

# A Brief History of Japanese Culture

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# “The” Japanese

# Analyzing Popular Culture

- formal
- aesthetic
- quantitative
- sociological
- political

Ganguro fashion, late 1990s

(source: New York Times)

Lawrence Grossberg (1989)

# "Japan"

- What is culture?
  - Humanist
    - Arts and letters
  - Anthropological
    - Meanings and lifeways
  - Historical
    - Traditions, institutions

Bunraku puppet theater

# Goals of the Class

- Analyze Japanese popular culture
- Locate popular culture in social context
- Understand its power and politics

TEZUKA Osamu (1949)  
*Metropolis*

# Course Dynamics

- Lecture
- Presentations
- Discussion
- Media
- Outside events

# Reading

- Three texts + articles
  - Treat, *Contemporary Japan and Pop Culture*
  - Craig, *Japan Pop!*
  - Kinsella, *Adult Manga*

# Why take this course?

- Japan
  - 2nd largest economy
  - Asian modernity
- Popular culture
  - information economies
  - media power
  - fan cultures
  - new millennium politics



# A Brief History of Japan

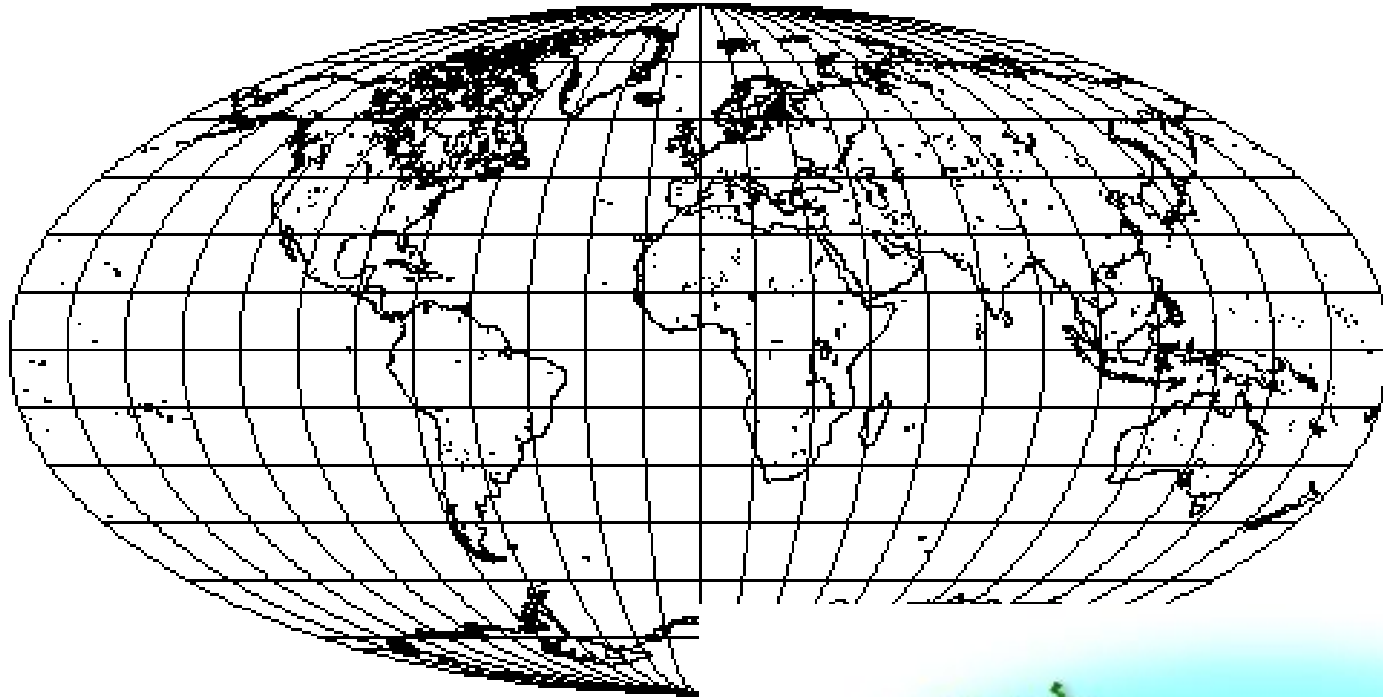
# Japan: Traditional and Modern

“Although time may pass, the important things never change. Trust. Proven results. Nichie.”

-- Nichie Bank (TV commercial)

Geisha

see also *Golden Memoirs of a Geisha*



Map of the world with Europe at the center.



Map of the world with the Pacific Rim as the center



# Locating Japan in Asia

QuickTime™ and a  
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

# Japan Geography

- Four main islands
  - Hokkaidô (north)
  - Honshû (main)
  - Shikoku (small)
  - Kyûshû (southern)
  
- also, Okinawa (small islands like Hawaii)

# Pre-historic Japan (1)

- first humans over 30,000 yrs ago
- 10,000 - 7,000 yrs ago from Korea
- **Jomon** up to 300 BC (pottery with cord markings, figurines)

# Pre-historic Japan (1)

- **Yayoi** after site in SW Japan by 100 AD replace Jomon
- 500s AD fighting men on horses, armor, swords, bows (from Korea)
- **Yamato clan, Shintô, Buddhism**



# Classical age (6th-12th c.)

- 710 - 794 Nara capital
- Heian court in Kyoto 794 -1185
- Literacy (*kanji, kana*)
- dueling aesthetics

see also Totman (1981)  
*Japan Before Perry*

# Warring states period (1192 - 1600)

- local warlords (*daimyô*)
- samurai (historical change)
- shifting centers of power
  - Kamakura 1192 - 1333
  - late 1200s Mongols invade (fail)
  - Muromachi 1334 - 1573 etc.
- Religion moves to the masses

Yukio MISHIMA,  
20th c. novelist,  
posing as a samurai

# Tokugawa Period (1600 - 1868)

- Shogun rule Edo (Tokyo)
  - TOKUGAWA Ieyasu
- samurai bureaucrats
- rigid class structure
  - samurai, farmers, artisans, merchants
- but power shifts to merchants
  - rise of mercantile culture

Himeji Castle near Osaka

# Meiji Restoration 1868

- 1853 Commodore Perry “Black Ships”
- Reformers “restore” Meiji Emperor
- Modernization following Western models
- Imperial aggression begins in 20th century

Izumo Shrine, the Emperor as living god of Shintô religion

# Reading Discussion

# Homework

- Reading for Wednesday
  - from Craig, *Japan Pop!*
    - Atkins, *Can Japanese Sing the Blues*

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