Chapter 4: Modern Japan and the World (Part 1) – From the Final Years of the Edo Shogunate to the End of the Meiji Period
People's revolutions

The one hundred years between the late-seventeenth and late-eighteenth centuries saw the transformation of Europe's political landscape. In Great Britain, the king and the parliament had long squabbled over political and religious issues. When conflict over religious policies intensified in 1688, parliament invited a new king from the Netherlands to take the throne. The new king took power without bloodshed and sent the old king into exile. This event, known as the Glorious Revolution, consolidated the parliamentary system and turned Britain into a constitutional monarchy.¹

¹In a constitutional monarchy, the powers of the monarch are limited by the constitution and representatives chosen by the citizens run the country’s government.

Great Britain's American colonies increasingly resisted the political repression and heavy taxation imposed by their king, and finally launched an armed rebellion to achieve independence. The rebels released the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and later enacted the Constitution of the United States, establishing a new nation with a political system based on a separation of powers.²

²Under a separation of powers, the powers of the government are split into three independent branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.

In 1789, an angry mob of Parisian citizens, who groaned under oppressively heavy taxes, stormed the Bastille Prison, an incident that sparked numerous rural and urban revolts throughout France against the king and the aristocracy. This was the start of the French Revolution. The revolutionary forces abolished class privileges and drew up the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, enshrining the principles of liberty and equality. The revolutionaries soon turned blood-thirsty and beheaded the king and queen for refusing to abide by their program. It has been estimated that 700,000 people were killed amid the “reign of terror.”
as the period of chaos during the French Revolution is called. Fearing the spread of the revolution, France's neighbors intervened. Napoleon Bonaparte seized control of France to confront this threat and, for a time, he dominated most of continental Europe. As a result, the ideals of the French Revolution spread across Europe. Because these political revolutions gave rise to modern nation-states aspiring to the legal equality of all citizens, they are called people's revolutions.

Europe's Industrial Revolution
The dawn of the eighteenth century brought changes to the daily lives of the peoples of Europe. Traditional woolen fabric fell out of favor, and people instead began to wear clothing made of cotton imported from India. Cotton was not only lighter and more durable than wool, but also cheaper and more sanitary. It became so popular that the production of cotton garments, which were hand woven with simple tools, could not keep pace.

In the face of this mounting demand, a variety of new machines were invented in late-eighteenth century Great Britain to quickly mass-produce cotton textiles. There were both spinning machines to create thread and weaving machines to manufacture the garments. To generate the energy needed to run the new machines, more powerful coal-burning steam engines were developed. People clustered in large factories and worked in groups alongside the machines. Productivity rose dramatically, fulfilling the needs of society and even generating new demand. These remarkable advances in the production process are referred to as the Industrial Revolution.

*3=Great Britain was once an agrarian society with a vast rural countryside traversed only by quiet, horse-drawn carriages. However, the Industrial Revolution transformed Great Britain into an industrial society crisscrossed by iron railway tracks and dotted with great cities filled with smoke-belching factories.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, France, Germany, and the United States experienced their own industrial revolutions. After having undergone both industrial and people's revolutions, the Western nations sought to expand their power worldwide.

* Topic 47 Recap Challenge! – Explain the significance of people's revolution using the words "king" and "citizens" and the significance of industrial revolution using the words "mechanization" and "productivity".
**Topic 48 – The Western invasion of Asia**

**How did the Western powers advance into Asia?**

**Great Britain’s colonization of India**

Following their industrial and people’s revolutions, the Western powers overran Asia with the twin objectives of securing plentiful sources of cheap raw material and gaining access to markets where they could sell their own mass-manufactured products. The country leading this charge into Asia was Great Britain.

Great Britain’s conquest of India was spearheaded by the British East India Company, which inundated India with its mass-produced cotton textiles.\(^1\) India’s handicraft manufacturing lost out to stiff competition from cheaper British products and many craftsmen were deprived of their livelihoods.\(^2\)

\(^1\)=This company was founded in 1600 with a monopoly on trade in Asia granted by the King of Great Britain.

\(^2\)=By contrast, the British government imposed high tariffs of up to four hundred percent on Indian goods entering Great Britain to prevent them from undercutting Britain’s own industries.

In 1857, India was rocked by a mutiny of Indian soldiers known as sepoys, who were serving the British East India Company. When the mutineers were joined by disaffected Indian farmers and craftsmen, it transformed into a national revolt. Great Britain responded by crushing the rebels through force of arms and imposing direct rule over all of India. With that, India became a British colony.

**The military superiority of Europe**

During the three hundred years between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the nations of Europe were locked in a state of near-constant warfare. With the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, each nation adopted the latest military technologies, including advanced firearms, artillery, and warships. Consequently, a huge disparity emerged between the military strengths of European and Asian nations.
In Japan, the formation of the Edo shogunate at the start of the seventeenth century ushered in an era of peace during which the development of new military technology was actively discouraged.

During the nineteenth century, European peoples utilized their overwhelming military supremacy to colonize the nations of Asia, one by one.

**The Opium War and Great Britain’s advance into China**

Tea-drinking grew in popularity throughout Europe over the course of the eighteenth century. In Great Britain especially, Chinese tea became a daily necessity. Britain paid a hefty price in silver to Qing China in exchange for the tea. However, in order to recoup its losses, Britain started to grow the narcotic opium in India and secretly export it to China. As a result, silver flowed out of China.

When China banned importing of opium, Britain sent an armada to China, in the name of defending free trade. In 1840, British and Chinese forces clashed, marking the start of the Opium War. Great Britain used its naval superiority to blockade the Chinese coastline and, in 1842, finally forced China to sign the humiliating Treaty of Nanking, which ceded Hong Kong to Britain. Hamstrung by hefty war reparations, China soon had to sign similar unequal treaties with the other Western powers.

The Western powers were thus gradually conquering China to a quasi-colonial status. News of this reached Japan where it was met with great alarm.

**Topic 48 Recap Challenge!**

1. What word would you use to describe the state of the nations of Asia during the West’s age of expansion?
2. Explain what methods were employed by the Western powers at this time to extend their influence over Asia.
Section 2 – From the end of isolationism to the Meiji Restoration

**Topic 49 – Commodore Perry and the opening of Japan to the West**

What events forced Japan to open its doors to the outside world?

**The arrival of Perry**

In June 1853 (Kaei 6), four heavily-armed American warships, dubbed "black ships" by the Japanese, appeared at the entrance of Edo Bay off the coast of Uraga (in modern-day Kanagawa Prefecture). The commander of this fleet was Commodore Matthew C. Perry, who carried an official letter from the President of the United States.

The shogunate was left with little choice but to accept the letter, which demanded that Americans sailing in the Pacific Ocean be allowed to enter Japanese ports if their steamships required food and water or were shipwrecked by a typhoon. Perry departed after informing the Japanese that he would return the following year to receive their reply.  

*1=If Japan refused to end its policy of isolationism, Perry planned to occupy the port of Okinawa as a storage site for steamship coal.

**Elder Abe Masahiro’s dilemma**

Once Perry had departed, Elder Abe Masahiro agonized over resolving the unprecedented crisis confronting Japan. Up to then, Western ships approaching Japan had been driven off with cannon fire. This policy was called joi, which means "expel the barbarians". However, it was not possible for the shogunate to simply reject Perry’s demands, given the overwhelming military superiority of the US Navy. Even though the shogunate held the exclusive right to conduct diplomacy with foreign countries, Abe decided to break with tradition and solicit the views of the Imperial Court, the daimyo, and even the shogun’s retainers. Simultaneously, he ordered the creation of Odaiba, an artificial island in Edo Bay to be used as an artillery emplacement, and lifted the prohibition on construction of large ships. Though the daimyo had no useful ideas on the issue of national defense, the very act of consulting them enhanced their political influence over the shogunate. As the strength of the shogunate declined, the prestige of the Imperial Court also increased.

**The Treaty of Kanagawa and the arrival of Townsend Harris**

In January 1854 (Ansei 1), Perry returned to Kanagawa. Following negotiations, the shogunate acceded to his demands and signed the Treaty of Peace and Amity (Treaty of Kanagawa) with
the United States in March. Under the terms of this agreement, Japan was to open two ports, Hakodate (in modern-day Hokkaido) and Shimoda (in modern-day Shizuoka Prefecture), where American ships could resupply with coal, foodstuffs, and water. In addition, Japan was to set up a US consulate in Shimoda. This marked the end of Japan’s policy of national isolation.

In accordance with the treaty, Consul General Townsend Harris took up his post in Shimoda in 1856 and reiterated America’s desire for a commercial treaty opening Japan to trade with the United States. The shogunate was in no position to refuse, but tried to put off answering on the grounds that it wanted permission from the Imperial Court. And yet, the Emperor refused to sanction the agreement. The ensuing controversy split the country into two camps, one advocating that the “barbarians” be expelled from Japan and one advocating that Japan sign the commercial treaty and open its doors to the West. Each side attempted to sway the opinion of the Imperial Court in Kyoto, which abruptly became the center of the nation’s political attention.

**Topic 49 Recap Challenge! – Using bullet points, list two of the demands Perry made to the shogunate upon his arrival in Japan.**

- Establishment of a US consulate in Shimoda
- Opened two ports—Hakodate and Shimoda
- Allowed American ships to resupply coal, foodstuffs, and water
- Japan was to set up a US consulate in Shimoda

**ベリーは日本人をどう見たか**

「日本人は一概に罪人ではなく、時には歴史的や時代的な理由をたどって行動した。」

「我々は日本人を尊敬しており、彼らの勇気や誠実さに感銘を受けている。」

「彼女たちは優秀で、 правилаを守り、立ち向かいやすい人々である。」

「彼らはこれへの希望を我々に持っている。」

**ベリーの「日本通書記」より**
What Did Perry Think of the Japanese People?
(Excerpts from Perry's Narrative of the Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Seas and Japan)

"The people are universally taught to read and are eager for information… The Japanese with whom the Americans were brought into communication were not only thoroughly acquainted with their own country, but knew something of the geography, the material progress, and contemporary history of the rest of the world. Questions were frequently asked by the Japanese which proved an information that, considering their isolated situation, was quite remarkable…"

"Once possessed of the acquisitions of the past and present of the civilized world, the Japanese would enter as powerful competitors in the race for mechanical success in the future."

"The Japanese are hard workers, but they compensate themselves with occasional holidays, and in the evenings and hours of leisure with frequent games and amusements."

"The young girls are well formed and rather pretty, and have much of that vivacity and self-reliance in manners, which come from a consciousness of dignity, derived from the comparatively high regard in which they are held."
Topic 50 – The rise of the sonno joi movement

How did the sonno joi movement arise during the waning years of the Edo shogunate?

The conclusion of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce

In 1858 (Ansei 5), the shogunate went ahead and concluded the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with the United States, despite the Imperial Court’s pointed refusal to sign on. Consequently, five ports, Hakodate, Kanagawa, Niigata, Hyogo (now Kobe), and Nagasaki, were opened to American trade.

Soon after, Japan signed similar treaties with other foreign countries. However, these were unequal treaties, in that Japan forfeited tariff autonomy, meaning its right to set its own import duties, and guaranteed extraterritoriality to foreign nations, meaning their exclusive right to try their own citizens in consular courts for any crimes they committed on Japanese soil.

The sonno joi movement

The conclusion of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce elicited a storm of criticism from those who felt that the shogunate had ignored the will of the Imperial Court and surrendered to foreign pressure. This discontent gave rise to a new political movement, insisting that Japan preserve its independence. The slogan adopted by its supporters was sonno joi, which means “revere the emperor and expel the barbarians”. Between 1858 and 1859, Great Elder Ii Naosuke, a proponent of the shogunate’s decision to sign the treaty, launched a far-reaching crackdown on all the court nobles, daimyo, and patriotic samurai who had criticized the diplomatic policies of the shogunate and were sympathetic to the sonno joi movement. Tokugawa Nariaki, the former daimyo of Mito Domain, was placed under permanent house arrest, and Yoshida Shoin of Choshu Domain (modern-day Yamaguchi Prefecture) and Hashimoto Sanai of Echizen-Fukui Domain were both beheaded. This is referred to as the Ansei Purge.

In 1860 (Manen 1), as Ii Naosuke was passing near Sakurada Gate on his way to Edo Castle, he was ambushed and killed by masterless samurai, many from Mito Domain, who wanted revenge...
かつて開闘の戦いに敗れ領地を縮小されていた長州藩は、幕府批判勢力の中心だった。吉田松陰は、松下村塾という私塾で、弟子たちに尊王攘夷を説いて大きな感化をおこなっていた。松陰が安政大獄で処刑された後、その弟子であった高杉晋作や木戸孝允が藩を動かすようになり、長州藩は一部の公家と結んで、朝廷を強髪の攘夷論へと導いていった。

よく、開元通商条約が交渉された翌年、長州藩は薩摩藩（鹿児島県）だった。薩摩藩は、幕府の開国方針を支持していた。しかし、1862年には薩摩藩が沖のごイギリス人発病（生麦事件）に報復するため、鹿児島に進攻したイギリス艦隊を攻撃した。艦隊の攻撃により鹿児島城は炎上した。しかし、薩摩藩は戦勝し、艦隊にかなりの損害を与えた（鹿児島戦争、1863年）。

以後、イギリスは薩摩藩士の気概に一目を置いており、薩摩藩に接近していた。

対馬事件
外洋覇権は矢兵たちにやむを得ず、1861年（文久元年）春2月、ロシアの軍艦ボガツシニ号が、突然、対馬の漁村に来袭した。360人のロシア兵が島の一部を占領し、両島侵略事件まで発展した。ロシアの目的は、イギリスに対抗して対馬を太平洋進出の道を塞ぐことだった。

幕府はイギリスの力使いで遠ざかせたが、半年にわたり日本の領土を占領されたこの事件は、幕末の人々に自防の重要性を認識させた。

一次・二次事件
外来の武士たちと幕府の対立の先端を捉えよう。
The British left the fight greatly impressed by the bravery of Satsuma samurai, and henceforth attempted to deepen its ties with Satsuma Domain.

Having seen the military strength of the Western powers firsthand on the battlefield, the samurai of Satsuma and Choshu realized that simply "expelling the barbarians" would not save their country. Instead, they increasingly came to believe that Japan would have to embrace Western civilization in order to modernize its own military forces.

*Topic 50 Recap Challenge!* (1.) Write down two controversial provisions included within the US-Japan Treaty of Amity and Commerce. (2.) Explain the differences in the policies of the shogunate and those of the samurai of the sonno joi movement.

**The Tsushima Incident**

The foreign threat to Japan came no less from the north. In February 1861 (Bunkyu 1), the Russian warship *Posadnik* suddenly appeared in Aso Bay, Tsushima Island. Three hundred and sixty Russian soldiers disembarked, occupied part of the island, and killed several local people. Russia was an imperial rival of Great Britain and hoped to turn Tsushima into a military outpost for its own incursions into the Pacific.

The shogunate convinced Great Britain to compel the Russians to leave, but the occupation of Japanese territory for half a year hammered home to the people of late-Edo Japan the necessity of a strong national defense.
The Edo shogunate was formed in 1603 and ruled Japan for over 260 years, until it was overthrown in 1868. The shogunate's power was based on a system of vassalage, with the shogun as the supreme warrior lord, and the daimyos as the warriors who held the land and ruled in his name.

In 1863 (Bunkyo 3), the shogunate purged the Imperial Court of Choshu influence and the extremist court nobles backing the *sonno joi* movement. It then attempted to bolster its authority by setting up a leadership coalition with the most powerful domains, including Satsuma and Aizu (modern-day Fukushima Prefecture). The next year, Choshu attempted to regain its power by instigating a rebellion in Kyoto, but it was defeated by the shogunate. This was known as the Imperial Palace Gate Incident.

The shogunate followed up by attacking Choshu with a military force led by allied daimyos. The shogunate was victorious in the First Choshu Expedition, and Satsuma replaced Choshu as the dominant influence on the Imperial Court.

Nonetheless, the shogunate's success was short-lived, as Takasugi Shinsaku refused to accept Choshu's decision to capitulate. Together with Kido Takayoshi, he launched a rebellion against the government of his domain and restored the anti-shogunate forces to power. Choshu once again became a thorn in the shogunate's side. Meanwhile, in Satsuma, Saigo Takamori and Okubo Toshimichi were exercising de facto control of the domain. Having learned from the Anglo-Satsuma War, they focused on acquiring superior weaponry by cultivating close ties with the British.

In 1866 (Keio 2), Sakamoto Ryoma, a samurai from Tosa Domain (modern-day Kochi Prefecture), brought Saigo Takamori of Satsuma together with Kido Takayoshi of Choshu and impressed upon them the need for Japan to become a strong, unified nation-state that could resist the depredations of foreign nations. Though Satsuma and Choshu had been bitter enemies up to then, Sakamoto urged them to put aside their differences and form an alliance. Thanks to the resulting *Satcho Alliance*, Choshu was able to acquire state-of-the-art weaponry from Satsuma and use it to decisively defeat the shogunate's Second Choshu Expedition. Choshu and Satsuma then secretly agreed to work together to destroy the Edo shogunate. Thus, the *sonno joi* movement evolved into a campaign to overthrow the shogunate.
The fall of the Edo shogunate

In 1866 (Keio 2), the fourteenth shogun died and Tokugawa Yoshinobu was proclaimed the fifteenth shogun. In the Imperial Court, the anti-Shogunate faction gained the upper hand when Emperor Komei, who was friendly to the shogunate, died suddenly and was succeeded the following year by fourteen-year-old Emperor Meiji.

Realizing that the Tokugawa family could no longer hold onto power through the shogunate, Yoshinobu declared in October 1867 (Keio 3) that political power would be transferred to the Imperial Court. Yoshinobu's true intention was to exploit the Emperor's authority to form a governing council of daimyo that would be presided over by a member of the Tokugawa family.

Saigo Takamori and Okubo Toshimichi of Satsuma Domain deduced Yoshinobu’s scheme, and attempted to counter it by having court noble Iwakura Tomomi and Kido Takayoshi of Choshu secretly convince the most influential court nobles of the Imperial Court to join their side. Their plan came to fruition when, in December of the same year, the Imperial Court released the Decree for the Restoration of Imperial Rule, which declared the establishment of a new government led by the Emperor. Soon thereafter, they had the Imperial Court order Yoshinobu to resign from office and relinquish his lands. This marked the conclusion of 260 years of Tokugawa rule and a definitive end of the samurai governments that controlled Japan since the foundation of the Kamakura shogunate nearly seven hundred years earlier.

Topic 51 Recap Challenge! – Explain the significance of (1.) the Satcho Alliance and (2.) the restoration of imperial rule.
Topic 52 – The Meiji Government

What nation-building principles did Japan adopt at the time of the Meiji Restoration?

The Boshin War and the resistance of the former shogunate’s army

Court nobles and samurai who supported the anti-shogunate movement were awarded positions of power in the new government headed by Emperor Meiji. Rather than asking Tokugawa Yoshinobu to join their ranks, he was ordered to surrender all his lands to the new government. The soldiers who had served in the shogun’s army were angered by this order and, in January 1868 (Keio 4), they confronted the government’s army, composed mainly of Choshu and Satsuma soldiers, in the Kyoto districts of Toba and Fushimi. The Battle of Toba-Fushimi ended with the defeat of the loyalists of the former shogun. The army of the Meiji Government, led by Saigo Takamori, pressed home its victory and marched into Edo while holding aloft the golden Imperial Standard, demonstrating to all who saw them that they were the Emperor’s soldiers. Edo Castle was surrendered without a fight following discussions between Saigo and the enemy commander Katsu Kaishu. Even after Yoshinobu declared his allegiance to the Meiji Government, his former retainers formed a new military corps called the Corps of Justice. Determined to fight to the last, they holed themselves up in the hills of Ueno, Edo. During the Battle of Ueno, commander Omura Masujiro wheeled out a powerful new type of artillery, the Armstrong Gun, and smashed their resistance.

Matsudaira Katamori, the pro-shogunate former daimyo of Aizu Domain, also signaled his intention to continue fighting. Though he successfully forged an alliance of many northern daimyo, they were massively outgunned by the army of Japan’s new government and were soon defeated. By May 1869, Goryokaku Fortress in Hakodate, the final stronghold of the old regime, fell to the Meiji Government, ending resistance of those loyal to the former shogun. This eighteen-month conflict is known as the Boshin Civil War.

The guiding principles for building a modern nation

The Meiji Government was committed to changing the old ways of doing things and forging a modern nation-state. The far-reaching reforms implemented between the fall of the Edo shogunate and the end of the Meiji period are referred to as the Meiji Restoration.

In March 1868 (Keio 4), Emperor Meiji promulgated the Charter Oath, a set of five guiding principles for Japan’s new government, and had all the court nobles and daimyo swear to the deities that they would uphold them. Among its provisions, the Charter Oath advocated that
people speak their minds freely and that public policy be discussed in assemblies and determined by public opinion. In this manner, it paved the way for Japan to assimilate Western civilization and develop into a modern constitutional state.  

*1 In a constitutional state, the government is run within the framework of a modern constitution. A constitutional state is characterized by a separation of powers, democratic institutions, and the rule of law. Japan became a constitutional state through the enactment of the Meiji Constitution of 1889.

In September 1868, Japan's era name was changed from Keio to Meiji. The Meiji Government declared that, henceforth, only one era name would be chosen for each new emperor, a system known as "one reign, one era". Furthermore, the Imperial Court was moved from Kyoto to Edo. The following year, Edo was designated the nation's new capital city and was renamed Tokyo, which means "the eastern capital". With that, Tokyo had become the political epicenter of modern Japan.

Topic 52 Recap Challenge! – Give the two most important principles included in the Charter Oath, Emperor Meiji's blueprint for the construction of a new Japan.

The Charter Oath

- Deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by open discussion.
- All classes, high and low, shall be united in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state.
- The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall all be allowed to pursue their own calling so that there may be no discontent.
- Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything be based upon the just laws of Nature.
- Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of imperial rule.
Topic 53 – The abolition of the domains and equality of all citizens

How did Japan achieve social equality and establish a centralized state under the Meiji government?

The return of the land and people to the Emperor

Although the Meiji Government emerged triumphant at the conclusion of the Boshin War, it was little more than a collection of feudal domains, an arrangement that was inherently unstable. The Meiji Government had to defer to each of the local daimyo on all matters, making it virtually impossible to implement reforms for the benefit of the nation as a whole. Moreover, as long as Japan remained divided into so many self-governing domains, it was at risk of being partitioned by foreign powers. National unity was the most pressing problem facing Japan’s new government.

In response, the daimyo of the four domains that had played the largest roles in forming the Meiji Government, Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa, and Hizen (modern-day Saga and Nagasaki Prefectures), voluntarily accepted the Petition to Return the Land and People to the Emperor in 1869 (Meiji 2). One by one, the other daimyo followed suit.

Under the Petition to Return the Land and People to the Emperor, all domains and their subjects officially belonged to the Imperial Court, and, thus, the Meiji Government. Nonetheless, the daimyo continued to exercise actual power to raise taxes and troops in their respective domains.

The end of the domain system

In accordance with the Document on Government Structure, the Great Council of State was founded in 1869 (Meiji 2) as the highest administrative body of the Meiji Government. This was the predecessor to the cabinet, Japan’s current executive branch of government. In 1871 (Meiji 4), the Great Council of State was reorganized so that state decisions could be made at council meetings between the Grand Minister, the Minister of the Right, and the State Councilors. In July of that year, Okubo Toshimichi and the other leaders of the Meiji Government invited the daimyo who were resident in Tokyo to the Imperial Palace, the old Edo Castle. Surrounded by ten thousand of the Emperor’s personal bodyguards, who had been recruited from Satsuma, Choshu, and Tosa, the daimyo were presented with a decree in the name of the Emperor ordering the abolition of the domains. The Meiji Government feared that the decree would spark a rebellion, but surprisingly there was no serious resistance.
### Key Figures in the Great Council of State (The Meiji Government)

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<td>Grand Minister</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister of the Right</td>
<td>Iwakura Tomomi (a court noble)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Councilors</td>
<td>Kido Takayoshi (from Choshu), Saigo Takamori (from Satsuma), Okuma Shigenobu (from Hizen), Itagaki Taisuke (from Tosa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury Minister</td>
<td>Okubo Toshimichi (from Satsuma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs Minister</td>
<td>Soejima Taneomi (from Hizen)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Army Minister</td>
<td>Yamagata Aritomo (from Choshu)</td>
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<td>Industry Minister</td>
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### How Did the Samurai React to the Abolition of the Domains?

William Elliot Griffis, an American citizen, was teaching at a Japanese domain school in Fukui when the news arrived from Tokyo that the domains had been abolished. According to his diary, the announcement sparked a furious uproar from the samurai of Fukui who were now without work. And yet, even amidst this tumult, several of his samurai pupils proudly told him, "Now Japan will take a position among the nations like your country and England."

Fukuzawa Yukichi, a former retainer of the shogun, remarked that the transformation of Japan during the Meiji Restoration had given him the opportunity to "live two lives in a single body". In one letter he wrote to a friend, he said that he could die happy just from knowing that the domains had been abolished. Thus, those samurai with foresight fully understood the need for reform.

At the time that the domains were abolished, a new system of local administration was introduced based on prefectures, which remain in place in Japan to this day. To replace the old daimyo, the Meiji Government appointed prefectural governors. The Meiji Government gained political authority over the whole country, including the exclusive powers to collect taxes and employ soldiers. Japan was now a unified nation under a centralized government.
The Meiji Government decommissioned the samurai serving in the domains, but, for the time being, it did continue to pay their stipends.

**Achieving social equality**

Adopting the slogan "equality of all citizens", the Meiji Government wanted to unite all the people of Japan as national citizens with equal rights and responsibilities. Firstly, the old class system of the Edo period was abolished. The court nobles and daimyo were given peerages, the samurai were reclassified as gentry, and the peasants and townspeople became commoners. To break down class barriers, the samurai were banned from wearing the swords and topknots that were the symbols of their social class, and the commoners were allowed to publicly take surnames. All Japanese people were guaranteed the right to travel wherever they wished and the rights to choose their own occupations, marriage partners, and residences.

In 1871 (Meiji 4), the Meiji Government laid down the Emancipation Edict, which abolished the so-called "untouchable" class and granted former untouchables the same status as commoners. Despite this, they continued to suffer various forms of discrimination from Japanese society long after they had officially won equal rights.

*Topic 53 Recap Challenge!* (1.) Explain how the position of the samurai changed due to the abolition of the domains. (2.) Try researching the ages of each of the major figures serving in the Meiji Government in 1869 (as listed in the above table).
How did the Meiji Government implement its three greatest reforms?

The creation of a public education system

The Meiji Government carried out three robust, institutional reforms in the fields of education, military conscription, and taxation. These reforms furthered Japan’s transformation into a modern and unified nation-state whose citizens enjoyed equal rights. Thanks to these three great reforms, all Japanese citizens quickly came to view attending school, completing their military service, and paying their taxes as the “three fundamental obligations”.

The year 1872 (Meiji 5) saw the passage of the School System Law and the release of the Imperial Proclamation on the Encouragement of Education exhorting all boys and girls to attend school and become independent citizens. Elementary education was made compulsory. Within the short span of several years, the Meiji Government had established 26,000 elementary schools, many of which were rechristened Edo period temple schools. Initially, Japan’s school attendance was under fifty percent, but it rose rapidly and reached nearly one hundred percent by the end of the Meiji period.

An Excerpt from the Imperial Proclamation on the Encouragement of Education

"Each family in every village will allow their children to go to school, and we must ensure that there is no child in any family who does not attend classes."

The institution of the conscription system

In 1873 (Meiji 6), the Japanese military system was revolutionized through the promulgation of the Conscription Ordinance. Under the new policy, the Meiji Government set up garrisons (later called army divisions) in Tokyo, Sendai, Nagoya, Osaka, Hiroshima, and Kumamoto. All men, both commoners and the descendents of samurai, would be required to join the military upon reaching the age of twenty. The conscription ordinance established a system of universal military service that was based on Western models and aspired to create a truly national army grounded in the principle of equality of all citizens.

How was the conscription ordinance received by the Japanese people? During the Edo period, the rights to bear arms and fight in battle were the exclusive honor and privilege of the samurai class, and the descendents of the samurai were angered at being robbed of their old entitlements. The
families of commoners also felt aggrieved by the conscription system when their young sons who helped them at home were forced to leave to serve in the military.

**The land tax reform**

In 1871 (Meiji 4), Japanese farmers were granted the right to plant any crops of their choosing on their fields. The following year, they also gained the right to buy and sell land. Next, the Meiji Government set land prices throughout Japan, determined the owners of the land, and distributed title deeds officially awarding them land ownership rights. The title deeds recorded the owner of the land, its area, its value, and the amount of tax owed to the government. On the basis of the information provided in the title deeds, the Meiji Government introduced a sweeping land tax reform in 1873.

Because the land tax of the Edo period was paid in rice based on the amount harvested, taxation rates varied considerably in each domain. After the Meiji land tax reform, the tax rate was fixed at three percent of the land’s value to be paid in currency. Therefore, it became possible to levy taxes uniformly throughout Japan. The new system gave official ownership rights to the farmers who held the land and, in exchange, imposed an obligation on them to pay the tax. The new land tax provided the Japanese government with a stable source of income for many years until the growth of private industry caused corporate and personal income taxes to occupy a far greater percentage of national revenue. In this manner, it allowed Japan to secure the funds necessary to pay for its continuing progress towards modernity.

*1= In 1877 (Meiji 10), the land tax was lowered to 2.5 percent.

**Topic 54 Recap Challenge! – Explain the essential features of the major reforms instituted to Japan’s educational, military, and fiscal systems.**
I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT...

The Meaning of the Meiji Restoration

Why did the leaders of Meiji Japan willingly abolish their own class privileges and transform their country through a reform program unprecedented in the annals of world history?

Averting Japan’s colonization by the Western powers

In the year 1800, the Western powers controlled about 35% of the land surface of the Earth. By 1914, the year of the outbreak of World War I, this figure increased to an astonishing 84%. The Meiji Restoration took place in between these two dates. If the Meiji reformers had failed to turn Japan into a centralized nation-state, it very likely would have been conquered by the Western powers and incorporated into their vast colonial empires.

The policies of territorial expansion pursued by the Western powers are referred to as imperialism. Under the shadow of this age of imperialism, Japan succeeded at maintaining its independence and even joining the ranks of the great powers.

The transition from the Edo shogunate to the Meiji Government

The collapse of the Edo shogunate and inauguration of the Meiji Government took place a mere fifteen years after Commodore Perry first came to the shores of Japan demanding an end to the shogunate’s policy of isolationism. By contrast, it took forty-four years for Korea’s Choson dynasty to fall since the time of its first confrontation with the Western powers and even seventy-two years in the case of Qing China.

Why is it that Japan succeeded relatively earlier than its neighbors at making the transition to a new political system capable of meeting the challenges of the time? It is believed that one major explanation lies in the unique structure of the Japanese government during the Edo period. Prior to the Meiji Restoration, Japan was under samurai rule, and the shogun wielded de-facto power over the nation’s politics.

Regardless, it was the Emperor who appointed the shogun, and likewise the samurai remained nominally in the service of the Emperor throughout the Edo period. Under the Edo shogunate, authority and power were not monopolized in one man, but rather, authority belonged to the Emperor just as power belonged to the shogun. The existence of these dual political centers played a key role in averting a crisis during the final years of the Edo shogunate. As the power...
of the shogunate declined in the face of growing pressure from the Western powers, the people instead rallied behind the Emperor, and in relatively short order a smooth regime change had taken place.

**Why the reformers abolished their own class**

Throughout the Edo period, Japanese society revolved around the samurai class. The samurai were quick to understand the military threat posed by the Western powers in the shogunate’s waning years, and they were especially alarmed by the defeat of the mighty nation of China during the Opium War.

Satsuma and Choshu, two of Japan’s most influential domains, each fought wars against the Western powers in the final years of the Edo period and, by doing so, became painfully aware of just how militarily backwards Japan was in comparison to the West. The leaders of both domains responded by changing tack and trying to rival the West by learning from Western civilization.

As a result of the Meiji Restoration, social classes were abolished and a new society was built based on the principle of equality of all citizens. All people gained the right to choose their own occupation, making freedom of economic activity possible. The samurai lost their privileges and their very class ceased to exist.

And yet, the Meiji Restoration was not a revolution in which the lower classes violently overthrew and destroyed the aristocratic class, as was the case in the French Revolution. The samurai, who constituted the Meiji Government, were the ones responsible for abolishing their own class. French scholar Maurice Pinguet made the following comments on this remarkable turn of events in his book *Voluntary Death in Japan*:

"The samurai, unlike the French nobility, never fell under the knife of a rival class: sole architect of their own abolition, they contrived it at first unconsciously, but in the end consentingly - the voluntary death, a destiny accepted… It is hard to find a name for such a drastic change. ‘Revolution’? Maybe, so long as we understand a revolution quite different from anything in Western history, a revolution without class struggle, without subversion from below…. No guillotine for the warlike nobility of Japan: they faced up to the foreign threat with a revolution whose price was their own disappearance. It was only a national revolution they attempted, a rousing of their country’s strength."
The Meiji Restoration was thus a revolution like none the world had ever seen. It was carried out by the privileged samurai who sacrificed their own personal interests for the good of the entire nation.

The Meiji Restoration and the national commitment to education

The Meiji reformers acknowledged education as the cornerstone of the national reconstruction they sought, though the Japanese esteem for education was already apparent during the Edo period.

For example, the daimyo of Nagaoka Domain (modern-day Niigata Prefecture), remained loyal to the shogunate and was defeated during the Boshin Civil War. Adding to his domain's woes, the ravages of war combined with serious flooding to create a critical food shortage. Another domain governed by a daimyo of the same lineage was moved by Nagaoka's plight and sent one hundred bales of rice as relief aid. Nevertheless, Kobayashi Torasaburo, one of Nagaoka Domain's most influential political administrators, refused to distribute even one grain of this rice to the samurai of his domain. He instead decided to use the funds to build a new domain school, Kokkan School, for the purpose of cultivating future generations of talented individuals.

The foundation of Japan's success at achieving modernization was this concept, known as the "spirit of the one hundred bales of rice", that a nation must always keep a steady eye towards the future and invest the bulk of its resources in educating the next generation of leaders.
Defining the northern limit of Japan's territory

Following the Meiji Restoration, Japan aspired to become a modern nation-state. To do so, Japan needed three things: a territory with clear-cut national borders, a united citizenry inhabiting that territory, and a government to rule the citizenry. If the Meiji Government failed to demarcate Japan's borders, it would be impossible to secure the lives and property of all its citizens and to guarantee them equal rights. Japanese people had a longstanding presence on the northern island of Sakhalin, which they called Karafuto. As far back as 1679 (Enbo 4), Matsumae Domain sought to cultivate its position on the island by setting up an encampment at Odamari (now Korsakov).

In 1855, the shogunate approved the Russo-Japanese Treaty of Amity, setting Japan's border with Russia at the midway point between the islands of Urup and Iturup, which remains the northern extremity of Japanese territory to this day. Ownership of Sakhalin was not determined, so the island was simply acknowledged as a place co-inhabited by both Japanese and Russian citizens.

However, Great Britain warned Japan that, should Japan go to war with Russia, it would likely lose not only Sakhalin, but Hokkaido as well. In order to avert such a clash, the Meiji Government signed the Treaty of Saint Petersburg with Russia in 1875 (Meiji 8). Under the terms of this treaty, Japan handed over all of Sakhalin Island to Russia, in exchange for Russia recognizing the Kuril Islands as Japanese territory.

The Meiji Government also succeeded in 1876 (Meiji 9) in gaining international recognition for its right to control the Bonin Islands, located in the Pacific Ocean southeast of Japan's main islands. A British ship had already planted its flag there, but the United States refused to accept Britain's claim.

The Taiwan Expedition and annexation of Ryukyu

In 1871 (Meiji 4), Japan signed the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Friendship, which established an equal diplomatic relationship between Qing China and Japan on the basis of international law.
An Excerpt from the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Friendship (1871)

"Article 1 – The nations of Japan and China shall deepen their friendship and mutually respect each other's territorial sovereignty."

"Article 2 – Japan and China shall aid one another should either be subjected to the undue interference of another nation."

The Ryukyu Kingdom had been a tributary state of both China and Japan since the Edo period, but the Japanese government placed it under the jurisdiction of Kagoshima Prefecture in July 1871. In October of that year, a Ryukyu government vessel was cast adrift and shipwrecked on Taiwan, and fifty-four Ryukyuan sailors (inhabitants of the Miyako Islands) were murdered by Taiwanese natives. And yet, when Japan attempted to hold China responsible for the incident, China argued that it had no jurisdiction over the matter, as the people of Taiwan were not its subjects. For this reason, the Japanese government decided to take matters into its own hands and, in 1874 (Meiji 7), dispatched a military force, the Taiwan Expedition, to punish the Taiwanese perpetrators. The root of this conflict was that China did not yet fully comprehend the concept of a modern nation, which prevented it from seeing eye-to-eye with Japan.

The matter was resolved following discussions between Japan and China in which China agreed to recognize the Ryukyuans as Japanese citizens. Pursuant to this recognition, Japan carried out the annexation of Ryukyu in 1879 (Meiji 12), officially declaring the kingdom to be the Japanese Prefecture of Okinawa. With that, Japan had largely completed the process of demarcating its national borders with its neighbors.

Topic 55 Recap Challenge! – Describe the circumstances that led to (1.) the signing of the Treaty of Saint Petersburg and (2.) Japan’s annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom.

The Tributary System Versus the Rule of International Law

Since ancient times, China insisted that neighboring countries within its sphere of influence become tributaries and that their kings be appointed by the Chinese emperor as vassals. The foreign policies of these tributaries were restricted by their relationship with China. On the other hand, the West constructed a system of international law under which all nations conducted bilateral diplomacy as equals and recognized each other as sovereign nations with defined borders and territory. After Commodore Perry brought an end to isolationism, Japan adopted the system of international law as part of its efforts to join the Western nations. However, this created friction in Japan’s relations with Taiwan, Ryukyu, and Korea, which still viewed diplomacy through the lens of the Sino-Barbarian World Order.
The formation of the Ryukyu Kingdom

The ancestors of the people living on Japan’s southern islands, the most significant of which are Amami and Okinawa, came largely from Kyushu during the Jomon period of Japanese history. Their language is called Ryukyuan, which is a dialect of the Japanese language.

The islanders subsisted on fishing and gathering until the eleventh century when they began practicing agriculture. After this, the islands fell under the control of local chiefs known as aji who had castles called gusuku constructed and waged frequent wars against one another. Eventually, three rival kingdoms became dominant: Hokuzan (whose capital was Nakijin), Chuzan (whose capital was Urasoe), and Nanzan (whose capital was Itoman). The Sho family, who ruled Chuzan, transferred their capital from Urasoe to Shuri and, by the early-fifteenth century, had succeeded at unifying all three kingdoms. This is how the Ryukyu Kingdom came into being.

Ryukyu’s emancipation proclamation

The Ryukyu Kingdom was a tributary state subservient to both Satsuma Domain and Qing China. As such, the people of Ryukyu were burdened by both annual tribute payments to Satsuma and the enormous expense of hosting envoys from China. Japan’s annexation of Ryukyu finally freed the kingdom from their yoke. Iha Fuyu, described as “the father of Okinawan studies”, praised Japan’s decision to annex Ryukyu as "a sort of emancipation proclamation".

Nonetheless, Ryukyu’s leaders were divided into a pro-Japan faction, those in favor of the annexation who wanted to modernize Ryukyu as Okinawa Prefecture, and a pro-China faction, those against annexation who wanted to revive the Ryukyu Kingdom with Chinese support. Even after the establishment of Okinawa Prefecture, sharp disagreements remained. The dispute between the two factions hit its peak during the First Sino-Japanese War, but Japan’s victory resulted in the dissolution of the pro-China faction, finally putting an end to the longstanding controversy.

After the end of the First Sino-Japanese War, the Meiji Government began modernizing Okinawa in earnest, strengthening its administrative institutions, and clarifying land ownership.
The Okinawa Prefectural Assembly was created in 1909 (Meiji 42) and the House of Representatives Election Law came into effect in Okinawa in 1912 (Meiji 45), allowing the people of Okinawa to participate in national elections for the first time. In 1920 (Taisho 9), Okinawa was granted equal status to Japan's other prefectures. In spite of this, income levels in Okinawa remained low and higher education was still unavailable a half century after the annexation.

The culture and lifestyles of the Ainu people

The people of Hokkaido maintained a hunter-gatherer society long after the rest of Japan's main islands had adopted agriculture. After having received cultural influence from Japanese migrants and intermingling with Sakhalin Islanders, they became the people we call the Ainu. Their language was unrelated to Japanese and had no written form.

By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Ainu developed unique cultural traditions, including a distinct form of music and a sacred ceremony called the iyomante that involved killing a bear in order to return its spirit to the land of the deities. The Ainu traded salmon, kelp, and furs they collected through hunting and gathering in exchange for many essential goods, such as rice, clothing, and lacquerware. By the late-Edo period, the Ainu had a total population of about 20,000 people.

Guaranteeing protection and citizenship to the Ainu

The Meiji Government sought to develop Hokkaido by bringing in armed settlers from Japan's other main islands. At the same time, it taught the Ainu agricultural techniques and advised them on becoming farmers. By then, the previous Edo shogunate had already attempted to increase the Ainu population by encouraging young men and women to get married and setting up medical facilities where they could be vaccinated against smallpox.

The Meiji Government continued the shogunate's policy of promoting population growth among the Ainu of Hokkaido. In addition, it trained them to live in permanent villages, banned their practice of burning down their own homes upon the death of a family member, and, under the policy of "civilization and enlightenment", prohibited Ainu men from wearing earrings and women from tattooing their skin. The Meiji Government also built schools in Hokkaido and provided financial aid to Ainu parents to ensure that they could send their children there. In the
schools, Ainu children were taught how to read and write, provided with free lunches, and given instruction on bathing and personal hygiene.

On the other hand, the Ainu were given title to only a tiny fraction of their traditional lands when Japan modernized its land ownership system, and what little they had left was either leased or sold on unfavorable terms. In 1899 (Meiji 32), the Japanese government responded by passing the Hokkaido Aborigine Protection Act, which awarded about 50,000 square meters of land to any Ainu desiring to become a farmer. This land was made unalienable except through inheritance in order to prevent those Ainu who were unfamiliar with legal contracts from having their lands taken by Japanese settlers. In this manner, the law guaranteed Ainu people government protection as citizens of Japan.

Still, the act did contain problematic points. For instance, some of the land distributed to the Ainu proved to be unsuitable for farming. Moreover, even most of the arable land was seized by the government during land reform undertaken in the aftermath of World War II, leaving its provisions to protect the Ainu people effectively null and void. Over time, the Japanese word for "aborigine", kyudojin, also came to have negative connotations, and therefore the Hokkaido Aborigine Protection Act was repealed in 1997 (Heisei 9). In its stead, the government enacted the Ainu Cultural Promotion Act, which provided support for aspects of Ainu culture, including traditional crafts, dancing, and the Ainu language.
The Iwakura Mission

Soon after the abolition of the domains in 1871 (Meiji 4), the Meiji Government dispatched the Iwakura Mission, led by Ambassador Plenipotentiary Iwakura Tomomi, to Europe and the United States. Half of the most important figures in the Meiji Government, including Okubo Toshimichi and Kido Takayoshi, participated in the mission, whose goals were to observe the state of Western civilization and begin preliminary negotiations to revise the unequal treaties. Based on the information they collected over the span of two years, the members of the Iwakura Mission estimated that Japan was roughly forty years behind the West in development and concluded that the key to catching up would be to give priority to establishing a modern industrial economy, an idea later encapsulated in the slogan "enrich the country".

*1=Five young female students accompanied the Iwakura Mission in order to study in the United States. One of them, Tsuda Umeko (1864-1929), who was only six years of age at the time, later made major contributions to women's education in Japan.

Diplomacy and conflict with Korea

Japan's new government intended to normalize its diplomatic relations with Korea immediately after coming to power at the start of the Meiji Restoration, but the mission it sent to Korea in 1868 (Meiji 1) was turned down. In 1873 (Meiji 6), many Japanese perceived Korea's rejection of their country's most recent overture to be an act of disrespect, and some former samurai argued that Japan should compel Korea through military force to end its isolationist policies. This is known as the "Debate on Punishing Korea".

*2=Japan's official diplomatic message to Korea included words such as "Emperor", "Imperial Order", and "Imperial Court" that, under the tributary system, were only permitted to be used by the emperor of China in correspondence to his vassals. For this reason, the Koreans feared that Japan's true intention was to make Korea its tributary.

The former samurai who were still unemployed due to the abolition of the domains were displeased with the Meiji Government's enthusiastic adoption of Western technology and culture, fearing that this policy was damaging the national character of the Japanese people and the warrior
spirit passed down by their ancestors. The man on whom they pinned their hopes was Saigo Takamori, who handled government affairs while other key officials were away on the Iwakura Mission. Although Saigo supported the reforms needed to build a modern nation as part of the Meiji Government, he also felt that the government must defend the honor and social positions of the former samurai.

Saigo insisted on personally going to Korea as Japan’s emissary and secured official approval of his plan. He was absolutely determined to use these negotiations to make Korea open its doors to Japan, even though he was well aware that the Koreans might kill him and thus force the Japanese government to go to war.3

3=Later, in 1875, the Japanese warship Unyo conducted an armed survey of Korea’s Kanghwa Island. Korea shelled the Unyo and the two sides clashed in an event known as the Kanghwa Island Incident. The following year, Korea and Japan finally normalized their diplomatic relations through the ratification of the Japan-Korea Treaty of Friendship. The treaty expressly affirmed that, "Korea is an independent state,” but it also saw Japan impose upon Korea the same unfair extraterritoriality clauses that the Western powers had foisted upon Japan.

Splits within the Meiji Government and the Satsuma Rebellion

However, once Iwakura Tomomi and Okubo Toshimichi returned to Japan, they voiced strong concern that Saigo’s plan might provoke intervention by the Western powers. Having seen first-hand the tremendous military might of the West, they were convinced that Japan needed to consolidate its strength before it could risk a confrontation with foreign powers. Iwakura and his allies worked behind-the-scenes to persuade members of the Imperial Court and Meiji Government of their views, and they succeeded in having Saigo’s mission delayed in spite of the official sanction it had been given just a month earlier. Saigo and his supporters, including Itagaki Taisuke, were so angered by this rebuke that they resigned their posts in protest. Saigo then returned to his home prefecture, followed by the many Kagoshima samurai who were ardently devoted to him.

Up to then, the Meiji Government was still providing regular stipends to the former samurai, but, in 1876 (Meiji 9), it finally implemented the abolition of the hereditary stipends, replacing them with a single lump sum payment. The same year, the Meiji Government also issued an edict banning all citizens from wearing swords. This last act infuriated the former samurai, who had
continued to carry their swords as a badge of pride. Rather than accept the humiliation of having their swords taken from them, they rose up against the government in Kumamoto, Fukuoka, and Yamaguchi. Nevertheless, these revolts were all suppressed quickly by the Meiji Government's conscript army, proving the superiority of its modern equipment, firearms, means of communication, and command structure.

The most strongly aggrieved of the former samurai were those of Saigo's home prefecture of Kagoshima (formerly Satsuma Domain). In 1877 (Meiji 10), they seized control of the prefectural government. When they heard rumors that the Meiji Government was attempting to assassinate Saigo, they banded together under Saigo's leadership and marched on Tokyo. However, they failed to capture Kumamoto Castle where a government garrison was stationed, and soon suffered military setbacks across Kyushu. When cornered by government forces, Saigo died by his own sword and the Satsuma Rebellion came to an end. This was the last act of resistance by the old samurai class before the consolidation of the system of universal military conscription.

*Topic 56 Recap Challenge! – List the two major goals of the Iwakura Mission.*
"Increase production and promote industry"

As the Meiji Restoration progressed within Japan, the Western powers continued to expand their colonial empires across Asia. Adopting the slogan of "enrich the nation and strengthen the military", the Meiji Government aspired to build Japan into a powerful nation capable of resisting Western domination.

In 1868 (Meiji 1), the Meiji Government took control of the mines and shipbuilding yards previously administered by the shogunate. In the fields of transportation and communication, it installed telegraph lines in 1869 (Meiji 2), introduced a postal system in 1871 (Meiji 4), and constructed Japan's first railway in 1872 (Meiji 5) to connect Shimbashi to Yokohama.

After Saigo's resignation, Okubo Toshimichi emerged as the most powerful figure in the Meiji Government. Okubo was the architect of the "increase production and promote industry" campaign, which aimed to foster modern industrialism in Japan through government investment. Under his guidance, the Meiji Government purchased machinery from abroad, hired foreign engineers, and built government factories to reel silk, spin thread, construct ships, make cement, and mine coal, silver, and copper. The government factories were later sold off to private individuals and formed the foundation of Japan's industrial growth. Japan benefited from already having had many of the preconditions for modern industrialism since the Edo period, including a high degree of technological maturity and a people with a strong work ethic. Another major objective of the Meiji Government was to develop Ezochi, which was renamed Hokkaido in 1869 (Meiji 2). To this end, it formed the Hokkaido Development Commission and sent former samurai and farmer-soldiers called tondenhai to settle the region.

An Excerpt from Okubo Toshimichi's Official Address on the "Increase Production and Promote Industry" Campaign (1874)

"From the outset, the strength or weakness of any nation depends on the wealth or poverty of its people, and the wealth or poverty of its people is connected to how much they can produce. Production is, in turn, rooted in whether or not the people are engaged in industry. In any country, the only way to achieve this is through government guidance and encouragement."
"Civilization and enlightenment"

In 1867 (Keio 4), the Meiji Government decided to end the traditional fusion of the Buddhist and Shinto faiths that had prevailed in Japan since the Nara period. The Ordinance for the Separation of Shinto and Buddhism removed Buddhist influence from Japan's Shinto shrines. Then, in 1870 (Meiji 3), the Imperial Edict for the Establishment of Shinto committed the Japanese government to preach the virtues of Japan's ancient Shinto faith to the entire country. The purpose of this edict was to unite the Japanese people behind Shinto as a patriotic institution. Unfortunately, it also inspired an extremist anti-Buddhist movement that was responsible for burning down temples and destroying Buddhist sculptures at many sites throughout Japan. Concerned by these acts of fanaticism, the Meiji Government shifted its stance and instead promoted the three faiths of Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism as common national heritages of the Japanese people.

In 1873 (Meiji 6), Japan adopted the solar calendar used in Western countries. Henceforth, the day would be twenty-four hours, the week would be seven days, and Sunday would be a day of rest. Christianity was also legalized.

During the dismantling of the domains, many pedagogical works, known as "books for the enlightenment of the public", were published, including Fukuzawa Yukichi’s An Encouragement of Learning. This widely-read work extolled the importance of independence and self-respect within a society that valued individual ability more than social class. In addition, many newspapers and magazines were printed, introducing the people of Japan to Western customs, lifestyles, and ideas.

Major changes occurred in the daily lives of the Japanese people. In Tokyo and other cities, more and more people wore hats and Western clothes, ate beef, and used lamps in their homes. Gas lights were installed to illuminate city streets that were now lined with Western-style brick buildings and bustling with horse-drawn carriages and rickshaws. All of these modes of cultural expression were part of a far-reaching trend of Westernization that was dubbed "civilization and enlightenment".

**Topic 57 Recap Challenge!** – What two preexisting conditions aided the smooth implementation of the Meiji Government’s policy to "increase production and promote industry"?
Japan formerly used the lunar calendar, in which each month is tied to the phases of the moon. This is why the Japanese word for "month", tsuki, also means "moon". On November 9, 1872 (Meiji 5), the Imperial Edict on Calendar Reform abolished the lunar calendar and replaced it with the solar calendar employed in Western countries. The solar calendar is tied to Earth's rotation around the sun. As a result of this change, the old calendar date of December 3, 1872, immediately became January 1, 1873, when the new calendar was adopted.
JAPAN AS SEEN THROUGH FOREIGN EYES
The Lifestyles of the Japanese People in the late-Edo and Meiji Periods

Foreigners who travelled to Japan in the late-Edo and Meiji periods were deeply impressed by the good manners and strong morality of the Japanese people.

"Suavity and politeness"

The British writer John Black published an English-language newspaper in Yokohama during the final years of the Edo period and the early years of the subsequent Meiji period. In his book, Young Japan, he wrote the following about the courtesy displayed by Japanese people:

"As a race, with all their suavity and politeness, they possess an amount of independence… Then there was the welcome almost universally accorded to foreigners who in passing sought to rest themselves, and the cheerful greeting, ‘Ohai-o,’ that was never wanting from those who were met on the roads, or from the labourers in the fields or the inhabitants of the villages…”

The spirit of kindness and generosity

Aime Humbert came to Japan in 1863 (Bunkyu 3) as the head of a Swiss diplomatic delegation. In his book, Japan and the Japanese Illustrated, he wrote about his surprise to be treated so considerately by people who expected no compensation in return:

"This spontaneous kindliness and cordiality is a characteristic common to all the lower classes of Japanese society. More than once when I have been going on foot about the suburbs of Nagasaki or Yokohama, the country people have invited me to step inside their little enclosures. Then they would show them their flowers, and cut the best among them to make up a bouquet for me. It was always in vain that I offered them money; they never accepted it…”

In 1878 (Meiji 11), the Englishwoman Isabella Bird had a similar experience while on a trip that took her across Japan. In her travelogue Unbeaten Tracks in Japan, she described the kindness of the packhorse driver she had hired to transport her and her luggage:

"Only yesterday a strap was missing, and though it was after dark, the man went back a ri [four kilometers] for it, and refused to take some sen [coins] which I wished to give him, saying he was responsible for delivering everything right at the journey's end."
A society free of conflict

Edward Morse, an American, came to Japan in 1877 (Meiji 10) and served as a professor of zoology at Tokyo University. In his book, *Japan Day By Day*, he expressed great admiration at the calm dispositions and exemplary manners of the Japanese people:

"In coming from the University I walked up to a group of four jinrikisha men and wondered if they would all rush for me as do our hackmen at home; but, no, one of them stooped down, picked up four straws of varying lengths, and then drew lots. No feeling was shown as the lucky one drew me away to the station. Time had to be made to catch the train and during the ride the wheel of my jinrikisha bumped into the hub of another one ahead. The men simply smiled their apologies for getting in the way, and kept on. I instantly contrasted this behavior and the customary swearing resulting from a similar accident at home."

Modest, but spiritually rich ways of life

Willem van Kattendijke, a teacher at the Nagasaki Naval Training Center, described the people of late-Edo Japan:

"The masses thrive under this system, and seem to lead very happy lives. The Japanese are a people of simple desires. When it comes to luxury, the most they could ever want is enough money for a kimono… Even the meals of upper-class households are quite modest, so much so that there is not much difference between the meals consumed by the poor and the rich… One of the special characteristics of the Japanese people that differentiate them from other Oriental peoples is their lack of attachment to luxuries. Even the big houses of the nobles are extremely humble and simple. That is to say, even their reception rooms are not equipped with any fixtures like chairs, desks, or bookshelves."

A great many foreign visitors to Japan in the nineteenth century observed how the Japanese of the time held few selfish desires and lived modest, but fulfilling and happy lives.

The aforementioned qualities that foreigners saw in Japanese society, including the politeness, kindness, generosity, and peacefulness of the people, formed the spiritual foundation of Meiji Japan's remarkable progress towards modernization. And yet, it was this very modernization that awakened the minds of the Japanese people to an endless stream of new desires, which gradually made them lose sight of the modest but fulfilling lifestyles they had once enjoyed.