



Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction

Christopher Goto-Jones

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Japan is arguably today's most successful industrial economy, combining almost unprecedented affluence with social stability and apparent harmony. Japanese goods and cultural products--from animated movies and computer games to cars, semiconductors, and management techniques--are consumed around the world. In many ways, Japan is an icon of the modern world, and yet it remains something of an enigma to many, who see it as a confusing montage of the alien and the familiar, the ancient and modern. This *Very Short Introduction* explodes the myths and explores the reality of modern Japan, offering a concise, engaging, and accessible look at the history, economy, politics, and culture of this fascinating nation. It examines what the term "modern" means to the Japanese, debunks the notion that Japan went through a period of total isolation from the world, and explores the continuity between pre- and post-war Japan. Anyone curious about this intriguing country will find a wealth of insight and information in these pages.

About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, **Very Short Introductions** offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam

Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction Details

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Thaer says

A great read about Japan written by specialist.

I have been living in Japan for about 10 years now, and there are thing I never came to know until I read this book.

What is exactly to be modern? Since Japan is the first non-western nation to be modern, the unique experience of Japan in this regard is highly worth the investigation. I would recommend this book to arab intellectual to analyze this experience, since arab nations are in so much need to rapidly go along the modernization process.

Japan faced the struggle to define its identity while rapidly trying to modernize. How Japan changed from the Tokugawa period to Meiji restoration to war time to the present time is the main topic of this book while discussing this identity defining process.

While Japan was faced by western power, they developed this mentality that either you become an empire or a colony. I think this motivates Japan to push hard to be powerful not to be swallowed by western power. Needless to say that the spread of publication and journalism helps deliver intellectual ideas to the public. I think though that this book take the western view, I felt that author might have given credit to U.S more than needed in supporting the modernization of Japan.

One big issue that has been discussed here is in some sense, some commentators think that Japan has a schizophrenic nature.

Japan miraculous economic development, not only resulted from the hard work of Japanese population but also the korean war next door provided a big opportunity to boost the economy of Japan. In addition, being an ally to the west, helped Japan to buy advanced technology instead of investing time and money in researching them.

Few points worth mentioning: The discrimination against asian people in Japan is an old thing and not only in the current present time.

Japan felt in the time of world war that it has been discriminated by the west even though it was a modern nation, but was not treated equally with other western nation. Specially after the ban of east asian nation from immigration to U.S.

The policy of U.S in Japan after occupation has significantly influenced by the fear that Japan might fall under communist influence so they supported Japan modernization the same as what they did in Germany for the same reason.

A final thought: I would think that it might be more of Japan interest to and China and South korea to have an alliance on the same path as EU. The conflict of interest that Japan and China have might not be beneficial to both of them.

D says

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A decent book, but didn't hold my interest as much as Hane's *Japan: A short history*, which I recommend over this book.

Jabont Chamikorn says

[illegible]

The first time looking at Japan as an entire outsider.

Suneo Thanvorapong says

Sarah says

In theory I love the whole idea of the A Very Short Introduction series, so it was time I finally read one. Since my husband is pretty interested in all things Japanese and has gotten me into some manga and anime, and everything else I know about Japan I learned from watching Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles as a kid, I thought this would be a good book to pick up.

The book covers Japanese history from the arrival of Admiral Perry in 1853 to the current day, but also goes back to outline the Tokugawa Period which began in the 17th-century. Even when learning about parts of Japanese history I thought I knew somewhat well (WWII), I was surprised at how much I learned. I'm always asking my husband why the Japanese do X seemingly weird thing and his response is usually something

along the lines of explaining that their cultural background is completely different from ours. Here I started to understand some of those differences. One of the main lessons Goto-Jones tries to get across in this book is that modern is not synonymous with Western and that while Japan is a thoroughly modern (or post-modern) culture, they are thoroughly Eastern, which can be further extrapolated to explain a lot about why Japan's modernity looks very different from Western modernity.

I liked it, but this is definitely not a stand-alone book. This seems like a really good supplemental book, perhaps for someone studying recent Japanese history or someone studying the Japanese language who wanted a clearer overview of Japanese history. With the supplemental nature of this book, I felt it would have been helpful to include a glossary in the back. Because everything was run through so quickly I often had trouble remembering important terms that popped up briefly in one chapter and then were brought up again a few chapters later with the assumption that the reader still remembered the term. I kept reading interesting sections and then being disappointed that there weren't more details to flesh out the rest of the story, so I may be spending some time with titles on the suggested reading list in the back. Definitely good for whetting my appetite.

Gavin Leech says

Terribly written, with the glib say-what-you're-going-to-say structure, cod psychology and thoughtless overreach common in social theory.

Japan retreated into a state of denial... Can a nation's [unacknowledged] past make its people ill, in the same way as repressed memories make individuals ill?

No and no they don't. But he gives a brief and clear sketch from Edo to their World Cup; still helpful if you are a total novice like me. (Never knew the shogunate were the internationalists in the Meiji struggle!) Needless to say Goto-Jones is unable to step beyond C20th stereotypes - to note, for instance, that by time of writing Japan had likely stopped being the place the future happens first.

Cardyn Brooks says

This really readable, compressed overview of Japan from ancient times to the early 2000s provides multiple launch points for deeper study into the military, socioeconomic, geopolitical, religious, environmental, and social class hierarchy of this multifaceted culture.

Josiah says

The book gave a brief overview on the history of Japan. However, despite the lengthy amount of time the author had to cover, he insisted on infusing his view of politics in the book. Other than that, the book was great.

Thanawat says

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