The Heritage of Japanese Civilization
Second Edition

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For John and Paul Craig
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The history of Japan has undergone three major transitions, each initiated by contact with a more advanced technology and a different culture.

The first transition was from a hunting and gathering society that had been in place for thousands of years to an agricultural and metal-working society of villagers and local aristocrats. The transition began in about 300 B.C., when northeast Asian peoples, crossing from the Korean peninsula to Japan, introduced the new technologies and their accompanying culture.

In the second transition, the Japanese actively reached out for the technologies, writing system, and culture of China, and changed from a pre-literate to a historical East Asian society. Developments within this society between the seventh and nineteenth centuries constitute the longest span of recorded Japanese history.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the third transition occurred. Massive contacts with the West led to the rapid development of modern industries and the acceptance of new ideas and values. Japan transformed itself and became the first non-Western modern nation.

Within the long time span in which Japan developed its unique variant of East Asian civilization, three periods must be further distinguished. First was the classical era of the Nara and Heian courts that extended from the seventh to the twelfth century. Second was the medieval period of rule by military houses, which began in the
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thirteenth century and continued until the sixteenth century. Third was the era of Tokugawa rule, which extended from the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century. During this peaceful era, military houses still ruled but were incorporated within a centralized framework of Tokugawa government.

Modern Japan, though brief in comparison to these earlier periods, may be divided into two phases: the first, from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of World War II; the second, from 1945 to the present day.

This volume originated with the Japan chapters of *The Heritage of World Civilizations*, but they have been extensively revised and many new materials have been added. New interpretations have also been added in this second edition. This book provides a chronological framework and a narrative of Japan's history. While highlighting periods of rule, it also addresses social, economic, and cultural developments that cut across rule-periods. For the student who wishes to approach Japanese history topically, and have the time to read original documents, monographs, and novels, the brevity of this text will be an advantage.

Brevity being a goal, the author asserts with seeming confidence many things that may be true only in the balance. Proper qualifications would take up many pages. Also, in telling the story of Japan's past, the author has emphasized the most important historical variables, but in doing so has inevitably left out minor themes that merit attention. Reading assignments from the Suggested Readings at the end of each chapter will provide a counterpoint to interpretations in the text.

Geography helps us to understand Japanese history. The climate varies widely, from the northern island of Hokkaido, where ice and snow may last into the spring, to the southern island of Kyushu, where palm trees dot the shores of Miyazaki and Kagoshima. But the central axis of the Japanese economy, culture, and polity has always been the temperate zone that stretches from western Honshu, through Osaka and Kyoto, to the Kanto plain and Tokyo in the east. Also of historical salience is the mountainous spine that runs almost the length of the country and divides the country into regions. When central authority was weak, the regions often became independent political units. Maps identify most of the places mentioned in the text.

Even studying the West—our own civilization—we catch only glimpses of what it meant, say, to be a merchant in late medieval Paris. What family, society, and nature looked like to a medieval Japanese monk or warrior is yet more difficult to fathom. But some inkling may be gained from original sources. To this end, many translations of poems, philosophical essays, and passages from novels are included in the narrative and in boxed quotations. The immediacy of these writings provides windows onto the actual thought and feelings of actors in Japan's history. We find that Japanese living a thousand years ago had many of the same hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows that we do today. We recognize these shared feelings despite the powerful shaping of human experience by different cultural modalities and social institutions.
The final section of each chapter reviews chapter materials in a larger comparative context. The comparisons point out that similar processes occur in widely divergent societies. But it should be remembered that such similarities are always embedded in dense structures that are quite dissimilar. Each chapter is followed by review questions, which will elucidate the main themes of the chapter.

Japanese names in the text are given in the Japanese fashion, with the family name first. Thus Ito Hirobumi is Mr. Ito, his given name is Hirobumi. Artists and writers are often known by their “pen names.” Natsume Sōseki, for example, was Natsume Kinnosuke as a youth, but later on, as an established novelist, was known as Natsume Sōseki or simply by his pen name as Sōseki. Japanese long vowels are indicated by a macron. Thus, Ito is pronounced I-toh, not Ito, and Sōseki as Soh-seki, not So-seki. Long vowels are omitted from familiar words treated as English terms, such as Osaka, Tokyo, or shogun.

In writing this book, I have drawn on many fine studies; my intellectual debts are legion and, as usual in a text, largely unacknowledged. But I must mention those to whom I owe a particular and personal debt, those whose ideas I have absorbed so completely as to think of them as my own. Edwin O. Reischauer was first a mentor and then a colleague; Benjamin I. Schwartz was the colleague with whom I first collaborated in a course on modern Japanese history; others with whom I have taught are Robert Bellah, Harold Bolitho, Peter Duus, Steve Ericson, Carol Gluck, Andrew Gordon, Howard Hibbett, Akira Iriye, Kate Nakai, Henry Rosovskv, Donald Shively, William Steele, and Ezra Vogel. I would also like to thank Ethan Segal and Adam Kern for their suggestions for this edition. And the following reviewers offered valuable suggestions: David L. Kenley, Elizabethtown College; Jeremy Robinson, Grand Valley State University; John A. Tucker, East Carolina University; and Stephen Vlastos, University of Iowa. I owe special thanks to my wife, Teruko Craig, who has tirelessly read and proofread the manuscript and made valuable suggestions.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

• Greater clarity, deeper analyses, and an improved presentation are featured throughout.
• Coverage of early Buddhism and Tokugawa Confucianism now offers the reader some background, Indian and Chinese, on the two belief systems.
• Chapter 1 includes a discussion of recent DNA findings about Japan’s early population.
• In Chapter 2, the southern court has been worked into the narrative and the section on women has been expanded.
• Chapter 3 offers an improved analysis of political changes in the early Tokugawa era.
• Chapter 4 features expanded coverage of education, urbanization, and the introduction of Western ideas.
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- Chapter 5, particularly the section on the recent decades, has been almost completely rewritten:
  - A new section has been added on international relations.
  - The section on politics has been streamlined.
  - The section on society and culture has been expanded.
  - Coverage of the current Japanese economy has been updated.

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