

THROUGH SAKE, A PORTAL TO THE PAST #5: EARLY EDO / GENROKU JIDAI (1615- 1750 AD)

6/24/26

1 OTOKOYAMA "SEICHU GISHIN MEIMEI KAGAMI" \$39 (720ml)

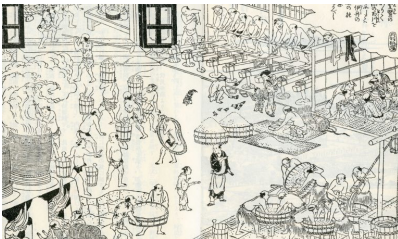


poem poem optional

Tokubetsu Junmai, 60% polish
Itami -> Hokkaido
Historical reference: Ukiyo-e, Itami,
Chuushingura (47 Ronin)
Timeline: 1615-1850

The Tokugawa Shogunate establishing their seat of power in Edo strengthened trade between the new capital and Kyoto. As these two metropolises flourished, the lower social classes of merchants, craftspeople and laborers found themselves with more leisure time and disposable income. The craft of woodblock printing allowed for mass produced images of a budding working class daily life in theater districts and sake bars to be circulated among the masses. In early Edo, prior to re-establishing in Hokkaido, the Otokoyama brand was produced by a house in Itami and being a favorite of the shogunate, was featured as one of woodblock printer Utamaro Kitagawa's Six Famed Breweries. The Japanese label for this sake is a portrait of one of the 47 ronin enjoying Otokoyama, printed as part of a series by master carver Utagawa Kuniyoshi.

3 SHIRAYUKI "AOSAE" NFS (720ml)



Junmai Daiginjo 50%
polish; Itami, Hyogo
Historical reference:
Itami/Ikeda brewing,
Kimoto, Toji guilds,
"Itami morohaku,"
commercialization
Timeline: 1630-1800

At its peak, Edo's population nearly hit 1 million, making it the largest metro area of the early modern period. In the 17th century, Kansai's Itami grew to prominence by focusing on production for the rapidly expanding city. Itami and Nada, central to Kansai's strong rice growing areas, benefited from access to trade routes that brought rice through Osaka from the Kaga domain, so the area was in good position to meet demand. In the mid 1700s, area rice farmers who traveled to breweries around Itami and Nadagogo to learn new brewing techniques formed the Tanba Toji guild. A clear sake, Itami Morohaku, was the product of this organized skill sharing. Use of polished rice for kojimai and kakemai, wood ash fining, and adding shochu to the mash created a clear and clean tasting sake with good stability for long distance travel...

2 IPPAKUSUISEI TOKUBETSU JUNMAI \$45 (720ml)



Tokubetsu Junmai
Akita prefecture
Historical reference:
Ikko Ikki, Forestry,
Akita mining, Satake
clan wealth
Timeline: Late 1500s
through Edo period

1688 marks the first year of the Genroku era of the Edo period, a time when Japan had settled into peace and productivity. The Watanabe family, who founded the brewery, originally hailed from Mattō in Kaga Province (present-day Hakusan City in Ishikawa Prefecture). In the final years of the Sengoku period, the family fled Mattō due to the destruction of an Ikkō-ikki uprising against then-shogun Oda Nobunaga. Kaga was the heartland of the Ikkō-ikki, members of the warrior Jōdo Shinshū Buddhist sect, and it would be a while longer before they were completely suppressed. Reestablished in Gojome, Akita, the Watanabes began brewing doburoku across the street from a morning market (that dates to ~1450!) At the time, Akita was swimming in mining revenue, with thousands of workers to feed and timber-hungry smelting operations to supply. A healthy timber-and-market town like Gojome had steady demand for exactly what it produced: cedar, charcoal, rice, and sake.

4 ICHINOKURA "TARU" \$32 (720ml)



Tokubetsu Junmai Taruzake
Miyagi prefecture
Historical reference: Kudarizake,
wooden barrel brewing, Yoshinosugi
Timeline: ~1650-1850

...This sake was packed into 40-koku Yoshino cedar barrels for transport to Edo. As it sloshed round the barrel's interior on the seas, it developed the distinctly rich flavor of taruzake. Sake that made this trip was known as kudarizake. Popular conjecture behind its linguistic origin is that though it traveled east then north through the Seto Inland Strait, it "came down" (kudaru) from near the old capital of Kyoto, the imperial center of the country. The cedar tinged sake took off in metropolitan Edo soba shops and bars. Despite the vaguely condescending name, certain barrels got marked for Fujimizake (sake with a view of Mt. Fuji), and took a round trip back for novel consumption in the area it was originally produced. In this time, everything was brewed in wood, but enamel tanks, generational knowledge loss, and evolutions in shipping logistics took kudarizake out of the spotlight over time. The taruzake we drink today is a romantic link to that past.

5 KATSUYAMA "KEN" "KEN" - \$79 (720ml)

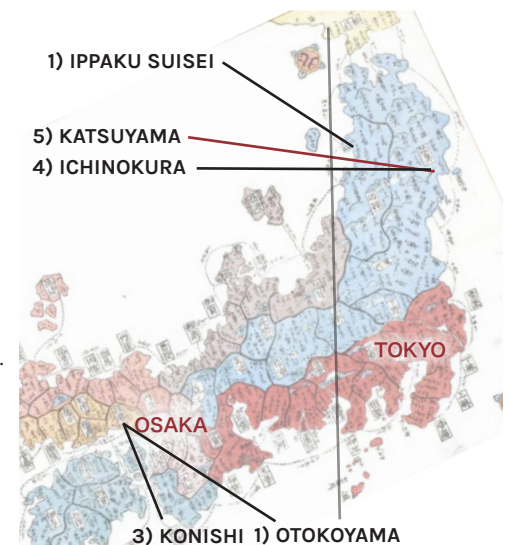
BONUS: \$10



Junmai ginjo, 50% polish
Yamadanishiki
Miyagi prefecture
Historical reference:
Date Masamune, Date
clan, Sendai Han, Tohoku
expansionism

Timeline: 1580-1636

Katsuyama famously advertises itself as the sake of Date Masamune and the Date clan, who ruled Sendai domain from 1600-1868, but the truth is a little different. Katsuyama isn't Date's original castle brewery, but the last living heir of the clan's brewing tradition. Date Masamune, a devoted patron of arts, culture and famous epicure, founded a castle brewery in 1608 on the recommendation of sword master Yagyū Munenori. Munenori wanted to see the world's best sake brewed in Sendai so he hired a respected toji named Mataemon from Nara, and gave him the surname Kayanomori. The Kayanomori family trained in the latest techniques and technologies and held their official post for 12 generations, raising the overall quality of sake across the domain. In 1688, responding to the need for increased supply, the Izawa family (of Katsuyama) was licensed as an official sake supplier to the domain. With the closure of the Kayanomori brewery and others licensed under this system, Katsuyama remains the only surviving brewery with this history today.



1603-1868

EDO JIDAI- PART 1

(adapted from worldhistory.org)

The Edo (or Tokugawa) period refers to the period from 1603-1868 when the Tokugawa family ruled Japan. It's named after the city of Edo, modern-day Tokyo, where the Tokugawa shogunate had its government. The Edo period is also called the early modern period because it was during this time that many of the characteristics of modern Japanese society were formed.

In 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu emerged victorious against the Tokugawa clan and its loyalists at the Battle of Sekigahara, bringing an end to a 140-year period of civil war (the subject of our previous flight). In 1603, Ieyasu had the emperor appoint him as shogun-- the imperial family had no real power at this time, but it did have the capacity to confer political legitimacy through titles and endorsements.

The genius of the Tokugawa period, and why the clan persisted in maintaining authority for so long, stems from a series of strict rules and protocols to control the populace and the daimyo (samurai clans). These rules would come to define the social and economic culture of the period, and their influence can be seen in modern Japan as well.

After the war, Ieyasu divided Japan's

270 daimyo families into three groups according to their loyalty: 1) **Sankei daimyo**: collateral branches of the Tokugawa family, 2) **fudai daimyo**: those who swore allegiance to Ieyasu before the Battle of Sekigahara, and 3)

Tozama daimyo: those who swore allegiance after the Battle of Sekigahara. Land-- called a han-- was granted to each daimyo according to the amount of rice it could produce. Fudai daimyo were of course more trusted, and their han were located in key strategic locations in central Japan. The han of the less-trusted tozama daimyo were much larger but located far from the centre of Japan.

Ieyasu also restricted the size of daimyo armies: they could only have one castle in their territory, and couldn't repair fortifications without approval. Daimyo were required to spend alternate years living in Edo, while their families lived in Edo permanently-- effectively hostages. Having grown up in Edo, successors' education, worldview and social network were tied to Edo rather than their home han. Daimyo had to spend incredible resources

traveling annually to Edo, lodging their sizable retinues along the way, supporting local economies (especially breweries!)

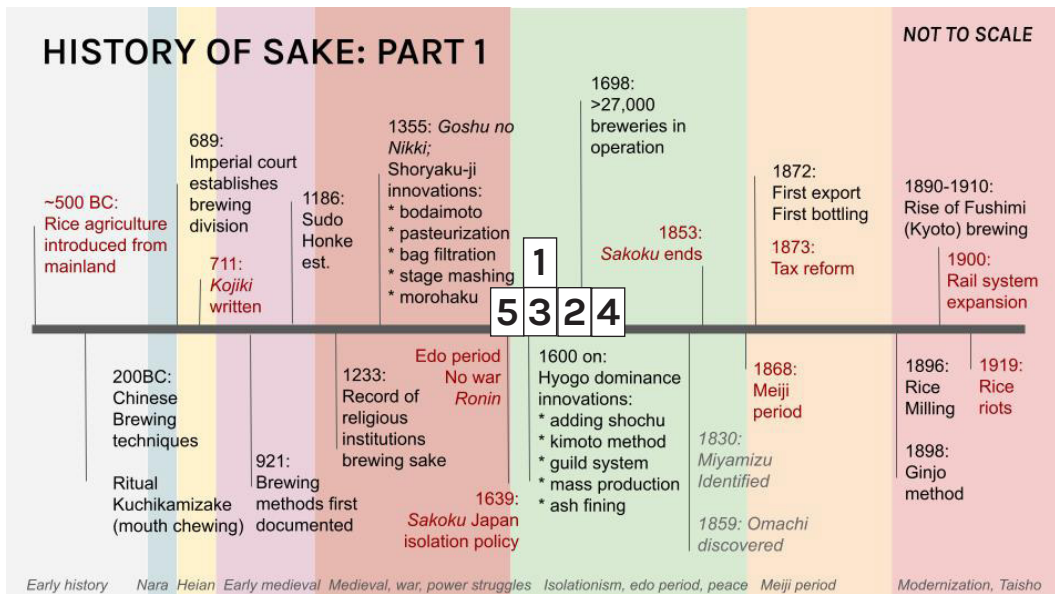
The Tokugawa also created a four-tier hereditary class system. Samurai were at the top, followed by farmers, artisans, and merchants. Samurai were not permitted to work outside of government posts paid in rice, but as Japan's agricultural productivity grew, that rice became less and less valuable in currency, leading to many destitute samurai. Only samurai could carry weapons, effectively disarming the populace. In addition, only samurai and aristocracy could have surnames: these were status symbols, official titles indicating a person's house and lineage. Because peasants couldn't use family names in official documents (they had family names, but that information was tracked privately), they were instead identified by their given names, professions, and geographical origins, ex: Mariko from Kanda, owner of Mariko's Textiles. In many cases, merchants were so wealthy and daimyo

were so deeply in debt to them that, despite being at the bottom of the totem pole, merchant families had authority to carry weapons and use surnames-- a privilege granted in an effort to repay that debt.

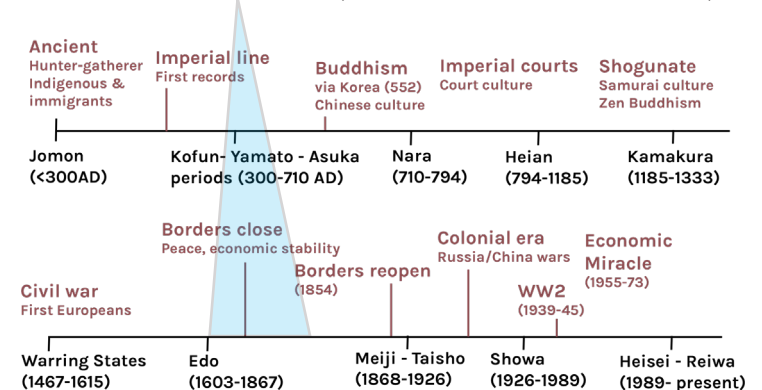
The last and most important rule is sakoku, Japan's isolation policy. Enacted in the 1630s, sakoku made it illegal for any Japanese person to leave Japan and for any foreigner to enter Japan, save for very specific ports and purposes. Europeans came to Japan in the 16th century; the Dutch were focused on trade, while the Portuguese were on a holy mission to spread Christianity. Things came to a head in the 1630s-- wary of their rising influence and political involvement, Ieyasu banned Christianity outright, expelled all Europeans except the Dutch, and confined trade to very specified, tightly controlled, usually island ports.

Now that war was over and able young men could farm rather than fight, from 1600- 1720 Japan's population roughly doubled. Daimyo, incentivized by taxes, encouraged economic productivity of their han, opening up new agricultural land, subsidizing irrigation, and propping up industries like cotton, silk, sake, wax, paper, and salt, which could be sold outside their han. This led to the emergence of a much larger commercial economy than Japan had ever seen, and with it, sake's transition into a common product for commoners and aristocracy alike.

No Japanese ship ... nor any native of Japan, shall presume to go out of the country; whoever acts contrary to this, shall die, and the ship with the crew and goods aboard shall be sequestered until further orders. All persons who return from abroad shall be put to death. Whoever discovers a Christian priest shall have a reward of 400 to 500 sheets of silver and for every Christian in proportion. All Namban (Portuguese and Spanish) who propagate the doctrine of the Catholics, or bear this scandalous name, shall be imprisoned. The whole race of the Portuguese with their mothers, nurses and whatever belongs to them, shall be banished to Macao. Whoever presumes to bring a letter from abroad, or to return after he hath been banished, shall die with his family; also whoever presumes to intercede for him, shall be put to death. - sakoku edict



PORTAL TO THE PAST, EPISODE 5: EARLY EDO PERIOD (TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE)



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