflicts which influence nationalistic thinking. The recurring conflict between parties in Japan may have destroyed the governing system, the Tokugawa government, but it developed into a new era leading to a new way and a new view on life, similar to the historic event when Commodore Perry forcibly opened the Japanese ports in 1853 which may have closed a few windows while simultaneously opening many more doors.

The seclusion policy was enacted by the Tokugawa *shogunate*; however there were two factors that prompted this policy of seclusion, or *sakoku* (1638) (Kazui, Videen, 1982: 285). One was the collision and hostility between foreigners arriving in Japan and their possible allegiance with *daimyos* who opposed the *shogun*, the other was the growing Catholic influence and its potential to overthrow internal stability, challenging the present imperial ruling system and its doctrine. In 1597 the Japanese government became wary of the perceived foreign intruders and sought to purge the country of their influence. For the arrival of foreigners did not only influence the government and its politics, but also Japan's perspective of religion as well as their cultural structure. This influence could be deemed both positive and negative: a positive effect in that the Japanese native doctrine was challenged, and also that contact with the outside world led to the flow of foreign knowledge and technology into the country. The negative effect could be seen as the rapid increase of foreigners arriving and the disruptive element of their respective countries' rivalry with one another for Japanese trade. This conflict led to the expulsion of one country after another and the consequent seclusion. This was to be only the beginning of the seclusion for further restrictions ensued.

Schirokauer identifies the Jesuits, or Society of Jesus, to be the most impressive of all pioneers to reach the shores of Japan. The Society of Jesus was founded in 1540 and was the advanced guard of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. This meant they were very tightly organized and strictly adhering to their religion. "They were the 'cavalry of the church,' prepared to do battle with Protestant heretics in Europe or the heathen in the world beyond." (Schirokauer, 1993: 132) It became evident that when the Jesuits infiltrated Japan, they had much more in mind than just introducing their Christian

⁴ Military code of conduct formulated by Yamaga Shokō (Varley, 2000: 208).

beliefs. The Japanese had heard about Spain's colonization of the Philippines⁵ (Philippines, 2015). This led to certain distrust on the part of the Japanese, a distrust which was originally solely directed towards Spain but since the foreigners were all considered Westerners this sentiment later turned towards foreigners in general. The fact that Spain was Catholic and Catholic influence was growing stronger also led the Japanese to be increasingly wary.

The Jesuits worked from the top down, which in itself is an astute approach. The Franciscans were a part of a Christian religious group who strived to live "a life of preaching, penance and total poverty. [...] Under this rule, Franciscan friars could own no possessions of any kind" (Franciscan, 2015). The Franciscan approach differed in the sense that they worked among the poor, thus working their way up. By doing so they jeopardized the traditional social order that had developed over the years. Both adversaries conspired "to encourage Japanese suspicions of their Catholic rivals." (Schirokauer, 1993: 134, 136) The reason for the Jesuits' painless integration was due to similarities between their feudal backgrounds. By virtue of this similarity, they sought approval "by adapting themselves to local manners and customs." (Schirokauer, 1993: 133) This proved to be ingenious if anything. By converting the rulers they would soon see the rest of the country being converted, for history has shown that the rulers' faith is the faith of its people. The Jesuits inaugurated missionaries, in 1549, methods proved remarkably propitious to the point of well-nigh converting Hideyoshi, a feudal *damiyo* lord who, according to scholars, admired Portuguese clothing. Hideyoshi "once said that the only thing that kept him from converting was the Christian insistence on monogamy." ⁶ (Schirokauer, Lurie & Gray, 2006: 135) This clearly shows the considerable progress of the Jesuits and their infiltration into Japan.

This progress was soon to be lost, for the same man they had thought to be in favor of them was the one to ultimately see them as a threat. As a result in 1587, Hideyoshi proclaimed the "nationalization" of Nagasaki and ordered the expulsion of Jesuit missionaries to leave Japan within twenty days of his declaration. Yet this order was not invoked since the Japanese were aware of the Jesuits' true intentions and kept watch over their doings (Varley, 2000: 144).

⁵ Named after Philip II who was king of Spain during the 16th century.

⁶ In accordance with the book this is not referenced from a different text but are the authors own words.

As mentioned above, Hideyoshi, whilst campaigning for the unification of Japan, wished to “nationalize” the country. By doing so, he saw the opportune moment for putting in motion the first step in relieving Japan of foreign influences, by banning Christianity in 1606. The *sakoku*, albeit being devised in the early 17th century, was not enforced until the *bakufu* was assigned consecutive edicts issued between 1633 and 1636 (Varley, 2000: 164). With these steps other enforcements soon followed e.g. with the expulsion of the Spaniards in 1624, a year later the English left, albeit of their own accord, as well. The Portuguese were so determined to stay that a rebellion broke out which later came to be called the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-1638). The only westerners allowed to stay, although barely, were the Dutch. Even during the *Tokugawa era* (1603–1867), the Dutch continued to be the only Westerners allowed access to Japan, albeit limited access. As a result of this diminished contact with Europe, Japanese studies of the West became “Dutch Learning“, because of their limited contact with Europe (Schirokauer, 1993: 167).

After Christianity was declared illegal, the Japanese people no longer had access to or support of an organized religion and they felt at loss, forming a gap which can only be described as a social loss. Even without support, it is in human nature to adapt and evolve. Due to this gap, which formed following the removal of Christianity, the Japanese sought spiritual nourishment from their own heritage in preference to the West. Since Christianity was no longer available the closest doctrines were either Shinto or Buddhism, which according to Paul Varley had coexisted since 552. Because of the distain felt towards foreigners the adage *sonnō-jōi*, meaning “Revere the Emperor! Oust the Barbarians!” (Varlay, 1973: 236-237), became quite the movement. When it became evident that it would be impossible for them to expatriate the ‘barbarians’ they sought another solution to this dilemma. Due to the *bakufu*’s restriction policy, little became known about Western politics, philosophical or religious ideas. This sheds light on the 19th century adage “Eastern ethics-Western science.” (Schirokauer, 1993: 168) The purpose of this saying was to explain the reasons why the government would allow immigration of westerners or at least claim to allow them to enter. The main obstacle for this was “how to retain the socially binding ethics of traditional behavior” (Varlay, 1973: 234) whilst simultaneously acquiring knowledge and technology from the West.

The *bakufu* tried time and again to solve new problems, the problem being the imminent arrival of foreign traders, with old methods. With this, it became evident what

was required - to find new solutions to old dilemmas. During the Tokugawa era, the country's political and economic systems were unstable and the feud between these two forces, the Tokugawa system and the fast approaching foreigners, challenged the old order which subsequently lost (Hendry, 2003: 15). The *bakufu* could not have predicted what was to come for this failure would not be seen as such in the future but as a chance for modernization, a chance to change for the better.

It seems that the *bakufu* itself was not alone regarding their disdain for foreigners. A physician named Hirata Atsutane (1776-1843) who had studied translations of medical texts claimed that "Japan had originally been pure and free of disease: the need for powerful medical science arose only after Japan was infected by foreign contacts." (Schirokauer, 1993: 168) This point can actually be argued and compared to the Columbus voyages in the late 15th century, for had he not arrived to the Americas he would not have introduced European diseases which led to the disappearance of a whole civilization (Wilson, 1995: 40). On the other hand, it can also be argued that a country can never be completely pure to begin with for its contact with the outside world is inevitable.

In the pursuit for modernization and internationalization, the *bakufu* sent out missions shortly after the seclusion policy came to an end. Although earlier expeditions are said to have occurred, the most prominent of them was by far the Iwakura Mission which dispatched in 1871 only to return two years later. This mission was led by Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883), Japan's most exceptional and influential statesman in the 19th century. In order to inquire into Japan's international relations during the time of the missions, and due to shortage of precise information regarding previous missions, the Iwakura Mission will be specifically observed.

From *sakoku* to semi-colonization

Sakoku (literally “closed country”), or seclusion period, was not invoked overnight but over a period of years up until the 1630s. Policies were implemented by the Nobunaga and Hideyoshi regimes restricting trade with other countries and measures were also put in place against Christianity and their missionaries.

Whilst Japan was secluded from the world, many tried to negotiate with the Japanese in the hope of gaining their trust, and thus opening their borders and ports, to allow foreign ships to dock. Even the King of Holland, King William II, in 1844 wrote a letter to the *shogun* of Japan, warning him of the quickened pace of the world as well as his personal opinion of the seclusion being “unwise and untenable” (Varley, 2000: 235). In spite of the *bakufu* being pro-seclusion, in 1811, they set up a bureau to translate Dutch books, a contradictory action one might think. On the other hand, if thought of as a preemptive strike, being a plausible suggestion, it is quite wise. To understand what goes on in the enemy’s mind would later on be held in great esteem; for keeping your enemies close is a top priority when thinking of your country’s best interests.

There were few who were brave enough to oppose the *bakufu* and their seclusion policy. Takano Chōei (1804-1850) and Watanabe Kazan (1795-1841) were among those brave few. Unfortunately they ended up committing ‘suicide’, having most likely been pressured by the *bakufu*. Everyone that supported or bore good will toward the West ended up dying, either being killed or by committing ‘suicide’. However, this would not be sustained for long, as the second Opium War (1856-1860) opened up China’s borders. This foothold in China yielded the West’s interest in other adjacent countries, Japan being one of them (Beasley, 1995: 30). For that reason the United States later on sent Commodore Matthew C. Perry to Japan as an envoy on behalf of his country.

Before this, many attempts by the West had been made to ‘persuade’ the Japanese to open their borders, but they had all been in vain. For this reason, Japan was regarded as a poor and remote country and therefore a “low priority for the great powers” (Schirokauer, Lurie & Gray, 2006: 174-175). This likewise tells us that Japan was considered undeveloped and not a leading country in the world, hence the country was considered a follower but never a leader. Today this might be considered a great lapse in judgment, since Japan was ‘isolated’ from the West for so many years. Although Japan was considered detached, little did the Westerners know, that knowledge about Western

science, industry and military capability continued to be provided by scholars of Dutch Learning and even by the Dutch themselves, who had been captured and held captive in Nagasaki. Even their neighboring country, China, provided information about the evolution of the world. This was not fully perceived by the West which explains their lapse of judgment. The Japanese were mastering Western technology yet barely had access to it.

After the opening of China's borders, the United States became very interested in pressing for an end to the seclusion of Japan. Conveniently for the US, Japan, if not so isolated would allow their ships to stop and refuel in their ports. This drove the United States to take the lead, and was one of their reasons for sending Commodore Perry to Japan. The Commodore and his fleet reached Japan in July 1853, at which point he forced the Japanese to accept a letter from the American president to the Emperor. The *bakufu*, knowing that they were no match for the American fleet, realized that they would have no choice but to succumb to the American's demands, or at least partly so. Perry returned in February the following year, with not four but eight ships, four more ships than in the previous 'visit', seeming even more threatening than the first time, sealing the deal and allowing a treaty to be made.

This treaty was the first treaty to be made and as a result, many other countries soon followed suit and made treaties of their own. Britain and France negotiated a treaty in 1855 and the Dutch and Russians in 1857 (Schirokauer, Lurie & Gray, 2006: 176-7). Townsend Harris was later sent to Japan, as a consul, to secure a commercial pact in 1856. "The coming of Perry and Harris brought to an end Japan's seclusion policy of more than two hundred years, but it did not resolve differences of opinion about the policy". Some continued to say that the treaties were only made temporarily in order for Japan to strengthen, as a whole, thus allowing them to drive the 'barbarians' out (Varley, 2000: 235-236). What better than to get in bed with the enemy; the closer they are, the better they can be understood.

The forced entry of the Americans in 1853, thereby ending the *sakoku*, can be deemed a semi-colonization of sorts, the first in the history of Japan. The latter semi-colonization, or occupation, would take place later, following the end of World War II in 1945.

According to *Japan's War* by Edwin P. Hoyt, the Marco Polo Bridge incident in 1937 was one of many "incidents" which marked the beginning of an all-out war

between Japan and China. This war would later be called the Second Sino-Japanese War thus intertwining with the Pacific War (Hoyt, 1986: 143, 146). In both Hoyt's *Japan's War* and Dower's *Embracing Defeat*, it is suggested that only Western powers had the privilege of colonization and the benefits it reaped (Dower, 1999: 21). Japan managed to colonize Formosa, Manchuria and Korea, though not for long. Why were Western powers exclusively permitted to form colonies yet when Japan sought to do so it was considered outrageous? Was it because the time of colonization had come to a close or was it because they did not wish to share a slice of their continental pie? As stated by Hoyt the latter seems more plausible, the "Japanese had moved too far, too fast, and had irritated the Western powers. [...] Japan had gone further, and now she threatened the special privileges and ambitions of the Europeans in Asia." (Hoyt, 1986: 27)

Although Dower does not stress so directly, a similar tone can be seen in his introduction in the aforementioned book. However, he also objectively states that Japan had "become prisoners of their own war rhetoric" (Dower, 1999: 22), resembling bewitchment thus blocking Japan culturally and psychologically. This can also be interpreted as a second seclusion of sorts. It was with this strategy that they would gain land, resources and wealth so as to grant them independence from Western powers. Scholar Jeff Kingston similarly writes in *Japan's Quiet Transformation: Social change and civil society in the twenty-first century*: "This seemingly unrepentant attitude has left the country a prisoner of its past, arousing animosity and suspicion in the region. To some extent this is a self-inflicted wound." (Kingston, 2004: 226)

As mentioned above, Japan's past deeds can and should not be easily forgotten, though they should not be looked at from a Western perspective but rather a Japanese one. Once again, Western ideology was forced onto Japan. This is not uncommon, for Westerners have long since pushed their ideals unto other countries that were thought to be underdeveloped or even barbaric since they did not act in accordance with Western traditions (Marker, 2003). It can be said that history repeats itself for the abovementioned is akin to the Crusaders in the 12th century to the 14th century as well as the European colonial period from 16th century to the mid-20th century. This can also be referred to as a cultural shock to some extent. Russia, similar to the actions of Commodore Perry and the United States during *sakoku*, sent a message to Japan *advising* them to tread no further and concede the Liaotung Peninsula of Manchuria. Russia rallied Germany and France to its side thereby forcing Japan to exercise *enryo*, or outward politeness whilst hiding one's

rage (Hoyt, 1986: 27-28). Japan, with its history of placing honor and respect above all else, saw this as a great humiliation and offence. This was to be the final strike, severely bruising Japan's psyche pushing them towards aggressive nationalism.

Cultural perceptions and contradictions

Ian Nish's edited book *The Iwakura Mission in America and Europe: A New Assessment* claims that the Iwakura Mission was the first real contact with the "outside" world of any importance. This statement contradicts other historical and civilization books on subjects surrounding the mission(s), but not necessarily about the mission itself. Iwakura himself is contradictory, for he disapproved of "opening" the borders and letting the "barbarians" run amok, yet he led the mission to explore Europe and North-America.

The long-term effects of the *sakoku* only become visible subsequently, after WWII when the effects of the war on both the victors and the losers become apparent. In some cases positive effect can later become a negative one. For instance, the American influenced constitution gave rise to great discrimination. Due to the new constitution the Japanese were called *kokumin*, meaning country of the people, and were equals under the law. This did and does not apply to Koreans, Chinese or other minority groups by reason of not being a *kokumin* or Japan's "country people".

Missions

Because of overwhelming technology and the velocity with which the world was evolving, Japan felt the 'need' to join this conquest and show the world that Japan was not a follower but a leader alongside the other leading countries. In order to seek this knowledge, the Iwakura Mission, or the Iwakura Embassy as it is also called, was founded and sent to research, in detail, what had occurred in their surroundings and what could be used to Japan's advantage. Before the Iwakura Mission, the earliest documented exchange was a "group of four Japanese Christians from Kyushu who had gone as youths in 1582 on a mission to Europe [...] Returning in 1590." (Varley, 1973: 150)

What events led to the end of the seclusion and what persuaded the great noble, Iwakura Tomomi, to join forces instead of standing strong in his disapproval? Japan had opened a small door to the world before the Mission, e.g. by sending exchange students abroad to study, but what made the door turn into a gateway? What the world knows and sees might not always be accurate, for there are always two sides to each coin and

therefore two sides to each story. The fact that Japan had their doors opened forcefully, gave rise to a crisis in 1873. The crisis revolved around the war with Korea to force Korea to open its doors to Japan. Oddly enough, the Japanese were doing the same thing as the United States had once done to them. This decision was made in the absence of Ōkubo, Kido and other great leaders. They were absent due to the Iwakura Mission.

The Iwakura Mission was led by Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883), “one of Japan’s most influential statesmen of the 19th century” (Iwakura Tomomi, 2015). He was born as a noble, but a family of low rank and so adopted into the Iwakura family of higher rank, as their son and heir. As a result he gained an important place in court circles, thus helping him to influence the emperor and plant ideas of his own in the emperor’s mind. He was part of a small group of conspirators that brought about the Meiji Restoration which, as mentioned previously, ended the last *bakufu*. The original motive being “to convey the Meiji Emperor’s respects to the heads of state of the treaty powers and build goodwill, to discuss subjects for later treaty revision, and to provide its distinguished members with an opportunity to observe and study the West at first hand.” (Schirokauer, Lurie & Gray, 2006: 187) Along with Iwakura went Ōkubo Toshimichi, Kido Koin (Takayoshi), Itō Hirobumi and Yamaguchi Naoyoshi. They were all middle aged and all prominent leaders in the newly restored Japan. It appears that these delegates were in agreement at the beginning of the journey but the motives, underlying the mission, changed over time as well as the thoughts of each individual (Nish, 1998).

Iwakura, and other members of the mission, were not against revision of the treaties per say, but against the treaties themselves, for they saw the shackles that these unequal treaties were and felt the need to put an end to their shackles. For the “Japanese economic conditions [had] gradually improved, the people began to feel the fetters of the unequal treaties more and more acutely.” (Keizō, 1958) Members of the party were called back, because the ministry was troubled, and so sent a ‘positive’ order for members of the team to return to Japan which allowed Iwakura to postpone the revision of the treaties. This opening up of the seclusion is the reason for the delegates’ prolonged stay in the United States and also explains why the revision of the treaties never took place. The delegates’ recall to Japan was most likely made in the hopes that the treaties would never have to be revised and the ‘barbarians’ would be banished from their homeland instead. Rather than making revisions, the delegates gathered knowledge and information in the hopes that, in the future, the ‘barbarians’ would eventually be driven

out. With this in mind, one might think; why would Iwakura, and other members of the party be sent on an ambassador mission to pay respects to the leaders of each country with whom they held treaties and to build good will between themselves when these delegates bore such disdain for foreigners and their invasion into the land of the rising sun? Perhaps, these were the ‘qualities’ desired from the people sent. However, as mentioned earlier, there were few who favored the foreigners’ invasion and as a result, people with the same inclination were chosen for the mission.

The mission in itself lasted 631 days. Seven months were spent in the United States; four were spent in England and seven more in continental Europe. After returning home in September 1873, they better appreciated the importance and complexity of modernization, and the newly accepted quest for equality through significant adaptation of legislation. The leaders saw domestic change as a priority after the Iwakura Mission. Although some of the members of the Iwakura ‘team’ were against the treaties, the trip in itself was far from being a complete waste. For their interest were not only to seek knowledge concerning weaponry but were “interested in everything”, including what was considered common in Western countries including working sewage systems and street lamps (Schirokauer, Lurie & Gray, 2006: 187-188). They even showed special interest in the canal system in Amsterdam which led to a special investigation being launched to study it further thus allowing it to be adapted to Japan’s environment.

The Iwakura Mission was essential and bore more fruit for Japan’s connections than was ever imagined. As scholar Silvana de Maio clearly states in her article published in Nish’s *The Iwakura Mission in America and Europe*, the most important result of the mission was not the revision of the treaties or conveying the Emperor Meiji’s respects, but their [Japanese’s] decision to take the first step in their own modernization and that future enlightenment depended solely on future recruitments of teachers to teach the Western ways. The mission was crucial for Japan’s entry into the international arena. As a result, not only was Japan aware of the mission’s importance but “it was regarded as important by politicians of the Victorian age (1837–1901) who received the ambassadors with the courtesy appropriate to a newcomer in world politics but who also had a shrewd eye on the trading possibilities which that newcomer might present in the future.” (Nish, 1998: 10)

One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that Iwakura, whilst not approving the treaties overall, saw the opportunity to end them, which he took, but it backfired and

the treaties remained the same up until the 1900s (Keizō, 1958: 163-165). The Japanese borders were only breached by the United States, so as to facilitate their interaction with the Chinese, whose borders had previously been breached in the Opium Wars, as mentioned above. The countries that followed suit in this respect only sought to gain a slice of the pie that had previously been cut by the Americans themselves. The treaty, unequal as it was, escalated the Japanese people's fears and contempt for foreigners thus helping to postpone the revision of the treaties. From the written texts, it would appear the Japanese would rather have had no treaties than have to revise them. Yet, were it not for the Iwakura Mission, the modernization that has brought them to today's modern era, would have never occurred, or at least not at such velocity. Iwakura saw this opportunity and grasped it, not only to delay the treaty revision but also for the advancement of his country. He was a true imperial loyalist and a patriotic supporter of his government. Seeking to gain knowledge of the West was an excellent method of scouting information and ideas that could help better their own homeland and also showed the West their ingenuity and originality in their quest for knowledge.

The Iwakura Mission was essentially founded and sent to research what had transpired in the world during the *sakoku* and to acquire knowledge that could be used to Japan's advantage against approaching foreign forces. This quest for knowledge was meant to strengthen their homeland and use whatever knowledge gained against foreigners and their influences. The need to use this acquired knowledge to maintain their unique culture, its 'Japaneseness', and keep their country safe further shows their stand on hegemony and the myth of their "racial purity" (Ko, 2010: 11-13).

Mono-ethnic vs. multi-ethnic

Japan is a society comprised of different ethnic groups which originally migrated from Southeast Asia and East Asia. The earliest Japanese settlements were during the *Jōmon* period (c.11.000 to 300 BCE) of which the Ainu are the closest direct relatives, which today are one of Japan's many minority groups (Murphy-Shigematsu, 1993: 63). According to scholars Schirokauer, Lurie and Gray, "there is to date no solid evidence of human presence in the Japanese archipelago before about 35,000 years ago." (Schirokauer, Lurie & Gray, 2006: 6) Other minority groups are Okinawans (one of the two indigenous groups), Korean-Japanese, Chinese-Japanese, *burakumin*, and Japanese-Brazilians (Tsuda, 1998: 319). *Burakumin* are subjected to prejudice in some ways due to an unfounded myth that they are ethnically different. This prejudice began in the feudal period during the Tokugawa *shogunate* when the government created a class specifically for societal outcasts which were thence on known as the *burakumin*. Inclusion in this group came based on ritual pollution, i.e. those who worked with slaughter, skins or any "dirty" jobs. The classification system generated prejudice between Japanese and a supposedly inferior minority group, clearly showing that prejudice was already present even among Japanese people prior to the arrival of foreigners in Japan. This classification system was later abolished after the Meiji Restoration in 1868; however, prejudice towards *burakumin* descendants still persists until the present day (Tsuda, 1998: 338).

Despite the abovementioned minority groups Japan is still portrayed as a homogenous, or mono-ethnic, country. This has been contradicted by many scholars such as Lansing and Domeyer, Lie and Murphy-Shigematsu who have all written articles and books regarding this very topic. Japan's internationalization is once again put to the test with its closed society "as well as perpetuation of the myth of racial homogeneity, which is used to exclude outsiders [...] from Japanese society." (Yamanaka, 1993: 84) This deep-rooted assumption of Japan's one nation one ethnicity is questioned on the grounds that Japan, having multiple ethnic and national minority groups, two groups in particular being indigenous to Japan, Ainu and Okinawans. Furthermore, scholar Chung's research found Japan to be the only advanced industrial democratic country confronted with the dilemmas of fourth-generation immigration problems. Moreover, Chung states that "immigration policies seek to uphold the commonly accepted idea that Japan is not a country of immigration," (Chung, 2010: 3-4). Many Japanese are under the illusion of Japan being societally isolated, or living in a mono-ethnic society which they also deem

to be their most distinct characteristic. This assumption is commonly accepted by Japanese scholars and Japanese people alike. Nevertheless, the term 'ethnic' is in itself controversial. As C.K. Cho scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, John Lie states "[...] whether Japan is monoethnic or multiethnic is a matter of degrees and definitions. Indeed, the very term ethnicity – as well as its cognates, race, nation, and people – is contentious." (Lie, 2001: 1-2). The 'Achilles Heel' of the Japanese Constitution which allowed for further distinction between ethnically Japanese and foreign individuals can be traced back to the American occupation and the Constitution which was largely drafted by American lawyers in the Allied Powers. To further explain, the interpretation of some areas within the Constitution differed from the original meaning in English when it was translated into Japanese. This is a common problem when interpreting from one language to another, especially the mistranslations of idioms. These idioms pose big obstacles for translators for the idiomatic expressions do not necessarily bear the same meaning as the individual words which constitute the idiom itself. Due to this the risk of doublespeak taking place increases tremendously. For instance, with the selection of the word used in the Constitution for *people* would later reveal serious consequences for foreign residents living in Japan.

In the new Constitution the concept of "people" which is fundamental to the Americans' idea of sovereignty has a more historical and cultural significance in America which Japan could not compare (Dower, 1999: 381). In the previous Meiji Constitution the "people" were referred to as "subjects" (*shinmin*) which resulted in the dilemma of what word in the new Constitution would be best suited for the translation of "people". The term *kokumin* was chosen as it was thought to include the emperor hence proclaiming that the emperor and people were as one. Unbeknown to the Americans, *kokumin* did not merely mean people but "had been a familiar word in propagandistic sloganeering, essentially synonymous with "the Japanese" or even "the Yamato race." (Dower, 1999: 382) This would later result in greater leeway for the Japanese government to deny minority groups and foreigners equal rights on the grounds that they did not pertain to the same concept of *kokumin*, literally meaning "country people".

The post WWII Constitution not only changed the understanding of Japanese as a people *versus* foreigners and their situation in Japan from then on but also greatly impacted the Japanese Education system, specifically the English education in Japan.

From WWII onwards the English language was included in Japan's compulsory education (Shimizu, 2010: 10).

English education in Japan

Learning a second language from an early age in school has become a common element around the globe, the English language being the most commonly chosen one. In Japan it is a part of the compulsory education for children aged 7 to 12

to learn a foreign language, whether English or any other language (Iino, 2002: 81). From that age Japanese children learn English and those who wish to advance to high school are made to pass rigorous English examinations to get into the school of their choosing. In addition, further pressure on examinations in English is placed on students wishing to advance to higher level education. With this in mind, how is it that many Japanese high school students are yet incapable of conversing in English? The aim is not to apportion blame but to seek plausible causes for why this might have arisen, as well as show the results collected from the survey compiled for this dissertation.

In 2011, the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT) introduced a new law requiring fifth-graders to take 45 minute English lessons once a week. This was initially planned due to the extreme difference between

Table 1 TOEFL iBT Total and Section Score Means¹ — All Examinees, Classified by Geographic Region and Native Country²

Country	Total Score	Rank
Singapore	98	1
India	92	2
Malaysia	88	3
Pakistan	88	3
Philippines	88	3
Bangladesh	83	6
Sri Lanka	83	6
Bhutan	82	8
Hong Kong	81	9
Korea, Republic of	81	9
Kyrgyzstan	79	11
Nepal	79	11
Indonesia	78	13
Kazakhstan	78	13
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	78	13
China	77	16
Uzbekistan	77	16
Azerbaijan	76	18
Taiwan (Republic of China)	76	18
Turkmenistan	76	18
Thailand	75	21
Macao	74	22
Myanmar	74	22
Afghanistan	73	24
Mongolia	73	24
Viet Nam	73	24
Japan	70	27
Lao, People's Democratic Republic	67	28
Tajikistan	66	29
Cambodia	63	30
Brunei Darussalam	*	*
Maldives	*	*
Timor-Leste	*	*

¹Because of the unreliability of statistics based on small samples, means are not reported for subgroups of less than 30, as indicated by*. Due to rounding, section score means may not add up to the total score mean.

²Because of changes in region and/or country boundaries, certain countries may have been added or deleted since the previous table was published.

Japan and other Asian countries in regard to foreign language communication skills. Furthermore, Japanese students who took TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) examinations in January to December 2010 were ranked among the lowest of 33 Asian countries, in fact Japan ranked 27th in these examinations as seen in Table 1 (Educational Testing Service, 2011). Following these TOEFL results and bearing in mind the gap in communication skills between Asian countries, the ministry of international education section's main purpose for making English education compulsory for primary school fifth-graders, was to ease the transition between primary and junior high school. English became part of the compulsory curriculum in junior high school after the World War II (Shimizu, 2010: 10). Although English education is compulsory, this does not mean that the education given is beneficial or that the students wish to learn English as a second language. Japan's unique method of teaching English and then the consequent social and exam pressure inhibits rather than encourages language learning. Another factor which also plays a significant part is whether or not the information taught is for the purpose of communication or to pass school entrance exams. Since Japan is an Asian country, it would be reasonable to assume that Asia's *lingua franca* would be an Asian language, such as Chinese, Japanese or Korean rather than English but due to the influence of the Portuguese during the age of exploration, "[the] Portuguese language not only remained the *lingua franca* of Asian commerce but was used in Japan for generations after the Portuguese expulsion." (Howe, 1996: 22) In order to gain further insight, a small survey was composed and sent to fifteen university students of Japanese ethnicity, who were asked questions in relation to their English education and its relevance to *sakoku*. The survey could be answered in both English and Japanese and the questions were available in both languages.

All of the participants had studied English for more than 6 years, 5 studied for 7 years and 2 for up to 13 years. Only 1 of the participants felt that English was not a necessary language, by answering no in the survey, whilst others said yes and even stated their reasons for answering so. Every individual confirmed that they knew about the seclusion period, or *sakoku*, and some stated the reasons why they thought that the seclusion period came to be and why it was so important.

Firstly, five individuals claimed to feel that there was no correlation whatsoever between historical events in regard to their English studies. Two individuals felt that learning English was not essential in Japan. Four individuals stated that they felt some

influence, mainly in regards to how the language was taught (e.g. 2 of the 4 felt that speaking was not taught enough and the other 2 claimed that writing and understanding is considered more important in Japan). One individual felt that the seclusion period had a good effect on Japan and that it allowed Japan to protect its unique cultural aspects whereas 2 participants felt that it caused more harm than good. Finally, the last individual's answer was the most insightful of all, stating that due to the seclusion period English was added to the curriculum giving the Japanese populace an opportunity to study a western language and making it an important part of their education development and modernization.

When the individuals were asked if they felt as though Japan might hold a grudge against other nations due to past events, 9 denied and 6 agreed. One individual stated that holding a grudge would be understandable considering how Japan was treated after the seclusion period, and under the goals stated by the GHQ (General Headquarters of the Allied Occupation of Japan following the WWII by General Douglas MacArthur) towards Japan.

Although further research and more interviews would be needed to confirm this modern day dilemma, it would seem evident that despite having studied English for many years, English has yet to become functional as a *lingua franca* to a certain degree and fluently spoken in Japan. The reasons for this vary from person to person but, some answered that Japan is a very closed country physically, (most likely meant in regard to law and the regulations concerning acceptance of foreigners) as well as psychologically (how natives think of foreigners and how they are accepted in Japan).

In conclusion, the study method used to teach foreign languages, in this case, English, is not sufficient and does not allow the learner to fully grasp and learn the language. It merely gives the individual basic tools to read and write instead of granting the learner actual ability to use it. With this in mind, historical events were thought to have played a significant role, specifically *sakoku*, but was proven and yet contradicted at the same time to have had no effect whatsoever. Due to this, more data and participants would be needed to determine whether or not these facts hold true. With this exception, a plausible reason for the lack of spoken English amongst Japanese individuals can be traced to (1) from what age they start learning the language, (2) when English was made a part of the mandatory curriculum by the MEXT (Ministry of Education), (3) their

method of learning it and finally (4) their acceptance of the language as a communication tool.

English language acquisition and teaching has developed throughout the years differently for each country or even continent. That being said, although the Missions were for educational purposes, including the study of foreign languages, the knowledge acquired was perhaps overly adapted to Japanese society and culture. This can be considered the double edged sword of the *sakoku* and its effects; whether they are considered harmful or beneficial is a different matter but its overall effects are present in modern day Japanese society.

Conclusion

During the *sakoku* of the Western countries, it was only the Dutch who were allowed minimal contact with Japan and their populace. Despite this contact, the linguistic barrier inhibited their communication with one another. This problem resembles current problems with foreign language learning in Japan today. The language barrier, and even the prejudice experienced in earlier times (in the beginning of the 19th century), may still play a significant role in the reasons why foreign language learning is not considered necessary. Language learning can also be seen a step towards internationalization and a step farther from their detachment from the world itself.

Sakoku's impact on Japan is a topic that has been widely researched as well as present discrimination in Japan however its continued effect on modern day Japanese society has not been as extensively examined. The impact can be found in Japan's documented interaction with Western countries, Japan's Meiji Constitution as well as the new Constitution forged under the supervision of the Allied Powers. The influence is wide as it is vast and prejudice in Japan can be traced back leading to one of its many roots, the *sakoku*. In every country throughout the world there are events which can be traced back and roots of either discord between countries, prejudice between ethnic groups or even war between continents can be found and identified. In this case, *sakoku* has shown to be one of Japans moments of discord which over time has possibly bred prejudice.

The Iwakura Mission and other subsequent missions laid the groundwork for future communication on a global scale, between Japan and other nations. The events that led up to the Missions, the Meiji restoration as well as the arrival of Commodore Perry and his fleet were not agreeable to everyone among the Japanese government. As previously mentioned, this can poetically be called the seed of future *sakoku* roots which affected later historical events. One of the purposes of the Iwakura Mission was to gain knowledge of the West, bring that knowledge back to Japan, adapt said knowledge to Japanese culture and society and use it to their advantage, possibly expelling the 'barbarians' as the Westerners were called during that time. The latter collision was the semi-colonization after WWII and the aftermath that ensued.

After the overwhelming victory of the United States it became evident to the victors that something had to be done in regard to the hierarchal empirical system of

Japan. Instead of eradicating the system completely they humanized the emperor himself thus appeasing the people who lost loved ones in the war. Consequently, at the request of the Allied Powers, Emperor Hirohito denied his, and his family's, godly lineage (Dower, 1999: 308). Prior to this, Japan's emperor godly descent meant that the government, if supported by the emperor, could not be defied, whereas opposing the emperor meant opposing the gods (Jansen, 2000: 208). The emperor having conceded his proclaimed godly decent supposedly invalidated the emperor's godly authority over the government and his people. The allegedly unbroken line of emperors along with Japan's portrayed homogeneity, or mono-ethnicity, is deemed by many Japanese to be its most distinct characteristic.

This pattern of thought and opinions precedes *sakoku* yet combined with the aftermath of the opening of Japan's borders provided the seeds sown during that time with the necessary 'nutrition' which allowed it to manifest in modern day Japan. Although the seed of *sakoku* and its aftermath might not have been sown by Japan alone its consequences are now being reaped not only by Japan but on a global scale, creating a ripple effect throughout the world.

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Appendix 1

The following is the questionnaire sent to fifteen university students of Japanese ethnicity. Grammatical errors have been pointed out after the accumulation of the data but is shown here in its original form as it was presented to the participants.

English:

1. How long was your compulsory English learning period?
2. Do you think English is a necessary language for you? (If yes why?)
3. How long have you studied English? / How long did you study English?
4. Do you know what the Seclusion Period (鎖国) of Japan is?
5. How do you feel about the seclusion period (鎖国)?
6. Do you think the seclusion period (鎖国) has, in the long run, affected your opportunities to learn English in school?
7. Do you think that Japan holds a grudge against foreign countries in general because of the forced entry after the seclusion period as well as the semi-colonization after WWII?

Japanese:

1. 必修の英語の授業はいつまでありましたか？
2. あなたにとって英語は必要な言語ですか？（もし「はい」と答えたら、どうしてですか？）
3. どのくらいの期間、英語を勉強していますか？/勉強しましたか？
4. 日本の‘鎖国’を知っていますか？
5. ‘鎖国’についてどんなふうに思いますか？

6. ‘鎖国’は長期的に見て、あなたの英語の勉強にどのような影響を与えましたか？
7. 日本が鎖国や、第 2 次世界大戦後の GHQ の統治を通して他国との距離を置くようになったと感じますか？