

# Samurai Disorder

# Unifier #3: Tokugawa Ieyasu

- 1543-1616
- Battle of Sekigahara (1600)
- *Shōgun*= “barbarian subduing generalissimo” (1603)
- Capital in Edo
- Solidify bakufu with son and grandson
  - Hidetada (1605-1623)
  - Iemitsu (1623-1656)



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# Pax Tokugawa



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# Consequences of Tokugawa Order

- Impressive developments
- Emergence of national economy
- Urban life
- Contradictions
  - Samurai identity crisis



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# Akō Vendetta

- “47 Rōnin Incident”
- April 22, 1701: Asano Takumi-no-kami Naganori vs. Kira Kōzuke-no-suke Yoshinaka
- January 31, 1703: 47 Asano retainers led by Ōishi Kura-no-suke Yoshio attacks Kira residence



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# Main Characters

- Asano Naganori, Lord of Akō (1667-1701)
- Kira Yoshinaka, bakufu master of ceremonies (1641-1703)
- Ōishi Kuranosuke Yoshio, Asano chief retainer (1659-1703)
- 5th shōgun Tsunayoshi, “Dog Shōgun” (1680-1708)

# Archetypal Samurai Story

- Legend vs. history
- Well known in the West: Ruth Benedict's *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946)
- Countless retelling in Japan
  - First performance two weeks after the vendetta
  - *Kabuki*, film, tv, comics

# ***Modern Akō Vendetta***



# Guilty? Of What?



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# Paradoxes and Contradictions

- History vs. Legend
  - Sketchy evidence for both 1701 and 1703 events
  - 1701: Asano motive unclear; not so heroic?
  - 1703: 47 out of ~240 retainers > mixed reactions and motives
- Emerging consensus: both 47 and shogunate correct?
- Solidarity of the Ako ronin only made possible by *bakuhau* system: shared destiny with “ie” (household)
- Multiple meaning of honor/loyalty: personal vs. “ie”

# Structural Contradictions

- Bakufu's assumption of three levels of hierarchy/loyalty: samurai-commoner, daimyo-samurai, shogun-daimyo
- But this system was also dependent on ideology of personal loyalty (but to whom?)
- Away from private use of violence BUT continuing fascination with the medieval image

# Commoners?

- Urbanization and commercialization
- Commoner fantasy and protest



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21H.155 Modern Japan: 1868 to Present  
Spring 2017

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