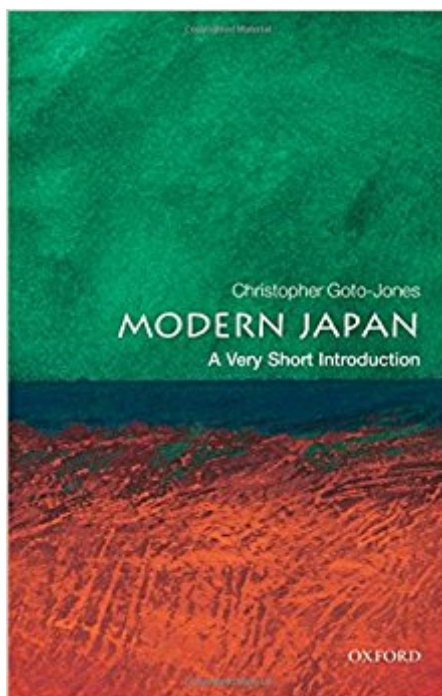


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# Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction



## Synopsis

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

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## Customer Reviews

Lively, lucid, and full of insight, this is an outstanding exploration of Japan's troubled modern past. \* Stephen S. Large, Wolfson College, Cambridge University \* With remarkable clarity and breadth of coverage, Goto-Jones introduces the major topics and themes of the modern history of Japan,

giving particularly thoughtful attention to the complex and tortured efforts of figures seeking to define and defend a properly Japanese modernity, and those striving to come to grips with the trauma and shadow of World War II. \* Andrew Gordon, Harvard University \* A wonderfully engaging narrative of a complicated history, which from the beginning to end sheds light on the meaning of modernity in Japan as it changed over time. An exemplary text. \* Carol Gluck, Columbia University \*

Christopher Goto-Jones is Professor of Modern Japan Studies at the University of Leiden.

This is a concise but insightful, well-written and nuanced history of Japan from the early 1600s onward, situated in the kind of subtle, complex questions that interest historians. My somewhat awkward summary of those might be: "What does it mean for Japan to be modern? And given the importance of Western (and especially American) influence in Japan during the last 150 or so years, combined with the tendency of the West to conflate modernity with Western-ness, how has Japan responded to those pressures in developing and advancing its own conceptions and approaches to modernity? How does Japan's experience then inform our understanding of what modernity itself is?" Some other reviewers seem to have been looking for something simpler, a more linear presentation of dates and names, with less analysis and more emphasis on "facts" -- in other words, exactly the kind of thing that drives my history professor friends crazy. But to me, the thoughtful approach taken in *Modern Japan: A Very Short Introduction* is far more rewarding. I'll definitely be buying other titles in this series.

I'll start with the good: Goto-Jones writes very well, so the book is a pleasure to read throughout; the history to around the First World War is presented in an extremely clear and compelling way, and throughout Goto-Jones takes a very thoughtful and humane approach to the Japanese people, never resorting to stereotypes or cultural clichés. The not-so-good: Goto-Jones from the outset distances himself from his subject by effectively saying that a short general introduction is doomed to failure - not what the reader wants to hear! He announces that he will focus on one aspect - that of cultural determination - which is clearly key, but not what the title advertises. While the good news is that he generally does deliver a broad introduction, after the First World War he loses coherence, and the events of the last seventy-five years are glossed over; here he really does return to mainly focus on cultural crises. With very little knowledge of Japan and Japanese history I'm happy that I started with this book, but I will now look to read a more balanced and thorough treatment of the post Second World War period.

I am currently in Japan and this book is very helpful and makes things around me easier to understandGreat!

Satisfactorily gives an overview of modern Japan history, but in serious need of further editing. The writing simply isn't very good at times.

This is a good primer on Japan's history. Quick to read. The final section is a bit more than five years old " could do for an update.

Love these small books on great matters. If you need to know about modern japan in a couple of hours reading, be sure to read this book by professor Goto Jones, who writes understandably but critically about Japan today.

Perfect for a short introduction--it reads well and accomplishes what it sets out to do.

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