

Overview of Japan before 1912

Tokugawa Shogunate (1600 - 1868)

- The Emperor ruled
- Tokugawa shoguns held true power
- Japan was agrarian society (cultivate land)
- It was organised in a strict hierarchy
- Japan was isolationist
 - Very few foreigners allowed into the country (only the Dutch and the Chinese)

Meiji Period (1868 - 1912)

Background

Throughout the 1800s (i.e. before the Meiji Period), Japan observed European powers taking advantage of China due to its political instability.

- The Europeans forced China to sign unfair treaties
- Japan viewed this with concern

By the 1850s, Japan was forced to open up by the USA as warships of its Navy sailed into Tokyo Bay

- Specifically when on July 8 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy sailed into Tokyo harbour

The US demanded that Japan sign treaties that would give it more opportunities for trade

- Recognising that the US would use force and they could not defeat them, the Japanese signed the treaties.

The easy capitulation of the Shogunate ultimately led to rebellion.

By 1868, the rebellion concluded with the Shogun losing his power and Emperor Meiji took control of the government.

This marked the start of the Meiji Period / Meiji Restoration.

- This was an era of modernisation.
- They did not want to repeat the encounter with the US or end up like China.
- To facilitate this, in 1871, the Meiji government sent academics and other officials to the USA and Europe to learn how the Western nations ran their governments, economies and militaries.

Economic Modernisation

- Following the principle of *Fukoku Kyohei* (Enrich the country, Strengthen the Army)
 - Sought to strengthen Japan's economic foundations to facilitate the strengthening of its military to allow it to better defend against foreign invaders
- Industrialised its economy
- Using Western technology, its production rapidly increased.
- Infrastructure (e.g. banking systems, railroads, etc.) were setup to support its increased production
- Powerful megacorporations known as zaibatsu were established.
- Japan also began to open up
- It engaged in foreign trade
- Started to export goods to the rest of the world.

Political Change

- 1889: Japan received a new constitution
 - Became a constitutional monarchy
 - Japanese Emperor had to rule according to a set of laws outlined in the constitution
 - He had to share power with a government.
- Even though the Emperor shared power, the Meiji government encouraged loyalty to and reverence to the Emperor
 - He was characterised as divine and almost God-like
- The power of the PM, Cabinet and Diet were limited.
- 1900 - 1912: Capable leaders (Emperor, PMs and Genro) were able to balance interests of different groups.
- Created relative political stability.

Social Change

Urbanisation

- E.g. Tokyo
 - 1873: ~600,000
 - 1913: ~2,000,000
- Many new urbanites were young people migrating for work.
- Created a divide, with rural people tending to hold more traditionalist views.

Social Hierarchy

- Social hierarchy began to change
 - The samurai were no longer an elite class
 - Their role as Japan's military were replaced by the new national army and navy that was made up of civilian conscripts.

Education

The Education System

- It adopted a Western-style curriculum and vocational schools to support its industrialisation
- It also reinforced loyalty to the Emperor, the state, family, and community.
- Alongside media, it also encouraged nationalism.
 - Stressed that Japan was never colonised
 - Highlighted its economic developments
 - Celebrated its stability and unity
- Praised military
 - Military drills were part of the curriculum
 - Stressed the military's
 - Importance in protecting Japan from enemies, particularly the western powers
 - victories during the sino-japanese war and russo-japanese war
 - led to the military becoming highly respected
 - contributed to the rise of militarism

Japan and the World, 1868 - 1912

- Some Meiji leaders believed Japan should become a major important player in international politics, especially in Asia.
 - They felt that they should build a colonial empire
 - They felt that it was important for Japan to control lands with natural resources to grow and strengthen the economy.
- This determination was demonstrated in:
 - 1894 - 1895: 1st Sino-Japanese War
 - 1904 - 1905: Russo-Japanese War

1st Sino-Japanese War (1894 - 1895)

- Japan went to war with China over Korea
- China was outclassed by Japan's modern and well-trained Japanese army and navy

- Ended in a stunning victory for Japan
- Japan gained...
 - Increased influence over Korea
 - Gained Taiwan and Liaodong Peninsula from China

Russo-Japanese War (1904 - 1905)

- Japanese territorial gains after the 1st Sino-Japanese War alarmed Russia
 - Felt Japanese borders were too close to their own
- Japanese won a spectacular victory
 - It was the first time that an Asian power had defeated a major European power.
- Japan replaced Russia as key power in Manchuria.
- Japan annexed Korea
- Japan became a major power in the Region.