

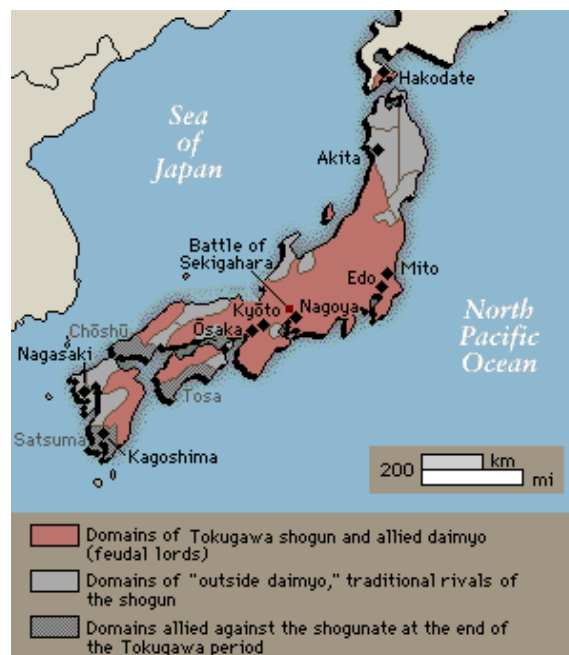
Japan

Japan responded differently when challenged by the West. When the United States and European countries forced Japan to open its markets to the world in the 1850s, Japan chose to learn from the West. From 1868, under new leadership, Japan modernized, industrialized, and militarized, all coming from Western examples. By the 1890s and early 1900s, Japan was an imperial power, expanding its influence throughout East Asia. Japan was the first non-Western nation in the modern era to rival Europe and America in military ability and strength.

Starting in the 1600s and lasting until the 1750s, Japan was ruled by the **Tokugawa** clan. They controlled the **archipelago** (a chain of islands) under the system of feudalism. Their form of government was a **shogunate**. There was an emperor but he was merely a figurehead. The controlling power lay in the hands of the shogun. He ran the country on behalf of the emperor. The **samurai** class, the warrior aristocracy, was still the top of Japanese society.

The Tokugawa shoguns had ruled the nation with a strong hand. They had controlled the several states that were at war and had brought them together as a single nation. This system of government worked well for the aristocracy but did not grant any freedoms for the ordinary citizens. They were not allowed to partake in politics and their social mobility was very limited.

The nation of Japan was **isolated** from the rest of the world. By 1720, the only country that they had formal ties with was **Korea**. They did have informal relations with **China** but they were very limited. Japan did have a relationship with one European country at this time, the **Netherlands**. The Dutch traders had requested and received permission from the Tokugawa government trading rights with Japan. They had to vow that no trader was to travel inland and no Christianity would be preached and no attempts to conversion would be made. The Dutch honored this agreement and were allowed to trade only in the port of **Nagasaki**.



In the early 17th century, Tokugawa Japan had partially modernized both economically and socially. Japan had a society of cities and the nation's population was growing at a constant rate. Urban growth was seen in the cities of **Kyoto**, **Osaka** and the capital **Edo** (Tokyo). The population of Edo was estimated to be just over one million at this time. The agricultural production to feed this growing population had to be changed. The Tokugawa regime **rationalized the farming system**, meaning that they allowed fewer people to grow more food and forced the unwanted, small farmers to move to the cities.

Internal trade, commerce and manufacturing became important in these cities. In order to connect the states and islands of Japan more **infrastructure** was needed. The government began a major project of building roads, canals and seaports. As a result of this increase in trade, the **merchant class** grew and they became wealthy. It was the merchant class that began to pressure the Japanese middle class to begin modernization. Despite being an isolated nation, some modernization did begin due to an awareness of scientific and technical knowledge from the West.

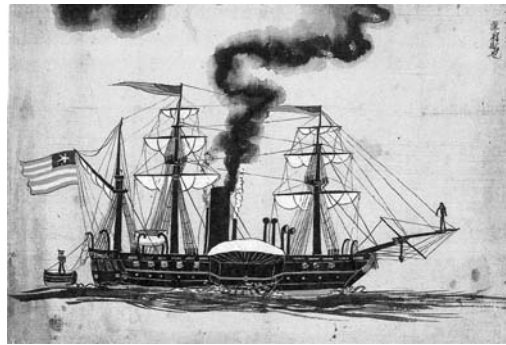
Partial modernization produced an interesting situation for the Japanese. Any change would bring prosperity to the nation and enable Japan to become a more advanced nation. However, the urbanization, changes in agriculture and the emergence of the merchant and the middle classes undermined the system of traditional aristocracy that was the controlling power of the country and consisted of 5 to 8 percent of the population. The samurai class was greatly affected by these changes. They wanted to keep their traditional weapons of swords and also maintain the monopoly on the ownership of and the ability to make gunpowder weapons. The isolationism of Japan would soon change and the Tokugawa system of government will be forced to change its rigid ways.

In **1853**, a fleet of American gunships arrived off the Japanese coast. They had been sent by the U.S. President **Millard Fillmore** on a mission to request that the Tokugawa government open their economy to trade with the United States. Seeing what could be achieved from China, the United States had their message hand-carried by **Commodore Matthew Perry** with instructions to be friendly to the Japanese but be prepared to use force if Japan declined the demands of the United States.



Commodore Matthew Perry and his fleet arriving off the coast of Japan

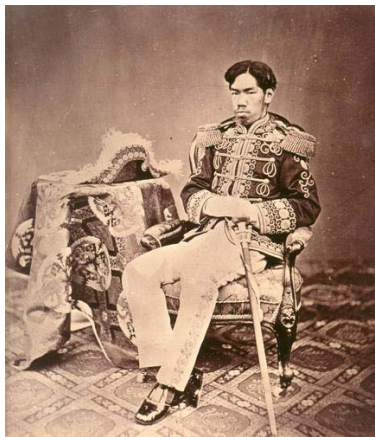
The Tokugawa shogunate government was forced into accepting the demands of the Americans and for the next five years other nations, especially from Europe, demanded that the Japanese open their markets to European trade. By 1860 it appeared that the islands of Japan were to follow in the same pattern as China, foreign domination would control their cities.



Commodore Perry meeting with the Tokugawa regime and Japanese artist's version of Perry's ship

The two southern provinces of **Satsuma and Choshu** (see map above) resisted the demands of the West and urged the shogun to reject their trade. They formed the **Sat-Cho Alliance** and began to attempt to influence the shogun's court in Edo to break-off all ties with the West. They also took matters in their own hands when in 1867, one of the coastal forts in Choshu opened fire on Western ships, who in turn fired back. The Sat-Cho Alliance soon became powerful as many of the Japanese aristocracy saw that their social and political status was about to be removed and began to move toward a **rebellion** against the new shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, who had just come to power.

In December of 1867 the **Sat-Cho Alliance** demanded that Yoshinobu resign and turn over the full authority of Japan back to the emperor. In January 1868, the alliance led a military uprising and physically overthrew the shogun and his regime. The Sat-Cho Alliance reinstated the emperor to have full imperial powers. The new emperor, called **Meiji**, was only a Youngman but he was educated and became the first emperor in nearly one thousand years to have full control over the shogunates of Japan.



The Emperor Meiji

The Meiji Restoration

The Emperor Meiji totally changed Japan through **Industrialization**. He sent young members of the upper class to Europe and America to learn engineering, economics and military science. In 1870, Meiji created the **Ministry of Industry**. He also allowed the formation of state banks that would finance his industrial campaigns. His government formed large corporations called a **ziabatsu**, that would build railroads, steamboats, ports and canals. The formation of the zaibatsu created a large-scale industrial network within Japan. Meiji also allowed private enterprise to develop in Japan. Headed by the middle class, they began to produce for export **tea, silk, modern weapons and ammunitions, ships and saki** which is Japanese rice wine.



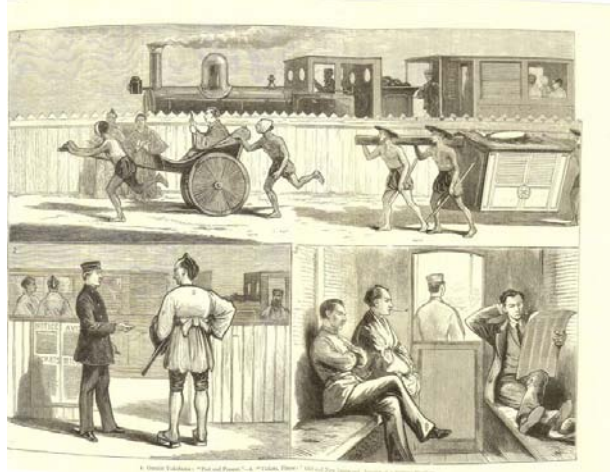
Japanese silk screen showing modernization

Many of the lower classes in Japan did not benefit from the Meiji Restoration. Taxes were increased to pay for these new developments and these forced hard times upon the farmers as their prices were now controlled by the state. Similar to the Industrial Revolution in Europe, sweatshops and poor, unsafe working conditions were common in the textile mills and coal mines. The punishments, however, were far stricter than in Western Europe. If a coalminer tried to escape, he was shot by the authorities. Unions of any kind were not allowed.

During the Meiji Restoration, the traditional privileges given to the Samurai class were taken away. Civil Service examinations were needed for a government position, promotions made on merit and quality of work. The old elite class still had power but it was slowly being taken away from them. The number of government workers increased rapidly from 29,000 in 1890 to 72,000 by 1908. Meiji created new, regional governments. Provinces were formed and ruled by **prefects** who represented these areas in the Japanese Parliament, the **Diet**, in the newly named capital city of **Tokyo**.

Meiji implemented the **Constitution of 1890**. It was a document for the middle and upper classes, the lower classes were still barred from political participation. The lower class did benefit from some reforms. There was now a national education system so previously illiterate peasants could now learn to read and write. Commoners were allowed to handle and learn to use weapons and serve in the military, a rite previously exclusive to the samurai class.

Japanese society began to adopt Western dress, fashions, manners, the Western calendar and the metric system. The population of Japan grew rapidly. In 1873 the population was 35 million; by 1918 it had reached 55 million.



The Meiji Restoration created a wave of **Nationalism** throughout Japan. The nation now planned on creating an empire. The state passed a law that everyone now revert back to the old religion of **Shintoism**, placing the emperor as a descendant of the gods. However, if Japan was to develop even larger, the raw materials that it badly needed for these new products was rapidly being depleted in the islands. Japan had to search and acquire the raw materials if it was to grow.

Japan's expansion began in the 1870s. In 1876 it forced Korea to open their ports to trade. In 1879 the Japanese army took over the **Ryuku Island chain** from China. Japan now controlled the **Okinawan islands** which was to become one of its greatest possessions. Japan began a large military build-up and constructed a steamship navy that would be comparable to any in the West. In 1894 China and Japan went to war as both nations took sides in a large peasant uprising in Korea. The **Sino-Japanese War** was from 1894 -1895. Japan had a better army with technology and politically determined to create an empire. China was still military backward and was not unified. Japan won easily, **occupied Korea**, and seized the island of **Taiwan**. In 1908, Japan would annex Korea outright.



Japanese painting of a battle during the Sino-Japanese War

In 1904 Japan began another war, this time it was against Russia. Both Japan and Russia competed over who was to control the area of Manchuria on the Chinese mainland. Russia wanted to expand into the area and construct the end of the Trans-Siberian railroad into this region. The Japanese wanted to control the same region, knowing that it contained valuable raw materials and that one day it may serve as a home for Japanese nationals who had little or no room to expand on the island chain.

The **Russo-Japanese War** began with a surprise attack by the Japanese on the Russian naval base of Port Arthur. Japan was better prepared for the war and had a distinct advantage that it was fighting close to home. Russian troops had to be mobilized several thousands of miles from their bases in the west. Japan was again victorious and the war was **the first time that a non-Western nation had defeated a European power in a full-scale military conflict.**

The victory for Japan meant that it now controlled **southern Manchuria**, the **Liaotung Peninsula**, the **Kurile Islands** and the **southern half of Sakhalin Island**, areas that were later to become valuable oil reserves and fishing centers for Japan.



With the arrival of the twentieth century, Japan was now a modern, industrial nation that was growing a formidable empire and could compete with any Western European nation. Unfortunately nationalism and a militaristic minded government would cause future conflicts within the world.

