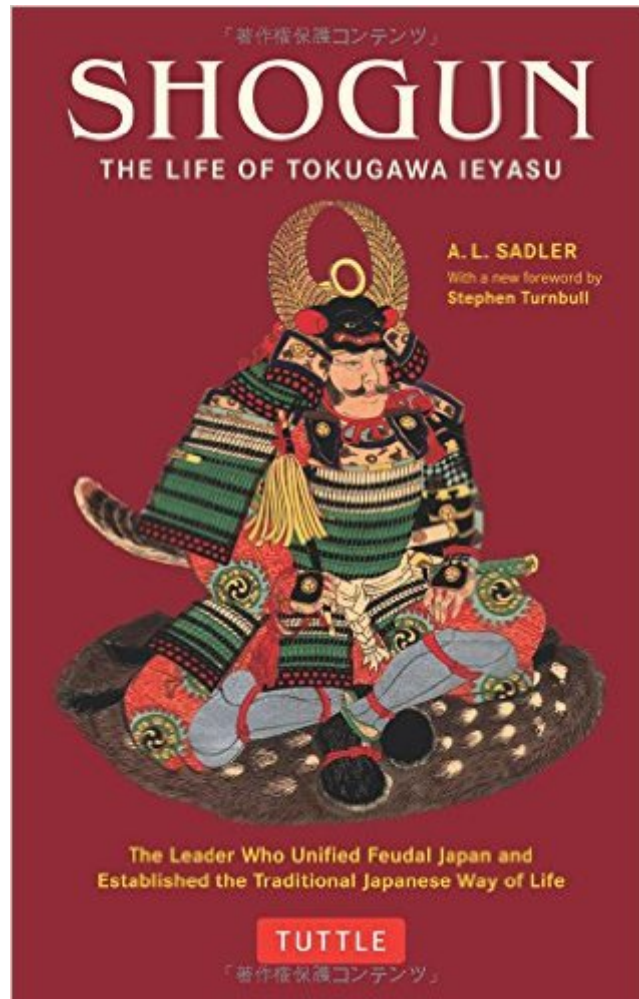


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# Shogun: The Life Of Tokugawa Ieyasu (Tuttle Classics)



## Synopsis

This book tells the fascinating history of the life of Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu – Japan's most famous Shogun. Since its initial appearance, A.L. Sadler's imposing biography of the Japanese Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu has been recognized as an outstanding contribution to the knowledge of Japanese history. It is also considered the standard reference work on the period that saw the entrenchment of feudalism in Japan and the opening of some two and a half centuries of rigid isolation from the rest of the world. In the course of Japanese history there have been five great military leaders who by common consent stand out above the others of their type. Of these, two lived in the twelfth century, while the other three, Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Tokugawa Ieyasu, were contemporary in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The last of these three, with whose life Mr. Sadler deals, may well be described as having perfected the shogunate system. Not only did Ieyasu found a dynasty of rulers and organize a powerful system of government, but also he rounded off his achievements by contriving before his death to arrange for his deification afterwards. As Mr. Sadler notes, "Tokugawa Ieyasu is unquestionably one of the greatest men the world has yet seen," and this fascinating account of Ieyasu's life and times is presented in a thoroughly absorbing narrative in which dramatic highlights abound. Japan's feudal age came to a close in 1868 with the downfall of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the restoration of the Emperor to political power. The event marked the end of the powerful regime that Ieyasu established at the beginning of the seventeenth century. That it did not at the same time mark the eclipse of Ieyasu's greatness is sufficient testimony to the major role he played in his country's history. It is to A. L. Sadler's lasting credit that he has brought this eminent but often ruthless military leader so vividly to life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A quite in-depth look, full of fascinating details, insightful anecdotes and colourful stories that immerse you in the era and the character of Ieyasu. I read it through in a few days and immediately started reading it again. The author's style is subtle, unobtrusive with occasional humourous turns of phrase or insights that delight the reader. If you love feudal Japan you must have this classic work.

This is a hard book to review. It is filled with detail about this vital time in the history of Japan (Ieyasu was Japan's "Julius Caesar" and placed his stamp on the next 250 years of history), and is very scholarly. It isn't Sadler's fault that the names of the most important leaders of the time were terribly repetitious and impossible to keep straight (Nobunaga, Nobuo, Masanobu, Nobuyasa, Hideyasa, Hideyori, Hideyoshi, Hidetada), but he could have given us a little primer on what the various components of them meant and how to remember what side they were on. It doesn't help that the main character changed his name 5 times during his life, which wasn't at all unusual for Japan, or that great lords honored people by "giving" them a syllable from their own names. It is Sadler's fault that he writes with total disregard for the use of pronouns, making it even harder to figure out who is doing what to whom. This is a great book for scholars of Japan (who seem to be the intended audience) but hard going for the interested reader who doesn't know it all already. Some of the book is fascinating and very well written; other parts are almost incomprehensible. I was trained as a historian, and read this book to learn more about Japanese history, but honestly *Shogun* by James Clavell (obviously based on Sadler's book) was much easier to follow, and stuck to the actual history quite well. If this is a period you're interested in, and you're willing to keep a list of who's who, or read the book twice, then give it a go. If you want to learn about the period and don't mind being confused about 1/4th the time, then it's fine. If you're looking for an easy book to read, not to study, then this is not for you.

Tokugawa Ieyasu is one of the most interesting figures in Japanese history, made even more so by the fictional Lord Toranaga in James Clavell's novel "Shogun". This book presents his life story, but some of the information seems a little on the legendary side - to me at least. However, it does reveal the reality behind some of the incidents in the novel. The book arrived in good condition, and the

seller was prompt in sending it.

The book is good if you are looking for a first view on the matter, it is rich on historical details, but it lacks sources should you want to check original texts or to compare with other documents you will hardly do so. In the words of Sadler "This book is not peppered with references, for they would be quite useless except for those who read Japanese historical texts..." (Preface, pag. xii) Also have in mind that the original text is named *The Maker of Modern Japan: The Life of Tokugawa Ieyasu*, if I recall correctly, the first edition was in 1937, Sadler passed away in 1970 so these recent versions are not only probably lacking updates. As Stephen Turnbull who wrote the foreword of this book says: "So has *The Maker of Modern Japan*, renamed for this edition *Shogun: The Life of Tokugawa Ieyasu*, stood the test of time? With the limitations of a lack of comparative sources and its uncritical acceptance of Mikawa Go Fudoki, it still provides a valuable and inspirational starting point..." (Foreword, pag. x). So if one is looking for a text from which to make an investigation, I would say do not use this book as neither the core nor as a pillar of your study, use it if you are new to the topic, if you enjoy reading on the matter or as "extra": In my point of view, when the author says that he dismisses sources throughout the text because they would be useless for most readers, he automatically downgrades his work to something of second category (and indeed you'll barely see any quotes or references on the text)...

Difficult to read. The English in this book needs to be updated to a modern style of the language.

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