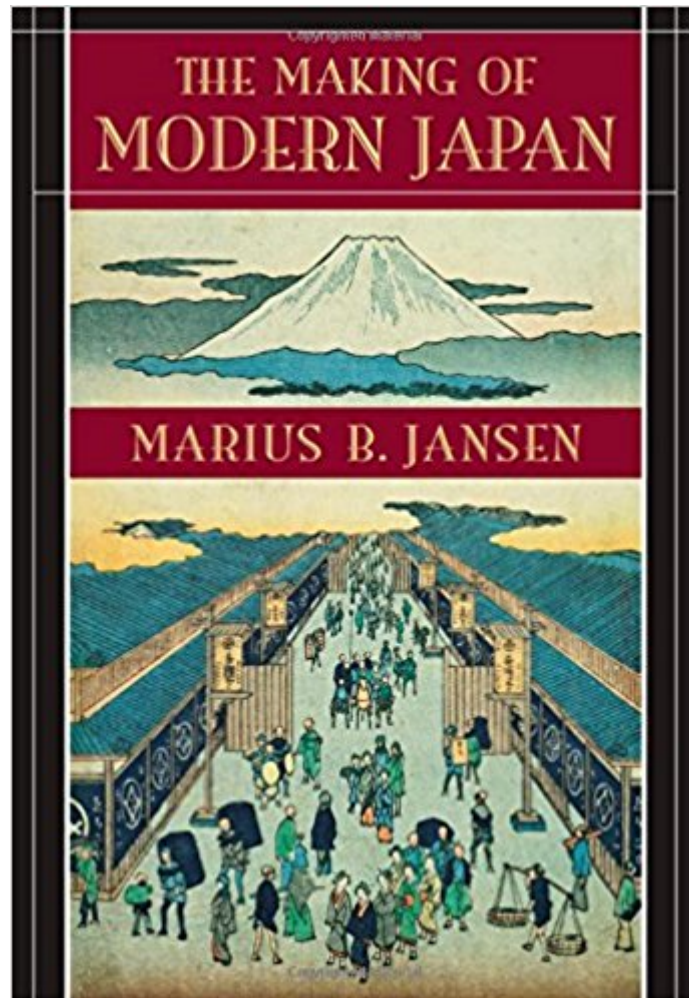




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# The Making Of Modern Japan



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## Synopsis

Magisterial in vision, sweeping in scope, this monumental work presents a seamless account of Japanese society during the modern era, from 1600 to the present. A distillation of more than fifty years' engagement with Japan and its history, it is the crowning work of our leading interpreter of the modern Japanese experience. Since 1600 Japan has undergone three periods of wrenching social and institutional change, following the imposition of hegemonic order on feudal society by the Tokugawa shogun; the opening of Japan's ports by Commodore Perry; and defeat in World War II. *The Making of Modern Japan* charts these changes: the social engineering begun with the founding of the shogunate in 1600, the emergence of village and castle towns with consumer populations, and the diffusion of samurai values in the culture. Jansen covers the making of the modern state, the adaptation of Western models, growing international trade, the broadening opportunity in Japanese society with industrialization, and the postwar occupation reforms imposed by General MacArthur. Throughout, the book gives voice to the individuals and views that have shaped the actions and beliefs of the Japanese, with writers, artists, and thinkers, as well as political leaders given their due. The story this book tells, though marked by profound changes, is also one of remarkable consistency, in which continuities outweigh upheavals in the development of society, and successive waves of outside influence have only served to strengthen a sense of what is unique and native to Japanese experience. *The Making of Modern Japan* takes us to the core of this experience as it illuminates one of the contemporary world's most compelling transformations.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jensen conducts his readers through the labyrinthine path taken by Japan over the last 400 years, from centralized feudalism under the shoguns of Edo (now Tokyo) to Japan's postwar emergence as one of the world's most developed and peaceful nations. For Westerners the most fascinating aspect of this monumental work will be Japan's always uneasy, sometimes violent relationship with the outside world. Jensen pays careful attention to Japan's struggle to differentiate itself culturally from China and to subjugate Korea. With the West, Japan's first hesitant acceptance of Portuguese and Dutch traders gave way to contemptuous rejection of Western values, religion and culture. The debate thus framed has resounded throughout the last two centuries, and Jensen patiently explains how xenophobia and openness to the outside world have alternated as dominant impulses in Japanese life. Jensen does his utmost to make intelligible the complexities of Japanese politics since 1600. Besides politics, he ventures into economics, military affairs, literature, education, social organization and both high and popular culture. He observes that postwar Japanese managed "to achieve in business suits what they had failed to bring about in uniform," and he shows how this extraordinary result came about, in the context of Japan's long and conflict-ridden emergence into the modern world. Japan has been a subject of intense interest in the West in recent years, though only serious students will want to read this lengthy history. Still, it should receive major review coverage, and sales may increase if it's promoted with Herbert P. Bix's *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (Forecasts, July 31). (Nov.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Despite our deep national involvement with the Japanese people since the end of World War II, this still frustratingly insular nation remains a puzzle for Americans and other westerners. Perhaps, as some have suggested, genuine understanding will remain elusive. Still, Jansen, professor emeritus of Japanese history at Princeton, strives valiantly to explain the foundations of modern Japanese history and culture in this richly detailed, smooth-flowing narrative of the past four centuries of Japanese development. While acknowledging the sweeping changes that occasionally buffeted Japan since the Meiji Restoration, Jansen emphasizes the remarkable strands of continuity in Japanese history that have helped maintain unique social cohesion in an internally dynamic culture. Although well written and not bogged down with useless detail, general readers are advised to devour this massive work in small doses; if they do, they will find it a greatly rewarding examination of an admirable but enigmatic and ancient land. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

This is a great book for those curious about Japanese history since Sekigahara (i.e., from the rise of the Tokugawa). It is certainly academic in tone, but it is very well-written, and the author's wit often shines through as one is reading. It is difficult to give a comprehensive review because of just how much is covered in this volume. I found the Meiji era to the Pacific War period to be the best written, and most interesting. This may have to do with it being the part I am less familiar with though. Still, Jansen does a great job of providing a balanced and neutral tone. He rarely takes a strong side on controversial issues, although he usually points out good critiques of a position if it is lacking. It also features a good amount of new vocabulary, that I enjoy (consider riparian and atainder). This is a long book, but worth the read if you are curious about Japanese history. I initially thought it'd be a 4-star book because of its academic tone, but Jansen's style really wins you over, and the Post-Tokugawa section is extremely well-written and interesting.

The Making of Modern Japan focuses on the history of Japan, mostly the last 400 years in which Jansen heavily focus on the the warring states period, the Tokugawa period, Meiji Era, and lastly what would be considered pre-WWII and after. The book is remarkably readable, as one other reviewer remarked the first few hundred pages read as a more academic article with factual evidence, references, socio-historic criticism. However, it allows for a vast amount of history in a relatively short amount of time. Jansen takes a very neutral stand, especially on WWII presenting both sides of the argument, both the U.S. wish to join WWII, Japan's imperialism in China and Indochina, the lack of Japanese resources deprived by the U.S., etc. These help the reader come to their own unbiased opinion on right/wrong, but more so than an ethical decision made by the reader it informs. The book is well structured presenting factual evidence with citations in a chronological narration of history. While this book is considered long, it is well worth the read. With little foreknowledge of Japanese history it allows for a quick assimilation of information with many external references to look further into the desired time period of focus. Jansen does not just only cover historical incidents but remarks upon the making of society itself, introductions to literature, Noh, kabuki, printing, politics, education (and its reform), women's rights, post and prewar advances, capitalism, and so much more. It not only gives a chronological explanation of the modernization of Japan and its coming into modernity but allows the reader to further their own studies within the subsets of the book. Likewise, Jansen has made the readability accessible to those not familiar with academic writing. It does not read (entirely) as a history book, but rather closer to a lecture and at some points a page turner novel. Overall, the book gives a good "overview" of Japanese history and its coming into modernity. It demonstrates and elucidates how the West

has had its influences over the Orient and more so how it effected Japan's growth, especially in early Meiji and postwar with the creation of the constitution and later its amendment. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in getting started in Japanese studies, anyone with a general interest in modernity in Japanese culture. Personally, I would declare it a must read as an introduction to Japanese culture, history, and its modernization.

I bought this book in order to better understand the background of the modern Japanese culture and literature. For me, it has the right ratio between the description of general trends and the historical details. I like the fact that it refers to many life aspects of the different periods, not only to military or political aspects. It reads like a good historical novel. The many illustrations are very clear and useful.

As always, everything I buy through comes on time and with the expected quality.

Received this 2 days early and have already learned that i might actually enjoy this reading. The text so far seems easy to read in that its more like a story then textbook reading.

I've always been fascinated with social and organizational change. This book offers plenty of that. It's an exciting tale of Japan's transformation from backward, feudal country to up-and-coming Asian power to Word War II villain to defeated, conquered country to today's ultra-modern economic superpower.

If you are looking for an erudite, lengthy, detailed, and insightful analysis of Japan and it's people, this is it. I had just returned from my first visit to this fascinating country and this book was the perfect answer for me. If you can over the length and detail you are in for a treat.

The late Marius Jansen has left us with a superb single volume introduction to modern Japanese history. Anyone approaching Japanese history for the first time would do very well to start with this book. Those who know the story well already will nevertheless find many delights. The book is good reading and explains the intricacies of Japanese history with remarkable clarity. Jansen treats the social and cultural as well as political and economic sides, and integrates them into a coherent whole. When reading more specialized accounts, I find myself referring back to Jansen's book as a convenient way to put their stories in context. The illustrations are well chosen and well presented.

Strongly recommended.

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