

George Sansom

**A History
of Japan
1334-1615**

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA

Stanford University Press
Stanford, California
© 1961 by the Board of Trustees of the
Leland Stanford Junior University
Printed in the United States of America
Cloth ISBN 0-8047-0524-0
Paper ISBN 0-8047-0525-9
Original edition 1961
Last figure below indicates year of this printing:
87 86

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PREFACE

This volume relates the course of events in a period of some two hundred and eighty years during which the whole of Japan was torn by factions and plagued by incessant civil war until late in the sixteenth century, when a process of national unification by force of arms was begun by a great general, Nobunaga, continued by his successor Hideyoshi, and completed by the victories of Ieyasu, the first Tokugawa Shōgun.

Examined in retrospect this prolonged achievement of the military power reveals a decline in the moral standards of its leaders. The rule of the Hōjō had been distinguished by prudent administration and a concern for justice until after the Mongol invasion of 1281, which threw a great strain upon the feudal economy. At the turn of the century the Hōjō were showing clear signs of weakness, and in 1334 (perhaps because any feudal system harbours an internal contradiction) they succumbed to the pressure of dangerous rivals. Kamakura fell, the Regency was destroyed, and the Throne, after a fruitless restoration, was subjected to the dominance of a new line of Shōguns, beginning with Ashikaga Takauji.

Takauji and his kinsmen and associates were men without scruple. They have been blamed for their ill-treatment of the Imperial House, although in this they were no more guilty than the Hōjō, who had banished an Emperor in 1221. Their real faults were their gross ambition and their ruthless greed. Yet the two centuries and more of Ashikaga rule (from 1336 to 1573) are the liveliest, the most varied and interesting period in Japanese history, whether military, political, or social. In the nineteenth century, because political orthodoxy regarded the Ashikaga Shōguns as traitors, Japanese historians tended to neglect this period; but today it is enthusiastically explored by specialists in almost every field bent upon tracing the evolution of the national life during the middle ages.

Some scholars describe the dynastic struggle of the fourteenth century and its sequels as a social revolution. Such a label seems to me misleading, for what took place was a redistribution of feudal privilege and power due to economic stresses rather than to conscious political design and affecting the lives of both warrior and peasant in unforeseen ways.

It is upon this aspect of Ashikaga history that I have mainly dwelt in the following chapters. I have paid comparatively little attention to the activities of Western missionaries and traders in Japan in the six-

teenth century because I regard their intrusion as an episode of secondary importance in the history of the nation. From the Western viewpoint it has been amply treated by Murdoch.

Since warfare was almost incessant during the years treated here, I have dealt at length and in what may seem tiresome detail with campaigns and the clash of arms. I wish I could have abbreviated these chronicles, but they are a necessary part of any study of a society in which the warriors compose the ruling class. Moreover, because development in the arts of war was rapid, the changing needs of armies influenced the direction of the economic development of the whole country and often dictated changes in its social and political structure. Even the aesthetic climate of the fifteenth century reflects the taste of successful fighting men.

G. S.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a great debt to many friends in Japan for continued assistance and encouragement.

Fukui Rikichirō (formerly Professor at Tōhoku Daigaku, Sendai), as well as reading critically parts of my manuscript, took pains to select and procure photographs for use as illustrations and gave me good advice out of his store of learning on mediaeval art and letters.

Yashiro Yukio (celebrated as an art historian and now Director of the Yamato Bunkakan Museum at Nara), whose friendship I have enjoyed for many years, never failed to give me generous help.

For several months in the spring and summer of 1959 I had the exceptional advantage of almost daily guidance by Toyoda Takeshi, of Tōhoku Daigaku, one of the leading Japanese historians, who was at that time a guest of Stanford University. Our collaboration was as fruitful and harmonious as he is erudite and kind. We worked at the same desk side by side, although metaphorically I sat at his feet, with great profit and enjoyment. I also owe thanks to his accomplished wife, Toyoda Yoshiko, a specimen of whose calligraphy adorns the page preceding the half title of this volume.

Sakamoto Tarō, the learned director of the Historiographical Institute of Tokyo University, supplied me with much valuable material in the shape of photographs of documents of historical importance.

Ishizawa Masao, of the Tokyo National Museum and a member of the Commission for the Protection of Cultural Property, also kindly furnished photographs of paintings and other articles under his care.

Here I must also acknowledge the permission granted to me by the above Commission (Bunkazai Hogo Iinkai) to publish photographs of materials under its protection.

At Stanford Dr. Joseph Williams, Professor of Geography, again generously gave time and care to the preparation of maps and diagrams.

I am indebted to Helen Craig McCullough of the University of California at Berkeley for research assistance, especially in regard to the first five chapters of this volume. Her translation of part of the *Taiheiki* covers some of the matters treated in those chapters.

Other friends here and at Berkeley, in particular the library staff of the East Asiatic collections, gave me valuable assistance. I am especially obliged to J. G. Bell and Linda Brownrigg, of the Stanford University Press, for highly skilled editorial work.

DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF PLATES

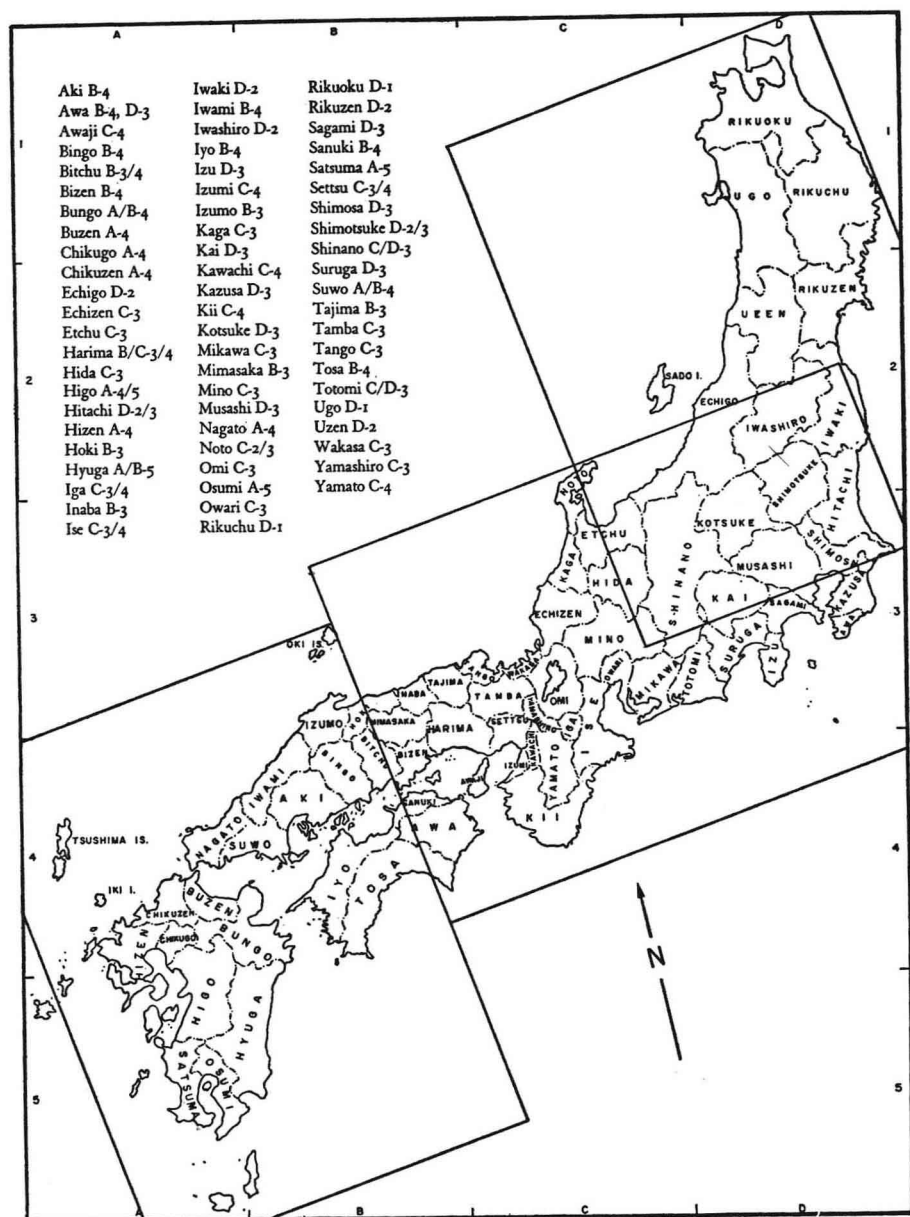
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Plates 10-13 follow p. 234. Plates 14 and 15 follow p. 282.
Plates 16-20 follow p. 346.

FRONTISPIECE

Suigetsu Kannon. A sculpture of the late Kamakura period, foreshadowing the strong influence of Sung art during Ashikaga times. It is of wood, painted; 47 cm. in height. Now in the Kamakura Museum, it is the property of the Tōkeiji.

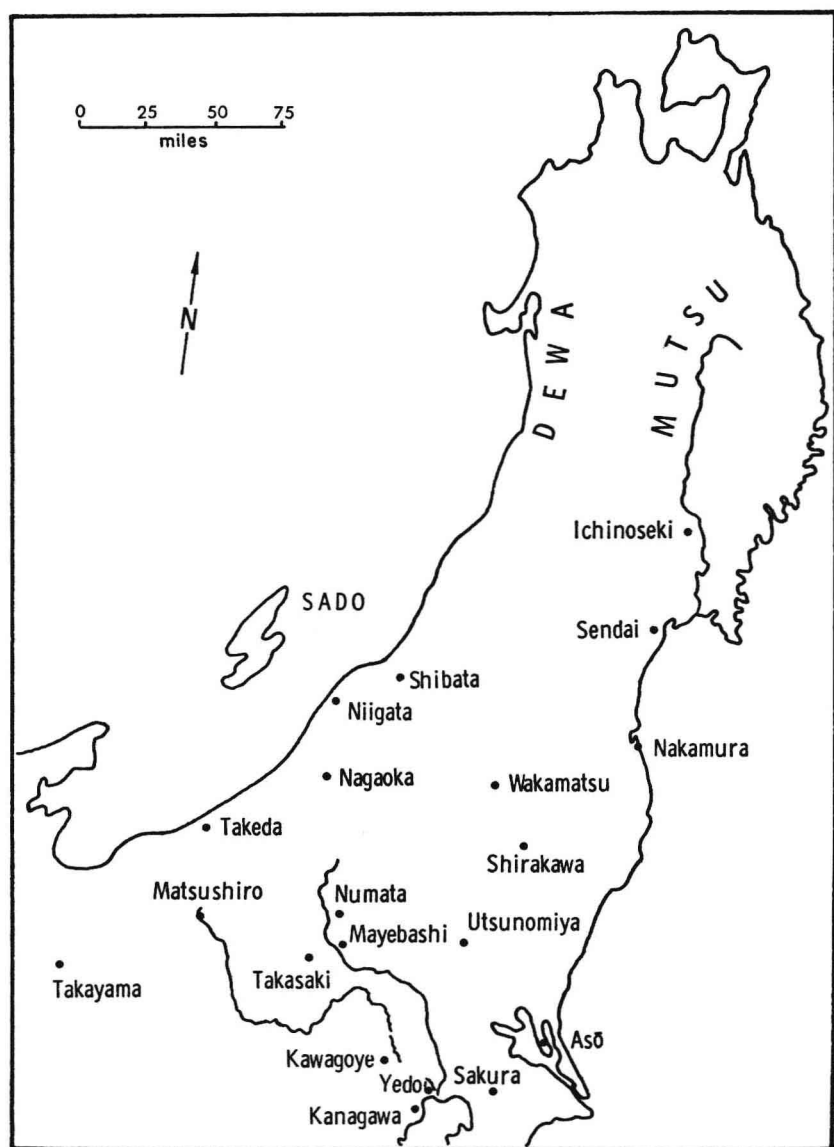
1. Ashikaga Takauji. An equestrian portrait bearing the cipher of Ashikaga Yoshiakira, Takauji's son. Formerly the property of the Moriya family. It has been questioned, but it is almost certainly authentic.
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6. Four figures from the *Tōhoku-In Uta-awase*, a picture scroll portraying a verse-matching party for members of various occupations. It is ascribed—both script and drawings—to Hanazono. The figures are from left to right (1) a gambler, (2) a carpenter, (3) a sorceress, and (4) a moulder of pots and pans.
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11. Detail from *Yūki Kassen Ekotoba*, a picture scroll showing episodes in the civil war of 1440, when Yūki Ujitomo revolted against the Bakufu. In colour, on paper. Property of the Hosomi family, Ōsaka.
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13. The market place at Fukuoka in Hizen. From the scroll *Ippen Shōnin E-den* ("Pictorial Life of Ippen").

14. Portrait of Oda Nobunaga, by Kanō Munehide, younger brother of Eitoku. In colour, on paper. The inscription states that the portrait was dedicated to the Chōkeiji in 1583, on the first anniversary of Nobunaga's death.
15. Portrait of Ryōkei, ca. 1570. He played a leading part in the defence of the Honganji in 1570-76, and was a typical militant leader of the Ikkō sect. This is probably a contemporary painting by a Kanō artist. Photograph kindly furnished by the publishers of *Nihon Bunkashi Taikei*.
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17. "Karashishi" ("Lions at Play"). Attributed to Kanō Eitoku (1543-90). It was painted for Nobunaga's castle at Azuchi. A folding screen in colour, on gold, its dimensions are 225 cm. × 459 cm. In the Imperial Collection.
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19. Another detail from "Namban Byōbu," showing the Jesuits.
20. A portrait of Ieyasu, one of six from the Rinnōji at Nikko, which is the mausoleum of Ieyasu.

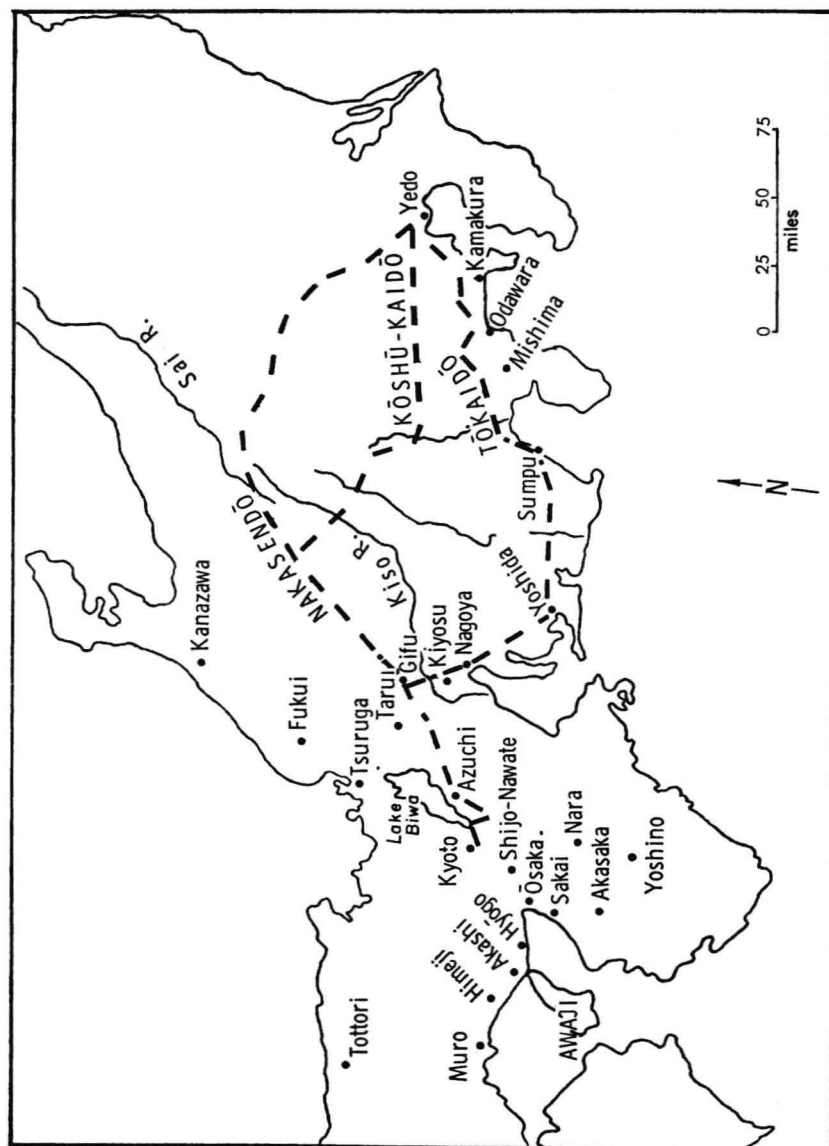


The provinces of Japan

The five northern provinces correspond to the earlier Mutsu and Dewa. There are two provinces named Awa; the names are written with different characters. The islands of Iki, Oki, Sado, and Tsushima are not provinces. The three small rectangles correspond to the enlarged maps on the following three pages.



The northern and eastern provinces



The central provinces (Chūgoku) and the Home Provinces



The western provinces, Shikoku, and Kyūshū

THE SCRIPT ON THE OPPOSITE PAGE,
FROM THE ACCOMPLISHED BRUSH OF TOYODA YOSHIKO,
FORMS THE WORD *araso*i, MEANING *strife*,
AND THAT IS THE MAIN THEME
OF THIS VOLUME.

何
羅
拔
以

They around the flag
Of each his faction, in their several Clanns
Light-arm'd or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift or slow,
Swarm populous, unnumber'd as the Sands

.

To whom these most adhere,
Hee rules a moment; *Chaos* Umpire sits,
And by decision more imbroiles the fray
By which he Reigns. Next him high Arbiter
Chance governs all.

(*Paradise Lost*, II)

The history upon which I am entering is rich
in disasters, dreadful in its battles, rent by its
seditions and cruel even in its peace.
(TACITUS, *Histories*, I, ii)

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