

# JAPANESE HISTORY

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#### **Part I : The Jōmon Era (8000 BCE-300 BCE)**

**Overview** It is not known exactly when the first human migrants reached the islands that now make up contemporary Japan. Excavations of the earliest archaeological sites indicate that some areas of Japan have been inhabited for more than 10,000 years, although there isn't universal agreement among scholars for this time frame. The Jōmon people of Japan were the first identifiable group to settle the islands. They were hunter-gatherers for most of the epoch, but during brief warm periods when living became easier, became a semi-sedentary. Because of their living habits, their archaeological footprint was relatively small, thereby making definitive traces difficult to find. Cross-pollination of culture, technology and innovations in agriculture proceeded from the Asian mainland, and later Southeast Asia, to Japan in much the same way that the Fertile Crescent and ancient Egypt influenced each other. However, Japanese civilization evolved with no influence from the earliest civilizations of Egypt, the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers or the Indus River. The archaeological evidence that does exist is suggestive that the appearance of the Jōmon people in Japan roughly corresponds to the earliest stages of developed agriculture on the mainland. This transformation may have set in motion waves of migration of people groups on the periphery of more settled areas of China, Korea, Siberia and the Russian Far East to Japan. Given that Japan is situated on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, innovations were generally slow to arrive and sporadically adopted by very widely dispersed people groups. Some of the same early populations that migrated to Japan are believed to have also made their way into the Western Hemisphere. It is unlikely that the earliest inhabitants of Japan represent the first early, ethnic Japanese because they have been replaced by so many different sets of migrants over the millennia. The Jōmon people were very likely not the ancestors of today's Japanese.

#### **Events**

There were several waves of migration to Japan in the Jōmon period. Most scholars hypothesize, based on pottery fragments, DNA evidence and linguistic archaeology, that the Jōmon people of Japan came across the straits between southeastern Korea and northwestern Kyushū (known as the Straits of Korea or Tsushima—depending on one's political persuasion). But this was not the only route. Other groups are believed to have migrated from Siberia southward, first crossing the Tatar Strait to Sakhalin Island (possibly then a land bridge), and then making their way to the islands of Hokkaidō and Honshū. These groups are believed to have been ancestors of Tungusic speaking people groups which today includes Manchu and Evenki. There is also evidence of proto-Mongolian and early Korean influence in the southern areas of Japan. Other migration occurred from Southeast Asia, although that likely occurred very late in the Jōmon period. Many Japanese scholars place the Ainu language in the Tungusic family, though that is not settled scholarship among linguists. However, it is a generally settled narrative among Japanese today that the Ainu represent the remnant of the Jōmon population that originally settled Japan during this period.

## **Government**

**The Structure of Government.** As hunter-gatherers, the early Jōmon people of Japan lived in small groups that were limited by the supply of food and other resources readily available to them. Settlements could be very small and often temporary because people groups had to move when resources began to dwindle. These settlements were also widely dispersed and though trade goods and marriage partners could be exchanged so as to not intermarry too closely within kinship groups, they were far enough apart to not compete for limited resources. In the brief, warmer periods of the Jōmon era, there is evidence of some settlements being large enough to accommodate several dozen people and even for villages to emerge. But for most of the era, people were grouped in significantly smaller bodies. Government, as we think of it today, therefore didn't exist. There is no evidence of a ruler, a central state, a bureaucracy, a set of written laws, a specialized military and the like. At most there was someone like a village headman because resources had to be administered. Association was likely based on kinship and was probably somewhat voluntary and potentially fluid. Clan, family or village leaders provided the only security and stability available in the Jōmon period. If one was exiled or became a sole survivor of an attack or epidemic, their future was extremely bleak. Life was tenuous and could be rather Hobbesian: nasty, brutish and short. Evidence for just how difficult life could be can be found in population numbers. According to Shuzo Koyama of the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, the population of Jōmon Japan grew very, very slowly increasing from approximately 20,000 in 10,000BCE to 75,000 some 9000 years later. Population is believed to have been seriously affected by even small, periodic changes in climate because residents of Jōmon Japan did not have the ability to store excess food stuffs for very long. During periods of hardship, several poor foraging outings in a row or failed hunting trips could lead to hunger, malnutrition and catastrophe for a small group.

**The Military.** Specialized military units didn't exist in the Jōmon period. Small groups of hunter gatherers banded together for protection and safety. By definition, however, many members of hunter gatherer groups were proficient in the use of weapons that could take down large game. When threatened, the same skills and weapons used to hunt big game could be employed against enemies. These included spears and clubs, and mechanical devices such as bows and arrows and atlatl, which when used by an expert, could propel spears at significantly greater speeds and distances than by the simple throw of a spear. Small groups occasionally fought, likely over dwindling resources, abductions, and other perceived slights, but there is scant evidence of large scale warfare. Settlements and villages were extremely exposed if men were away hunting or fighting. Given the size of the population and the highly dispersed and isolated settlements, fighting was surely sporadic and also probably didn't result in the complete annihilation of an enemy. The taking of slaves and the abduction of women was more advantageous to the victor than the utter destruction of an enemy.

## **Culture**

**Early Religion.** Organized religion had not yet emerged in Jōmon period Japan, but the Jōmon people were nonetheless very spiritual and sought out answers to some of life's persistent questions. Given that each clan or group existed as a fairly independent unit, customs and rituals varied from place to place and throughout time. They left evidence of many and varied symbols representing spirits associated with hunting, fertility, agriculture, stars and the moon. In particular, bear skulls are known to have been carefully placed in inland pits in areas of spiritual significance. According to Nelly Naumann, one of the foremost scholars in the discipline, large-animal hunting, represented by the most fearsome predator then known in Japan, the bear, is thought to represent this important food source. In coastal areas where fishing provided much of the protein needed for subsistence, dolphin skulls have been found buried in sacred spaces. Other objects such as clay masks have also been found. Finally, among the most pervasive found in sacred pits are objects representing the female form. These objects are associated with fertility deities, the renewal of life and the safe birth of the next generation. Often accompanying the female form are representations of phalluses. For Naumann, the moon was thought to be among the most important deities because of its association with death and rebirth in Jōmon Japan.

**The Arts.** There is scant evidence of many of the art forms as we know them today. Music, story-telling, painting, drama and the like almost surely existed but have disappeared from the human record. However, one that remains is sculpture in the form of ceramics, pottery and religious artifacts. Indeed, the very long and diverse era known as the Jōmon period is understood to be the same epoch because from beginning to end, cord markings appear as decoration on ceramics. Sculptors shaped objects by hand without the use of wheels. They used clay with small amounts of connective fiber to fashion representations of the female form, of masks representing the sun or stars, animals—some with human faces, and phalluses. Early attempts were rather crude and were clearly created by people with little extra time or talent. These early objects were fired in open pits at relatively low temperatures. During periods of warming, for example, approximately 2500BCE-1500BCE, Jōmon populations lived in larger groups which allowed for some specialization. During this period, figurines and other ceramics were carefully sculpted with great attention to detail and were lavishly decorated with pigment and inlaid with exquisite decoration. A small number of artists used the medium of stone or bone to carve figures and inlay images and some woodworking rose to the level of art, but most artists used fired clay. Motifs, though more detailed and more carefully executed later in the period, remained much the same as in past millennia.

## **Society**

**Social Relationships.** Given that during the Jōmon period most people lived in small groups, many if not most social relationships were likely based on some level of kinship ties. Fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, in-laws, and other extended family were all a part of any given group. When groups got larger and villages emerged, family ties were still paramount. Daughters were likely married out but sons likely were not. Women were pregnant for many if not most of their childbearing years and often died in childbirth. Men hunted and fought and suffered injury and death from those activities. Though likely, it is not known whether serial monogamy was practiced in mating partners or whether society was based on a patriarchy. Boys learned life skills from older men in the group and girls learned from older women. To the extent possible, families cared for the old and infirm, although few would have survived past the age of forty. The struggle to survive in an age where disease, injury and unexpected death were constant companions even for the young and healthy provides context for social relationships. It indicates that flexibility and utilitarianism must surely have governed most of society. Orphans must have been adopted, widows remarried and wanderers taken in.

Jōmon people lived in extremely close quarters. Early in the era, very small groups lived in caves. Later they began to construct pits with fires in the center around which huts made of wood and straw were constructed. In warm periods, multiple, large pits were sometimes constructed that could accommodate several dozen people, demonstrating the appearance of villages. But there are no known cities. Warmth and security from attack and predation were primary goals as well as the pooling of resources. The collection and production of food was the most important task of all societies. Jōmon people were known to have some storage capacity for food stuffs in ceramic pots, but likely not enough to get through entire seasons and certainly not enough to navigate years of drought or pestilence. As the era progressed, there likely emerged some stratification of society with village headmen and others controlling a disproportionate amount of resources. For most, however, subsistence was tenuous and often difficult.

**Funerary.** There is ample evidence that Jōmon people placed great value on the rites and ceremonies associated with death. Early in the period, a small number of simple funerary items associated with that person's life were sometimes included in a burial. If a hunter, a weapon might be included. If a woman, a pot or other kitchen item might be in evidence. Later in the period, the number and value of funerary items increased, depending on the status of the individual. In some cases, elaborate and expensive burial shrouds covered the bodies along with jewelry made of shells and other items. Even infants were interred, sometimes in large pots and in other protective coverings. It is very likely that shamans played some role in the ceremonies associated with the internment of the dead.

## Economy

**Agriculture.** Jōmon era people did not engage in agriculture early in the period. They gathered berries, roots, nuts, and other readily available foodstuffs based on the season. Nuts, such as walnuts and chestnuts, have been found in archaeological digs. These and other such items could be stored to help them get through a winter that was longer and colder for most of the period than is the case today. There is some evidence that during the warmer periods of 2500BCE—1500BCE that large villages might have just begun to cultivate some food stuffs because it would have been extremely difficult to forage enough food in the immediate vicinity to sustain a large village. But this was toward the end of the period and did not become a primary food source for the Jōmon people.

**Diet.** In addition to the nuts, berries, roots and other seasonal bounty readily available to the Jōmon people, hunting provided the protein needed to sustain most of the population. Early in the period, large game such as bear, deer, and wild boar were regular food items for inland people groups. For groups near to the coast and to fresh water sources, fishing was the primary source of protein. Virtually anything aquatic could be prepared and consumed to provide sustenance. Later in the period, smaller game such as squirrels, rabbits, and birds of all varieties were trapped and/or hunted

## Readings

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- 2) Keiji Imamura, *Prehistoric Japan: New perspectives on Insular East Asia*, (University of Hawaii Press, 1996), 1-126.
- 3) Junko Habu, *Ancient Jomon of Japan*, (Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- 4) Ryusaku Tsunoda, *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, (Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 1-33.
- 5) Takeru Akazawa and C. Melvin Aikens, eds., *Prehistoric Hunter-Gatherers in Japan: New Research Methods* (University of Tokyo Press, 1986).
- 6) Edward Kidder, *Prehistoric Japanese Arts: Jōmon Pottery*, (Kodansha International, 1968).

## Questions for Discussion

- 1) Japanese Civilization seemed to develop quite late. In some cases, it was more than a millennium behind other cultures in East Asia. Bronze and iron technology was slow to arrive and slow to be adopted. Even wet rice agriculture appeared after the Jōmon period had ended. Why was this? Was it because of Japan's relative geographic isolation? Was it because Jōmon society was largely self-sufficient and content? Was there something about the land which delayed development? Or was there some other reason that Jōmon Japan was late in developing?
- 2) Questions about national origins, migration patterns, ethno-genesis and cultural beginnings have often dominated Japanese historical, archaeological and anthropological scholarly discussions. Why might this be the case? Why do you think that Japanese scholars were so keen to prove where their distant ancestors came from? What difference, if any, does it make to contemporary Japan culture and identity?
- 3) Religion seemed to play a significant role in the life of the Jōmon people. Why do you think this was such an important element in their culture? What does it tell us about the nature of humanity that so many early cultures placed such a strong value on spirituality? To what extent was religion in Jōmon Japan expressed in a similar fashion to other early cultures and to what extent was it different? Finally,

what can we really know about religion in Jōmon Japan? Is a lot what we know based on extrapolation and conjecture?

## Texts

1) From the *Kojiki*, 712 CE, on Japanese cosmology. Translation by Yaichiro Ise, in the public domain via Creative Commons.

Before the heavens and the earth came into existence, all was a chaos, unimaginably limitless and without definite shape or form. Eon followed eon: then, lo! out of this boundless, shapeless mass something light and transparent rose up and formed the heaven. This was the Plain of High Heaven, in which materialized a deity called Ame-no-Minaka-Nushi-no-Mikoto (the Deity-of-the-August-Center-of-Heaven). Next the heavens gave birth to a deity named Takami-Musubi-no-Mikoto (the High-August-Producing-Wondrous-Deity), followed by a third called Kammi-Musubi-no-Mikoto (the Divine-Producing-Wondrous-Deity). These three divine beings are called the Three Creating Deities.

In the meantime what was heavy and opaque in the void gradually precipitated and became the earth, but it had taken an immeasurably long time before it condensed sufficiently to form solid ground. In its earliest stages, for millions and millions of years, the earth may be said to have resembled oil floating, medusa-like, upon the face of the waters. Suddenly like the sprouting up of a reed, a pair of immortals were born from its bosom. These were the Deity Umashi-Ashi-Kahibi-Hikoji-no-Mikoto (the Pleasant-Reed-Shoot-Prince-Elder-Deity) and the Deity Ame-no-Tokotachi-no-Mikoto (The Heavenly-Eternally-Standing-Deity).

Many gods were thus born in succession, and so they increased in number, but as long as the world remained in a chaotic state, there was nothing for them to do. Whereupon, all the Heavenly deities summoned the two divine beings, Izanagi and Izanami, and bade them descend to the nebulous place, and by helping each other, to consolidate it into terra firma. "We bestow on you," they said, "this precious treasure, with which to rule the land, the creation of which we command you to perform." So saying they handed them a spear called Ama-no-Nuboko, embellished with costly gems. The divine couple received respectfully and ceremoniously the sacred weapon and then withdrew from the presence of the Deities, ready to perform their august commission. Proceeding forthwith to the Floating Bridge of Heaven, which lay between the heaven and the earth, they stood awhile to gaze on that which lay below. What they beheld was a world not yet condensed, but looking like a sea of filmy fog floating to and fro in the air, exhaling the while an inexpressibly fragrant odor. They were, at first, perplexed just how and where to start, but at length Izanagi suggested to his companion that they should try the effect of stirring up the brine with their spear. So saying he pushed down the jeweled shaft and found that it touched something. Then drawing it up, he examined it and observed that the great drops which fell from it almost immediately coagulated into an island, which is, to this day, the Island of Onokoro. Delighted at the result, the two deities descended forthwith from the Floating Bridge to reach the miraculously created island. In this island they thenceforth dwelt and made it the basis of their subsequent task of creating a country. Then wishing to become espoused, they erected in the center around the island a pillar, the Heavenly August Pillar, and built around it a great palace called the Hall of Eight Fathoms. Thereupon the male Deity turning to the left and the female Deity to the right, each went round the pillar in opposite directions. When they again met each other on the further side of the pillar, Izanami, the female Deity, speaking first, exclaimed: "How delightful it is to meet so handsome a youth!" To which Izanagi, the male Deity, replied: "How delighted I am to have fallen in with such a lovely maiden!" After having spoken thus, the male Deity said that it was not in order that woman should anticipate man in a greeting. Nevertheless, they fell into connubial relationship, having been instructed by two wagtails which flew to the spot. Presently the Goddess bore her divine consort a son, but the baby was weak and boneless as a leech. Disgusted with it, they abandoned it on the waters, putting it in a boat made of reeds. Their second offspring was as disappointing as the first. The two Deities, now sorely

disappointed at their failure and full of misgivings, ascended to Heaven to inquire of the Heavenly Deities the causes of their misfortunes. The latter performed the ceremony of divining and said to them: "It is the woman's fault. In turning round the Pillar, it was not right and proper that the female Deity should in speaking have taken precedence of the male. That is the reason." The two Deities saw the truth of this divine suggestion, and made up their minds to rectify the error. So, returning to the earth again, they went once more around the Heavenly Pillar. This time Izanagi spoke first saying: "How delightful to meet so beautiful a maiden!" "How happy I am," responded Izanami, "that I should meet such a handsome youth!" This process was more appropriate and in accordance with the law of nature. After this, all the children born to them left nothing to be desired. First, the island of Awaji was born, next, Shikoku, then, the island of Oki, followed by Kyushu; after that, the island Tsushima came into being, and lastly, Honshu, the main island of Japan. The name of Oyashi- ma-kuni (the Country of the Eight Great Islands) was given to these eight islands. After this, the two Deities became the parents of numerous smaller islands destined to surround the larger ones.

2) From the *Nihongi*, The Age of the Gods, Book 1, translated by William George Aston, in the public domain.

Of old, Heaven and Earth were not yet separated, and the In and Yo not yet divided. They formed a chaotic mass like an egg which was of obscurely defined limits and contained germs.

The purer and clearer part was thinly drawn out, and formed Heaven, while the heavier and grosser element settled down and became Earth.

The finer element easily became a united body, but the consolidation of the heavy and gross element was accomplished with difficulty.

Heaven was therefore formed first, and Earth was established subsequently.

Thereafter divine beings were produced between them.

Hence it is said that when the world began to be created, the soil of which lands were composed floated about in a manner which might be compared to the floating of a fish sporting on the surface of the water.

At this time a certain thing was produced between Heaven and Earth. It was in form like a reed-shoot. Now this became transformed into a God, and was called Kuni-toko-tachi no Mikoto.

Next there was Kuni no sa-tsuchi no Mikoto, and next Toyo-kumu-nu no Mikoto, in all three deities.

These were pure males spontaneously developed by the operation of the principle of Heaven.

In one writing it is said: "When Heaven and Earth began, a thing existed in the midst of the Void. Its shape may not be described. Within it a deity was spontaneously produced, whose name was Kuni-toko-tachi no Mikoto, also called Kuni-soko-tachi no Mikoto. Next there was Kuni no sa-tsuchi no Mikoto, also called Kuni no sa-tachi no Mikoto. Next there was Toyo-kuni-nushi no Mikoto, also called Toyo-kumu-nu no Mikoto, Toyo-ka-fushi-no no Mikoto, Uki-fu-no-toyo-kahi no Mikoto, Toyo-kuni-no no Mikoto, Toyo-kuhi-no no Mikoto, Ha-ko-kuni-no no Mikoto, or Mi-no no Mikoto."

In one writing it is said: "Of old, when the land was Young and the earth young, it floated about, as it were floating oil. At this time a thing was produced within the land, in shape like a reed-shoot when it sprouts forth. From this there was a deity developed, whose name was Umashi-ashi-kabi-hiko-ji no Mikoto. Next there was Kuni no toko-tachi no Mikoto, and next Kuni no satsuchi no Mikoto."

In one writing it is said: "When Heaven and Earth were in a state of chaos, there was first of all a deity, whose name was Umashi-ashi-kabi-hiko-ji no Mikoto. Next there was Kuni-soko-tachi no Mikoto."

In one writing it is said: "When Heaven and Earth began, there were deities produced together, whose names were, first, Kuni-no-toko-tachi no Mikoto, and next Kuni no satsuchi no Mikoto." It is further stated: "The names of the gods which were produced in the Plain of High Heaven were Ama no mi-naka-nushi no Mikoto, next Taka-mi-musubi no Mikoto, next Kami-mi-musubi no Mikoto."

In one writing it is said: "Before Heaven and Earth were produced, there was something which might be compared to a cloud floating over the sea. It had no place of attachment for its root. In the midst of this a thing was generated which resembled a reed-shoot when it is first produced in the mud. This became straightway transformed into human shape and was called Kuni no toko-tachi no Mikoto."

## Part II : Japan in the Iron Age (Classical Period)—the Yayoi Age, 300BCE—300CE

**Overview.** The shift from the Jōmon era to the Yayoi era in Japan took place over several centuries. Civilization progressed in “fits and starts,” which is to say, in a rather irregular and sporadic fashion. In the realm of technology, some late Jōmon people were still using stone tools and weapons. Others used a blend of bronze and stone tools and weapons. For example, stone axe heads might be used alongside bronze spears and arrow tips. Still other settlements had completely adopted bronze technology. In agriculture, late Jōmon people were slowly transitioning to more sedentary agriculture. This likely first began with nuts and berries. For example, very large examples of nuts and berries have been found in settlement pits, much larger than grew naturally in the wild. This indicates that Jōmon people were likely selecting for size and planting bushes and trees that produced a greater bounty. Alongside innovations in agriculture, late Jōmon era people were also beginning to group into larger settlements and were no longer always moving with the seasons or when resources began to dwindle. This required advances in government, long-term planning, some social cohesion and the careful allocation of food stuffs and other essential items. In short, society was beginning to emerge. What distinguishes the Yayoi era from the Jōmon era, however, was a relatively quick transition to sedentary agriculture. In particular, Yayoi Japanese rather suddenly (in archaeological terms) began to produce rice using patterns of farming we know as “wet rice” agriculture. Rice transformed Japan in fundamental ways and allowed for the creation of Japanese culture. Indeed, rice still plays a central role in Japanese culture and society.

### Events

The Yayoi period falls largely into the era of “pre-history.” That means that even though the Yayoi Japanese were modern humans and were using bronze and iron tools and weapons, they had not developed writing. Instead, they used the spoken language to navigate an increasingly complex society. Therefore, though it is possible in many other early societies to know many of the events of the same age, knowledge of the Yayoi people is generally limited to that which others have written about them or that we can glean from archeological evidence and other sources such as DNA evidence and linguistic archaeology.

**Wet Rice Agriculture.** The development of wet rice agriculture in Japan sometime between 1000BCE and 250BCE is the single most important event in the entire history of Japan. Though it is not clear exactly when it first arrived or what group of migrants first introduced it, rice still permeates virtually every element of contemporary Japanese culture and society. It was (and remains) more than just the single most important staple in the diet of Japanese and is eaten three times a day at breakfast, lunch and dinner. Indeed, there is almost a spiritual link between this grain and people of Japan and is still used in religious rituals and festivals. Wet rice agriculture requires a great deal of water and a relatively warm climate to cultivate. This limits where migrants to Japan during the late Jōmon and early Yayoi periods came from to include Korea, central China or Southeast Asia, since rice farming had long been established in these places. For many decades, it has been generally settled scholarship that most migrants came from Korea during this period, a theory that has yet to be definitively disproven. Recently, however, advances in plant DNA technology have allowed us to determine that Japanese short grain rice is most closely connected to the rice grown in the Yangzi River Valley in China. This indicates that either migrants brought the same strain of rice to Japan and central China at roughly the same time or—and this is more likely—this particular strain of rice originated in central China and made its way to Japan, via Korea, from the source.

**Human Migration.** Advances in human DNA technology have reinforced the long-standing hypotheses that many Yayoi era Japanese were descendants of people from the Korean Peninsula. Archeological evidence indicates that these migrants spread bronze and iron technology from Kyūshū northward to Honshū. It is assumed that they brought rice with them as well. In addition, some scholars, such as Ann Kumar, have made a compelling argument that migrants from Southeast Asia also made their way to Japan during the Yayoi period. Evidence for this includes distinctive architectural elements in large buildings and the forging of certain kinds of metal objects used in religious ceremonies.

## Government

**Japan in Chinese Documents.** Though Yayoi era Japanese had not yet developed writing, other nearby people groups had. The Chinese, in particular, had been writing for at least a millennium. In addition, the Chinese already had a high-functioning central government complete with an autocratic monarch, stable tax base, massive military, vast land holdings and a mature culture. Virtually all the specifics we know about Yayoi government and culture therefore comes from Chinese sources. In this instance, the short-lived Wei Kingdom (220-265 CE) compiled and finally published a document in 297 CE entitled *Wei Zhi*(The History of the Wei Kingdom)in which mention is first made of a people from the “Land of *Wa*” (Japan).

**Pimiko.** According to Chinese documents, Japanese society in the middle Yayoi era had evolved to include over one-hundred known groups. Each group had a leader. Sometime during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, a great, but unnamed, chieftain emerged among the communities and ruled most of them for several decades, followed by a period in which the Chinese understood that there was no great chieftain. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, thirty communities banded together and came to be known as the Kingdom of Yamatai. They selected as their ruler a woman named Pimiko, who had as a part of her duties control of the people through supernatural and religious means. It is unknown the extent to which she actually ruled the people of Yamatai, but she appeared to be more than a figurehead. The Chinese conferred upon her the title of “Queen of Wa,” a designation she accepted and used until her death. She is said to have had many hundreds of female attendants and one male attendant. It is instructive that when she was buried, more than a hundred people were sacrificed and placed in her grave. This indicates that she was very powerful and ruled a significant number of people. After a few years of disorder, one of Pimiko’s female relatives, a girl of thirteen years, was placed on the throne. Her name was Iyo, but we know nothing more about her except that her position was subsequently endorsed by the Wei. Though Japan’s first chronicle, the *Kojiki*(Record of Ancient Matters), published in 711CE, mentions other monarchs during the Yayoi period, they are still considered to be mythical. It should be noted that no connection has been made by scholars between Pimiko, a name that means “daughter of the sun” and could refer to one of several high-ranking spiritual leaders or monarchs and Iyo and any of the monarchs named in the *Kojiki*. Japanese archaeologists have not determined exactly where Yamatai was located. Options include Northern Kyūshū and the Yamato Plain (near what is today the city of Nara). Conclusive proof, however, remains elusive.

## Culture

**Religion.** Organized religion had not yet emerged in Japan during the Yayoi period. However, it is known from the Chinese sources, in particular, the *Wei Zhi*(The History of the Wei Kingdom), that the Japanese were spiritual and sought out wisdom through divination. Yayoi period Japanese burned bones and then attempted to interpret them as a way of discerning spiritual direction. This assumes the presence of an interpreter, most likely a shaman or other holy man or woman. Evidence exists in the form of fired clay images of animals, frogs, the moon and the like that Yayoi era Japanese likely followed animistic practices and were also generally superstitious. The Chinese sources indicate that when going on a long voyage, they appointed a fortune keeper, someone whose job it was to act as the spiritual presence on the trip. He was required to abstain from sexual relations, not eat meat and not even to wash for the duration of the trip. If successful, he was showered with gifts upon his return. If ill fortune befell the trip and the holy man was deemed to have not kept his vows, he could be killed. It is very likely that many Japanese, based on the connection to the Han and Wei, were aware of Confucianism and Buddhism, both of which were well-established on the mainland. However, conclusive proof that organized religion had taken hold in Japan has not yet been discovered.

**Sculpture.** Yayoi period Japanese produced a full range of ceramics—everything from very utilitarian clay pots to highly decorative religious artifacts to a whistle. In part, the Yayoi period is demarcated from the Jōmon period (8000-300 BCE) which preceded it, and Kofun period (250-538 CE) which followed it, by the particular style of pottery produced. Jōmon period pottery was generally very rough and crudely produced. However, Yayoi period pottery is more refined and used processes that are also found in

Korea. It is likely that migrants brought this technology with them from Korea and, finding it useful, was adopted by Japanese potters. In particular, Yayoi period potters burnished porous surfaces with slip, which had the effect of smoothing the surface and making it more waterproof. Slip is a form of liquefied clay that has a slightly different composition than what is found in the body of an object and is added before firing. In addition, slip allowed for different forms of decoration and Yayoi pottery is distinguished by red and occasionally black pigment being used in decoration. There is no evidence of Yayoi potters using a wheel or other mechanical aids during production. Therefore, it is likely that potters used the cord stacking method to mold objects, indicating some continuity between Jōmon pottery and Yayoi pottery.

**Bronze and Iron.** Yayoi artisans had also become adept at casting bronze and iron. This technology, which came to Japan very late in human history, was quickly adopted by Yayoi Japanese. In particular, Yayoi artisans crafted iron weapons—swords, tools, armor, rudimentary jewelry and cast bells and mirrors—for use in religious ceremonies. Motifs in sculpture and decoration on pottery included female figures, celestial objects, birds, wild and domesticated animals and structures.

## **Society**

**The Effect of Rice on Society.** The primary difference between Jōmon period Japanese and Yayoi period Japanese was rice. However small this distinction may seem today, it marked a fundamental change in the way society was ordered. Instead of moving from time to time when seasons changed or when resources dwindled, Yayoi Japanese lived long-term in settlements and villages, some of which grew quite large. Society was ordered around the cultivation, storage, distribution and protection of this most important food stuff. When successfully implemented, rice cultivation provided a stable, reliable source of excess calories, which in turn allowed for population increases. A larger population required more social structure, the careful control of resources and the development of local government. Villagers had to learn how to get along with those who were not necessarily members of the same family or clan. Standards of normative behavior had to be set, mutually agreed upon and carefully followed.

The rudimentary pit dwellings that characterized the Jōmon period were abandoned and more permanent above ground dwellings began to be built. In general, Yayoi villages were built on new ground and the archaeological evidence indicates few if any Yayoi settlements were built on old Jōmon settlements. This is likely because the physical needs of a hunter-gatherer society were very different than those associated with rice paddy farming. Yayoi period dwellings had to be fairly close to rice paddies, water and irrigation infrastructure, but higher and far enough away from water so as to not be flooded periodically. Village dwellings were also grouped around rice storage buildings so that they could be controlled and protected and food easily distributed.

**Specialization in Society.** The cultivation of rice allowed for some specialization in society. Because of its high caloric value, successful rice farmers could usually produce more calories than could be consumed by an individual or family. This freed other members of society to engage in pursuits other than agriculture. Some became religious figures, others village headmen, and still others were freed to develop martial skills which could be used to protect the village and farming infrastructure. On a related topic, it is also during the Yayoi period that we see the first evidence of some stratification of society, although its precise contours are not known. For example, prominent men were sometimes buried with multiple wives, which indicates that some men were likely denied the opportunity to find a mate. In short, the cultivation of rice created an environment in which Japanese society could emerge.

## Economy

**Technology.** Like every other element of society during the Yayoi period, the cultivation of rice transformed the economy. In the Jōmon period, most Japanese were hunter-gatherers and it is difficult to speak of an economy of any size or scale. However, the cultivation of rice in the Yayoi period changed that because it required new forms of technology. In general terms, Yayoi period Japanese transitioned from stone to bronze to iron during the period of three or four centuries—likely through the importation of technology from Korea. Bronze, as a metal, was stronger and more utilitarian than stone or wood—media still found in Yayoi period sites. The forging of bronze required special knowledge and intensive quality control. However, the casting of iron did not require intensive specialization and could be carried out by those with little training and access to a rudimentary furnace. It is believed that bronze and iron were produced side-by-side during this period. Among the iron tools discovered in Yayoi period archaeological sites were farming implements such as shovels, hoes, axes, fish hooks, chisels and knives. The natural resources needed to forge these new tools (and weapons) were in short supply and it is believed that those who controlled iron in its raw form were able to charge a premium for it. Indeed, given its importance in agriculture and warfare, a number of anthropologists have argued that gaining access to iron may well have been the impetus for the creation of regional population centers of the Yamato Plain and Northern Kyūshū. The iron trade developed and tied disparate villages together. Those with iron weapons could out compete their less technological advanced neighbors and those with iron tools could produce more food.

**Agricultural Advances.** In order to cultivate rice, paddies had to be created. Paddies had to be flooded during the transplantation stage of development for a period of several weeks. This required land to be transformed as well because paddies must be flat and ringed by small dykes, a condition that rarely if ever exists in a state of nature. Shovels, hoes and other earth moving tools were necessary to prepare the land. Canals, ditches and other irrigation infrastructure had to be tied in to rivers and creeks. Finally, sluice gates and a drainage mechanism had to be in place in order to remove water from the paddies at the appropriate time. In short, wet rice agriculture is very labor intensive and was facilitated by technological advances in metallurgy. Labor demands of this magnitude required villages to become larger, well led and more socially sophisticated.

Alongside advancements in agriculture, Yayoi period Japanese continued to forage and hunt. Iron spear tips, arrows and knives made the taking of large game easier. Iron fish hooks made it easier to catch fish and rudimentary iron traps made ensnaring small game possible. Iron therefore became the foundation of the late Yayoi period economy. Those who had a ready supply of raw materials and the technical knowledge of how to forge it came to dominate society and likely emerged as some of the first elites in Yayoi period Japan.

## **Readings**

- 1) Koji Mizoguchi, *The Archaeology of Japan: From the Earliest Rice Farming Villages to the Rise of the State*, (Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 53-213.
- 2) Mark Hudson, *Ruins of Identity: Ethnogenesis in the Japanese Islands*, (University of Hawaii Press, 1999).
- 3) Ann Kumar, *Globalizing the Prehistory of Japan: Language, Genes and Civilization*, (Routledge Press, 2009).
- 4) J. Edward Kidder, Jr., *Himiko and Japan's Elusive Chieftdom of Yamatai: Archaeology, History and Mythology*, (University of Hawaii Press, 2007).
- 5) William Wayne Farris, *Sacred Texts and Buried Treasures: Issues in the Historical Archaeology of Ancient Japan*, (University of Hawaii Press, 1998), pp. 1-54.

6) Gina Barnes, *State Formation in Japan: Emergence of a 4<sup>th</sup> Century Ruling Elite*, (Routledge Press, 2006).

### Questions for Discussion

- 1) The lesson has characterized the introduction of wet rice agriculture as being the most important event in the entire history of Japan. Do you agree with this statement or do you think it is an exaggeration? Do you think it understates the importance of rice? If an exaggeration, what other event in the history of Japan does it compare to? To what extent does the food one grows and consumes shape culture and society? Does it have greater effect than the political system? Is it more important than religion?
- 2) What was the connection between the introduction of bronze and iron technology and the development of the nascent Yamato state? Did new tools, weapons and implements remake society or allow it become more of what it already was? Were new elites created for society? Or did the existing elites, given their access to resources and wealth, buy and use them and remain in the positions they already enjoyed? What effect did new technology have on the indigenous population? Were they displaced or assimilated?
- 3) Many of the early Japanese chieftains/monarchs wanted validation from various Chinese emperors. Why do you think they were willing to debase themselves and make themselves subservient all for the purposes of having an honorific title conferred upon them by a foreign power? Is this behavior rational? Or was there some other benefit from Chinese recognition? Is it possible to see this sort of behavior in the contemporary world?

### Texts

1) From *History of the Kingdom of Wei (Wei zhi, 297 CE)*, found in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*. Edited by Ryusaku Tsunoda, Theodore de Bary and Donald Keene, (Columbia University Press, 1958), pp 4-7.

The people of Wa [Japan] dwell in the middle of the ocean on the mountainous islands southeast of [the prefecture of] Daifang. They formerly comprised more than one hundred communities. During the Han dynasty, [Wa] envoys appeared at the court; today, thirty of their communities maintain intercourse with us through envoys and scribes. ...

In their meetings and in their deportment, there is no distinction between father and so or between men and women. They are fond of liquor. In their worship, men of importance simply clap their hands instead of kneeling or bowing. The people live long, some to one hundred and others to eighty or ninety years. Ordinarily, men of importance have four or five wives; the lesser ones, two or three. Women are not loose in morals or jealous. There is no theft, and litigation is infrequent. In case of violations of the law, the light offender loses his wife and children by confiscation; as for the grave offender, the members of his household and also his kinsmen are exterminated. There are class distinctions among the people, and some men are vassals of others. ...

The country formerly had a man as ruler. For some seventy or eighty years after that there were disturbances and warfare. Thereupon the people agreed upon a woman for their ruler. Her name was Pimiko. She occupied herself with magic and sorcery, bewitching the people. Though mature in age, she remained unmarried. She had a younger brother who assisted her in ruling the country. After she became the ruler, there were few who saw her. She had one thousand women as attendants, but only one man. He served her food and drink and acted as a medium of communication. She resided in a palace surrounded by towers and stockades, with armed guards in a state of constant vigilance. ...

In the sixth month of the second year of Jingchu [238 C.E.], the Queen of Wa sent the grandee Nashonmi and others to visit the prefecture [of Daifang], where they requested permission to proceed to the Emperor's court with tribute. The Governor, Liu Xia, dispatched an officer to accompany the party to the capital. In answer to the Queen of Wa, an edict of the Emperor, issued in the twelfth month of the same year, said as follows:

Herein we address Pimiko, Queen of Wa, whom we now officially call a friend of Wei. The Governor of Daifang, Liu Xia, has sent a messenger to accompany your vassal, Nashonmi, and his lieutenant, TsushiGori. They have arrived here with your tribute, consisting of four male slaves and six female slaves, together with two pieces of cloth with designs, each twenty feet in length. You live very far away across the sea; yet you have sent an embassy with tribute. Your loyalty and filial piety we appreciate exceedingly. We confer upon you, therefore, the title "Queen of Wa Friendly to Wei," together with the decoration of the gold seal with purple ribbon. The latter, properly encased, is to be sent to you through the Governor. We expect you, O Queen, to rule your people in peace and to endeavor to be devoted and obedient. ...

When Pimiko passed away, a great mound was raised, more than a hundred paces in diameter. Over a hundred male and female attendants followed her to the grave. Then a king was placed on the throne, but the people would not obey him. Assassination and murder followed; more than one thousand were thus slain.

A relative of Pimiko named Iyo, a girl of thirteen, was [then] made queen and order was restored. Zheng [the Chinese ambassador] issued a proclamation to the effect that Iyo was the ruler. Then Iyo sent a delegation of twenty under the grandee Yazaku, General of the Imperial Guard, to accompany Zheng home [to China]. The delegation visited the capital and presented thirty male and female slaves. It also offered to the court five thousand white gems and two pieces of carved jade, as well as twenty pieces of brocade with variegated designs.

2) From the *Nihongi*, 720 CE (The Chronicles of Japan), translated by W. G. Aston, 1896, pp. 110-114. An account of a battle to expand the empire in the east that likely took place in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. In the public domain.

Emperor Jimmu was forty-five years of age when he addressed the assemblage of his brothers and children: "Long ago, this central land of the Reed Plains was bequeathed to our imperial ancestors by the heavenly deities, Takamimusubi-no-Kami and Amaterasu-Omikami. ... However, the remote regions still do not enjoy the benefit of our imperial rule, with each town having its own master and each village its own chief. Each of them sets up his own boundaries and contends for supremacy against other masters and chiefs.

"I have heard from an old deity knowledgeable in the affairs of the land and sea that in the east there is a beautiful land encircled by blue mountains. This must be the land from which our great task of spreading our benevolent rule can begin, for it is indeed the center of the universe. ... Let us go there and make it our capital. ...

In the winter of that year...the Emperor personally led imperial princes and a naval force to embark on his eastern expedition. ...

When Nagasunehiko heard of the expedition, he said, "The children of the heavenly deities are coming to rob me of my country." He immediately mobilized his troops and intercepted Jimmu's troops at the hill of Kusaka and engaged in a battle. ... The imperial forces were unable to advance. Concerned with the reversal, the Emperor formulated a new divine plan and said to himself: "I am the descendant of the Sun Goddess, and it is against the way of

heaven to face the sun in attacking my enemy. Therefore our forces must retreat to make a show of weakness. After making sacrifice to the deities of heaven and earth, we shall march with the sun on our back. We shall trample down our enemies with the might of the sun. In this way, without staining our swords with blood, our enemies can be conquered.” So he ordered the troops to retreat to the port of Kusaka and regroup there.

[After withdrawing to Kusaka, the imperial forces sailed southward, landed at a port in the present-day Kita peninsula, and again advanced north toward Yamato.]

The precipitous mountains provided such effective barriers that the imperial forces were not able to advance into the interior, and there was no path they could tread. Then one night, Amaterasu Omikami appeared to the Emperor in a dream: “I will send you the Yatagarasu, let it guide you through the land.” The following day, indeed, the Yatagarasu appeared flying down from the great expanse of the sky. The Emperor said: “The coming of this bird signifies the fulfillment of my auspicious dream. How wonderful it is! Our imperial ancestor, Amaterasu Omikami, desires to help us in the founding of our empire.”

3) From the *Nihongi*, 720 CE (The Chronicles of Japan), translated by W. G. Aston, 1896, pp. 202-211. On the Emishi and the Death of a Prince. In the public domain.

In the summer of the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the Emperor Keikō's reign [12<sup>th</sup> emperor], there was a rebellion by eastern barbarians, and the frontier was in the state of siege. ... The Emperor addressed his ministers. “The eastern country is not secure, and numerous rebellious chieftains have sprung up. In the case of the Emishi, the revolt is total, and they frequently steal from our loyal subjects. Whom can I send to suppress this rebellion?” To this inquiry, none of the ministers knew how to answer.

[After another prince had refused to bear arms, concealing himself in the thicket,] Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto manly proclaimed. “It has not been many years since I subdued the Kumaso. Now the Emishi in the east are reveling against us. If we allow it to continue, there can be no universal peace. Your subject is aware of the difficulties and begs of you to be sent to quell the rebellion.” The Emperor gave a battle axe to Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto and gave him the following charge: “We hear that the eastern barbarians are men of violent disposition, making crime as their credo. Their villages have no chiefs, and towns have no masters. Each of them covets a territory and plunders one another. Their mountains and fields are inhabited by malicious deities and demented demons, who stop traffic and bar the roads to cause difficulties. Amongst those eastern barbarians, the Emishi are the most powerful. Their men and women live together in promiscuity and they make no differentiation between father in son. In winter they dwell in holes and in summer they live in nests. They use furs as their clothing and drink blood. Brothers are suspicious of one another. ... When they receive a favor, they forget it, but if an injury is done, they repay it with vengeance. ... They plunder our frontier, and steal from our people the hard-earned products in agriculture and sericulture. When attacked, they hide in the grasses and if pursued, they enter into the mountains. From the olden days, they have not been able to receive the influence of our benevolent civilization. ... Heaven has taken pity on my want of intelligence and on the unmanageable conditions of the country, and has sent you to execute the work of heaven so as to perpetuate the existence of our imperial institution. My empire is your empire, and this position I hold is your position. Use your profound judgement and wisdom to guard against iniquity and rebellious movement. Exercise your authority with majesty and pacify people with virtue. Whenever possible subjugate people without recourse to arms. Use carefully chosen words to teach moderation to rebellious chiefs. If it fails, eradicate those malicious demons by displaying your armed might. ...

When Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto first reached Suruga, the brigands falsely pledged allegiance. They urged the prince to hunt, claiming that their field was rich in large deer, whose breath was like the morning mist and legs dense woods. Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto believed their

words, and went into the middle of the field to hunt. The brigands, intending to kill the prince, set the field ablaze. Realizing that he had been deceived, the prince brought out his flint and steel and kindled a counter fire. The prince cried out: "I am almost betrayed," and burnt all the brigands and exterminated them. ...

Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto turned to Owari, and married a daughter of the lord of Owari by the name of Murakumo, and remained there for a month. While there he heard that there was a ferocious deity on Mount Ibuki in Ōmi. He took off his sword and left it in the house of Miyazuhime, and then set out on foot to investigate. When he reached Mount Ibuki, his way was blocked by a great serpent which was the incarnation of the mountain god. Without knowing that the main deity took the shape of a serpent, Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto reasoned: "This great serpent must be a messenger of the ferocious deity. Unless I can kill the main deity, there no use being bothered by its messenger." So he strode over and went on. The mountain god raised up clouds and made freezing rain to fall. The hills were covered with mist, and the valleys were darkened. The prince could no longer find his way. ... All he could do was to brave the mist and force his way onward. Finally when he succeeded in escaping from the mountain, he was not quite himself, looking like a drunken man. ...

It was at that time that Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto first became ill. With great difficulty, he made his way to Owari and entered the house of Miyazuhime, and then moved on to Ise and to Ōtsu. ... When he reached the field of Nobo, the pain became almost insufferable. He made arrangements to have the prisoners he obtained in wars against the Emishi sent to the Ise Shrine as part of his thanks offering, and dispatched Kibi-no Takehiko to the Emperor to report. ... The prince died on the field of Nobo at the age of thirty. ... The Emperor ordered his ministers and functionaries to bury the body of the prince in a tomb of the Nobo field in the land of Ise.

Now, Yamatotakeru-no-Mikoto, taking the shape of a white bird, left his tomb (*misasagi*) and flew towards the direction of Yamato. The ministers opened the coffin, only to discover the empty clothing remaining, and there was no corpse. Messengers were sent to follow the trace of the white bird. It stopped on the plain of Kotohiki in Yamato, so another tomb was erected. The white bird flew on again until it reached Kawachi, and remained in the village of Furuichi. Accordingly, the third tomb was erected. Men of those days called these three tombs (*misasagi*), "the white bird *misasagi*." Finally, the white bird soared high above in heaven, and nothing is buried in the *misasagi* except his clothing and official cap. ...

## SECTION II : POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

Part 1: Early Postclassical Period

Part 2: Late Postclassical Period

### PART 1: EARLY POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

**Overview** Japan had been transformed in a relatively short period of time during the Yayoi period (300BCE-300CE). The introduction of wet rice agriculture, bronze and iron technology and significant human migration—all most likely coming from the Korean Peninsula—created an environment in which society and culture could emerge. Settlements were no longer sparse and widely dispersed and were becoming larger and more sophisticated. Social structures, local government and indigenous religion had developed. Though there were no cities, large villages appear in the archeological record and large clans dominated. Northern Kyūshū and the Yamato Plain (near the city of Nara today) in particular are known regional centers late in the Yayoi period within which food stuffs, cast and forged objects such as farm implements, weapons, religious objects and the like were traded. As Japan entered the early post-classical age, the first central government appeared where powerful monarchs ruled approximately half of what is today contemporary Japan. During this period, the Japanese also adopted Chinese writing, which means that some real people, history and events are known to posterity. In short, Japan came of age during this period. The golden age of early Japanese history had arrived.

#### Events

**Horse-Riding Culture.** Between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries CE, there was another wave of migration from the mainland. These immigrants brought with them new technology and a new set of organizational skills—both of which were very useful in military applications. For example, there is archaeological evidence of a horse-riding culture that came from Korea, of warriors wearing armor and of the ability of some leaders to harness the labor of large groups of people for the building of the very large tombs which distinguished the era. Historians agree that sometime between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is possible to speak of an emerging “Japanese culture.”

**The Yamato Clan.** During this time several clans began to vie for dominance. One in particular, the Yamato, emerged as “first among equals” at some point in the late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 6<sup>th</sup> century and proclaimed themselves the Imperial family. This process did not go unnoticed by the other clan chieftains and a series of struggles ensued. The Yamato were very capable leaders and not above using bribery, force and diplomacy to maneuver themselves into power. For example, the Yamato clan, who ruled an area around what is today the city of Nara, was allied with the Korean kingdom of Paekche. This allowed for the importation from the continent of iron weapons, weavers, scribes, metal workers and other artisans before their rivals.

**Prince Shōtoku.** One of the most prominent leaders of early Yamato Japan was an aristocrat known as Prince Shōtoku (574-622). Prince Shōtoku never became emperor even though he was the son of Emperor Yōmei (518-587) and was one of the Yamato leaders who helped defeat the rival Mononobe clan at the Battle of Shigisan in 587. The *Nihongi*, an 8<sup>th</sup> century document which chronicles the early years of Yamato Japan, indicates that Prince Shōtoku convinced the Emperor to import many Chinese institutions. Some scholars believe that he even made a journey to the mainland, a dangerous proposition in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Prince Shōtoku is credited with bringing to Japan the Chinese calendar, Chinese ideas on statehood and legal system, art and, though some scholars dispute this, Buddhism.

**The Capital City of Nara.** In 710, the Imperial family decided to build a permanent capital called Nara, which gives name to the Nara Period (710-794). Prior to 710, reigning emperors would build a new seat of government, administer the realm during his (or her) reign and then upon the death of the emperor and the coronation of a new emperor, a new seat of government would be built. It is not entirely clear how this practice got started, however, most historians believe that Buddhist notions on the ritual defilement of

space associated with death and bodily decomposition led most rulers to seek out a new space. Because of this, Japanese rulers prior to 710 rarely built grand, imposing cities or structures.

**The Dōkyo Incident.** Having close ties with religious organizations can be a tricky thing, however. Within a decade of the Emperor Shōmu's death (701-756), trouble began to brew with his successor, the Empress Kōken (718-770). The chronicles tell of a special relationship that sprang up in 764 between the Empress and a Buddhist monk named Dōkyo (700-772). Though it is unclear whether there was any romantic attachment, Dōkyo very, very quickly rose through the ranks, began to put on royal airs and appeared to be making a play for the throne itself. This threat to the prerogatives of the Imperial household became intolerable, but no action was taken because Kōken's premature death in 770 rendered this unnecessary. Still—the threat posed by the Buddhist institutions had become all too clear to the court. In the aftermath of the Dōkyo Incident, the Imperial family and their handlers decided that, among other reasons, factional machinations among the Buddhist organizations in Nara would never again threaten the prerogatives of the throne. In an effort to ensure that it never happened again, the Emperor Kanmu (737-806) decided to construct a new capital. After a few years of searching and consultation, a new site was selected—Nagaoka. Construction began in the year 784 and within a few months, an Imperial Palace and a few other official buildings were sufficiently complete to begin to move the seat of government. But, in one of the great mysteries of Japanese history, the entire city was abandoned in 794 and the search for a new one began.

**The New Capital City of Heian.** The site for another new capital city was situated near both Nara and Nagaoka. From a military perspective, it was very well chosen. It was ringed on three sides by mountains, had ample fresh water supplies and was near enough to the sea for easy access. The city would be named Heiankyō. Though it would change names from Heiankyō, to Heian to Kyōto, it would remain the capital city from 794 to 1868.

**The Fujiwara Period.** One of the defining characteristics of the Heian period (794-1185) is the prominence of one aristocratic family—the Fujiwara. Prior to becoming the most important court family, the Fujiwara had served the Imperial family in various capacities since at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Later, a member of the Fujiwara family held the position of regent (*sesshō*) to an underage (usually) boy emperor. Still later, a Fujiwara would be named regent to an adult emperor (*kampaku*). The Fujiwara were able to maintain their grip on power for more than two hundred years. Indeed—most of the positions they held at court became hereditary. The early Fujiwara nobles were masterful politicians. One in particular, Yoshifusa (804-872), who became regent to the Emperor Montoku (826-858), is reported to have married his daughter Akirakeiko off to the Emperor Montoku—something which was not at all unexpected given his position as grand minister of state. That meant that his grandson would become the next emperor—and Yoshifusa would become his regent (*sesshō*) as well. This is made all the more important because, in Japan, the offspring of nobility were often raised in their mother's family for several years. Yoshifusa's position as head of household and regent allowed him to raise the boy emperor as a Fujiwara and manipulate imperial institutions to his advantage. Thereafter, it became practice for a Fujiwara to marry off a daughter (or niece) to a crown prince or reigning emperor (who was also usually a Fujiwara!). In this way, enormous wealth, privilege and power accumulated to this family.

**Fujiwara no Michinaga.** The most famous of all Fujiwara was Michinaga (966-1027). Michinaga was a man of great passions, a lover of strong drink and of beautiful women. He was perhaps the most masterful politician of the Heian period. He was, without question the most powerful, wealthiest man in the land. He was a contemporary of the novelist MurasakiShikibu, author of the world's first novel—*Tale of Genji*. Several of the stories in Murasaki's work are reportedly about him. Michinaga had an amazing legacy. He married 4 daughters to emperors, was uncle to 2 emperors and was grandfather to another 3 emperors.

**Grand Estates.** The world of the shining prince (Michinaga's Japan), though brilliant, was destined to be short lived. Even in the midst of the golden era, structural problems were beginning to become evident. In particular, there was an increasing shortfall in tax revenue. In part, this was because taxes were raised to pay for the profligate lifestyle of the court and aristocrats and in part because of conditions outside anyone's control such as poor harvests, natural disasters and the like. However, peasants and low-

ranking members of society could (and often did) give their land to aristocrats who had tax exemptions. Those peasants were then able to stay on the land and pay a smaller portion of their income to the aristocrat in rent. Grand estates (*shōen*) became very large indeed. This led to a spiraling problem of tax avoidance, higher taxes to make up the shortfall and additional attempts at tax avoidance. The old Heian system (the *ritsuryō* system), though many years away from collapse, seemed to be on the wane and imperial power began to decline.

**The Period of the Retired Emperors.** The Fujiwara domination of Heian Japan, based as it was on biology and politics, was not very strong. All it took was one Fujiwara consort not being able to produce an heir and/or the unwillingness of an emperor or crown prince to marry another Fujiwara and the system ended. This happened during the time of the Emperor Shirakawa (1053-1129). As a relatively young man, Shirakawa set about doing the sorts of things the Fujiwara had done—collect grand estates and the money that came along with them—and get involved in marriage politics. In 1086, Shirakawa abdicated, but he would become the power behind the scenes for the next 43 years. This set off a series of struggles between the Fujiwara and a series of retired emperors which would mark the beginning of the end of the era.

**The Military.** The Imperial court had to rely upon “enforcers” to maintain law and order in the provinces and to ensure the efficient administration of the realm. In an era before the existence of a police force or constabulary, this task was often left to military families. The two most prominent of these were the Minamoto (SeiwaGenji) and the Taira (Heike). The Minamoto were descendants of the Emperor Seiwa (850-881), whose grandson—Tsunemoto (894-961) was given a military position by the Fujiwara. Over the course of time, the Minamoto came to have a very strong fighting force on land. The Taira were descendants of the Emperor Kanmu (737-806). Their strength was the navy.

**The Hōgen and Heiji Insurrections.** Two rebellions characterized the struggles between various member of the Fujiwara family and the retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa (1127-1192). The first of these small clashes took place in the city of Heian in the year 1156 and is called the Hōgen Rebellion. This was a small insurrection with only a few hundred warriors on all sides participating. What started as a struggle to determine Imperial succession between the Fujiwara regent Yorinaga (1120-1156) and Go-Shirakawa ended with a victory by the Taira and the execution of the Minamoto chieftain—Tameyoshi (1096-1156). Go-Shirakawa’s power, influence and authority, though damaged by the affair, was not greatly diminished. Tameyoshi’s son was ordered by the Taira chieftain, Kiyomori (1118-1181), to demonstrate his loyalty by cutting off his father’s head—a task he resisted doing for understandable reasons. This set off a blood feud between the two military families which would last for decades. In the Heiji Rebellion a few years later in 1159, many hundreds of warriors were involved. Prior to this time, warfare could be characterized as a “gentleman’s conflict.” The intensity and bloodshed of the Heiji Rebellion was somewhat unexpected. The participants in this action were much the same—Taira and allies vs. Minamoto and allies—but there were more of them on all sides. Taira Kiyomori, fighting on the side of Emperor Nijō (1143-1165), was prepared to fight using whatever tactics provided the best chance of success—even if it meant the death of civilians, the use of arson as a weapon—even threatening the safety of the Imperial court. The Minamoto, nominally allied with Go-Shirakawa, were unwilling to use savage, overwhelming force to win the day. This was a fatal blunder. Many of the Minamoto clan were executed and had their heads displayed on pikes in the public squares of Heian. War in the Heian period was becoming more serious.

**Minamoto Yoritomo.** After the Heiji Rebellion, Kiyomori was the undisputed military leader in the land. He was initially perceived to be the savior of the emperor himself. He was so powerful that many historians consider him to be something like an early shōgun—although that was a title to which he neither aspired nor held. Rather, Kiyomori wanted to be a courtier, and began to accumulate titles, land, and even began to engage in marriage politics. Indeed, he had one of his daughters married off to the Emperor Takakura (1161-1181). This meant that his grandson, Antoku (1178-1185), would be a Taira emperor! The chronicles describe Kiyomori as *nouveau riche* and not yet accepted as an equal by members of the late Heian aristocracy. Nonetheless, he was the undisputed power in the land and even became Chancellor of the realm—a title reserved at that time for the highest members of aristocracy. As the political landscape was reset in the decades after the Heiji Insurrection, it eventually became clear

that Kiyomori intended to rule if not reign. However, for those with political grievances against Kiyomori, there was no one they could petition who could check his power.

**The Hōjō.**In the aftermath of the Heiji Insurrection, Kiyomori had, uncharacteristically, shown mercy to the youngest sons and heirs to the headship of the Minamoto clan. These two boys—one most likely in his early teens (Yoritomo) and the other an infant (Yoshitsune)—were sent to live in exile in the small city of Kamakura near the present city of Tokyo. The boys were cared for by a branch family of the Taira, the Hōjō, and made a ward of Hōjō Tokimasa (1138-1215), the clan leader. The boys grew up in Kamakura and developed a fondness for their guardians/captors.

**The Gempei War.**In 1179, Kiyomori was 61 years old and, sensing his mortality, moved to consolidate his official power, eliminate his rivals and protect the (new) prerogatives of his descendants. His grandson, the future Emperor Antoku, was made crown prince. Kiyomori believed his enemies were conspiring against him—a charge which was all too true. A plot was “discovered” and the retired Emperor Go-Shirakawa was arrested. Other government figures were removed from power and banished. This *coup d'état* by Kiyomori was finally more than the elites of Japan could tolerate. There was a sense in the land that a final showdown was imminent.

In 1180, Yoritomo (1147-1199), then approximately 33 years old, received a letter in Kamakura from Go-Shirakawa in which he was asked to chastise the traitor Kiyomori. Yoritomo, with revenge on his mind for the dishonorable deaths of his father and grandfather, took up the cause. This would later become known as the Gempei War (1180-1185). In 1181, the despised Kiyomori died leaving the Taira without leadership. A series of battles ensued, some small and some large, which ended in the annihilation of the Taira. Much to the consternation of Go-Shirakawa, Yoritomo had no intention of returning to Heian to await Imperial orders. He was named shōgun in 1192, a title which had long existed but which was without political power before this time. Yoritomo then set about creating a shōgunate mostly independent of the throne.

## Government

**Land-Holding.** In the early years of Yamato dominance, the extent of Imperial control over the country is not clear. It is believed that they started out ruling in coalition with other clans and slowly overwhelmed their rivals as conditions allowed. By the 8<sup>th</sup> century, most of Japan from the Kansai area (around present day Osaka) west and south is believed to have been subject to the throne. Western Honshū and most of Kyūshū, though not densely populated by today's standards, was generally settled. Over time, ethnic Japanese colonists continued to migrate northward and by at least the 10<sup>th</sup> century, the Imperial family claimed all of Honshū. It is clear, however, that the area north of present-day Sendai was very sparsely populated and central control was tenuous. Indeed, the title of shogun first appeared when Japanese military units were sent to subjugate the north. Their commander's title was *Sei-i Tai shōgun* (supreme commander for the subjugation of the northern barbarians). Nonetheless, as the Japanese emperors extended geographic control, they also continued to expand political control.

**Taxation.**Rather than reinventing the wheel, the Japanese monarchs looked to the Tang Empire in China (618-907) for a deliberate system of landholding and its most important accompanying element, a rational basis for taxation. These were implemented in Japan and became known as the Taika reforms. In this system, peasants were initially allotted 2 tan (about ½ of an acre) per male over the age of 5 years old and 2/3rds of that amount for females over the age of 5 to farm. Given that in theory the emperor had provided land for the peasants, failure to pay taxes could result in expulsion from the land and quickly to starvation. Initially, the tax—which was based on crop production—was not too onerous and amounted to only 5%. That number later increased significantly. In addition to raising revenue for the Imperial treasury, this also removed the land from the control of local elites because the Emperor had to rely upon a bureaucracy to administer the system.

**Statehood.**In the Nara period and the early years of the Heian period, the Emperor ruled as well as reigned. He named a set of advisors and ministers, most of whom were courtiers, to administer a discrete portfolio. The emperor ruled the provinces through governors, whose job it was to keep the peace,

implement imperial decrees and laws—and most importantly see that taxes were deposited into the treasury. The chronicles tell us that many of these governors increasingly became less willing to leave the city, the only civilization in the country and began to spend more time in the capital rather than doing their jobs in the rural areas. During the last years of the Nara era, they would appoint deputies to do their jobs, levy extraordinarily high taxes and sometimes behave in a coercive and intimidating manner. In the final years of Kanmu's reign, he cracked down on the worst abuses by creating "circuit inspectors," whose job it was to check on court appointees. Slowly, power became more and more centralized in the office of the emperor during the early years of the Heian period.

By the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Fujiwara family had effectively seized control of the monarchy and whoever was head of the Fujiwara household effectively ruled Japan, a system that lasted for approximately 200 years. The Fujiwara leader married a daughter (or niece) to an emperor or crown prince, which resulted in the next generation being a Fujiwara emperor. Most often, a Fujiwara boy who had not yet reached the age of majority was placed on the throne and required a regent, which then became the Fujiwara head of household. This arrangement lasted long enough that the positions they occupied became hereditary and the Fujiwara came to be known as the premier court nobles.

**The Military.** In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, the emperor established a military. Each province was to provide a certain number of soldiers for a standing army. The soldiers were to drill and be ready in case of emergency. After the period of unification was complete, however, there was little need for a large military, even one of dubious quality, because there were no known external threats after Tang China went into decline. The standing army therefore transitioned to a much smaller, more professional force positioned mostly in the rural areas and commanded by either a member of the Taira or Minamoto clan. In the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Japanese military came to be used as a tool for the suppression of the political enemies of the Fujiwara or a retired emperor.

## Culture

**Shintō.** The indigenous religion of Japan is called Shintō. Shintō means the "way of the gods" and is polytheistic. Rather than worshipping one single, all powerful God, as is the case in the religions from the Abrahamic traditions, adherents of Shintō venerate and worship many different gods (*kami*) which are reflected in the natural world. Natural wonders, old trees, waterfalls and the like are examples of objects to be venerated. Shintō has no sacred texts, no code of conduct, little concept of the afterlife and a poorly defined liturgy. Shintō provided a cosmology for Japan and introduced the sun goddess Amaterasu, the founding deity of Japan. It would be difficult to convert to Shintō if one were not Japanese. Shintō is often described as being a way of life for the Japanese, but it is not necessarily a philosophy. One can worship at a Shintō shrine or where ever objects in nature are found. Shintō is not exclusive. In fact, many Japanese are adherents of both Shintō and Buddhism.

**Buddhism.** Buddhism arrived in Japan in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries (probably earlier—but documentary and archaeological evidence for this is lacking) and remains a vibrant part of the religious landscape of Japan today. There are many, many different sects of Buddhism in Japan, some of which have largely disappeared in places such as China and India—where Buddhism originated. The emerging Yamato rulers of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries eagerly embraced Buddhism as a way to legitimize their own rule and provided funding for the building of temples and monasteries. The earliest temple complex constructed, of the Tōdaiji sect, can be found in the ancient capital city of Nara. It was the Emperor Shōmu (701-756) who is credited with the casting of the gigantic, 49ft tall statue of the Daibutsu (great Buddha) which now rests in the great hall in Nara. During this period, Buddhism was privileged in Japan, generously funded and protected by the Emperor. Temples were built all over Japan and Buddhism became institutionally linked to the throne. The Emperor Kanmu (737-806) also understood the importance of Buddhism in Japan and decided that the new capital city of Heian should have religious institutions of its own. He decided to become a patron of two new sects of Buddhism—Tendai and Shingon. Both of these organizations were later urged to ordain their own clergy (which further diminished the power of the Tōdaiji sect in Nara) and build complexes on the mountains near the city. Both of these sects are still prominent in Japan today. Buddhism is as important in the history of Japan as the Roman Catholic Church is to the history of Europe.

## Language and Literature.

**Kanbun: The Literary Form of Chinese.** The Chinese language was the single greatest influence on the development of Japanese language and literature. Before the time that Japanese civilization was beginning to coalesce in the 5th and 6th centuries, Japan had a spoken language, but no written language. As Japan's ruling elites learned more and more about the brilliance of China through their envoys abroad, they determined to adopt the written form of the Chinese language as a tool to help govern the Japanese people. After all, the Chinese language represented both a way to communicate in writing—something any government requires—and the glory of the Tang Dynasties—the world's greatest civilization at the time. The Japanese would later call this language *kanbun*—Chinese writing.

*Kanbun* became the language of officialdom and of the imperial household during the Nara period (710-784). It was one of the means through which the ancient government sought to legitimize its rule and assert its authority. By bringing writing to a people who had none, *kanbun* also represented civilization. In time, it came to occupy much the same position in Japan as Latin did in Europe. Later, Chinese characters were also modified to serve as Japanese writing (syllabary). Initially, the Japanese imperial court employed immigrant scribes to act as chroniclers and to help conduct the business of state. Naturally, the need arose over time to train more people to read and write the language. However, the rigors of learning such a difficult foreign language led to the development of many variant forms. Often, sentence structure was modified to reflect a writing style that more closely approximated Japanese grammar. Even at this early stage of language development, the various shades of *kanbun* had begun to blur. Nonetheless, knowledge of the language offered access to power. Many strove to master it. Those who did so were revered as learned, erudite men. By the next historical period, the Heian era (794-1185), *kanbun* had become the language of the elite, the cultured and the refined.

Some of the earliest examples of Japanese writing in *kanbun* can be seen in works produced in the seventh century. One of the most prominent is the *Kenpo Jūshichijū*, known in English as the “Constitution of Seventeen Articles.” Many scholars believe that the Regent Shōtoku Taishi (572-622), revered as one of the most able statesmen in all of Japanese history, wrote or supervised the writing of this document. He was impressed with all things Chinese and probably visited that country on at least one occasion. This document is one of the first works outlining the form and function of the state. Most official documents of the Nara and early Heian periods were written in *kanbun*. Among the famous works of literature written in *kanbun* were the *Kojiki*, *Nihongi* and the *Man'yōshū*. These works represent a significant portion of the extant narratives and poems from the earliest periods of Japanese culture. It should be noted, however, that these works were written in a slightly variant form of *kanbun*. Proper nouns posed the most immediate challenge because no Chinese characters existed to represent place names in Japan or the names of people. Even in its earliest forms, *kanbun* had to be adopted to suit the needs of the Japanese. Japanese literature in pre-history and antiquity therefore reflects both Japanese and Chinese sensibilities.

**Fiction.** *The Tale of Genji*, arguably the world's first novel, was written in a form of language linguists call *wabun*. *Wabun*, as the name suggests, is literally Japanese-style writing. It is distinguished by the use of *kana*—Japanese syllabary which was used to represent Japanese sounds. Nonetheless, some Chinese characters were interspersed in the narrative depending on the author and time period in which it was written. *Wabun* was the language spoken by the Japanese aristocracy of the mid-to-late Heian period. Heian aristocrats were very fond of poetry and sought to express themselves through this medium—a pastime Japanese still consider to be a mark of artistic accomplishment. However, women were not sufficiently educated in the Chinese language to use *kanbun* to write poetry and began to write using the spoken language instead. In this way, *wabun* emerged as an identifiable form by the tenth century. *Wabun* is often described as soft, flowery and richly descriptive. It reflected the privileged lifestyle of the Heian aristocracy. It was also much more accessible to larger segments of the ruling elites than *kanbun*.

*The Tale of Genji* was written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Murasaki Shikibu (978-1014). It is a work of narrative fiction with a “realistic” plot, when compared to other works of the same period. The work details the successful and unsuccessful romantic adventures of Prince Genji, the son of an imperial concubine. Many scholars believe that inspiration for some of the events in the work came from the life and exploits

of the most politically powerful man in Japan at the time: the courtier (and advisor to the emperor) Fujiwara no Michinaga (966-1028). *The Tale of Genji* was generally well known in Heian court circles and has come to be considered one of the most important works of long form prose ever composed.

*The Pillow Book* was composed at roughly the same time as *The Tale of Genji*. It was written by SeiShōnagon (966-1017), who was a lady-in-waiting to the Empress Sadako (977-1001). Unlike *The Tale of Genji*, *The Pillow Book* is a work of observations, of events and personalities of the Imperial court. The author relates stories of romance—both requited and unrequited—directly but with decorum. She was not above sharing gossip, if it suited her purposes. Her insights reveal the aesthetic of the Heian court—how they played, lived, worked and even dressed. In short, her depiction of the Heian court, along with MurasakiShikibu's *Genji* (and her diary), provides a depiction of Heian Japan which would otherwise have severely limited our knowledge of the age. Their works are all the more important because they provide a woman's perspective—something sorely lacking even in the western world in the same period.

## **Society**

**The Development of Social Classes.** The stratification of society began in earnest in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries. Prior to that time, virtually everyone was somehow involved in or linked to subsistence agriculture—either cultivation, storage, distribution or protection. Even religious figures spent time beseeching the spirits to provide good harvests. As political and social structures began to mature, larger segments of the population were removed from cultivation and were engaged in more specialized pursuits. This led to a recognizable triangle-shaped social structure of monarchs, aristocrats, clergy, bureaucrats, skilled laborers, village leaders all the way down to peasants. Still, 95% + of the population were peasants. Most lived in small villages and rarely had contact with anyone other than other villagers, village headmen, low-ranking clergy, a few skilled laborers and perhaps itinerant peddlers. Most peasants had little to no access to education and lived lives similar to their immediate ancestors. Dwellings were small, hand built and had thatched roofs, small windows and rudimentary chimneys.

**Gender Roles.** Both peasant men and women worked hard or didn't live long. Women were generally keepers of home and hearth. Their primary job was to gather and prepare food, and men worked the fields and rice paddies. However, it should be noted that during planting and harvest seasons, both genders and all age groups could be found in the paddies. Indeed, religious festivals grew up around women transplanting rice into flooded paddies. Men sometimes hunted and trapped animals if they had access to forests and other lands.

**Local Government.** Village life revolved around family and the village headman. He was the intermediary between government officials who set rice (tax) quotas and the peasants. His job was to collect the tax, keep the peace and settle disputes before they came to the attention of officials above the village level. It is believed that spouses were selected by parents; and girls in particular were married at a very young age. If sufficiently nourished, women spent most of their adult lives pregnant or nursing and could expect to lose a significant number of their offspring to injury or illness in childhood.

**Normative Behavior for the Aristocracy.** Aristocratic society was highly ritualized and refined in the Heian periods. Virtually all lived in the city of Heian. Men were head of household, generally well educated and earned a living. Women were a part of public life mostly insofar as they were objects of desire and/or wooing by men or vice versa. Many aristocratic women were literate (at least partially) and free to attend parties and poetry exhibitions but could not expect to rise to positions of leadership outside of their homes—and no woman has become emperor or shogun since the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Aristocratic men were expected to marry for politics and take second wives, concubines or mistresses for love. Women, however, could only be married to one man at a time. Principal wives were expected to remain faithful during childbearing years. Divorce, however, was acceptable and remarriage legal for both genders. Aristocratic women lived in a society which glamorized the taking of lovers and were largely free to participate. Both genders controlled who they had affairs with and could spurn a potential lover or suiter at will.

## Economy

**Agriculture.** The economy of Nara and Heian Japan was based on rice and other agricultural products. Skilled laborers such as masons, smithies, carpenters, coopers, fletchers and the like were able to ply their trade and made a good living. But they, like all others, supported agriculture. In the early years, tax assessments were determined by how much rice each parcel of land produced. Rice came to represent life and wealth was measured not by land alone, but by how much rice it produced.

**The System of Landholding.** It was in the best interests of the monarchy during the Nara and Heian periods for peasants to expand land under cultivation because it would enlarge the tax base, enrich the imperial treasury and provide additional calories for population expansion. After the Taika reforms of 7<sup>th</sup> centuries which set out a rational system of landholding, peasants were encouraged to engage in the very, very labor intensive work of transforming land into rice paddies. Few did. Before the first grain of rice could be planted, trees had to be cleared, land leveled, rice paddy levees built, canals dug, sluice gates built and water diverted. Because of the difficulty of the work, peasants would only do this if given tax abatements for several years. In due course, this was forthcoming and it is believed that agriculture expanded some in most years. This was facilitated by a period of domestic peace and the institution of central government. As a result, government budgets in the Nara and early Heian periods came to rely on constant growth decade after decade. However, this period of economic expansion did not last forever. There are many reasons for this. First, most land that could be easily brought under cultivation was transformed early on in the process. Second, land under intensive cultivation became exhausted of nutrients and was abandoned. Third, corrupt government officials demanded extortionist-rates of tax payments. At times these became so high that land was seized and brought under the control of aristocrats who did not pay tax. And then there was the curious phenomenon of aristocrats going to economically-strapped peasants with a promise of lower taxes (rent) if they gave their land to tax exempt aristocrats.

**Shōen.** Slowly, vast estates called *shōen* began to emerge which paid for the profligate lifestyles of Heian era aristocrats. The life of the peasant didn't change much. But for the Heian aristocrats who had found a way to finance their existence, they had also sown the seeds of systemic economic collapse. By the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the imperial treasury was nearly empty, which diminished the ability of the government to carry out its essential functions. The very rural areas which produced rice (and wealth) began to give rise to their own elites, many of whom were connected to one or more of the warrior clans.

**Coinage.** During the Nara and Heian periods, trade within the country was facilitated by government control of minting. The first coins were minted during the reign of Empress Gemmei (707-715). This was made possible by the discovery of large copper deposits in western Japan. But the Japanese also minted silver and gold coins. It is no surprise that most of these coins resembled coinage on the mainland. Small denominations were round, had a square hole in their center and were carried on a string. On the front were stamped the reign names of the monarch. Large denominations of copper, silver and gold were rectangular. Some had square holes in them, others did not. When paying tax, rice—which could sometimes be a form of currency—was exchanged for silver (the preferred specie for imperial tax collectors) and deposited into the treasury. In this way, a nationwide economy allowed for the exchange of food stuffs and other trade goods.

## Readings

- 1) Karl Friday, ed. *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, (Westview Press, 2012), pp. 77-188.
- 2) Robert Borgen, *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court*, (University of Hawaii Press, 1994).
- 3) Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan*, (Kodansha America and Knopf Press, 1964)

- 4) Richard Bowring, *The Religious Traditions of Japan 500-1600*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005).
- 5) Karl Friday, *Hired Swords: The Rise of Private Warrior Power in Early Japan* (Stanford University Press, 1992).
- 6) Paul Varley, *Warriors of Japan: As Portrayed in the War Tales*, (University of Hawaii Press, 1994)

### Questions for Discussion

- 1) Japanese government was slow to develop when compared to China, Korea and others in East Asia. What elements of society finally combined to allow for the emergence of a single ruling household and a unified government? Did ancient Japan develop because of the application of new technology? Was it because of the importation of new ideas on statehood? Was it the adoption of a writing system? Was it because of advances in agriculture? Was it because of immigration? Was it because of one person's dynamic personality? Was it because of a new legal system? Or was it because of a combination of one or more of the above ideas? Perhaps it was something else altogether?
- 2) The Heian period in Japan (794-1185) is known as the "golden age" of Japanese history. Why do you think historians would describe the period this way? What was good about it? Was it the economy, the military, the arts, literature, or the government? We know that the aristocratic class lived very well and enjoyed life. But how widely was Heian period prosperity enjoyed? What about the average person? Do we know how the average person lived? Is it relevant or important to ask about the plight of the peasants or lower gentry?
- 3) Amid the glories of the Heian period, historians recognize a system that slowly became unsustainable. What weaknesses in the system might those be? What was slowing going wrong that later played a role in the collapse of civilian rule and its gradual replacement by the military? Was there an economic or agrarian downturn, an ecological problem, or a series of natural disasters? Was the fragmentation of the political elites the problem, or was it the usurpation of power by one or more people? What about the tax base and the system of landholding? In short, what caused the collapse of the Heian system and could it have been averted with strong, decisive and farsighted action?

### Texts

- 1) From the *Nihongi*, 720 CE (The Chronicles of Japan), translated by W. G. Aston, 1896, pp. 128-133. The Constitution of Prince Shōtoku. In the public domain.

C.E. 604, Summer, 4<sup>th</sup> Month, 3<sup>rd</sup> day. The Prince Imperial Shōtoku in person prepared laws for the first time. There were seventeen clauses, as follows:

1. Harmony should be valued and quarrels should be avoided. Everyone has his biases, and few men are far-sighted. Therefore some disobey their lords and fathers and keep up feuds with their neighbors. But when the superiors are in harmony with each other and the inferiors are friendly, then affairs are discussed quietly and the right view of matters prevails.
2. The three treasures, which are Buddha, the (Buddhist) Law and the (Buddhist) Priesthood; should be given sincere reverence, for they are the final refuge of all living things. Few men are so bad that they cannot be taught their truth.
3. Do not fail to obey the commands of your Sovereign. He is like Heaven, which is above the Earth, and the vassal is like the Earth, which bears up Heaven. When Heaven and Earth are properly in place, the four seasons follow their course and all is well in Nature. But if the Earth

attempts to take the place of Heaven, Heaven would simply fall in ruin. That is why the vassal listens when the lord speaks, and the inferior obeys when the superior acts. Consequently when you receive the commands of your Sovereign, do not fail to carry them out or ruin will be the natural result.

4. The Ministers and officials of the state should make proper behavior their first principle, for if the superiors do not behave properly, the inferiors are disorderly; if inferiors behave improperly, offenses will naturally result. Therefore when lord and vassal behave with propriety, the distinctions of rank are not confused: when the people behave properly the Government will be in good order.

5. Deal impartially with the legal complaints which are submitted to you. If the man who is to decide suits at law makes gain his motive, and hears cases with a view to receiving bribes, then the suits of the rich man will be like a stone flung into water, meeting no resistance, while the complaints of the poor will be like water thrown upon a stone. In these circumstances the poor man will not know where to go, nor will he behave as he should.

6. Punish the evil and reward the good. This was the excellent rule of antiquity. Therefore do not hide the good qualities of others or fail to correct what is wrong when you see it. Flatterers and deceivers are a sharp weapon for the overthrow of the state, and a sharp sword for the destruction of the people. Men of this kind are never loyal to their lord, or to the people. All this is a source of serious civil disturbances.

7. Every man has his own work. Do not let the spheres of duty be confused. When wise men are entrusted with office, the sound of praise arises. If corrupt men hold office, disasters and tumult multiply. In all things, whether great or small, find the right man and they will be well managed. Therefore the wise sovereigns of antiquity sought the man to fill the office, and not the office to suit the man. If this is done the state will be lasting and the realm will be free from danger.

8. Ministers and officials should attend the Court early in the morning and retire late, for the whole day is hardly enough for the accomplishment of state business. If one is late in attending Court, emergencies cannot be met; if officials retire early, the work cannot be completed.

9. Good faith is the foundation of right. In everything let there be good faith, for if the lord and the vassal keep faith with one another, what cannot be accomplished? If the lord and the vassal do not keep faith with each other, everything will end in failure.

10. Let us control ourselves and not be resentful when others disagree with us, for all men have hearts and each heart has its own leanings. The right of others is our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men. How can anyone lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong? For we are all wise sometimes and foolish at others. Therefore, though others give way to anger, let us on the contrary dread our own faults, and though we may think we alone are in the right, let us follow the majority and act like them.

11. Know the difference between merit and demerit, and deal out to each its reward and punishment. In these days, reward does not always follow merit, or punishment follow crime. You high officials who have charge of public affairs, make it your business to give clear rewards and punishments.

12. Do not let the local nobility levy taxes on the people. There cannot be two lords in a country; the people cannot have two masters. The sovereign is the sole master of the people of the whole realm, and the officials that he appoints are all his subjects. How can they presume to levy taxes on the people.

13. All people entrusted with office should attend equally to their duties. Their work may sometimes be interrupted due to illness or their being sent on missions. But whenever they are able to attend to business they should do so as if they knew what it was about and not obstruct public affairs on the grounds they are not personally familiar with them.

14. Do not be envious! For if we envy others, then they in turn will envy us. The evils of envy know no limit. If others surpass us in intelligence, we are not pleased; if they are more able, we are envious. But if we do not find wise men and sages, how shall the realm be governed?

15. To subordinate private interests to the public good-that is the path of a vassal. Now if a man is influenced by private motives, he will be resentful, and if he is influenced by resentment he will fail to act harmoniously with others. If he fails to act harmoniously with others, the public interest will suffer. Resentment interferes with order and is subversive of law.

16. Employ the people in forced labor at seasonable times. This is an ancient and excellent rule. Employ them in the winter months when they are at leisure, but not from Spring to Autumn, when they are busy with agriculture or with the mulberry trees (the leaves of which are fed to silkworms). For if they do not attend to agriculture, what will there be to eat? If they do not attend to the mulberry trees, what will there be for clothing?

17. Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone. They should be discussed with many people. Small matters are of less consequence and it is unnecessary to consult a number of people. It is only in the case of important affairs, when there is a suspicion that they may miscarry, that one should consult with others, so as to arrive at the right conclusion.

2) From *The Tale of Genji*, first published in 1008 CE. A poetic account of a failed nighttime assignation between Michinaga no Fujiwara, the most powerful man in Japan and the author, MurasakiShikibu. In the public domain.

*Michinaga:*

“How sad for him who stands the whole night long

Knocking on your cedar door

Tap-tap-tap like the cry of the kuina bird.”

*MurasakiShikibu's response:*

“Sadder for her who had answered the kuina's tap,

For it was no innocent bird who stood there knocking on the door”

3) From the *Nihongi*, 720 CE(The Chronicles of Japan), translated by W. G. Aston, 1896, pp. 278-279. The Emperor Nintoku.In the public domain.

4<sup>th</sup> year, Spring, 2<sup>nd</sup> month, 6<sup>th</sup> day. The Emperor addressed his ministers, saying: we ascended a lofty tower and looked far and wide, but no smoke arose in the land. From this, we gather that the people are poor, and that in the houses there are none cooking rice. we have heard that in the reigns of the wise sovereigns of antiquity, from everyone was heard the sound of songs hymning their virtue, in every house there was the ditty, “How happy are we.” But now when we observe the people, for three years past, no voice of eulogy is heard; the smoke of

cooking has become rarer and rarer. By this we know that the five grains do not come up, and that the people are in extreme want. Even in the Home provinces there are some who are not supplied; what must it be in the provinces outside of our domain?

3<sup>rd</sup> month, 21<sup>st</sup> day. The following decree was issued: "From this time forward, for the space of three years, let forced labor be entirely abolished, and let the people have rest from toil." From this day forth his robes of state and shoes did not wear out, and none were made. The warm food and hot broths did not become sour or putrid, and were not renewed. He disciplined his heart and restrained his impulses so that he discharged his functions without effort.

Therefore, the Palace enclosure fell to ruin and was not rebuilt: the thatch decayed, and was not repaired; the wind and rain entered by the chinks and soaked the coverlets; the starlight filtered through the decayed places and exposed the bed mats. After this the wind and rain came in due season, the five grains produced in abundance. For the space of three autumns the people had plenty, the praises of his virtue filled the land, and the smoke of cooking was also thick.

7<sup>th</sup> year, summer, 4<sup>th</sup> month, 1<sup>st</sup> day. The Emperor was on his tower and looking far and wide, saw smoke arising plentifully. On this day he addressed the Empress, saying: "We are now prosperous. What can there be to grieve for?" The Empress answered and said: "What dost thou mean by prosperity?" The Emperor said: "It is doubtless when the smoke fills the lands, and the people freely attain to wealth." The Empress went on to say: "The Palace enclosure is crumbling down, and there are no means of repairing it; the buildings are dilapidated so that the coverlets are exposed. Can this be called prosperity?" The Emperor said: "When Heaven establishes a Prince, it is for the sake of the people. The Prince must therefore make the people the foundation. For this reason the wise sovereigns of antiquity, if a single one of their subjects was cold and starving, cast the responsibility on themselves. Now the people's poverty is no other than Our poverty; the people's prosperity is none other than Our prosperity. There is no such thing as the people's being prosperous and yet the Prince in poverty."

## PART 2: LATE POSTCLASSICAL PERIOD

**Overview** The period after the Gempei War (1180-1185) is best described as one of transition. The old civilian system embodied in the Heian court continued to exist, but over a period of two centuries was supplanted by an increasingly important military system initiated by the first shōgun, MinamotoYoritomo (1147-1199). By the time of the Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281, the military was ascendant in the political and social realm. The transformation of Japan continued apace during the Ashikaga period (1335-1477), when the second shōgunal dynasty oversaw the continued devolution of power to the feudal lords in the provinces. The final step in this process was the Ōnin War (1467-1477), which resulted in the complete destruction of Kyoto, the only city in Japan. For a century afterwards, Japan had no cultural center, no central authority and no government, although both a titular emperor and Ashikaga shōgun still existed. In spite of all these problems, Japanese cultural development continued, matured and was in many ways, defined in the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Ashikaga shoguns, in particular, are well known for patronizing the arts and for supporting Tea Ceremony, Nō drama and the literary and visual arts. It was, in many ways, a foundational era for traditional Japanese culture. This period also gave rise to many of the samurai traditions, which were, in part, based on Zen Buddhist aesthetics and teachings supported by the Ashikaga. Still, many great lords in Japan during the Warring States period (1477-1600) sought to unify the country under their command, but this process would have to wait until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

### Events

**Kamakura.** Having defeated the Taira in the Gempei War (1180-1185), the Minamoto had no intention of being drawn into the court intrigue of Heian Japan. Yoritomo believed this had contributed to the downfall of his rivals, the Taira. When the fighting was over, Yoritomo simply set up his military government (*bakufu*) in the city of Kamakura where his wife, Hōjō Masako, lived. Initially, there wasn't much change in Japan because the civilian government still existed—although in a diminished state. Before long, however, Yoritomo began to issue decrees which had the same effect as law. He had fourteen years to act as shōgun before his death in 1199 after falling from a horse—a rather ignominious end for the great warrior. His sons, Yoriie and Sanetomo, were not suited to govern and required a regent—which became, of course, HōjōTokimasa—Yoritomo's father-in-law. Tokimasa created a system whereby, the Hōjō regents sought out members of the Minamoto clan to act as titular shōguns until the year 1333. One of the greatest ironies of Yoritomo's legacy is that, even though he had struggled all his early life against the Taira, a branch family of the Taira, the Hōjō, governed Japan as regents for more than a century after his death. In the end, TairaKiyomori had actually won.

**Mongol Invasions.** The Hōjō regency had been very successful in dealing with the existential threat posed by Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281. Thousands of samurai had died and areas of Kyūshū where the fighting had taken place suffered from the privations of war. The ongoing threat of another Mongol invasion (which never occurred) from 1281 until the great Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan died in the year 1294 effectively bankrupted the treasury. Twenty years of war (or imminent threat of war) and the threat of cultural annihilation at the hands of the Mongol hoards had unified Japan in a way rarely seen before the modern era. However, Japan was traumatized and war weary.

**Go-Daigo.** In the year 1318, a new emperor of Japan assumed the throne: Go-Daigo. Unlike his predecessors, Go-Daigo was a grown man, at least 30 years old and fully capable of engaging in the rough and tumble politics of the time. He was not particularly happy about being a political pawn and fervently believed that Japanese emperors should rule as well as reign. When, in the year 1331 he was forced to abdicate by the regent HōjōTakatoki to make way for a new emperor, he raised a small army which was quickly defeated. He was then exiled, but escaped in 1333 and succeeded in having himself named emperor with help from military men such as KusunokiMasashige (1294-1336) and Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358). This ended the Hōjō regency. Go-Daigo then set about trying to rule as well as reign. In 1334 when it became clear that he was going to actually wield power as the sovereign, something which not been done in many centuries, the military men who supported him began to fall away and he was removed by Ashikaga Takauji in 1336.

**Ashikaga Takauji.** Ashikaga Takauji, though named Shōgun in 1338, was more of a “first among equals” than all powerful ruler. Japan can best be described as a (mostly) decentralized state. Feudal lords (*daimyō*) ruled the territory under their control with minimal interference from the shōgun. A balance of power among the feudal lords existed, but alliances were ever shifting in an effort to limit the power of any single *daimyō*. Nonetheless, Ashikaga shōguns still held court in Kyoto and wielded considerable power and influence for the first century or so of the Ashikaga (Muromachi) period.

**A Crisis.** The shōgun during middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was Ashikaga Yoshimasa. Yoshimasa was reportedly a capable, hands-on administrator in his early years. Increasingly, however, the task of ruling the country became an impossibility for even the most engaged executive. After a couple of decades, he developed other interests and decided to retire from office. When the topic of shōgunal succession arose, a crisis was at hand—one which, combined with other factors, would lead to full scale fighting. Recognizing the dangers of warfare in the only urban center in Japan, the (now) retired shōgun Yoshimasa issued orders that the leader of any army initiating hostilities in Kyoto would be branded a traitor—regardless of the circumstances. However, this did little to stop armies from posturing and maneuvering just outside the capital when it suited their interests. Indeed, a conflict between rival clans—the Hosokawa and the Yamana in the year 1467 lit the spark which resulted the total destruction of the city and the end of central government in Japan.

**Devastation.** The Ōnin War lasted approximately 10 years. Most of the battles were fought in and around Kyoto. By the time the conflict was over, neither the Hosokawa nor the Yamana existed as national or even regional powers. Most of the other great *daimyō* in central Hōnshū had either participated in or were allied with a participant. Many clans had been defeated by their rivals. Others had been overthrown by their retainers when they grew weak from incessant fighting. It is safe to say that the political and cultural landscape of central Hōnshū and Kyoto would have been unrecognizable to someone who had been away from the city for more than a decade. Kyoto was in ruins. The chronicles tell of foxes and wolves roaming the city, of corpses choking the streets, of thousands of buildings burned. It was a scene of absolute horror. Civilization lay in ruins. Though there was an emperor and Ashikaga shōgun, there was no effective central authority and no victorious army. The last armies that occupied Kyoto simply left after a few months because there was nothing left worth fighting over. This ushered in a period of political fragmentation unlike anything seen in Japan since before the Nara period. Local and regional warlords dominated their fiefs, schemed to defeat their rivals and become the leader of a reunified Japan. None would succeed for approximately a century. Japan had entered the Warring States (*sengoku*) period.

## **Government**

**Structure.** The changes brought about by the Gempei War (1180-1185) were incremental. Even though there was a shogun, Minamoto Yoritomo didn't immediately move to seize absolute power and to completely replace the civilian structure. Instead, Yoritomo moved to control first his own clan and retainers with the creation of the *mandokuro* (which oversaw administration and finance) and then, over a decade or so, came to appoint additional officials in the provinces. One of his first moves was to appoint *shugo*, a position best described as constable or military administrator. It is not entirely clear whether or not he was protecting the people in each province or protecting his own (new) prerogatives. Nonetheless, over the decades, the warriors in these positions came to work alongside governors appointed by the civilian administration. Many *shūgo* passed these positions down to their sons and successors and came to control the land in their own right. They became known as *daimyō*, a term best understood as regional lord in a feudal system. Another position Yoritomo created was *jitō*. These were “land stewards” or civilian administrators whose job it was to manage the finances of estates—some of which were quite large. They were, above all to oversee the collection of taxes and generally carry out the will of the shōgun in the provinces. Just like with many *shugo*, a significant number of *jitō* transitioned from being representatives of the shōgun to being medieval *daimyō*. In this way, the old Heian system where courtiers working for the emperor in the provinces slowly became wealthy and powerful, transitioned to include a different set of elites. Though it took approximately a century, power and authority increasingly

devolved away from the capital city of Kyoto to Kamakura—and more importantly—to the provinces. By the time of the Mongol invasions, both the central court and courtiers enjoyed power mostly insofar as it originated from Kamakura. Still, both the civil and military authorities continued to exist side by side, with overlapping legal and military jurisdictions.

**Jōei Code.** In 1232, the Hōjō regent Yasutoki handed down a series of legal codes in the aftermath of the *Jōkyūwar*, the failed attempt by a retired emperor to regain some power from Kamakura. It contained a series of fifty-one articles which clarified many discrepancies which had arisen as the old Heian era *ritsuryō* legal system slowly became unworkable in the new age. Among other things, it effectively established the primacy of the shōgunal authority but required warriors to respect higher officials, in particular religious institutions and whatever remained of the civilian structures and court systems. It started as a relatively simple document which was mostly directed at the new warrior elites. However, over the course of time, it became extremely complicated and was expanded to include even non-warriors nationwide. It was superseded by the Ashikaga and other shōguns, but a number of basic concepts remained until 1868.

**The Military.** A loyal, standing army controlled by a ruling emperor had ceased to exist long before the Gempei War ended in 1185. Powerful cliques in Heian Japan (794-1185) each called upon their own military units to protect their own interests beginning in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. In general, two families—the Taira—who had lost in the Gempei War and the Minamoto—who had won, were the most prominent. But others existed, mostly as retainers to one of the two great families. After the Minamoto victory, Yoritomo sent out a number of his most trusted lieutenants to act as *shugo* and *jitō*. Some went back to their own home areas, others to completely new places. During the long period of the Hōjō regency, many of these families in the provinces emerged to exercise significant military influence in their own right. Under the titular command of the Hōjō regent, these armies controlled their own domains most of the time but could be called upon in time of national emergency. For example, the Hōjō called on the great families of Kyūshū and western Honshū during the first Mongol invasion in 1274 and 10,000 samurai responded. In the second in 1281, 40,000-50,000 samurai from all over Japan acted in defense of the realm. Japan was, for two decades, completely mobilized against foreign invasion. The military was rightly praised as the saviors of Japan and the myth of the samurai was born. It should be noted that these armies fought as small, independent units (and sometimes even as individual warriors) and not as one highly integrated, cohesive army. The structure of the military continued to devolve during the last years of the Hōjō regency and a sort of uneasy equilibrium came to exist. By the time of the Ashigakashōgunate, no single family—not even the Ashikaga—could claim to be military hegemon of Japan without the consent and/or alliance of one or more of the other great families.

## Culture

**Zen Buddhism.** In the absence of a strong central government, the Ashikaga period (1336-1477) is remembered for cultural and religious development. Buddhism, in particular, enjoyed a renaissance. This was, in part, because Ashikaga Takauji himself embraced Buddhism as he aged and patronized the religion by funding the building of monasteries and temples. It was the Ashikaga who illuminated the connection between the warrior ethic (*bushidō*) and Zen Buddhism. Zen (Chan in China) had a long presence in Japan, but it was (and still is) a very small sect. Zen stressed an austere lifestyle, the clearing of the mind and the total abandonment of ego. These characteristics, when internalized by soldiers, yielded a disciplined, unselfish warrior, free from worldly attachments and willing to sacrifice his life in service to his lord.

**The Literary Arts.** Buddhist themes and plot lines dominated Japanese literature before the modern era. It was, quite simply the single most important idea permeating virtually all genres and all types of writing. This was, in part, because more clergy were literate when compared to the rest of the population and could read and write in far greater numbers than most other segments of society. The church, as an institution, also valued literacy as a way both to proselytize and to disciple their new converts. Itinerant priests traveled from village to village telling (or singing) stories—many of which were designed to be morality plays. They either had to be memorized or written down. However, religion occupied a more

prominent role in some narratives than others. One example we have of literature which was very strongly influenced by Buddhism during the Kamakura era (1185-1333) is *Hōjōki* (An Account of My Hut). It was written in the year 1212 by the Buddhist monk Kamo no Chōmei (1155-1216). Chōmei was a published author and celebrated poet at both the imperial and shōgunal courts. He was a low-ranking aristocrat but still held court rank. He is known for his compassion and his willingness to recognize suffering and misery in the lives of others. It is not known why he took the tonsure and became a monk in 1204, but he took the opportunity to remove himself from society and relocate into a tiny hut. From his perch on the south side of a mountain outside Kyoto, Chōmei chronicled a number of the catastrophes he witnessed down in the city. In his poems, he relates instances of fire, famine, loss, destruction and ponders on the impermanence of life. It is the quintessential work reflecting Buddhist values.

***Tsurezuregusa* (Essays in Idleness).** *Essays in Idleness* was written by the Buddhist priest Kenkō Yoshida (1283-1352) in the first years of the 1330s. The festering political schism between the senior and junior branches of the Imperial family had finally broken out into open warfare due to the machinations of the Emperor Go-Daigo (1288-1339). In the end, neither Go-Daigo nor the Hōjō regents to the Kamakura Shōgunate survived the turmoil. Instead, a new general seized power and became the next shogun: Ashikaga Takauji (1305-1358)—ushering in an entirely new period in Japanese history called the Ashikaga Era (1336-1477). Kenkō was not involved in the fighting or the scheming at court because he had taken the tonsure a few years earlier. Having been a court poet, he still participated in poetry recitation gatherings at the palace during the transition. *Essays in Idleness* reflects a sense of foreboding, that Japan was entering a degenerate age. And he was correct. Kenkō's observations, idle though they were, reflected Buddhist theology on the ephemeral nature the world.

**The Fine Arts. Tea Ceremony.** The Ashikaga period is remembered for the adoption of Tea Ceremony (*Cha-no-yu*). Tea Ceremony reflects the austere lifestyle of Zen. It is highly stylized and very formal. It is still practiced as an art in Japan and is an activity that all cultured Japanese aspire to participate in at some point in their lives. The austere aesthetic is also evident in some of the representative architecture of the time. For example, the Golden Pavilion (Kinkakuji) in Kyoto was built during the reign of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (the third Ashikaga shōgun) and later became a Zen monastery. In the dramatic and visual arts, the Ashikaga period saw the importation from China of new forms of monochrome painting. These forms, which were quickly adapted to reflect Japanese artistic sensibilities, were championed by artists such as Sesshū (1420-1506) who is reported to have been one of the first to have used ink splash techniques. Perhaps the most important and well known of the cultural arts introduced in the Muromachi period were Nō and Kyōgen. These forms, especially Nō, are still performed today and can be seen in most major cities in Japan on any given night.

## Society

**Structure.** The Gempei War (1180-1185) acted as the catalyst for systemic social change in Japan. During the Heian period (794-1185), society was generally stable and the emphasis was on the civilian sector, the expansion of land under cultivation and maintenance of a functional system. That does not mean, however that the plight of the peasantry was uniformly bright and rosy. Natural disasters, poor harvests, epidemics, capricious government officials, unpredictable and high taxes and the like were all visited upon the peasants from time to time. Life could be difficult. In general, village headmen worked to maintain good relations between different peasant family groups and local officials. Local officials saw to it that the tax was paid, peace was kept and provincial officials kept happy. In the last century or so of the Heian period, another element was added to the social mix: the military. Soldiers didn't fit into the neat categories of society as understood in a civilian system. They weren't government officials, clergy, skilled craftsmen, village headmen or peasants. They were not producers of anything and, by and large, not accountable to local officials. They were small in number but exercised great influence. They also often switched allegiances on the provincial or national level and were, in short, a sort of wild card in the late Heian period—a disruptive force.

After the Gempei War, warriors slowly began to play a larger and more important role in society. As first Minamoto Yoritomo and then the Hōjō Regents expanded their official role, warrior role in society

was normalized. The *shugo* and *jitō* system carved out a place for them in society alongside the civilian sector. The Mongol invasions of 1274 and 1281 and the continued threat of a third Mongol invasion until the death of the Mongol Emperor—Kublai Khan in 1294 played a significant role in the continued shift away from the civilian system to more and more military control. For approximately two decades, the needs of the civilian sector were subsumed to the needs of national defense. Society was mobilized to face the threat of total annihilation posed by the Mongols. Smithies, fletchers, coopers, swordsmiths, armorers, and the like provided goods and services for the campaign against the Mongols. Peasants grew the food, the government helped distribute it to the military and even the clergy offered up prayers for deliverance. When the threat passed, the Hōjō were bankrupt but the military all across the country then came to occupy a central position in society. As Japan passed into the Ashikaga period (1336-1477), society was ordered around the military and became, as the prominent historian Thomas Conlon argues a “State of War.” This social system continued to evolve over the course of many centuries. But the concept of the centrality of the warrior in society remained, in one form or another, until after the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

## **Economy**

**Agriculture.** The economy of late post classical Japan was based on agriculture, and in particular, the production of rice. Rice was (and is) the single most important food stuff in Japan. Japanese eat it for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It is used as a starch and can even be made into sweets. Rice also acted as the basis of land holding for much of Japanese history. Land holdings were not only determined by geographic measurement, but by the fertility of land under wet rice cultivation. This is because Japan is mostly mountainous and unsuitable for cultivation. Therefore, wealth (and one’s tax) bill every year was determined as a percentage of that which was produced. For example, a large and successful landowner might own land that produced 1,000 koku (1 koku equals approximately 5 bushels and is normally enough to feed one man per year) of rice. The yearly tax rate might be 300-400 (or more) koku. Rice was then traded for silver and made its way into the treasury. It should be noted that the average peasant didn’t cultivate more than a few koku of rice per year nor did he regularly eat rice before the modern era. It was simply too dear to be consumed by the producers. Instead, peasants often ate millet and vegetables. Meat was rarely consumed, largely because of its expense and because of Buddhist considerations. If close to the coast or fresh water sources, fish and other aquatic life provided protein, as did tofu. As might be expected, industries grew up in Japan to support tertiary agricultural pursuits such as fishing and sericulture.

**Commerce.** As Japan moved through the Heian period, commerce grew dramatically. The imposition of law and order along with a transportation infrastructure and the like made it possible for goods to be transported from the rural areas to the capital, the only urban area of any size and consequence. Indeed, the city of Heian/Kyoto was known for trade in food stuffs, tea and items such as silk, a textile that first arrived in Japan in the Yayoi period (300BCE-300CE). Merchants in the late post classical age generally made a good living and participated in the culture of the city. However, during periods of instability and war, merchants were some of the first to suffer. In particular, when Kyoto was destroyed in the Ōnin War (1467-1477) commerce largely ceased altogether. Given that there was no central authority, commerce between domains also became problematic and continued that way until reunification had been achieved in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. For most of the Warring States period (1477-1600), commerce was possible only between two non-warring domains, a condition that sometimes existed but which was unpredictable. Even when commerce was possible, each domain set up its own checkpoints on major roads where tolls could be collected and papers checked. The control of coinage also became a problem as civilian authority devolved in the aftermath of the Gempei War (1180-1185). The debasement of coinage was one way to raise revenue, but it also led to inflation. In the early Ashikaga period, commerce was tricky because specie had to be weighed and carefully calibrated. And of course, after the Ōnin War, each great *daimyō* was free to mint their own coinage as they pleased. Commerce therefore suffered from a lack of central authority, a lack of law and order, a lack of freedom of movement and the lack of a nationwide monetary system. In spite of it all, Japanese merchants persevered and emerged in the Edo period (1600-1868) to become some of the great trading houses/companies of the contemporary era.

## Readings

- 1) Karl Friday, ed. *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, (Westview Press, 2012), pp. 189-308.
- 2) Thomas Conlan, *State of War: The Violent Order of Fourteenth Century Japan*, (University of Michigan, Center for Japanese Studies, 2003).
- 3) Pierre Francois Souyri, *The World Turned Upside Down: Medieval Japanese Society*, (Columbia University Press, 2003).
- 4) Andrew Goble, *Kenmu: Go-Daigo's Revolution*, (Harvard University Asia Center, 1996).
- 5) Mikael Adolphson, *The Teeth and Claws of the Buddha: Monastic Warriors and Sōbei in Japanese History*, (University of Hawaii Press, 2007).
- 6) Paul Varley, *The Ōnin War: History of its Origins and Background. With a Selective Translation of the Chronicle of the Ōnin*, (Columbia University Press, 1967).

## Questions for Discussion

- 1) The Gempei War marked the end of an era. The civilian government which characterized most of the Heian period was replaced by a military government. This shift, however, took many years to complete. What was the impetus for this shift? Wasn't it possible to retain many civilian institutions? Why did the new shōgunate feel it was necessary to put into place not just their own personnel, but to create a large number of entirely new bureaucratic positions? Meanwhile, what happened to the old civilian offices and office holders? Were they discarded and removed or retained but given a more limited portfolio? In other words, how did Minamoto Yoritomo and the Hōjō Regency remake the structure of Japanese government? Did this have a negative or positive effect on Japan?
- 2) The Mongol juggernaut seemed to be an unstoppable force for virtually all the people groups they encountered. Neither the Europeans states, the Russian princes, the Persians, nor the Chinese were able to put up an effective defense against the overwhelming military might of the Mongol hordes. Yet, the Japanese leadership decided to stand and fight and, if unsuccessful, risked cultural oblivion. What motivated the Hōjō to take such a firm stance knowing the stakes? Was this decision a "fool's courage" or was it a calculated risk? Though successful in their defense, Japan was forever changed by their brush with annihilation. What effect did the Mongol invasions have on the culture, government and economy of Japan?
- 3) The Ōnin War was more than a civil war. It led to the end of central government for more than a century and to near cultural collapse. What would motivate the Japanese warlords of the era to fight until there was nothing left to fight over? Were they unable to understand the consequences of their actions or did they not care if Japan was plunged in the Warring States period? Why did it take so long for a new leader of Japan to emerge? What challenges specific to Japan in the Warring States period did they face as they sought to bring order to chaos? During the Warring States period, was Japan in a state of cultural stasis? Or did culture continue to evolve and find expression?

## Texts

- 1) "The Splendor of Kiyomori." From the *Heike Monogatari*, (compiled in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century), found in the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. 45, 1919, by A. L. Sadler. Chapter 5: In the public domain.

Not only did Kiyomori himself live in splendor and luxury, but all his house likewise shared his prosperity. His eldest son Shigemori was Naidaijin and Sadaisho, his second son Munemori was Chunagon and Udaisho, his third son Tomomori was Chujo of the third grade, his eldest grandson KoremoriShosho of the fourth grade; sixteen of his house in all held offices of the higher grade (Kugyo), while thirty had right of entry to Court. The whole number of his family who drew revenues from the provinces as military officials were about sixty persons. All others who appeared are of no account in the world. Since long ago in the era of Nara no Mikado the office of Nakae-no-Taisho was first instituted in the fifth year of Shingi, and Nakae was changed to Konoe in the fourth year of Daido, only on three or four occasions have brothers occupied the offices of the Right and Left together. In the time of MontokuTenno, on the Left was Yoshifusa as Sadaijin-no-Sadaisho, on the Right, Yoshisuke as Dainagon no Udaisho; they were the sons of Fuyutsugu, the retired Sadaijin. In the time of Shujo-in, Saneyori Ono no-miyadono was Minister of the Left and MorosukeKujodono of the Right; they were sons of Teijin Ko. In the time of Go-Rei-zei-in, Norimichi O-nijodono was Minister of the Left and YorimuneHorikawadono of the Right; they were the sons of the KwampakuMido. In the time of Nijo-in, Motofusa Matsu dono was Minister of the Left, and KanezaneTsuki-no-wadono of the Right; they were the sons of Hoseijidono. All these were the sons of Regents. Among the sons of ordinary people there is no precedent.

2) "KusunokiMasashige: A Guerrilla of Unflinching Loyalty." Found in *Legends of the Samurai*, compiled and translated by Hiroaki Sato, (New York: Overlook Press, 1995), pp. 186-187.

Captain of the Imperial Police KusunokiMasashige turned to his brother, Sword bearer Masasue, and said, "Our enemies have cut us off from front and rear, and we've been separated from our command post. We now have no way of getting out of this. Let's first smash into the enemies in front and drive them around, then fight the enemies behind us!"

That's a good idea," Masasue agreed.

Then, with their 700 horsemen in front and back, they galloped into the great mass of enemies. The soldiers under Chief of the Imperial Stables of the Left Tadayoshi saw the banners with the crest of chrysanthemum and water, thought these were worthy enemies, and tried to isolate and kill Masashige and Masasue. But each brother cleaved through them from east to west and drove them from north to south. Each one, when he saw a worthy enemy, would gallop side by side with him, wrestle him down, and take his head; when the enemy was unworthy, he would strike him with a swing of the sword and run him down. Masasue and Masashige met seven times and separated seven times. Each one's sole aim was to get close enough to Tadayoshi, wrestle him down and kill him.

Tadayoshi's 500,000 horsemen were pushed around so badly by Kusunoki's 700 that they started to turn back toward Ueno, of Suma. As they did, the horse Tadayoshi rode stepped on an arrowhead with his right foreleg and began limping. The Kusunoki force swiftly caught up and was about to strike at Tadayoshi, when YakushijiJūrōJirō turned back and, as he met Tadayoshi on the bank of Lotus Pond, jumped off his horse and, brandishing a thirty-inch blade halberd held at its metal handle, slashed at the neck and chest straps of the oncoming enemy horses, in no time felling seven or eight of them. In the meantime Tadayoshi switched horses with JūrōJirō and escaped into the distance.

When General Takauji saw Chief Tadayoshi being drive back by Kusunoki and withdrawing, he issued an order, "Send in reinforcements! Don't let Tadayoshi be killed!"

At once, 6,000 horsemen of Kira, Ishitō, Kō, and Uesugi galloped to the east side of the Minato River and encircled the Kusunoki force to cut off its rear. Masashige and Masasue turned back and attacked these forces, killing or wrestling the enemies down as they galloped in and out of them. In about six hours they had sixteen engagements. Their force was reduced gradually, until only seventy-three riders remained.

Even with the small force they could have broken out of the enemy and escaped, but since leaving Kyoto, Kusunoki had had a mind to bid farewell to the world there, so he fought without retreating a step. But their spirit now drained, he and his men hurried into a house in a village north of the Minato River. When he removed his armor for disembowelment, he found

eleven sword wounds on his body. Each of the remaining, seventy-two men also had five to ten wounds. The thirteen members of the Kusunoki clan and their sixty retainers sat in two rows in the guest room with six pillars, chanted a Buddhist prayer ten times in unison before disemboweling themselves.

Masashige, sitting at the head of the group, turned to his brother, Masasue, and asked, "They say your thought at the last moment determines whether your next life is going to be good or bad. Tell me brother, what is your wish in the Nine Realms?"

Masasue laughed cheerfully and said, "I'd like to be reborn in the Human Realm seven times so that I may destroy the imperial enemy."

Masashige was pleased to hear this and said, "That's a truly sinful, evil thought, but I think exactly as you do. Well then, let us be reborn in the same way and realize our wish."

With the vow the two brothers stabbed each other and died side by side. The eleven other principal members of the clan, including Governor of Kawachi Usami Masayasu, Jungūji no Tarō Masamoro, of the Middle Palace Guards, and Wada Gorō Masataka, as well as the sixty retainers, disemboweled themselves all at once, each sitting in the place of his choice.

Kikuchi Shichirō Takeyoshi, who had come to observe the battles in Suma as the representative of his older brother, the Governor of Higo, happened upon Masashige's death. Perhaps he thought it would be a disgrace to see something like this and return. He also killed himself and fell in the fire.

3) "On the Vanity of Human Desires." From *The Miscellany of a Japanese Priest (Tsurezure Guza)*, translated by William N. Porter, (London: Humphrey Milford, 1914), pp. 34-36. In the public domain.

He who afflicts his whole life by spending it in the pursuit of riches and fame, leaving himself no leisure for quiet, is but a fool.

However great his wealth may be, he is still too poor to safeguard himself; for his money is an agent which will only buy him misfortune and call in affliction. He may "pile up his gold even to the Great Bear," but his heirs after his death will have great anxieties, and he will soon weary of taking delight only in rejoicing the eyes of silly people. Though his carriages are big, his horses are fat, and he himself is adorned with gold and jewels, wise men will think him but a sad fool. Let him throw away his gold among the mountains and fling his jewels into the deepest pool, for there is no greater simpleton than he who is blinded by money.

Some men hope that, as their fame is not buried with them, it will remain long after they are dead. But could we say that a man had excelled because he had acquired high rank and great honor? For however, ignorant and foolish he is, if he comes of a good family or has good luck, he may rise to high rank and lead a life of luxury. The Wise Man (Mencius) and the Sage (Confucius), both very worthy, were themselves content with low rank. So that he who earnestly strives for high rank and office comes next in foolishness.

Others again aim at leaving behind them in the world the very best reputation for the capabilities and kindliness. Yet on thinking it over carefully we find that this desire for fame is in reality love of praise. Those who may praise or blame, however, will not long be alive themselves, and those who may know of them by repute will soon be gone also. Whose censure, therefore, (need you fear) and whose commendation can you wish for? Moreover, praise leads only to blame. Therefore to leave a good name behind one is quite pointless, and he who aims at it comes next in foolishness.

If I may add a word of advice to those who seek persistently for knowledge and crave for learning—cleverness is productive of cunning and the worldly lusts are increased by ability. Knowledge gained by study and by listening to what is taught by others is not the true wisdom. Then what can we say is wisdom? For right and wrong are inextricably mixed together. And what can we say is goodness? A true man is above all (standards of) wisdom, virtue, ability or reputation. Who can properly appreciate him now, or hereafter? Not because he hides his virtues or pretends to be foolish, but because his whole existence is altogether beyond the limits of wisdom of folly, riches or poverty.

I have already written of the pursuit of riches and fame with an infatuated mind. Not only these but all things are profitless; not worth speaking of, not worth wishing for.

## SECTION III : EARLY MODERN PERIOD Overview

The three great unifiers Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu brought peace back to Japan after more than a century of political chaos. Japan was unified and poised to grow. However, there was a cost. The long-lasting Tokugawa regime was authoritarian and can fairly be described as a military *junta*. The samurai, as a caste of society, initially maintained law and order and only later became government bureaucrats. They lived under a different set of rules than the vast majority of society. And, though they represented only 7%-8% of the population, they exercised extensive control of society. Once the system was in place, however, the energies of the Japanese people were loosed and the country grew and developed in all ways. The early years of the Tokugawa Period (1600-1750) are understood to have been some of the best in the entire history of Japan. Agricultural development allowed for a dramatic increase in the population, and though there were still periodic times of hardship, periods of widespread hunger, as compared to earlier periods, temporarily diminished. Commerce grew along with the cities of Edo, Kyoto and Osaka and produced some of the great trading houses we still know today. Culture matured and provided us with expressions of world-class literature and theater. It was a good time to be alive in Japan as long as one didn't criticize the government or plot "changes," which was the government's way of silencing critics.

### Events

**Oda Nobunaga.** After the Ōnin War was over in 1477, national power politics had become very Darwinian. For nearly a century, great *daimyō* (feudal lords) had schemed to destroy their rivals and be the one to reunify Japan. Treachery, invasion and war were constant threats. *Daimyō* formed alliances and broke them as they saw fit. They meddled in the internal politics of their adversaries. They married daughters to competitors as a gesture of good will and then when lulled into a sense of security, proceeded to attack and assassinate rivals and take their land. They burned each other's fields and castles, poisoned water supplies and disrupted irrigation infrastructure. In this environment, it would have been nearly impossible to believe that Oda Nobunaga, the young lord of the very small domain of Owari would be the one to start the process of reunification.

**The Battle of Okehazama.** Nobunaga inherited the lordship of Owari domain upon the death of his father in 1551. He was under 20 years of age. Because of his relative youth and inexperience, he spent a few years destroying his familial rivals. By the time he was roughly 29, his brother had finally been eliminated. In the process, he had learned how to command men and the efficacy of showing little or no mercy. Indeed, Nobunaga came to be known for his excessive brutality. In 1560, one of the greatest and most powerful *daimyō* in Japan, Lord Imagawa Yoshitomo (1519-1560), determined to seize the Owari domain in a larger effort to dominate central Japan. Nobunaga's retainers were concerned that his small force of less than 3000 would not be able to defend against Imagawa's 25,000 men. Nonetheless, Nobunaga would not join the Imagawa cause and an invasion began. At the Battle of Okehazama (in Oda's domain) in 1560, Nobunaga's small force surprised and destroyed the Imagawa. The final and decisive act of the battle for Japan, however, took place not with a member and supporter of the Oda's clan, but with the lord of a neighboring clan. Some of the chronicles tell us that Imagawa's head was taken by his nominal ally—Matsudaira Motoyasu, who turned on the battlefield to support the Oda (this is disputed by some historians). This Matsudaira (a neighbor and old rival of the Oda clan) would later come to support Nobunaga and change his name to Tokugawa Ieyasu.

**Partial Unity.** Over the next two decades, Nobunaga and his soldiers began the military unification of Japan. Nobunaga was perhaps the most ruthless man of a very ruthless era. He very often massacred the survivors (and sometimes the wives and children who accompanied them to the field) and the civilian population who Nobunaga perceived had supported his enemies. Nobunaga's most famous general was an orphan named Toyotomi Hideyoshi. By the time of Nobunaga's death, roughly half of Japan was under his control or allied with him.

**Hideyoshi Toyotomi.** In 1582, Nobunaga was assassinated by one of his allies—Akechi Mitsuhide and several of the Akechi clan. Hideyoshi then immediately hunted down and destroyed all of them he could find—and seized their land and that of their Akechi allies. Though Hideyoshi had not received permission from Nobunaga's other generals for this action, his boldness had led to success. Over the next months, he moved to consolidate his power and to continue the military unification of Japan. By the late 1580s, all of Japan was controlled by one man for the first time in more than two centuries. Peace had arrived. But Japan had become a nation of warriors in a time of peace. In part to give the warriors something to do, Hideyoshi decided to invade Korea as a stepping stone to the invasion of Ming China. This action, bold though it was, reflected a growing megalomania and unpredictability that characterized Hideyoshi as he aged. In his delusions, Hideyoshi came to see himself as the descendant of the Mongol warrior Genghis Khan and rightful heir to the Celestial Kingdom of China. Though initially successful in Korea, when the Koreans began to use guerilla tactics and Ming troops arrived to repel the Japanese near the Yalu River, the invasion(s) of Korea became a disaster. Though reliable numbers are virtually impossible to determine, tens of thousands of Japanese samurai became casualties.

In 1598, one of the most dynamic personalities in all of Japanese history, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, passed from the scene. His final months had been dedicated to making sure that his heir (the five year old Hideyori) was properly cared for and that the group of trusted elders (the generals he was closest to) allowed him to inherit his titles and lands. Indeed, he made them publicly swear more than once that they would carry out his wishes. He must have perceived that there were those among them, such as Tokugawa Ieyasu, who would not.

**The Battle of Sekigahara.** Tokugawa Ieyasu was initially allied with Imagawa against Nobunaga at the Battle of Okehazama in 1560 but had later come to support the Oda clan. Since that time, the Tokugawa had been a loyal ally in the struggle to reunify Japan. However, the relationship between Oda and the Tokugawa predated Hideyoshi and any of his more recent decrees. Tokugawa Ieyasu and Hideyoshi had a complicated relationship. They had been both allies and rivals—and had even battled each other. Both realized that the best course of action was an uneasy peace. Still, Tokugawa Ieyasu was perhaps the most astute politician between the time of Fujiwara Michinaga (966-1028) and the modern era. He treated his allies well but was cunning and ruthless with his enemies. He was meticulous in his planning and careful to work behind the scenes to make sure that at the most important time, he could count on his allies. An example of his planning can be seen in one of the most consequential battles of all Japanese history: the Battle of Sekigahara in the year 1600. This was the final conflict associated with reunification and resulted in Tokugawa Ieyasu becoming the most powerful general in Japan. It set the stage for the creation of the Tokugawa shōgunate. Before hostilities commenced, Tokugawa Ieyasu had made an agreement with one of his enemies, Lord Kobayakawa, to turn on the field of battle. This surprise resulted in the Tokugawa victory.

The Battle of Sekigahara had settled who would lead Japan for two and a half centuries. Revolts and rebellions still occasionally happened, such as the Siege of Osaka in 1614 which resulted in the death of Hideyoshi's heir, Hideyori. Another was the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637-1638, which solidified Tokugawa resolve to eradicate Christianity in Japan. After Shimabara, the military in Japan increasingly sought out another role in society, for there was little unrest to quell. The Tokugawa dynasty would rule Japan without interruption until 1868.

## **Government**

**System.** While the fighting for reunification raged during a two decade period under Oda Nobunaga and Hideyoshi Toyotomi, each *daimyō* more or less ran their own fief as they saw fit. It is understood that many used some form of martial law, with close control of all areas of life essential to the continued support of military units in the field. Nobunaga had begun to institute reforms, but his efforts were truncated because of his untimely death. When Hideyoshi proclaimed the ending of hostilities in 1583 (something that wasn't exactly true), he began the process of creating a state apparatus for the peacetime administration of Japan. Given that there had not been a central government in Japan for more than a century, there were many options. However, he didn't stray too far from the existing system. Hideyoshi governed as shōguns had in the previous era, but he never assumed that title. In general, he ruled through existing *daimyō*. Though he was more than the first among equals, as long as individual

domain laws didn't interfere with his own decrees, each *daimyō* enjoyed considerable autonomy to govern. Hideyoshi had a council of elders, composed mostly of generals who had long served with him, and who advised him in matters of state.

**Reforms.** The two main governing initiatives nationwide that Hideyoshi is known for are the Great Sword Hunt (*Taikō no katanagari*) and the Land Survey (*Taikō no kenji*), both of which had long lasting and very far reaching consequences. In 1588, Hideyoshi issued a decree that required all peasants to turn over their weapons to the authorities. This demilitarized society and had the effect of giving the government a monopoly on the tools with which to commit violence and engage in uprisings. At the same time, all warriors who still had a lord were to move to castle towns and out of the rural areas. *Rōnin*, or masterless samurai, were to quickly find a lord or become a farmer and turn in their sword. This had the effect of removing the samurai from part-time farming and removing farmers from part-time soldiering. Peasants were not allowed to leave their domains without permission and all samurai were to be under the direct supervision of their lords. It is not entirely clear if it was intended or not, but this edict effectively created the upper two classes of society, a condition which would be codified into the four classes of society under the Tokugawa. The Land Survey was just as important for the health and wellbeing of Hideyoshi's government. All peasants had to return to their ancestral lands, register and recommence farming. This allowed the government to know who was on the land, and later, how much they were producing. Given that no survey had been conducted in approximately 500 years, this was sorely needed. Peasants had long resisted thorough land surveys and hid or camouflaged their land under cultivation while they waited for a different lord to take power. Hideyoshi, however, was persistent and sent the hated surveyors around several years running, and at unpredictable times. In this way, his government was able to determine with some level of accuracy who lived in Japan and how much to tax them.

**The Tokugawa Consolidation of Power.** After Hideyoshi's death in 1598 and subsequent Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, Tokugawa Ieyasu very slowly moved to consolidate his own position. First, he removed all *daimyō* who opposed him at Sekigahara and confiscated their lands as spoils of war. This made him the single largest landholder in the country. In addition, those *daimyō* who remained neutral at the time of Sekigahara were understood to be of questionable loyalty. Second, he demanded the emperor name him shōgun, a title he made sure was given to his son, Tokugawa Hidetada, in 1605. Even though he didn't know he would live another decade, this had the effect of solidifying Hidetada as his successor upon Ieyasu's death in 1616. Third, he (and his successors) began to hand down edicts such as the *Bukeshohatto*. These were initially rather minor laws and addressed the behavior of samurai, appropriate attire for samurai, marriage guidelines, rules for turning in neighbors who might be lawbreakers and the like. Later expanded, they acted as the legal basis for increasing the power of the central authorities in the city of Edo (Tokyo) and the continued diminishment of the power of the *daimyō* in the provinces.

By the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Tokugawa enjoyed a fully functioning government. Over a period of a hundred years, they had discovered through trial and error what was and was not working. The feudal system that the Tokugawa had inherited from Hideyoshi slowly evolved under the Tokugawa and came to be known by historians as "centralized feudalism." Though this would seem to be an oxymoron, it describes a system where local control was the ideal, but where the central government increasingly assumed more and more power.

## **Culture**

**Religion.** Buddhism enjoyed a renaissance during the Tokugawa era, but its role had changed from the Warring States Period (1477-1600). Before the reunification process began under Oda Nobunaga in 1560, Buddhist sects played a prominent role in the political milieu. Given that there was no central state and little in the way of law and order, abbots, priests and monks moved to protect their own interests and prerogatives. In order to do this, they contracted mercenaries and engaged warrior monks, both of which become a security threat in their own right. Nobunaga, however, made it one of his highest priorities to break the power of the church and to remove them from the governmental sphere. He is well known for engaging in acts of excessive brutality and viciousness against Buddhist institutions. Arson, wanton

slaughter and vile acts such as the large scale burning at the stake of survivors, the total destruction of temple complexes and the like were all a part of Nobunaga's military campaigns. Buddhism thereafter returned to its more traditional role.

The Tokugawa later found Buddhism to be useful as a tool for social and cultural control. State sanction was returned to the faith. Every family had to register with the local Buddhist temple, which became a repository for recording births, deaths and marriages. It was a way for a non-governmental organization to maintain records which could be used by the state but which cost to the state very little. In a spiritual sense, adherence to the Buddhist faith was mandatory because priests were to interact with parishioners on a yearly basis. Nonetheless, state obligation facilitated perfunctory adherence to the faith, which minimized personal observance.

**Christianity.** Christianity first arrived in Japan during 16<sup>th</sup> century and was very well received. Christians of all sects, Roman Catholics and Protestants, alike appeared and began to make converts among the people and among a number of powerful *daimyō*. These western missionaries and merchants also brought innovations in metallurgy and weaponry, and were willing to sell them to the highest bidder. Oda Nobunaga was an enthusiastic adopter of western military technology. The Tokugawa, however, were very suspicious of all religions other than Buddhism and the indigenous faith, Shintō. Christianity was suspect because Christians believed all authority was derived from Christ—not a secular lord. This was made manifest in the Shimabara Rebellion in 1637 in which several *daimyō* rebelled, in part, against increasingly strict rules on religion. This was the largest conflict between the Battle of Sekigahara and the battles associated with the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Christianity was then outlawed and all missionaries were expelled. Many Japanese Christians were martyred.

**Kabuki.** The Genroku years (between 1688 and 1704) are considered by scholars to have produced some of the greatest works of art (visual, dramatic and literary) of the age. Included among the great artists was the dramatist Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725), who is often compared to Shakespeare. Kabuki theatre was the most popular of the dramatic arts in the Tokugawa period. It is distinguished (even today) by the prohibition of women on the stage, a ban that took effect in 1629. Chikamatsu is well known for bringing Kabuki to the masses. In particular, his narratives were written to appeal to the average man. Stories about the pleasure districts of Edo (Yoshiwara) or Osaka (Shinmachi) were particular favorites, as were stories of unrequited love and suicide. Kabuki can be rather bawdy, is colorful, fast moving and sometimes brash. It is always interesting and fun to watch. Chikamatsu is very well known for tragedy, for creating a setting in which duty is set against the extremes of human feelings. It is this conflict that produces such a poignancy and intensity of feeling that Chikamatsu excelled at—and it also appealed to a very broad audience. Chikamatsu's ability to move an audience was unrivaled for his time. He occasionally ran afoul of the authorities because he had a tendency to address contemporary issues (something the authorities frowned upon) but placed them in historical settings.

**Bunraku.** Bunraku is best described as puppet theatre. It is believed to have originated in Osaka in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a city in which it thrived in the Tokugawa period and still thrives today. Chikamatsu also wrote for this genre. Indeed, some of his best known works were written for Bunraku. Bunraku was surprisingly popular and allowed Chikamatsu and other dramatists greater control of the presentation of their works (in addition to the narrative). Like modern *anime*, Bunraku frees characters from the constraints of the physical human condition and allows for more stylized, fanciful elements of a narrative to find expression. Bunraku requires two or three artists/actors to manipulate the doll. It is accompanied by a chanted narrative, and various instruments such as the samisen and drums.

**Censorship.** A number of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's plays were censored. The most well-known example was *Love Suicides at Amijima*. However, self-censorship was practiced more often than actual censorship. Chikamatsu's political satire entitled *The Sagami Lay Monk and the Thousand Dogs* is one such example. This was a dangerous work which criticized the policies of a shōgun soon after his death. Nonetheless, the audience seemed to understand that the work was critical of an ordinance issued by the shogun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi (1646-1709) that forbade the killing of any beast. When there was actual censorship, it occurred most often when a dramatist had slightly overstepped the bound of acceptable

public speech or when there was a crackdown—usually associated with a change in leadership or when it appeared that society was being inappropriately influenced by a play.

*Chūshingura (The Forty-Seven Rōnin)* is, without question, the most famous dramatic work of the entire Tokugawa period. It found resonance with the people of Japan in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and has been rewritten, reworked and revised on numerous occasions—but its popularity has endured. It first appeared as a bunraku play in 1748 and has since found expression as a kabuki play, a movie (many times) and even a television series. It is also well known in the western world. Indeed, a movie starring Keanu Reeves on the topic was released in 2014.

## **Society**

**Structure.** Hideyoshi Toyotomi's Great Sword Hunt (*Taikō no katanagari*) of 1588 at the end of the Warring States period (1477-1600) had the effect of demilitarizing the population and of returning to the government the monopoly on the tools with which one could commit violence. It also had the effect of separating the peasantry from the military. All peasants were required to turn in their weapons to the authorities and all warriors were to move to castle towns and submit to the authority of their lord. Warriors were also not allowed to do any job that was not a part of their military training or otherwise sanctioned by the state. In this way, most members of society became a part of an accountability unit. Over the course of the first few decades of the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), the four classes of society were clearly demarcated. One was not free to move between classes of society, thereby making them almost castes.

**The Samurai.** Samurai were at the top level of society during the Tokugawa period. They represented between 7-8% of the population and it was their job to keep the peace. After the Siege of Osaka (1614-1615) and the Shimabara Rebellion (1637-1638), however, there was little for warriors to do. There were no significant external threats and, though very small domestic uprisings sprang up from time to time, the country was largely at peace. Indeed, some would say that the late 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Japan represented a second golden age. The *daimyō* paid stipends to most of their retainers, money that came from taxation, and the samurai then sought out positions working for the government. The samurai lived under a different set of rules than the peasants and, though they could summarily execute a peasant if they presented a threat, that was an extremely rare event which later required a full investigation, potential sanction for the samurai a great deal of trouble. Samurai and most peasants did not run in the same social circles and did not regularly interact on a daily basis. The one exception was samurai who acquired a bureaucratic position (a not insignificant number) who might have cause as a government official to regularly encounter a member of the peasantry. This changed later in the period. In addition, sons and daughters of peasants and samurai occasionally married, but it was frowned upon—and samurai had to get permission to marry in advance from their lords.

**The Peasants.** Peasants were at the second level of society in the Tokugawa period. They represented 80%+ of the population. The life of the peasant had not much changed over the previous millennium. Their job was to work the fields and produce the food that they and other members of society consumed. The plight of the peasant was intimately tied to agricultural and weather patterns. Unlike in the Warring States period when a rival lord might unexpectedly seize their entire crop, burn it in the field, poison their water supply or otherwise disrupt the cycle, the Tokugawa period was more predictable. In most years, the peasants produced enough to feed themselves and pay the tax. There might be a little left over to trade for fabric, farm implements or other items they themselves could not make. Some farmers were naturally more adept than others and acquired land and material goods. In very bad years, the weather might not cooperate or insects might decimate a harvest. In these dark times, peasants succumbed to malnutrition, illness and starvation. Things could get so bad that families would result to selling children or infanticide.

**Craftsmen and Merchants.** Skilled laborers made up the third level of society. This group mostly lived in large villages and in the cities. They were masons, carpenters, coopers, smithies, and the like. They were an essential part of society and provided goods and services that were necessary in an agrarian age. The lowest class of society was the merchants. According to the ideology of the day, they were perceived as producing nothing of value and lived off the labor of others. Peasants grew the food.

Skilled craftsmen did specialized jobs and the samurai acted as a constabulary and bureaucracy. Merchants only moved goods from place to place and bought and sold items. Because of this, they were understood to be the least important class of society and were treated as such.

## Economy

**Sankinkotai.** The economy of Japan in the years between 1560 and 1800 was largely agrarian. 80%+ of the population were peasants who produced mostly rice and vegetables. 7-8% of the population were samurai who worked in the public sector. A small percentage of skilled laborers toiled forging iron and steel, making barrels, brewing sake, weaving straw mats (*tatami*) and the like and an even smaller percentage were clergy. Still, the one element of the economy that had yet to mature was commerce. Commerce required law and order, a stable government, standardized currency and a transportation infrastructure. As Japan moved into the Tokugawa period in 1600, the environment was finally right for it to emerge. In part, this was facilitated by the Tokugawa requirement known as *sankinkotai*. This transformed a fragmented country and tied it together in an unexpected way.

In the years after the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the Tokugawa began to require that all *daimyō* maintain a residence in Edo and live in the city for one year out of every two. In the year that they were back in their domains, they had to leave in Edo as a hostage their first wife and oldest son (and heir). In this way, the Tokugawa could keep watch on the *daimyō* and if one initiated an uprising back in his domain, the first casualty would be his heir. This led to great processions as *daimyō* traveled back and forth to their provincial lands. Good roads, bridges, ferries, inns, weigh stations and the like became an essential part of life. Porters were engaged to carry goods, restaurants served food and livery stables cared for horses. Great houses were also built in Edo for these lords, which put to work carpenters, servants, farmers on the outskirts of town who provided food and a whole host of other supporting professions. Banks and other financial institutions created rice or silver paper certificates. But government officials and *daimyō* were not the only ones who benefited from this system. Merchants were able to ship goods between the rapidly growing urban centers of the country. It is believed that Edo's population began to approach one million during this period, Osaka and Kyoto 400,000 each. Over the course of time, some merchants came to be quite wealthy, influential and extraordinarily successful, so much so that by the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, they were challenging the concept that merchants should be at the bottom of the social structure. A number of Japanese firms from this period still exist and are household names worldwide: Sumitomo, Mitsuzakaya, Kikkoman, Mitsui, and Mitsukoshi—to name just a few.

Over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the economy of Japan grew dramatically in virtually every sector. Though the Tokugawa policy of *sakoku* (seclusion) meant that there was international trade largely with Korea and China only, domestic commerce thrived. Advances in agriculture allowed for a dramatic and unparalleled increase in population from approximately 15 million in 1600 to approximately 30 million in 1800. Silkworm production increased dramatically and sericulture became a thriving element of the economy. Indeed, some scholars argue that Japan had already taken the first step in industrialization because rapid advances in agriculture freed increasingly large segments of the population who were no longer needed in the fields and rice paddies. The Japanese economy suffered from the same cyclical problems that all economies endured. But, in general terms, the Japanese economy grew along with the population and reached a level of maturity that matched a number of western European countries.

## Readings

- 1) Karl Friday, ed. *Japan Emerging: Premodern History to 1850*, (Westview Press, 2012), pp. 309-426.
- 2) Jeroen Lamers, *Japonius Tyrannus: The Japanese Warlord Oda Nobunaga*, (Brill Press, 2000).
- 3) Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Hideyoshi*, (Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1989).
- 4) Ronald Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*, (Stanford University Press, 1991).
- 5) Brett Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Land: Ecology and Culture in Japanese expansion, 1590-1800*, (University of California Press, 2006).
- 6) Constantine Vaporis, *Tour of Duty, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan*, (University of Hawaii Press, 2009).

## Questions for Discussion

- 1) Hideyoshi began the process of dividing Japanese society into what later became codified under the Tokugawa as the four classes: samurai, peasants, skilled craftsmen and merchants. For more than two centuries, there was little intermarriage between these groups and virtually no social mobility. It created stability in a country that had enjoyed very little in the previous century. However, it also came at a cost. What were the advantages and disadvantages of such a system? Did the system stifle or facilitate technological innovation? Was the economy negatively or positively affected by it? Was cultural growth stifled or promoted by it? How might it have been modified to minimize the worst abuses evident in the system? In the final analysis, was the division of Japanese society in the Edo period a positive or negative policy.
- 2) The Edo period is known primarily for the policy of seclusion (*sakoku*). All foreign interaction was strictly controlled by the state. This policy allowed for the development of a distinctive Japanese culture. However, it also cut off Japan from most of the rest of the world. Was this policy wise? Did it achieve its objectives? What were those objectives? Was it a wise policy for a few years, but perhaps should have been discarded long before it was? In other words, provide an evaluation of its effectiveness.
- 3) The process of reunification in Japan during the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries took many decades to complete. Why did it take so long? Which of the three great unifiers do you think did more than the others to complete the process? In order to answer this question you will need to give me a narrative of how it occurred and provide details of the various struggles/battles/movements which made it possible. Which of the three great unifiers was the least important? In other words, how should historians of East Asia consider the legacy of the three men?

## Texts

1) "The Edicts of Toyotomi Hideyoshi: Excerpts from Collections of Swords, 1588" Found in *Japan: A Documentary History: The Dawn of History to the Late Tokugawa Period*, edited by David Lu (New York: M.E. Sharp, 1997), pp. 191-192.

### (a) The 徳川幕府 Edict:

1. Farmers of all provinces are strictly forbidden to have in their possession any swords, short swords, bows, spears, firearms, or other types of weapons. If unnecessary implements of war are kept, the collection of annual rent (nengu) may become more difficult, and without provocation uprisings can be fomented. Therefore, those who perpetrate improper acts against samurai who receive a grant of land (kyūnin) must be brought to trial and punished. However, in that event, their wet and dry fields will remain unattended, and the samurai will lose their rights (chigyō) to the yields from the fields. Therefore, the heads of the provinces, samurai who receive a grant of land, and deputies must collect all the weapons described above and submit them to Hideyoshi's government.

2. The swords and short swords collected in the above manner will not be wasted. They will be used as nails and bolts in the construction of the Great Image of Buddha. In this way, farmers will benefit not only in this life but also in the lives to come.

3. If farmers possess only agricultural implements and devote themselves exclusively to cultivating the fields, they and their descendants will prosper. This compassionate concern for the well-being of the farms is the reason for the issuance of this edict, and such a concern is the foundation for the peace and security of the country and the joy and happiness of all the people. All the implements cited above shall be collected and submitted forthwith.

Vermillion seal of Hideyoshi Sixteenth year of Tenshō  
[1588], seventh month, 8th day

### (b) 徳川幕府 Commentary

All the swords possessed by farmers in this country have been collected for the ostensible purpose of making nails for the erecting of the Great Image of Buddha.... But truthfully, this is a measure specifically adopted to prevent occurrence of peasant uprisings (ikki). Indeed various motivations are behind this.

2) "The Buke Shohatto" (Laws for the Barons), promulgated by the shōgun Iemitsu Tokugawa on August 5, 1635. Found in *Asiatic Society of Japan, Transactions*, 38:4, 1911, pp. 293-297. In the public domain

1. The taste for the Way of literature, arms, archery and horsemanship is to be the chief object of cultivation.

2. It is now settled that the Daimyō and Shomyō (i.e., the greater and lesser Barons) are to do service by turns at Yedo. They shall proceed hither on service every year in summer during the course of the fourth month. Latterly the numbers of their followers have become excessive. This is at once a cause of wastefulness to the provinces and districts and of hardship to the people. Henceforward suitable reductions in this respect must be made. On the occasions of going up to Kyoto, however, the directions given may be followed. On occasions of government service (i.e., military service) the full complement of each Baron must be in attendance.

3. The erection or repairing of new castles is strictly forbidden. When the moats or ramparts of the present residential castles are to be repaired, whether as regards the stonework, plaster, or

earth-work, a report must be made to the Bugyōsho (i.e., the Mag-istracy at Yedo) and its direction taken. As regards the (Yagura, hei and mon) armories, fences and gates, repairs may be made to restore them to their previous conditions.

4. Whether at Yedo or in any of the provinces whatsoever, if an occurrence of any sort whatsoever should take place, those (Barons and their retainers) who are there at the time are to stay where they are and to await the Shogun's orders (from Yedo).

5. Whenever capital punishment is to be inflicted, no matter where, nobody except the functionaries in charge is to be present. But the coroner's directions are to be followed.

6. The scheming of innovations, the forming of parties and the taking of oaths is strictly forbidden.

7. There must be no private quarrels whether amongst the (Kokushu) greater Barons or (Ryoshu) the other Feudatories. Ordinary circumspection and carefulness must be exercised. If matters involving a lengthy arrangement should arise they must be reported to the Magistracy and its pleasure ascertained.

8. Daimyō of over 10,000 koku income, whether they be lords of provinces (domains) or lords of castles, and the heads of departments (monogashira) in personal attendance on them are not to form matrimonial alliances (between members of their families) at their private convenience (i.e., they must apply for the Shogun's permission before doing so).

9. In social observances of the present day, such as visits of ceremony, sending and return of presents, the formalities of giving and receiving in marriage, the giving of banquets and the construction of residences, the striving after elegance is carried to very great lengths. Henceforth there must be much greater simplicity in these respects. And in all other matters there must be a greater regard for economy.

10. There must be no indiscriminate intermingling (of ranks) as regards the materials of dress. Undyed silk with woven patterns (Shiro-aya) is only to be worn by Court Nobles (Kuge) and others of the highest ranks. Wadded coats of undyed silk may be worn by Daimyō and others of higher rank. Lined coats of purple silk; silk coats with the lining of purple; white gloss silk, colored silk coats without the badge are not to be worn at random. Coming down to retainers, henchmen, and men-at-arms, the wearing by such persons of ornamental dresses such as silks, damask, brocade or embroideries was quite unknown to the ancient laws, and a stop must be put to it.

11. Those who may ride in palanquins are all persons of distinction who are connections of the Tokugawa clan; lords of domains (Kuni) and lords of castles having 10,000 koku and upwards; the sons of provincial Daimyō (beneficiaries), lords of castles; chamberlains and higher functionaries, and the legitimate sons of such (i.e., sons by their wives; but not sons by their concubines); persons (of any rank) above fifty years of age; of the two professions of doctors of medicine and soothsayers (astrologers, onyoshi) and invalids and sick persons. Apart from the above named, irregularities must be prohibited; but those who have applied for and received official permission to ride are not included in the prohibition. As regard the feudal retainers in the provinces, those who may ride are to be definitely specified in each fief. Court Nobles, Abbots of royal or noble birth, and ecclesiastics of distinction are not to be included in this regulation.

12. Retainers who have had a disagreement with their original lord are not to be taken into employment by other Daimyō. If any such are reported as having been guilty of rebellion or homicide they are to be sent back (to their former lord). Any who manifest a refractory disposition must either be sent back or expelled.

13. When the hostages given by sub-vassals to their mesne lords have committed an offence requiring punishment by banishment or death, a report in writing of the circumstances must be

made to the Magistrates' office and their decision awaited. In case the circumstances were such as to necessitate or justify the instant cutting down of the offender, a personal account of the matter must be given to the Magistrate.

14. The lesser beneficiaries must honestly discharge the duties of their position and refrain from giving unlawful or arbitrary orders (to the people of their benefices): they must take care not to impair the resources or well-being of the province or district in which they are.

15. The roads, relays of post horses, boats, ferries and bridges must be carefully attended to, so as to ensure that there shall be no delays or impediments to quick communication.

16. No private toll-bars may be erected, nor may any existing ferry be discontinued.

17. No vessels of over 500 koku burden are to be built.

18. The glebelands of shrines and temples scattered throughout the provinces (domains) having been attached to them from ancient times to the present day, are not to be taken from them.

19. The Christian sect is to be strictly prohibited in all the provinces and in all places.

20. In case of any unfilial conduct the offender will be dealt with under the penal law.

21. In all matters the example set by the laws of Yedo is to be followed in all the provinces and places.

All the foregoing provisions, being in conformity with the previous enactments of this (Tokugawa) House, are hereby reimposed and definitely established and must be carefully observed.

3. "Text of the Sakoku, or Closed Country Edict of June 1636." Found in *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*, by C.R. Boxer, (University of California Press, 1967), pp. 439-440.

1. No Japanese ships may leave for foreign countries.

2. No Japanese may go abroad secretly. If anybody tries to do this, he will be killed, and the ship and owner/s will be placed under arrest whilst higher authority is informed.

3. Any Japanese now living abroad who tries to return to Japan will be put to death.

4. If any Kirishitan believer is discovered, you two (Nagasaki bugyō) will make a full investigation.

5. Any informer/ revealing the whereabouts of a bateren will be paid 200 or 300 pieces of silver. If any other categories of Kirishitans are discovered, the informer/s will be paid at your discretion as hitherto.

6. On the arrival of foreign ships, arrangements will be made to have them guarded by ships provided by the Omura clan whilst report is being made to Yedo, as hitherto.

7. Any foreigners who help the bateren [Christian missionary] or other criminal foreigners will be imprisoned at Omjra as hitherto.

8. Strict search will be made for bateren [Christian missionary] on all incoming ships.

9. No offspring of southern Barbarians will be allowed to remain. Anyone violating this order will be killed, and all relatives punished according to the gravity of the offence.

10. If any Japanese have adopted the offspring of southern Barbarians they deserve to die. Nevertheless, such adopted children and their foster-parents will be handed over to the Southern Barbarians for deportation.
11. If any deportees should try to return or to communicate with Japan by letter or otherwise, they will of course be killed if they are caught, whilst their relatives will be severely dealt with, according to the gravity of the offence.
12. Samurai are not allowed to have direct commercial dealings with either foreign or Chinese shipping at Nagasaki.
13. Nobody other than those of the five places (Yedo, Kyoto, Osaka, Sakai and Nagasaki) is allowed to participate in the allocation of ito-wappu.
14. Purchases can only be made after the ito-wappu is fixed. However, as the Chinese chips are small, you will not be too rigorous with them. Only twenty days are allowed for the sale.
15. The twentieth day of the ninth month is the deadline for the return of foreign ships, but latecomers will be allowed fifty days grace from the date of their arrival Chinese ships will be allowed to leave a little after the departure of the (Portuguese) galliots.
16. Unsold goods cannot be left in the charge of Japanese for storage or safekeeping.
17. Representatives of the five (shōgunal) cities should arrive at Nagasaki not later than the fifth day of the long month. Late arrivals will not be allowed to participate in the silk allocation and purchase.
18. Ships arriving at Hirado will not be allowed to transact business until after the nineteenth day of the fifth month of the thirteenth year of Kwanei (June 22, 1636)

## SECTION IV : 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

**Overview** Japan in the year 1900 would have been unrecognizable to someone living in the year 1800. The extent of the change in the country over a one hundred year period was unprecedented and profound. The 19<sup>th</sup> century started with Japan enjoying a mature, high-functioning and well-ordered government that was inward looking, semi-feudal in its structure and anachronistic in its rule. The economy remained largely agrarian but was nonetheless well situated to rapidly industrialize. There had been occasional crises in Japan's economic fortunes, for example the Tempō famine, and reform was sorely needed, but life progressed much as it had for the previous two centuries. The early 19<sup>th</sup> century was also distinguished by samurai rule, a time when the warrior ethos (*bushido*) was still highly valued, but when there were few enemies to fight. But that changed in the 1850s when the Tokugawa shōgunate found itself outgunned by several very aggressive, Western imperial powers seeking the normalization of diplomatic and commercial relations. Soon the Japanese government was forced to sign humiliating, unequal treaties, and the foreigners could not be kept at bay. In 1868, the Tokugawa collapsed and the Meiji Restoration was proclaimed. Within a few years, an ambitious plan for national development had been articulated, and the transformation of Japan into a modern, industrialized nation had begun. Within two generations, Japan had largely succeeded and had become the most powerful nation in East Asia. Indeed, it had become an imperial power in its own right.

### Events

**Seclusion:** During the wars of unification that ended in 1600, Japanese commanders had been more than happy to welcome Europeans bearing technology that could be applied to the battlefield. Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), in particular, was well known for his willingness to embrace new weapons, new tactics and new ideas. As long as the Europeans were useful and didn't cause too much trouble, they were welcome. However, Europeans also brought with them old grudges that reflected national and religious differences, a situation which was intolerable to the new Tokugawa leaders. In 1635, the Japanese moved to completely secure their borders and instituted the policy known as *sakoku*—seclusion. Only Koreans, Chinese and a few Dutchmen per year would be allowed to enter Japan. Though not totally isolated, Japan turned inward for more than two centuries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *sakoku* became increasingly difficult to enforce as the Europeans (and Americans) began to industrialize. When *sakoku* was instituted, Japanese technology was roughly on par with the rest of the world. And though Japan developed internally under the Tokugawa and the early stages of industrialization were evident, it became clear by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Japan was behind.

**Foreign Threats.** Tokugawa institutions (and leaders) were increasingly unable to cope with the rapidly changing world of the 1840s and 1850s. Both in the domestic and international realm, there were few good options. There seemed to be no end to the number of uprisings, riots and economic crises faced by the government. The treasury seemed always to be empty. Even small, but needed changes had met with resistance from the ruling elites or the peasantry—or both. The Tokugawa were aware that China had recently lost the Opium War to the British and became alarmed because an increasing number of foreign ships had appeared off the coast of Japan. Unlike in centuries past, this time it was clear that new, industrial weapons the foreigners were using might overwhelm coastal defenses. When an American naval squadron of four ships commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry appeared off the coast of Isu Peninsula in 1853 and demanded that the Japanese open their country, they had little choice but to comply. Over the next fifteen years, the Tokugawa were forced to sign multiple, humiliating treaties, and foreigners started living in the country who were not bound by Japanese law and were ignorant of Japanese culture and society. During this time, the government demonstrated that it was unable to defend its borders and to keep the country safe from a potential (or real) barbarian invasion.

**The Boshin War.** The combined domestic and international problems eventually overwhelmed the Tokugawa. Conflict arose between the Tokugawa and some of the old *daimyō* (feudal lords) in southwestern Hōnshū (Chōshū domain) and Kyūshū (Satsuma domain). The leaders of these rebellious domains came to consider themselves the right, true patriotic Japanese, the inheritors of the samurai traditions. They depicted the Tokugawa as having lost their way, of having abandoned all that right and

true in Japanese heritage. In a series of relatively small battles known as the Boshin War, the forces of Chōshū, Satsuma and Tosa defeated the Tokugawa. The new leaders proclaimed a new era—one which would be distinguished by the coronation of a new monarch—the Emperor Meiji.

**Meiji Reforms.** As the new leaders surveyed Japan beginning in 1869, the enormity of the task became evident. In order to secure the nation from foreign and domestic threats, they would have to transform Japan economically, politically, militarily, socially and even culturally. This was an ambitious goal, one which would take two generations to complete. Some reforms were easy. A new government based on Japanese-style democracy was to be implemented (but which would not look much like democracy for two decades) and a new conscript army was created. But most of the decisions on how to build a new country would take several years to determine.

**Iwakura Mission.** Many of the goals set for the Meiji Reforms were informed by the Iwakura Mission, which began in 1871. This was a diplomatic (and fact-finding) mission in which most of the leaders of the new Meiji government traveled to the United States and Europe over a period of two years to study what made these nations strong. They investigated religious, educational, economic, military and government institutions; visited factories and machine shops; looked at penal and legal systems and the like; and considered how they wanted Japan to progress. They also went to try to renegotiate a series of unequal treaties, something they were unsuccessful in doing. Upon their return, they published a 2000 page report, called the Iwakura Report, which outlined their findings. Perhaps the most important discovery was that they believed Japan was only 40 years behind the industrialized countries, a gap which through hard work and sacrifice could eventually be bridged. The Meiji elite then created a blueprint for the development of Japan—in virtually every facet of life. They were largely successful in this endeavor.

**Sino-Japanese war (1894-1895).** The Meiji Reforms had created a nation capable of defending itself by the middle of the 1890s. Still, the ruling oligarchs had grown increasingly concerned about the European powers (Russia in particular) seizing land in Manchuria and threatening to block Japan's own imperial ambitions in Korea. In a peculiar proxy war, the Japanese fomented rebellion in Korea, a nation then allied with China. When the Korean leadership asked the Chinese for assistance putting down a Japanese-backed uprising, the Japanese went to war with China. The outcome was a quick and successful victory by the Japanese. In the negotiations at the Japanese city of Shimonoseki, Japan was given selected Chinese territories and became an imperial power in its own right. It should be noted, however, that in 1895, Russia, France and Germany blocked the transfer of Port Arthur (now known as the Port of Lushun) at the southern tip of the Liaodong Peninsula in what has become known as the Triple Intervention. The enraged the Japanese and set the Japanese on a collision course with Russia a decade later.

## **Government**

**Structure.** The Meiji elites were in no hurry to transfer power to a legislature or any other democratically elected body. Indeed, the Meiji Constitution finally took effect 22 years after the Restoration! This document, which was authored by Itō Hirobumi (1841-1909) and Inoue Kowashi (1844-1895) was handed down by the Emperor Meiji in 1889. A key (and conscious) omission was the concept of God-given rights. Since the Emperor had given these rights, they were not inalienable and could be rescinded by the same method. In addition, though in theory, the people would have a voice based on their elected representatives in the Diet, real power resided with the oligarchs. For about two decades they decided who among them would form a cabinet and become Prime Minister. This was a position that changed hands quite frequently. It should be noted, however, that though these men didn't always agree with the specific policy decisions of their predecessors or successors, there was a great deal of continuity of vision.

**The Legislature and the Bureaucracy.** The system was designed to be parliamentary in nature (a Diet), with an upper and lower house. The upper house was composed of peers (a designation created during this period). The lower house was to be the people's house. Over the course of time, the lower house discovered that the only real power it possessed was the power of the purse. It got to decide on tax

policy and, in this way only, was able to exert influence on the decision making process. It didn't much matter for most of the Meiji period which party had a majority in the Diet because the initiatives of the late Meiji period were decided upon, by and large, by the ruling oligarchs. A national bureaucracy was also created to accompany the new system. It became the highest form of accomplishment to be able to serve the state in this way. Graduates of the new universities competed to enter one of the Ministries. The best and brightest all wanted to help in the creation of the new Japan. Those who could not compete went into the private sector.

**The Feudal System Abolished.** In the early years of the Restoration, the old domains of the Tokugawa period were abolished and in their place governors loyal to the ruling oligarchs were named. A few of the old *daimyō* (feudal lords) remained in place during the transition. But they no longer owned or exercised control over the land in the way they had before. In a very short period of time, the old feudal system was dismantled and a modern system of local, regional and national authorities was created. Tax rates were determined by the oligarchs and revenue collected by representatives of the central government. A new police force was also required in the years immediately following the Restoration. When the samurai lost their jobs, many traded their swords for police clubs and began to enforce the new laws. Given that the samurai as a class had enjoyed great prestige in society, the police in Meiji era Japan came to be highly respected as well.

**The Military.** In the years immediately following the Restoration, the oligarchs disbanded the old samurai system where warriors answered to their lords and not the central government. In this way, the samurai very quickly lost their status in society and their jobs as well. Field Marshall Yamagata Aritomo (1838-1922) then was tapped to create a conscript army, one which was drawn from all across Japan and which used modern training and modern weapons. It was believed that some of the samurai would join the ranks. However, they were largely found to be unsuited and the ranks were filled mostly by young men from the rural areas of Japan. Nonetheless, many of the martial ideals embodied in the samurai were transferred to the new army. This army came to be led by an excellent officer corps and a series of outstanding generals and admirals. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, it proved to be very capable and dealt first with the remnant of the samurai during the Seinan War/Rebellion (1877) and then the Chinese in several small skirmishes and finally the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895).

**The Independence of Command.** The Meiji Constitution placed the military outside of civilian control. It is not clear that the authors of the Constitution intended to give it this much autonomy, but by making it accountable to the emperor only, only the Emperor could reign it in. Neither the Diet nor the Prime Minister could get the military to do what the civilian leadership wanted, unless the military wanted to do it. The Constitution also required the military to name a general officer (Admiral or General) to become Minister of War. The general staff soon discovered that if they didn't name a man to the position, it was extremely difficult for a cabinet to be formed. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the military discovered that it had a great deal more power than was intended by the framers. It effectively had the power to veto the formation of a cabinet. It should be noted that they didn't exercise this prerogative for many years until party politicians began to try to form cabinets. In spite of its many weaknesses, the system worked fairly well until the Meiji oligarchs began to retire from public life.

## Culture

**The Literary Arts.** At the time of the Meiji Restoration in 1868, there were four official forms of the written language. They were *kanbun*, *sorobun*, *wabun* and *wakankobun*. *Kanbun* was Chinese style writing. *Sorobun* was the form used in everyday correspondence. *Wabun* was one which most closely reflected the spoken Japanese language several centuries before and *wakankobun* was a variant Chinese style with markers to indicate how they should be read in Japanese. None was the form of Japanese actually spoken by average Japanese in the Meiji period. In this environment, authors and language specialists took the lead writing Japan's first modern novels and transforming the expression of long form prose. Indeed, many scholars argue that this form of written Japanese acted as a template for the creation of the modern Japanese language.

**Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909)** was a student in the 1880s and had been working on translations of several works from Russian into Japanese, including those written by Ivan Turgenev and Nikolai Gogol. However, he was unable to convey effectively their essence using one of the four classical forms of Japanese. Accordingly, he decided to render them into the colloquial but he could not even decide on basic sentence structure because no grammars existed. After the appearance of *The Essence of the Novel* (*Shōsetsushinzui*) by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859-1935), Futabatei initiated a friendship with the literary critic and author that lasted for many decades. Tsubouchi suggested that Futabatei construct a new style based on the performances of San'yūtei Enchō (1839-1900), a famous yose performer, (yose is best described as the Japanese version of vaudeville) who allowed his stories to be transcribed. Futabatei then wrote *The Floating Cloud* (*Ukigumo*) in this form. While the mystery of the *genbun'itchi* style (unity of the written and spoken style) was not yet fully solved, Futabatei had made an important first step and had produced what many scholars refer to as Japan's first modern novel.

**Yamada Bimyo (1868-1910).** Around the same time, another author working independently from Tsubouchi and Futabatei began to experiment with the colloquial style, Yamada Bimyo. Bimyo also had been influenced by the introduction of Western novels into Japan and was especially fond of reading the English language works of Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400). He admired Chaucer for producing quality works of fiction in the vernacular during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, a time when Latin was the written language of the educated class. Bimyo never finished school, which perhaps contributed to his willingness to experiment to such an extent with the colloquial form. Nonetheless, Bimyo was a prolific author and vocal advocate of language reform.

**Colloquial Style.** Bimyo published several novels, but was never to attain the literary status of Futabatei. In most of his efforts, he was a shameless promoter of the colloquial style and perhaps had gone too far in the eyes of many of his colleagues. He was even one of the first to use Western-style punctuation such as the comma, period, question mark and exclamation point. While Bimyo seemed to have had a command of the mechanics of the colloquial style, he was not as polished as Futabatei when it came to character development and plot sophistication. Bimyo also wrote in a number of different styles, including *gabuntai*, which has led many scholars to question his loyalty to the *genbun'itchi* style.

**Genbun 'itchi Style ( Modern Style)** Among scholars of the Japanese language, there is still much discussion about who created the *genbun'itchi* form—or even if there was an identifiable form called *genbun'itchi* in the middle Meiji years. Both Futabatei and Bimyo wrote later in their lives that the style of *Ukigumo* and the style of language used after the publication of Bimyo's *A Song from an Organ Melody* (*Fūkinshirabe no hitofushi*, 1887) was *genbun'itchi*. Bimyo himself credited Futabatei with the creation of the *genbun'itchi* style. Nonetheless, after the publication of Futabatei's and Bimyo's works, over thirty authors were known to be using the *genbun'itchi* style, including, for a time, such literary luminaries as Mori Ōgai (1862-1922).

**The Kokugaku.** In the decade or so after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, intellectuals, government officials, philosophers, journalists and the like began a period of great experimentation. They looked around the world for a philosophical and ideological framework to replace the Chinese Confucian system they believed had been superseded. Men such as Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), Mori Arinori (1847-1889) and Nishi Amane (1829-1897) and many, many others were active in various learned societies, published numerous articles, made speeches and debated before many different groups as public intellectuals. This was known as the "Civilization and Enlightenment" movement and though relatively short lived, was very influential but precipitated a cultural backlash. By the 1880s, many Japanese had had enough of the endless embrace of foreign ideas and believed that the period of experimentation had stripped Japanese culture of its essential nature. During this same period, a group of philosophers and intellectuals began to look backward to Japan's ancient past and to the writings of Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801). Motoori studied works such as the *Kojiki* (8<sup>th</sup> century) and the *Man'yōshū* (759CE). Put succinctly, adherents of Motoori and the *kokugaku* came to believe that Japan and Japanese culture was the purest expression of East Asian culture. This is often described as a nativist ideology. For them, China had gotten it wrong and had strayed from the right and true path.

Many of the leaders of the Meiji Restoration had been heavily influenced by *kokugaku* ideology during the 1840s and 1850s and had temporarily strayed from its central tenants in the first decade or so of the Meiji period. However, as Japan moved into the 1880s, this ideology became ascendant. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was the ideology which defined virtually all of the second series of reforms. The cult of the emperor, the state support of Shintō, the Imperial Rescript of Education, the development of *kokugo* (national language) and many other initiatives all reflect this perspective. This remained the central ideology of Japan until 1945.

## **Society**

**Problems with the Structure of Society.** As Japan entered the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, cracks in the social system that had remained hidden from view for several decades began to become more evident. The samurai class was supposed to be the ruling class, followed in rank order by the peasantry, skilled laborers and finally merchants. However, the system increasingly became inverted in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Sankinkōtai* (the system of alternate residence in Edo) and other economic pressures had reduced the fortunes of many *daimyō* and caused them to become increasingly dependent on loans from the merchant class. Some prominent merchants had become very affluent, so wealthy in fact that the shōgun had singled out a few for property confiscation over the years. In other instances, a number of merchant households were ruined when they were forced to make large loans to well-connected *daimyō*, who then refused to make payments. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, careful merchants camouflaged their wealth and found ways to not make loans to the ruling class. But this had the effect of limiting or removing capital from the economic system. Still, many *daimyō* from the great families all the way down to the lowest samurai retainer struggled with diminished budgets and even bankruptcy. In addition, the competition for a shrinking number of government positions (in relation to a larger samurai population) increased, creating an environment in which corruption could flourish. The samurai, as a class, were struggling and were increasingly seen by the other members of society as contributing little.

### **The Peasants**

In the Edo period, peasants were tied to the land, although they were not serfs. Mobility was limited and permission had to be secured to travel from place to place, to change jobs or to change residences. It was impossible to stop being a peasant, a merchant or a craftsman. (In most instances, one could not stop being a samurai either.) Social mobility was virtually impossible and society became static. Village headmen were responsible to their *daimyō* for the actions of their charges and sometimes for the collection of taxes. When village headmen could not maintain order, the samurai bureaucracy stepped in and meted out severe punishment. In the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, Japan suffered from several major periods of famine, hardship and natural disasters. Conditions deteriorated to the point where infanticide and the selling of children were no longer rare occurrences among the peasants. These periods, for example, the Tempō famine of 1833-1837, were severe and widespread. They disrupted society and demonstrated the weakness of the shōgunate.

### **The Samurai**

Over the course of Edo period, the samurai had been transformed from a fighting force to a bureaucratic work force. Still, the number of samurai in Japan had increased as the population increased, but the treasury (and government stipends) had remained much the same. This caused serious hardship for lower-ranking samurai in particular. When it became clear that the Tokugawa could no longer protect the country from increasing foreign incursions in the 1850s because of pre-existing internal weaknesses, samurai from other parts of Japan overthrew the ruling dynasty and proclaimed the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Ironically, the same samurai who had led the effort to overthrow the previous government moved quickly to minimize the role of samurai in Japan. Within eight years, the samurai were effectively dissolved as a distinct class of society, as were all other class distinctions.

## **Economy**

**Agriculture.** In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, more than 80% of all Japanese were involved in some form of agricultural pursuit as a profession. Either they were peasants or silk producers (*sericulture*) or in some job that supported the peasantry. Because of this, a very large segment of the population was dependent

on the vicissitudes of naturally occurring cycles in agriculture. For most of the late Edo period (with a couple major exceptions), these were predictable. After a typhoon or regionalized flood, hardship and hunger was to be expected. When the rains didn't fall as normal or pests afflicted the crops, people went hungry and the economy suffered. In most instances, the authorities were able to alleviate the worst elements of these by providing some aid. However, there were exceptions. In the Tempō famine (1833-1837), millions of people were affected and hardship appeared to grip most of the country. Thousands died and the government appeared to be unable to respond because of the scale of the disaster. This was followed by several major earthquakes in the 1840s and 1850s which killed thousands. All of these combined to lead most Japanese to believe that the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were the worst of times, a degenerate age. Still, economic historians assert that Japan had experienced some elements of the agricultural revolution during this period, a necessary precursor to industrialization. This is evident in the population, which had risen to 34 million at the end of the Edo era.

**Rapid Industrialization.** After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, and in particular the Iwakura Mission which ended in 1873, the new leadership set Japan on a crash course of rapid industrialization. In the realm of finance, the government provided every known incentive to promote its development. Loans were underwritten by the government that offered virtually 0% interest rates in key industries such as steel production and coal mining. Land was set aside to be procured for new factories. In the transportation sector, the government went on a crash course of building railroads (and later encouraging private companies to do the same). Shipbuilding was also emphasized and a merchant marine became a priority. The Meiji government also passed laws mandating education through the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, providing basic literacy to a new workforce that could move into the burgeoning cities and go to work in the factories. Universities and technical schools were opened to meet the increasing need for new teachers, researchers and technicians. Advances in industry also were applied to agriculture, which freed additional workers for industrial pursuits and allowed for additional increases in population. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan was becoming an industrial power. Though still behind most nations in Western Europe in industrial output, it would soon rival Italy and Hungary as Japan moved into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Indeed, by 1905, Japanese industry had developed sufficiently so that it was able to support its military in defeating a major European power in the Russo-Japanese War.

## Readings

- 1) James L. McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 1-275
- 2) Stephen Vlastos, *Peasant Protests and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).
- 3) Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period*, (Berkeley: University of California, Press, 2006).
- 4) Albert Craig, *Chōshū in the Meiji Restoration*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).
- 5) Kyu Hyun Kim, *The Age of Visions and Arguments: Parliamentarianism and the National Public Sphere in Early Meiji Japan*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).
- 6) Karen Wigen, *The Making of a Japanese Periphery, 1750-1920*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
- 7) Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

## Questions for Discussion

- 1) Many of the policies put in place by the Tokugawa rulers in the early part of the era—*sakoku*, *sankinkōtai*, the division of society into the four classes, seemed to work well for two centuries. However, as Japan entered the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these very strengths appeared to become weaknesses. Do you agree with this statement? If so, what changed in Japan to bring about this shift? If not, how can historians explain why these very policies were discarded so quickly after the Meiji Restoration? In order to answer these questions, you will need to describe these policies, how they changed and the effect they had on society in the early Edo period and the effect they had on society in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2) The Meiji Restoration occurred in 1868. Did the appearance of Westerners cause the war which led to the end of the Tokugawa shōgunate or did the Westerners take advantage of already existing domestic weaknesses evident in the country? What were the major weaknesses in Japan that doomed the Tokugawa? Conversely, what Tokugawa policies seemed to be effective and forward looking in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? In other words, what were the Tokugawa doing right in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and what were the Tokugawa doing wrong in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Were they overtaken by events outside their control, or did their own incompetence and lack of leadership doom their enterprise?
- 3) The Meiji Restoration has been described by historians as a *coup d'état*, a successful rebellion, a military *junta*, and a number of other positive and negative labels. All of these are correct in one way or another. However, what the Meiji leadership achieved was nothing less than revolutionary. Why do you think that historians are reluctant to call it the “Meiji Revolution?” Is there something about that term that is difficult to apply to Japan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century? Or is there a better moniker that describes the actions of the Meiji elites after they seized power? In order to answer the question, you will need to understand the word “revolution” in its historical context and know which events in post-Meiji Restoration Japan can be applied to it. You will also need to understand the historical context for the word “restoration” in East Asia and why historians use that term instead.

## Texts

- 1) “The Charter Oath of 1868,” found in *Sources of Japanese Tradition, volume II*, compiled by Ryusaku Tsunoda, Wm. Theodore de Bary and Donald Keene (N.Y.:Columbia University Press, 1958) p. 137.

By this oath we set up as our aim the establishment of the national weal on a broad basis and the framing of a constitution and laws.

1. Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.
2. All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.
3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue his own calling so that there may be no discontent.
4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon the just laws of Nature.
5. Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule. The oath was written by the new leaders and given to the newly restored emperor to present to the people.

- 2) From Millard Fillmore, President of the United States of America, to His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor of Japan November 13, 1852. In the public domain.

GREAT and Good Friend: I send you this public letter by Commodore Matthew C. Perry, an officer of the highest rank in the navy of the United States, and commander of the squadron now visiting your imperial majesty's dominions.

I have directed Commodore Perry to assure your imperial majesty that I entertain the kindest feelings towards your majesty's person and government, and that I have no other object in sending him to Japan but to propose to your imperial majesty that the United States and Japan should live in friendship and have commercial intercourse with each other.

The Constitution and laws of the United States forbid all interference with the religious or political concerns of other nations. I have particularly charged Commodore Perry to abstain from every act which could possibly disturb the tranquility of your imperial majesty's dominions.

The United States of America reach from ocean to ocean, and our Territory of Oregon and State of California lie directly opposite to the dominions of your imperial majesty. Our steamships can go from California to Japan in eighteen days.

Our great State of California produces about sixty million dollars in gold every year, besides silver, quicksilver, precious stones, and many other valuable articles. Japan is also a rich and fertile country, and produces many very valuable articles. Your imperial majesty's subjects are skilled in many of the arts. I am desirous that our two countries should trade with each other, for the benefit both of Japan and the United States.

We know that the ancient laws of your imperial majesty's government do not allow foreign trade, except with the Chinese and the Dutch; but as the state of the world changes and new governments are formed, it seems to be wise, from time to time, to make new laws. There was a time when the ancient laws of your imperial majesty's government were first made.

About the same time America, which is sometimes called the New World, was first discovered and settled by the Europeans. For a long time there were but a few people, and they were poor. They have now become quite numerous; their commerce is very extensive; and they think that if your imperial majesty were so far to change the ancient laws as to allow free trade between the two countries it would be extremely beneficial to both.

If your imperial majesty is not satisfied that it would be a safe deal together to abrogate the ancient laws which forbid foreign trade, they might be suspended for five or ten years, so as to try the experiment. If it does not prove as beneficial as was hoped, the ancient laws can be restored. The United States often limit their treaties with foreign states to a few years, and then renew them or not, as they please.

I have directed Commodore Perry to mention another thing to your imperial majesty. Many of our ships pass every year from California to China; and great numbers of our people pursue the whale fishery near the shores of Japan. It sometimes happens, in stormy weather, that one of our ships is wrecked on your imperial majesty's shores. In all such cases we ask, and expect, that our unfortunate people should be treated with kindness, and that their property should be protected, till we can send a vessel and bring them away. We are very much in earnest in this.

Commodore Perry is also directed by me to represent to your imperial majesty that we understand there is a great abundance of coal and provisions in the Empire of Japan. Our steamships, in crossing the great ocean, burn a great deal of coal, and it is not convenient to bring it all the way from America. We wish that our steamships and other vessels should be allowed to stop in Japan and supply themselves with coal, provisions, and <sup>fresh</sup> water. They will pay for them in money, or anything else your imperial majesty's subjects may prefer; and we

request your imperial majesty to appoint a convenient port, in the southern part of the empire, where our vessels may stop for this purpose. We are every desirous of this.

These are the only objects for which I have sent Commodore Perry, with a powerful squadron, to pay a visit to your imperial majesty's renowned city of Edo: friendship, commerce, a supply of coal and provisions, and protection for our shipwrecked people.

We have directed Commodore Perry to beg your imperial majesty's acceptance of a few presents. They are of no great value in themselves; but some of them may serve as specimens of the articles manufactured in the United States, and they are intended as tokens of our sincere and respectful friendship.

May the Almighty have your imperial majesty in His great and holy keeping!

In witness whereof, I have caused the great seal of the United States to be hereunto affixed, and have subscribed the same with my name, at the city of Washington, in America, the seat of my government, on the thirteenth day of the month of November, in the year one thousand eight hundred and fifty-two.

[Seal attached]  
Your good friend,  
Millard Fillmore

By the President:  
Edward Everett, Secretary of State

- 3) The Imperial Rescript on Education, 1890. Found in *Japanese Education* (London: John Murry, 1909), in the public domain.

Know Ye, Our Subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and herein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation, extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the law; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you. Our subjects, that we may all attain to the same virtue.

I, the Emperor, think that my ancestors and their religion founded my nation a very long time ago. With its development a profound and steady morality was established. The fact that my subjects show their loyalty to me and show filial love to their parents in their millions of hearts all in unison, thus accumulating virtue generation after generation is indeed the pride of my nation, and is a profound idea and the basis of our education.

You, my subjects form full personalities by showing filial love to your parents, by making good terms with your brothers and sisters, by being intimate with your friends, by making couples who love each other, by trusting your friends, by reflecting upon yourselves, by conveying a spirit of philanthropy to other people and by studying to acquire knowledge and wisdom.

Thus, please obey always the constitution and other laws of my nation in your profession in order to spread the common good in my nation. If an emergency may happen, please do your best for Our nation in order to support the eternal fate and future of my nation. In this way, you are my good and faithful subjects, and you come to appreciate good social customs inherited from your ancestors. The way of doing this is a good lesson inherited from my ancestors and religion which you subjects should observe well together with your offspring.

These ideas hold true for both the present and the past, and may be propagated in this nation as well as in the other countries. I would like to understand all of this with you, Our subjects, and hope sincerely that all the mentioned virtues will be carried out in harmony by all of you subjects.

The 30th day of the 10th month of the 23rd year of Meiji (1890).

## SECTION V : 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

### Contents

Part I : The Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century  
Part II : Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century

### Part I : Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century

**Overview** The first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Japan was as interesting as it was tumultuous. It was the best of times and the worst of times—a period when the people of Japan experienced the highest emotional highs and the lowest of lows. Japan expanded its territory dramatically and became a world power only to then see it collapse back to its pre-20<sup>th</sup> century boundaries. The Japanese economy enjoyed unprecedented growth, then depression, more growth and then finally near total destruction. The Japanese people enjoyed a period of great openness in the public sphere only to see an authoritarian government suspend virtually all of the new-found freedoms. Finally, when the Pacific War came to a close, Japan was a vanquished, shattered nation. Millions were dead, millions were stranded in foreign countries and tens of millions were at risk of starvation. Its future was extremely bleak and there was virtually no hope for the future. During the early years of the occupation (1945-1952), it seemed all was lost. The dominant philosophies and ideologies of the previous era had failed and new ones had yet to emerge. But the essential spirit of the Japanese people endured and would emerge out of the ashes of the war.

### Events

**Russo-Japanese War.** There was unfinished business from the settlement over the Sino-Japanese war in 1895. Even though the Japanese had conquered Port Arthur (now the Lushun Port) in southern Manchuria, the Japanese were forced to abandon it because of the threat of force issued by Russia, Germany and France. This is known as the Triple Intervention and infuriated the Japanese leadership, who vowed never to have terms dictated to them again by a foreign country. Soon, the Japanese began to pour prodigious amounts of money into their military in preparation for the coming conflict with Russia over Manchuria. They signed the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in 1902, which stated in Article 3 that the both nations would come to the aid of the other if the other nation were at war with more than one other of the European Powers. (This was the reason the Japanese fought against the Central Powers in the WWI.)

When the opportunity arose in 1904 to pressure Imperial Russia, the Japanese issued an ultimatum which they knew was unacceptable to the Tsar, and war began. The Russo-Japanese War was a surprisingly bloody affair that resulted in almost 200,000 deaths in total for all sides. It was also much more costly and destructive than either side anticipated—a precursor of things to come in WWI. The Japanese seemed to win battle after battle in Manchuria and on the seas, but they could never deliver the final blow which would cause the Russians to sue for peace. Finally after the Battle of Tsushima in May of 1905, which resulted in 27 Russian vessels sunk (6 were battleships) or captured and 6 more Russian vessels interned in neutral ports, the Russians agreed to negotiate. These talks were held at Portsmouth, New Hampshire and were mediated by U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt. The Russians agreed to terms, but Japan was nearly bankrupt and also didn't get all that it wanted. Russia clearly had not won, but the cost to Japan was almost more than it could bear as well. Still, Japan was given a free hand to intervene in Manchuria as they saw fit. For the first time in the modern era, one of the European Powers had lost a war to a nation in East Asia. This war changed the balance of power and made Japan a nation to be reckoned with.

**Taishō Democracy (1912-1926).** In the late teens and early twenties, Japan experienced a period during which there was a flowering of culture and political openness. This is known as “Taishō Democracy” and describes a time when party politicians exercised more power than had ever been the case. There were several Prime Ministers who were not one of the oligarchs who had ruled Japan since

1868. Indeed, most of the original group of two dozen men who had dominated politics since the Meiji Restoration had died or retired from public life by this time. During this period, Japanese generally felt free to participate in public life, experiment with new expressions of culture and criticize their government as they saw fit. In short, Japanese were optimistic about the future. However, the Peace Preservation Law, which was passed in 1925 and which accompanied the passage of universal male suffrage, was soon used to crack down on leftists. Later, it became the legal basis for the creation of various government agencies associated with the militarism of the 1930s.

**Militarism.** The suppression of anarchists, socialists and communists in the late 1920s and early 1930s marked the beginning of the period of militarism. The openness of the Taishō period stood in stark contrast to the reality of the Great Depression and the various states of emergency proclaimed by the government in the 1930s. The Great Depression in Japan, as elsewhere, was unprecedented for the industrial era. The Japanese economy contracted dramatically, workers were unemployed and hardship and hunger were not uncommon. Government policies helped the Japanese economy recover more quickly than most nations, but deficit spending resulted later in government spending cuts. The military, which made up one of the largest parts of the budget, was also cut. This was unacceptable to the military, which, over the course of the early and middle years of the 1930s, made it nearly impossible to form new government cabinets that were not military friendly. Soon thereafter, the military came to dominate public life and created the authoritarian system of the militarist years.

**War in China.** Over the course of the late 1920s, the Japanese army moved little by little into Manchuria and seized all of it by 1932 in multiple acts of pure aggression. This was in contravention of all international norms of the time and caused considerable diplomatic trouble for Japan. The people in Manchuria—both ethnic Chinese and Manchu—also did not passively accept the situation and began a guerilla war which eventually spilled over into North China proper. In 1936 and 1937, elements of the Japanese Kwangtung Imperial army moved into the Beijing area in force and were faced somewhat unexpectedly by the armies of the Chinese Nationalist government in Nanjing. Large-scale fighting then erupted in the summer of 1937 between Nationalist armies and the armies of Imperial Japan, beginning the worldwide conflict known as WWII.

**Pacific War.** The Japanese war against China dragged on from 1937 to 1941, with no resolution in sight. More than a hundred thousand Japanese soldiers had already died and millions of Chinese soldiers and civilians had perished. The Japanese military had succeeded in conquering the coastal areas of China and had decimated the capital city of Nanjing. But much to the consternation of the Japanese, however, the Chinese government which had evacuated to Chongqing, still refused to capitulate. By 1941, Japan was faced with a dilemma: withdraw from China without a victory—an unthinkable possibility—or expand the war into Southeast Asia in order to acquire the resources needed to continue the war in China. Japanese strategists believed that the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands would not allow this. Therefore, Japan formulated a plan to limit U.S. involvement and destroyed most of the U.S. Pacific Fleet in the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In so doing, however, the U.S. resolved to end Japanese aggression once and for all, no matter how long it took and regardless of the cost. Japan had anticipated a limited conflict with the U.S., not total war.

War with the United States alone was ill-advised. War with the US, Great Britain, China and most of the peoples of Southeast Asia at the same time was folly. Japan was a small nation with very limited natural resources. It had a population of 90 million that had been at war in China for approximately 4 years. Its people and military were already tired. The US had ample natural resources and a population of 134 million. As the most heavily industrialized nation in the world, its production capacity dwarfed Japan's. The Empire of Japan was simply outmatched and outgunned by the U.S. industrial juggernaut. For example, the city of Pittsburgh alone produced more steel than all of the smelters in Japan combined! By the summer of 1942 after the naval Battle of Midway, the best Japan could hope for was a negotiated peace with the U.S.

The war ended badly for the Japanese. US production and firepower simply overwhelmed the Japanese. It should be noted, however, that the Chinese did more than their fair share in the war. It was,

after all, about them more than any other nation. Chinese troops, both Nationalist (Guomindang) and the Chinese Communist Party's People's Liberation Army, fought the fearsome Japanese Imperial Army to a standstill. After the Soviet Union declared war and atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan capitulated and was occupied for the first time in its history.

## **Government**

**Structure.** The Meiji Constitution promulgated in 1889 was functioning quite well as Japan entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Meiji oligarchs (the approximately two dozen men who had led in the Meiji Restoration and who later governed Japan in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) had successfully transformed the government into a well-oiled and high-functioning machine. The Constitution had withstood the challenges of the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, and the internal unrest associated with the Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905. Still, the greatest challenge was to come with the death and retirement of the Meiji oligarchs. By the end of the Meiji period in 1912, very few of the old leaders remained on the public scene and the transition to party rule seemed eminent. In 1918, the first party politician from the Diet (lower house), Hara Takashi, became prime minister. Soon thereafter, a series of military officers, alternating with party politicians, served as prime ministers until 1932, when the military began to supply the greatest number. Given that there were a total of 23 prime ministers from 1918 to 1945, each prime minister served only slightly more than one year on average. This means that real power was exercised elsewhere, behind the scenes with the remaining oligarchs and with the permanent bureaucracy. With the death of Yamagata Aritomo in 1922 and Matsukata Masayoshi in 1924, only Saionji Kinmochi survived among the old oligarchs and he wanted to retire. Stability was greatly desired in the political realm, but no one had the clout of the founding generation. Political cliques formed and were disbanded when a better situation presented itself. Things seemed unpredictable and there was a political power vacuum that left the Japanese government adrift until the early 1930s. The greatest strength of the founding generation, the oligarchs themselves, had been unable to find an effective way to replicate themselves in the Meiji Constitution. The military stepped into the void.

**The Military.** The Japanese army and navy were considered to be the spiritual inheritors of the samurai traditions. They understood themselves to be the protectors of all that was right, true and patriotic in the country. They did not answer to the civilian leadership and were accountable only to the Emperor. They came to consider it their highest calling to protect the person and prerogatives of the Emperor, who was a living embodiment of the spirit of Japan and a god himself. They took their duties very seriously and seldom compromised with the politicians whom they despised and whom they thought was leading Japan astray in the 1920s and early 1930s. When the civilian leadership of Japan called upon the Japanese army to pull back from various areas of Manchuria in the late 1920s and early 1930s, the military responded that they operated independently. They demanded that the Diet continue to appropriate additional funds for the military on the mainland, which the legislature sometimes did. When they did not, the military often manufactured a crisis in Manchuria and demanded funding because of a new threat. In short, the Japanese army manipulated the civilian leadership. When that didn't work, they brought down a cabinet, creating the very instability they said they despised. In Manchuria, the military operated as a semi-independent arm of the government. And as long as they stayed in Manchuria where they faced an unorganized and poorly funded foe, they could maintain the fiction of independence of command. However, when they blundered into North China proper and encountered a determined, Nationalist army and a Chinese people who understood themselves to be fighting for their very existence, the military and the rest of Japan found themselves in a war that they could not win, but a war that they also could not end. It is the very definition of "mission creep."

The Japanese military was extraordinarily well trained, well equipped and highly motivated. They had some of the best weapons available for the era. In particular, the Japanese navy sailed aboard some of the finest, most capable vessels ever to go to sea. But the Japanese military was thin. When four aircraft carriers were sunk in the Battle of Midway in June of 1942, the Japanese capacity to project power was severely diminished and they were unable to build more. They had great airmen and advanced aircraft, but there were too few of them to fight the Chinese and later to fight the U.S. and other enemies at the same time. As an island nation, they also had a large merchant marine, but when

submarine warfare began to take its toll, Japan could not sufficiently supply its military in the field. Its industrial capacity was insufficient and its population too small.

## Culture

**The Literary Arts.****Natsume Sōseki.** One of the most beloved of all Japanese modern authors in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916). Sōseki graduated from Tokyo Imperial University and then, given his proficiency in English, attended University College in London. He returned to Japan and accepted a post at Tokyo Imperial University as a lecturer in English literature where he taught criticism and theory. Sōseki had the common touch and in this way is comparable to one of his contemporaries in the United States: Mark Twain. However, Sōseki was also financially savvy and willingly gave up a very respected position at Tokyo Imperial University to become a full-time novelist, a profession far below professor in social status. Rather than trying to earn a living selling novels, Sōseki signed on to the *Asahi Shinbun* (newspaper) and had many of his stories released in serial form. This was beneficial for the newspaper and also provided a stable income for Sōseki. Most importantly, it gave him a ready platform for his new works. His novels and essays were so anticipated that customers would queue up outside of newspaper stands in the mornings waiting for them to open so that they could buy the next installment of his stories.

**Language.** It is during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the modern novel reached final maturity in Japan. Sōseki is, in part, credited with bringing this to fruition. He wrote in the colloquial form of Japanese so that his works would be accessible to the largest audience. However, his facility with the Japanese language was so great and his works so brilliantly executed that the critics had little effect on him.

**Kokoro.** One of his most well-known (and perhaps important) works was published in 1914 and is entitled *Kokoro*. The title “*Kokoro*” (心) is most often not translated, in part because it is difficult to find an English word which conveys the depth of its multiple meanings. “*Kokoro*” in English is literally translated “heart” but can also mean “spirit”—or can be interpreted as the “essence of things.” The title conveys the internal struggles of the protagonist “Sensei” to find the essence of life in the realm of a dying Meiji emperor, where estrangement and indifference seem to define his existence. This work is all the more important for what it tells us about the expression of sensibilities in long form prose as Japan transitioned from a period of tremendous change and upheaval, where modernity swept aside long-held traditions of the earlier age. Sensei can be understood as emblematic of the end of an age, particularly because he committed suicide at roughly the same time as the Meiji emperor died. This, of course, was a perplexing event for other characters in the novel who did not fully understand nor appreciate Sensei’s motives. Nonetheless, Sensei’s decision to end his life was in part atonement for behavior he was ashamed of as a young man. In like fashion, as Japan transitioned into the post-Meiji world, Sōseki seems to suggest that there were Meiji era transgressions that needed absolution before society could move on. Sōseki died from a stomach ulcer only two years after the publication of *Kokoro*. He was only 49 years old. He left at least one novel unfinished.

**Tanizaki Jun’ichirō (1886-1965).** Tanizaki’s literary career began quite early in his life. His first work appeared in 1903, when he was only 17 years old. He came from a modest background and was effectively a scholarship student even in high school. (The condition of being surrounded by students who came from more affluent families, but who were less capable, may have contributed to the formation of his unique perspective on society.) However, his knowledge of the Chinese classics and of European literature—and his writing ability—set him apart from his peers. He then entered Tokyo Imperial University, where by all accounts he in no way distinguished himself. While there, he continued to sell his stories. Ultimately, he decided to abandon the academy and make a living as a full time author. This was a risky move at the time and frowned upon by his family. But his genius, work ethic and indefatigable spirit provided the motivation necessary to become a successful author.

**Unusual Themes.** Though he is among Japan's literary geniuses of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tanizaki Jun'ichirō (1886-1965) is not remembered as a sympathetic person or beloved author. His works are somewhat idiosyncratic and can exhibit a harshness in tone and plot. The narratives found in his novels, essays and plays sometimes pushed the boundaries of acceptable public discourse. Indeed, he ran afoul of the censors on a number of occasions. However, his fiction resonated with a certain segment of the population who found his semi-erotic, sensual themes to reflect the sensibilities of the time. For Tanizaki, few topics were off limits. For example, his characters treated women abominably and were, in turn, treated harshly (or with indifference) by other women. In many of his works, male characters seemed to worship the female form and sometimes went so far as to fantasize about various sexual fetishes. Tanizaki was also not a slave to social convention and was more honest and straightforward in his fiction and in his life than was expected of the time.

**Some Prefer Nettles.** Tanizaki's *Some Prefer Nettles* ranks among his masterpieces. This work was serialized in 1929 during a particularly creative period that also saw the publication of some of his other most famous works of fiction. *Some Prefer Nettles* is set in the Kansai area (the Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe area), which facilitated Tanizaki's use of bunraku (puppetry) imagery, particularly in the depiction of women in the text. It also allowed him to experiment with the Kansai dialect. The story revolves around the unhappy marriage of the characters Kaname and Misako. Kaname's tone is described as "confessional," leading many scholars to believe that Kaname is Tanizaki. We believe this to be the case because we now know that Tanizaki divorced his spouse soon after *Some Prefer Nettles* appeared. Tanizaki continued to live in the Kansai area for many years after the publication of *Some Prefer Nettles*. He survived the war and lived to receive numerous honors including the prestigious Japanese government honor, the *Order of Culture*.

## Society

**Glorification of the Military.** In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japanese society had learned to value the military as an important element of its national identity. The traditions of the samurai were warmly embraced and military adventurism had largely paid dividends. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 was a clear success and, though costly in both men and treasure, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 was understood to be a turning point for Japan's expansion into the mainland. Above all, WWI demonstrated just how much could be gained by the careful application of aggressive diplomacy and military power. For Japanese society, there was little opposition to its use and the rush to acquire empire became a national priority. Still, neither Japanese society nor its economy can be described as "militarized" until the 1930s. Indeed, in the period of Taishō openness, the military endured its fair share of criticism. In particular, leftists (anarchists, socialists and communists) were very willing to argue that aggressive military action was not in the interest of the working man.

In the early 1930s, young military officers took the lead in promoting ultra-nationalism. They gave speeches, published pamphlets and journals and created an environment where assassination was not uncommon. These "righteous patriots"—as they called themselves—targeted anyone they perceived threatened the interests of the state or the prerogatives of the Emperor. Politicians (including even Prime Ministers, Finance Ministers and the like), public intellectuals, military officers, leaders of industry were all assassinated or targeted for assassination. Anyone who advocated for more democracy, less authoritarianism and more freedom was also warned. In short, a culture of fear and intimidation was used to silence the opposition. All of this was done by those who claimed to be patriots and the most sincere adherents of the cult of the Emperor. By the middle of the 1930s, the social narrative glorifying the military and military adventurism had become nearly impossible to counter. Society was carefully divided and sub-divided into small accountability groups and enforced by auxiliaries of the justice and interior ministries—and the *kempeitai* (military police). These accountability groups were small enough to ensure that those who espoused heterodox ideas were exposed and dealt with either through judicial or social sanction. Opposition political figures were jailed or effectively silenced, censorship rules strictly enforced

and fines and confiscations were regular occurrences. Once in place in the 1930s, the leadership of Japan maintained a firm grip on society and monitored and tightly controlled the public narrative.

By any measure, Japanese society was generally willing to embrace the culture of militarism without much coercion. Propaganda was effective and largely unnecessary in the early years of the Pacific War. The campaign against China was a stalemate but the successes of 1941 and early 1942 provided society hope for a quick and easy conflict. However, the setbacks and failures of 1943 and early 1944 were minimized in the press and Japanese society was not prepared for the sacrifices to come. It was only in late 1944 and 1945 that cracks began to show in the social veneer of wartime Japan. As city after city was decimated by bombing, and word arrived that hundreds of thousands of soldiers had died, it became impossible to hide the truth that Japan was losing the war. Nonetheless, the social narrative was so resilient that Japanese women and school children began to drill for battle to repel the enemy invader in 1945. For Japanese society, it was impossible to consider that its vaunted military was incapable of protecting neither the Emperor nor the nation. When surrender occurred in August of 1945, Japanese society was traumatized in many ways. Its dominant social narrative of ethnic and military superiority was exposed as a lie. The Emperor was even forced to renounce his divinity.

## **Economy**

**Industry.** As Japan entered the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its economy was still very much dependent on agriculture. There were continued advances in agriculture, but the easy and quick gains had already been seen in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Japan's agriculture was limited by the amount of land that could be cultivated. In particular, since most of Japan (about 75%) is mountainous, large-scale mechanization (as seen in the flat-lands of the U.S. great plains) was not practical. The vast majority of Japanese farmers still relied extensively on human and animal labor augmented by some mechanization. There was also the persistent problem of absentee landowners who provided little in the way of incentives for those who actually worked the land to increase production. This problem of absentee landownership, a situation that reached nearly 50% of all farm land in Japan, persisted until the end of the war, at which time land was redistributed by occupation officials to those who actually worked it. (This had created a situation in which wealth disparity of that magnitude was understood to be destabilizing factor for society.)

In industry, however, the potential for growth was unlimited but largely dependent on the demand for exports and a ready supply of raw materials. Economic and industrial growth continued in fits and starts until 1930. Before 1930, Japanese industrial growth was spurred on by the Russo-Japanese War and WWI, periods in which the government prioritized the production of armaments, heavy industry and transportation. These increases were punctuated by dramatic downturns as factories retooled and refitted for consumer markets after the wars ended. Nonetheless, some periods saw tremendous growth. Japanese manufacturers became major exporters of finished silk and other textiles, pharmaceuticals, cement, paper, glass and the like.

**Great Depression.** Like all other nations, Japan suffered from the effects of the Great Depression. The eminent historian of Japan, Kenneth Pyle, argues that nationwide wealth was reduced by one-third from 1925-1931. He also asserts that exports fell fifty percent between 1929 and 1931. This was felt immediately by factory workers and soon thereafter by all other sectors of the economy. This created an environment in which various states of emergency could be implemented and others extended by the government. It should be noted that the Japanese government intervened extensively in the economy and helped spur recovery from the Depression sooner than most other nations. This just also happened to coincide with Japan's final annexation of Manchuria, which reinforced the false narrative that aggressive military action could spur economic growth.

**The War Ends.** As the war came to a close, greater and greater percentages of industrial capacity was devoted to the war. At one point in 1944, it is estimated that thirty-five to forty percent of all industrial output in Japan was spent on munitions and other items essential to the war effort. This meant that the civilian sector was neglected and food shortages and shortages of other consumer goods had become a major problem even before the war ended. At the end of the war, Japan was bankrupt and its economy

lay in ruins. The bombings had destroyed a large percentage of Japan's industrial capacity. It was estimated by occupation officials that industrial production stood at ten percent of its prewar capacity. Homelessness and starvation were realities for large segments of the population in 1946 and 1947, and many succumbed. Even a year after the war, industrial production remained well below prewar levels. Japan's dream of economic and industrial independence was shattered along with everything else because of the war.

## Readings

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- 2) Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919*, (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2001).
- 3) Richard J. Smethurst, *From Foot Soldier to Finance Minister: Takahashi Korekiyo, Japan's Keynes*, (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2007).
- 4) John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, (New York: Pantheon Press, 1987).
- 5) Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore Cook, *Japan at War: An Oral History*, (New York: New Press, 1993).
- 6) Natsume Soseki, *Kokoro*, translated by Meredith McKinney, (New York: Penguin Classics, 2010).

## Questions for Discussion

- 1) The Japanese government seemed to have a policy of near continuous warfare in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Russo-Japanese War, WWI, the Japanese intervention in Siberia, the Japanese conquest of Manchuria, the war against China and finally the wider war in the Pacific and Southeast Asia—all were fought within a 40 year period. For Japan, was military conflict the last resort of a cornered nation, or might it best be described as one of the most important arrows in the foreign policy quiver? What would lead Japanese policy makers and military leaders to believe that war could have a positive outcome? Did Japan suffer from poor leadership, a lack of leadership or leadership that was strong and capable but mistaken? How could Japan's leaders have been correct and astute in the foreign policy realm for so long and then seem to fundamentally misapprehend the international situation in the late 1930s? What had changed to make Japan vulnerable in the late 1930s?
- 2) The Great Depression was one of the most important events in the world during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Japan suffered along with all other industrialized nations. However, the Japanese government responded effectively and minimized the effects of the economic collapse. What policies did the Japanese government implement that seemed to have the greatest effect on the economy? Where did things go wrong as Japan's government sought to respond to the effects of the Great Depression? Finally, the social consequences were severe for most of the nations affected by the Great Depression. Did the social fabric of Japan show the same level of stress that other nations endured? How did Japanese authorities respond to unrest and incivility in the early 1930s?
- 3) The phrase historians often use to describe the period of authoritarianism in the 1930s is "militarism." It applies to Japan and Japan alone during this period. How is it understood today? How was it understood in the 1930s? To what extent can it be compared, if at all, to Fascism? How are they different? How are they the same? Did the goals of the militarists and Fascists coincide? If so, where?

Were their respective ideologies too divergent to ever coexist in the long run, or were they co-sympathetic?

## **Texts**

1) The Treaty of Portsmouth, Signed on September 5, 1905. In the public domain.

The Emperor of Japan on the one part, and the Emperor of all the Russias, on the other part, animated by a desire to restore the blessings of peace, have resolved to conclude a treaty of peace, and have for this purpose named their plenipotentiaries, that is to say, for his Majesty the Emperor of Japan, Baron Komura Jutarō, Jusami, Grand Cordon of the Imperial Order of the Rising Sun, his Minister for Foreign Affairs, and his Excellency Takahira Kogoro, Imperial Order of the Sacred Treasure, his Minister to the United States, and his Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, his Excellency Sergius Witte, his Secretary of State and President of the Committee of Ministers of the Empire of Russia, and his Excellency Baron Roman Rosen, Master of the Imperial Court of Russia, his Majesty's Ambassador to the United States, who, after having exchanged their full powers, which were found to be in good and due form, and concluded the following articles:

**ARTICLE I.** There shall henceforth be peace and amity between their Majesties the Emperor of Japan and the Emperor of all the Russias, and between their respective States and subjects.

**ARTICLE II.** The Imperial Russian Government, acknowledging that Japan possesses in Korea paramount political, military and economical interests engages neither to obstruct nor interfere with measures for guidance, protection and control which the Imperial Government of Japan may find necessary to take in Korea. It is understood that Russian subjects in Korea shall be treated in exactly the same manner as the subjects and citizens of other foreign Powers; that is to say, they shall be placed on the same footing as the subjects and citizens of the most favored nation. It is also agreed that, in order to avoid causes of misunderstanding, the two high contracting parties will abstain on the Russian-Korean frontier from taking any military measure which may menace the security of Russian or Korean territory.

**ARTICLE III.** Japan and Russia mutually engage:

First.--To evacuate completely and simultaneously Manchuria, except the territory affected by the lease of the Liaotung Peninsula, in conformity with the provisions of the additional article I annexed to this treaty, and,

Second.--To restore entirely and completely to the exclusive administration of China all portions of Manchuria now in occupation, or under the control of the Japanese or Russian troops, with the exception of the territory above mentioned.

The Imperial Government of Russia declares that it has not in Manchuria any territorial advantages or preferential or exclusive concessions in the impairment of Chinese sovereignty, or inconsistent with the principle of equal opportunity.

**ARTICLE IV.** Japan and Russia reciprocally engage not to obstruct any general measures common to all countries which China may take for the development of the commerce or industry of Manchuria.

**ARTICLE V.** The Imperial Russian Government transfers and assigns to the Imperial Government of Japan, with the consent of the Government of China, the lease of Port Arthur, Talien and the adjacent territorial waters, and all rights, privileges and concessions connected with or forming part of such lease, and it also transfers and assigns to the Imperial government of Japan all public works and properties in the territory affected by the above-mentioned lease.

The two contracting parties mutually engage to obtain the consent of the Chinese Government mentioned in the foregoing stipulation.

The Imperial Government of Japan, on its part, undertakes that the proprietary rights of Russian subjects in the territory above referred to shall be perfectly respected.

**ARTICLE VI.** The Imperial Russian Government engages to transfer and assign to the Imperial Government of Japan, without compensation and with the consent of the Chinese Government, the railway between Chang-chunfu and Kuanchangtsu and Port Arthur, and all the branches, together with all the rights, privileges and properties appertaining thereto in that region, as well as all the coal mines in said region belonging to or worked for the benefit of the railway. The two high contracting parties mutually engage to obtain the consent of the Government of China mentioned in the foregoing stipulation.

**ARTICLE VII.** Japan and Russia engage to exploit their respective railways in Manchuria exclusively for commercial and industrial purposes and nowise for strategic purposes. It is understood that this restriction does not apply to the railway in the territory affected by the lease of the Liaotung Peninsula.

**ARTICLE VIII.** The imperial Governments of Japan and Russia with the view to promote and facilitate intercourse and traffic will as soon as possible conclude a separate convention for the regulation of their connecting railway services in Manchuria.

**ARTICLE IX.** The Imperial Russian Government cedes to the Imperial Government of Japan in perpetuity and full sovereignty the southern portion of the Island of Sakhalin and all the islands adjacent thereto and the public works and properties thereon. The fiftieth degree of north latitude is adopted as the northern boundary of the ceded territory. The exact alignment of such territory shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of the additional article II annexed to this treaty.

Japan and Russia mutually agree not to construct in their respective possessions on the Island of Sakhalin or the adjacent islands any fortification or other similar military works. They also respectively engage not to take any military measures which may impede the free navigation of the Strait of La Perouse and the Strait of Tartary.

**ARTICLE X.** It is reserved to Russian subjects, inhabitants of the territory ceded to Japan, to sell their real property and retire to their country, but if they prefer to remain in the ceded territory they will be maintained protected in the full exercise of their industries and rights of property on condition of submitting to the Japanese laws and jurisdiction. Japan shall have full liberty to withdraw the right of residence in or to deport from such territory of any inhabitants who labor under political or administrative disability. She engages, however, that the proprietary rights of such inhabitants shall be fully respected.

**ARTICLE XI.** Russia engages to arrange with Japan for granting to Japanese subjects rights of fishery along the coasts of the Russian possession in the Japan, Okhotsk and Bering Seas.

It is agreed that the foregoing engagement shall not affect rights already belonging to Russian or foreign subjects in those regions.

**ARTICLE XII.** The treaty of commerce and navigation between Japan and Russia having been annulled by the war the Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia engage to adopt as a basis for their commercial relations pending the conclusion of a new treaty of commerce and navigation the basis of the treaty which was in force previous to the present war, the system of reciprocal

treatment on the footing of the most favored nation, in which are included import and export duties, customs formalities, transit and tonnage dues and the admission and treatment of agents, subjects and vessels of one country in the territories of the other.

**ARTICLE XIII.** As soon as possible after the present treaty comes in force all prisoners of war shall be reciprocally restored. The Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia shall each appoint a special commissioner to take charge of the prisoners. All prisoners in the hands of one Government shall be delivered to and be received by the commissioner of the other Government or by his duly authorized representative in such convenient numbers and at such convenient ports of the delivering State as such delivering State shall notify in advance to the commissioner of the receiving State.

The Governments of Japan and Russia shall present each other as soon as possible after the delivery of the prisoners is completed with a statement of the direct expenditures respectively incurred by them for the care and maintenance of the prisoner from the date of capture or surrender and up to the time of death or delivery. Russia engages to repay as soon as possible after the exchange of statement as above provided the difference between the actual amount so expended by Japan and the actual amount similarly disbursed by Russia.

**ARTICLE XIV.** The present treaty shall be ratified by their Majesties the Emperor of Japan and the Emperor of all the Russias. Such ratification shall be with as little delay as possible, and in any case no later than fifty days from the date of the signature of the treaty, to be announced to the Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia respectively through the French Minister at Tokyo and the Ambassador of the United States at St. Petersburg, and from the date of the latter of such announcements shall in all its parts come into full force. The formal exchange of ratifications shall take place at Washington as soon as possible.

The present treaty shall be signed in duplicate in both the English and French languages. The texts are in absolute conformity, but in case of a discrepancy in the interpretation the French text shall prevail.

**SUB-ARTICLES.** In conformity with the provisions of articles 3 and 9 of the treaty of the peace between Japan and Russia of this date the undersigned plenipotentiaries have concluded the following additional articles:

**SUB-ARTICLE TO ARTICLE III.** The Imperial Governments of Japan and Russia mutually engage to commence the withdrawal of their military forces from the territory of Manchuria simultaneously and immediately after the treaty of peace comes into operation, and within a period of eighteen months after that date the armies of the two countries shall be completely withdrawn from Manchuria, except from the leased territory of the Liaotung Peninsula. The forces of the two countries occupying the front positions shall first be withdrawn.

The high contracting parties reserve to themselves the right to maintain guards to protect their respective railway lines in Manchuria. The number of such guards shall not exceed fifteen per kilometer and within that maximum number the commanders of the Japanese and Russian armies shall by common accord fix the number of such guards to be employed as small as possible while having in view the actual requirements.

The commanders of the Japanese and Russian forces in Manchuria shall agree upon the details of the evacuation in conformity with the above principles and shall take by common accord the measures necessary to carry out the evacuation as soon as possible, and in any case not later than the period of eighteen months.

**SUB-ARTICLE TO ARTICLE IX.** As soon as possible after the present treaty comes into force a committee of delimitation composed of an equal number of members is to be appointed by the two high contracting parties which shall on the spot mark in a permanent manner the exact

boundary between the Japanese and Russian possessions on the Island of Sakhalin. The commission shall be bound so far as topographical considerations permit to follow the fiftieth parallel of north latitude as the boundary line, and in case any deflections from that line at any points are found to be necessary compensation will be made by correlative deflections at other points. It shall also be the duty of the said commission to prepare a list and a description of the adjacent islands included in the cession, and finally the commission shall prepare and sign maps showing the boundaries of the ceded territory. The work of the commission shall be subject to the approval of the high contracting parties.

The foregoing additional articles are to be considered ratified with the ratification of the treaty of peace to which they are annexed.

In witness whereof the respective plenipotentiaries have signed and affixed seals to the present treaty of peace.

Done at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, this fifth day of the ninth month of the thirty-eighth year of the Meiji, corresponding to the twenty-third day of August, one thousand nine hundred and five, (September 5, 1905.)

2) Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, September 6, 1941, Liaison Council of Japan. Found in Nobutake Ike's *Japan's Decision for War: Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1967), 138.

May I call the conference to order. With your permission, I will take the chair in order that we may proceed.

As you all know, the international situation in which we are involved has become increasingly strained; and in particular, the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands have come to oppose our Empire with all available means. There has also emerged the prospect that the United States and the Soviet Union will form a united front against Japan as the war between Germany and the Soviet Union becomes prolonged.

If we allow this situation to continue, it is inevitable that our Empire will gradually lose the ability to maintain its national power, and that our national power will lag behind that of the United States, Great Britain, and others. Under these circumstances our Empire must, of course, quickly prepare to meet any situation that may occur, and at the same time it must try to prevent the disaster of war by resorting to all possible diplomatic measures. If the diplomatic measures should fail to bring about favorable results within a certain period, I believe we cannot help but take the ultimate step in order to defend ourselves.

The government and the Army and Navy sections of Imperial Headquarters have discussed this matter on numerous occasions. They have now reached an agreement, and have drafted "The Essentials for Carrying Out the Empire's Policies," which is on today's agenda. I would like you to consider this proposal carefully.

3) Emperor Hirohito's Surrender Speech to the Japanese Nation, Broadcast to all of Japan on August 14, 1945. In the public domain.

To our good and loyal subjects: After pondering deeply the general trends of the world and the actual conditions obtaining in our empire today, we have decided to effect a settlement of the present situation by resorting to an extraordinary measure.

We have ordered our Government to communicate to the Governments of the United States, Great Britain, China and the Soviet Union that our empire accepts the provisions of their joint declaration.

To strive for the common prosperity and happiness of all nations as well as the security and well-being of our subjects is the solemn obligation which has been handed down by our imperial ancestors and which we lay close to the heart.

Indeed, we declared war on America and Britain out of our sincere desire to insure Japan's self-preservation and the stabilization of East Asia, it being far from our thought either to infringe upon the sovereignty of other nations or to embark upon territorial aggrandizement.

But now the war has lasted for nearly four years. Despite the best that has been done by everyone--the gallant fighting of our military and naval forces, the diligence and assiduity of our servants of the State and the devoted service of our 100,000,000 people--the war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage, while the general trends of the world have all turned against her interest.

Moreover, the enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb, the power of which to do damage is, indeed, incalculable, taking the toll of many innocent lives. Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.

Such being the case, how are we to save the millions of our subjects, nor to atone ourselves before the hallowed spirits of our imperial ancestors? This is the reason why we have ordered the acceptance of the provisions of the joint declaration of the powers.

We cannot but express the deepest sense of regret to our allied nations of East Asia, who have consistently cooperated with the Empire toward the emancipation of East Asia.

The thought of those officers and men as well as others who have fallen in the fields of battle, those who died at their posts of duty, or those who met death [otherwise] and all their bereaved families, pains our heart night and day.

The welfare of the wounded and the war sufferers and of those who lost their homes and livelihood is the object of our profound solicitude. The hardships and sufferings to which our nation is to be subjected hereafter will be certainly great.

We are keenly aware of the inmost feelings of all of you, our subjects. However, it is according to the dictates of time and fate that we have resolved to pave the way for a grand peace for all the generations to come by enduring the [unavoidable] and suffering what is unsufferable. Having been able to save [inaudible] and maintain the structure of the Imperial State, we are always with you, our good and loyal subjects, relying upon your sincerity and integrity.

Beware most strictly of any outbursts of emotion that may engender needless complications, of any fraternal contention and strife that may create confusion, lead you astray and cause you to lose the confidence of the world.

Let the entire nation continue as one family from generation to generation, ever firm in its faith of the imperishableness of its divine land, and mindful of its heavy burden of responsibilities, and the long road before it. Unite your total strength to be devoted to the construction for the future. Cultivate the ways of rectitude, nobility of spirit, and work with resolution so that you may enhance the innate glory of the Imperial State and keep pace with the progress of the world.

## Part II : Middle and Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century

**Overview** Recovery from the war continued in the first decades after the occupation ended in 1952. The new political system provided for universal suffrage and open, fair elections. Citizens were to enjoy a number of freedoms—including freedom of the press, freedom of expression, religion, speech and assembly—and guaranteed due process under the law. There was to be a parliamentary-style legislature with a Prime Minister as head of government and a largely independent judiciary. Economic recovery and expansion became the priority in the post-war period, and Japan was very successful in this endeavor. Indeed, the economic miracle made Japan the envy of all developing nations—and the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest economy in the world. However, there was a great deal of sacrifice required of individual Japanese in the post-war economic recovery and for most of that period, social and cultural development and quality of life issues were secondary considerations to economic growth. The dynamic of the post-war era has given way to the economic malaise of the past two decades. Disillusionment and frustration at the lack of progress in the economic and social realms have led contemporary Japanese to question their institutions, leadership and cultural expectations. Whereas there was a clear blueprint for recovery and economic growth in the post-war era, there doesn't seem to be consensus on the best way forward for the current generation. This condition has been exacerbated by the triple disaster of March 11, 2011, an event which resulted in nearly 20,000 deaths.

### Events

**Devastation.**As the war came to an end, Japan was devastated. Though the government still functioned (in contrast to Nazi Germany), Japan had waited too long to surrender. Tokyo and Osaka had lost 57% and 60% of its dwellings respectively. 8 million people nationwide were homeless. Japanese industry functioned at less than 10% of its prewar capacity. 80% of Japanese shipping (merchant marine) was destroyed. Approximately 3million Japanese had been killed and an additional three million soldiers had to be repatriated. In addition, 3.2 million Japanese civilians had to find their way home as well. The agricultural and transportation sectors collapsed and hunger was an ever-present specter. Occupation officials had to import hundreds of thousands of tons of food, but thousands of Japanese died of starvation anyway in the first 18 months after the war ended.

**The Occupation.** The nations that had fought the Japanese created the Far Eastern Commission (FEC) to administer the occupation. The FEC in turn created SCAP (Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers) which was headed by General Douglas MacArthur. It was MacArthur's job to demobilize and demilitarize Japan. All weapons were seized, many government officials were purged (about 220,000) and a number of government and military leaders were placed on trial at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. Large corporations (*zaibatsu*) were split up in what was called "*zaibatsu* busting." Agricultural land was redistributed. A new constitution was implemented in 1947 which included as its most famous article the total renunciation of war as a tool of government. By 1948, the Communist Revolution in China had caused US and FEC policy makers to soften several of their most punitive occupation measures. When the Korean War began in 1950, the FEC and SCAP reversed course. The allies began to see a strong, self-sufficient Japan as a strategic partner in the Cold War and implemented policies that would lead to economic growth and a strong, stable, democratic government.

**Peace Treaty.** The Occupation ended in 1952 when the Treaty of San Francisco was signed. At the same time, Japan signed a Mutual Defense Treaty with the United States. This allowed Japan to live under the umbrella of US military protection. As long as Japan has been willing to remain a junior partner, this has worked well and the treaty is still renegotiated every decade. Japan was also allowed access to the US market to trade, more or less, freely. This meant that Japan spent very, very little on its own defense and poured those resources into the continued rebuilding of the country and the growth of the economy.

**Protests.**Japan continued to grow economically in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Indeed, Japan became one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Its drive in the modern era to become a world power had succeeded, just not as had been planned for in the pre-war period. Nonetheless, there have been

serious social and cultural crises. For example, labor actions and social protests rocked Japan in the 1960s during what has been known as the Anpo Protests. This series of events associated with the renewal of the US-Japan Security Treaty called into question how democracy worked in the post war era. Other problems such as the shrinking population, the role of guest workers in Japan, very high government debt (one of the highest per capita in the world) remain intractable. Protests over the US military presence in Okinawa periodically make it into the public sphere.

**Disaster.** The triple disasters of March 11, 2011—the massive 8.9 Tōhoku earthquake, followed by the tsunami, followed by the nuclear meltdown of the Fukushima nuclear power plant, have been a body blow to a Japan. Approximately 20,000 people died and tens of thousands were left homeless. There are several areas around Fukushima that have been lost to humanity and will never again be inhabited by humans. The situation was so dire for a few days that if the wind had been blowing from a northeasterly direction, the city of Tokyo would have been contaminated and 35 million people would have been affected. Given that the government had no real plan for what to do with 35 million refugees (many of whom would have been dealing with radiation sickness), it lied to the public and said that there was never any threat to public safety. When this was discovered, the government of Prime Minister Naoto Kan fell. Japan's economy took a significant hit during this period and has not yet recovered. Japan will be dealing with the March 11 disasters for several decades to come.

## **Government**

**Structure.** The Japanese government was not systematically dismantled during the occupation (1945-1952). Rather, occupation officials decided to purge militarists (about 220,000) from public life and government positions and work with the remaining permanent bureaucracy in an effort to maintain stability in the country. The highest official remaining in the country was, of course, Emperor Hirohito. He was forced to renounce his divinity and made a figurehead. But he was not tried as a war criminal. However, as Japan began to make some strides toward recovery, SCAP officials determined that Japan needed a new constitution to replace the old Meiji-era foundational documents. A new Diet was elected and given the task of preparing a document. After the first two attempts were deemed unacceptable by General Douglas MacArthur, SCAP officials themselves wrote a document that was ratified by the Diet. It is still the constitution used in Japan today.

The 1947 constitution created a bicameral legislature with a Prime Minister as the head of government. The party that holds the majority of seats (or works in coalition when in the plurality) in the lower house forms a government and administers the country. Since the new constitution has been in effect, there have been 24 different Prime Ministers. The Liberal Democratic Party governed Japan for all but a few years between 1955 and 1993. Since 1993, the Democratic Party, the Japan New Party, the Japan Renewal Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Democratic Party of Japan and the Liberal Democratic Party have all formed cabinets. Most of the Prime Ministers of Japan in the post-war era have governed from the center-right, center or center-left. There have been very few post-occupation Prime Ministers who could be described as radical or reactionary.

Given the high number of Prime Ministers in the post-war era, most government administration has taken place within the permanent bureaucracy. The bureaucracy in Japan is staffed by highly educated, motivated university graduates. Until quite recently, these have been some of the most highly sought-after positions for university graduates from some of Japan's finest universities. The Japanese government functions efficiently and is understood to carry out essential state functions. Those who enter government service are highly respected members of society.

**The Military.** The 1947 Constitution is distinguished by its so-called "Peace Clause," which is Article 9. This article goes so far as to "forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation." However, by 1954, the Japanese government decided that it, in fact, needed a small military and came to call it the Japan Self Defense Forces (JSDF). This force is divided into the Ground Self-Defense Forces (Army), the Maritime Self-Defense Forces (Navy) and the Air Self-Defense Forces (Air Force). In its early form, the JSDF was quite small, seriously underfunded and not very capable. Most of the weapons they had at

their disposal were US surplus items from the Korean War and even WWII. More recently, the JSDF has enjoyed a very large budget, one of the largest in the world, and now has an extremely capable but still small force. Though they do not yet have a large blue-water navy, recent Chinese actions have caused the Japanese to begin the process of creating a navy capable of projecting power abroad. Unlike the situation before the Pacific War, the current Japanese military is answerable to the civilian leadership. With the exception of a few deployments, most of which were UN peacekeeping missions, Japan has managed to avoid using its military abroad since the end of the Pacific War.

Over the course of the last two decades, calls in Japan have grown louder for the abandonment or modification of Article 9, and policy makers appear to be more receptive than in the past. There is a growing perception in Japan that the US government might not be as reliable a military partner as had been the case. In addition, Japan increasingly wants to set its own foreign policy agenda and to feel free to protect its own international interests.

## **Culture**

### **The Literary Arts.**

**Mishima Yukio** (1925-1970) is most often known as just “Mishima.” Even then, this is a *nom de plume* which he took as a teenager with the publication of one his first works in 1944. His given name was HiraokaKimitake. Mishima was something of a prodigy. He wrote short stories and essays as a boy, even though his father was not particularly pleased with him for doing so. Mishima’s first love was poetry, particularly the form known as *waka*, and infused his novels, short stories, plays and essays with poetic symbolism. For Mishima, writing poetry was a lifelong pleasure. Mishima was a world-famous author and his body of work so impressive that he was nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature. He was considered by many scholars to be Japan’s greatest living post-war author before he took his own life.

**Political Leaning.** It is difficult to consider Mishima’s life and Mishima’s works apart from the events of November 25, 1970. On this day, Mishima entered the office of the Commander of the Japan Self-Defense Forces, gave a speech on his desire that the emperor be restored to power and then committed ritual suicide (*seppuku*). Though it was clear that he had planned his demise well in advance, his suicide shocked the nation. But there was no *coup d’état*. Scholars and literary specialists then set about reevaluating his writing and examining the body of his work through a different lens. Despite numerous attempts to do so, there is scant evidence that Mishima had devoted his life and writings to the ultra-nationalist cause, though it is clear that he had drifted very far to the right at the end. Indeed, Mishima was very cosmopolitan, traveled abroad extensively, and had many, many foreign friends. Perhaps his suicide was simply the most dramatic, last act of the performance art which was his life. And he even got to write the final script, down to the death poem found after his suicide.

**Themes.**In many, many of Mishima’s narratives, death seemed to be a constant theme, none more so than his short story *Death in Midsummer*. In this work which was set at a resort on Izu Peninsula (a popular vacation area near Tokyo), a family went swimming at a beach with a strong current. Soon thereafter, two young children were swept away and their aunt simultaneously died from a heart attack. Mishima then moved to depict the reaction of the survivors—blame, grief, guilt and the many banal details of the funeral. The characters were deeply hurt, shocked and angry at each other and even at the dead. Tomoko (the mother/spouse) became angry with her husband (Masaru) because he appeared to be grieving more over his sister (Yasue) than his own children. Somehow, Tomoko and Masaru got through it, survived to have another child and finally made a pilgrimage back to the beach two years later. Masaru complained to his wife, “Why the devil did we come here? We only remember things we don’t want to. Things we had finally forgotten.” For Mishima, death was not to be forgotten. It was an ever present companion, a part of life—to be faced with grace and dignity. Death was for him often the final act of either a tragic life cut short or of a life well lived. Nonetheless, in Mishima’s works, death was never far away.

**Death and Grief.**Mishima’s stories on death and dealing with grief were, in many ways, brutally honest. *Death in Midsummer* is representative of the way Mishima portrayed the final act. But Mishima didn’t

shirk from the topic. Indeed, it is likely because there were so many social taboos and cultural conventions about death that Mishima chose to write about it so often. For him, literature was art, and art can be uncomfortable. For the living, there is nothing more universally uncomfortable, nothing that more clearly reveals character, nothing that makes us react in a more visceral way than death.

**EnchiFumiko**(1905-1986). Another of Japan's great novelists is EnchiFumiko. Like most of her colleagues, she was the child of privilege. Her father was Ueda Kazutoshi, the most influential pure linguist/literature specialist of his generation. He is considered the "father of the modern Japanese language." Even though they were reportedly not especially close, it is natural that she would develop an interest in the history of Japanese literature.

**Works.** In addition to her works of fiction in long-form prose, Enchi is also known for her modern translation of *The Tale of Genji*. Unlike many of her post-war colleagues, not many of her works have been translated and she remains less well-known outside of Japan. But this does not diminish the quality of her work. Enchi gained attention with her first play in 1926. In the years after, she expanded her repertoire with the publication of many novels and short stories.

**Masks.** One of Enchi's few novels known widely in the English-speaking world is *Masks* (1958). It is also one of her finest. The central metaphor is, of course, a mask. The protagonist in *Masks* is a woman who, in order to interact with society, must put on a false face. This allows her to deceive the other characters into doing her bidding in a most unpleasant and unscrupulous series of events. The main character is thoroughly unlikable and unsympathetic. Nonetheless, *Masks* resonated with a certain segment of the population in Japan. In a number of Enchi's works, the characters also interact with the supernatural. *Masks* is no exception. In this way, Enchi pays homage to one of the themes found in literature of the Heian period, *The Tale of Genji*. Despite the subject matter and harshness of tone in Enchi's works, and her one-dimensional depiction of men, *Masks* has stood the test of time as one of Japan's finest post-war novels.

**EndōShūsaku**(1923-1996). With the possible exception of Nobel Laureate ŌeKenzaburō and Mishima, few post-war authors in Japan are as well-known in the English-speaking world as EndōShūsaku. Endō was born in Tokyo, spent much of his childhood in Manchuria and attended Keio University during the war. Indeed, he had to abandon his studies for a time after being drafted to work for the war effort. Like many of his colleagues, he wrote in several formats. Endō was, of course, an award-winning novelist. But he was also an accomplished short story author and essayist. He regularly wrote for the *Yomiuri Shinbun* (Newspaper) until very late in his life. Endō was awarded the Japanese government's *Order of Culture* in 1995.

**Themes.**Endō is beloved in both Japan and the West, in part, because of the themes he most often chose to write about. As a Roman Catholic, Endo struggled with how to reconcile his faith and his national identity at a time when very few Japanese were Christians. As a result, he often wrote about Christians in Japan, sometimes setting them in the Tokugawa period when Christianity was banned, and sometimes setting them in more contemporary times. Given his status as a best-selling author (millions of copies of his novels were sold in Japan alone), it is clear that his works resonated with very large segments of the reading population. The success of his works reveal a Japan that was struggling to understand how it had been/was affected and/or transformed in the aftermath of the war and occupation by the "Christian" West.

**Works.**In Japan, Endō's 1966 masterpiece entitled *Silence* sold over two million copies in a very brief period of time. Though his early works had found a following in the 1950s, Endō rocketed to literary stardom worldwide after its publication. *Silence* is set in the Tokugawa era, during the period of time when Christianity was illegal and its adherents executed if they did not apostatize. The protagonist is named Rodrigues, a Portuguese, Jesuit missionary who, in contravention of Japanese law, secretly entered Japan after the "Christian" Shimabara Rebellion. Rodrigues sought out Ferreira, a Jesuit missionary (and his former teacher) who had renounced his faith not because he broke under torture, but because he perceived that God did nothing to alleviate the suffering and torture of other Japanese Christians. Rodrigues was incredulous that his former teacher, whom he respected greatly, had become

an apostate and wanted to find out why. Endō's narrative follows Rodrigues psychological (and physical) struggles as he too faced the same dilemma. The basic theme, whether one has the courage of their convictions, is universal for any religion (or none at all) anywhere in the world. This novel was made into a feature film in 2017 by the celebrated director Martin Scorsese.

## **Society**

**New Freedoms.** The militarism of the war-time years gave way to occupation and then to a fully-functioning open, democratic society as Japan moved into the 1950s. During the occupation, Japanese still did not enjoy most of the freedoms they now take for granted. Occupation officials placed restrictions on freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, freedom to live where one pleases, freedom to travel; implemented price controls, rationing of food and all consumer goods, and the like. This means that Japanese society had endured some form of authoritarian control from the early 1930s until the early 1950s. As a result, in the last 24 months of the occupation, social unrest became a real concern for SCAP officials. It appeared that Japanese had begun to internalize the teachings of SCAP officials on the importance of openness in the public sphere. Finally, the occupation came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of San Francisco in 1952 and the Japanese were back in control of their own destiny.

The devastation of the war, however, was so great that Japanese were most interested in economic recovery and growth. In general, Japanese worked extremely long hours, sacrificed and saved money for the future. They spent very little on consumer goods, lived in small houses or tiny apartments and hoped for stability and a return to normality.

**The Role of Women.** After the war and occupation, women were freed from formal social restrictions, but nonetheless mostly returned to traditional roles in society. The main breadwinner in the home was to be the husband. Women would often enter the work force as recent graduates but would resign when they married and started a family. As a result, Japanese society came to resemble a patriarchy, at least in the public sphere. When women married, they often moved into a multi-family dwelling where they were expected to care for their husband's parents as well as their own husband and children. Mothers-in-law, who were supposed to give up many of their household duties when a daughter-in-law moved into the home, often refused to step back and let someone else run the household. This caused a great deal of stress in the family then and is occasionally still a problem. In contemporary Japan, women have more freedom of choice. They can still enter the work force and increasingly are not expected give up their careers when they marry. Still, a sizable number of women exit the workforce to care for their families.

**Population.** Japan is a medium-sized country and is roughly the size of the U.S. state of California. However, it is 75% mountainous, which means that only 25% of the land in Japan is suitable for farming or habitation. The population of Japan is 128 million and ranks 10<sup>th</sup> among the most populous countries in the world. The Japanese government is aware that such a large population is likely not sustainable but still offers incentives to families to produce more children because of the need to maintain the social safety net. Nonetheless, the vast majority of couples have decided to have fewer than two children. As a result, the population of Japan has stopped growing and has begun to decrease. Indeed, within two generations, the United Nations predicts that Japan's population will decrease to approximately 87 million. That is a drop of 41 million people! Though life will undoubtedly be more comfortable for Japanese with that many fewer people, the smaller population is expected to cause significant social disruption. Since very few nations in the modern era have experienced this sort of population decline (outside of war), it is not known how this will affect society and the economy.

## Economy

**Recovery.** The Japanese economy was in no way totally recovered from the ravages of the war in the middle years of the occupation. There was still widespread homelessness, occasional outbreaks of epidemics and disease, hunger, and significant unemployment. These economic conditions (and associated social and medical ills) were not totally eradicated for a generation after the war. Early relief came from an unexpected event: the Korean War. Though Japanese soldiers did not officially participate in the war, the conflict had the benefit of jump-starting Japanese manufacturing in textiles, steel production and other industries. It was cheaper and more efficient for UN forces to buy Japanese manufactured goods than it was to manufacture them (mostly in the US) and ship them across the world. Companies that provided items for the war effort such as trucks, spare parts, clothing, and the like recovered very quickly. Some, such as Toyota, Ajinomoto, Fuji (parent company of Subaru), and Hitachi become major, international conglomerates known the world over for innovation and excellence. During the Korean War, food production also returned to pre-war levels and widespread malnutrition was vanquished, although very poor areas of the major cities where shanty towns existed still experienced hunger. By 1954, the Japanese economy had surpassed pre-war levels.

**Economic Growth.** The Japanese government decided that its highest priority in the 1950s, 60s and 70s would be economic growth. In order to facilitate this, the government assigned the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) the task of determining economic policy. For Japan, this would mean that exports became the priority and that all industries would support this goal. The Japanese government underwrote financing for key industries by guaranteeing loans at extremely low rates, but there were strings attached. Companies selected were expected to invest for the long term and were to prioritize stable employment above profits and the payment of quarterly dividends. This was, however, problematic for entrepreneurship and for companies that wanted to expand or change what they produced. If a company wanted low-interest government-backed loans, CEOs had to ask permission of MITI officials, which was not always forthcoming. The most famous example is the Honda Corporation, maker of some of Japan's finest motorcycles. In the early 1960s, Honda's founder and CEO Soichiro Honda wanted to expand into automobiles, but was denied government backing. Undeterred, he went abroad for financing and started building some of the world's finest cars.

Japanese economic policies were successful beyond all expectations. The growth rate per year between 1955 and 1960 was 9.1%, between 1960 and 1965 was 9.8% and 1965 and 1973 was 10%. These are extremely high numbers and were three times higher than the US growth rate during the same period. By the late 1980s, Japan had become the world's second largest economy. However, in the drive to grow the economy, social and cultural issues received little attention from Japan's governing elite. Some of these would become problematic in contemporary Japan.

By 1990, the Japanese economy had reached a plateau. Though individual companies grew, sustained economic growth nationwide had stopped. There has been very, very little economic growth since the late 1980s. Japanese economists, government officials and business leaders have struggled to find ways to prime the economy, but have largely failed. Japan is now dealing with deflationary tendencies in the economy and a decreased population—both of which mean that the growth of the postwar period will likely not be seen again.

## Readings

- 1) James L. McClain , *Japan: A Modern History*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 555-632.
- 2) Wesley Sasaki-Uemura, *Organizing the Spontaneous: Citizen Protest in Postwar Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001).
- 3) Shūsaku Endō, *Silence*, William Johnston, trans., (Tokyo: Kodansha Press, 1982).
- 4) William Tsutsui, *Manufacturing Ideology: Scientific Management in Twentieth-Century Japan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- 5) John Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, (New York: Norton Press, 2000).**
- 6) Herbert Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2000).

## Questions for Discussion

- 1) The relationship between Japan and the United States has proven to be enduring and very strong. Japan obviously feels as though it is better to remain under the US military umbrella than to build up its own military to the extent that it is capable of protecting its interests alone. Other than military protection, what benefit has Japan reaped from its relationship with the United States? Will there come a time in the foreseeable future when Japan may feel that their relationship with the US should come to an end? What might cause a reevaluation of the alliance? If Japan decides to end the alliance, how might this affect stability in the region?
- 2) Japan's decision to prioritize economic development in the years following the occupation was very consequential. Japan is now one of the wealthiest nations in the world and has the third largest economy. What might have been some of the social and cultural costs of the decision? Many in Japan would argue that in the process of becoming rich, the essence of Japanese culture has been diluted. Do you agree or disagree that Japan has somehow been diminished by its single-minded drive for economic growth? Given that Japan has not experienced meaningful economic growth for the last two and a half decades, to what extent has Japan reevaluated its national goals? Should the government emphasize something else? Or is the economy still the most important priority?
- 3) Historians have struggled to discern a meaningful narrative for post-war era Japan that didn't rely on economics. And there have surely been a significant number of other events, movements and narratives that deserved attention over the past 70+ years. What might some of those events have been? What might be a good alternate narrative for the post-war years? Given that military history would be extremely difficult to approach, should historians focus on cultural or social history? Diplomatic or intellectual history? Or should historians investigate something altogether different?

## Texts

- 1) Chapters two and three of the 1947 Japanese Constitution. In the public domain.

### CHAPTER II RENUNCIATION OF WAR

**Article 9.** Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

### CHAPTER III RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE PEOPLE

**Article 10.** The conditions necessary for being a Japanese national shall be determined by law.

**Article 11.** The people shall not be prevented from enjoying any of the fundamental human rights. These fundamental human rights guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be conferred upon the people of this and future generations as eternal and inviolate rights.

**Article 12.** The freedoms and rights guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be maintained by the constant endeavor of the people, who shall refrain from any abuse of these freedoms and rights and shall always be responsible for utilizing them for the public welfare.

**Article 13.** All of the people shall be respected as individuals. Their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare, be the supreme consideration in legislation and in other governmental affairs.

**Article 14.** All of the people are equal under the law and there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin.

Peers and peerage shall not be recognized.

No privilege shall accompany any award of honor, decoration or any distinction, nor shall any such award be valid beyond the lifetime of the individual who now holds or hereafter may receive it.

**Article 15.** The people have the inalienable right to choose their public officials and to dismiss them.

All public officials are servants of the whole community and not of any group thereof. Universal adult suffrage is guaranteed with regard to the election of public officials. In all elections, secrecy of the ballot shall not be violated. A voter shall not be answerable, publicly or privately, for the choice he has made.

**Article 16.** Every person shall have the right of peaceful petition for the redress of damage, for the removal of public officials, for the enactment, repeal or amendment of laws, ordinances or regulations and for other matters; nor shall any person be in any way discriminated against for sponsoring such a petition.

**Article 17.** Every person may sue for redress as provided by law from the State or a public entity, in case he has suffered damage through illegal act of any public official.

**Article 18.** No person shall be held in bondage of any kind. Involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime, is prohibited.

**Article 19.** Freedom of thought and conscience shall not be violated.

**Article 20.** Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority.

No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.

**Article 21.** Freedom of assembly and association as well as speech, press and all other forms of expression are guaranteed. No censorship shall be maintained, nor shall the secrecy of any means of communication be violated.

**Article 22.** Every person shall have freedom to choose and change his residence and to choose his occupation to the extent that it does not interfere with the public welfare. Freedom of all persons to move to a foreign country and to divest themselves of their nationality shall be inviolate.

**Article 23.** Academic freedom is guaranteed.

**Article 24.** Marriage shall be based only on the mutual consent of both sexes and it shall be maintained through mutual cooperation with the equal rights of husband and wife as a basis. With regard to choice of spouse, property rights, inheritance, choice of domicile, divorce and other matters pertaining to marriage and the family, laws shall be enacted from the standpoint of individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes.

**Article 25.** All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living. In all spheres of life, the State shall use its endeavors for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health.

**Article 26.** All people shall have the right to receive an equal education correspondent to their ability, as provided by law.

All people shall be obligated to have all boys and girls under their protection receive ordinary education as provided for by law. Such compulsory education shall be free.

**Article 27.** All people shall have the right and the obligation to work. Standards for wages, hours, rest and other working conditions shall be fixed by law. Children shall not be exploited.

**Article 28.** The right of workers to organize and to bargain and act collectively is guaranteed.

**Article 29.** The right to own or to hold property is inviolable.

Property rights shall be defined by law, in conformity with the public welfare.

Private property may be taken for public use upon just compensation therefor.

**Article 30.** The people shall be liable to taxation as provided by law.

**Article 31.** No person shall be deprived of life or liberty, nor shall any other criminal penalty be imposed, except according to procedure established by law.

**Article 32.** No person shall be denied the right of access to the courts.

**Article 33.** No person shall be apprehended except upon warrant issued by a competent judicial officer which specifies the offense with which the person is charged, unless he is apprehended, the offense being committed.

**Article 34.** No person shall be arrested or detained without being at once informed of the charges against him or without the immediate privilege of counsel; nor shall he be detained without adequate cause; and upon demand of any person such cause must be immediately shown in open court in his presence and the presence of his counsel.

**Article 35.** The right of all persons to be secure in their homes, papers and effects against entries, searches and seizures shall not be impaired except upon warrant issued for adequate cause and particularly describing the place to be searched and things to be seized, or except as provided by Article 33.

Each search or seizure shall be made upon separate warrant issued by a competent judicial officer.

**Article 36.** The infliction of torture by any public officer and cruel punishments are absolutely forbidden.

**Article 37.** In all criminal cases the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial by an impartial tribunal.

He shall be permitted full opportunity to examine all witnesses, and he shall have the right of compulsory process for obtaining witnesses on his behalf at public expense.

At all times the accused shall have the assistance of competent counsel who shall, if the accused is unable to secure the same by his own efforts, be assigned to his use by the State.

**Article 38.** No person shall be compelled to testify against himself. Confession made under compulsion, torture or threat, or after prolonged arrest or detention shall not be admitted in evidence.

No person shall be convicted or punished in cases where the only proof against him is his own confession.

**Article 39.** No person shall be held criminally liable for an act which was lawful at the time it was committed, or of which he has been acquitted, nor shall he be placed in double jeopardy.

**Article 40.** Any person, in case he is acquitted after he has been arrested or detained, may sue the State for redress as provided by law.

2) From the *Shiryō Meiji Hyakunen* (A Documentary History for the Meiji Centennial), Asahi Shinbunsha, ed., (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1966), pp. 561-562. Translation found in *Japan: A Documentary History: The Late Tokugawa Period to the Present*. (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), pp. 527-529.

### **Plan to Double Individual Income, December 27, 1960**

1) *Objectives of This Plan*

The plan to double the individual income [hereafter referred to as the plan] must have as its objectives doubling of the gross national product, attainment of full employment through expansion in employment opportunities, and raising the living standard of our people. We must adjust differentials in living standards and income existing between farming and non farming sectors, between large enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises, between different regions of the country, and between different income groups. We must work toward a balanced development in our national economy and life patterns.

## 2) *Targets to Be Attained*

The plan's goal is to reach 26 trillion yen in GNP (at the fiscal year [FY] 1958 price) within the next ten years. To reach this goal, and in view of the fact that there are several factors highly favorable to economic growth existing during the first part of this plan, including the rapid development of technological changes and an abundant supply of skilled labor forces, we plan to attain an annual rate of growth of GNP at 9 percent for the coming three years. It is hoped that we shall be able to raise our GNP of 13.6 trillion yen (13 trillion yen in FY1958 price) in FY1960 to 17.6 trillion yen (FY 1960 price) in FY 1963 with application of appropriate policies and cooperation from the private sector.

## 3) *Points to Be Considered in Implementing the Plan and Directions to Be Followed*

The plan contained in the report of the Economic Council will be respected. However, in its implementation we must act flexibly and pay due consideration to the economic growth actually occurring and other related conditions. Any action we undertake must be consistent with the objectives described above. To do so, we shall pay special attention to the implementation of the following:

### a) Promotion of Modernization in Agriculture

To secure a balanced development in our national economy, we shall enact a Fundamental Law of Agriculture as a means of promoting modernization in agriculture. The proposed law shall serve as the basis of our new agricultural policies on issues ranging from agricultural production, income and structure, to various other measures.

Concurrent with this, we shall actively secure investment for infrastructure required for agricultural production, and moneys required for promoting modernization in agriculture.

Enhancement of coastal fishing shall be undertaken in a similar manner.

### b) Modernization of Medium and Small Enterprises

To enhance productivity in medium and small enterprises, to relax the ills associated with our economy's dual structure, and to promote vigorously various measures required to attain these objectives, we shall secure an adequate and just supply of funds for modernization of medium and small enterprises.

### c) Accelerated Development of Less Developed Regions

To accelerate development of those less developed regions (including southern Kyushu, western Kyushu, Sanin region, and southern Shikoku) and to adjust difference in income levels, we shall establish without delay a plan for comprehensive multi-purpose development of the land. This will enable us to develop these regions' resources. Special consideration will be given to tax incentives, financing and rates of assistance permitted for public sector investment. We shall study legislation necessary to implement these measures. We shall see to it that industries appropriate to these regions will be located there. In this manner the welfare of the inhabitants in these regions may be advanced and the regions' less developed status may be rectified.

### d) Promotion of Appropriate Locations for Industries and Reexamination of Regional Distribution of Public Sector Projects

It is certainly important to respect the use of sound economic reasons in selecting industrial locations, if we are to maintain for a long period of time our country's high rate of growth, to strengthen international competitiveness, and to heighten the utility of our social capital investment. This must not be carried out in a manner that will promote greater differentials between regions.

While respecting rationality in mg economic decisions and at the same time preventing spread of differentials between regions, we must adjust flexibly the amount of moneys invested or loaned for public works in different regions according to the special conditions existing in these regions. In this manner we shall be able to enhance the utility of public works projects consistent with economic development which at the same time contribute toward minimizing differentials between regions.

e) Active Cooperation with the Development of World Economy

Raising productivity means strengthening our export competitiveness. Bearing in mind that an important key to the success of this plan is in the expansion of our exports and an increase in revenues in foreign currencies, we must promote a viable export strategy accompanied by other measures increasing non trade revenues such as tourism and maritime transportation. We shall actively seek cooperation with other countries in promoting economic development in less-deed countries and raise their income levels.

3) Found in *Made in Japan: Akio Morita and Sony* by Akio Morita, founder of Sony(New York: Penguin Press, 1986), pp. 63-66, 70-71.

### **Made in Japan**

The idea on an international market for Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo had been in our minds from early one, and it was inevitable that Ibuka and I would have to travel. In 1952 the tape recorder business was very good, and Ibuka thought he wanted to go to the United States to see what uses were being made of the tape recorder and to learn more about the manufacture of the tape itself. He spoke virtually no English, but he managed to get around and observe things. He came away disappointed because, while he found some language laboratories using tape recorders, he saw that we were making wider use of them in our schools than they were in the U.S. Another disappointment for Ibuka was that none of the tape manufacturers would allow visitors into their plants. But the trip turned out to be of great benefit to us. In 1948, we had both read about the work of William Shockley and others at Bell Laboratories in the "Bell Laboratory Record," and we had been curious about their discoveries ever since. That year small articles began to appear in the American press and elsewhere about the device invented at Bell Labs called the transistor, and on Ibuka's trip he first learned that a license for this marvelous gadget might soon be available. He began to make plans.

This solid-state device was something completely new to our experience, and learning about it and deciding what we could do with it was a job for more than an electronics engineer or two. During one sleepless night in a noisy room in New York's old Taft Hotel near Times Square, it occurred to Ibuka that our company now had about one hundred and twenty employees, about a third of them graduate engineers-electronic, metallurgical, chemical, mechanical - and developing the transistor for our use would be a job that would challenge the skills of all of them. He didn't know then just what we would make with the transistor if we got the technology, but he was excited by the technological breakthrough it represented. Ibuka tried to get an interview with the Western Electric patent license manager the next day, as Western Electric was the patent holder for Bell Labs, but was told the man was too busy to see him, so he asked a friend of his, Shido Yamada, who lived in New York and had worked for a Japanese trading company, to make some inquiries. Then Ibuka went home.

I must make it clear that the transistor being made at that time wasn't something that we could license and produce right off the shelf. This miraculous device was a breakthrough in electronics. Technology, but it could only handle audio frequencies. In fact, when I finally signed the patent agreement a year later, the people at Western Electric told me that if we wanted to use the transistor in consumer items, the hearing aid was the only product we should expect to make with it. In those days there were no transistors made for use in radios. Of course we were not interested in the hearing aid market, which is very limited. We wanted to make something that could be used by everybody, and we had plans to put our research scientists and technicians to work developing our own high-frequency transistor for use in radios. We started to consider what kind of radio we could make with transistors. At that time, the worldwide trend in the radio field was toward a new concept. The new phrase, "high fidelity," or hi-fi, was soon to be in vogue.

People would be listening for purity of sound, for realistic reproduction, or at least for sonically exciting reproduction. Some early hi-fi fans were already buying records of locomotive noises, airplanes taking off, horses galloping, police sirens, old weapons being fired, and all kinds of other sound effects to show off their new systems. Speakers were getting bigger, sound was getting bigger, and the words "woofer," "tweeter," "distortion" and "feedback" were entering the language. Amplifiers using many vacuum tubes were thought to give the purest sound. We envisioned the transistor replacing the bulky, hot, and unreliable vacuum tube. It would give us a chance not only to miniaturize electronic products but also to lower the power consumption. If we could devise a transistor that could deliver a high enough frequency, we could make a very small radio powered by batteries. We hoped to get realistic sound using a minimum of power.

Miniaturization and compactness have always appealed to the Japanese. Our boxes have been made to nest; our fans fold; our art rolls into neat scrolls; screens that can artistically depict an entire city can be folded and tucked neatly away, or set up to delight, entertain, and educate, or merely to divide a room. And we set as our goal a radio to fit into a shirt pocket. Not just portable, I said, but "pocketable." Even before the war RCA made a medium-size portable using tiny "peanut" vacuum tubes, but half the space was taken up by an expensive battery, which played for only about four hours. Transistors might be able to solve that power and size problem.

We were all eager to get to work on the transistor, and when word came that it would be possible to license the technology, I went to New York to finalize the deal in 1953. I also wanted to see what the world was like and where our new company could fit in, so I planned to visit Europe after my New York business was concluded. I was excited when I climbed aboard the Stratocruiser at Tokyo's Haneda Airport, a small suitcase in one hand and a bag slung over my shoulder. I must admit that I was initially discouraged by the very scale of the United States. Everything was so big, the distances were so great, the open spaces so vast, the regions so different, I thought it would be impossible to sell our products here. The place just overwhelmed me. The economy was booming, and the country seemed to have everything.

When I mailed Ibuka the license agreement with Western Electric, I had a surge of confidence. But in Japan exchange control was very strong at the time, and we needed approval from the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) to remit the initial transistor license fee of twenty-five thousand dollars out of the country. The transistor was so new, and foreign currency was so scarce in Japan, which was just then beginning to accelerate its recovery from the war, that the bureaucrats at MITI could not see the use for such a device and were not eager to grant permission. Besides, MITI thought that such a small company as Totsuko (as we were known) could not possibly undertake the enormous task of dealing with brand-new technologies. In fact, they were adamant against it at first. Ibuka was eloquent on the possible uses of this little-known device, but it took him six months to convince the bureaucrats. MITI has not been the great benefactor of the Japanese electronics industry that some critics seem to think it has. ...

We wanted a new name that could be recognized anywhere in the world, one that could be pronounced the same in any language. We made dozens and dozens of tries. Ibuka and I went through dictionaries looking for a bright name, and we came across the Latin word *sonus*, meaning "sound." The word itself seemed to have sound in it. Our business was full of sound, so we began to zero in on *sonus*. At that time in Japan borrowed English slang and nicknames were becoming popular and some people referred to bright young and cute boys as "sonny," or "sonny-boys," and, of course, "sunny" and "sonny" both had an optimistic and bright sound similar to the Latin root with which we were working. And we also thought of ourselves as "sonny-boys" in those days. Unfortunately, the single word "sonny" by itself would give us troubles in Japan because in the Romanization of our language, the word "sonny" would be pronounced "sohn-nee," which means to lose money. That was no way to launch a new product. We pondered this problem for a little while and the answer struck me one day: why not just drop one of the letters and make it "Sony"? That was it!

The new name had the advantage of not meaning anything but "Sony" in any language; it was easy to remember, and it carried the connotations we wanted. Furthermore, as I reminded Ibuka, because it was written in roman letters, people in many countries could think of it as being in their own language. All over the world governments were spending money to teach people how to read English and use the roman alphabet, including Japan. And the more people who

learned English and the roman alphabet, the more people would recognize our company and product name- at no cost to us.

We kept our old corporate name for some time after we began putting the Sony logotype on our products. For our first product logo, we used a tall, thin sloping initial letter inside a square box, but I soon realized that the best way to get name recognition would be to make the name as legible and simple as possible, so we moved to the more traditional and simple capital letters that remain today. The name itself is the logo.

We managed to produce our first transistorized radio in 1955 and our first tiny "pocketable" transistor radio in 1957. It was the world's smallest, but actually it was a bit bigger than a standard men's shirt pocket, and that gave us a problem for a while, even though we never said which product we had in mind when we said "pocketable." We liked the idea of a salesman being able to demonstrate how simple it would be to drop into a shirt pocket. We came up with a simple solution- we had some shirts made for our salesmen with slightly larger than normal pockets, just big enough to slip the radio into.

The introduction of this proud achievement was tinged with disappointment that our first transistorized radio was not the very first one on the market. An American company called Regency, supported by Texas Instruments, and using TI transistors, put out a radio with the Regency brand name a few years before ours, but the company gave up without putting much effort into marketing it. As the first in the field, they might have capitalized on their position and created a tremendous market for their product as we did. But they apparently judged mistakenly that there was no future in this business and gave it up.

Our fine little radio carried our company's brand new name, Sony, and we had big plans for the future of transistorized electronics and hopes that the success of our small "pocketable" radio would be a harbinger of successes to come.

In June 1957, we put up our first billboard carrying the Sony name opposite the entrance to Tokyo's Haneda International Airport and at the end of the year we put up another in the heart of the Ginza district of Tokyo. In January 1958 we officially changed our company name to Sony Corporation and were listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange that December.