



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



Private Academies of Tokugawa Japan by Richard Rubinger

Review by: Earl H. Kinmonth

The American Historical Review, Vol. 89, No. 5 (Dec., 1984), pp. 1376-1377

Published by: [Oxford University Press](#) on behalf of the [American Historical Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1867158>

Accessed: 17/02/2015 10:26

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Oxford University Press and *American Historical Association* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Historical Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

(Studies of the East Asian Institute, Columbia University.) Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1984. Pp. xxviii, 309. \$30.00.

For students of Tokugawa Japan and East Asian state relations, this book is important as an independent accomplishment and as a major element in a newly revitalized area of scholarship.

As an independent accomplishment, Ronald P. Toby's book rectifies a severe imbalance in our understanding of Tokugawa foreign relations. Whereas the extant English-language corpus focuses on relations with Europeans, Toby casts a sharp beam on the heart of Tokugawa foreign affairs: relations with Korea, China, and the Kingdom of the Ryukyus. Moreover, the study links foreign policy to domestic politics with unexampled sophistication. Toby argues forcefully that the central function of this policy was to enhance the regime's domestic political prestige, thereby strengthening and perpetuating its "legitimacy."

The core of Toby's study is four meticulously researched and skillfully organized chapters that examine the main developments in Edo's Asian policy from Ieyasu's day to the eighteenth century. He discusses the Tokugawa restoration of diplomatic links to Korea and the Ryukyus, the subsequent routinization of relations with Korea, Tokugawa policy toward the Manchu conquest of China, and the avenues of contact with the mainland. His study makes clear the unsettled nature of seventeenth-century policy and the enduring importance of foreign affairs to the shogunate, giving us an interpretation quite at odds with the older notion that Japan was "isolated" from the world after the 1630s. And it reveals the many subtle ways (choices of titles, use of era names, mode and phrasing of correspondence, deployment and nondeployment of missions, types of gifts, and so on) in which shogunal leaders exploited the rituals of diplomacy and the principles of Confucian interstate relations to advance their pretensions to authority.

For reasons of length, Toby does not examine Japanese trade with the mainland. But his brief references to it suggest that the trade was sustained, substantial, and deserving of independent book-length study.

Toby's opus is also important as one element in a reviving field of study: seventeenth-century Japanese history. In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars published a number of studies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century institutional history, the best of them reissued in book form by John W. Hall and Marius Jansen. During the following two decades the subject languished. Recently, however, several new works on the sixteenth century have appeared. These, most especially Elizabeth Berry's lively study of Hideyoshi, argue that the key arrangements of

the Tokugawa political system were forged in the late sixteenth century. Toby's research, together with forthcoming studies by Herman Ooms and Philip Brown, strongly suggest that, although late sixteenth-century developments determined the initial shape of the Tokugawa settlement, it was ideological and organizational changes of the seventeenth century that converted the battlefield truce of 1600 into that enduring order called the Great Peace.

CONRAD TOTMAN
Yale University

RICHARD RUBINGER. *Private Academies of Tokugawa Japan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1982. Pp. xvi, 282. \$26.50.

In a time when Japan is increasingly an object of study as a model for advanced Western industrial societies, it is somewhat unusual to encounter a book that harks back to concerns of the 1950s and 1960s: "development" and "modernization." Nevertheless, illuminating the "preconditions that may have contributed significantly to Japan's modern development" is the basic goal of Richard Rubinger in this study of Tokugawa-era private academies. It is the author's thesis that these academies "alone of Tokugawa educational institutions, contributed significantly to breaking down regional barriers and to the development of a more unified, integrated, and 'national' culture" (p. 15).

The author's definition of private academies is essentially negative. It excludes the equally private *terakoya* (common schools) and those institutions with clear sponsorship and control by the Tokugawa or individual fiefs. What remains is a category including one-person calligraphy and martial arts schools run as family businesses, groups of young political activists studying under a charismatic personality such as Yoshida Shōin, and some fairly large-scale operations that catered to those seeking the structured acquisition of culture, usually Chinese.

Overall, there is little to link these schools other than the fact that they were lumped together in the early Meiji era by the compilers of Rubinger's most important source, the government-sponsored *Nihon kyōiku-shi shiryō* (Materials on the History of Japanese Education). The author does little more than select several subsets from this source, arranging these into three case studies concerned with academies specializing in Chinese, Dutch, and other studies.

The treatment of these schools is essentially administrative. Admissions, grading, financing, and discipline get the most attention. Intellectual content is discussed only in administrative terms: texts used and hours devoted to subjects. This information

does not notably increase our understanding of the changes taking place in Japanese thought and behavior, and it did not convince me that the private academies were agents of change, although they may have been symptomatic of change.

This would have been a much stronger book if the author had given more attention to the content of education and if he had ventured beyond his Japanese collected sources. For example, Shimazaki Tôson's famous autobiographical novel *Yoakemae* (Before the Dawn) has some very vivid descriptions of the thought and behavior of nativist (*kokugaku*) scholars on the eve of the Meiji Restoration. Rubinger should also have given more attention to the official schools. A number of noted figures in the early Meiji enlightenment came out of very orthodox backgrounds, including the Tokugawa's own Shôheikô.

Overall, the book is well written and free of jargon. Two stylistic quirks do, however, deserve comment. I found the author's use of the "imperial we" somewhat distracting, especially as a part of a prelude ("we shall also argue . . ."). More important, some of Rubinger's tables present percents calculated to one or two decimal places. This gives an aura of precision not justified by the underlying numbers.

This book is handsomely produced with numerous photographs of schools and teachers, maps showing the geographical distribution of students, and ideographs for Japanese names and terms. One can only wish that this elaborate production was backed by more substance.

EARL H. KINMONTH
University of California,
Davis

MICHAEL M. YOSHITSU. *Japan and the San Francisco Peace Settlement*. New York: Columbia University Press. 1983. Pp. viii, 120. \$20.00.

This thin volume by Michael M. Yoshitsu contains insights that many heftier ones lack. The author's skillful reconstruction of postwar Japanese-American relations, based on highly useful personal interviews and hitherto unavailable Japanese-language sources, provides a valuable account of Japan's masterly diplomacy. The result is a revealing story of how the postwar Japanese leadership, so soon after the crippling defeat, was able to manage significant diplomatic successes against heavy odds. The record that emerges demonstrates both Japan's formidable negotiating style and admirable long-range visions that evoke respect.

The central aspect of particular significance is that the Japanese had immediately embarked on elaborate and secret planning to map both the clear

goals and tactics for the diplomatic negotiations to protect their short- and long-term national interests and that this extensive effort was ably assisted by a body of highly dedicated personnel with prescience and premeditation. Yoshitsu reveals that Japan realized well before 1948 that a peace treaty was impossible with the Soviet Union and realistically directed its main efforts toward the United States. After 1949, although some still felt that peace with mainland China was historically desirable, this too was soon abandoned for fear that insistence on this would delay the American treaty and ultimately Japan's own independence.

The real story of Japan's rearmament decisions, however, seems far more complicated than the generally accepted notion that Japan was adamantly against it. Here Yoshida Shigeru's innermost thinking was far different from his public stance, and he was extremely devious and Machiavellian in his secret pursuit of ultimate rearmament. His only concern was how best to maneuver the United States to keep alive the useful myth of Japan's reluctance to rearm. John Foster Dulles was apparently fooled by this ruse and kept up the pressure through 1949 and 1950, well before the Korean War. For instance, on June 22, 1950—three days before the war in Korea—Yoshida was ambiguous and sarcastic responding to Dulles's conclusion that Japan's rearmament was inevitable. With striking resemblance to Adenauer's tactics and coyness, Yoshida circled in parables and said mockingly that Japan's security could be guaranteed by world public opinion, as long as it was "democratic, demilitarized, [and] peace-loving"—near verbatim rehashing of the Allied Powers' early sermons to Japan (pp. 41–42).

With the American demand for guarantees to maintain military bases in Japan, Yoshida blithely countered by proposing an "unarmed Japan" and the neutralization of northern Asia. He was willing to trade off the bases with "unarmed Japan." All along, however, he understood that the treaty terms would have to accommodate closely American wishes, and he was even willing to accept the rearmament level of 50,000—a figure still too low to satisfy the United States.

On China, Yoshida recognized early on that actual relations were not possible. He was determined, however, to conduct diplomacy in such a manner as to lay the foundation for future ties with China, convinced as he was that China and the Soviet Union were not compatible and that China had the ability to ward off permanent foreign influences. Consequently, although Yoshida finally yielded to Dulles's threat that Japan's insistence on ties with China would never be acceptable to the Senate, he continued to hope that some form of relations was possible through the opening of "overseas offices." Ironically, it was this stubborn persistence that led to