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About GURPS

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GURPSnet. Much of the online discussion of *GURPS* happens on this e-mail list. To join, send mail to majordomo@io.com with "subscribe GURPSnet-L" in the body, or point your World Wide Web browser to <http://gurpsnet.sjgames.com/>.

The *GURPS Japan* web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/japan.

Page References

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. BE refers to *Bestiary*, BT refers to *Blood Types*, CH refers to *China*, CI refers to *Compendium I*, CII refers to *Compendium II*, G refers to *Grimoire*, M refers to *Magic*, MA refers to *Martial Arts, 2nd Ed.*, UN refers to *Undead*, WI refers to *Wizards*, and WWI refers to *Who's Who I*.

Introduction

In 1192, Minamoto Yoritomo established the Shogunate, which endured until the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and covered nearly 700 years of Japanese history. *GURPS Japan* focuses on two periods within this age. The first is the Warring Provinces Era (*sengekujidai*, 1467-1568) and the subsequent Period of Unification (the *Azuchi-Momoyama* Era, 1568-1600), the setting familiar to many Westerners from Akira Kurosawa's movie *Kagemusha*. This is a time of social upheaval, as powerful factions within the ruling Ashikaga clan battle for the Shogunate. Vast armies sweep across Japan. Peasants are taxed to ruin, but have the opportunity to rise in status as soldiers. (One climbs from peasant foot soldier to virtual dictator of the nation.) The peculiar, ugly people called Europeans visit Japan for the first time, and Japan first learns of the strange religion called Christianity.

The second period is the last half of the Tokugawa era. From the naming of the fifth Tokugawa Shōgun, Tsunayoshi, in 1680, to the Shogunate's end in 1868, this is an age of uneasy stability. The Tokugawa Shogunate tries to close Japan to all changes, whether foreign-inspired or locally invented. The commoners are disarmed, the nobility leashed, and the foreigners strictly controlled. This is the society depicted in Kurosawa's movie *Yōjimbō*. A very thin façade of control covers a reality of riots, petty rebellions, intellectual dissatisfaction, and increasing pressure from the West. This world ends forever when Commodore Perry of the United States Navy sails his black ships into Japanese waters in 1853.



About the Authors

Lee Gold's previous Japanese game, *Land of the Rising Sun*, is now out of print but has been revised for compatibility with the latest version of *Chivalry & Sorcery* and may be reprinted any year now. Feel free to write Lee Gold with questions or comments, either care of SJ Games or at 3965 Alla Road, Los Angeles, CA 90066; be sure to include a SASE. Unless you request otherwise, interesting questions and their answers may be reprinted in her fan magazine, *Alarums and Excursions*, \$2 plus postage (currently \$3.13 in the US, \$3.56 overseas for an issue mailed Book Rate).

Hunter Johnson is a software engineer in Dayton, OH, where he lives with his wife Lori and their son Forrest. Revising and expanding *GURPS Japan* for its second edition is the biggest gaming gig he's had; previous works have consisted of overseeing the *Knightmare Chess 2* playtest and writing *Pyramid* articles and a few paragraphs for sourcebooks here and there. His other interests include Bible studies, World War II history, and whiz-bang movies. He used to watch "genre" television, but nowadays Disney videos monopolize the set – which he doesn't mind at all.





The Shōguns of the Late Tokugawa Era

Tokugawa Tsunayoshi became Shōgun in 1680, after the death of his elder brother Ietsuna. Neither of them had any children. Buddhist priests told Tsunayoshi that his bad karma was due to his having injured animals in an earlier life. He therefore forbid his subjects to kill animals and had places of refuge erected for disabled or aged dogs and horses. A daimyō's procession waited for a dog who lay sleeping in the road until it awakened. A samurai who killed a swallow had to commit seppuku, and his children were sent into exile. Tsunayoshi gained the nickname "the dog Shōgun."

Tsunayoshi also lavished funds on artists and writers. When the Shogunate treasury began to run low, he raised money by inflating the currency. He granted more and more land out of the Shogunate domains to his chief adviser, Yanagisawa Yoshiyasu. He encouraged his *hatamoto* to attack the *otokodate* (see p. 42), until finally most of the bands left Edo. In 1709, Tsunayoshi's wife stabbed the Shōgun to death and then killed herself.

Tsunayoshi's nephew Tokugawa Ienobu repealed Tsunayoshi's laws against animal killing and reformed the coinage. He died three years after becoming Shōgun, possibly due to ill health, possibly due to skillful poisoners. Ienobu's four-year-old son succeeded him, but died three years later in 1716. This left no heir descended from Ieyasu's eldest son.

The Shogunate council chose as Shōgun the daimyō of Kii, Tokugawa Yoshimune, descended from Ieyasu's eighth son. Yoshimune's son Ieshige became Shōgun in 1745, followed in 1760 by his son Ieharu. Like Ienobu and his son, Yoshimune and his descendants left affairs of state to their ministers.

The most remarkable of these ministers was Yoshimune's adviser, Magistrate Ōka Tadasuke. He increased Japan's prosperity by allowing trade between provinces, giving Yoshimune the nickname of "the rice Shōgun." During Yoshimune's reign, beginning in 1720, the Dutch were allowed to sell imported and even translated copies of European books, as long as the books did not mention Christianity.

In 1786, Shōgun Ieharu died without a son. The Shogunate council chose as his heir the 15-year-old Ienari, descended from Yoshimune's third son. Again, Ienari and his descendants left affairs of state to their ministers. Ienari reigned from 1786 to 1837, and sired 51 children, 31 of whom died in their youth.

In 1808, the British ship *Phaeton* entered Nagasaki harbor. She was boarded by two Dutchmen from Dejima, who explained that the English were not permitted to trade. Her captain held the Dutchmen for two days, then released them and sailed away. The commander of Nagasaki harbor committed seppuku for not destroying the *Phaeton*. Five years later, an English fleet from Batavia attempted to conquer Dejima, but was driven away.

Ienari's son Ieyoshi succeeded him, followed in 1853 by his brother Iesada, who died without a son in 1858. The Shogunate council chose as Iesada's heir the 12-year-old Iemochi, a member of the Kii branch of the Tokugawa. He died at age 21 in 1866, during the Satsuma, Chōshū, and Tosa rebellion.

The Shogunate council then chose one of its own members, Tokugawa Keiki, who took the name Yoshinobu. The next year, Emperor Kōmei died and was succeeded by Emperor Meiji. Yoshinobu resigned his office on October 14, 1867, restoring power nominally to the Emperor.

Background: The Early Tokugawa Shōguns

Hidetada became Shōgun in 1605, during his father Ieyasu's lifetime. Both tried to root out Japanese Christianity. Japanese were forbidden to sail out of sight of land. From this point on, Japanese characters would have a great deal of difficulty attempting to leave Japan. At one point, a taifū blew a Japanese fishing boat out to sea for some days; it returned to have all its men executed. In 1620, Hidetada married his daughter to Emperor Go-Mizunoo. He went inkyo in 1622, six years after his father's death.

Iemitsu was Hidetada's eldest son and became Shōgun in 1622 at age 19. He became Japan's real ruler in 1632 upon his father's death. In 1624, English traders were banished from Japan when the heir to the British throne (Charles I) became engaged to a French Catholic princess. In 1636, Iemitsu ordered the destruction of all ships capable of more than coastline sailing and forbid building any more such ships. In 1638, the Dutch ship *de Ryp* helped to put down the Shimabara rebellion of Japanese Christians. In 1641, the Dutch traders were confined to Dejima. Iemitsu had the Emperor (his nephew) proclaim that an Imperial prince must be high priest of the Nikkō shrine, giving the Shogunate a hostage from the Imperial Court. He died, still Shōgun, in 1651.

Ietsuna was Iemitsu's eldest son. He became Shōgun at age 12, upon his father's death. He prohibited any translation of European works and any writing concerning the government or recent history. Historical plays could still be presented, but the names had to be changed. A tradition grew up of what fictitious names to use. For instance, Hideyoshi was called Hisayoshi, and Nobunaga was called Harunaga. Ietsuna had no sons, but named his younger brother Tsunayoshi as his heir. He died in 1680 at age 41.

