Japan in the Age of the Samurai

History and Film

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. Image from anime, *Samurai Champloo*. 
Intro to History of Japan’s Medieval Period, 1185-1867
- Pre-1185: Rule by emperor and aristocrats
- Japan ruled by warrior class (samurai)
- Feudal Society/Period of war and fragmentation, then peace and unification
- Flourishing of Buddhist values and arts
- Experiences of warriors, courtiers, clerics, peasants, and merchants
- Films: How is Medieval Japan Viewed Today?
Unit 1

I. Ways of the Warriors

• What was the warrior ideal and how did it evolve and change over time?
• Why was such an ideal necessary? What function did it serve?
• What types of warriors were there? How did they really act?
Unit 2

✓ Spiritual and Supernatural Worlds
  ✓ What is Japanese “spirituality”?
  ✓ How did it operate in popular and elite culture?
  ✓ Zen Buddhism, Secular Buddhism, Christianity, Popular Tales
Unit 3: Worlds of Pleasure/Worlds of Pain

- What were the experiences of women?
- How did different classes interact with each other?
- What were the tensions between social values and human feelings/relationships?

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Why Medieval Japan?

- Development of traditional Japanese arts, philosophy and religion
- Continued presence in contemporary popular imagination
- Dynamic, rich, multi-faceted society populated by diverse peoples
Temples

- Great Buddha (Daibutsu): Statue of Amida Buddha cast in 1252
- Kinkakuji (Golden Temple): Zen Temple Built by Yoshitsune in 1397
Zen Gardens

✓ Daisen-in Garden (Kyoto): Built in 1509 by monk, Kogaku Sotan

✓ Ryôanji (Temple of the Peaceful Dragon) Noh/Kabuki
Noh/Kabuki

Images removed due to copyright restrictions. Photographs of modern Kabuki and Noh actors.
Bunraku (Puppet Theater)


See: http://www.bookmice.net/darkchilde/japan/japan/raku.jpg
Tea Ceremony (Chanoyû)

Ceremonial tea cup.

Schoolgirls practice performing the tea ceremony.
Mito Kômon

Images removed due to copyright restrictions. Photographs from the television series Mito Kômon.
Abarenbô Shogun

Image removed due to copyright restrictions. Photograph from the television show Abarenbô Shogun.
Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
Image from anime *Samurai 7.*
See: http://www.samurai-7.com/download/s7k_1024_768.jpg
Films for Unit 1

✓ “Hôichi the Earless” from *Kwaidan* (Kobayashi Masaki, 1964)
✓ Seven Samurai (Kurosawa Akira, 1954)
✓ Forty-Seven Rônin (Mizoguchi Kenji, 1940-1941)
✓ Recommended: Throne of Blood (Kurosawa Akira, 1957)
Films for Unit 2

✓ Ugetsu (Mizoguchi Kenji, 1953)
✓ Onibaba (Shindô Kaneto, 1964)
✓ Sen no Rikyû (Teshigahara Hiroshi, 1990)
Films for Unit 3

- Utamaro and His Five Women (Mizoguchi, 1946)
- Double Suicide (Shinoda Masahiro, 1969)
- Life of Oharu, (Mizoguchi, 1952)
- Samurai Rebellion (Kobayashi, 1967)
Assignments

- Class Participation: 20%
  - Attendance
  - Contribution to Class Discussions
- Weekly Response Papers
  - Around 250 to 300 words.
  - Usually, I’ll give a question beforehand
  - Post to website by Thursday, class time!
  - Also bring to class
  - You may skip 1 response paper
Assignments (cont.)

✓ Three essays: 45%
  ✓ 1,500 words, six double-spaced pages
  ✓ Grading based on presentation of argument, organization, and articulateness of writing
  ✓ Show familiarity with readings, films, and lectures
  ✓ **Do not plagiarize:** When in doubt, cite or insert quotation marks, then cite.
  ✓ Questions in syllabus
Assignments (cont.)

✓ Short Exam (Sept. 26): 10%
  ✓ ID format
  ✓ Based on “historical overview” and readings until exam.

✓ Final Exam: 25%
  ✓ IDs and essay questions
  ✓ Covers course as a whole
Geography, 1185-1600

✓ Pre-1185 Japan was a group of countries under authority of court in Kyoto
✓ 4 main islands: Kyûshû, Shikoku, Honshû, Hokkaidô
✓ East vs. West Japan
✓ Main Regions: Kinai, Kantô, Kyûshû, Chûgoku, Shikoku, Tôhoku, Hokkaidô
Map of twelfth-century Japan.

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Kinai Region

- Heart of the Country
- Around 2 million people
- Kyoto: Imperial Court
- Nara: Ancient capital/Center of Buddhism
- Lake Biwa: major trade area
- Heavy rice cultivation
Western Regions

- Kyûshû, Chûgoku, Shikoku
- Sanyôdô: Road linking Kinai to Kyûshû
- Maritime culture along sea route to Kyûshû: fishing, shipping
- Around 2 million people
- Base of Taira (Heike) warrior clan
Kantô

✓ Tôsandô: Road from Kyoto to northern and eastern Kantô
✓ Best land for rice cultivation, high yields
✓ Plains for horse breeding
✓ Tôkaidô: Coastal road from Kyoto to Edo (southern and western Kantô)
✓ Kamakura: Seat of warrior political power: 1185-1333
✓ Base of Minamoto (Genji) warrior clan
Tôhoku, Hokkaidô, Tsushima, Ryukyu islands

- Tôhoku: sparsely populated, mountainous, semi-independent
- Hokkaidô: Semi-nomadic North Asian peoples, Ainu tribes peoples
- Ryukyu: semi-independent kingdom with strong ties to China
- Tsushima: Economic and political ties to Korea
Map of the provinces of medieval Japan.
See: http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~chgis/japan/images/hall_medieval_prov.jpg
Tales of the Heike

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Modern illustration for *Tales of the Heike.*
Story

- Genpei War, 1180-1185
- Genji (Minamoto) vs. Heike (Taira) warrior clans
  - Taira leader: Taira no Kiyomori
  - Dominates Kyoto imperial court of Go-Shirakawa (Hô-ô)
- Genji Leader: Minamoto no Yoritomo
Taira no Kiyomori

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
See http://www.sonic.net/~tabine/Heike/Heike_Graphics_aGeneral/heike_kiyomori03.jpg
Go-Shirakawa (Hô-ô)

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See http://www.sonic.net/~tabine/Heike/Heike_Graphics_aGeneral/heike_goshirakawa.jpg
Story (cont.)

- First half of Tales of Heike focuses on the history of Kiyomori (Sadler, 22-110)
- Second half: fall of the Taira (Sadler, 110-end)
- Focuses on fates of various Taira figures who suffer and die because of Kiyomori’s sins
Other Minamoto leaders

✓ Kiso Yoshinaka: Genji leader who drove Heike from Kyoto to the Inland Sea in 1183.
✓ He plunders Kyoto and asserts independence. Defeated by Genji forces in 1184.
✓ Minamoto Yoshitsune: Yoritomo’s half-brother. Defeats Heike forces at Ichi-no-tani in 1184.
✓ Last of Heike forces killed at Dan-no-ura in 1185.
Kiso Yoshinaka

Minamoto Yoshitsune
Other Important Facts

✓ Most famous example of “Warrior Tale” genre
✓ Originally sung by *biwa hôshi*: wandering blind minstrels who entertained commoners
✓ Sung to appease restless spirits of those who died in Genpei War
✓ By late 1200s, numerous written versions appeared: each different
✓ Definitive **Kakuichi Version** (1371): upper-class acceptance and patronage
Biwa hôshi

Image removed due to copyright restrictions.
See http://www.sonic.net/~tabine/Heike/Heike_Graphics_aGeneral/Biwa_hoshi_Tokyo_Museum.jpg
What to Look for

- Romantic tales/anecdotes of emerging warrior ethos during Early Medieval Age
- Buddhist sense of “impermanence of things”; pathos
- Non-warrior characters: women, priests, and nobles
Caution!!

- Don’t get overwhelmed by all the names and ranks.
- If overwhelmed, use character glossary
- Just get a sense of the different tales.
- Chinese figures and tales often appear
- Start reading now!
Historical Readings

- Kamakura Age (1185-1333)
- Muromachi Age (1333-1568)
  - Azuchi-Momoyama (1568-1600)
- Edo Period (1600-1868)
- Do not get overwhelmed by density of facts.
- Get sense of basic structures and developments of each period