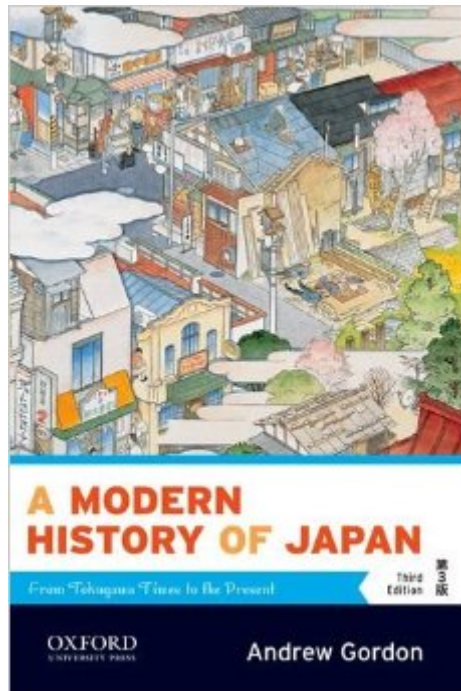


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A Modern History Of Japan: From Tokugawa Times To The Present



Synopsis

A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present, Third Edition, paints a richly nuanced and strikingly original portrait of the last two centuries of Japanese history. It takes students from the days of the shogunate--the feudal overlordship of the Tokugawa family--through the modernizing revolution launched by midlevel samurai in the late nineteenth century; the adoption of Western hairstyles, clothing, and military organization; and the nation's first experiments with mass democracy after World War I. Author Andrew Gordon offers the finest synthesis to date of Japan's passage through militarism, World War II, the American occupation, and the subsequent economic rollercoaster. New to the Third Edition* The previous edition's final chapter has been extensively revised for the third edition. Retitled "Japan's 'Lost Decades'", it now covers the timespan from 1989 through 2008.* An entirely new final chapter examines Japan's tumultuous recent history in a global context. Beginning with the financial crisis of 2008, it takes readers up to the traumatic events of 3/11/11, and through the aftermath of this disaster. The chapter includes a color insert with maps and photographs that document the cataclysm.* More "voices" of ordinary people integrated into the narrative* Increased coverage of cultural history topics, such as anime and manga

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I generally found this history to be helpful in understanding Japan's past and present. It's impossible for a non-expert like me to know to what extent Gordon's history is a distorted one, but there is lots to interest, and great detail for its 350ish pages of text. While it reads more like a textbook than a

gripping novel, I thought it fairly well-written. Below is my very brief summary of the book's content. The period of the Tokugawa shogunate was summarized more briefly than later history (the "modern" period). Tokugawa government had achieved stability through the "shogun system" for over two centuries, but that system came to be seen by many Japanese as impotent during the 1800s as western regimes asserted power and humiliation against Japan. Revolution was instigated by samurai elites from Choshu domain in southern Honshu and Satsuma domain in Kyushu. Leaders of the successful revolt focused on the emperor as Japan's legitimate ruler in place of the shogun, but in reality power was exercised by an oligarchy of several leaders. The constitution during that era, known as the Meiji period, was quite elitist. Only a tiny portion of the population voted, and the Diet had very limited power at first. However, economic vitality and social transformation ensued. Japan modernized rapidly and interacted with increasing vigor in the international arena. International conflict and military successes inflamed nationalism from the humiliations of the late 1800s to the climactic disaster of World War II, usually with strong and widespread popular support. Turmoil and assassinations strengthened traditionalism, led to authoritarian repression by police and military, weakened democratic processes, and ultimately resulted in Japan's ill-considered plunge into regional war.

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