A proven lawmaker, Tokugawa Ieyasu Shogun received the nickname “The Old Badger” for his contributions to the prosperity of Japan in the seventeenth century. His memoirs, entitled “Legacy of Ieyasu,” advanced the society of Japan for centuries through the betterment of those who would succeed him. Esteemed twentieth-century scholars, such as George Sansom and Edwin O. Reischauer, explore the success of Ieyasu’s controversial imperial legal codes and the effects they had on the history of Japan in Makers of World History. Through the instructions of Ieyasu and the studies of today’s scholars, it can be established that Ieyasu was, conceptually, a good ruler; however, questions surround his political policies and the effects they had on the influential society of Japan.

Ieyasu promoted a number of leadership principles for government in “Legacy of Ieyasu.” His instructions set forth a governmental structure supported by a number of orders, edicts and codes that regulated the people of Japan through an imperial court of justice. Due to Ieyasu’s strong belief in the power of punishment, his regime supported the idea that “justice” should be delivered through example, and the courts should administer sentences in accordance with this fundamental policy. Finally, Ieyasu’s writings promoted his remaining principles of government through four general themes: Confucian ideals; the roles of benevolence, compassion, and personal conduct in government; the Tokugawan structure of the vassalage; and the Tokugawan cautions on the overt use of the military (72).

Ieyasu focused the first of his principles on the effects of Confucian theories and their relation to the Chinese government. He felt that a good leader’s goal was to establish peace and security throughout society, the very basis for Confucian thought. He spoke of the Confucian idea of parental and ancestral respect, devoting his success to his family. Ieyasu’s views of the relationship between a lord and his vassal emphasized the significance of such a respect, stating the notable lessons of the Chinese ceremonial book, Li Chi, and its lesson of the distinction between a man’s wife and his favorite concubine. Ieyasu valued the faithfulness of his subjects, especially his warriors, because he felt
that any man who could not set apart the distinction between the two women could lead a great nation to its demise (75).

Ieyasu also emphasized the importance of benevolence and good personal conduct in a successful leader. He spoke of the human compassion his successors must take for their subjects, and vice versa, in order to make the country prosper:

If the lord is not filled with compassion for his people and the people are not mindful of the care of their lord, even though the government is not a bad one, yet rebellions will naturally follow. But if the lords love Benevolence, then there will be no enemies in the Empire. (72)

Like any good leader, Ieyasu valued the ideal which urges the "Supreme Sovereign of the Empire" to look upon his subjects not only as followers, but also as children from whom he must obtain support and respect in order to succeed (75). He characterized Benevolence as a distinction between inferior and superior, thus the difference between the unfaithful Tozama Daimyos or "Outside Lords" and the dependable Fudai Daimyos who were his hereditary family (76-77).

According to his third basic principle, Ieyasu stressed the importance of a set structure of vassalage. Ieyasu clarified the inferior and superior concept by stating that if a man is supported by his retainers, he has ultimate control of his country; however, he cautioned that not everyone can be a trustworthy character (72). He stressed the need for constant mobility between the fiefs of the Tozama and the Fudai, stating that this fundamental would allow his successors to control angry lords and unruly vassals merely by their unfamiliarity with their surroundings (73). Ieyasu felt that only the trustworthy should succeed the shogunate, even if the unrighteous subject is the leader's son and successor. Along with this principle, Ieyasu gave "official stipends and rank only if they [lords] conduct themselves properly" (74).

Ieyasu's final principle dealt with the ever-powerful role of the military, especially in the vital trading port of Nagasaki. He cautioned his successors, stating that the role of a military did not always have to end in mortal combat, but if war were inevitable, the sword should be handled correctly, for it is the soul of the warrior. According to Ieyasu, "The right use of a sword is that it should subdue the barbarians while lying gleaming in its scabbard" (73). Ieyasu also stated the importance of rulers keeping level heads and using controlled substances with extreme caution, for those who could not hold their offices responsibly should be "deprived of office and commit suicide" because they cannot uphold their country (73).

In assessing the significance of Tokugawa Ieyasu Shogun as a leader, not only must his principles be taken into account, but also his character, which
ultimately led the nation of Japan into an era of great prosperity. Ieyasu displayed many characteristics not only of a good leader, but also of a strong person. According to his personal memoirs, the factor which drove Ieyasu to succeed was not greed of the position, but the virtue of it: "if we always... declare that it is by learning that emolument comes, we can always attain our purpose" (73). Ieyasu felt strongly about his principles, stating that those who committed injustice would be openly punished in front of all—evoking a sense of fear in his people and his successors—and that even a "son or heir" disobeying his principles would not succeed to the reign (73). Ieyasu's principles were concrete in his feelings of loyalty among the people, which is extremely important in a good ruler. He felt that all Japanese people should obey the laws of their courts and that even the councils should be treated in much the same way as the common people. His ideas of a strong government even began in the home—the ideal being a good husband supporting his family—for a good home was the basis for a strong country (75).

According to scholar George Sansom in his selection "Tokugawa's Practical Revolution," Ieyasu even contributed to the minting of gold and silver coins, thus the creation of a monetary system in Japan that would allow trade with other countries as well as internally (78). If Ieyasu had faults, like any other human, they lay in the areas of cultural isolation and development. He and other shogunates believed in establishing monitored trading posts, such as Nagasaki—their "window to the world" which ultimately froze Japan from other cultures. By creating such segregated areas, Ieyasu stunted the growth of individualism in his people, and according to Reischauer in his excerpt, "A More Cautious View," "stifled the normal social and economic development of the country" (84). According to Sansom, Ieyasu also segregated his own community from itself by the separation of the Tozama and the Fudai families. He forced the inferior Tozama, "Outside Family," into the lower middle class by not allowing the same privileges to them, not because of their abilities, but because of their heritage. Reischauer points out the concept of a secret police, or "metsuke," within Ieyasu’s structure. These secret police were part of a system of checks and balances created by Ieyasu to insure the loyalty of the daimyo as well as those within his own government, thus leading to one of the first occurrences of a secret police within a governmental structure (81). Reischauer also notes that the Tokugawa developed a system of rotation, by forcing the daimyo to commit every other year to living within the city of Edo (Tokyo). This excursion was carried out at the daimyo’s expense, and the idea of loyalty was furthered by keeping the daimyo’s family hostage in the city at all times as a safeguard for the shogunate against tyranny (81). Ieyasu supported these principles which helped in creating a separation between his own people. Even though Ieyasu resigned in 1605, after two years of service, his contributions to the political structure of the shogunate were tremendous as well as symbolic of the reign of the Tokugawa family in Japan. According to Sansom, Ieyasu’s resignation proved that the Tokugawa family was to be the
reigning ruler of Japan, and succession of the shogunate was to lie within it
(77).

Through scholars George Sansom and Edwin O. Reischauer, and the
words of Tokugawa Ieyasu Shogun himself, it is apparent that the role Ieyasu
had on the governmental structure of Japan was an important one. Ieyasu
proved through his economic and militant principles that Japanese society
could become a powerful nation through the succession of the Tokugawa fam-
ily. This selection in *Makers of World History* proved itself to be both highly
informative and insightful into the systematic strategies of Tokugawa Ieyasu
Shogun through its use of both the primary source of Ieyasu and the secondary
source of modern day scholars, Sansom and Reischauer. Despite the fact that
even "The Old Badger" had his faults, Ieyasu gave practical strategies to the
Japanese, promoting the welfare and prosperity of his people for centuries to
come.

**Works Cited**


Sanson, George. "Tokugawa’s Practical Revolution." *Makers of World History,