

# THE MAKING OF MODERN JAPAN



MARIUS B. JANSEN



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## The Making of Modern Japan



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MAKING  
of  
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JAPAN



Marius B. Jansen

THE BELKNAP PRESS OF  
HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
London, England

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Printed in the United States of America

Third printing, 2002

First Harvard University Press paperback edition, 2002

Book design by Marianne Perlak

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Jansen, Marius B.

The making of modern Japan / Marius B. Jansen.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-674-00334-9 (cloth)

ISBN 0-674-00991-6 (pbk.)

1. Japan—History—Tokugawa period, 1600–1868.

2. Japan—History—Meiji period, 1868— I. Title.

DS871.J35 2000

952'.025—dc21

00-041352

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## PREFACE



My entry into the field of Japanese history was fortuitous. As an undergraduate at Princeton I had decided on a career in Reformation and Renaissance history, but World War II and the military duty I began in 1943 changed that. An army language program, followed by service in Okinawa and Japan, brought experiences and interests that proved compelling. The army program was directed by a pioneer in the study of Japan, Serge Elisséeff, who was himself a chapter in the West's encounter with Japan. Son of a wealthy Russian merchant, he had studied at Tokyo Imperial University in the last years of the Meiji period majoring in Japanese literature, the first non-Japanese to do so, and became a member of the student group that met with the great novelist Natsume Sōseki. Returning to Moscow, he narrowly survived the Bolshevik Revolution and made his way to Paris before coming to head the Harvard-Yenching Institute in 1935. He was a splendid teacher, with a personal anecdote to underscore the usage of almost any word or term.

I was astonished by a language so different from those I knew, and to acquire it was almost like learning to think a second time. There were gradations of status so clearly established that they seemed terraces of courtesy, and all transcribed in a nonalphabetic script. Long before the course was completed I had decided to return for more systematic study once the war was over.

Acquaintance with Japanese society confirmed me in that resolution. On Okinawa I found a gentle, warm, and forgiving people, stripped of everything except their dignity, dazed and surprised to find themselves alive after the carnage of a battle that had reduced their numbers by one-quarter. They seemed courteous, deferential, and quietly skeptical of all authority. In the Japan to which I was soon transferred shadowy figures

moved along darkened streets in the rubble of the cities, far more fearful, and far less open, than the Okinawans had seemed.

There followed an assignment to join a small detachment in the magnificent mountains of Hakone, among villages to which Japanese authorities had sent the “friendly” European community for shelter when the cities were set ablaze by fire raids. The little unit to which I found myself attached had as its mission the investigation of the master spy Richard Sorge, whose story the Intelligence Section of General Headquarters wanted clarified as an object lesson in the dangers of Communist subversion. Sorge, a German of Russian birth, combined brilliance with extraordinary recklessness. As columnist for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* he had secured access to the military men who headed the Nazi embassy in Tokyo, mixed easily with Japanese social scientists, many of them Marxist, who staffed a research institute established by Prince Konoe, three times prime minister, and then transmitted to Moscow reel after reel of secret documents which indicated that Japan would strike south and not north against the Russians. Our office contained the relevant files from the German embassy, and former ambassador general Eugen Ott, who had lost his post when Sorge was unmasked, lived nearby; his successor, Heinrich Stahmer, lived upstairs in the hotel in which we had our office. So too the German embassy’s military attaché, who described for us his astonishment, on walking his dog in Hibiya Park one December morning, at hearing that the Japanese navy had attacked Pearl Harbor and war had broken out with the United States. It would be difficult to imagine a better introduction to contemporary East Asian history.

That same good fortune continued during my years of graduate training in Chinese and Japanese studies at Harvard after the war. Some of our number, most of them with prewar experience of East Asia, were following plans they had had to defer because of military service during the war, but the great majority of us were wartime converts, eager to place what we had learned and experienced in a larger and longer historical context. Edwin Reischauer, newly returned as professor from service in Washington and little more than a decade senior to most of us, was the coach and leader of the team, and his vitality and energy balanced Professor Elisséeff’s quiet astonishment at this sudden influx of enthusiastic students. There was an air of excitement and discovery about our work; the world we were studying seemed newly opened, and its paths were still uncharted.

My first research topic was chosen almost as accidentally as my entrance into Japanese studies. I needed a topic that could be researched in Japanese sources for John Fairbank’s seminar in Chinese history, and out of that came a concern with Sino-Japanese cultural and political contacts that never left

me and is reflected in the chapters that follow. *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen* (Harvard University Press, 1954) traced friendships that developed between Chinese and Japanese in shared distress at the rise of Western imperialism in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and closer study of Japanese participants in those events opened windows on the aspirations of a generation of young Japanese whose identities had been shaken to the core by the tidal wave of foreign culture they encountered. Miyazaki Tōten and Chiba Takusaburō, two young men who figure in this narrative, exemplify that shock and cultural confusion.

For most of that generation a desperate drive to shelter what was central led to concentration on the construction of a modern state. Sun Yat-sen and other Chinese exiles in Japan sometimes styled themselves after the state builders of Meiji Japan, while the young Miyazaki and Chiba looked for ways to broaden the mandate their predecessors had worked out. To better understand this I turned next to the study of the thought and political world of pre-Meiji activists, and tried to locate my subject in the political and intellectual ferment whose echoes still moved Meiji-era Japanese like Miyazaki as well as their Chinese friends. For this a young enthusiast whose political growth was mirrored in letters to the family he had left behind, and whose early death at the hands of assassins, on the very eve of the Tokugawa fall, removed the possibility of distraction by a later career, proved a happy choice. *Sakamoto Ryōma and the Meiji Restoration* (Princeton University Press, 1961) also immersed me in problems of local history in late and post-feudal institutions in Tokugawa Japan, and these in turn traced their origin to the founding of the shogunate in 1600.

That sweep of Japanese history, from 1600 to the present, has been the subject of my teaching and research in the decades that have followed, and it is the field I have taken as my problem in this book. It would have been an easier task fifty years ago, when I began my career at the University of Washington. It is difficult today to imagine a field in which there were almost no books, few articles, and not very many ideas. The study of Japanese history has grown exponentially in this half century, and the flood of publications and variety of topics have forced students to specialize in ways that my generation could not. We were less learned, no doubt, but perhaps also more fortunate, for every topic lay ready to hand and needed to be examined. Concepts like feudalism, militarism, modernization, statism, civil society, and social history have changed the landscape, each leaving awareness of new problems and possibilities in its wake.

My generation of historians of Japan has also benefited immeasurably



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from the accessibility and cooperation of scholars in Japan. In my case, a year spent as executive associate at the International House of Japan in Tokyo during 1960–61 led to friendships that have deepened over the years. It has been quite different for our counterparts in Chinese history; however great the contributions of expatriate Chinese scholars and institutions on the edges of China itself, universities in the People's Republic were beyond reach, personally and intellectually, for the greater part of the last half century. In contrast the flow of visiting scholars from Japan, and their receptivity to colleagues, students, and publications on this side of the Pacific, created a universe of shared discovery that has been central to all our work. Visiting scholars became partners in projects by the 1950s; they were taking part in multinational and binational research conferences by the 1960s, joined committees to plan research programs in the 1970s, and took part in editorial boards and manuscript preparation for projects like the *Cambridge History of Japan* in the 1980s and 1990s. They translated and discussed our work and visited major institutions to expound their own ideas. In the last decades the support of the Japan Foundation and, most recently, the International Research Center for Japan Studies have made the study of Japanese society and culture even more of a binational effort.

The other major change has come with the emergence of a generation of specialists who encountered Japanese history and society as standard fare within established college and university curricula, and did not have to wait for international crises or governmental directives to draw them into the study of Japanese. Students educate one another, with the help, or sometimes in spite of, the efforts of their teachers. The greatest pleasure of my pursuit of Japanese history has been the companionship and stimulation of undergraduate and graduate participants in that effort at Princeton since 1959. Not a few will find their work cited in the notes and suggestions for further reading provided here, and it is to them that this book is dedicated.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Every author owes thanks to those who helped, but my gratitude has grown as my eyesight has weakened. I am enormously indebted to Ronald P. Toby for the care with which he went through the manuscript. In addition it was he who worked with James A. Bier to produce the maps. Computers were meant for younger people; Ralph Meyer responded to numerous emergencies with house calls, and Eileen Moffett unearthed a font that I could almost read. Morgan Pitelka rejuvenated the manuscript and its author by clearing the manuscript of technical errors. Izumi Koide and Yasuko Makino, librarians at the International House of Japan and Princeton University's Gest Oriental Library, were unfailingly prompt with materials and answers. Martin Heijdra, Yoshiaki Shimizu, Masako Shinn, Robert Singer, and Yutaka Yabuta helped in various ways with illustrations. My colleagues Martin Collcutt, Sheldon Garon, and David Howell were always on hand when needed. At Harvard University Press Aida D. Donald, Elizabeth Suttell, and especially my manuscript editor Elizabeth Gilbert have been models of forbearance. Jean, as always, has been more central to this enterprise than she can ever know. To all, my thanks for what is here and my apologies for what is not.

Princeton, N.J.  
April 2000

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## NOTE ON NAMES AND ROMANIZATION

In Japan, as in China and Korea, the family name precedes the given, and this order has been followed throughout the text. Japanese authors whose works appear in translation or who publish in English sometimes prefer to use the Western sequence with family names last, however, and where this is the case citations in the notes follow the original. There are other pitfalls. Japanese are sometimes better known by their pen names or, more inconvenient still, by alternate readings of the Chinese characters with which their first name is written. Where this is the case the text and the index indicate the alternate possibility in parentheses. Japanese romanization follows *Kenkyūsha's New Japanese-English Dictionary*, 4th ed. (1974), a modification of the system worked out by the pioneer missionary James Hepburn, a Princeton graduate of 1832. Macrons to indicate long vowels in names have been used except in reference to well-known terms and places like shogun and Tokyo. For readings of names and for dates, I have followed *Kadokawa Nihonshi jiten*, 2d ed. (Tokyo: Kadokawa, 1976). For Chinese I have retained the Wade-Giles system, except for familiar place names like Peking, but that too, in deference to current usage, becomes Beijing after 1949.

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## The Making of Modern Japan



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## SEKIGAHARA

# 1

In 1610 Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate, gave his adopted daughter a pair of eight-fold screens as part of her dowry before sending her off to be the bride of Tsugaru Nobuhira. The screens depict the battle of Sekigahara, which took place in the ninth month of 1600, and established the political foundation for two and a half centuries of Tokugawa rule. They are in the style of the court school of Tosa painters, richly detailed and splendidly colored, painted on thin sheets of hammered gold that set off the epic deeds that they record. The narrative moves from right to left, as in a page of written Japanese, and begins with the arrival of the competing hosts the day before the battle. The village of Sekigahara is set in a narrow valley between the mountains of Mino Province. The rice harvest has been gathered; fall was a favorite time for the military commanders of the day, as they could seize the peasants' produce after the harvest and avoid the work of transporting mountains of supplies. At the top the army of Ieyasu is shown joining the battle line; the future shogun himself is splendidly mounted and surrounded by his guard. Lower on those panels is the castle of Ōgaki, which served as headquarters for the coalition of feudal chiefs, the daimyo, drawn up to oppose Ieyasu. Everywhere throughout the sixteen panels there are formations of soldiers, arranged below the tall cloth banners that announce their formation and lord. The men throng to the scenes of struggle, and break in defeat and flight. The samurai, resplendent in their armor, are on horseback; larger groups of foot soldiers armed with lances and swords surround and follow them. By the time the scene shifts to the sixteenth and final screen the army at the lower part of the screen is in flight, and from the surrounding hills men equipped with firearms are adding to the carnage by picking them off. Soon the heads of those who have fallen will

be stacked in orderly piles to make possible a count of enemy dead. For the losing side modern estimates range from four thousand to twice that number; in any case an awesome harvest of the defeated host will be executed a few days later, and their gibbeted heads displayed in the nearby city.

The number of fighting men arrayed against each other was formidable. There were probably over 100,000 on each side, although the nature of the terrain meant that about half that many, perhaps 110,000, were actually committed to the battle. Sekigahara came as the climax to almost a century of intermittent warfare during which commanders had gained experience in moving large numbers of troops. The night before the battle not even a driving rain kept the hosts from assembling and taking up their positions, and on the morning hostilities broke out a dense fog brought units into contact before the word to attack had been given. Battle management was difficult because there were divisions sent by feudal lords from all parts of the country on both sides. From one such, the detachment of 3,000 men contributed by Date Masamune, daimyo of the northeastern domain of Sendai, one can get some idea of the proportions of weaponry in use. Date had 420 horsemen, 200 archers, 850 men carrying long spears, and 1,200 armed with matchlock firearms. Many also carried swords, the samurai two, one long and the other short, but the other weapons were the ones that counted more.

### 1. The Sengoku Background

Tokugawa rule was to be praised as the “great peace,” and to understand how grateful writers in early modern Japan were for the more than two centuries without conflict—a period during which China was overrun by the Manchus, India by the Moguls, and Europe was engulfed in a series of wars that culminated in the rise and fall of the Napoleonic empire—it is necessary to explain what had gone before. Tokugawa rule was not Japan’s first experience of unity and order. In the seventh and eighth centuries the introduction of institutions of central government modeled on those of China had also been followed by several centuries of peace broken only by border conflict to the north. The early government had purchased Chinese-style centralization for its heartland at the price of continued dominance for regional leaders at the periphery, however, and by the tenth century a movement of privatization had begun to replace the institutions of central rule. Grants of tax-free land to court favorites and to temples restricted the fiscal base of central government, and additional offices for the maintenance of order and land registration began to usurp the functions that had been set aside for the institutions of the imperial state. By the twelfth century power struggles between local grandees were

affecting life in the capital. At the center the great Fujiwara clan, subdivided into several houses, reached into the court through marriage alliances and patronage, and so dominated life that emperors began to seek early abdication in order to be able to arrange their own lives and manage their own estates. The court itself was becoming more a private than a governmental institution, though its members continued to function as the most important of the lineages with which it was connected. Great Buddhist temples too served as centers of a network of subsidiaries with landed interests throughout the country. Ambitious men developed personal followings in the course of accumulating and managing private estates and managing the diminished part of the once universal public realm that remained. They began to arrange themselves in leagues that claimed and sometimes had lineage connections, and as their power grew the aristocrats at court tried also to utilize them for their needs.

In the twelfth century a series of wars among these aristocratic warriors—few in number, fiercely proud of their heritage, and splendidly accoutered and horsed—ended with victory for the Minamoto clan, which installed itself in headquarters at Kamakura on the Sagami Bay in eastern Japan. The office of shogun, theretofore a temporary commission used in pacification campaigns against the Ainu to the north, now became a permanent and hereditary title used to designate the head of warrior houses. Japan entered a period of warrior rule from which it did not emerge until the fall of the Tokugawa in 1868.

That period was nevertheless one of constant development and change. The first line of Minamoto shoguns—from whom the Tokugawa were to claim descent, albeit on dubious grounds—established a line of military authority that supplemented, and in time overshadowed, that of the imperial court. It forced from the court permission to appoint stewards to private estates throughout the land, and constables or military governors in the provinces to serve as officials of the new system of justice that was established. Although the Minamoto line itself soon ended, a line of regents, hereditary in the Hōjō family, carried on its functions. At the imperial capital the wishes of emperors, who frequently abdicated to exercise greater influence from monastic establishments, counted for much less. An attempt by a retired emperor to challenge Kamakura dominance was quickly snuffed out and led to more forceful measures by the Kamakura leaders. Shadow shoguns dealt with shadow emperors, and Kamakura institutions remained an overlay on those of the court. Gradually provincial and local interests came to count for more. The tenuous balance was brought to an end by the great invasions launched by the Mongol overlords of China in 1274 and 1281. Japan emerged from this crisis with its sovereignty intact, but its leaders had conquered no new lands with which they could reward their men. By 1333 a discontented emperor was



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