

**RATIONALE** The following lesson plan will take place within the context of a World Humanities course for sophomores at Columbus Alternative High School. The Humanities courses are team-taught blocks of 85 minutes; the courses are two credits, with students receiving both a Language Arts and Social Studies credit. As such, the lesson will focus on Japanese imperialism and modernization but within the context of a unit on imperialism that includes lessons on the rise of: Western nationalism, militarism, industrialization, and imperialism in Africa, China, and the Asian subcontinent. However, it is possible that certain aspects of this lesson plan also could be implemented in a U.S. History class.

The justification for the focus of the lesson in either a World History or American History class is rooted in both the Ohio Dept of Education Social Studies and Language Arts Academic Content Standards.

The relevant strands for Social Studies are:

**Benchmark C: Analyze the reasons that countries gained control of territory through imperialism and the impact on people living in the territory that was controlled.**

Grade Nine *Imperialism* 4. Describe the political, economic and social roots of imperialism.

6. Explain the global impact of imperialism including:

- a. Modernization of Japan

Grade 10 *Imperialism*

5. Trace the development of the United States as a world power with emphasis on b. U.S. imperialism in the Far East, South Pacific, Caribbean and Central America

For Language Arts, a relevant strand is:

**Benchmark C Organize information from various resources and select appropriate sources to support central ideas, concepts, and themes.**

**Writing Applications**

4. Write information essays or reports, including research that
  - a. pose relevant and tightly drawn questions that engage the reader.
  - b. provide a clear and accurate perspective on the subject.
  - c. create an organizing structure appropriate to the purpose, audience, and context.
  - d. support the main ideas with facts, details, and examples, and explanations from sources; and
  - e. document sources and include bibliographies.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

1. Students will understand the historical context of Japanese imperialism
2. Students will explain the similarities among, and the differences between, the motivations and goals of Japanese imperialism and the motivations and goals of imperialism of Western powers
3. Students will comprehend the extent of Japanese imperialism
4. Students will explain multiple perspectives on Japanese imperialism both domestically and internationally
5. Students will describe Japan's modernization, including the political, social, and economic changes that took place in Japan during the age of Japanese imperialism

## **METHODOLOGY**

Examination of documents including: maps, primary and secondary documents, graphs and charts, photographs, and period political cartoons

Class discussion

Individual written responses/ formation of thesis statements

## **SCHEDULE**

### **DAY 1**

Review with students the goals and objectives of Western imperialism. (10 min.)

Prompt students for prior knowledge about Japan's involvement in World War II and Japanese history leading up to World War II. (15 min.)

Distribute time line of Japanese history. Direct students to note the centuries of isolation Japan experiences preceding the period of Japanese imperialism. Have students note concurrent events that demonstrate the expansion of Western imperialism in Asia. **Append. 1-6** (20 min.)

Direct students to 1804 on time line and initial unsuccessful attempts by Russian envoys to convince Japan to open to the West. Next, trace with students the events that lead to the arrival of American Commodore Matthew Perry. (15 min.)

Direct students to the map that shows the extent of Western imperialism in Asia. Discuss the possible effects this had on the Japanese people **Append. 7** (15 min.)

Read aloud with students the brief poem and discuss with students the concern of some Japanese people in the midst of Western imperialism. **Append. 8** (15 min.)

### **DAY 2**

Review of previous day's discussion. (10 min.)

Read aloud with students the excerpts of primary documents that reveal the Japanese curiosity about Westerners and admiration for some Western ideas. **Append. 9** (25 min.)

Have students examine the prints of drawings that illustrate a Japanese perspective of Westerners in Japan. Discuss with students how this might have appeared to Japanese. **Append. 10-11** (20 min.)

Present students information about the agreements the Japanese make with the West about opening up, including document excerpts that reveal the Japanese desire for expansion. Present further information about the decisions made by the Meiji government to expand. **Append. 12-13** (25 min.)

### **DAY 3**

Read and discuss the documents concerning Japanese expansionist successes that reveal the motivation for further Japanese expansion. **Append. 14-15** (15 min.)

Present students information about the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. Explain the sources of conflict, ie. rivalry over desired territories. Discuss outcomes: Japan emerging as a world power. (15 min.)

Have students examine various bar graphs that demonstrate large material gains, a rising standard of living, and developing industrial economy in Japan. Students create a summary of these graphs.

**Append. 16-17** (45 min.)

**DAY 4**

Read and discuss excerpts of primary documents of Western perceptions of Japanese modernization.

**Append. 18** (15 min.)

Examine and discuss the photographs of university women suffrage and the image of a Japanese woman in traditional kimono. Discuss the changing role of women during modernization. Read and discuss the primary document "On Wives and Concubines" that shows influence of Western ideas on Japanese social customs.

**Append. 19-21** (20 min.)

Read and discuss textbook excerpt "Exploitation or co-prosperity?" Return to Day 1 discussion about the perception of Japan in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Summary remarks about Japanese expansion in the midst of Western imperialism; summary remarks about the changes in Japan during the imperialist period. Summary remarks about Japan's motivations/actions in comparison to Western imperialists.

**Append. 22-29** (45 min.)

**FINAL ESSAY:** In consultation with the teacher, students will develop and address a thesis statement about Japanese imperialism and produce an essay that addresses the thesis statement. This assignment will address the benchmark noted above. It also enables students to complete one specified writing portfolio assignment required by Columbus Public Schools.

1794	Slavery established in French colonies		Slavery abolished in French colonies
1799	Shogunate gains administrative control over the southern part of Ezo		
1803			Louisiana Purchase
1804	Russian envoy Nikolai Petrovich Rezanov reaches Nagasaki, and unsuccessfully seeks the establishment of trade relations with Japan		Napoleon crowns himself Emperor of France
<b>Year</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>World</b>
1806			Official end of the Holy Roman Empire
1808	Phaeton Incident: British warship Phaeton enters Nagasaki Harbor and exacerbates fears of Western encroachment		
1823			United States Monroe Doctrine
1825	Shogunate issues the Order for the Repelling of Foreign Ships		
1833	Tempo Famine		Slavery abolished in the British Empire
1837	Rebellion of Oshio Heihachiro		
	Morrison Incident: U.S. merchant ship carrying Japanese castaways is fired upon as it attempts to enter Uraga Bay near Edo (now Tokyo) and Kagoshima Bay in Kyushu		
1839		Opium War (1839-1842)	
1841	Tempo Reforms	Great Britain claims sovereignty over Hong Kong	

	Nakahama Manjiro, a fisherman shipwrecked on a Pacific island, is rescued by an American whaler and taken to the United States	New Zealand becomes a British colony	
1844	Dutch warship arrives in Nagasaki with a letter from the king of the Netherlands advising the shogunate to open the country to Western trade	U.S. and China sign Treaty of Peace, Amity, and Commerce	
1846	Shogunate and domains give greater attention to coastal defenses as foreign ships and whaling vessels enter Japanese territorial waters		Mexican War begins (to 1848)
1848			Gold discovered in California
1850		Taiping Rebellion breaks out in China (1850-64)	California joins the Union
<b>Year</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>World</b>
1853	Four warships of the US East India Squadron, commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry, enter Uruga Bay		
1854	Treaty of Peace and Amity between the United States and the Empire of Japan (Kanagawa Treaty) signed; similar treaties concluded with Great Britain (1854), Russia (1855), and the Netherlands (1856)		
1855	Ansei earthquake kills more than 5000 people in Edo		
1856	US Consul General Townsend Harris arrives at Shimoda to initiate trade negotiations with the shogunate		
	Yoshida Shoin teaches		



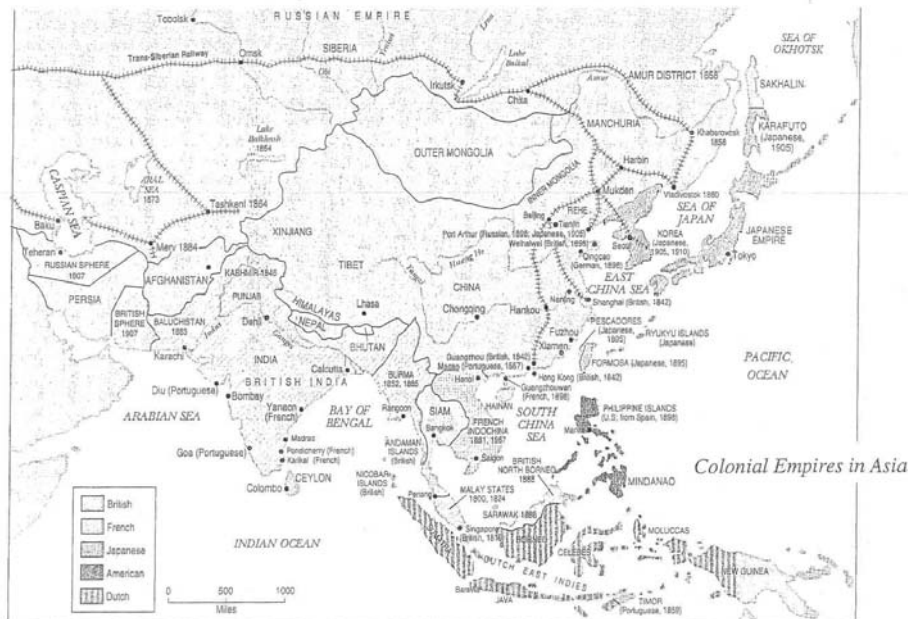
Year	Japan	Asia	World
1866	Shogunal army engages forces of Choshu domain in the second of the Choshu Expeditions; the Shogunate's failure to bring the campaign to a successful conclusion severely damages its prestige		Prussia defeats Austria in the Six Weeks War
	Satsuma and Choshu form a secret alliance against the shogunate		
1867	The last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu returns political authority to Mutsuhito (Emperor Meiji) who changes the name of the era to Meiji (or enlightened rule)		Russia sells Alaska to the U.S. for \$7.2 million
1868	Restoration of Imperial rule (Osei Fukko) declared		U.S. President Andrew Johnson is impeached for violating the the Tenure-of-Office Act, and is acquitted by the Senate
	Fragmented Tokugawa forces and dissident domains lodge the Boshin War		
	Emperor Meiji moves from Kyoto to Edo, now named Tokyo, or Eastern Capital		
1869	Daimyo return domain lands and population registers to the Emperor. Domains are designated public land with uniform procedures for tax collection. Daimyo are appointed as local governors and receive government stipends		United States trans-continental railroad completed
	Samurai divided into two ranks: a) shizoku; b) sotsu,		

	established		
1879	Ryukyu Islands incorporated into Japan and becomes Okinawa prefecture		
1881	Jiyuto (Liberal Party) formed by Itagaki Taisuke		
1881-85	Matsukata Deflation		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>World</b>
1882	Kaishinto (Progressive Party) formed by Okuma Shigenobu	Korea and the U.S. establish formal diplomatic relations	Great Britain occupies Cairo
1883-85		Sino-French War; China recognizes Vietnam as a protectorate of France	
1885	Cabinet system adopted with Ito Hirobumi as the first Prime Minister; the new cabinet supersedes the Dajokan (Grand Council of State) as the central organ of the Japanese state		Canadian Pacific Railway completed
	Tianjin (Tientsin) Convention: agreement reached between China and Japan concerning their interests in Korea		
1886		Great Britain annexes Burma	
1888	Privy Council established		Eastman produces Kodak camera
1889	Meiji Constitution promulgated		Gustave Eiffel completes Tower in Paris
	First Election law of 1889 limits voting to the House of Representatives to men over 25 who paid ¥15 or more in national tax (about 1% of the population)		First American skyscraper built in Chicago

1890	Imperial Rescript on Education		
1893	Artist Kuroda Seiki returns from study in Paris and introduces impressionism to Japan	Tonghak Rebellion, a peasant uprising, breaks out in Korea. (China and Japan intervene in 1894, commencing the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895)	
		France annexes Laos	
1894	Anglo-Japanese Commercial Treaty abolishes extraterritoriality and restores partial tariff autonomy to Japan	Sino-Japanese War (1894-95)	
1895	Treaty of Shimonoseki concludes Sino-Japanese War: China recognizes the independence of Korea; Japan gains Formosa (Taiwan), and Pescadores Islands; Liaodong Peninsula now controlled by Japan (Japan gives this up a few months later, only to have Russia gain the leasehold in 1898); China pays ¥364 million indemnity; and Japan gains same extra-territorial rights as Western countries	Queen Min of Korea is assassinated by Japanese troops	
1898	Jiyuto and Kaishinto become Kenseito (Constitutional Party); later becomes Minseito in 1927	Hundred Days of Reform of Kang Yuwei	Spanish-American War: Spain cedes Puerto Rico, Philippines, Guam to the United States; United States annexes Hawaii
1899	Extra-territoriality privileges (in place since 1858) removed by foreign governments		
1900	Rikken Seiyukai (Friends of Constitutional Government)	Boxer Rebellion in China	



	Party) formed by Ito Hirobumi		
1901	Future Emperor Hirohito born (first emperor since 1758 not born of an imperial concubine)		Commonwealth of Australia established
1902	Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Japan</b>	<b>Asia</b>	<b>World</b>
1904-05	Russo-Japanese War. Treaty of Portsmouth in 1905 concludes hostilities: Russia recognizes Japan's interests in Korea; Japan gains southern part of Sakhalin Islands; Russian lease on Liaodong Peninsula; and South Manchurian Railway line between Port Arthur and Mukden		
1905	Hibiya Incident	Korea becomes a Japanese protectorate. In 1910, Japan's role is expanded and Korea is annexed	
1906	Japan Socialist Party formed	South Manchurian Railway incorporated	Major earthquake hits San Francisco
1907		King Kojong of Korea is forced to resign, and Japan gains control of Korea's internal affairs	U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt bans Japanese from immigrating to the United States
1908	Japan gains U.S. recognition of its special status in Manchuria		First Model T Ford is made
1909	Ito Hirobumi assassinated on his arrival in Manchuria by a Korean nationalist		Washington D.C. receives 2,000 flowering cherry



**Map 4-1 Formation of the Japanese empire.** The Japanese empire grew in three stages: The Sino-Japanese War in 1894–1895, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, and Japanese conquests in Manchuria and Northern China.

## A Japanese View of the Dutch

*The Japanese were characteristically curious about the Westerners who came to Japan.*

England in the West,  
Russia in the North.  
Don't be caught off guard,  
Countrymen!  
The treaties that bind on the surface  
Do not plumb the depths of the heart.  
International law though there may be,  
When the time comes,  
We must be prepared –  
For with brute force,  
The strong devour the weak.<sup>23</sup>

The men of the countries of Europe sail at will around the globe in ships which recognize no frontiers. In Holland, one of the countries of Europe, they consider astronomy and geography to be the most important subjects of study because unless a ship's captain is well versed in these sciences it is impossible for him to sail as he chooses to all parts of the world. Moreover, the Dutch have the excellent national characteristics of investigating matters with great patience until they can get to the very bottom. For the sake of such research they have devised surveying instruments as well as telescopes and helioscopes with which to examine the sun, moon, and stars. They have devised other instruments to ascertain the size and proximity of the heavenly bodies....Scholars write down their own findings and leave the solution for their children, grandchildren, and disciples to discover, though it may require generations.

Source: From R. Tsunoda et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. II. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 41.

### A Japanese View of the Inventiveness of the West

Serious Japanese thinkers reacted to their country's weakness with proposals to adopt Western science and industry. But the "Civilization and Enlightenment Movement" of the 1870s had its lighter side as well. In 1871 the novelist Kanagaki Robun wrote a satire about a man with an umbrella, a watch, and eau de cologne on his hair, who was eating and drinking in a new beef restaurant. Before the Restoration, Buddhism had banned beef eating as a defilement. The comic hero, however, wonders, "Why we in Japan haven't eaten such a clean thing before." He then goes on to rhapsodize about Western inventions.

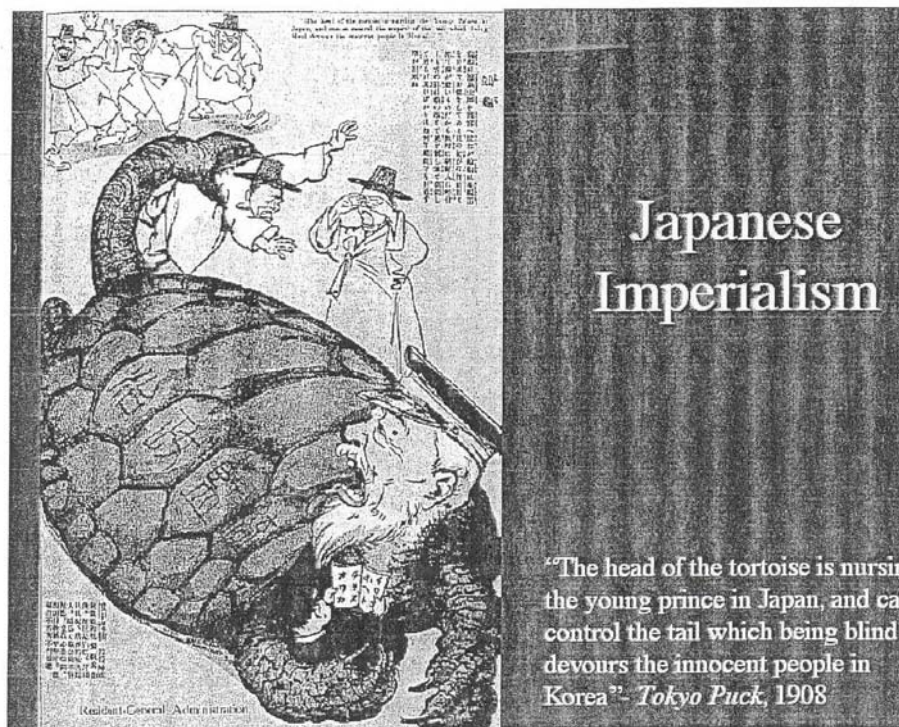
*What do pickled onions have to do with the marvels of Western technology?*

In the West they're free of superstitions. There it's the custom to do everything scientifically, and that's why they've invented amazing things like the steamship and the steam engine. Did you know that they engrave the plates for printing newspapers with telegraphic needles? And that they bring down wind from the sky with balloons? Aren't they wonderful inventions! Of course, there are good reasons behind these inventions. If you look at a map of the world you'll see some countries marked "tropical,"

which means that's where the sun shines closest. The people in those countries are all burnt black by the sun. The king of that part of the world tried all kinds of schemes before he hit on what is called a balloon. That's a big round bag they fill with air high up in the sky. They bring the bag down and open it, causing the cooling air inside the bag to spread out all over the country. That's a great invention. On the other hand, in Russia, which is a cold country where the snow falls even in summer and the ice is so thick that people can't move, they invented the steam engine. You've got to admire them for it. I understand that they modeled the steam engine after the flaming chariot of hell, but anyway, what they do is to load a crowd of people on a wagon and light a fire in a pipe underneath. They keep feeding the fire inside the pipe with coal, so that the people riding on top can travel a great distance completely oblivious to the cold. Those people in the West can think up inventions like that, one after the other. . . . You say you must be going? Well, good-bye. Waitress! Another small bottle of sake. And some pickled onions to go with it!

From *Modern Japanese Literature*, D. Keene, ed. and trans. pp. 32-33. Copyright © 1956 Grove Press. Reprinted by permission of Grove/Atlantic, Inc.



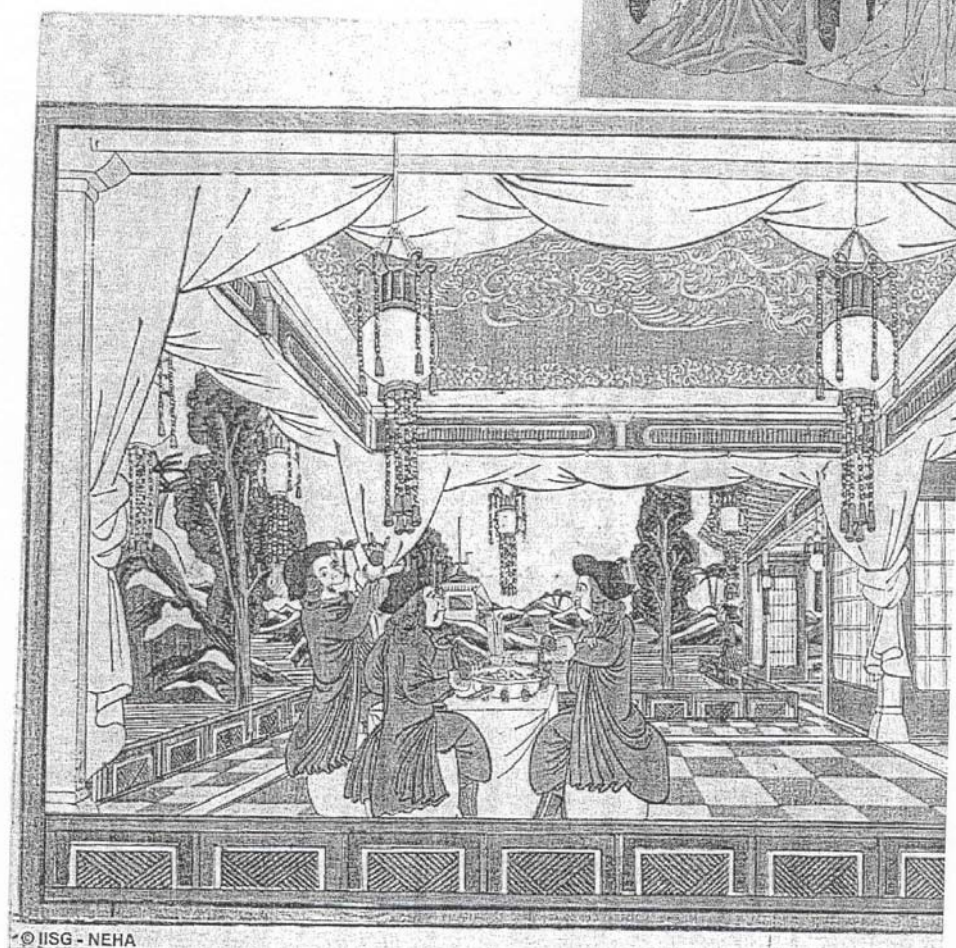


### ⊗ Concerns About Modernization ⊗

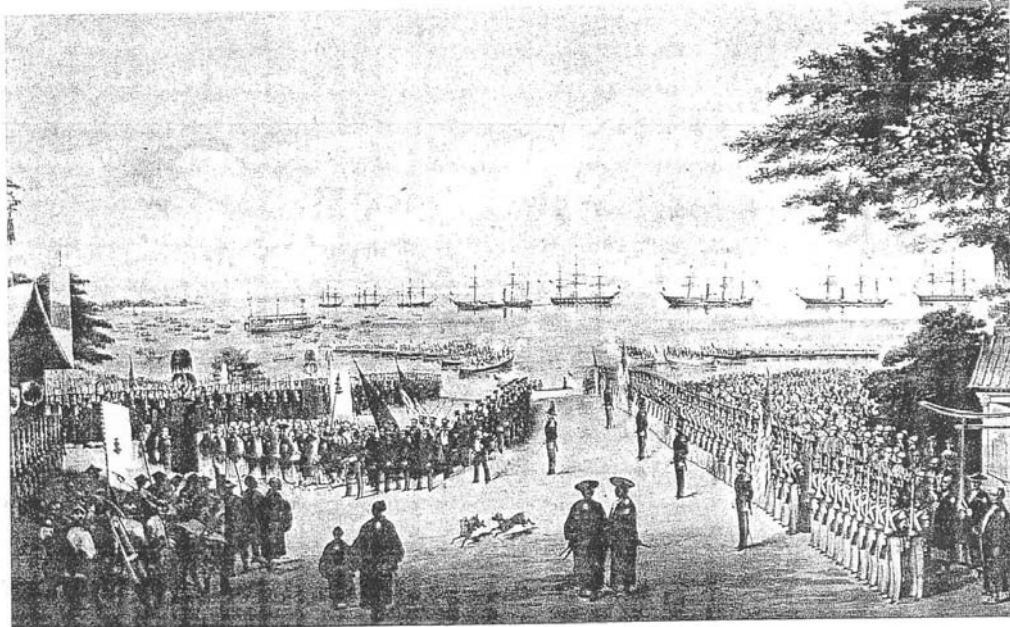
The novelist Natsume Soseki (1867-1916) speaks through a character in his novel, *Passers-by*, about the disturbing pace of change, called "modernization," which reached full speed in twentieth-century Japan:

You know, our uneasiness comes from this thing called scientific progress. Science does not know where to stop, and does not permit us to stop either. From walking to rickshaws [oddly enough, a foreign introduction], from rickshaws to horse-drawn cabs, from cabs to trains, from trains to automobiles...to airplanes—when will we ever be allowed to stop and rest? Where will it take us? It is really frightening.

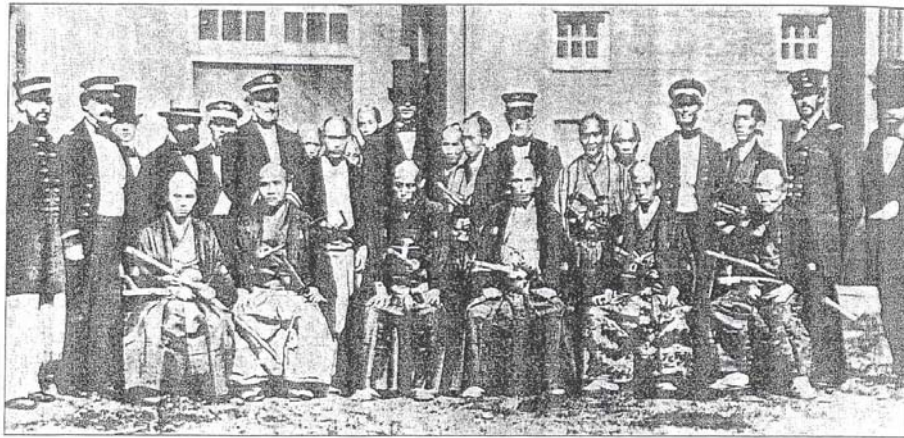
Source: From E. McClellan, "An Introduction to Soseki," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 22 (1959), 205-206.)







1. Commodore Perry meets the Imperial Commissioners at Yokohama, 8th March 1854.  
Photo: Peter Newark's Pictures.



The first modern Japanese embassy abroad, sent by the Tokugawa to Washington and shown here in the navy yard there in 1860 with their American hosts. Notice that the Japanese are all dressed in *samurai* outfits, complete with swords. (Bettmann/CORBIS)

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## ⊕ The Meiji Constitution ⊕

*The hurriedly drawn up constitution of 1889 was designed to make the Charter Oath more specific, which Article 1 of the Constitution merely restates. Most of the other articles echo Western models, at least in part to make a favorable impression on the imperialist powers and to hasten the time when they might give up their "Unequal Treaties." The following is a selection.*

Article 2. All power and authority in the empire shall be vested in a Council of state, and thus the grievances of divided government shall be done away with. The power and authority of the Council of State shall be three-fold: legislative, executive, and judicial. Thus the imbalance of authority among the different branches of government shall be avoided.

Article 4. Attainment to offices of the first rank shall be limited to princes of the blood, court nobles, and territorial lords and shall be by virtue of (the emperor's) intimate trust in the great ministers of state.

Article 5. Each great city, clan, and imperial prefecture shall furnish qualified men to be members of the Assembly. A deliberative body shall be instituted so that the views of the people may be discussed openly.

Article 9. All officials shall be changed after four years' service. They shall be selected by means of public balloting. However, at the first expiration of terms hereafter, half of the officials shall retain office for two additional years ... so that the government may be caused to continue without interruption.

*Source: Quoted in R. Tsunoda et al., eds., Sources of Japanese Tradition, Vol. II. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp. 137-138.*

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## ⊕ On Education ⊕

*The Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890 was much cited, and was regularly read aloud in the schools. Many Meiji officials contributed to its content and wording.*

Know Ye, Our subjects: Our imperial ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue.... This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire.... Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation.... Pursue learning and cultivate the arts and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws. Should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State, and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers.

*Source: Quoted in R. Tsunoda et al., eds., Sources of Japanese Tradition, Vol. II. (New York: Columbia University Press), 1958, pp. 139-140.*

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## ☐ Supernationalism in Japan ☐

*Tokugawa Japan saw a new growth of nationalist feelings. Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) asserted the superiority of Shinto over all other religions, and the superiority of Japan and the Japanese.*

People all over the world refer to Japan as the Land of the Gods, and call us the descendants of the gods. Indeed it is exactly as they say: our country, as a special mark of favor from the heavenly gods, was begotten by them, and there is thus so immense a difference between Japan and all the other countries of the world as to defy comparison. Ours is a splendid and blessed country, the Land of the Gods beyond any doubt, and we, down to the most humble man and woman, are the descendants of the gods.... Japanese differ completely from and are superior to the people of China, India, Russia, Holland, Siam, Cambodia, and all other countries, and for us to have called our country the land of the Gods was not mere vainglory. It was the gods who formed all the lands of the world at the creation, and these gods were without exception born in Japan.... This is a matter of universal belief, and is quite beyond dispute.

Source: From R. Tsunoda et al., eds., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. II. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 39.

## ☐ Need for *Lebensraum* ☐

*The Japanese used the same argument as the Nazis in asserting their need for expansion room to accommodate their population.*

"We have already said that there are only three ways left to Japan to escape from the pressure of surplus population. We are like a great crowd of people packed into a small and narrow room, and there are only three doors through which we might escape, namely, emigration, advance into world markets, and expansion of territory. The first door, emigration, has been barred to us by the anti-Japanese immigration policies of other countries. The second door, advance into world markets, is being pushed shut by tariff barriers and the abrogation of commercial treaties. What should Japan do when two of the three doors have been closed against us? It is quite natural that Japan should rush upon the last remaining door."

Source: Quoted in R. Tsunoda et al., eds. *Sources of Japanese Tradition*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), p. 289.

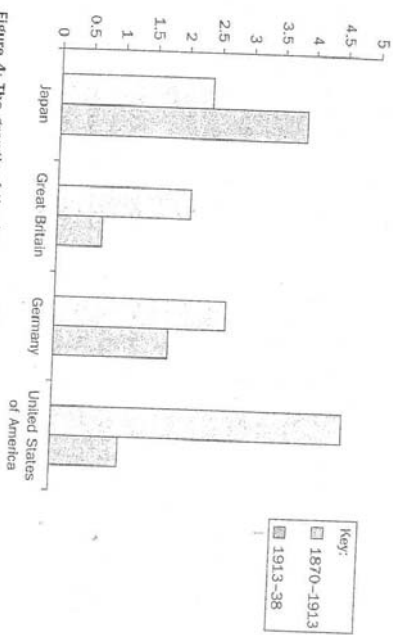


Figure 4: The growth of the Japanese, British, German and United States economies, 1870-1938 (% real growth pa)  
Source: I. Nakamura, *Economic Growth in Prewar Japan*, Yale University Press, 1983, p. 2.

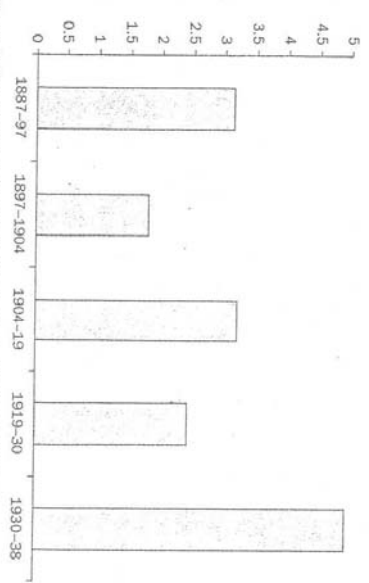


Figure 5: The growth of the Japanese economy, 1887-1938 (% pa)  
Source: W.J. Macpherson, *The Economic Development of Japan 1868-1941*, Macmillan, 1987, p. 16.

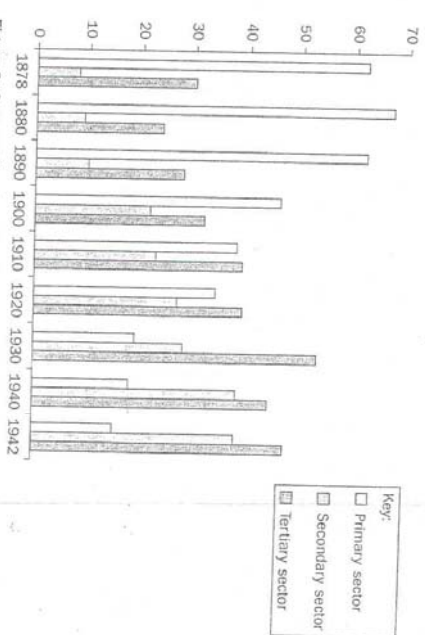


Figure 6: Gross national product by sector of the economy, 1878-1942 (%)  
Source: *Hundred-Year Statistics of the Japanese Economy*, Statistics Department, Bank of Japan.

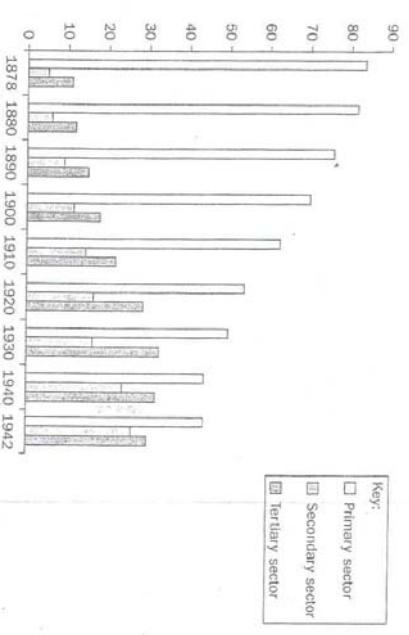


Figure 7: Working population by sector of the economy, 1878-1942 (%)  
Source: *Hundred-Year Statistics of the Japanese Economy*, Statistics Department, Bank of Japan, 1966, pp. 56-7.



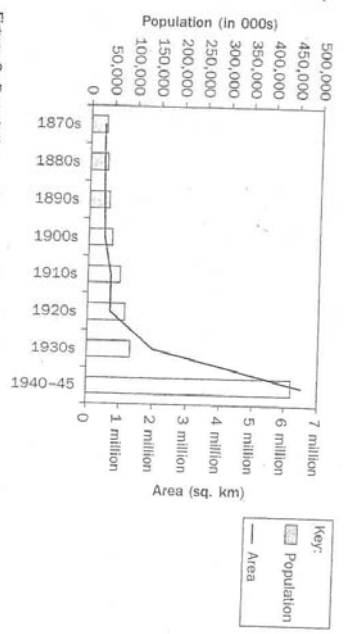


Figure 3: Population and area of the Japanese Empire, 1870s-1945

Note: Figures for 1940 to 1945 are estimates since the population and area of occupied China are not officially recorded.

Source: Compiled from *Nihon teikoku taisei nenkan*, figures for 1940 to 1945 from P. Dunn, R.H. Myers and M.R. Peattie (eds), *The Japanese Maritime Empire, 1931-1945*, Princeton University Press, 1995, p. xiii.

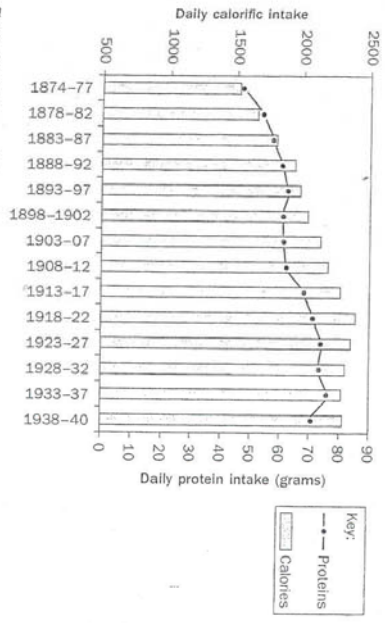


Figure 10: Daily caloric and protein intake, 1874-1940

Source: C. Moser, 'The Decline of Marital Fertility in Japan', *Population Studies: A Journal of Demography*, XXXII, 1979, p. 25.

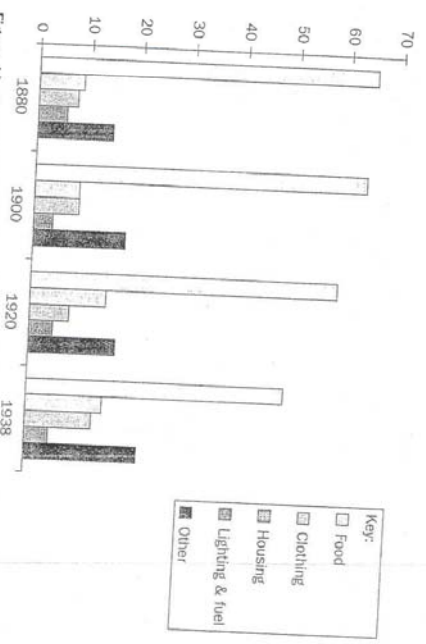


Figure 12: Consumer expenditure (at current prices) by major product groups, 1880-1938 (%)

Source: R. Nishimura, *The Economic Development of Japan: A Quantitative Study*, Macmillan, 1986, p. 398.

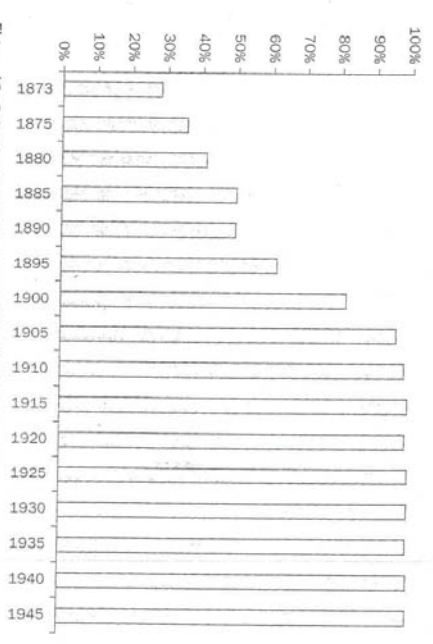


Figure 13: School attendance rates, 1873-1945 (% enrolled)

Source: Ministry of Education, *The Role of Education in the Social and Economic Development of Japan*, Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, 1968, p. 64.



## The Cultural Revolution of Meiji Japan: Westerners' Views

*While the political parties prepared for constitutional government and the government built dikes to contain the parties, Japan's society and culture were being transformed.*

### ON JAPANESE STUDENTS IN 1868

What a sight for a schoolmaster! . . . They are all dressed in the native costume of loose coats, with long and bag-like sleeves; kilts, like petticoats, open at the upper side; with shaven midscalps, and topknots like gun-hammers. Men and boys carry slates and copy books in their hands, and common cheap glass ink bottles slung by pieces of twine to their girdles. Hands and faces are smeared with the black fluid; but, strangest of all, each has two of the murderous-looking swords, one long and the other short, stuck in his belt. Symbols of the soldier rather than the scholar are these; but the samurai are both.

### ON JAPAN DURING THE 1870s

To understand the situation you have to realize that less than ten years ago the Japanese were living under conditions like those of our chivalric age and the feudal system of the Middle Ages, with its monasteries, guilds, Church universal, and so on; but that betwixt night and morning, one might almost say, and with one great leap, Japan is trying to traverse the stages of five centuries of European development, and to assimilate in the twinkling of an eye all the latest achievements of western civiliza-

tion. The country is thus undergoing an immense cultural revolution—for the term "evolution" is inapplicable to a change so rapid and so fundamental. I feel myself lucky to be an eyewitness of so interesting an experiment.

### LOOKING BACK FROM THE 1890s

If one considers the comparative precocity of the Japanese youth, as well as the wild and lawless traditions which students of twenty years ago had inherited from their predecessors, and adds thereto the further consideration that twenty years ago parental authority was at its lowest in Japan, for the reason that the go-ahead sons were conscious of knowing a great deal more than their old-fashioned, old world parents, . . . it will not be wondered at that in those early days strikes sometimes took place which bore a striking testimony to the power of organization which is innate in the Japanese. . . . But I am talking of events which took place many years ago. Things are very much changed now. . . . The go-ahead student of twenty years ago is the go-ahead parent of today, and has succeeded in reestablishing over his children that parental authority which for the time slipped from the grasp of his old world father.

W. E. Griffis, *The Mikado's Empire* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1896), p. 370; E. Baelz, *Awakening Japan: The Diary of a German Doctor* (New York: Viking Press, 1932), p. 16; A. Lloyd, *Everyday Japan* (New York: Cassell and Co., 1909), pp. 272-273.

### On Wives and Concubines

During the 1870s and 1880s leading Japanese thinkers introduced a wide range of Western ideas into their country. Among them were freedom and equality as rights inherent in human nature. Debating the questions of equality in marriage and the rights of wives, intellectuals voiced a radical criticism of concubinage and prostitution. As a consequence of these debates, laws were passed during the eighties and nineties that strengthened the legal status of wives. Mori Arinori (1847-1889), a leading thinker who had studied in the United States and England, wrote the following passage in 1874. He later became a diplomat and, between 1885 and 1889, the minister of education.

*Can you think of a comparable instance in American or European history when new ideas led to dramatic social change? How long did the changes last and how deeply rooted did they become?*

The relation between man and wife is the fundamental of human morals. The moral path will be achieved by establishing this fundamental, and the country will only be firmly based if the moral path is realized. When people marry, rights and obligations emerge between them so that neither can take advantage of the other.

There have hitherto been a variety of marriage practices [in our country]. . . . Sometimes there may be one or even several concubines in addition to the wife, and sometimes a concubine may become the wife. Sometimes the wife and the con-

cubines live in the same establishment. Sometimes they are separated, and the concubine is the favored one while the wife is neglected. . . .

Taking a concubine is by arbitrary decision of the man and with acquiescence of the concubine's family. The arrangement, known as *ukedashi*, is made by paying money to the family of the concubine. This means, in other words, that concubines are bought with money. Since concubines are generally *geisha* and prostitutes patronized by rich men and nobles, many descendants in the rich and noble houses are the children of bought women. Even though the wife is superior to the concubine in households where they live together, there is commonly jealousy and hatred between them because the husband generally favors the concubine. Therefore, there are numerous instances when, the wife and the concubines being scattered in separate establishments, the husband repairs to the abode of the one with whom he is infatuated and wilfully resorts to scandalous conduct. . . .

Thus, I have here explained that our country has not yet established the fundamental of human morality, and I hope later to discuss how this situation injures our customs and obstructs enlightenment.

From *Journal of the Japanese Enlightenment* by Meiroku Zasshi, translated and with introduction by William Reynolds Braisted, assisted by Adachi Yasushi and Kikuchi Yūji (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 104-105. © 1976 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Reprinted by permission of Harvard University Press.



6. Women in 1929 making demands for voting power during municipal elections in Tokyo.  
Photo: Peter Newark's Pictures.

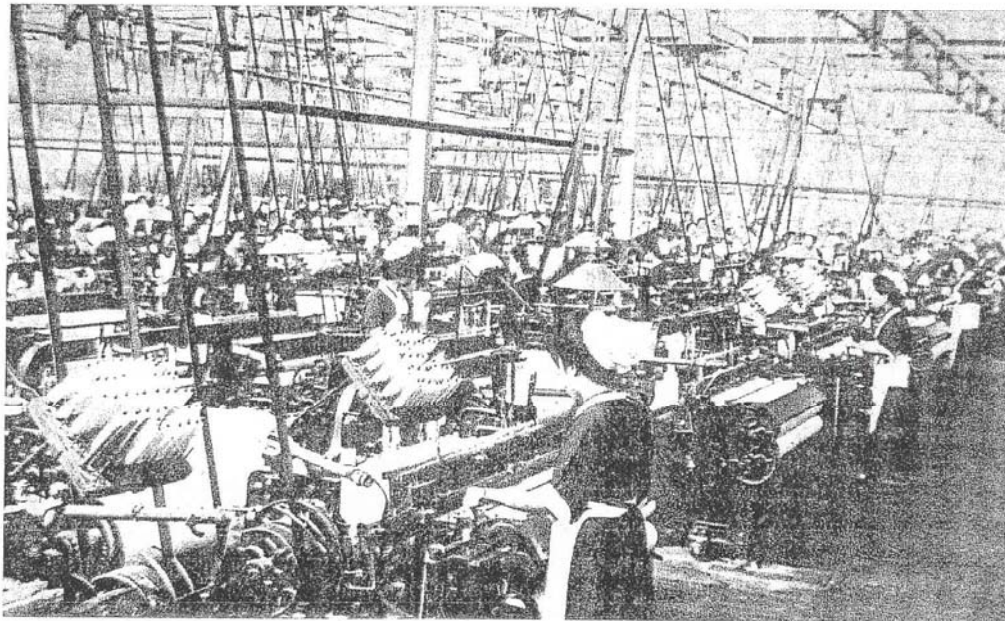


7. A woman practising calligraphy in traditional surroundings, 1933.  
Photo: Peter Newark's Pictures.





Women textile workers at a turn-of-the-century silk-weaving mill in Japan. Their product, made from mechanically reeled silk thread, was superior. A company officer, at center, is visiting the shop floor. Behind him is a supervisor, wearing a Meiji-style mustache. Women constituted more than half of Japan's industrial labor force well into the 20th century. They worked a span of years after leaving primary school and before marrying. Their hours were long, their dormitories crowded, and they often contracted tuberculosis. [Keystone Press Agency]



8. Women cotton workers at Toyoda, 1937.  
Photo: Peter Newark's Pictures.

However, it is easy to let one's outrage run away with one's judgement. It is tempting to generalise too broadly about Japan's international relations and imperial expansion, suggesting, for example, that there was no change in policy between the beginning and end of the period, and that there was no difference in the ways that different parts of the empire were acquired and administered. It is a temptation that needs to be resisted.

There is no reason to attribute a spurious homogeneity to Japan's international relations and imperial expansion to be able to mount a telling attack on her record in dealing with the rest of the world. There is no need either to use the supposed homogeneity of Japan's international relations and imperial expansion to support the view that it derived from something deep and unchanging in Japanese society and culture.<sup>81</sup>

The heterogeneity of Japan's international relations and imperial expansion can be seen in several ways. It will be recalled from earlier in the chapter that when Japan embarked upon her policy of territorial aggrandisement, her troops were viewed as a model of restraint rather than barbarity and her colonial administration in Taiwan (and even Korea) was regarded – at least in the West – as a model of enlightenment rather than exploitation. It should be recognised too that during the 'Taishō Democracy' of the 1920s, there were some attempts to further a more liberal policy – if that is the proper way to describe the new emphasis that was placed upon the 'assimilation' of the colonial population. In Taiwan, in particular, efforts were made to encourage equal employment opportunities, to stimulate the diffusion of the Japanese language and to bring about intermarriage between Japanese and Koreans.<sup>82</sup>

It should not be forgotten either that, later in the century, the Japanese claimed that it was Western troops, rather than their own, who were notorious for their barbarity; and that it was Western imperialism, not Co-Prosperity, which should be identified with degradation and exploitation. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, papers like the *Nippon Times* and *Japan Times Weekly* carried numerous reports contrasting the barbarity of the Americans with the chivalry of the Japanese. 'The in-born cruelty of the American people', it was argued, 'is clearly manifest in the character of crimes perpetrated by them' against coloured people. The Japanese built hospitals for their prisoners of war, it was explained. 'Unlike the brutal massacre of helpless Japanese soldiers and the wanton attacks on hospital ships by the enemy, kind considerate treatment is accorded to the war prisoners interred in Japan.'<sup>83</sup>

This, of course, was selective reporting with a vengeance. But neither were Western troops or Western imperialists by any means as fastidious

Predictably perhaps, the army reported that the military had 'counter-measures' in hand, and that the high command did not believe that the war was lost. They were overruled, however, and finally on 15 August, Emperor Hirohito made his celebrated, and unprecedented, broadcast to the Japanese people.

I cannot bear any longer to see my innocent subjects tormented under the cruelties of war. There are certainly conditions that can hardly be accepted: disarmament of the Imperial Forces by foreign hands for one. But we have to bear it now. I think of the spirit of those who have died for the nation's cause and I reflect on my incapacity to respond to their loyalty. My heart aches as I think of those who have faithfully fulfilled their duties and who now have to bear the disgrace. But this is the time when we must bear the unbearable to restore peace to the nation and to the world.<sup>79</sup>

### Exploitation or co-prosperity?

Is it possible to regard Japan's international relations and imperial expansion between 1868 and 1945 with anything other than scorn and contempt? Is it possible to find anything positive to say about the way in which the Japanese treated the countries and individuals with which they came into contact as they became a world power and swept across the Asian continent?

It is obvious, of course, how Japan acquired her evil reputation. The political leaders of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Japan led her into a series of aggressive wars: against China, Russia, China again, the United States of America, the allied powers and finally much of south-east Asia. They established a chain of oppressive colonial regimes: in Korea, Manchuria, other parts of China and much of south-east Asia. They declined to ratify the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war. They condoned the excesses of the armed forces, it seems, whenever and wherever they occurred: the Manchurian Incident, the Nanjin Massacre and innumerable, less well known events throughout the Pacific War. The armed forces themselves behaved with a mixture of cunning, barbarity and apparent fanaticism. They provoked the Manchurian Incident, and possibly the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. They forced thousands upon thousands of Korean and Chinese women into sexual slavery; they abused, exploited and murdered prisoners of war; they conducted experiments on live subjects, they launched themselves to certain death in kamikaze raids, and they refused, some of them, even to surrender when the war was over. Japanese imperialism became – and has remained – a byword throughout the world for cruelty, inhumanity and exploitation.<sup>80</sup>



as those in the West have been led to believe. In fact, it has been seen already in this chapter that even the victims of Japanese imperialism sometimes regarded it as an example of what the East might achieve.

Japan's military expansion after 1941 toppled colonial regimes in the Dutch East Indies, Malaya, the Philippines, and eventually French Indochina. The Japanese occupying forces had difficulty in finding collaborators who saw the Japanese, initially at least, as liberators, and Japan's encouragement of anticolonialist nationalism in Southeast Asia paved the way for the wave of antiimperialist revolutions, civil wars, and liberation movements, successful and unsuccessful, that swept the region after 1945.<sup>84</sup>

It is important to stress, once again, how difficult it is to avoid the 'presentism' and ethnocentrism which colour so many Western judgements about late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Japanese history. There is no denying, of course, that Japan's international relations and imperial expansion inflicted misery both upon her own people and upon untold millions in Asia and the rest of the world. There is no denying either that many of the policies adopted by Japan were similar to those which had been pursued by other imperial powers. The comparison may help to explain, but it does nothing to excuse, the course which was adopted by Japan's political and military leaders. It is a record with which many in Japan still have to come to terms.

#### Notes

1. D.B. Smith, *Japan since 1945: The Rise of an Economic Superpower*, Macmillan, 1995, pp. 164-5; P. Duus, Introduction, in P. Duus (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 6, *The Twentieth Century*, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 6-11; A. Iriye, *Japan and the Wider World: From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the Present*, Longman, 1997, p. 63.
2. *The Times*, 28 May, 30 May, 27 November 1998.
3. *South China Morning Post*, 29 August 1997. See also 'Behind the Textbook Controversy', *Japan Echo*, 24 March 1997; *The Times*, 29 May 1998.
4. In retrospect, it appears as though Japanese international relations were directed exclusively towards imperialistic aggrandisement. Nevertheless, a closer examination of the period reveals that various foreign policy strategies were debated and pursued, often in tandem. The most important of these included the pursuit of an alliance with the predominant Western nation of a given era, and benevolent co-operation with Asia (Pan-Asianism). For an analysis of foreign policy throughout the period, see M. Mayo (ed.), *The Emergence of Imperial Japan: Self-Defense or Calculated Aggression*, Heath, 1970; I.H. Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy, 1869-1942. Kusumigaseki to Miyakezaka*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977; W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894-1945*, Oxford University Press, 1987. For the distinction between formal and informal imperialism, see R. Robinson and J. Gallagher, 'The Imperialism of Free Trade', *Economic History Review*, vi, 1954, esp. pp. 1-13.
5. J.E. Hoare, 'Japan's Road to War', *Asian Affairs*, 18, 1997, p. 57.

order," a hedging in favor of the state which was to remain the basis of growing arbitrary power.

The emperor was also declared "sacred and inviolable," and was given supreme command of the army and navy, and the power to dissolve the Diet whenever he (really of course the government leaders) considered it desirable. The provision that the ministers of war and the navy must be serving generals and admirals was announced in an imperial decree shortly after the promulgation of the constitution, a move in which one can detect the strong hand of Yamagata, father of the new army, who had earlier insisted that the chiefs of staff were wholly independent of the civil government and acted only under the command of the emperor. Thus was foreshadowed the increasingly disastrous domination of government by the military, which put Japan on the path to Nanjing, Pearl Harbor, and Hiroshima. The Meiji oligarchs were pragmatists, and perhaps judged correctly that Japan was not yet ready for and would not support a more legitimate form of democracy than the token form represented in the constitution.

This may have been so, but the leaders were clearly strongly authoritarian in persuasion; some, like Yamagata, more so than others, but as a group determined to safeguard government against popular opposition, and the military against even government efforts to control it. The legacy of this Meiji establishment of governmental forms, and the overtones clearly hinted at, was to be the ruin of Japan. Unfortunately but understandably, Japan's string of military successes beginning in 1894–1895 against China attracted strong popular support and tended to dampen down opposition. This was part of the goal the whole country had worked so hard for, and the fruits of victory in national pride were sweet.

### Japanese Imperialism

Westerners are not, however, in a good position to criticize Japan for picking up from them the disease of imperialism (see Chapter 14) or for following their model in imposing their rule on other countries. Japanese had long had what one may call troubled relations with Korea, and as Japanese strength increased it was perhaps understandable that they should look there with newly ambitious eyes. Yamagata and some of his colleagues had clearly felt that it was part of the new Japan's destiny to express its strength in East Asia, and it will be remembered that as early as 1872 there were plans to invade Korea, and an actual expedition to Taiwan in 1874, followed by an expedition to Korea in 1876 to open Korean ports to Japanese trade. Korea was still a Chinese tributary, and China felt that it was responsible for whatever happened there. In 1882 an antiforeign mob attacked the newly established Japanese legation in Seoul, and both

China and Japan sent troops. Two years later there was open fighting between the two sets of troops. Li Hongzhang and Ito Hirobumi agreed in 1885 at Tianjin in what was called the Li-Ito Convention that both countries would withdraw their troops and would notify each other before sending them back.

China was now at last trying to build up its military forces with Western weapons; Li was prominent in supporting the building of modern arsenals and of a modern navy, with ships bought abroad and constructed in Chinese shipyards. In 1894 a popular rebellion with earlier origins as the Tonghak movement broke out again in Korea, which was strongly antiforeign. The Korean king, against whom the revolt was aimed, requested help from China, but Japan sent a much larger force which seized control of the Korean government and forced it to declare war on China, which of course provoked a war between China and Japan. To Western surprise, the Japanese army routed the Chinese forces, occupied the whole of Korea, and moved on to invade Manchuria. The war at sea was even more disastrous for China. Its fleet was larger, but poorly supplied and led. Many of the shells did not fit the guns, and many of those which did were found to have been filled with sand by corrupt contractors. The admiral was a former cavalry commander who led his ships out in a line abreast like a cavalry charge. The Japanese ships were new too and were well supplied and led using modern Western naval tactics; they easily sank a large part of the Chinese fleet in a battle off the Korean west coast and damaged or routed the rest. It was a bitter humiliation, at the hands of an upstart country which had always been seen as a dutiful pupil, or at least as a sort of cousin within the East Asian family, albeit one long looked down on as less civilized, inhabited by "hairy sea dwarfs" and pirates. The victorious Japanese dictated the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki which ended the war, in a conference held of course on Japanese soil, and among other provisions extracted a heavy indemnity from China which was three times the annual income of the whole government.

Nearly all Japanese were jubilant. The "Yamato race" had proved its superiority, and the new strength built by the Meiji leaders and by all the Japanese working together had paid off. Japanese dreams of their rightful dominance in East Asia were given new stimulus. Power always tempts those who have it to use it, and often provides its own justification, as Westerners justified their own use of power in the cause of "right" and the spreading of "civilization" as well as the glorification of aggression and the survival of the fittest. All of these delusions now fastened themselves on the Japanese mind, and at the same time encouraged them to see China, not inaccurately, as in decline from its former greatness, no longer either a model of superiority or a legitimate contender for the leadership of East Asia which it had aspired to in the past. China was increasingly now seen

Question

It's why the J. went to Korea

as "backward," "dirty," disorganized, and ineffective. Most Japanese felt that it was time for the Chinese to take a backseat and leave the leadership and the model behavior to Japan. Japan was in fact a far more appropriate model for Korea, which had tried to close itself off from all foreign contact while Japan had forged ahead through the use of Western ideas. Korea became from 1895 a Japanese sphere though nominally independent (i.e., from China), and was taken over as part of the Japanese empire in 1910. The Treaty of Shimonoseki, dictated by Japan, also gave it sovereignty over Taiwan and the nearby Pescadore Islands as part of the spoils of victory; this provided further scope for the application of the Japanese model of successful development, and fed new Japanese national/imperial pride.

Already the Japanese had their eye on Manchuria, next door to Korea, and the treaty granted them sovereignty also in the Liaodong peninsula of southern Manchuria, which they wanted for both commercial and strategic reasons; Port Arthur, built up by the Chinese near the tip of the peninsula (often referred to in Japan as Kwantung) was a valuable naval base within easy range of the China coast and occupying one edge of the Gulf of Bohai with Tianjin, the port of Beijing, on its other (western) shore. A fleet based at Port Arthur could seal off access to north China and blockade much of the entire coast, while, adjacent Dalian, already a treaty port, was a valuable commercial base. But the Western powers, including Russia, were alarmed at Japan's astonishing success and its sudden grab of territory, especially of course its attempted intrusion into Manchuria, a Russian sphere of expansion ever since the Treaty of Tianjin in 1860. The Russians persuaded the Germans and the French soon after the Treaty of Shimonoseki was signed to "advise" Japan to give up Liaodong. Faced with such pressure, Japan was obliged to do so, but accepted a considerable increase in the indemnity, paid of course by China, which was still supposedly sovereign in Manchuria but was not involved in the Russian-German-French move known as the Triple Intervention. There was massive popular indignation in Japan over this "humiliation." The Emperor told his people that they must "endure the unendurable," a phrase which was repeated by his grandson Emperor Hirohito when he announced Japan's surrender to the Allies in 1945.

The British were not part of the Triple Intervention, and were later in 1902 to sign their own pact of friendship and alliance with Japan. But there was angry resentment against Russia, Germany, and France, many of whose institutions and culture had been faithfully copied by the Japanese and their countries respected. Now they were despised as hypocrites and oppressors. Within three years Russia took over Liaodong and Port Arthur, the Germans seized Qingdao in Shandong, the French Guangzhou Bay south of Guangzhou, the British Weihaiwei in Shandong (which had originally been part of the

Japanese claims), and the United States the Philippines and Hawaii. Japan had always feared Russia as a powerful and expansionist neighbor, and its plans for Manchuria conflicted head-on with Japanese plans.

Having denied it to Japan, Russia's new control of Liaodong was followed by expansion of its de facto control in the rest of Manchuria with mining and railway rights. Much of this new imperialist grabbing was part of the fever pitch of the disease, at a time when China seemed largely defenseless. The Japanese defeat of China revealed Beijing's weakness, and stimulated a new round of demands for additional concessions to the Western powers, as above. Western aggressiveness was accelerated by the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 when Chinese mobs with tacit imperial support besieged the foreign legations in Beijing and were finally driven off only by an allied expedition, which included Japanese troops as about half of the total allied force. China was forced to pay yet another indemnity and Beijing was occupied by foreign troops, the largest contingent of them Japanese.

It was understandable for the Japanese to conclude from all this experience that force was a very effective instrument of foreign policy, and in any case the army and the navy were now riding high. The British had noticed with grudging approval the military performance of the Japanese in 1894 and 1900, including their brilliant use of the ships bought from Britain, and they shared with Japan a deep concern about Russian expansion in Manchuria and their evident designs on Korea as well as on Britain's leading economic and diplomatic position in China. In 1902 the two countries signed an Anglo-Japanese alliance of mutual support: Japan accepted the existing treaty system in China, and Britain acknowledged that Japan had a special interest in Korea. This was Japan's first agreement with a Western power on equal terms, and it gave a great boost to morale, while reassuring the Japanese that if they attacked Russia the Western powers would remain "benevolently neutral."

### Conflict with Russia

The Russians had already advised the Japanese against building any fortifications on the Korean south coast, which could threaten Russian communications between Vladivostok, their Pacific naval base, and Port Arthur. The Japanese were incensed, and it increased their conviction that they would have to drive the Russians out of Manchuria and Korea. It seems to have been prepared to accept a Russian sphere in Manchuria, which they were already rapidly developing, in exchange for a Japanese sphere in Korea, but Yamagata and the cabinet which he then dominated were adamantly opposed and already planning to strike against the Russians. The Anglo-Japanese alliance fed Japanese national pride, and helped to make up for the "humiliation" of the Tripartite



In fact, the costs of the war had left Japan bankrupt and scraping the bottom of the manpower barrel, although the public was told none of this. The Russians were willing to settle also because they were having to confront at home in 1904-1905 the stirrings of revolution which was eventually to topple the Czarist regime. The war was generally unpopular and very expensive. Nevertheless the Russians had completed the last short link of the Trans-Siberian railway by 1905 and had earlier finished the rail link through Manchuria known as the Chinese Eastern Railway direct to Vladivostok with its southern branch to Mukden and Port Arthur. In time their far greater resources would have crushed the Japanese, who were lucky to escape as well as they did. But the early Japanese victories against the Russians astounded the world, and won them full acceptance as a great power. The British and the Americans saw Japan as an apt pupil who made all the right moves on the basis of Western teaching and example, and also as heaven-sent deliverers against the growing Russian threat to the British position in China, which implied a disruption of the multipower sharing of China's semicolonial domination. In 1899 and 1900 the Americans had issued two successive "Open Door" notes in which they tried, without much success, to get the other powers to agree to oppose the domination of China by any one of them and to keep trade open to all comers on an equal basis. Russian expansionism, its military power, and its location right next door to China, seemed to threaten all of this. The Japanese were thus cast as the saviors for the Anglo-American position, although a few saw their sudden rise as presaging trouble in the future.

### Japan in Korea

The war had been fought in part over Korea, and before it was over the Japanese consolidated their hold there by forcing the Koreans to accept Japanese diplomatic and financial "advisers." In 1905 the Korean king was obliged to make over control of the country's foreign affairs to a Japanese Resident-General, a position filled by Ito Hirobumi. Understandable Korean reluctance to cooperate with this violation of their sovereignty led to new Japanese demands that they should approve all executive and legislative actions; the king abdicated and was succeeded by a crown prince who was more compliant. The

Korean army was disbanded but there was massive and repeated rioting, which the Japanese brutally suppressed. Yamagata pressed for outright annexation of Korea, but Ito argued that Japan could and should try to win the Koreans over to the Japanese model of development. Nevertheless Korea was already in effect a Japanese colony, and they were of course bitterly resented. Faced with opposition at home to his policy of tact, Ito resigned in 1909, and later in the same year was assassinated by a Korean patriot. This gave Tokyo the pretext for complete annexation they had been looking for, and in 1910 Korea was declared to be an integral part of the new Japanese empire.

The heady atmosphere created in Japan by the victories over China and Russia further strengthened the prestige and dominance of the military in all aspects of Japanese life. General Nogi and Admiral Togo, the chief army and navy commanders against the Russians, became widely popular national heroes, revered in the schools and by the general public. A number of ultranationalist societies were formed in this period, most well known among them the Black Dragon Society (a translation of the Chinese characters for the Amur River), as pressure groups pushing for a more aggressive policy of expansion abroad and with close army connections. Japanese politics had long been marred by the assassination of political leaders whose policies displeased such groups, somewhat in the same way as late Tokugawa hot-heads among the *samurai* had felt that the only acceptable response to foreigners on the sacred soil of Japan was to kill them. Assassination now became an all-too-common way for the new societies of superpatriots to eliminate politicians who did not conform to their ideas, and of course to use such acts as a threat to others. When the Meiji emperor died in 1912, General Nogi, accompanied by his wife, committed ritual *hara-kiri*; his will made it clear that this was to remind Japanese of the old *bushi* code and to condemn what he felt was happening in Japanese society as people were pursuing their own pleasure instead of sacrificing themselves to their national duty. The new emperor took the reign title of Taisho, but proved to be mentally deficient and most of his functions were in time performed instead by his son as a formal regent.

colonies, and in China, was pronouncedly racist, and the Japanese colonial record was decidedly bad in balance, developing its subject countries to feed the Japanese economy and repressing all protest. Later in Manchuria, Japanese policy was more constructive, investing large sums in the creation of a rail system, mines, factories, and a commercialized agriculture and thus creating the essential infrastructure for industrialization. Much of the fruits, including even the pig iron and steel produced in Manchuria, were drained off to Japan, but during their control Manchuria developed the largest heavy industrial complex in mainland East Asia, only then to be reabsorbed by Communist China before the heavy Japanese start-up costs had been fully repaid.

### Meiji Culture and Accomplishments

By late Meiji times, in the flood of Western influence, Japanese had begun to write realistic novels as well as translating large chunks of modern Western literature. The French realist writer Emile Zola was especially admired, as were Western romantic models. Probably the best-known and still-valued writer of this period was Natsume Soseki (1867–1916). He had studied in England, and described himself as half Western and half Japanese. His poetry and even more his many novels, especially *Kokoro*, are still widely read. Many painters went even farther in imitating Western styles, especially those of the French impressionists and realists, including Kuroda Seiki (d. 1924), who shocked Tokyo by painting full frontal nude female figures in a style hard to distinguish from what was being painted in the West. By 1920 Japan had nearly 55 million people and nearly 100 percent were in school or had completed the primary grades. This provided a greatly expanded reading and viewing public, increasingly sophisticated in its tastes, concentrated in the booming cities but involving many in rural areas as well. As a reflection of Japan's success in Westernization, including its legal system, and also in response to its triumphs over China and Russia, the long hoped for relinquishment of extraterritoriality was accepted by Britain in 1899 and soon thereafter by the other Western powers; tariff autonomy was restored in 1911. In little more than a generation Japan had won its struggle for acceptance and equality with the West.

Credit for this achievement must be shared among the Meiji oligarchs but also with the Japanese people as a whole, for it was a truly national effort. Among the Meiji leaders, Ito Hirobumi stands out as a statesman, conservative like most Japanese of this period but open to new ideas. As a youth he wanted passionately to save his country from the foreign threat, and at age 21 tried to

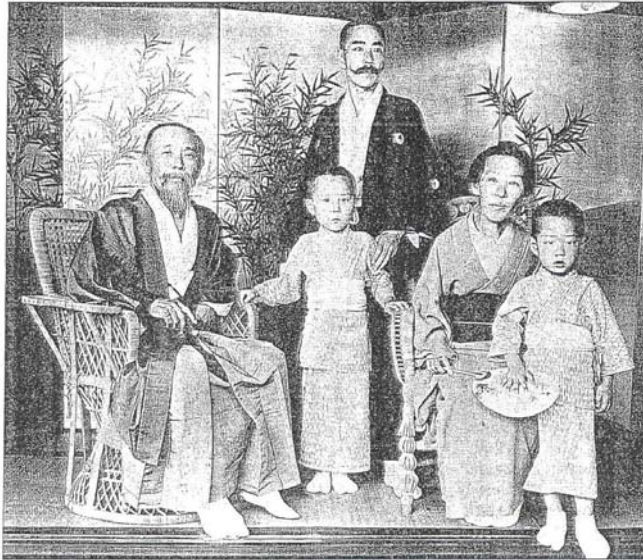
### The New Japanese Empire

Meanwhile, Taiwan and Korea were exploited to feed Japan's need for raw materials and food. Korea provided coal, iron, timber, and rice while Taiwan became an important source of sugar as well as rice. Taiwan was ruled somewhat less oppressively than Korea, in part because of its lesser strategic importance, plus the absence of the long history of conflict and mutual animosity between Japan and Korea. There were only some three million Chinese in Taiwan, never more than loosely governed by China and without their own tradition as yet of nationalism, unlike Korea. In both countries Japan built the first railways and modern coal mines, disseminated the same agricultural improvements, including irrigation and fertilizer, which had already revolutionized Japanese agriculture, built port facilities, developed hydroelectric plants and a new education system, and began an effective program of public health, like all the other colonial powers.

But Koreans especially were treated like inferiors and they and the Taiwanese considered only as loyal, if exploited and second-class, subjects of the Japanese empire. Japanese control was harsh, and the drain of raw materials and food actually led to a steep decline in Korean food consumption. Japanese policy in the new

Cultural changes





Ito Hirobumi (seated left) with his family.  
(Library of Congress)

burn the newly established British embassy in Tokyo. But when he visited Britain the next year, he realized that it was impossible to drive the Westerners out, and returned to work for Japan's modernization. After the Restoration, he went with government missions to Europe and America to learn more from their example how to make his country strong. A later mission to Prussia convinced him that the Prussian constitutional monarchy was best suited to Japan, and Ito was the chief architect of the new constitution proclaimed by the emperor in 1889, which contained many Prussian ideas. He understood, however, that constitutional government, and the cooperation of the new parliament, could not be made to work without political organization and popular support. In 1898 he left office to form a political party for that purpose, which was dominant until 1941. In 1901 Ito gave the prime ministership to General Katsura, a fellow Choshu man and a follower of Yamagata.

*Revision*  
Ito was an enthusiastic modernizer, especially after his visits to the West, but he also understood the need for compromise in politics and for adapting Western ways to Japanese traditions, circumstances, and values. In some ways, he remained at least as traditional as he was "modern." His objective was the preservation and development of his country, not its Westernization. He saw the need for

many foreign ideas, but never at the expense of strong Japanese identity. He believed deeply in the restoration of the emperor's personal rule, and aimed to accomplish his ends by working through the throne. But he also understood the rising interest in a less authoritarian form of government, the need for political parties, a constitution, and a parliament. He was both an enthusiast and a realist, a radical reformer and a traditional conservative, a promoter of change and a practical compromiser—in other words, a true statesman, who served his country well and who never let personal ambition or power cloud his judgment or his dedication to the public welfare.

With the goals of the national drive to modernize the country and obtain Western approval accomplished, and with the rise in living standards for most people (except for tenants, landless laborers, and most factory workers—altogether a substantial share of the population, but one with no real political power), attitudes and interests became more divided among divergent groups. The rise of the military in politics tended to form one such group, with their ultranationalist supporters. Those who hoped for a less authoritarian and externally aggressive alternative and pressed for a more genuine democracy formed another. The spread of universal public education and the rise of the universities produced a growing group of intel-



Viscount Katsura (1847–1913), prime minister of Japan three times between 1901 and 1913. He was a Choshu man, a general, and a protégé of Yamagata.  
(Hulton/Archive Photos/Getty Images)

lectuals who were, not surprisingly, heavily Westernized, as the education system was, and they tended to pull in conflicting directions but in general supported a liberalization of the rigid and autocratic system inherited from the Meiji period. The business community, including many who had become rich especially during the First World War, not only in the *zaibatsu* firms but in many smaller ones, tended to display their new wealth, sometimes garishly but in any case in increasing consumption of luxuries, representing a sharp departure from the Meiji ideals of frugality, self-sacrifice, and hard work.

Women slightly improved their status during the brief flowering of liberalization and Westernization following World War I, the age of the flapper, the Charleston, and the sexual revolution. But these were urban events, and elsewhere women remained subject to men except at home, where they were more nearly equal or even dominant.

These were the kinds of trends which General Nogai found distasteful in the testament he left behind on his suicide. But like the passing of all of the Meiji leaders, his death, followed by that of Yamagata as an old man

in 1922, marked the end of an era. The Meiji oligarchs had offered strong leadership to a united country. Now that they were gone, there were really no comparable figures to succeed them, and there was not the same kind of national consensus which had supported their efforts. This was one reason for the rise of the military as the dominant power in the government, where authority rested on force, and the consequent slide of Japan into even more authoritarian government and, in time, further foreign aggression at the instigation of the militarists.

Before Japan's descent into what the Japanese call "the dark valley," there was a brief bloom of diversity, intellectual and artistic expression, and moves in the direction of a more democratic government and society, known as "Taisho Democracy" from the imperial era which spanned it. This, and its destruction by the rising military, will be considered in Chapter 18.

### Suggested Websites

Meiji Period Japan

<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2130.html>

Chronology: <http://www.aems.uiuc.edu/HTML/LearningfromMakiko/Chronology.html>

The Meiji Era and the Modernization of Japan

[http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/oriental\\_history/17895](http://www.suite101.com/article.cfm/oriental_history/17895)

### Suggestions for Further Reading

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