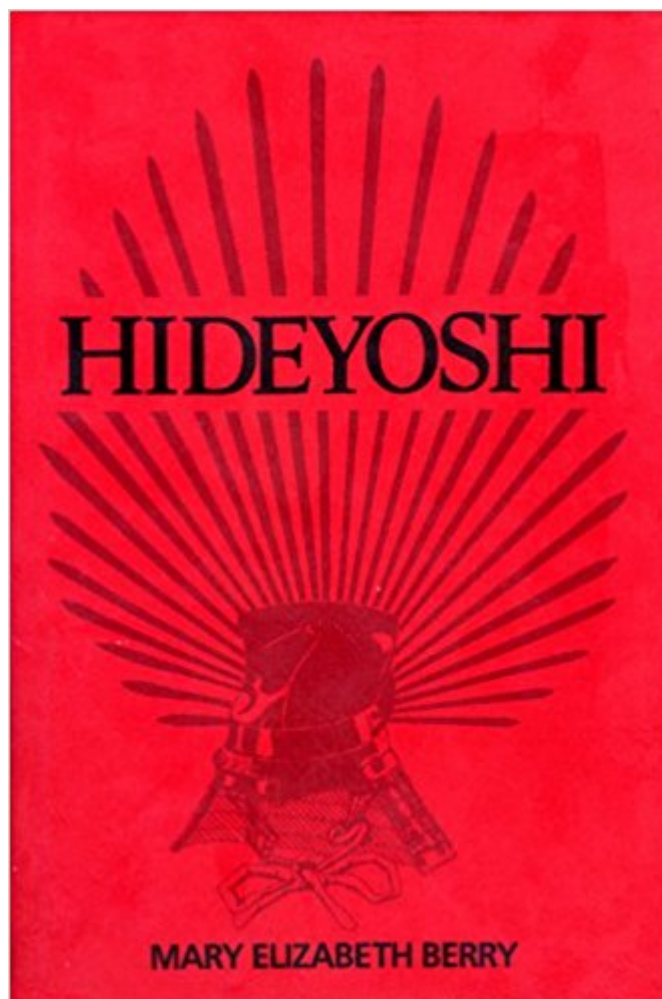


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Hideyoshi (Harvard East Asian Monographs)



Synopsis

Here is the first full-length biography in English of the most important political figure in premodern Japan. Hideyoshi "peasant turned general, military genius, and imperial regent of Japan" is the subject of an immense legendary literature. He is best known for the conquest of Japan's sixteenth-century warlords and the invasion of Korea. He is known, too, as an extravagant showman who rebuilt cities, erected a colossal statue of the Buddha, and entertained thousands of guests at tea parties. But his lasting contribution is as governor whose policies shaped the course of Japanese politics for almost three hundred years. In Japan's first experiment with federal rule, Hideyoshi successfully unified two hundred local domains under a central authority. Berry explores the motives and forms of this new federalism which would survive in Japan until the mid-nineteenth century, as well as the philosophical question it raised: What is the proper role of government? This book reflects upon both the shifting political consciousness of the late sixteenth century and the legitimization rituals that were invoked to place change in a traditional context. It also reflects upon the architect of that change—a troubled parvenu who acted often with moderation and sometimes with explosive brutality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Elizabeth Berry's Hideyoshi is the first truly scholarly comprehensive or readable account in English of a man who was probably the most extraordinary and significant political figure in the world during the sixteenth century. No single person did more than Hideyoshi to shape the Japan of modern

times. (Edwin O. Reischauer)

Mary Elizabeth Berry is Class of 1944 Professor of History at the University of California, Berkeley.

For those who want to do some serious research of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, this is the book to read. This book provides detailed analysis of the politics and economic policies during Hideyoshi's era. I found the federalism pursued by Hideyoshi very intriguing; while the local politics and economics were taken care of by the local warlords (Daimyos), Hideyoshi was the head-figure of Japan and had the authority to mobilize the military nationwide. For those who like to read 'general biographies', this might be a little too academic. This is not intended for a fun read. The military campaigns are summarized very well, but it does not provide a "I couldn't put it down" effect.

The deep historical research of this broad but unique topic of pre-modern oriental political history is well written, superbly researched, plainly stated, and enjoyable. Hideyoshi's life is a class of human experience regardless of one's political persuasion or cultural beliefs. Every military, religious, political, and community leader should have to take a required course in Japanese history. The key mark discussion subject should be Hideyoshi and this book as one of three main course texts.

Sometimes the author's writing is excessively verbose and wordy.

At first when I picked up a copy of this book, I didn't really know what to think of it. As it didn't have a cover of the book on then, it was really a shot into the dark. I'm real glad I made that shot. This book centers around Hideyoshi Toyotomo and his predecessor Oda Nobunaga. These two legendary Japanese warlords can't be mentioned without each other, as they are very much interrelated with each other. Nobunaga conquered a third of Japan featuring Hideyoshi as one of his generals. Then, after the murder of Nobunaga, Hideyoshi took charge and conquered Japan through conquest and diplomacy. This book takes you on the journey through these eras. Political as well as social circumstances are covered in detail. Berry has put together a vast and comprehensive history not just only about Hideyoshi, but about 16th century Japan. Then why four stars? The book does not cover in-depth detail about Nobunaga or any of the battles. Also, when you're not that familiar with Japan or its customs, pictures are lacking as well. I really hope there will be a reprint one day featuring these things. Then it will deserve the five stars without any doubt.

Excellent book, and shipping was reasonable. Highly recommend.

unless you read Japanese,(I assume that there are a few who can.) This is one of the best books on the market.

This book provides an excellent portrait of arguably the most important single individual in Japanese history. Berry's scholarship is abundantly informative without being heavy-handed. This account of Hideyoshi's life reads like a narrative and is rich with references from diverse resources. More important than that, however, is the respect Berry shows for the subject matter. She really captures the grand sweep of Hideyoshi's life, which was inseparable from the fate of Japan at the time. This is a must read for anyone interested in Japanese history or anyone wishing to deepen their appreciation of Japanese samurai movies that depict this period of time (the late 1500s).

"Hideyoshi" is an incredible biography of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who more than anyone else is responsible for transforming Japan from a crazy-quilt of fiefs and feudal lords engaged in civil war to a centralized state at peace. It is one of history's ironies that a child born to a subsistence farmer could end his life as the most powerful man in the country. If you share my admiration of Japan and fascination with its history, don't pass this book up!

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