Problem Set #1

1. In the late 1500s Nobunaga, Hideyoshi and Tokugawa unified Japan. They all came from the Owari and Mikawa regions of Japan. Why would the unifiers of Japan come from this region of Japan?

2. One of the striking features of Japanese economic development was Japan's ability to rapidly assimilate foreign technology during the Meiji period. Discuss briefly five government policies/private institutions which helped make this possible.

3. According to the cadastral survey, productivity in Japanese rice fields was 1.3 koku/tan during the period 1874-77. Nakamura argues that productivity was higher, on the order of 1.5-1.7 koku/tan. Why is this important for an understanding of economic development?

4. Henry Rosovsky, in his essay, "Japan's Transition to Modern Economic Growth," notes that despite the inflationary policies of the Meiji government, inflation did not become a problem until the mid-1870s. Give two reasons why inflation was slow to develop in the early Meiji period.

5. In the course of development, Japan transformed its “surplus labor” in agriculture into an effective factory work force. But the process by which early Japanese industrial employers created a stable labor force with industrial skills was far from straightforward. Explain.

6. The Meiji period runs from 1868 to 1912. Discuss the nature of monetary policy during the Meiji period. Did they have monetary policy as we know it today? Explain.

7. After the Meiji restoration, Japan wanted to make the yen convertible to gold. Japan was unable to do so until 1897. Explain some of the challenges in making the yen convertible to gold.

Your response to each prompt should be limited to about half a page at most.

Due on Thursday 15 February