Notes on 19th Century Japan (Tokugawa Shogunate – 1912)

IB History

1. **Togukawa Shogunate**

Established in the 17th Century, the Togukawa Shogunate was a feudal structure of the warrior class of Japan that was quite similar to that of medieval Europe. It was based on a series of loyalties and obligations. It decentralized power away from the Emperor and gave it to the shoguns. The society at the time was setup as follows:

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| **Japanese Society in the Early 17th Century** | |
| **Samurai** | * Warrior Class with great Social standing * Vassal of the Daimyo * Mercenaries * Poor austere conditions and faced unemployment * Faced financial ruin received stipends but these are dwindling * Some lived in comfortable surroundings others did not * Infanticide common many began to abandon and give up their duties of a warrior * Feel deprived do not get the effects of growing economic prosperity that other groups do. |
| **Farmers** | * Rice is the dominant factor 25 million and shogun takes it and hands to Daimyo about 20% given to the TS * 1.3 million to the Kaga daimyo from the North * Weather changes but does not take account into the effects on the rice harvest and quotas still taken leading to poverty and destitution * Framers are essential to the economic prosperity of Japan |
| **Merchants** | * Bottom of the social hierarchy but lack power despite wealth. * Jealousy rife among the different strata’s who do not like the Merchants. * Provide funds to the Samurai and loans * Trade developing, building of infrastructure and roads leads to increasing wealth of the merchants |
| **Craftspeople** | * Carpentry stonemasonry lacquerers, clothes markers. Despise the merchants as they see as giving back to society. Sword makers becoming wealthy. Craftspeople are not generally educated and have little rights and power. * Eta actors’ priests do not fit into the rigid class system and viewed as outsiders. * Live in own communities and are living in periphery of Society * Face discrimination. |

1. **Flaws of Shogunate**

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| **Economic** | **Social** | **Ideological** |
| A financial crisis faced the Bakufu. Excessive spending vs. Poor Taxation Structure | Tension between upper Samurai and the much larger class of lower Samurai  The emergence of the gono (wealthy peasants) challenged feudal power  Peasant protests (15 a year from 1800-1868) | Difference between theory of Feudal System (Loyalty was conditional and personal) and Reality (loyalty was unconditional and impersonal) |

In response to these flaws in the Tokugawa Shogunate was a push to return to the Imperial past of centralized power under the emperor. It was based in the Shinto religion and the desire to return to the “glory days” of Japan.

1. **International Influence (Commodore Perry)**

In 1853, the United States sent Commodore William Perry to Japan to open trade and diplomatic relations with Japan. The massive contrast between the military and economic development between the West and the Feudal society fundamentally shattered the Tokugawa’s control of Japan. It was clear that the West was more modernized then Japan and the Japanese would be subjugated by the western imperial powers if they did not do something immediately to modernize Japan. While Perry’s visits cannot be seen as a sole cause of the Meiji Modernization, it was definitely a catalyst.

1. **Beginnings of Moderation-Rise of Oligarchs and Meiji Restoration**

The Meiji Modernization was driven by a group of Japanese Oligarchs that looked to restore the Meiji Emperor to true power in Japan. The first step in this process was through the Charter Oath of 1868:

In 1868 the new Meiji Emperor issued the “Five Articles Oath” sometimes known as the Charter Oath. This set out the broad principles on which the new Government would apparently be based. The five articles were:

1 Deliberative Assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion.

2 All classes, high and low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out administration of affairs of the state.

3. The common people, no less than the civil and military officials, shall each be allowed to pursue his own calling so that there maybe no discontent.

4. Evil customs of the past shall be broken off and everything based upon just laws of nature.

5 Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.

Once in power the Emperor, through the work of the Oligarchs, set about consolidating their power and reforming Japan by:

1. MO destroyed the military might of the Shogunate.
2. The Daimyo and Samurai brought under the control of the Meiji leaders.
3. The role of the emperor was crucial he gave the leaders legitimacy for their actions.
4. The creation of a modern army, which was then used to put down the rebellion of 1877.
5. Constitutional challenges were blocked.
6. Reforms implemented consolidated oligarch power.
7. Educational edict emphasized nationalism, obedience to the state, conformity and a belief in progress.
8. Modernization progress such as increased living standards helped to ensure the MO position.
9. **Political Modernization**

The political reforms shifted the political system of Japan from Feudalism to a constitutional monarchy, which was derived from the visits to Europe of the Oligarchs (Hirobumi and others). It drew heavily on the systems that had been setup in the United States, Germany and France. The introduction of the Meiji Constitution in 1889. The oligarchs were successful in their political reforms because:

1. Western challenge coincided with domestic political revolution.
2. Political leadership was a homogenous group, in age, social and political origins.
3. Power centralized quickly thus reforms were put though with speed and in an organized manner.
4. Nationalist responses and support of the Emperor because of social push to Shintoism and the focus of the oligarchs.
5. **Social Modernization**

The story of Japan’s social change was based around a massive adoption (and some adaption) of Western ideas and systems. Cultural adoption could be seen in changes in diet (beef was consumed) and adaption (Imperial Rescript on Education 1890). These changes were successful because:

1. Cultural acceptance of borrowing foreign ideas. Not so stuck with self-sufficiency as the Chinese were. Cultural assimilation practiced to suit their own ends.
2. Willing to go with the times and develop new technological ideas.
3. Japan was a small country so it was easy to implement reform.
4. Universal education was important it helped to create a new nationalism
5. **Economic Modernization**

The economic transformation of Japan was driven by the oligarchs planned economy approach. They systematically improved Japanese infrastructure and industrialized its economy. They created entrepreneurship by granting government monopolies to individuals that they knew would adopt modern methods. It was successful because:

1. The Japanese environment was conducive to change. Provisions were made e.g. currency, banking system, reasonable tax system.
2. Reduction of the government deficit. Establishment of Zaibatsu, which allowed for private investment.
3. **Foreign Policy**

The approach to foreign policy was driven by the desire to redress the unequal treaties imposed post Perry and become and equal player on the stage of Asian geo-politics. They worked to gain control of their sovereignty and begin to become a player in the region by expanding into Korea and China. Some of their specific goals were:

1. Successful revision of the unequal treaties
2. Escape from semi colonial status
3. Imperialism: economic, political and strategic
4. Achieve the above and then concentrate on domestic policy.
5. Gain access to raw materials and market
6. Build a modern economy as a basis for the nation’s power
7. Japan should gain influence before others do. This way she could
8. Be the dominant Asian country.
9. Security: protect territory of nation but also establish influence beyond limits.
10. Japan’s security depended on preventing Korea from falling under a third power

The success of these policies were epitomized by two major victories by the Japanese armies in the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo Japanese War.

**THE SINO-JAPANESE WAR 1894–95**

1. **Background**

The full-scale war, which broke out between China and Japan at the end of the 19th century, provides us with an interesting comparison between their relative “successes” in modernisation. By the mid 1880s, the Russians, French and British had begun “detaching” territory from China’s control; equally the Japanese had begun the process too in the 1870s, and her success in the war over Korea (1894-95) almost led to China’s partition at the end of the 1890s with the “scramble for Concessions”.

1. **Japan Formosa and the Liu-ch’iu Islands (Ryukyu)**

In the 1860s the Japanese made attempts to open trade and diplomatic links with China which Li Hung-Chang recommend; this led to a commercial treaty between the two nations in 1871 (Treaty of TIENTSIN) in which Japan got extraterritoriality rights but not Most Favoured Nation status. However relations between the countries soured after an incident in 1871 when some Liu-ch’iu (Ryukyu) islanders were shipwrecked on Taiwan and murdered there. Now to the Chinese, the Liu-ch’iu islands were of tributary status…… but to the Japanese, the islands were, in effect, under their political control. They demanded compensation, which China refused. War loomed especially when a Japanese army occupied Taiwan! However China did not want war at this time and so she paid compensation to the Japanese for the sailors’ murders, and for the cost of the expedition; in return, Japanese troops withdrew from Taiwan. In diplomatic terms this meant, in effect, that the Japanese controlled the Liu-ch’iu islands. In 1879 they were formally annexed by Japan: China had lost yet more territory.

1. **Korea: Foreign Relations to 1885**

Korea was also known as the ‘Hermit Kingdom’ and had resisted all foreign attempts at penetration (e.g. religious) by the end of the 1860s. She was a tributary state of China and that was that. Within twenty-five years her status had radically altered.

After 1868 the Japanese made several attempts to negotiate a treaty with Korea – a nation: they considered to be “a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan” given its geographical proximity, but they had ended in failure – the Japanese feeling insulted by the rejections. However, after an incident in 1875 when a Japanese warship was fired upon – a ‘great pity’ – the Japanese had an excuse to obtain “satisfaction”. Copying western diplomatic practices, they sent a mission to Peking and a naval squadron to Korea! The Chinese remained ‘neutral’ in the matter, allowing the Koreans (ruled by king kojong) to negotiate with the Japanese themselves. The result? The

**Treaty of KANGHWA, 1876:**

\* Korea’s independence was recognised by Japan.

\* Exchange of ambassadors between Japan and Korea.

\* Opening of 3 Korean ports to Japanese merchants.

\* Japanese consular jurisdiction in these ports (extra territoriality).

In effect this meant that Korea had lost her tributary status to China; Li Hung-chang tried to counter Japan’s growing influence by helping western powers gain their own influence in Korea, but his efforts backfired. By 1886, US, France, Germany and Italy had all signed treaties with Korea, recognising her independent status; China had lost another diplomatic round.

Within Korea itself in the 1880s there was much internal dissent and Court politicking. There was concern about the penetration of the western powers and the Japanese; the king’s father, Taewongon, loathed the Japanese, whilst the king’s mother, Queen Min, initially favoured good relations with the Japanese! Taewongon wanted Min’s influence removed!

**1882 Coup**

Taewongon orchestrated a coup in 1882 in Seoul in which the Japanese legation was burned down. Both China and Japan sent troops but war was avoided between them (the Chinese were having trouble with the French in Vietnam and they also removed Taewongon) a settlement being reached in 1882 at CHEMULPO (Inchon) in which the Japanese:

\* Got compensation for their burned legations.

\* The right to station guards at its new legation.

Li Hung-chang was not slow to realise the significance of this, and sent Yuan Shih-k’ai to Korea to train up its army and he also sent Chinese troops there too. (It was an about-turn of their pre 1876 attitude.) Korea was scarcely “independent”!

**1884 Coup**

There was further trouble in 1884 when there was another coup, this time led by Kim Ok-Kyun, who was pro-Japanese (against Queen Min and Yuan!). They managed to kidnap Kojong and kill some pro-Chinese conservatives but Yuan used his troops to rescue the king and defeat Kim’s rebels. Kim fled to Japan. The situation could have led to war but both China and Japan did not want war and Li and Ito negotiated an agreement in 1885 (Tientsin Convention, also known as the Li-Ito Convention):

\* Both sides to withdraw their troops and military advisers (Yuan remained as Chinese Resident in Korea)

\* Both sides to notify each other in advance if there were trouble in Korea before sending any troops in (but Britain and Russia acquired Chinese ports in 1885, too: Hamilton and Lazaref respectively).

1. **WAR: 1894-95**

After 1885 China seemed to strengthen her control over Korea, with Yuan’s help. But perhaps this was Japan’s intention, so that when the ‘right’ time came, they would have to deal with China ONLY. There were two incidents/events, which sparked off the war between China and Japan, a war with enormous consequences for China in particular:

**Consequences:**

There were very important domestic and international consequences as a result of the Sino-Japanese war.

1. International Reaction:

The Japanese occupation of the Liaotung peninsula had greatly upset the Russians (who wanted it herself!) who recognized that a key change in the balance of power in Asia had occurred. Almost immediately after Shimonoseki Russia, France and Germany sent a ‘note’ to Japan (in late April 1895) “advising” her to withdraw from the Liaotung peninsula or else! The Japanese agreed – they were exhausted, too – after China gave her another 30 million taels. The TRIPLE INTERVENTION showed a certain limit to Japan’s newly acquired power but it is also interesting to look at why the western powers did it:

\* Russia wanted the region for herself, and gained a 25-year lease of it in 1898 thus obtaining Port Arthur – an ice free port all the year round; (more on this later)

\* France was keen to support Russia at this time for European diplomatic considerations

\* Germany was keen to keep Russia occupied in the Far East rather than on any western European adventures

* As for Britain, she now recognised (and even admired) the progress of her pupil Japan and this had consequences later on.
* China now was ready to be carved up and this leads us to the “SCREAMBLE FOR CONCESSIONS”.

1. Japanese Position

* Obviously her success in the war showed the enormous advances made since the mid 19th century in modernising herself.
* Her influence and interest in Korea increased
* Most importantly, the Triple Intervention upset the Japanese deeply – particularly with the Russians.

1. Within China:

The war showed the failure of her modernisation programme. China looked set to be dismembered – and the Ch’ing Dynasty looked ready to fall. Radical, even revolutionary (?), changes were essential if China were to survive. She had lost the war because:

\* She was not united as a nation to fight against Japan (unlike Japan).

\* There was no unity of command – the war had fought by Li’s army and navy, essentially.

\* Court corruption had ensured that the navy was not well equipped; the building of the Empress Dowager’s summer palace took a huge amount of navy funds.

\* Neither Russia nor Britain had helped her, in that Russia did not intervene on her behalf in the fighting, nor was Britain able to influence Japan’s policy.

***Hsu concludes:***

“The defeat was an irrefutable testimonial to the failure of the Self-strengthening movement”

1. The murder of Kim Ok-Kyun:

Kim, who had fled to Japan in 1884, was lured to Shanghai in 1894 and murdered. His body was taken to Seoul, mutilated and publicly displayed. The Japanese were outraged.

1. Tonghak Rebellion: also in 1894, the Tonghaks rose up again against the Korean government. They were a reactionary, anti-foreign group (“Eastern Learning”) with religious undertones (inspired by the Taipings?), which had been illegal since the 1860s. Thus inside Korea there was a need, apparently, for foreign troops China sent a smallish number to crush the rebellion, and by utilising the provision in the Li-Ito Convention, Japan sent troops, too, only far more than the Chinese! The uprising was quickly crushed by the Chinese, and thus the need for Japan’s troops had gone. The Japanese refused to return her soldiers, and they even invaded the royal palace, deposed Kojong and set up a puppet regime, which asked Japan to expel the Chinese troops from Korea. War seemed certain.

Before war was formally declared, the Japanese sunk a ship (on 25 July) carrying Chinese reinforcements, killing many soldiers; it was an action later compared to an event in Hawaii in December 1941. War was formally declared on China on 1st August 1894.

**Military Action**

For both countries, the ensuing conflict would be an interesting test of the ‘success’ of their modernisation programmes; by the end the Chinese had been thoroughly beaten on land and sea, and China (the melon) looked ready to be sliced up not only by Japan but by other nations.

1. Land war:

The Japanese quickly overran Korea, pushing Yuan out; they advanced on Port Arthur (a possession much desired by Russia!) and captured it in November 1894. However the sea conflict was of great significance in this war.

1. Sea war:

The Chinese fleet was considerably larger than her opponents’ (65-32 warships) but the quality of the Japanese fleet was far superior. In September 1894 in the mouth of the Yalu River (Battle of the Yellow Sea), the Chinese Peiyang fleet was heavily beaten. As a result of this battle, they lost control of the sea and thus Korea’s fate was sealed, as road links between China and Korea were so poor. Equally, Port Arthur was now very vulnerable, as was Weihaiwei both of which were captured by February 1895. Peking itself was under threat given Japan’s territorial advances and naval mastery (see map).

**Peace: Treaty of SHIMONOSEKI, April 1895:**

The Chinese sued for peace, not surprisingly. They had been humiliated, not by a barbarian western power this time but by the “dwarf bandits” from Japan. Li Hung-chang was dismissed but the Japanese insisted that they dealt with him at the peace table, so Li was reinstated. The Japanese were represented by Ito and Mutsu. The terms may well have been much harsher on China was it not for the fact that Li was almost assassinated in Japan, and this caused his hosts considerable embarrassment? The key terms of the Treaty were:

\* Cession of Taiwan (Formosa), Pescadores (islands), Liaotung Peninsula to Japan

\* 200m taels indemnity

\* Opening of 4 Chinese ports to Japanese merchants.

\* Trading and industrial rights for Japan inside China (including Most Favoured Nation Status) – commercial treaty signed in 1896.

It was an unequal treaty, no unlike those imposed by western powers on China before this war.

1. **Glossary of Key Terms and Key Individuals**

**GLOSSARY**

* BAKUFU Literally, Camp Office” the name given to the shogun’s government
* BAKUMATSU The last years of the Tokugawa Bakufu, roughly from 1854 to 1867
* BUSHIDO The Way of the Warrior, the code developed very largely in the seventeenth century
* DAIMYO Literally, ‘great name’, the provincial lord at certain periods almost an independent monarch in his own territory
* GIRI Duty, obligation, notably to a superior (for example one’s lord or teacher), among the samurai giri took precedence over human sentiment
* HARA\_KIRI Literally, belly cutting, the self-inflicted death held in honor by the samurai class
* KABUKI Originating from a form of folk dancing, Kabuki drama became popular during the late eighteenth century.
* KAISHAKU\_NIN The assistant during the act of hara-kiri whose office was to strike off the head of the samurai who had been ordered, or had chose, to commit self-immolation.
* KAMIKAZE “The Divine Wind”-the great storm which destroyed the Mongle fleet in 1281
* KOKUTAI A heavily emotional term. Often translated as’ national polity” refers to the unique characteristics of the Japanese national tradition
* MEIJI The regional name for the period 1867 to 1912. The emperor Meiji presided over the modernization of Japan
* NINJA Name given to highly specialized spies, skilled in the arts of concealment, employed by contending warrior captains and daimyo, as well as by the Bakufu.
* RONIN Literally, wave men, samurai without a recognized lord. Unemployed warriors, many of whom disturbed the peace of Yedo during the Tokugawa age.
* SANKIN KOTAI The system of alternate attendance whereby every daimyo was compelled to spend a regular period in attendance at the shogun’s court in Yedo.
* SEPPUKU The polite term for hara-kiri.
* SHINTO The way of the Gods the indigenous faith of the Japanese, predating the introduction of Buddhism
* SHOGUN Great general the title given to Minamote YOritomo and various successors. (See also Bakufu)
* SONNO JOI Revere the Emperor Expel the Barbarians the rallying cry of most shishi, implying not only the expulsion of foreign diplomats and traders buy also the overthrow of the Tokkugawa Bakufu.
* TATAMI The tight straw matting that fits together to cover the entire floor of a traditional Japanese room
* TENNO The Emperor
* TOKUGAWA The warrior house descended from the MInamoto, which, under loyasu, established the shogunate at Yedo (modern Tokyo) at the beginning of the seventeenth century
* TORII The gateway to be found at the entrance to a Shinto shrine.
* TOZAMA DAIMYO Outside lords those who fought against leyasu at Sekigahara in 1600 or were otherwise hostile.
* YEDO The old name for Tokyo (also Edo)

**Some Leaders of the Meiji Restoration**

Inoue Kaoro (Choshu 1835-1915)

Itagaki Taisuke (Tosa 1837-1919)

Ito Hirobumi (Choshu 1841-1909)

Iwakura Tomoni (1825-1883)

Kido Koin ( Choshu 1841-1909

Kuroda Kiyotake (Satsuma 1840-1900)

Matsukata Kasayoshi (Satsuma 1835-1924)

Okubo Toshimichi (Satsuma 1830-78)

Okuma Shigenobu (HIzen 1839-1922)

Saigo Takamori (Satsuma 1827-1877)

Yamagata Arimoto (Choshu 1838-1922)

**ESSAY QUESTIONS\_ENDING OF THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNATE & MEIJI JAPAN**

**Tokugawa Shogunate:**

1. Why were the Samurai such an important factor in the crisis of the Meiji Restoration and the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate?
2. Why did the Tokugawa Bakufu abandon its traditional exclusion policy between 1853 and 1858?
3. How and why did the domains of Choshu and Satsuma play a part in the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate?
4. Analyses and explain the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate in Japan
5. DO you consider that the absence of an effective centralized government in Tokugawa Japan hastened or delayed its opening to the West?
6. In what ways and why was feudalism in Japan declining before the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853?
7. Assess the impact of the arrival of Commodore Perry in Japan 1853-4 on Japanese Relations with the West.
8. In what ways and for what reasons was Japan in a stage of political transition between 1850 and 1871?
9. By 1850 the Tokugawa Shogunate was facing collapse. To what extent do you agree?
10. Why and to what extent was Feudalism in Japan declining before the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1853?
11. Analyze the factors, which placed pressure on the policy of isolation in Japan in the years before 1850.

**Comparison and Meiji Japan**

1. In what ways did Japan’s experience of Western imperialism in the period 1853-1868 differ to that of China? How would you explain the differences?
2. Examine the character and achievements of political opposition to the Meiji government down to 1890.
3. How successful were the policies of the Meiji government in dealing with the social and economic problems of the late Tokugawa period?
4. Compare and contrast the aims and limitations of modernization in China and Japan between 1860 and 1895
5. Why did Japan become a constitutional monarchy while China became a republic after the traditional political system in each country had come to an end?
6. Why did Japan become a constitutional monarchy while China became a republic after the traditional political system in each country had come to an end?
7. Commodore Perry knocked upon an open door. To what extent do you agree with this assessment of the Japanese Response to Commodore Perry’s arrival in Japan in 1853?
8. Assess the role of the genro in Meiji Japan 1868 to 1912.
9. In what ways was the Meiji Constitution 1889 a turning point in Japans History?
10. Japan’s industrialization until 1912 was driven by military considerations rather than purely economic factors. How far do you agree with this assessment?
11. Considering what had been achieved by 1860 the Meiji restoration 1868 should rightly be called a revolution. How far do you agree with this assessmsmt?
12. To what extent was Japan a modern early twentieth century industrial economy and society by the end of the Meiji era in 1912?
13. To what extent did Japanese government and society change in the years 1895 to 1912?
14. To what extent had the changes introduced under the Meiji Restoration transformed Japan by 1890?

