

Japanese History Preliminary Examination
UIUC
Spring 1998

Write on one question from each group, a total of three (3) essays. Be sure to support your arguments with specific illustrations, and with reference to the arguments of major works in the Western-language scholarship.

Group I:

Critique Conrad Totman's periodization of "early modern" Japan.
Evaluate "class" as an analytic category for understanding early modern Japan.
Support or refute the following argument: mass urban literacy produced popular culture in eighteenth century Japan.

Group II:

Who "made" the Meiji Restoration?
What were the roles of native and foreign ideologies in the downfall of the Tokugawa order?
Support or refute the following argument: Jiyū minken was the continuation of sonnō jōi against new opponents, by other means.

Group III:

Was early Shōwa Japan an era of fascism? Explain.
Describe the impact of the Meiji Restoration on the formation of Japanese national identity.
Evaluate the impact of mass public culture on democracy in twentieth-century Japan.

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Answer one question from each group.

Group I.

- A. Trace the changing significance of foreign settlement trading ports between 1600 and 1899.
- B. What was the impact of East Asia on early Meiji politics, diplomacy, and culture?
- C. Analyze and assess Japan's involvement in multilateral organizations since WW I.

Group II.

- A. Support or refute the proposition that Tokugawa Japan was a feudal society.
- B. Support or refute the proposition that Meiji Japan was an absolutist monarchy.
- C. Support or refute the proposition that interwar Japan was a fascist society.

Group III.

- A. What was "religion" in Tokugawa Japan, and how did it relate to social practice?
- B. Can you reconcile the positions of the pre-1868 restorationist leaders with the ideological positions they took after the Restoration?
- C. Compare the function of "China" in Japanese culture and identity in the Tokugawa and the Meiji-Taishô-early Shôwa eras.

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Answer one question from each section. Be sure to support your answers with specifics, and in reference to the scholarly literature.

Section I.

1. Evaluate the debate as to whether Japan was a "feudal" society or polity in the Tokugawa period, showing that you are familiar with the significance of the debate on feudalism in Japan. Support your argument with reference to salient features of the polity and society.
2. Some historians maintain that the Tokugawa order was sustained by a form of thought-control based on a Neo-Confucian orthodoxy. How accurate is this position?
3. How do you explain the levels of literacy and educational participation that Dore finds in the late Edo period? What do they tell us about the historical character of Tokugawa-era Japan?

Section II.

1. What difference does it make to a narrative of Bakumatsu whether one focuses on the bakufu, the activist domains, the "foreign powers" or "the people?"
2. Modern Japan's historical character was influenced most profoundly by the Meiji Restoration. To what degree was it a restoration of the emperor?
3. In 1885 Fukuzawa Yukichi proposed that Japan "leave Asia" (*datsu-A*). To what degree did Japan's historical practice in relations with Asia, from the Restoration to WW I, constitute an implementation of Fukuzawa's argument?

Section III.

1. Discuss the social consequences of Japan's industrialization, particularly as they became evident in the interwar period.
2. Evaluate the effects of the Fifteen-Year War on women in the Japanese empire.
3. When did, does, or will Japan's "postwar" period end?

