

University of Wisconsin-Madison
(Spring 1992)

HISTORY 454

JAPAN IN THE AGE OF THE SAMURAI: Seven Centuries of Feudal Society

Herbert P. Bix

Humanities Building
(Office Hrs: Mon, 3-4:30 & by appt)
Room 5122

1651 Humanities
Tues. & Thur. 2:30-3:45

Course Description:

This course treats the seven centuries from the late 1100s to the mid-1800s when Japan was governed by a warrior class. It focuses on the evolution of economic and political institutions as well as intellectual and cultural traditions which shaped the nature of "modern" Japan. The first group of lectures cover Japan's pre-feudal background, the development of distinctive Japanese traditions of myth, religion, and literature, and the role of the monarchy in Japanese history. Thereafter the lectures survey chronologically Japan's passage through different stages of feudal society, the century of contact with the West which began in the 1540s, the nature of the "bakuhan" state, the political and economic crises of late Tokugawa society, the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853 and the overthrow of the feudal regime fifteen years later. Considerable attention will also be given to the role and significance of the monarchy and its relationship with the warrior class.

Formal Course Requirements:

There will be a one-hour in-class examination on February 27, consisting of identification type questions requiring short answers. A second in-class examination, also requiring short answers, will be held on April 16. If you do not wish to take it, you may write a 5-7 page paper on a subject of your own choice, to be submitted on April 16. The third requirement is a two-hour final examination on May 12 covering the entire course.

Students who choose to write a short paper instead of taking a second hour exam are required to discuss their topics beforehand with me. The paper must be properly footnoted with

either end-notes or footnotes, comply with basic scholarly standards and be submitted on time. Extensions of deadlines will be granted only for family emergencies or documented medical reasons.

The first exam will count for 25 percent of the grade; the second exam *or* paper for 25 percent and the final exam for 50 percent.

The final exam will consist of an essay question distributed beforehand, plus a number of identification questions.

Required Texts:

1. Course Reader: *Japan in the Age of the Samurai.*

This "Reader" is an abridged and revised version of a xeroxed collection of materials originally compiled by John Dower for this course. It is available for purchase at Kinkos Copy Center, 620 University Avenue. In the Reader you will find Japanese materials in translation and articles by scholars in the field, as well as (in Parts I & II) useful overviews of Japanese history prior to 1868.

2. Mikiso Hane, *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey*

(1972, 1991 Westview Press paperback). This book and the Reader provide your basic "texts" for the course.

3. A. L. Sadler, trans. *The Ten Foot Square Hut & Tales of the Heike* (1928; 1972 Tuttle paperback).

4. Matsuo Basho, *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (1966, Penguin paperback).

5. Daisetsu T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (1959, Princeton paperback).

6. Donald Keene, comp., *Anthology of Japanese Literature: From the Earliest Era to the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (1955, Grove Press paperback).

[7. Herbert P. Bix, *Peasant Protest in Japan, 1590-1884* (Yale 1986). **Optional.** This need not be purchased. Copies will be on reserve in the library.]

Sequence of Readings:

- I. Prior to the first exam on February 27, read: Hall, 1-134; selections from Reader, I-VII; Sadler, all.
- II. Prior to the second exam, read: Hall, 135-141; D.T. Suzuki,
- III. Prior to the final exam, read: Hall, 160-272, Bix, 1-173, Basho, 1-111

Seven Centuries of Feudal Society: General Outline of Topics covered

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- * Land and people
- * Creation myths
- * Shinto & social practices
- * Advent & Assimilation of Chinese Civilization

II. "PROTO-FEUDALISM"

- * Culture of 9th and 10th centuries
- * Heian: the Age of Court Aristocracy
- * Rise of Shoen
- * Emergence of the Warrior Class

III. MEDIEVAL VALUES

- * Kamakura: triumph of the samurai
- * Buddhism & Culture
- * Ethos of the Warrior

IV. MEDIEVAL FEUDALISM

- *The Kemmu Restoration (1333-1336)
- *The Ashikaga Shogunate (1336-1573)
- *Sengoku (1467 to about 1590)
- *Emergence of Daimyo and Consolidation of Fiefs
- *Economic Growth (guilds, Pirates, Monetization, Commerce, Urbanization)
- *Anarchy and Social Change
- *The "Christian Century"

V. "SEMI-CENTRALIZED" (Tokugawa) FEUDALISM

- *Unification under Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi & Tokugawa Ieyasu
- *Tokugawa hegemony & the Bakuhan System
- *Market Development & Economic Growth
- *The Floating World
- *Peasant Uprisings
- *New Thought

VI. BAKUMATSU (1853-1868)

- *Arrival of the Westerners
- *Opening of the Treaty Ports
- *Overthrow of the Old Regime
- *Historical Legacies

TENTATIVE CALENDAR (subject to revision as the course proceeds). The numbers in parentheses refer to sections in the xeroxed reader that are relevant to the lecture topic. They should be read beforehand and brought to class. Lectures will be interwoven with discussions and can be interrupted at any time.

1. **January 21, 23**

2. **January 28, 30**

3. **February 4, 6**

4. **February 11, 13**

5. **February 18, 20**

6. **February 25, 27 (exam *or* 5-7 page real paper)**

7. **March 3, 5**

8. March 10, 12

9. March 17, 19

10. March 24, 26

11. March 31, April 2

12. April 7, 9

13. April 14, 16 [exam or]

14. April 21, 23

15. April 28, 30

16. May 5, 7 [last class]