

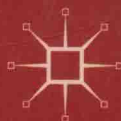


A HISTORY OF JAPAN

FROM STONE AGE TO SUPERPOWER

Third Edition

Kenneth Henshall



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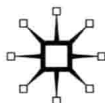
3rd Edition

KENNETH G. HENSHALL

*Professor of Japanese Studies, University of Canterbury,
Christchurch, New Zealand*



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First edition published 1999

Second edition published 2004

Third edition published 2012 by

PALGRAVE MACMILLAN

Palgrave Macmillan in the UK is an imprint of Macmillan Publishers Limited, registered in England, company number 785998, of Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS.

Palgrave Macmillan in the US is a division of St Martin's Press LLC, 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

Palgrave Macmillan is the global academic imprint of the above companies and has companies and representatives throughout the world.

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ISBN: 978–0–230–34661–1 hardback

ISBN: 978–0–230–34662–8 paperback

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

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PREFACE

Aims and Sources

The main aim of this book is to tell the story of Japan. The story needs to be told from the beginning. It needs to be told in a balanced and comprehensive way but without becoming cluttered, and in a way that makes Japan's history accessible and understandable without becoming simplistic or superficial. Many books on Japan's history are encyclopedic in nature and have so much detail it becomes difficult to see overall trends. Others tend to focus narrowly on a theme and omit background important for a balanced perspective. Still others tend to start Japan's story in modern times, omitting important earlier background.

Such books all have their merits, but they do tend to daunt the non-specialist. In this day and age, when so many people are interested in Japan and particularly its rise to superpower status, this seems a pity. General readers, students, and scholars in other specialist fields should all have easier access to Japan's fascinating and instructive history.

Accessibility, therefore, has been a major consideration in the writing of this book. A related consideration has been to encourage readers to follow up particular points of interest to them. For these reasons I have deliberately confined my sources to those in the English language, and I have deliberately and very frequently given references with a view to readers following these up if they wish. They will not have to read Japanese to do so.

My own knowledge of Japan's history has been built up over many years from both Japanese and English sources, but not everyone can afford to spend ten years or so learning to read Japanese. When I started studying Japanese, some thirty years ago, an inability to read the script was a major barrier to acquiring any sort of authoritative knowledge of the country. This is no longer so. Nowadays there is a vast amount of material available in English, not only works written originally in English

but translations of just about every major Japanese work. As a result, it is perfectly possible for the English-language reader to gain a very informed understanding even of detailed matters about Japan. Part of my aim in this book is to draw the attention of a wider reading public to this wealth of available material. In fact, there is so much available that I simply cannot touch upon all of it.

Japan's story is a fascinating one. It has elements of adventure, of mystery and intrigue, and of controversy, and I include these in the story in these pages. It is important for all readers, even if they are not academics, to know what areas and events in Japan's history are still unclear and uncertain.

Many readers will be particularly interested in how Japan became a superpower. Japan's achievements are the result of both circumstance itself and Japan's response to circumstance, a response-pattern often based on deep-rooted values and practices. I do not let these values and practices dominate my account of Japan's history, but I do highlight them and list them in the review at the end of each part, as well as writing my conclusion around them.

The periodic reviews are intended to help accessibility. Japan's history is so long and rich that it is important to stop from time to time and look back, to try to pick out major trends and events. The more we can digest of Japan's history, the greater our reward, for it is a history well worth knowing.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am particularly indebted to Ken Coates, formerly Professor of History at the University of Waikato, for his insightful comments and valuable suggestions about the book as a whole. A number of other scholars and individuals around the world have commented on drafts of various sections of this book or advised on specific points, and I am grateful to them for their advice. They include Laurie Barber, Gina Barnes, Darrin Findlay, Steven Lim, Derek Massarella, Tsutomu Nishigaki, Yoshio Okamoto, Ian Pool, Ray Richards, Eric Thompson, Tadashi Uda, and Brian Whitley. The shortcomings of the final product are in no way a reflection of their advice. Nor are any conclusions drawn or views asserted necessarily a reflection of their own positions.

I am grateful to my colleague Roy Starrs for letting me have a preview manuscript of his forthcoming book on modernism and Japanese culture. I am also grateful to the staff at Palgrave Macmillan – especially Tim Farmiloe, Vicki Johnson, Aruna Vasudevan, Luciana O’Flaherty, Michael Strang, and Ruth Ireland – for their guidance and support; to the University of Waikato and the University of Canterbury for funding various overseas study trips, allowing me leave, and for buying so many books for me; and to my family and colleagues for their understanding.

I am indebted to Addisu Mesfin for politely pointing out to me that the Japanese victory over Russia in 1905 was not in fact the first victory in modern times of a non-western nation over a western nation. Addisu is quite right, and I was guilty of following the herd in assuming that the defeat of Russia by Japan was the first such victory. Ethiopia defeated Italy in 1896 in the First Italo-Ethiopian War (1895–96), the decisive event being the Battle of Adwa (Adowa). Moreover, prompted to do further research, I discovered another victory of a non-western nation over a western nation in early-modern times, in the form of the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839–42.

Similarly I am grateful to João Bispo for suggesting I should include some discussion about manga, video games, youth culture, and Japan as a cultural superpower. As it happens, I have been planning for some time to do so in the third edition, and have now done so.

Such constructive feedback from readers is much appreciated.

PREFACE TO THIRD EDITION

Subsequent to the appearance of the second edition in 2004 there have been a number of new developments in Japan, together with new scholarship related to events in its earlier history.

Recent developments include official recognition in 2008 of the Ainu as indigenous people; the toppling of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 2009 by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ); the recovery of the economy, despite a setback in the world recession of 2008–09 and a substantial amount of public debt; the rapid – indeed annual – turnover of prime ministers, with there being six incumbents to October 2011 since Koizumi resigned in September 2006; the controversial deployment of Self-Defence Force personnel to Somalia in 2009; and, of course, the enormous catastrophe of 11 March 2011 in the form of the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, compounded by leakage of radioactive material from damaged nuclear reactors.

Recent scholarship has also revealed new information about earlier events. For example, genetic research has cast interesting light on the origins of the Japanese; more details are emerging about links between Korea and early Japan; marine archaeology has literally uncovered a major factor in the destruction of Kublai Khan's invasion fleet of 1281; there has been more evidence to suggest that the famed samurai were not actually characterised by fighting to the death, and so on.

Structurally, I have expanded the last section of Part Six (second edition), '6.5: A superpower Adrift' into a Part Seven, which itself is divided into three sections, namely the economy, the political scene, and general life and society in global age Japan.

I have introduced a lot more statistics in Part Seven, as I believe it is important in this global age to get a 'snapshot', as it were, of quantifiable

data regarding social composition, population trends, and so forth. In particular, I have referred to a number of international indexes, such as those relating to quality of life, transparency of government, and so on. This gives us some idea of Japan's standing in the international community.

On a personal note, I am flattered and delighted that my humble book on Japanese history is going into a third edition. It has also been translated into a wide range of languages, from Chinese to Estonian – though curiously there is not a Japanese translation that I am aware of – and has been recommended as a university text as well as for the general reader. I am grateful to the translators, and for all the positive comments, which fortunately greatly outweigh the negative ones.

Finally, I wish the Japanese nation a speedy recovery from the 11 March 2011 disaster, though 'speedy' will be measured in years, and I grieve with them for the loss of life, and the loss of homes and treasured items that all form part of the lives of the survivors. It is hard to imagine the terror of such an event – pictures are not enough, you have to experience it. Here in Christchurch we have experienced two major devastating earthquakes (4 September 2010 and 22 February 2011) in less than six months, in the second of which my son barely escaped from a falling ceiling in a large building. To pass crushed corpses when seeking your son is not what any parent wants to do. And yet, such an experience is lightweight compared to the suffering in Japan.

Ken Henshall
Christchurch, New Zealand
October 2011

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INTRODUCTION: JAPAN AND HISTORY

The impact Japan has had on the modern world is enormous. It occupies less than one-three-hundredth of the planet's land area, yet at the height of its economic growth in the 1980s it wielded one-sixth of the planet's economic might, and remains the third ranking economy in the world. There will be few homes and offices that do not rely on at least some Japanese technology. Japanese cars rule the roads. Despite recent problems with so-called 'Japanese-style management', many western and Asian managers still try to do things 'the Japanese way'. Japanese foreign aid props up many a developing country's economy. Project developers around the world seek Japanese investment. Tourist operators target the large numbers of wealthy Japanese who now travel overseas. Japan itself features as one of the most popular of all 'places I would like to visit' in western surveys. The list goes on.

A leading player on the world scene, Japan's absence from any major international forum would be unthinkable. No modern history of the world could fail to give it very considerable space.

And yet, of all the nations on the planet, Japan has come closest to annihilation. It is the only nation ever to have suffered nuclear attack. Many among its enemies in the Second World War genuinely believed the extermination of the Japanese race was necessary for the safety of humankind. Even humanitarians like Franklin Roosevelt seemed to think 'ethnic cleansing' might be beneficial all round.

In the end, the Japanese survived. Far from being annihilated, Japan is one of the most powerful nations on earth. Far from being forced into inter-ethnic breeding, the Japanese remain ethnically one of the most homogeneous of all populations.

Japan's arrival in the world arena has been dramatic. From a quaint and obscure land of paddy fields and feudal despots just a hundred and fifty years ago, it rapidly became a major contender among the imperialist powers, a military threat to the world order, and then, its crisis passed, an economic superpower. For many westerners, exotic and patronising nineteenth-century images of coolie-hatted rice farmers, doll-like geisha and funny little men trying to look civilised gave way to brutal warlords and fanatical samurai soldiers mindlessly loyal to an evil emperor. After the war the images changed again to slave-like workers controlled by ruthless capitalists out to dominate the world – and who succeeded in doing so. For many Asians, especially Chinese and Koreans, the one-time 'land of dwarfs' ceased to be a backward pupil. The pupil became a harsh master, and a vicious and exploitative one at that. Though they respect Japan's inspirational economic achievements, many Asians have still not forgiven Japan for its prewar and wartime behaviour in their lands.

Not all images have been negative. Among westerners, at the start of the twentieth century Japan was respected for its military victories over China and Russia and was considered an ally by some powers. After its defeat in the Second World War, it was admired for the way it set about the task of rebuilding the nation. The 'economic miracle' that soon followed was an object for analysis, and would-be imitators looked for the key to success in its educational system, its political organisation, and particularly its management practices. Among Asians, alongside the wartime images of rape and pillage and murder there is also a grudging recognition that Japan has at least put Asia on the map in terms of world respect, and overturned western condescension. Many Asian nations have openly tried to model their economies on Japan's, despite a few pitfalls. Some, notably Malaysia, have positively sung its praises.

Even though Japan at the turn of the millennium fell from grace a little as a result of its economic recession and holes in its management practices, it is still clear that the current prevailing image of Japan, and its impact on the world, is largely economic in nature – though in recent years it can also claim to be a technological and cultural superpower. In fact, Japan's focus on economic growth at the expense of quality of life and other matters has been one of the major criticisms levelled at it. At least an image of economic obsession is better than one of military fanaticism.

To understand the makings of an economic superpower it is not enough just to examine its economic development. Certainly this is