Modernization in Japan

Chapter 28

MAIN IDEA

CULTURAL INTERACTION  Japan followed the model of Western powers by industrializing and expanding its foreign influence.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Japan's continued development of its own way of life has made it a leading world power.

TERMS & NAMES

• Treaty of Kanagawa
• Meiji era
• Russo-Japanese War
• annexation

SETTING THE STAGE  In the early 17th century, Japan had shut itself off from almost all contact with other nations. Under the rule of the Tokugawa shoguns, Japanese society was very tightly ordered. The shogun PARCELLED out land to the daimyo, or lords. The peasants worked for and lived under the protection of their daimyo and his small army of samurai, or warriors. This rigid feudal system managed to keep the country free of civil war. Peace and relative prosperity reigned in Japan for two centuries.

Japan Ends Its Isolation

The Japanese had almost no contact with the industrialized world during this time of isolation. They continued, however, to trade with China and with Dutch merchants from Indonesia. They also had diplomatic contact with Korea. However, trade was growing in importance, both inside and outside Japan.

The Demand for Foreign Trade

Beginning in the early 19th century, Westerners tried to convince the Japanese to open their ports to trade. British, French, Russian, and American officials occasionally anchored off the Japanese coast. Like China, however, Japan repeatedly refused to receive them. Then, in 1853, U.S. Commodore Matthew Perry took four ships into what is now Tokyo Harbor. These massive black wooden ships powered by steam astounded the Japanese. The ships’ cannons also shocked them. The Tokugawa shogun realized he had no choice but to receive Perry and the letter Perry had brought from U.S. president Millard Fillmore.

Fillmore’s letter politely asked the shogun to allow free trade between the United States and Japan. Perry delivered it with a threat, however. He would come back with a larger fleet in a year to receive Japan’s reply. That reply was the Treaty of Kanagawa of 1854. Under its terms, Japan opened two ports at which U.S. ships could take on supplies. After the United States had pushed open the door, other Western powers soon followed. By 1860, Japan, like China, had granted foreigners permission to trade at several treaty ports. It had also extended extraterritorial rights to many foreign nations.

Meiji Reform and Modernization

The Japanese were angry that the shogun had given in to the foreigners’ demands. They turned to Japan’s young emperor, Mutsuhito (moot•soo•HEE•toh), who seemed to symbolize the country’s sense of
China
• Remains committed to traditional values
• Loses numerous territorial conflicts
• Grants other nations spheres of influence within China
• Finally accepts necessity for reform

Japan
• Considers modernization to be necessary
• Borrows and adapts Western ways
• Strengthens its economic and military power
• Becomes an empire builder

Both
• Have well-established traditional values
• Initially resist change
• Oppose Western imperialism

China and Japan Confront the West

Imperial Japan
Japan’s race to modernize paid off. By 1890, the country had several dozen warships and 500,000 well-trained, well-armed soldiers. It had become the strongest military power in Asia.

Japan had gained military, political, and economic strength. It then sought to eliminate the extraterritorial rights of foreigners. The Japanese foreign minister assured foreigners that they could rely on fair treatment in Japan. This was because its constitution and legal codes were similar to those of European nations, he explained. His reasoning was convincing, and in 1894, foreign powers accepted the
abolition of extraterritorial rights for their citizens living in Japan. Japan’s feeling of strength and equality with the Western nations rose.

As Japan’s sense of power grew, the nation also became more imperialistic. As in Europe, national pride played a large part in Japan’s imperial plans. The Japanese were determined to show the world that they were a powerful nation.

**Japan Attacks China**
The Japanese first turned their sights to their neighbor, Korea. In 1876, Japan forced Korea to open three ports to Japanese trade. But China also considered Korea to be important both as a trading partner and a military outpost. Recognizing their similar interests in Korea, Japan and China signed a hands-off agreement. In 1885, both countries pledged that they would not send their armies into Korea.

In June 1894, however, China broke that agreement. Rebellions had broken out against Korea’s king. He asked China for military help in putting them down. Chinese troops marched into Korea. Japan protested and sent its troops to Korea to fight the Chinese. This Sino-Japanese War lasted just a few months. In that time, Japan drove the Chinese out of Korea, destroyed the Chinese navy, and gained a foothold in Manchuria. In 1895, China and Japan signed a peace treaty. This treaty gave Japan its first colonies, Taiwan and the neighboring Pescadores Islands. (See the map on page 803.)

**Russo-Japanese War**
Japan’s victory over China changed the world’s balance of power. Russia and Japan emerged as the major powers—and enemies—in East Asia. The two countries soon went to war over Manchuria. In 1903, Japan offered to recognize Russia’s rights in Manchuria if the Russians would agree to stay out of Korea. But the Russians refused.

In February 1904, Japan launched a surprise attack on Russian ships anchored off the coast of Manchuria. In the resulting **Russo-Japanese War**, Japan drove...
Russian troops out of Korea and captured most of Russia’s Pacific fleet. It also destroyed Russia’s Baltic fleet, which had sailed all the way around Africa to participate in the war.

In 1905, Japan and Russia began peace negotiations. U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt helped draft the treaty, which the two nations signed on a ship off Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This agreement, the Treaty of Portsmouth, gave Japan the captured territories. It also forced Russia to withdraw from Manchuria and to stay out of Korea.

**Japanese Occupation of Korea** After defeating Russia, Japan attacked Korea with a vengeance. In 1905, it made Korea a protectorate. Japan sent in “advisers,” who grabbed more and more power from the Korean government. The Korean king was unable to rally international support for his regime. In 1907, he gave up control of the country. Within two years the Korean Imperial Army was disbanded. In 1910, Japan officially imposed *annexation* on Korea, or brought that country under Japan’s control.

The Japanese were harsh rulers. They shut down Korean newspapers and took over Korean schools. There they replaced the study of Korean language and history with Japanese subjects. They took land away from Korean farmers and gave it to Japanese settlers. They encouraged Japanese businessmen to start industries in Korea, but forbade Koreans from going into business. Resentment of Japan’s repressive rule grew, helping to create a strong Korean nationalist movement.

The rest of the world clearly saw the brutal results of Japan’s imperialism. Nevertheless, the United States and other European countries largely ignored what was happening in Korea. They were too busy with their own imperialistic aims, as you will learn in Section 3.

**TRANSFERENCES TO TODAY**

**Vocabulary**

*protectorate:* a country under the partial control and protection of another nation

**Main Idea**

**Clarifying**

How did Japan treat the Koreans after it annexed the country?

**SECTION ASSESSMENT**

**1. TERMS & NAMES**

For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- Treaty of Kanagawa
- Meiji era
- Russo-Japanese War
- annexation

**USING YOUR NOTES**

2. Do you think that Japan could have become an imperialistic power if it had not modernized? Why or why not?

**MAIN IDEAS**

3. How was the Treaty of Kanagawa similar to the treaties that China signed with various European powers?

4. What steps did the Meiji emperor take to modernize Japan?

5. How did Japan begin its quest to build an empire?

**CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING**

6. **ANALYZING CAUSES** What influences do you think were most important in motivating Japan to build its empire?

7. **FORMING AND SUPPORTING OPINIONS** In your view, was Japan’s aggressive imperialism justified? Support your answer with information from the text.

8. **ANALYZING BIAS** How did Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War both explode and create stereotypes?

9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** In the role of a Japanese official, write a letter to the government of a Western power explaining why you think it is necessary for your country to build an empire.

**CONNECT TO TODAY**

**CREATING A SYMBOL**

Conduct research to discover the name that Akihito, the present emperor of Japan, chose for his reign. Then create a *symbol* that expresses the meaning of this name.
Japanese Woodblock Printing

Woodblock printing in Japan evolved from black-and-white prints created by Buddhists in the 700s. By the late 1700s, artists learned how to create multicolor prints.

Woodblock prints could be produced quickly and in large quantities, so they were cheaper than paintings. In the mid-1800s, a Japanese person could buy a woodblock print for about the same price as a bowl of noodles. As a result, woodblock prints like those shown here became a widespread art form. The most popular subjects included actors, beautiful women, urban life, and landscapes.

RESEARCH LINKS For more on Japanese woodblock printing, go to classzone.com

▲ Carving the Block
These photographs show a modern artist carving a block for the black ink. (The artist must carve a separate block for each color that will be in the final print.)

Carving the raised image requires precision and patience. For example, David Bull, the artist in the photographs, makes five cuts to create each strand of hair. One slip of the knife, and the block will be ruined.

▲ Naniwaya Okita
The artist Kitagawa Utamaro created many prints of attractive women. This print shows Naniwaya Okita, a famous beauty of the late 1700s. Her long face, elaborate hairstyle, and many-colored robes were all considered part of her beauty.

2. Forming and Supporting Opinions Hokusai’s print of the wave, shown above, remains very popular today. Why do you think this image appeals to modern people?

**Under the Wave off Kanagawa**
Katsushika Hokusai was one of the most famous of all Japanese printmakers. This scene is taken from his well-known series Thirty-Six Views of Mount Fuji. Mount Fuji, which many Japanese considered sacred, is the small peak in the background of this scene.

**Printing**
After the carved block is inked, the artist presses paper on it, printing a partial image. He or she repeats this stage for each new color. The artist must ensure that every color ends up in exactly the right place, so that no blocks of color extend beyond the outlines or fall short of them.