

The Meiji Restoration (the modernization of Japan)



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The Meiji Restoration

- w Japan had essentially been isolated from the West since the 16th century.
- w The Japanese, like the Chinese, had viewed other world cultures as inconsequential.
- w When the Japanese heard what the British did to China (in the Opium War) and how China was forced to endure unequal treaties, Japan knew the West would soon come.



The Meiji Restoration

- w Japanese fears were realized in the summer of 1853.
- w American President Millard Fillmore wanted to open ports of trade, wanted better treatment of shipwrecked sailors, and wanted to open foreign relations between the two countries.
- w The American request was delivered by Commodore Perry and four American warships.

The Meiji Restoration

With Commodore Perry meeting the Japanese representative of the emperor.





The Meiji Restoration

- w Never before had the Japanese seen ships steaming with smoke. They thought the ships were "giant dragons puffing smoke."
- w They did not know that steamboats existed and were shocked by the number and size of the guns on board the ships.
- w American ships became known as the "black ships" and they carried the "big black guns."

The Meiji Restoration

w The American "Black Ships"





The Meiji Restoration

- w Commodore Perry brought examples of Western technology to leave with the Japanese in order to impress them with Western power and science.
- w A telegraph link was set up between Perry's flagship and the Japanese royal palace.
- w He even set up a miniature railroad along the Japanese coast and whirled Japanese officials around on its tracks.



The Meiji Restoration

- w The technological and military significance of these gifts was not lost on the Japanese.
- w Perry was told to come back later for an answer to President Fillmore's requests (Perry was not pleased)...



The Meiji Restoration

- w Several months later Perry came back, bringing with him the entire Pacific fleet (7 warships) as a sign of American naval power.
- w Perry sailed into Edo (Tokyo) harbor and ordered his guns to be trained on the city.
- w The Japanese got the message.



The Meiji Restoration

- w The Japanese government of the Tokugawa realized that their country was in no position to defend itself against a foreign power, and Japan could not retain its policy of isolation without risking war.
- w Two Japanese ports were opened to American ships and trade.



The Meiji Restoration

- w Americans got low taxes on imports and the rights to extraterritoriality.
- w Representatives from Britain, the Netherlands, and Russia soon pressed for similar terms.
- w Like the Chinese, the Japanese felt humiliated by the terms of these unequal treaties.



The Meiji Restoration

- w For centuries, the Japanese government was controlled by a shogun (“great general”) from the most powerful families... the emperor was marginalized and had little real power.
- w But the sudden intrusion of foreign powers created a domestic crisis in Japan that caused the collapse of the Tokugawa...for many questioned the shogun’s right to rule Japan as “subduer of barbarians.”



The Meiji Restoration

- w Many Japanese responded positively to normalizing relations with the U.S. but many traditionalists, led by the imperial court, did not.
- w A popular slogan was *kaikoku joi*, “open the country to drive out the barbarians.” **In other words, learn from the West so they can be defeated.**
- w Another was “Revere the emperor, expel the barbarians.”



The Meiji Restoration

- w In 1868, reformists overthrew the conservative, inward looking (isolationist) Tokugawa government and replaced it with a new, forward looking regime.
- w The young emperor Mutsuhito (1852-1912) was 15 when crowned and took the name Meiji, or the "Enlightened One."

The Meiji Emperor

w The Meiji Restoration lasted from 1868-1912.

w The Meiji period ended the series of military governments that had dominated Japan since 1185.

w It marked the birth of a new Japan.





The Meiji Restoration

- w When the Meiji emperor came to power, Japan was a militarily weak, primarily agricultural country that had had little technological development since the Europeans had left the islands nearly three centuries earlier.
- w It had a weak centralized government and was controlled by hundreds of semi-independent feudal lords (the daimyo).



The Meiji Emperor

- w To unite the Japanese nation in response to the Western challenge, Meiji political leaders created a civic ideology centered around the emperor.
- w Even though the emperor wielded little real political power (up to this point), he had long been viewed as a symbol of Japanese culture and historical continuity.

The Meiji Emperor

- w He was the head of Japan's native religion, Shintô.
- w By associating Shintô with the imperial line, which reached back into legendary times, Japan had not only the oldest ruling house in the world, but a powerful symbol of age-old national unity.





The Meiji Restoration

- w In 1868, the new emperor Meiji came to the throne determined to do two things:
1. To establish real imperial power--he centralized power and eliminated the shogunate and the samurai class.
 2. To industrialize Japan so the Japanese could compete with the West and remain independent.



The Meiji Restoration

- w Like so many others, the Japanese saw the West in terms of military and industrial might...They were determined to create a “rich country, strong army.”
- w So the Meiji government looked to the industrial lands of the West to obtain the knowledge and expertise to strengthen Japan and win revisions to the unequal treaties.



The Meiji Restoration

- w Sons of elites and governmental officials were sent abroad to study everything from technology to constitutions.
- w One of the first things the Meiji emperor set out to do was copy European military training, tactics, and equipment.



The Meiji Restoration

- w A new army was established and modeled after the (German) Prussian system.
- w A new, modern navy was also created (with Western help).
- w Younger officers replaced feudal generals and all young men were conscripted (drafted).
- w Military armament was modernized.



The Meiji Restoration

- w The Meiji government sponsored industrialization and promoted a Western-styled education.
- w The Meiji created and focused on a knowledge base-mainly in math and science.
- w The Meiji adopted the Western calendar and the metric system.
- w The Meiji goal was to combine “Western science with Eastern values.”

The Meiji Restoration

W Even today, Japanese students are ranked among the world's best in math and science (#4/#3 while the U.S. ranked #24/#21 out of 30).



The Meiji Restoration

w The Japanese government created new banks to provide capital for industry.

w State-built railroads and steamer ships connected most parts of the country.

w The state operated mines, shipyards, built ports and steel plants.





The Meiji Restoration

- w To get industries started, the government typically built the factories then sold them to wealthy investors (powerful families) who developed them further.
- w These powerful banking and industrial families were known as the **zaibatsu**.

The Meiji Restoration

- w Such companies as Kawasaki and Mitsubishi began this way.
- w The Japanese government set economic policy but left factory control to factory management (the zaibatsu).



The Meiji Restoration

w Thousands of women worked in low-paying textile mills, but the Japanese were eager to maintain the traditional notion of female inferiority (they were appalled at the “aggressiveness” of Western women).



The Meiji Restoration

W Even though literacy increased and some women were able to get educations, women in general were still assigned a secondary role in society.



The Meiji Restoration

- w Most women who worked, worked in the silk industry.
- w By the 1920's, Japan had surpassed China in silk exports to the West.





The Meiji Restoration

- w Life for factory workers in Japan was just as bad as it was in Europe during the early stages of the Industrial Revolution.
- w Twelve hour factory shifts were common.
- w The Meiji government didn't tolerate labor organizations and Meiji law treated the formation of unions and strikes as criminal activity.



The Meiji Restoration

- w Crowded slums sprang up near factory districts just as they did in Europe and the United States.
- w However most Japanese citizens accepted the belief that **personal sacrifice** was necessary to make Japan a more powerful industrial nation.

The Meiji Restoration

w Traditional Japanese clothing:



The Meiji Restoration

w The government promoted Western fashions as part of the effort to become "modern."



The Meiji Restoration





The Meiji Restoration

- w Western-style haircuts replaced the samurai practice of a shaved head with a top-knot—another example of the Westernizing of hair throughout the world.
- w Western standards of hygiene spread as the Japanese became tooth-brushers and buyers of patent medicines.

The Meiji Restoration



The Meiji Restoration

- w Before the Meiji, the Japanese did not play sports for entertainment. In fact, they had no word for sport (the closest meant exercise).
- w In 1873, an American teacher at a Japanese school introduced baseball.



The Meiji Restoration

- w By 1878, the first organized Japanese baseball team, the Shimbashi Athletic Club Athletics, was formed (modeled after the Boston Red Sox).
- w Today, baseball is as popular in Japan as it is in the U.S.



The Meiji Restoration

w In 1890 a new constitution took effect, based on the German model. A two-house parliament, elected by men of property, served under the emperor.



The Meiji Restoration

- w Japan admired Germany's militarism and sense of military discipline.
- w Japan's closeness with Germany really became a problem for the West in the 1930's.





The Meiji Restoration

- w The idea behind Westernization was simple: if Japan could not expel the barbarians she would at least stand beside them as an equal on the world stage.
- w Western principles of law and behavior would be adopted so that the foreigners would see Japan as a civilized nation and revise its unequal treaties.



The Meiji Restoration

- w The Japanese press told readers to give up bad old habits (kyûhei) so the Westerners wouldn't think Japan was backward.
- w Imperial orders required Western dress at official functions; and authorities advocated the eating of beef (not rice and fish) and drinking whisky/wine.



The Meiji Restoration

- w But most Westerners during this period generally considered the Japanese to be an uncivilized people, inferior to Caucasians in culture, intelligence, and character.
- w In the United States, they were discriminated against in the same way the Chinese were.

The Meiji Restoration

w Tokyo and Osaka.





The Meiji Restoration

- w In 1869 the feudal lords (daimyo) were asked to give up their domains, and in 1871 their domains were officially abolished and transformed into prefectures of a unified central state.
- w The armies of each domain (samurai) were disbanded, and a national army based on universal conscription was created in 1872, requiring three years' military service from all men, samurai and commoner alike.



The Last of the Samurai

- w By 1876, the samurai had lost their class privileges when the government declared all classes to be equal.
- w The samurai were forced to remove their swords in public and they were forced to cut off their top knots or risk arrest.
- w Most found jobs in business or in the professions, but some rebelled at this assault on 1000 years of tradition.

The Last of the Samurai

w Samurai of the Meiji Period with their "top knot."



The Last of the Samurai

w The samurai tradition
"westernized."





The Last of the Samurai

- w The final blow to the samurai came in the 1877 Satsuma rebellion, when the government's newly drafted army, trained in European infantry techniques and armed with modern Western guns, defeated the last resistance of the traditional samurai warriors.
- w Besides this outbreak, Japan's domestic transformation proceeded quickly and relatively smoothly.

The Satsuma Rebellion (1877)





The Meiji Restoration

- w Japan used expansion and nationalism as distractions to the problems created by industrialization.
- w Japan had few basic raw materials (like coal & oil) so there was great pressure to expand outward to acquire these resources.
- w Japan scored a quick victory over China in a quarrel for influence in Korea (1894-95). This demonstrated Japan's new superiority over other Asian powers.

The Russo-Japanese War

Disputes over Russian influence in Manchuria (northern China) and Japanese influence in Korea led to the **Russo-Japanese War** (1904-1905).



The Russo-Japanese War

- w In February 1904, Japanese torpedo boats made a surprise attack on part of the Russian fleet based in Manchuria (northern China).
- w Most of the Russian ships were wiped out.



The Russo-Japanese War

w The rest of the Russian Navy was in the Baltic Sea, 10,000 miles away. They began the slow fifteen month journey to Asia.

w When they reached Chinese waters, the Japanese attacked again, forcing the Russians to surrender in one day.



The Russo-Japanese War





The Treaty of Portsmouth

- w Some historians consider the Russo-Japanese War “World War 0.”
- w President Teddy Roosevelt mediated a peace (the **Treaty of Portsmouth**) becoming the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Peace.
- w Neither Russia nor Japan was happy with the deal or with the United States.

The Treaty of Portsmouth





The Meiji Restoration

- w This victory, the first time an Eastern power had defeated a Western power in modern history, showed the rest of the world, especially President Teddy Roosevelt, that Japan was now a force to be reckoned with.
- w Roosevelt correctly predicted that the U.S. would someday go to war with Japan over interests in the Pacific.



The Meiji Restoration

w When the emperor died in 1912, Japan had:

- w
- a highly centralized, bureaucratic government
 - a constitution establishing an elected parliament
 - a well-developed transport and communication system
 - a highly educated population free of feudal class restrictions
 - an established and rapidly growing industrial sector based on the latest technology
 - a powerful army and navy



The Meiji Restoration

- w In one generation, Meiji leaders transformed Japan from a weak agrarian society into an industrial powerhouse, poised to play a major role in world affairs.
- w Symbols of Japan's remarkable development were the ending of extraterritoriality (1899), an alliance with Britain as an equal (1902), and crushing China (1895) and Russia in battle (1905).