

# Production of Culture in the Vernacular Communities: Confucian Beliefs and the Culture of Shame in Japan

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## Abstract

Confucianism has been systematized in Japan since the Tokugawa or Edo period. Since then, Confucianism has contributed to culture in Japan. In fact, influence of the teachings of Confucianism on contemporary Japanese culture is noteworthy. This research therefore examines the influence of Confucianism on the contemporary Japanese society.

It employs descriptive-qualitative research methods. All the data was collected through literature.

Findings show that Confucianism has influenced contemporary Japanese politics primarily through the Samurai code of ethics or Bushido. Bushido values and morals are applied not only by the Samurai but has become a national code of ethics.

The teachings that became national moral values have gradually transformed Japan into a politically stable country. As a result, Confucius' lessons on shame have also influenced the political culture of Japan. Confucius emphasized the importance of leading and governing individuals through morality and decency, which would instill shame in them and cause them to resign if found corrupt. Confucianism is so ingrained in the Japanese culture that its teachings are taken for granted. Many aspects of the Japanese society, including politics, have been influenced by this integration.

**Keywords:** Beliefs, Confucianism, Culture of Shame, Politics, Japan

## Introduction

The cultural background and political patterns of Japan cannot be isolated from its history of political isolation, specifically from 1638 to 1863, generally known as the Tokugawa period (Britannica.com, 2022). Although it began as a small organization, it has evolved into the most potent and influential industrial society in the world.

The Tokugawa shogunate's 264-year reign is known as the Edo or Tokugawa period. During the 264 years of Tokugawa Shogunate reign, Japan experienced relative peace. One of the causes of this was the Tokugawa Shogunate's employment of an isolation or closure strategy. Through its isolationist stance, Japan, in particular, achieved the ability to meet all of its residents' demands without relying on other countries. To preserve Japan from foreign

meddling, the Tokugawa Shogunate implemented a strategy of political isolation. Shogun Tokugawa prioritized his domestic issues in order to achieve his goal of making Japan safe and peaceful (Japanpitt.pitt.edu, 2022).

Historically, Confucianism began to be methodically organized during the Tokugawa reign and was, after that, used as a primary teaching in Japanese society's political and social issues. Confucianism taught equilibrium in national and state life throughout the Tokugawa period. Confucianism stresses on the interactions between the society and the government to teach the philosophy of loyalty that government officials and civilians must learn and follow (Widarahesty & Ayu, 2013). In fact, Confucianism remains a popular teaching in the current Japanese society and has an impact on practically every element of Japanese life. Despite Japan's extensive history and capacity to adapt to global changes, traditional Japanese practices and values have always remained. As Safira (2020) point out, despite the nation's progress and modernization, they have cohabitated with it.

Confucianism also impacted the samurai way of life or the samurai code of ethics known as Bushido. Bushido, which was systematized throughout the feudal period, has played a significant part in moulding the character of the Japanese society. The attitude of maintaining a good name, allegiance to state officials up to the emperor, and the minimal engagement of women in politics are some characteristics of Confucianism. The Bushido code of ethics is still present in the character and culture of the Japanese people.

During the Tokugawa shogunate, a samurai was expected to keep a good name and avoid shame. Despite being a samurai code of conduct, it gradually formed the foundation of the Japanese national identity (Mandach, 2014). Even now, we hear of Japanese officials quitting if they are implicated in a controversy. It can even lead to suicide in some cases. Such incidents are the outcome of maintaining a good reputation. Although substantial distinctions exist between modern and feudal suicides, these examples share comparable goals. Indeed, without the influence of Confucianism, Japanese society today would not exist.

Therefore, in this context, this research is examines how Confucian values influence the culture of shame in Japanese politics. Its objectives are as follows.

## Review of Literature

Previous research has looked into the impact of Confucianism on health behaviours, health outcomes, and medical decisions. According to Badanta et al. (2022), Confucianism significantly impacts health behaviours and medical decisions, particularly in the Eastern countries. Chen et al. (2022) examining the impact of Confucian culture on technical innovation in Chinese family businesses, conclude that as a result of Confucian culture, Chinese family businesses tend to stick to stereotypes and lack innovation. In comparison, Li (2022) has examined Confucianism and the "Confucian Revival" in the light of current scientific research history. She explores the questions that serve as the foundation for examining Confucianism and the "Confucian Revival" in the light of recent scientific research history.

In the meantime, earlier research has looked into the role of Confucianism in the early development of modern science in China. According to Dong & Zhang (2023), Confucianism has significantly impacted the early development of contemporary science in China. Furthermore Chuang (2007) has investigated the impact of Confucian philosophy on adults' learning choices. He has discovered that Confucian philosophy considerably influences people's learning preferences. Young (2017) also examines the literature on the experiences of Asian international students studying in the United States. He proposes Confucianism as a cultural explanation for the difficulties encountered by the Asian overseas students in the United States.

Various perspectives and research findings can help us understand the consequences of Confucianism in the current society. Although some may dismiss Confucianism as irrelevant, research reveals that it remains influential in creating political philosophy and governance in China (Hu, 2007). Thus, it has seen a resurgence of attention in recent years in China and the West. This resurgence has resulted in a reconsideration of Confucian ideas from both the ancient and modern viewpoints. In fact, Confucianism is being explored and recreated to face

the problems produced by modernisation as society and culture undergo significant changes (Li, 2022).

In the modern Chinese society, Confucianism has arisen as an alternative source of belief. It is associated with cultural traditionalism and has seen a comeback among the Chinese people. According to Jiang-Fu (2021), Confucian values are frequently applied in different parts of life, including economic procedures and social conventions. Furthermore, Confucianism has always highly valued education and the pursuit of knowledge. According to Rozman (2014), its principles continue to govern the educational institutions and practices in modern culture, particularly in the East Asian countries influenced by the Confucian traditions (). Confucianism significantly impacts cultural identity and legacy, notably in East Asia. It contributes to group identity and shared values in Confucian-influenced communities by providing a feeling of continuity and tradition.

### **Research Methodology**

This research employed descriptive qualitative methods to reveal the symptoms, facts, or events relevant to the features of the Japanese population methodically and precisely (Creswell & Poth, 2016). It therefore made use of documents and content analysis.

Document or content analysis refers to research employing records or documents as data sources. In other words, content or document analysis collects and analyzes official records that are guaranteed to be reliable. The research reviewed theoretical or empirical articles from books, journals, and the internet. In so doing, it discovered the relationship between concepts and how Confucian values impact the culture of shame in Japanese politics.

Data was collected through literature study, which is a data collection technique that uses valid and relevant books, literature, and references. The research employed qualitative data analysis approaches by examining the process of generating findings inductively from the investigations of observable events.

### **Findings and the Discussion**

#### **Confucianism in Japan**

According to literature, Confucianism and Buddhism are the principal religio-philosophical teachings introduced from the incredible Asian cultural arena into Japanese history during the beginning of civilization, roughly in the mid-sixth century. Unlike Buddhism, which began in India, Confucianism is primarily a Chinese teaching. However, it migrated from Han Dynasty China to Korea and eventually to Japan, mainly via the Korean peninsula. In many ways, Confucianism determines much of Japan's East Asian character, particularly in terms of philosophical thinking and practice.

In the sixth and seventh centuries, Confucianism has arrived in Japan with Korean artisans, merchants, monks, and immigrants from the Baekjae Kingdom. With the Han dynasty's territorial and cultural expansion into what is now known as the Korean peninsula, the stage has been set for introducing Confucian texts and teachings into Japan in the mid-6th century via the Korean kingdom of Baekjae, along with Buddhism and the essence of Chinese civilization. An ancient Japanese publication, 'Records of Ancient Matters', mentions Keun Ch'ogo, the monarch of the Baekjae kingdom, sending an instructor named Wani along with a copy of the text. Around 400 CE, the monarch of Yamato received the Analects and another Chinese publication, the 'Thousand Character Classic'. According to Babasiewicz (2013), the goal was to educate the Yamato prince in Confucianism and Chinese.

In any event, in the mid-6th century, Baekjae was an effective Confucian text carrier and scholar. Buddhism, mainly as reflected in art and architecture, was the most remarkable new philosophical force this transmission offered. Along with Buddhism, however, arose Confucianism, most notably as a conceptually defined philosophical script that shaped the social, political and economic interactions and institutions.

Although Confucianism has a religious component, its teachings-ethical, epistemological, metaphysical, political, and aesthetic-are usually understood about humanity's socio-political world, beginning with the individual and his pursuit of moral and intellectual

perfection, the family and its pursuit of harmony and order, and government and its pursuit of peace and prosperity throughout the world under heaven, that is, the world at large. In this sense, Confucianism is a secular philosophy that operated at one level or another in the familiar realm of daily existence throughout Japanese history until modern times. However, its teachings have often been so thoroughly absorbed into Japanese culture without being overtly named "Confucianism" that many people mistakenly believe it is universal to the Japanese mentality and its numerous manifestations in history and culture.

Confucianism's effect grew further with the introduction of Classical Chinese culture to the Japanese literary language learned through the classical media. The introduction of Confucianism became a great honour, and it significantly affected the Japanese culture. Confucianism also influenced ideas, institutions, politics, economics, and social practices indirectly (Ivanhoe, 2016).

Confucianism's intellectual ideas also inspired important governmental policies of ancient Japan. Mencius' depiction of a "humane government" resulted in Japan's hidden system of equal land distribution. Mencius emphasized that people can only be expected to be good, law-abiding citizens with fundamental practical necessities such as food, clothing, and shelter. Mencius recommended a "well field" land distribution scheme, which provided equal parts to all households, to ensure everyone had these. According to Mencius, the humane governance began with this land allocation method. This idealistic approach to property distribution was gradually undermined by special exemptions of semi-permanent land ownership for Buddhist monasteries, Shinto shrines, aristocrats, and samurai lords after the Taika reforms in the seventh century. However, the extent to which it was attempted to be implemented illustrates how the ancient Japanese initially strove to realize egalitarian Confucian ideas on land ownership as a means of constructing the ethical underpinning of democratic society.

Another significant institution was the *dakimakura*, or imperial academy, designed to educate imperial princes and nobles expected to enter government service. However, the Chinese technique of appointing officials through civil service tests based on Confucian scholarship and practical application was never followed by ancient Japan. Nevertheless, by supporting *dakimakura* and other provincial schools that followed the plan outlined in the 'Confucian Book of Rites', ancient Japan constructed an elite education system centred on studying Confucian classics and the socio-political norms that arose from them.

It should be noted that Confucianism is not considered a religion. Unlike Christianity and Islam, Confucianism lacks transcendent characteristics and cannot be considered a religion (Taylor, 1998). It is a moral and ethical doctrine with no further theistic elements. The "Constitution of Seventeen Articles" established by the Prince Shotoku (572-621) is a source of reference for Confucianism being absorbed into the ethical and political concepts used in Japan. Confucianism was particularly essential to Prince Shotoku in promoting the performance of the central administration.

Similarly, the core of the Seventeen Articles Constitution emphasized concord between superiors and subordinates and urged citizens to be loyal to the State sovereignty. From the start, Japanese people chose to use Confucianism in their political objectives, which also characterized the State. As Smith (1959) points out, Confucianism became an essential study for government officials throughout the Nara period.

As the influence of Confucianism grew among the Japanese upper classes or intellectuals, so did the relationship between Japan and China, and the influence of Confucianism grew as a result of this relationship. However, there is a distinction between Japanese Confucianism and Confucianism in China since, from its introduction, Confucianism has been restricted to the upper class or aristocracy. Confucianism in China however has been accessible to practically everyone. This has made it difficult for certain groups to gain theoretical access to Confucianism.

Even during the Tokugawa shogunate, Confucianism was regarded as a competent theory for state governance. Tokugawa was seeking appropriate administrative measures to keep the State at peace. He saw that extending Confucian doctrine to all circles could help him attain this goal.

He contended:

"..if the Way of human morality is not understood, society will be chaotic, the nation will not be peaceful, and chaos will never cease. To produce an understanding of the principles of the Way, there is no better way than books. The printing and distribution of books is the most important task of benevolent government."

Many things influenced the growth of Confucianism during the Tokugawa era. One was justifying the hierarchical system and moulding the people's spirit of loyalty, allegiance, and obedience to the government. One noteworthy feature of the early phases of Confucianism during the Tokugawa period was that many people saw Confucianism as a personal belief rather than an ideological one. This occurrence was widespread, creating a new chapter in Japan's history. Because believers of Tokugawa Confucianism were in a position of ambiguity, Confucianism was perceived by the people not as a justification of their position or stratification but as a tool to remove the confusion (Nakai, 1980).

Confucianism governs five social connection rules: ruler and minister, father and son, husband and wife, brother and sister, and friend and friend. Matching duties and obligations accompany these. The king is upright, and the minister is faithful; the parent is loving, and the son is filial; the husband is harmonic, and the wife is obedient; the elder brother is kind, and the younger brother is respectful; and friends are faithful to each other. Humanity, righteousness, knowledge, modesty, and honesty are virtuous teachings. Confucianism was taught to reinforce the Tokugawa's influence in military society, resulting in Confucianism's nationalist nature in the Japanese society. Samurai were the protectors and the personification of morals in this administration (Widarahesty, 2011).

Tokugawa Mitsukuni, a third Mito prince, wrote to his followers:

"What, then, is the use of the (shi) or (samurai) class?" The people of the other classes deal with visible things, while the samurai deal with invisible, colourless, unsubstantial things...If there were no samurai, right (giri) would disappear from human society, the sense of shame would be lost, and wrong and injustice would prevail."

(Bellah, 1985).

This highlights the samurai's vital role in Japanese society.

Similarly, the samurai ethic Bushido supplements Confucian teachings in society, including loyalty, honesty, self-sacrifice, discipline, and perseverance. Buddhism and Confucianism, which had previously formed in society, impacted the samurai's principles. Bushido was once a requirement for the warriors, but it eventually formed the foundation of moral principles in the society. Bushido is the epitome of Japanese principles, having been recognized as a national ethic from the Tokugawa shogunate to the present day.

Bravery is one of the hallmarks of samurai behaviour. Samurai followed the idea of daring to die throughout the Tokugawa period. Courage is another value found in Bushido. The samurai ethic also includes the value of steadfastness, commitment to duty and oath, honouring the pledge of honour, fearlessness in carrying out tasks and obligations and willingness to undergo a noble death sentence (seppuku or harakiri). Bushido, which had become a part of the society and was initially a samurai's instruction, was no longer merely an inherited value but had evolved into a concept of virtue in the Japanese society.

Several notable Confucian figures from Chu-shi lived during this period, including Fujiwara Seika, Hayashi Razan, Yamazaki Ansai, and Muro Kys. There are also some figures from the Wang yang-ming (yemeigaku) school, such as Nakae Tju and Kumazawa Banzan. Ren (humanity), Yi (benevolence/justice), Li (order), Zhi (knowledge), Xin (integrity), Zhong (loyalty), Xiao (respect for elders), Chi (shame), Liang (compassion), Cheng (honesty), Wen (temperance), and Shu (forgiveness) are all parts of Confucius' moral teachings. Chaos may be conquered, and the country can be safe and secure by adhering to virtuous traits. Four books in

the Confucian system outline the core of Confucian teachings. The Confucian canon also includes the Five Classics.

	Four Books	Five Classics	
The Great Learning		Classic of Poetry	
Doctrine of The Mean		Book of Documents	
Analects		Book of Rites	
Mencius		Book of Changes	
		Spring and Autumn Annals	

Fig 1: Five Ancient Classics of Confucianism

Source: Data processed by the author, 2023

## The Spread of Confucianism in Tokugawa Era Japan

According to literature, Tokugawa Ieyasu's political and military unification in the 17th century brought relative stability, economic prosperity, and cultural revitalization to Japan, necessitating the expansion of education to meet the literacy needs of the samurai, as well as the expansion of merchants and village chiefs in their administrative roles. Following Hayashi Razan's proposed unification process, the Tokugawa government accepted Confucianism as a national doctrine to assist in maintaining political stability. The Tokugawa philosophy contained a combination of indigenous Buddhism and Shinto but was dominated by Chushi's Neo-Confucianism.

During periods of political stability, the military elite had more time for education, much of which was spent on classical Chinese studies, which were also reinvigorated with the shogunate's acceptance of Neo-Confucian beliefs. The military class, however, was not the only one making educational investments. As city trade expanded, merchants needed to be more educated and numerate, while economic expansion fueled artistic endeavours, the spread of book publishing and lending, and an increase in readership. Literacy among peasants expanded concurrently with separating the warrior and peasant classes, allowing agricultural village chiefs responsibility for administrative chores and tax collection in rural areas (Sangawa, 2017).

Although the Tokugawa Shogunate period is widely regarded as the pinnacle of Japanese Confucianism, it was in the 1790s that the central state directly integrated Confucianism into the government's bureaucratic apparatus or implemented a Confucian-based examination system in bureaucratic appointments. This choice was partly influenced by a rising awareness of Western imperial expansion and a desire to establish a formidable bureaucracy capable of dealing with these and other issues. As a result, the nationalization of Confucianism was inextricably tied to the desire to establish a partly professional and meritocratic bureaucracy to improve the state administrative system in the face of foreign change and increasing internal financial complexity (Paramore, 2012).

The Tokugawa Shogunate nationalized the Confucian Hayashi Academy in Edo in 1798, renaming it the Shoheizaka Academy (Shoheizaka Gakumonjo) and placing it under government supervision. Shoheizaka Academy scholars influenced shogunal state developments through a more bureaucratic and professional approach to government. An institutionalized position for the academy that influenced bureaucrat appointment through the implementation of an examination system and a new, more aggressive approach to the international situation sought to increase the acquisition and dissemination of specialized knowledge.

Before the nineteenth century, peasants, merchants, and artisans who were not samurai had minimal access to formal education. However, that did not stop them from studying. During the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), however, there were three primary types of educational institutions in Japan, and two of them also catered to the lower classes, so they were not completely prohibited from schooling. The first category includes;

The shogunate's Confucian academies (Shoheizaka kakemono or Shoheiko), Many other shogunate-established institutions, and Feudal lords' domain schools (hanko) for young samurai's elementary and advanced education. The second form was temple-run private primary schools for commoners (terakoya), attended by farmers, artisans, and merchants. Third, private academies (juku or shijuku) were open to samurai and commoners and sometimes administered by a single scholar.

Shogunate and official domain schools emphasized classical Chinese studies and Neo-Confucianism. While schools for commoners (terakoya) provided more practical skills for vocational training beyond reading, writing, and abacus, educational material in private academies varied greatly depending on the principal. Terakoya instructors are primarily men. However, female teachers are on the rise. Priests and doctors exercise power in distant places, whereas samurai are typically the teachers in fortifications. However, in locations where society is more developed, the regular people wield power. Teachers in Terakoya do so voluntarily. Retired village workers are typically educated (Savitri et al., 2022).

Shinjuku, or private academies, are usually private organizations open to all social groups and frequently convene at the academy director's home. The principal organizes the curriculum, and there is no formal oversight of its content. Furthermore, these academies' number, degree of education, and structure vary greatly. For example, the two most prominent Tokugawa-era private academies offering Confucian studies, led by Yoshida Shin and attended by many future Meiji reform leaders, including Ito Hirobumi, had completely distinct educational philosophies. While Kangien, founded by Confucian scholar Hirose Tanso, had a strict Chinese studies curriculum, it also included Japanese and Western subjects, emphasizing character development through studying Confucian classics and discussing current affairs aimed at political action. Although the figures and data are disputed, in a country with a population of 30 million, there may have been as many as 14,000 temple schools, 300 domain schools, and roughly 1,500 private academies during the late Tokugawa period. Literacy rates vary by place according to political and economic variables. Literacy rates were more significant in cities and more commercialized areas, demonstrating the tight relationship between literacy and power in all its forms.

### **Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism**

The conceptual foundation of the Japanese state was laid during the Tokugawa period by the influence of China through Confucianism and Buddhism taken from Korea, which was combined with the teachings of Shinto, considered the original (native) religion of Japan. Because of the Tokugawa, Confucianism became the basis of national thought and government (Risagarniwa, 2018). The Japanese lifestyle and way of thinking are closely linked to the teachings that form the basis of their philosophy of existence. At least three "schools"-syncretism, which combines local Shintoism with Confucianism from China and Buddhism from Korea significantly impacted how people understand life and the world. The schools of philosophy may have influenced the character and behaviour of the Japanese, known for their culture of shame, high and tenacious work ethic, and tendency to become workaholics through this syncretism.

Shinto teachings moulded Japanese society into a nation of obedience and respect for the Emperor (Tenno), whom they believed to be the descendant of the sun god Amaterasu Omi Kami. Eventually, this brand of fanaticism was associated with Confucianism, which gave rise to the idea of seppuku (suicide), which eventually gave rise to the discipline known as self-discipline. Therefore, the syncretism between Shintoism and Confucianism likely impacted the idea of harakiri, which many Japanese soldiers used during the war.

Shinto shrines known as Jinja, all of which utilise a gate or Torii as a shrine dedicated to the Emperor's ancestors, the local Uji (clan), the Rice God, or spirits that rule over mountains, hills, valleys, seas, and other natural features, are examples of this facet of animism and dynamism. Throughout the year, many Shinto religious ceremony celebrations occur in various locations. There is a syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism within Jinja, characterised by the frequent presence of Buddha figures. Based on ancient customs, the coronation ceremony of the emperor/Tenno is also performed. Tenno's patrilineal system of government allows for hereditary rule. As a result, the eldest son is appointed by the Japanese family inheritance system as the heir to the father's wealth and acting leader of the family at home.

Not for thousands of years, as some claim, but in the Edo period (1600s-1868), Shinto began to be "engineered" as a religion. At that time, Buddhism was declared the official religion, and Confucianism was the official philosophy. The word "engineered" refers to the phenomenon of opposing religion and government at the same time by anti-government groups and anti-both teachings, intended as an "engineered" counter-religion that was not "imported" and therefore considered the country's original religion. Consequently, when the Tenno (of the Tokugawa/Bakufu government) regained control through a bloody incident between "rebels" and government supporters (Tokugawa), which was eventually won by the rebels (anti-government groups), Shinto-known as a "religion" and "counter-ideology"-was set to become the official religion. However, the syncretism of these three teachings was already part of the Japanese nation.



The concept of government was seen as one big family through Confucianism. Emphasis is placed on democratic Confucian ideals, interpersonal loyalty, and the value of perseverance. These lessons gave the Japanese a highly disciplined work ethic, leadership responsibilities, a tenacious mindset, and a life emphasising efficiency (not waste). Buddhism has also had a significant and comparable influence on Christianity in the West regarding the belief that life is suffering and that Buddha will end human suffering. This belief is linked to "samsara", or endless life.

Due to the application of Confucianism, which emphasises the value of selfless subordination and totality to society for the benefit of collectivity, the idea of subordination as a whole is evident in the ethics of the Japanese samurai class. While Buddhism and Shinto adopted and integrated the ethical teachings of Confucianism, Confucianism and Shinto adopted and incorporated the metaphysical and psychological teachings of Buddhism. Moreover, Japanese Confucianism differs from Chinese Confucianism because all three principles are combined. Similarly, Japanese Buddhism is different from the religion that first emerged, Buddhism in India.

**Table 1:** Similarities and Differences between Japanese Confucianism and Chinese Confucianism  
Source: Data processed by the author, 2023

Equation	The difference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shinto and Buddhism are both not monotheistic religions.</li> <li>• Shintoism teaches loyalty to the Tenno or Emperor. Loyalty to the leader is also taught in Confucianism.</li> <li>• The differences between Shintoism and Buddhism are almost invisible, with the decorations, shrines and statues at Shinto shrines being heavily influenced by Buddhism.</li> <li>• Confucianism and Buddhism both teach the importance of self-reflection and virtuous behaviour. Likewise, both place importance on harmony.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confucianism is not considered a religion, but a philosophical teaching. Unlike Shinto and Buddhism, which are considered religions in Japan.</li> <li>• Confucianism and Shintoism do not have metaphysical teachings, whereas Buddhism does.</li> <li>• Buddhism emphasises the idea of transcending the cosmos, which is considered to be full of suffering, while Shinto focuses on adapting to the pragmatic requirements of life. Similarly, Confucianism does not recognise the idea of Nirvana.</li> </ul>

Bushido, an early rule of conduct for Samurai, was gradually extended to various social levels throughout the medieval era, including farmers, merchants, and samurai. Bushido draws on various traditions, including Confucianism and Buddhism, as an ethical code. Bushido is inspired by the following (Widarahesty & Ayu, 2013):

### 1. Shinto

Shinto was Japan's earliest religion. Shinto derives from Shin or Kami, god, and To, which means way. Shinto is also known as the "Way of the Gods." Shinto values emphasize loyalty to those in positions of authority, which may counteract a military soldier's hubris. Shinto teachings place a significant focus on nationality and sympathy for the Tenno. He did not comprehend sin, but he valued honour and dignity more. Nitobe asserts in *Bushido The Soul of Japan* that Shinto instilled in Bushido the concepts of religious observance, devotion to those in authority, and reverence for ancestors. Shinto teachings address the two most fundamental parts of Bushido's emotional being: patriotism and loyalty.

### 2. Confucianism

Bushido reached its pinnacle during the Tokugawa era, when Japan gave more attention to the principles of Confucianism, one of Bushido's core principles. Under Tokugawa's reign, Japan refocused on Chinese-inspired teachings such as Confucius. As a result of these lessons, the Japanese established Bushido. Bushido synthesizes Confucius' finest moral teachings and the ethical principles of loyalty and courage.

### 3. Zen

Zen is a Buddhist cult that has attracted members from all social classes, professional soldiers and warriors. Even though Zen was best known as the Samurai religion during the shogunate time, "Zen in the early shogunate period originated as a strategy to organize a cultural revolution to enhance the dignity and legitimacy of warriors as worldly." As a result, it became connected with the military class and was even referred to as the Samurai religion.

### **Influence of Confucianism on the Culture of Shame in Contemporary Japanese Politics**

The resignation of Japanese public officials in the modern age is frequently viewed as a reflection of Japan's political culture, which generates concerns in both domestic and international circles regarding Japan. Surprisingly, when many Japanese public figures retire, it is frequently recognized as an event because it is "normal" in Japanese society and hence deemed "cultural." This is even though, according to political theory, political behaviour does not always represent a nation's culture but is more often related to how people or organizations achieve their interests.

Yasuhiro Hanashi, Minister of Justice from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), was one example of a Japanese official retiring. The case derives from his remarks about a tedious chore. Despite worldwide pressure, Japan continues to use the death penalty. Hanashi once stated that his sole remaining responsibility was to sign the death sentence. He thought the process was tedious. This provoked widespread outrage since it was interpreted as underestimating his responsibilities as Minister of Justice. Hanashi had only been Minister of Justice since August 2022 and resigned in November 2022.

Apart from Yasuhiro Hanashi, three additional ministers resigned in three months from Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government. Kenya Akiba, the Development Minister, became the fourth minister to quit due to the electoral fraud controversy. According to the opposition party, Kenya Akiba broke election regulations by unlawfully supporting his wife and maids. He was also accused of involvement with the Unification Church. Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was killed in a gunshot by Tetsuya Yamagami in June 2022. Tetsuya Yamagami said that Shinzo Abe was involved in the Unification Church, which caused his mother's bankruptcy.

Sun Myung Moon, a man who claims to be the Messiah and is anti-communist, said Tetsuya caused his mother to go bankrupt, and it is believed Shinzo Abe was involved. Abe is said to have taken part in activities associated with this cult. He applauded the affiliate's efforts to bring peace to the Korean Peninsula. Some reports claim that Grandpa Abe had a close relationship with Moon through the International Federation for Victory Over Communism. The Unification Church has attracted national attention in the aftermath of the Shinzo Abe shooting case. So much so that Japan's Development Minister was drawn into the controversy. Kenya Akiba resigned, stating that he was not involved and had not been proven to have broken the law, and he refuted the claims levelled against him. However, he said that his departure was motivated by his unwillingness to see the budget process and other legislative agendas postponed due to his actions.

Japanese officials retiring is not a new phenomenon. Before Shinzo Abe's official departure as Prime Minister of Japan in 2007, the Shinzo Abe cabinet was marked by political scandals among ministers. The Abe era was frequently followed by events that harmed the government's image and eroded popular trust. One such controversy occurred when the Minister of Agriculture, Toshikatsu Matsuoka, was suspected of corruption and committed suicide due to the scandal. He committed suicide just as he would take responsibility for his involvement in the bribery and commercial contracts scandal in front of parliament.

Matsuoka was discovered hanged at his house. Many people believe that Abe burdened Matsuoka during the corruption affair. Abe's choice to keep Matsuoka was mentioned as one of the reasons Matsuoka committed suicide, severely damaging the Abe administration's reputation at the time. The phenomenon of Japanese officials leaving is related to less significant scandals and involvement in state scandals. Yuko Obuchi, Japan's Minister of Trade and Industry under Shinzo Abe, was found to have utilized donations from her support

organization for make-up and non-political things in 2014. Despite speculations that she would become Japan's first female prime minister, Yuko offered her resignation to Shinzo Abe. Yuko Obuchi's nomination as a minister is also one of Abe's measures to encourage women's political participation.

Cases of resignation of officials were brought not only by ministers but also by the City God (Parliament). For example, Wakako Horimoto of the Japan Restoration Party resigned as a member of parliament in 2022 after being involved in a scandal in which she pretended to be Yuji Shinkai, a former member of the House of Representatives who was tipped to be a rival in the next City Council election. He circulated pamphlets to the general public detailing Yuji Shinkai's ties to the Unification Church. Horimoto resigned from the party immediately following the affair.

The resignation of Japanese officials demonstrates the realities of the country's political culture. Confucius' teachings have long influenced people's attitudes toward resignation. This is seen in Japan's first constitution, which has 17 articles: Friendship with fellow humans and cooperation is essential. Believe in Buddhism's content. Do not give the Tenno orders. Respect and gratitude should be shown to state employees. Nature will be balanced if respect is maintained. If state officials hear complaints about lawsuits, do not settle them by accepting bribes.

The contents of the constitution have been updated to reflect the times. This indicates that while the 17-article constitution was established during the feudal era, the time of the military, known as samurai, the dominant values were similarly military. The samurai code of behaviour, Bushido, refers to these values. The interwoven notions of traditional Japanese culture in creating a sense of shame (Hajj) concretize the view that Hajj is the essence of an attempt to govern the Japanese society model. To achieve a life of self-equality, Japanese society regards Hajj as a transparent partition binding on every individual.

Socio-cultural adaptations cause guilt, which leads to reflective behaviours of negative actions, especially ignorance in adhering to societal norms. Generally, a strong sense of guilt in Japanese society is an attempt to avoid shame rather than a dread of God or Kami. Based on the preceding, officials' acts cannot be classified as officials who foster and protect themselves from negative attitudes toward the society they govern. The authorities' conduct was against Japanese social norms. These violations are intended to bring humiliation. Shame stems from the fear of being humiliated by the community because of the irregularities committed. The officials' sense of embarrassment emerged only due to public criticism. The criticism sprang from disappointment.

## Conclusions

Japan's modern political culture is inextricably linked to the country's long history. The Tokugawa Shogunate (Edo period) restored Japan to peace after years of political turmoil due to civil conflict. The Tokugawa Shogunate period was significant not only because it preceded the age that led Japan to modern civilization but also because it saw the development of the Japanese state in different social, political, and economic domains. Confucianism, which had been systematized throughout the Edo period, is one of the effects of Tokugawa authority that is still present in the character of Japan today. Although Confucianism was given less emphasis after the collapse of the Tokugawa period and the transition to the Meiji Restoration as it was during the Edo period, the remains of Confucianism still impact the Japanese country.

The Edo period's establishment of the culture of loyalty and honour (Meiyo) may still be reflected in the character of Japanese society. The character of loyalty and honour is derived from Bushido's teachings, which rely on different teachings, including Confucianism, to provide allegiance to the state, the leader, and the emperor. Confucian ideals have affected the Japanese political culture of shame. Confucius emphasized the need to lead and regulate individuals via virtue and decency, which would instil a sense of shame in them, causing them to resign if they were discovered in a corruption case. Confucianism has been so thoroughly ingrained in Japanese society that its principles are frequently seen as commonplace in the

Japanese mentality. This integration has impacted many facets of Japanese society, including politics.

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