

LESSON 3

# The Rise of Modern Japan

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- How can new ideas accelerate economic and political change?
- How do cultures influence each other?

READING HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

- subsidy
- context

Content Vocabulary

- concessions
- prefecture

TAKING NOTES

Key Ideas and Details

**Organizing** As you read, create a table like the one below listing the political, economic, and social reforms of the Meiji Restoration.

Political	Economic	Social

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

*In the mid-nineteenth century, the United States forced Japan to open its doors to trade with Western nations. After the Sat-Cho alliance overthrew the shogun, the Meiji Restoration began. Japan emerged as a modern industrial society.*

Japan Responds to Foreign Pressure

**GUIDING QUESTION** How did Japan respond to foreign pressure to end its isolationist policies?

By the end of the nineteenth century, Japan was emerging as a modern imperialist power. The Japanese followed the example of Western nations, while trying to preserve Japanese values.

By 1800, the Tokugawa shogunate had ruled Japan for 200 years. It had kept an isolationist policy, allowing only Dutch and Chinese merchants at its port at Nagasaki. Western nations wanted to end Japan's isolation, believing that the expansion of trade on a global basis would benefit all nations.

The first foreign power to succeed with Japan was the United States. In the summer of 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Edo Bay (now Tokyo Bay) with an American fleet of four warships. Perry brought a letter from President Millard Fillmore, asking the Japanese for better treatment of sailors shipwrecked on the Japanese islands. (Foreign sailors shipwrecked in Japan were treated as criminals and exhibited in public cages.) He also asked to open foreign relations between the United States and Japan. Perry returned about six months later for an answer, this time with a larger fleet. Some shogunate officials recommended **concessions**, or political compromises. The guns of Perry's ships ultimately made Japan's decision.

Under military pressure, Japan agreed to the Treaty of Kanagawa with the United States. The treaty provided for the return of shipwrecked American sailors, the opening of two Japanese ports to Western traders, and the establishment of a U.S. consulate in Japan.



**concession** a political compromise

In 1858 a more detailed treaty called for the opening of several new ports to U.S. trade and residence. Japan soon signed similar treaties with several European nations.

Resistance to opening foreign relations was especially strong among the samurai warriors in two southern territories, Satsuma and Choshu. In 1863 the Sat-Cho alliance (from Satsuma-Choshu) forced the shogun to promise to end relations with the West. In 1868, when the shogun refused, the Sat-Cho leaders attacked the shogun's palace in Kyōto. His forces collapsed, ending the shogunate system and beginning the Meiji Restoration.

**READING PROGRESS CHECK**

*Applying* What led to the collapse of the shogunate system in Japan?

## The Meiji Restoration

**GUIDING QUESTION** *How did the Meiji Restoration change Japan?*

The Sat-Cho leaders had genuinely mistrusted the West, but they soon realized that Japan must change to survive. The new leaders embarked on a policy of reform that transformed Japan into a modern industrial nation. The symbol of the new era was the young emperor Mutsuhito. He called his reign the Meiji (MAY • jee), or “Enlightened Rule.” This period has thus become known as the Meiji Restoration.

Of course, the Sat-Cho leaders controlled the Meiji ruler, just as the shogunate had controlled earlier emperors. In recognition of the real source of political power, the capital was moved from Kyōto to Edo (now named Tokyo), the location of the new leaders.

### Transformation of Japanese Politics

When in power, the new leaders moved to abolish the old order and to strengthen power in their hands. To undercut the power of the daimyo (the local nobles) the new leaders stripped them of their lands in 1871. In turn, the lords were named governors of the territories formerly under their control. The territories were now called **prefectures**.

The Meiji reformers set out to create a modern political system based on the Western model. During the next 20 years, the Meiji government carefully studied Western political systems. As the process evolved, two main factions appeared, the Liberals and the Progressives. The Liberals wanted political reform based on the Western liberal democratic model, which vested supreme authority in a parliament. The Progressives wanted power to be shared between the legislative and executive branches, with the executive branch having more control.

During the 1870s and 1880s, these factions fought for control. The Progressives won. The Meiji constitution, adopted in 1889, was modeled after that of Imperial Germany. It gave most authority to the executive branch.

In theory, the emperor exercised all executive authority, but in practice he was a figurehead. Real executive authority rested in the prime minister and his cabinet of ministers chosen by the Meiji leaders. The upper house included royal appointees and elected nobles, while the lower house was elected. The two houses were to have equal legislative powers.

The final result was a political system that was democratic in form but authoritarian in practice. Although modern in external appearance, it was still traditional because power remained in the hands of a ruling oligarchy (the Sat-Cho leaders). The system allowed the traditional ruling class to keep its influence and economic power.



▲ Japanese artist Hiroshige III created this woodblock print of the Tokyo-Yokohama railway just years after the Meiji Restoration opened the door to Western trade and ideas.

**CRITICAL THINKING**

**Identifying Bias** Do you think the artist was biased in his depiction of the railway? Why or why not?

**prefecture** in the Japanese Meiji Restoration, a territory governed by its former daimyo lord



## Meiji Economics

The Meiji leaders also set up a land reform program, which made the traditional lands of the daimyo the private property of the peasants. The daimyo were compensated with government bonds. The Meiji leaders then levied a new land tax, which was set at an annual rate of 3 percent of the estimated value of the land. The new tax was a great source of revenue for the government but a burden for farmers.

Under the old system, farmers had paid a fixed percentage of their harvest to the landowners. In bad harvest years, they had owed little or nothing. Under the new system, the farmers had to pay the land tax every year, regardless of the quality of the harvest. As a result, in bad years, many peasants were unable to pay their taxes. This forced them to sell their lands to wealthy neighbors and become tenant farmers who paid rent to the new owners. By the end of the nineteenth century, about 40 percent of all farmers were tenants.

With its budget needs met by the land tax, the government turned to the promotion of industry. The Meiji government gave **subsidies** to needy industries, provided training and foreign advisers, and improved transportation and communications. By 1900, Japan's industrial sector was beginning to grow. Besides tea and silk, other key industries were weapons and shipbuilding.

From the start, a unique feature of the Meiji model of industrial development was the close relationship between government and private business. The government encouraged new industries by giving businesspeople money and privileges. After an industry was on its feet, it was turned over entirely to private ownership.

## Modern Institutions and Social Structures

The Meiji reformers also transformed other institutions. A new imperial army based on compulsory military service was formed in 1871. All Japanese men now served for three years. The new army was well equipped with modern weapons.

Education also changed. The Meiji leaders realized the need for universal education. In 1871 a new ministry of education adopted the American model of elementary schools, secondary schools, and universities. It brought foreign specialists to Japan to teach, and it sent students to study abroad.

Before the Meiji reforms, the lives of all Japanese people were determined by their membership in families, villages, and social classes. Japanese society was highly hierarchical. Belonging to a particular social class determined a person's occupation and social relationships. Women were especially limited by the "three obediences": child to father, wife to husband, and widow to son. Husbands could obtain a divorce; wives could not. Marriages were arranged, and the average marital age of females was 16 years. Females did not share inheritance rights with males. Few received any education outside the family.

The Meiji Restoration had a marked effect on the traditional social system in Japan. Special privileges for the aristocracy were abolished. For the first time, women were allowed to seek an education. As the economy shifted from an agricultural to an industrial base, many Japanese began to get new jobs and establish new social relationships.

Western fashions and culture became the rage. A new generation began to imitate the clothing styles, eating habits, and social practices of Westerners. The game of baseball was imported from the United States.



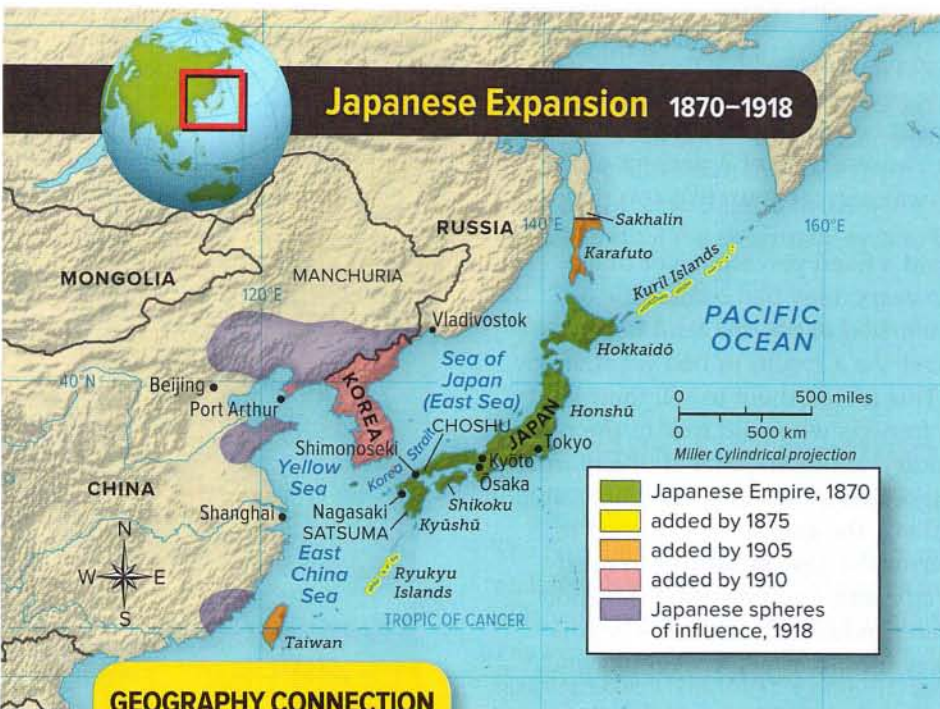
▲ These woodblock prints are part of a series called "Famous Places on the Tokaido: A Record of the Process of Reform" (1875).

### ► CRITICAL THINKING

**Analyzing Visuals** How do these prints show the effects of reform on Japanese society?

**subsidy** government payment to encourage or protect a certain economic activity





The social changes brought about by the Meiji Restoration also had a less attractive side. Many commoners were ruthlessly exploited in the coal mines and textile mills. Workers labored up to 20 hours a day. Coal miners in some areas worked in temperatures up to 130 degrees Fahrenheit (54 degrees C). When they tried to escape, they were shot.

The transformation of Japan into a “modern society” did not detach the country entirely from its old values, however. Traditional values based on loyalty to the family and community were still taught in schools. Traditional Japanese values were also given a firm legal basis in the 1889 constitution, which limited the right to vote to men. The Civil Code of 1898 played down individual rights and placed women within the **context** of their family role.

### GEOGRAPHY CONNECTION

From 1870 to 1918 Japan expanded into Korea and China.

- 1 **THE WORLD IN SPATIAL TERMS** What lands did Japan take by 1905?
- 2 **HUMAN SYSTEMS** What countries did Japan come into conflict with as it expanded?

**context** the circumstances surrounding a situation or event

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

*Examining* How did Meiji reforms reflect a mix of Western and traditional values?

## Japanese Expansion

**GUIDING QUESTION** Why did Japan turn itself into an imperialist power?

The Japanese soon copied Western imperialism. The Japanese knew that Western nations had amassed some of their wealth and power because of their colonies. Those colonies had provided sources of raw materials, inexpensive labor, and markets for manufactured products. To compete, Japan would also have to expand.

The Japanese began their program of territorial expansion close to home. In 1874 Japan claimed control of the Ryukyu (ree • YOO • kyoo) Islands, which belonged to the Chinese Empire. Two years later, Japan’s navy forced the Koreans to open their ports to Japanese trade. The Chinese grew concerned by Japan’s growing influence there.

In the 1880s, Chinese-Japanese rivalry over Korea intensified. In 1894, the two nations went to war, and Japan won. In the treaty ending the war, China recognized Korea’s independence.

China also ceded Taiwan and the Liaodong Peninsula, with its strategic naval base at Port Arthur, to Japan. In time, the Japanese gave the Liaodong Peninsula back to China.

Rivalry with Russia over influence in Korea led to increasingly strained relations. The Russo-Japanese War began in 1904. Japan launched a surprise attack on the Russian naval base at Port Arthur, which Russia had taken from China in 1898. In the meantime, Russia had sent its Baltic fleet half-way around the world to East Asia, only to be defeated by the new Japanese navy off the coast of Japan. After their defeat, the Russians agreed to a humiliating peace in 1905. They gave the Liaodong Peninsula back to Japan, as well as the southern part of Sakhalin (SA • kuh • LEEN), an island north of Japan. The Japanese victory stunned the world. Japan had become one of the great powers.



When Japan established a sphere of influence in Korea, the United States recognized Japan's role there. In return, Japan recognized American authority in the Philippines. In 1910 Japan annexed Korea outright.

Some Americans began to fear Japan's power in East Asia. In 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt made a "gentlemen's agreement" with Japan that essentially stopped Japanese immigration to the United States.

### ✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Identifying** How did Japan benefit from its imperialist strategy?

## Culture in an Era of Transition

**GUIDING QUESTION** How did contact between Japan and the West influence culture?

The wave of Western technology and ideas that entered Japan after 1850 greatly altered traditional Japanese culture. Dazzled by European literature, Japanese authors began imitating the imported models. They began to write novels that were patterned after the French tradition of realism. Japanese authors presented social conditions and the realities of war as objectively as possible.

Other aspects of Japanese culture were also changed. The Japanese invited engineers, architects, and artists from Europe and the United States to teach their "modern" skills to Japanese students. The Japanese copied Western architectural styles. Huge buildings of steel and reinforced concrete, adorned with Greek columns, appeared in many Japanese cities.

A national reaction had begun by the end of the 1800s, and many Japanese artists began to return to older techniques. In 1889 the Tokyo School of Fine Arts was established to promote traditional Japanese art.

These cultural exchanges were mutual. Japanese arts and crafts, porcelains, textiles, fans, folding screens, and woodblock prints became fashionable in Europe and North America. Japanese gardens, with their close attention to the positioning of rocks and falling water, became especially popular in the United States.

### ✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Drawing Conclusions** What inspired Japanese artists to return to traditional forms?

### ► CRITICAL THINKING

**Making Inferences** Why did aspects of Japanese culture become fashionable in the United States?

▼ This Japanese garden and tea house was showcased at the World's Fair in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1904.



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## LESSON 3 REVIEW

### Reviewing Vocabulary

**1. Explaining** Explain how the prefecture system affected the daimyo.

### Using Your Notes

**2. Identifying** Use the information from your notes to help explain the results of the Meiji Restoration.

### Answering the Guiding Questions

**3. Drawing Conclusions** How did Japan respond to foreign pressure to end its isolationist policies?

**4. Analyzing** How did the Meiji Restoration change Japan?

**5. Identifying Cause and Effect** Why did Japan turn itself into an imperialist power?

**6. Making Connections** How did contact between Japan and the West influence culture?

### Writing Activity

**7. Informative/Explanatory** Write two descriptive paragraphs about the woodblock prints in this lesson. In your answer, cite the artist's use of color, texture, line, shape, space, and perspective.