

Japan's Response to Imperialism

PART I: Go to the "Throwing Off Asia I" page of the MIT *Visualizing Cultures* website (http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/throwing_off_asia_01/index.html) and read the essay by John Dower. Complete the table below using information and images from the essay. **Part I is to be completed individually.**

Section of Essay	What is the thesis of this section?	What are the main points of this section?	How would you capture the ideas in this section in an image? Sketch or copy the image and caption in this column. Explain why you selected the image.
"Westernization"			
"Civilization and Enlightenment"			
"Wealth and Power"			

In his essay, John Dower referenced a statement by Sugita Teiichi, "that Japan's choice in the late 1800s came down to being either a 'guest at the table' or 'meat' on the table." What did Sugita mean by this statement? What was happening during this period that might have led Sugita to make such a statement? Do you think Sugita's analogy (guest or meat) worked? Why or why not? Answer on a separate sheet.

PART II: According to Sugita's statement, Japan had two choices. Depending on the choice, the West represented either a threat or an opportunity. Based on your reading of Dower's essay and your textbook, as well as your examination of the woodblock prints accompanying Dower's essay, do you think that Japan responded to the West as a threat or an opportunity? Present your answer in a PowerPoint presentation using the woodblock prints from the "Visualizing Cultures: Throwing Off Asia I" website.

As you organize your presentation, consider the following questions:

- What specific policies did the Japanese government put in place in response to the Western challenge?
- How effective do these policies appear to have been?
- How did Japanese people respond?
- Based on the text and the accompanying primary source woodblock prints that document the period, was Japan on its way to becoming meat or a guest at the table?

Your presentation must have a title slide that includes your thesis and group members' names. Each of the five additional slides must include a different woodblock print or portion of a woodblock print and your explanation of how that print supports your thesis. Woodblock prints, in total or in part, may not be used more than once in the presentation.

Part II is to be completed in groups of two or three.

Meiji Era Woodblock Prints: Images of Modernization

Woodblock prints, were a form of Japanese popular art--affordable, disposable, and produced commercially. During the Tokugawa period, they depicted images of the theater, pleasure quarters, and landscapes. Meiji woodblock prints reflect the use of new synthetic dyes adopted from Europe and the depiction of new subject matters such as current events which had been censored by the Tokugawa government. Around 1900, photography and postcards replaced woodblock print "reportage" in Japan.

1. Go online to view the four woodblock prints listed below. Sketch each image and take notes on what you observe. Analyze the images for changes and continuities in the Meiji era. Note what groups in Japanese society would have been affected by each change or continuity. Pay attention to clothing and other details. Consider when and why each image was created.

Meiji Era Woodblock Print	Sketch	Notes
A. <i>Famous Places in Tokyo: Picture of Azuma Bridge and a Distant View of a Torpedo Explosion</i> , by Inoue Tankei, July 1888 [2000.395]. Sharf Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Massachusetts Institute of Technology © 2008 Visualizing Cultures, http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/thro/wing_off_asia_01/2000_395_1.html		
B. <i>Famous Places in Tokyo: True View of the Post Office at Edobashi</i> , by Kobayashi Ikuhide, 1889 [2000.509]. Sharf Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Massachusetts Institute of Technology © 2008 Visualizing Cultures, http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/thro/wing_off_asia_01/2000_509_1.html		

<p>C. <i>Illustration of Ladies Sewing</i>, by Adachi Ginkō, 1887 [11.18172.74]. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Massachusetts Institute of Technology © 2008 Visualizing Cultures http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/throwing_off_asia_01/gallery/pages/11_18171.htm</p>		
<p>D. <i>Illustration of the Foreign Buildings along the Kaigandori Viewed from the Yokohama Wharves</i>, by Hiroshige III, c. 1870 [2000.506]. Sharf Collection, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Massachusetts Institute of Technology © 2008 Visualizing Cultures http://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/throwing_off_asia_01/2000_506_1.html</p>		

2. Compare your findings from the images with your notes from the textbook section on Meiji Japan. Do these sources agree or disagree?

Meiji Era PowerPoint Notes Format

Use this page to take notes on the images in the PowerPoint. Note the title of each image or slide and look for changes and continuities during the Meiji era. Think about what groups of people would have been affected by each. If you have ideas about why each image was created, note those.

Slide 1 Title of PowerPoint: Notes:	Slide 2 Title of Image: Notes:	Slide 3 Title of Image: Notes:	Slide 4 Title of Image: Notes:
Slide 5 Title of Image: Notes:	Slide 6 Title of Image: Notes:	Slide 7 Title of Image: Notes:	Slide 8 Title of Image: Notes:
Slide 9 Title of Image: Notes:	Slide 10 Title of Image: Notes:		

Stability in Transition

Susan B. Hanley is a historian who has studied material culture in Japan. Material culture includes the objects created or built by humans. Thus, Hanley has studied architecture, food, clothing, modes of transportation, and the like.

Below are some of her findings about how housing and clothing changed and stayed the same from the Tokugawa Period to the Meiji Period.

As you read your assigned section, consider the question, *Was modernization the dominant feature of daily life in Meiji Japan?* Look for how this source agrees or disagrees with other sources. Be prepared to share out.

Housing

- Housing is expensive and needs to last for many years. Thus, it tends to change slowly. This was true during the Meiji Period, when housing in Japan changed slowly.
- Tokyo and other large cities saw a few Western-style buildings constructed. Often made of brick, these buildings received a lot of attention as unusual structures, brought from other lands. But most people did not see them as examples they should follow in building their own homes. In addition, wealthy families that built Western-style homes tended to use the Western rooms for entertaining. The families actually lived in Japanese-style rooms.
- Changes in homes during the Meiji Period often reflected the adoption of innovations from the Tokugawa Period or earlier. For example, more people living in cities built homes with *genkan* (a particular type of entryway). *Genkan* had, in the Tokugawa era, been considered part of the samurai style. Having a *genkan* was a status symbol for workers living in cities.
- People in rural areas during the Meiji Period also adopted innovations from the Tokugawa era. People whose homes had dirt floors were able to install wood floors. People with wood floors were able to add tatami mats. This made homes much cleaner.
- Another innovation from the Tokugawa era that was used more widely during the Meiji Period was greater use of *shoji*, sliding doors with paper. Some Japanese modified this style by inserting glass. Use of *shoji* was one of several changes that made homes lighter inside during the Meiji Period.

Clothing

- Many Western clothing styles were impractical for Japanese people of the Meiji era. For example, Western women of the time wore long full skirts. These skirts were simply too big to work in, as well as move around or sit on the floor in Japanese homes. In addition, they would have been a major problem in Japanese toilets, which required squatting.

Source: Susan B. Hanley. *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan: The Hidden Legacy of Material Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 155-159, 166-168.

- Western shoes were also impractical. Westerners of the time wore high shoes that buttoned up. But Japanese people took their shoes off when they went inside. Undoing all those buttons would have been time-consuming.
- Japanese footwear did change during the Meiji Period. More people adopted styles that had first appeared during the Tokugawa Period. Instead of going barefoot, people wore straw sandals or wooden clogs.
- Western ideas did influence the appearance of Japanese people during the Meiji Period. Men cut their hair short and started wearing caps and hats. Women stopped blackening their teeth. Western hairstyles for women only caught on in the period following the Meiji era.
- Some Western accessories became popular in Japan. These included Western-style umbrellas and watches. Japanese people began wearing wool coats, cloaks, or shawls for warmth. This outer wear was worn over the kimono. Wool was expensive because it had to be imported, so its use was most common among people with some wealth.
- Government officials wore Western suits. In fact, in 1871, the emperor ordered high-ranking officials to wear suits. However, when these officials got home from work, they changed into Japanese-style clothes. Members of the military also wore Western-style uniforms.