





# Internal Troubles, External Threats

## China, the Ottoman Empire, and Japan

1800–1914

### The External Challenge: European Industry and Empire

New Motives, New Means  
New Perceptions of the “Other”

### Reversal of Fortune: China’s Century of Crisis

The Crisis Within  
Western Pressures  
The Failure of Conservative Modernization

### The Ottoman Empire and the West in the Nineteenth Century

“The Sick Man of Europe”  
Reform and Its Opponents  
Outcomes: Comparing China and the Ottoman Empire

### The Japanese Difference: The Rise of a New East Asian Power

The Tokugawa Background  
American Intrusion and the Meiji Restoration  
Modernization Japanese Style  
Japan and the World

### Reflections: Success and Failure in History

#### Considering the Evidence

Documents: Voices from the Opium War  
Visual Sources: Japanese Perceptions of the West

In the early twenty-first century, Japanese history textbooks became a serious issue in the relationship between Japan and its Chinese neighbor. From a Chinese point of view, those textbooks had minimized or whitewashed Japanese atrocities committed against China during World War II. In particular, many Chinese were outraged at the treatment of the so-called Rape of Nanjing, which witnessed the killing of perhaps 200,000 people, most of them civilians, and the rape of countless women. “Nanjing city was soaked with bloodshed and piles of bodies were everywhere,” declared one survivor of those events. “Japanese rightist groups distort history and attempt to cover the truth of Nanjing Massacre. This makes me extremely angry.”<sup>1</sup> Another issue was the Japanese use of Chinese “comfort women,” perhaps 200,000 of them, sexual slaves forced to service Japanese troops. Japan, they argued, had not sufficiently acknowledged this outrage in their history textbooks, nor had the Japanese government adequately apologized for it.

To an observer from, say, the fifteenth century or even the eighteenth century, all of this—Japanese aggression during World War II, its enormous economic success after the war, and the continuing fear and resentment of Japan reflected in the textbook controversy—would have seemed strange indeed. For many centuries, after all, Japan had lived in the shadow of its giant Chinese neighbor, borrowing many elements of Chinese culture. Certainly it was never a threat to China. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, however, a remarkable reversal of roles occurred in East Asia when both China and Japan experienced a series of internal crises and, at the

**Carving Up the Pie of China:** In this French cartoon from the late 1890s, the Great Powers of the day (from left to right: Great Britain’s Queen Victoria, Germany’s Kaiser Wilhelm, Russia’s Tsar Nicholas II, a female figure representing France, and the Meiji emperor of Japan) participate in dividing China, while a Chinese figure behind them tries helplessly to stop the partition of his country. (Gianni Dagli Orti/The Art Archive)

same time, had to confront the novel reality of an industrialized, newly powerful, intrusive Western world. It was their very different responses to these internal crises and external challenges that led to their changed relationship in the century or more that followed and to the continuing suspicions and tensions that still characterize their relationship.

CHINA AND JAPAN WERE NOT ALONE IN FACING THE EXPANSIVE FORCES OF EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES. During the nineteenth century, and in some places earlier, most of the peoples of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, as well as those living in the newly independent states of Latin America, were required to deal with European or American imperialism of one kind or another. Whatever their other differences, this was a common thread that gave these diverse peoples something of a shared history.

But—and this can hardly be emphasized too strongly—dealing with Europe was not the only item on their agendas. Many African peoples were occupied with Islamic revival movements and the rise and fall of their own states; population growth and peasant rebellion wracked China; the great empires of the Islamic world shrank or disappeared; Hindus and Muslims persisted in their sometimes competitive and sometimes cooperative relationship in India; and rivalry among competing elites troubled Latin American societies. Encounters with an expansive Europe were conditioned everywhere by particular local circumstances. Those encounters provided a mirror in which the peoples of Asia and Africa viewed themselves, as they alternately celebrated, criticized, and sought to transform their own cultures.

This chapter examines the experience of societies that confronted these crises while retaining their formal independence, with China, the Ottoman Empire, and Japan as primary examples. The following chapter turns the spotlight on the colonial experience of those peoples who fell under the official control of one or another of the European powers. In both cases, they were dealing with a new thrust of European expansion, one that drew its energy from the Industrial Revolution.

Four dimensions of an expansive Europe confronted these societies. First, they faced the immense military might and political ambitions of rival European states. Second, they became enmeshed in networks of trade, investment, and sometimes migration that radiated out from an industrializing and capitalist Europe to generate a new world economy. Third, they were touched by various aspects of traditional European culture, as some among them learned the French, English, or German language; converted to Christianity; or studied European literature and philosophy. Finally, Asians and Africans engaged with the culture of modernity—its scientific rationalism; its technological achievements; its belief in a better future; and its ideas of nationalism, socialism, feminism, and individualism. In those epic encounters, they sometimes resisted, at other times accommodated, and almost always adapted what came from the West. They were active participants in the global drama of nineteenth-century world history, not simply its passive victims or beneficiaries.

## The External Challenge: European Industry and Empire

More than at any other time, the nineteenth century was Europe's age of global expansion. During that century, Europe became the center of the world economy, with ties of trade and investment in every corner of the globe. Between 1812 and 1914, millions of Europeans migrated to new homes outside Europe. Missionaries and explorers penetrated the distant interiors of Asia and Africa. European states incorporated India, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the islands of the Pacific into their overseas colonial empires and seriously diminished the sovereignty and independence of the once proud domains of China, the Ottoman Empire, and Persia. Many newly independent states in Latin America became economically dependent on Europe and the United States (see pp. 846–48). How can we explain such dramatic changes in the scope, character, and intensity of European expansion?

### *New Motives, New Means*

Behind much of Europe's nineteenth-century expansion lay the massive fact of its Industrial Revolution. That process gave rise to new economic needs, many of which found solutions abroad. The enormous productivity of industrial technology and Europe's growing affluence now created the need for extensive raw materials and agricultural products: wheat from the American Midwest and southern Russia, meat from Argentina, bananas from Central America, rubber from Brazil, cocoa and palm oil from West Africa, tea from Ceylon, gold and diamonds from South Africa. This demand radically changed patterns of economic and social life in the countries of their origin.

Furthermore, Europe needed to sell its own products. One of the peculiarities of industrial capitalism was that it periodically produced more manufactured goods than its own people could afford to buy. By 1840, for example, Britain was exporting 60 percent of its cotton-cloth production, annually sending 200 million yards to Europe, 300 million yards to Latin America, and 145 million yards to India. This last figure is particularly significant because for centuries Europe had offered little that Asian societies were willing to buy. Part of European and American fascination with China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries lay in the enormous potential market represented by its huge population.

Much the same could be said for capital, for European investors often found it more profitable to invest their money abroad than at home. Between 1910 and 1913, Britain was sending about half of its savings abroad as foreign investment. In 1914, it had about 3.7 billion pounds sterling invested abroad, about equally divided between Europe, North America, and Australia on the one hand and Asia, Africa, and Latin America on the other hand.

Wealthy Europeans also saw social benefits to foreign markets, which served to keep Europe's factories humming and its workers employed. The English imperialist Cecil Rhodes confided his fears to a friend:

#### ■ Change

In what ways did the Industrial Revolution shape the character of nineteenth-century European imperialism?

Yesterday I attended a meeting of the unemployed in London and having listened to the wild speeches which were nothing more than a scream for bread, I returned home convinced more than ever of the importance of imperialism. . . . In order to save the 40 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a murderous civil war, the colonial politicians must open up new areas to absorb the excess population and create new markets for the products of the mines and factories. . . . The British Empire is a matter of bread and butter. If you wish to avoid civil war, then you must become an imperialist.<sup>2</sup>

Thus imperialism promised to solve the class conflicts of an industrializing society while avoiding revolution or the serious redistribution of wealth.

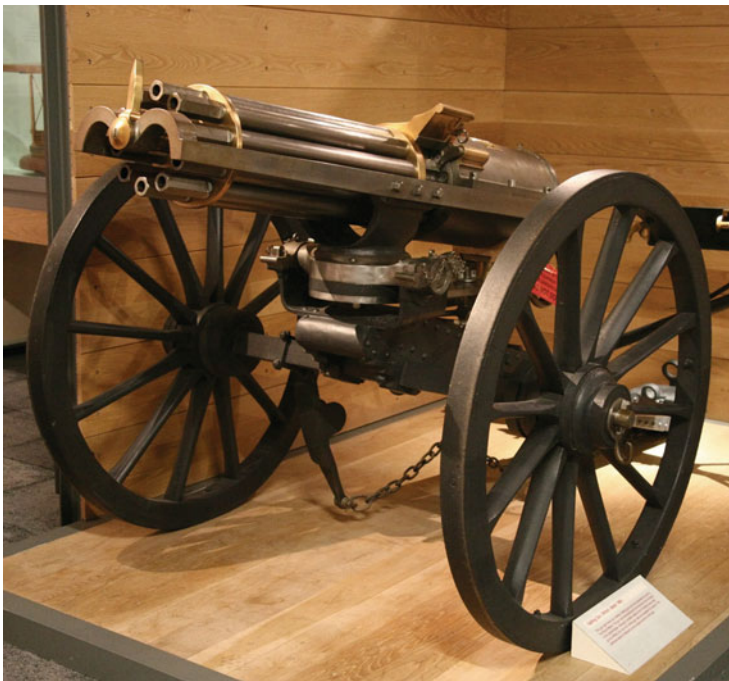
But what made imperialism so broadly popular in Europe, especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was the growth of mass nationalism. By 1871, the unification of Italy and Germany made Europe's always competitive political system even more so, and much of this rivalry spilled over into the struggle for colonies or economic concessions in Asia and Africa. Colonies and spheres of influence abroad became a symbol of national "Great Power" status, and their acquisition was a matter of urgency, even if they possessed little immediate economic value. After 1875, it seemed to matter, even to ordinary people, whether some remote corner of Africa or some obscure Pacific island was in British, French, or German hands. Imperialism, in short, appealed on economic and social grounds to the wealthy or ambitious,

seemed politically and strategically necessary in the game of international power politics, and was emotionally satisfying to almost everyone. It was a potent mix.

If the industrial era made overseas expansion more desirable or even urgent, it also provided new means for achieving those goals. Steam-driven ships, moving through the new Suez Canal, allowed Europeans to reach distant Asian and African ports more quickly and predictably and to penetrate interior rivers as well. The underwater telegraph made possible almost instant communication with far-flung outposts of empire. The discovery of quinine to prevent malaria greatly reduced European death rates in the tropics. Breech-loading rifles and machine guns vastly widened the military gap between Europeans and everyone else.

### The Gatling Gun

The Gatling gun, which was designed by the American Richard Gatling during the Civil War, was one of the earliest machine guns. By the late nineteenth century, this weapon, together with breech-loading rifles, gave European powers and the United States an enormous military advantage. (Courtesy, Royal Artillery Historical Trust)



## *New Perceptions of the “Other”*

Industrialization also occasioned a marked change in the way Europeans perceived themselves and others. In earlier centuries, Europeans had defined others largely in religious terms. “They” were heathen; “we” were Christian. Even as they held on to this sense of religious superiority, Europeans nonetheless adopted many of the ideas and techniques of more advanced societies. They held many aspects of Chinese and Indian civilization in high regard; they freely mixed and mingled with Asian and African elites and often married their women; some even saw the more technologically simple peoples of Africa and America as “noble savages.”

With the advent of the industrial age, however, Europeans developed a secular arrogance that fused with or in some cases replaced their notions of religious superiority. They had, after all, unlocked the secrets of nature, created a society of unprecedented wealth, and used both to produce unsurpassed military power. These became the criteria by which Europeans judged both themselves and the rest of the world.

By such standards, it is not surprising that their opinions of other cultures dropped sharply. The Chinese, who had been highly praised in the eighteenth century, were reduced in the nineteenth century to the image of “John Chinaman,” weak, cunning, obstinately conservative, and, in large numbers, a distinct threat, the “yellow peril” of late-nineteenth-century European fears. African societies, which had been regarded even in the slave-trade era as nations and their leaders as kings, were demoted in nineteenth-century European eyes to the status of tribes led by chiefs as a means of emphasizing their “primitive” qualities.

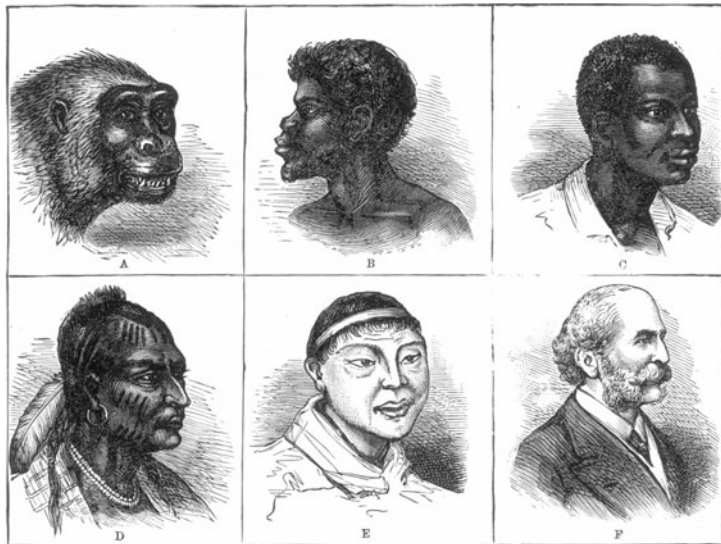
Increasingly, Europeans viewed the culture and achievements of Asian and African peoples through the prism of a new kind of racism, expressed now in terms of modern science. Although physical differences had often been a basis of fear or dislike, in the nineteenth century Europeans increasingly used the prestige and apparatus of science to support their racial preferences and prejudices. Phrenologists, craniologists, and sometimes physicians used allegedly scientific methods and numerous instruments to classify the size and shape of human skulls and concluded, not surprisingly, that those of whites were larger and therefore more advanced. Nineteenth-century biologists, who classified the varieties of plants and animals, applied these notions of rank to varieties of human beings as well. The result was a hierarchy of races, with the whites, naturally, on top and the less developed “child races” beneath them. Race, in this view, determined human intelligence, moral development, and destiny. “Race is everything,” declared the British anatomist Robert Knox in 1850; “civilization depends on it.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, as the germ theory of disease took hold in nineteenth-century Europe, it was accompanied by fears that contact with “inferior” peoples threatened the health and even the biological future of more advanced or “superior” peoples.

These ideas influenced how Europeans viewed their own global expansion. Almost everyone saw it as inevitable, a natural outgrowth of a superior civilization.

### ■ Change

What contributed to changing European views of Asians and Africans in the nineteenth century?





PROGRESSIVE DEVELOPMENT OF MAN.—(2) EVOLUTION ILLUSTRATED WITH THE SIX CORRESPONDING LIVING FORMS.

### European Racial Images

This nineteenth-century chart, depicting the “Progressive Development of Man” from apes to modern Europeans, reflected the racial categories that were so prominent at the time. It also highlights the influence of Darwin’s evolutionary ideas as they were applied to varieties of human beings. (The Granger Collection, New York)

For many, though, this viewpoint was tempered with a genuine, if condescending, sense of responsibility to the “weaker races” that Europe was fated to dominate. “Superior races have a right, because they have a duty,” declared the French politician Jules Ferry in 1883. “They have the duty to civilize the inferior races.”<sup>4</sup> That “civilizing mission,” as Europeans regarded it, included bringing Christianity to the heathen, good government to disordered lands, work discipline and production for the market to “lazy natives,” a measure of education to the ignorant and illiterate, clothing to the naked, and health care to the sick, while suppressing “native customs” that ran counter to West-

ern ways of living. All of this was defined as “progress” and “civilization.”

Another, harsher side to the ideology of imperialism derived from an effort to apply, or perhaps misapply, the evolutionary thinking of Charles Darwin to an understanding of human history. The key concept of this “social Darwinism,” though not necessarily shared by Darwin himself, was “the survival of the fittest,” suggesting that European dominance inevitably involved the displacement or destruction of backward peoples or “unfit” races. Referring to native peoples of Australia, a European bishop declared:

Everyone who knows a little about aboriginal races is aware that those races which are of a low type mentally and who are at the same time weak in constitution rapidly die out when their country comes to be occupied by a different race much more rigorous, robust, and pushing than themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Such views made imperialism, war, and aggression seem both natural and progressive, for they were predicated on the notion that weeding out “weaker” peoples of the world would allow the “stronger” to flourish. These were some of the ideas with which industrializing and increasingly powerful Europeans confronted the peoples of Asia and Africa in the nineteenth century. Among those confrontations, none was more important than Europe’s encounter with China.

## Reversal of Fortune: China’s Century of Crisis

In 1793 in a famous letter to King George III, the Chinese emperor Qianlong sharply rebuffed British requests for a less restricted trading relationship with his country. “Our Celestial Empire possesses all things in prolific abundance...,” he declared. “There was therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians” (see

Document 19.1, pp. 905–07). Qianlong’s snub simply continued the pattern of the previous several centuries, during which Chinese authorities had strictly controlled and limited the activities of European missionaries and merchants. By 1912, little more than a century later, China’s long-established imperial state had collapsed, and the country had been transformed from a central presence in the Afro-Eurasian world to a weak and dependent participant in a European-dominated world system. It was a stunning reversal of fortune for a country that in Chinese eyes was the civilized center of the entire world—in their terms, the Middle Kingdom.

### *The Crisis Within*

In many ways, China was the victim of its own earlier success. Its robust economy and American food crops had enabled massive population growth, from about 100 million people in 1685 to some 430 million in 1853. Unlike Europe, though, where a similar population spurt took place, no Industrial Revolution accompanied this vast increase in the number of people, nor was agricultural production able to keep up. The result was growing pressure on the land, smaller farms for China’s huge peasant population, and, in all too many cases, unemployment, impoverishment, misery, and starvation.

Furthermore, China’s famed centralized and bureaucratic state did not enlarge itself to keep pace with the growing population. In 1400, the lowest administrative unit, a county, encompassed perhaps 50,000 people and was governed by a magistrate and a small staff. By 1800, that same magistrate had to deal with 200,000 people, with no increase in his staff. Thus the state was increasingly unable to effectively perform its many functions, such as tax collection, flood control, social welfare, and public security. Gradually the central state lost power to provincial officials and local gentry. Among such officials, corruption was endemic, and harsh treatment of peasants was common. According to an official report issued in 1852, “[D]ay and night soldiers are sent out to harass taxpayers. Sometimes corporal punishments are imposed upon tax delinquents; some of them are so badly beaten to exact the last penny that blood and flesh fly in all directions.”<sup>6</sup>

This combination of circumstances, traditionally associated with a declining dynasty, gave rise to growing numbers of bandit gangs roaming the countryside and, even more dangerous, to outright peasant rebellion. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, such rebellions drew upon a variety of peasant grievances and found leadership in charismatic figures proclaiming a millenarian religious message. Increasingly they also expressed opposition to the Qing dynasty on account of its foreign Manchu origins. “We wait only for the northern region to be returned to a Han emperor,” declared one rebel group in the early nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup>

The culmination of China’s internal crisis lay in the Taiping Uprising, which set much of the country aflame between 1850 and 1864. This was a different kind of peasant upheaval. Its leaders largely rejected Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism alike, finding their primary ideology in a unique form of Christianity. Its leading

#### ■ Causation

What accounts for the massive peasant rebellions of nineteenth-century China?



figure, Hong Xiuquan (1814–1864), proclaimed himself the younger brother of Jesus, sent to cleanse the world of demons and to establish a “heavenly kingdom of great peace.” Nor were these leaders content to restore an idealized Chinese society; instead they insisted on genuinely revolutionary change. They called for the abolition of private property; a radical redistribution of land; the equality of men and women; the end of foot binding, prostitution, and opium smoking; and the organization of society into sexually segregated military camps of men and women. Hong fiercely denounced the Qing dynasty as foreigners who had “poisoned China” and “defiled the emperor’s throne.” His cousin, Hong Rengan, developed plans for transforming China into an industrial nation, complete with railroads, health insurance for all, newspapers, and widespread public education.

With a rapidly swelling number of followers, Taiping forces swept out of southern China and established their capital in Nanjing in 1853. For a time, the days of the Qing dynasty appeared to be over. But divisions and indecisiveness within the Taiping leadership and their inability to link up with several other rebel groups also operating separately in China provided an opening for Qing dynasty loyalists to rally and by 1864 to crush this most unusual of peasant rebellions. Western military support for pro-Qing forces likewise contributed to their victory. It was not, however, the imperial military forces of the central government that defeated the rebels. Instead provincial gentry landowners, fearing the radicalism of the Taiping program, mobilized their own armies, which in the end crushed the rebel forces.

Thus the Qing dynasty was saved, but it was also weakened as the provincial gentry consolidated their power at the expense of the central state. The intense conservatism of both imperial authorities and their gentry supporters postponed any resolution of China’s peasant problem, delayed any real change for China’s women, and deferred vigorous efforts at modernization until the communists came to power in the mid-twentieth century. More immediately, the devastation and destruction occasioned by this massive civil war seriously disrupted and weakened China’s economy. Estimates of the number of lives lost range from 20 to 30 million. In human terms, it was the most costly conflict in the world of the nineteenth century, and it took China more than a decade to recover from that devastation. China’s internal crisis in general and the Taiping Uprising in particular also provided a highly unfavorable setting for the country’s encounter with a Europe newly invigorated by the Industrial Revolution.

### *Western Pressures*

■ **Connection**  
How did Western pressures stimulate change in China during the nineteenth century?

Nowhere was the shifting balance of global power in the nineteenth century more evident than in China’s changing relationship with Europe, a transformation that registered most dramatically in the famous Opium Wars. Derived from Arab traders in the eighth century or earlier, opium had long been used on a small scale as a drinkable medicine, regarded as a magical cure for dysentery and described by one poet as “fit for Buddha.”<sup>8</sup> It did not become a serious problem until the late eighteenth century,

## Snapshot Chinese/British Trade at Canton, 1835–1836<sup>9</sup>

What do these figures suggest about the role of opium in British trade with China? Calculate opium exports as a percentage of British exports to China, Britain's trade deficit without opium, and its trade surplus with opium. What did this pattern mean for China?

	Item	Value (in Spanish dollars)
<b>British Exports to Canton</b>	Opium	17,904,248
	Cotton	8,357,394
	All other items (sandlewood, lead, iron, tin, cotton yarn and piece goods, tin plates, watches, clocks)	6,164,981
	Total	32,426,623
<b>British Imports from Canton</b>	Tea (black and green)	13,412,243
	Raw silk	3,764,115
	Vermilion	705,000
	All other goods (sugar products, camphor, silver, gold, copper, musk)	5,971,541
	Total	23,852,899

when the British began to use opium, grown and processed in India, to cover their persistent trade imbalance with China. By the 1830s, British, American, and other Western merchants had found an enormous, growing, and very profitable market for this highly addictive drug. From 1,000 chests (each weighing roughly 150 pounds) in 1773, China's opium imports exploded to more than 23,000 chests in 1832.

By then, Chinese authorities recognized a mounting problem on many levels. Because opium importation was illegal, it had to be smuggled into China, thus flouting Chinese law. Bribed to turn a blind eye to the illegal trade, many officials were corrupted. Furthermore, a massive outflow of silver to pay for the opium reversed China's centuries-long ability to attract much of the world's silver supply, and this imbalance caused serious economic problems. Finally, China found itself with many millions of addicts—men and women, court officials, students preparing for exams, soldiers going into combat, and common laborers seeking to overcome the pain and drudgery of their work. Following an extended debate at court in 1836—whether to legalize the drug or to crack down on its use—the emperor decided on suppression (see Documents 19.2 and 19.3, pp. 907–10). An upright official, Commissioner



#### Addiction to Opium

Throughout the nineteenth century, opium imports created a massive addiction problem in China, as this photograph of an opium den from around 1900 suggests. Not until the early twentieth century did the British prove willing to curtail the opium trade from their Indian colony. (Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis)

Lin Zexu, led the campaign against opium use as a kind of “drug czar.” His measures included seizing and destroying, without compensation, more than 3 million pounds of opium from Western traders and expelling them from the country.

The British, offended by this violation of property rights and emboldened by their new military power, sent a large naval expedition to China, determined to end the restrictive conditions under which they had long traded with that country. In the process, they would teach the Chinese a lesson about the virtues of free trade and the “proper” way to conduct relations among countries. Thus

began the first Opium War, in which Britain’s industrialized military might proved decisive. (See Documents: Voices from the Opium War, pp. 905–13, for more on the origins of that conflict.) The Treaty of Nanjing, which ended the war in 1842, largely on British terms, imposed numerous restrictions on Chinese sovereignty and opened five ports to European traders. Its provisions reflected the changed balance of global power that had emerged with Britain’s Industrial Revolution. To the Chinese, that agreement represented the first of the “unequal treaties” that seriously eroded China’s independence by the end of the century.

But it was not the last of those treaties. Britain’s victory in a second Opium War (1856–1858) was accompanied by the brutal vandalizing of the emperor’s exquisite Summer Palace outside Beijing and resulted in further humiliations. Still more ports were opened to foreign traders. Now those foreigners were allowed to travel freely and buy land in China, to preach Christianity under the protection of Chinese authorities, and to patrol some of China’s rivers. Furthermore, the Chinese were forbidden to use the character for “barbarians” to refer to the British in official documents. Following military defeats at the hands of the French (1885) and Japanese (1895), China lost control of Vietnam, Korea, and Taiwan. By the end of the century, the Western nations plus Japan and Russia all had carved out spheres of influence within China, granting themselves special privileges to establish military bases, extract raw materials, and build railroads. Many Chinese believed that their country was being “carved up like a melon” (see Map 19.1 and the photo on p. 876).

Coupled with its internal crisis, China’s encounter with European imperialism had reduced the proud Middle Kingdom to dependency on the Western powers as it became part of a European-based “informal empire.” China was no longer the center of civilization to which barbarians paid homage and tribute, but just one nation





**Map 19.1** China and the World in the Nineteenth Century

As China was reeling from massive internal upheavals during the nineteenth century, it also faced external assaults from Russia, Japan, and various European powers. By the end of the century, large parts of China were divided into spheres of influence, each affiliated with one of the major industrial powers of the day.

among many others, and a weak dependent nation at that. The Qing dynasty remained in power, but in a weakened condition, which served European interests well and Chinese interests poorly. Restrictions imposed by the unequal treaties clearly inhibited China's industrialization, as foreign goods and foreign investment flooded the country largely unrestricted. Chinese businessmen mostly served foreign firms, rather than developing as an independent capitalist class capable of leading China's own Industrial Revolution.

## *The Failure of Conservative Modernization*

### ■ Connection

What strategies did China adopt to confront its various problems? In what ways did these strategies reflect China's own history and culture as well as the new global order?

Chinese authorities were not passive in the face of their country's mounting crises, both internal and external. Known as “self-strengthening,” their policies during the 1860s and 1870s sought to reinvigorate a traditional China while borrowing cautiously from the West. An overhauled examination system, designed to recruit qualified candidates for official positions, sought the “good men” who could cope with the massive reconstruction that China faced in the wake of the Taiping rebellion. Support for landlords and the repair of dikes and irrigation helped restore rural social and economic order. A few industrial factories producing textiles and steel were established, coal mines were expanded, and a telegraph system was initiated. One Chinese general in 1863 confessed his humiliation that “Chinese weapons are far inferior to those of foreign countries.”<sup>10</sup> A number of modern arsenals, shipyards, and foreign-language schools sought to remedy this deficiency.

Self-strengthening as an overall program for China's modernization was inhibited by the fears of conservative leaders that urban, industrial, or commercial development would erode the power and privileges of the landlord class. Furthermore, the new industries remained largely dependent on foreigners for machinery, materials, and expertise. And they served to strengthen local authorities who largely controlled them, rather than the central Chinese state.

The general failure of “self-strengthening” became apparent at the end of the century, when an antforeign movement known as the Boxer uprising (1898–1901) erupted in northern China. Led by militia organizations calling themselves the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, the “Boxers” killed numerous Europeans and Chinese Christians and laid siege to the foreign embassies in Beijing. When Western powers and Japan occupied Beijing to crush the rebellion and imposed a huge payment on China as a punishment, it was clear that China remained a dependent country, substantially under foreign control.

No wonder, then, that growing numbers of educated Chinese, including many in official elite positions, became highly disillusioned with the Qing dynasty, which was both foreign and ineffective in protecting China. By the late 1890s, such people were organizing a variety of clubs, study groups, and newspapers to examine China's desperate situation and to explore alternative paths. The names of these organizations reflect their outlook—the National Rejuvenation Study Society, Society to Protect the Nation, and Understand the National Shame Society. They admired not only Western science and technology but also Western political practices that limited the authority of the ruler and permitted wider circles of people to take part in public life. They believed that only a truly unified nation in which rulers and ruled were closely related could save China from dismemberment at the hands of foreign imperialists. Thus was born the immensely powerful force of Chinese nationalism, directed against both the foreign imperialists and the foreign Qing dynasty, which many held responsible for China's nineteenth-century disasters.

The Qing dynasty response to these new pressures proved inadequate. More extensive reform in the early twentieth century, including the end of the old examination system and the promise of a national parliament, was a classic case of too little too late. In 1911, the ancient imperial order that had governed China for two millennia collapsed, with only a modest nudge from organized revolutionaries. It was the end of a long era in China and the beginning of an immense struggle over the country's future.

## The Ottoman Empire and the West in the Nineteenth Century

Like China, the Islamic world represented a highly successful civilization that felt little need to learn from the “infidels” or “barbarians” of the West until it collided with an expanding and aggressive Europe in the nineteenth century. Unlike China, though, Islamic civilization had been a near neighbor to Europe for 1,000 years. Its most prominent state, the Ottoman Empire, had long governed substantial parts of the Balkans and posed a clear military and religious threat to Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But if its encounter with the West was less abrupt than that of China, it was no less consequential. Neither the Ottoman Empire nor China fell under direct colonial rule, but both were much diminished as the changing balance of global power took hold; both launched efforts at “defensive modernization” aimed at strengthening their states and preserving their independence; and in both societies, some people held tightly to old identities and values, even as others embraced new loyalties associated with nationalism and modernity.

### *“The Sick Man of Europe”*

In 1750, the Ottoman Empire was still the central political fixture of a widespread Islamic world. From its Turkish heartland of Anatolia, it ruled over much of the Arab world, from which Islam had come. It protected pilgrims on their way to Mecca, governed Egypt and coastal North Africa, and incorporated millions of Christians in the Balkans. Its ruler, the sultan, claimed the role of caliph, successor to the Prophet Muhammad, and was widely viewed as the leader, defender, and primary representative of the Islamic world. But by the middle, and certainly by the end, of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was no longer able to deal with Europe from a position of equality, let alone superiority. Among the Great Powers of the West, it was now known as “the sick man of Europe.” Within the Muslim world, the Ottoman Empire, once viewed as “the strong sword of Islam,” was unable to prevent region after region—India, Indonesia, West Africa, Central Asia—from falling under the control of Christian powers.

The Ottoman Empire's own domains shrank considerably at the hands of Russian, British, Austrian, and French aggression (see Map 19.2). In 1798, Napoleon's invasion

#### ■ Change

What lay behind the decline of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century?





**Map 19.2** The Contraction of the Ottoman Empire

Foreign aggression and nationalist movements substantially diminished the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century, but they also stimulated a variety of efforts to revive and reform Ottoman society.

of Egypt, which had long been a province of the Ottoman Empire, was a particularly stunning blow. A contemporary observer, Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, described the French entry into Cairo:

[T]he French entered the city like a torrent rushing through the alleys and streets without anything to stop them, like demons of the Devil's army. . . . And the French trod in the Mosque of al-Azhar with their shoes, carrying swords and rifles. . . . They plundered whatever they found in the mosque. . . . They treated the books and Quranic volumes as trash. . . . Furthermore, they soiled the mosque, blowing their spit in it, pissing and defecating in it. They guzzled wine and smashed bottles in the central court.<sup>11</sup>

When the French left, a virtually independent Egypt pursued a modernizing and empire-building program of its own and on one occasion came close to toppling the Ottoman Empire itself.

Beyond territorial losses to stronger European powers, other parts of the empire, such as Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania, achieved independence based on their own surging nationalism and support from the British or the Russians. The continued independence of the core region of the Ottoman Empire owed much to the inability of Europe's Great Powers to agree on how to divide it up among themselves.

Behind the contraction of the Ottoman Empire lay other problems. As in China, the central Ottoman state had weakened, particularly in its ability to raise necessary revenue, as provincial authorities and local warlords gained greater power. Moreover, the Janissaries, once the effective and innovative elite infantry units of the Ottoman Empire, lost their military edge, becoming a highly conservative force within the empire. The technological and military gap with the West was clearly growing.

Economically, the earlier centrality of the Ottoman and Arab lands in Afro-Eurasian commerce diminished as Europeans achieved direct oceanic access to the treasures of Asia. Competition from cheap European manufactured goods hit Ottoman artisans hard and led to urban riots protesting foreign imports. Furthermore, a series of agreements, known as capitulations, between European countries and the Ottoman Empire granted Westerners various exemptions from Ottoman law and taxation. Like the unequal treaties in China, these agreements facilitated European penetration of the Ottoman economy and became widely resented. Such measures eroded Ottoman sovereignty and reflected the changing position of that empire relative to Europe. So too did the growing indebtedness of the Ottoman Empire, which came to rely on foreign loans to finance its efforts at economic development. By 1882, its inability to pay the interest on those debts led to foreign control of much of its revenue-generating system and the outright occupation of Egypt by the British. Like China, the Ottoman Empire had fallen into a position of considerable dependency on Europe.

### *Reform and Its Opponents*

The leadership of the Ottoman Empire recognized many of its “illnesses” and during the nineteenth century mounted increasingly ambitious programs of “defensive modernization” that were earlier, more sustained, and far more vigorous than the timid and half-hearted measures of self-strengthening in China. One reason perhaps lay in the absence of any internal upheaval, such as the Taiping uprising in China, which threatened the very existence of the ruling dynasty. Nationalist revolts on the empire’s periphery, rather than Chinese-style peasant rebellion at the center, represented the primary internal crisis of nineteenth-century Ottoman history. Nor did the Middle East in general experience the explosive population growth that contributed so much to China’s nineteenth-century crisis. Furthermore, the long-established Ottoman leadership was Turkic and Muslim, culturally similar to its core population, whereas China’s Qing dynasty rulers were widely regarded as foreigners from Manchuria.

Ottoman reforms began in the late eighteenth century when Sultan Selim III sought to reorganize and update the army and to draw on European advisers and techniques. Even these modest innovations stirred the hostility of powerful factions among both the *ulama* (religious scholars) and the elite military corps of Janissaries, who saw them in conflict with both Islam and their own institutional interests. Opposition to his measures was so strong that Selim was overthrown in 1807 and then murdered.

#### ■ Change

In what different ways did the Ottoman state respond to its various problems?

Subsequent sultans, however, crushed the Janissaries and brought the ulama more thoroughly under state control than elsewhere in the Islamic world.

Then, in the several decades after 1839, more far-reaching reformist measures, known as Tanzimat (reorganization), took shape as the Ottoman leadership sought to provide the economic, social, and legal underpinnings for a strong and newly recentralized state. Factories producing cloth, paper, and armaments; modern mining operations; reclamation and resettlement of agricultural land; telegraphs, steamships, railroads, and a modern postal service; Western-style law codes and courts; new elementary and secondary schools—all of these new departures began a long process of modernization and Westernization in the Ottoman Empire.

Even more revolutionary, at least in principle, were changes in the legal status of the empire's diverse communities, which now gave non-Muslims equal rights under the law. An imperial proclamation of 1839 declared:

Every distinction or designation tending to make any class whatever of the subjects of my Empire inferior to another class, on account of their religion, language or race shall be forever effaced. . . . No subject of my Empire shall be hindered in the exercise of the religion that he professes. . . . All the subjects of my Empire, without distinction of nationality, shall be admissible to public employment.

This declaration represented a dramatic change that challenged the fundamentally Islamic character of the state. Mixed tribunals with representatives from various religious groups were established to hear cases involving non-Muslims. More Christians were appointed to high office. A mounting tide of secular legislation and secular

### The Ottoman Empire and the West

The intense interaction of the Ottoman Empire and the world of European powers is illustrated in this nineteenth-century Austrian painting, which depicts an elaborate gathering of Ottoman officials with members of the Austrian royal family around 1850. (Miramare Palace Trieste/Alfredo Dagli Orti/The Art Archive)





schools, drawing heavily on European models, now competed with traditional Islamic institutions.

The reform process raised profound and highly contested questions. What was the Ottoman Empire, and who were its people? To those who supported the reforms, the Ottoman Empire was a secular state whose people were loyal to the dynasty that ruled it, rather than a primarily Muslim state based on religious principles. This was the outlook of a new class spawned by the reform process itself—lower-level officials, military officers, writers, poets, and journalists, many of whom had a modern Western-style education. Dubbed the Young Ottomans, they were active during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, as they sought major changes in the Ottoman political system itself. They favored a more European-style democratic, constitutional regime that could curtail the absolute power of the emperor. Only such a political system, they felt, could mobilize the energies of the country to overcome backwardness and preserve the state against European aggression. Known as Islamic modernism, such ideas found expression in many parts of the Muslim world in the second half of the century. Muslim societies, they argued, needed to embrace Western technical and scientific knowledge, while rejecting its materialism. Islam in their view could accommodate a full modernity without sacrificing its essential religious character. After all, the Islamic world had earlier hosted impressive scientific achievements and had incorporated elements of Greek philosophical thinking.

In 1876, the Young Ottomans experienced a short-lived victory when the Sultan Abd al-Hamid (1876–1909) accepted a constitution and an elected parliament, but not for long. Under the pressure of war with Russia, the Sultan soon suspended the reforms and reverted to an older style of despotic rule for the next thirty years, even renewing the claim that he was the caliph, successor to the Prophet and the protector of Muslims everywhere.

Opposition to this revived despotism soon surfaced among both military and civilian elites known as the Young Turks. Largely abandoning any reference to Islam, they advocated a militantly secular public life, were committed to thoroughgoing modernization along European lines, and increasingly thought about the Ottoman Empire as a Turkish national state. “There is only one civilization, and that is European civilization,” declared Abdullah Cevdet, a prominent figure in the Young Turk movement. “Therefore we must borrow western civilization with both its rose and its thorn.”<sup>12</sup>

A military coup in 1908 finally allowed the Young Turks to exercise real power. They pushed for a radical secularization of schools, courts, and law codes; permitted elections and competing parties; established a single Law of Family Rights for all regardless of religion; and encouraged Turkish as the official language of the empire. They also opened up modern schools for women, allowed them to wear Western clothing, restricted polygamy, and permitted women to obtain divorces in some situations. But the nationalist conception of Ottoman identity antagonized non-Turkic peoples and helped stimulate Arab and other nationalisms in response. For some, a secular nationality was becoming the most important public loyalty, with Islam relegated to private life. Such nationalist sentiments contributed to the complete disintegration

### ■ Comparison

In what different ways did various groups define the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century?

of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, but the secularizing and Westernizing principles of the Young Turks informed the policies of the Turkish republic that replaced it.

### *Outcomes: Comparing China and the Ottoman Empire*

By the beginning of the twentieth century, both China and the Ottoman Empire, recently centers of proud and vibrant civilizations, had experienced the consequences of a rapidly shifting balance of global power. Now they were “semicolonies” within the “informal empires” of Europe, although they retained sufficient independence for their governments to launch catch-up efforts of defensive modernization. But neither was able to create the industrial economies or strong states required to fend off European intrusion and restore their former status in the world. Despite their diminished power, however, both China and the Ottoman Empire gave rise to new nationalist conceptions of society, which were initially small and limited in appeal but of great significance for the future.

In the early twentieth century, that future witnessed the end of both the Chinese and Ottoman empires. In China, the collapse of the imperial system in 1911 was followed by a vast revolutionary upheaval that by 1949 led to a communist regime within largely the same territorial space as the old empire. By contrast, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire following World War I led to the creation of a new but much smaller nation-state in the Turkish heartland of the old empire, having lost its vast Arab and European provinces.

China’s twentieth-century revolutionaries rejected traditional Confucian culture far more thoroughly than the secularizing leaders of modern Turkey rejected Islam. Almost everywhere in the Islamic world, traditional religion retained its hold on the private loyalties of most people and later in the twentieth century became a basis for social renewal in many places. Islamic civilization, unlike its Chinese counterpart, had many independent centers and was never so closely associated with a single state. Furthermore, it was embedded in a deeply religious tradition that was personally meaningful to millions of adherents, in contrast to the more elitist and secular outlook of Confucianism. Many rural Chinese, however, retained traditional Confucian values such as filial piety, and Confucianism has made something of a comeback in China over the past several decades. Nonetheless, Islam retained a hold on its civilization in the twentieth century rather more firmly than Confucianism did in China.

### **The Japanese Difference: The Rise of a New East Asian Power**

Like China and the Ottoman Empire, the island country of Japan confronted the aggressive power of the West during the nineteenth century, most notably in the form of U.S. commodore Matthew Perry’s “black ships,” which steamed into Tokyo Bay in 1853 and forcefully demanded that this reclusive nation open up to more “normal” relations with the world. However, the outcome of that encounter differed sharply

from the others. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Japan undertook a radical transformation of its society—a “revolution from above,” according to some historians—turning it into a powerful, modern, united, industrialized nation. It was an achievement that neither China nor the Ottoman Empire was able to duplicate. Far from succumbing to Western domination, Japan joined the club of imperialist countries by creating its own East Asian empire, largely at the expense of China. In building a society that was both modern and distinctly Japanese, Japan demonstrated that modernity was not a uniquely European phenomenon. This “Japanese miracle,” as some have called it, was both promising and ominous for the rest of Asia. How had it occurred?

### *The Tokugawa Background*

For 250 years prior to Perry’s arrival, Japan had been governed by a *shogun* (a military ruler) from the Tokugawa family who acted in the name of a revered but powerless emperor, who lived in Kyoto, 300 miles away from the seat of power in Edo (Tokyo). The chief task of this Tokugawa shogunate was to prevent the return of civil war among some 260 rival feudal lords, known as *daimyo*, each of whom had a cadre of armed retainers, the famed samurai warriors of Japanese tradition.

Based on their own military power and political skills, successive shoguns gave Japan more than two centuries of internal peace (1600–1850). To control the restive daimyo, they required these local authorities to create second homes in Edo, the country’s capital, where they had to live during alternate years. When they left for their rural residences, families stayed behind, almost as hostages. Nonetheless, the daimyo, especially the more powerful ones, retained substantial autonomy in their own domains and behaved in some ways like independent states with separate military forces, law codes, tax systems, and currencies. With no national army, no uniform currency, and little central authority at the local level, Tokugawa Japan was “pacified . . . but not really unified.”<sup>13</sup> To further stabilize the country, the Tokugawa regime issued highly detailed rules governing occupation, residence, dress, hairstyles, and behavior of the four hierarchically ranked status groups into which Japanese society was divided—samurai at the top, then peasants, artisans, and, at the bottom, merchants.

Much was changing within Japan during these 250 years of peace in ways that belied the control and orderliness of Tokugawa regulations. For one thing, the samurai, in the absence of wars to fight, evolved into a salaried bureaucratic or administrative class amounting to 5 to 6 percent of the total population, but they were still fiercely devoted to their daimyo lords and to their warrior code of loyalty, honor, and self-sacrifice.

More generally, centuries of peace contributed to a remarkable burst of economic growth, commercialization, and urban development. Entrepreneurial peasants, using fertilizers and other agricultural innovations, grew more rice than ever before and engaged in a variety of rural manufacturing enterprises as well. By 1750, Japan had become perhaps the world’s most urbanized country, with about 10 percent of

#### ■ Comparison

How did Japan’s historical development differ from that of China and the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century?

#### ■ Change

In what ways was Japan changing during the Tokugawa era?



its population living in sizable towns or cities. Edo, with a million residents, was the world's largest city. Well-functioning markets linked urban and rural areas, marking Japan as an emerging capitalist economy. The influence of Confucianism encouraged education and generated a remarkably literate population, with about 40 percent of men and 15 percent of women able to read and write. Although no one was aware of it at the time, these changes during the Tokugawa era provided a solid foundation for Japan's remarkable industrial growth in the late nineteenth century.

These changes also undermined the shogunate's efforts to freeze Japanese society in the interests of stability. Some samurai found the lowly but profitable path of commerce too much to resist. "No more shall we have to live by the sword," declared one of them in 1616 while renouncing his samurai status. "I have seen that great profit can be made honorably. I shall brew *sake* and soy sauce, and we shall prosper."<sup>14</sup> Many merchants, though hailing from the lowest-ranking status group, prospered in the new commercial environment and supported a vibrant urban culture, while not a few daimyo found it necessary, if humiliating, to seek loans from these social inferiors. Thus merchants had money, but little status, whereas samurai enjoyed high status but were often indebted to inferior merchants. Both resented their position.

Despite prohibitions to the contrary, many peasants moved to the cities, becoming artisans or merchants and imitating the ways of their social betters. A decree of 1788 noted that peasants "have become accustomed to luxury and forgetful of their status." They wore inappropriate clothing, used umbrellas rather than straw hats in the rain, and even left the villages for the city. "Henceforth," declared the shogun, "all luxuries should be avoided by the peasants. They are to live simply and devote themselves to farming."<sup>15</sup> This decree, like many others before it, was widely ignored.

More than social change undermined the Tokugawa regime. Corruption was widespread, to the disgust of many. The shogunate's failure to deal successfully with a severe famine in the 1830s eroded confidence in its effectiveness. At the same time, a mounting wave of local peasant uprisings and urban riots expressed the many grievances of the poor. The most striking of these outbursts left the city of Osaka in flames in 1837. Its leader, Oshio Heihachiro, no doubt spoke for many ordinary people when he wrote:

We must first punish the officials who torment the people so cruelly; then we must execute the haughty and rich Osaka merchants. Then we must distribute the gold, silver, and copper stored in their cellars, and bands of rice hidden in their storehouses.<sup>16</sup>

From the 1830s on, one scholar concluded, "there was a growing feeling that the *shogunate* was losing control."<sup>17</sup>

### *American Intrusion and the Meiji Restoration*

It was foreign intervention that brought matters to a head. Since the expulsion of European missionaries and the harsh suppression of Christianity in the early sev-

enteenth century (see p. 681), Japan had deliberately limited its contact with the West to a single port, where only the Dutch were allowed to trade. By the early nineteenth century, however, various European countries and the United States were knocking at the door. All were turned away, and even shipwrecked sailors or whalers were expelled, jailed, or executed. As it happened, it was the United States that forced the issue, sending Commodore Perry in 1853 to demand humane treatment for castaways, the right of American vessels to refuel and buy provisions, and the opening of ports for trade. Authorized to use force if necessary, Perry presented his reluctant hosts, among other gifts, with a white flag for surrender should hostilities follow. (For a Japanese perception of Perry and his ships, see Visual Sources 19.1 and 19.2, pp. 916 and 917.)

In the end, war was avoided. Aware of what had happened to China in resisting European demands, Japan agreed to a series of unequal treaties with various Western powers. That humiliating capitulation to the demands of the “foreign devils” further eroded support for the shogunate, triggered a brief civil war, and by 1868 led to a political takeover by a group of young samurai from southern Japan. This decisive turning point in Japan’s history was known as the Meiji restoration, for the country’s new rulers claimed that they were restoring to power the young emperor, then a fifteen-year-old boy whose throne name was Meiji, or Enlightened Rule. But despite his youth, he was regarded as the most recent link in a chain of descent that traced the origins of the imperial family back to the sun goddess Amaterasu. Having eliminated the shogunate, the patriotic young men who led the takeover soon made their goals clear—to save Japan from foreign domination, not by futile resistance, but by a thorough transformation of Japanese society, drawing upon all that the modern West had to offer. “Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world,” they declared, “so as to strengthen the foundations of imperial rule.”

Japan now had a government committed to a decisive break with the past, and it had acquired that government without massive violence or destruction. By contrast, the defeat of the Taiping Uprising had deprived China of any such opportunity for a fresh start, while saddling it with enormous devastation and massive loss of life. Furthermore, Japan was of less interest to Western powers than either China, with its huge potential market and reputation for riches, or the Ottoman Empire, with its strategic location at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe. The American Civil War and its aftermath likewise deflected U.S. ambitions in the Pacific for a time, further reducing the Western pressure on Japan.



#### The “Opening” of Japan

This nineteenth-century Japanese woodblock print depicts Commodore Perry’s meeting with a Japanese official in 1853. It was this encounter that launched Japan on a series of dramatic changes that resulted in the country’s modernization and its emergence as one of the world’s major industrialized powers by the early twentieth century. (Bettmann/Corbis)

## Modernization Japanese Style

### ■ Change

In what respects was Japan's nineteenth-century transformation revolutionary?

These circumstances gave Japan some breathing space, and its new rulers moved quickly to take advantage of that unique window of opportunity by directing a cascading wave of dramatic changes that rolled over the country in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. Those reforms, which were revolutionary in their cumulative effect, transformed Japan far more thoroughly than even the most radical of the Ottoman efforts, let alone the modest self-strengthening policies of the Chinese.

The first task was genuine national unity, which required an attack on the power and privileges of both the daimyo and the samurai. In a major break with the past, the new regime soon ended the semi-independent domains of the daimyo, replacing them with governors appointed by and responsible to the emerging national government. The central state, not the local authorities, now collected the nation's taxes and raised a national army based on conscription from all social classes.

Thus the samurai relinquished their ancient role as the country's warrior class and with it their cherished right to carry swords. The old Confucian-based social order with its special privileges for various classes was largely dismantled, and almost all Japanese became legally equal as commoners and as subjects of the emperor. Limitations on travel and trade likewise fell as a nationwide economy came to parallel the centralized state. Although there was some opposition to these measures, including a brief rebellion of resentful samurai in 1877, it was on the whole a remarkably peaceful process in which a segment of the old ruling class abolished its own privileges. Many, but not all, of these displaced elites found a soft landing in the army, bureaucracy, or business enterprises of the new regime, thus easing a painful transition.

Accompanying these social and political changes was a widespread and eager fascination with almost everything Western (see Visual Source 19.3, p. 918). Knowledge about the West—its science and technology; its various political and constitutional arrangements; its legal and educational systems; its dances, clothing, and hairstyles—was enthusiastically sought out by official missions to Europe and the United States, by hundreds of students sent to study abroad, and by many ordinary Japanese at home. Western writers were translated into Japanese; for example, Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help*, which focused on “achieving success and rising in the world,” sold a million copies. “Civilization and Enlightenment” was the slogan of the time, and both were to be found in the West. The most prominent popularizer of Western knowledge, Fukuzawa Yukichi, summed up the chief lesson of his studies in the mid-1870s—Japan was backward and needed to learn from the West: “If we compare the knowledge of the Japanese and Westerners, in letters, in technique, in commerce, or in industry, from the largest to the smallest matter, there is not one thing in which we excel. . . . In Japan's present condition there is nothing in which we may take pride vis-à-vis the West.”<sup>18</sup>

After this initial wave of uncritical enthusiasm for everything Western receded, Japan proceeded to borrow more selectively and to combine foreign and Japanese



## Snapshot Key Moments in the Rise of Japan in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond

Famines, urban and rural rebellions	1830s
Commodore Perry arrives in Japan	1853
Meiji restoration	1868
Government-run enterprises in railroad construction, manufacturing, and mining	1870s
Western dress prescribed for court and official ceremonies	1872
Samurai rebellion crushed	1877
Government sells state industries to private investors	1880s
Ito Hirobumi travels to Europe to study political systems	1882
Peak of peasant protest against high taxes and prices	1883–1884
Women banned from political parties and meetings	1887
Japan's modern constitution announced	1889
Sino-Japanese War	1894–1895
Japan's labor movement crushed	by 1901
Anglo-Japanese alliance marks Japan's acceptance as Great Power	1902
Russo-Japanese War	1904–1905
Universal primary education	1905
Japanese annexation of Korea	1910
Meiji emperor dies	1912

elements in distinctive ways (see Visual Source 19.4, p. 919). For example, the constitution of 1889, drawing heavily on German experience, introduced an elected parliament, political parties, and democratic ideals, but that constitution was presented as a gift from a sacred emperor descended from the Sun Goddess. The parliament could advise, but ultimate power, and particularly control of the military, lay theoretically with the emperor and in practice with an oligarchy of prominent reformers acting in his name. Likewise, a modern educational system, which achieved universal primary schooling by the early twentieth century, was also laced with Confucian-based moral instruction and exhortations of loyalty to the emperor. Neither Western-style feminism nor Christianity made much headway in Meiji Japan, but Shinto, an ancient religious tradition featuring ancestors and nature spirits, was elevated to the status of an official state cult. Japan's earlier experience in borrowing massively but selectively from Chinese culture perhaps served it better in these new circumstances

than either the Chinese disdain for foreign cultures or the reluctance of many Muslims to see much of value in the infidel West.

At the core of Japan's effort at defensive modernization lay its state-guided industrialization program. More than in Europe or the United States, the government itself established a number of enterprises, later selling many of them to private investors. It also acted to create a modern infrastructure by building railroads, creating a postal system, and establishing a national currency and banking system. By the early twentieth century, Japan's industrialization, organized around a number of large firms called *zaibatsu*, was well under way. The country became a major exporter of textiles and was able to produce its own munitions and industrial goods as well. Its major cities enjoyed mass-circulation newspapers, movie theaters, and electric lights. All of this was accomplished through its own resources and without the massive foreign debt that so afflicted Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. No other country outside of Europe and North America had been able to launch its own Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century. It was a distinctive feature of Japan's modern transformation.

Less distinctive, however, were the social results of that process. Taxed heavily to pay for Japan's ambitious modernization program, many peasant families slid into poverty. Their sometimes violent protests peaked in 1883–1884 with attacks on government offices and moneylenders' homes that were aimed at destroying records of debt. Despite substantial private relief efforts, the Japanese countryside witnessed infanticide, the sale of daughters, and starvation.

As elsewhere during the early stages of industrial growth, urban workers were treated badly. The majority of Japan's textile workers were young women from poor

#### Japan's Modernization

In Japan, as in Europe, railroads quickly became a popular symbol of the country's modernization, as this woodblock print from the 1870s illustrates. (Visual Arts Library [London]/Alamy)



families in the countryside. Their pay was low and their working conditions terrible. Anarchist and socialist ideas circulated among intellectuals. Efforts to create unions and organize strikes, both illegal in Japan at the time, were met with harsh repression even as corporate and state authorities sought to depict the company as a family unit to which workers should give their loyalty, all under the beneficent gaze of the divine emperor.

## *Japan and the World*

Japan's modern transformation soon registered internationally. By the early twentieth century, its economic growth, openness to trade, and embrace of "civilization and enlightenment" from the West persuaded the Western powers to revise the unequal treaties in Japan's favor. This had long been a primary goal of the Meiji regime, and the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 now acknowledged Japan as an equal player among the Great Powers of the world.

Not only did Japan escape from its semicolonial entanglements with the West, but it also launched its own empire-building enterprise, even as European powers and the United States were carving up much of Asia and Africa into colonies or spheres of influence. It was what industrializing Great Powers did in the late nineteenth century, and Japan followed suit. Successful wars against China (1894–1895) and Russia (1904–1905) established Japan as a formidable military competitor in East Asia and the first Asian state to defeat a major European power. Through those victories, Japan also gained colonial control of Taiwan and Korea and a territorial foothold in Manchuria. (See Visual Source 19.5, p. 920, for an image of Japan's new relationship with China and the West.)

Japan's entry onto the broader global stage was felt in many places (see Map 19.3). It added yet one more imperialist power to those already burdening a beleaguered China. Defeat at the hands of Japanese upstarts shocked Russia and triggered the 1905 revolution in that country. To Europeans and Americans, Japan was now an economic, political, and military competitor in Asia.

In the world of subject peoples, the rise of Japan and its defeat of Russia generated widespread admiration among those who saw Japan as a model for their own modern development and perhaps as an ally in the struggle against imperialism. Some Poles, Finns, and Jews viewed the Russian defeat in 1905 as an opening for their own liberation from the Russian Empire and were grateful to Japan for the opportunity. Despite Japan's aggression against their country, many Chinese reformers and nationalists found in the Japanese experience valuable lessons for themselves. Thousands flocked to Japan to study its achievements. Newspapers throughout the Islamic world celebrated Japan's victory over Russia as an "awakening of the East," which might herald Muslims' own liberation. Some Turkish women gave their children Japanese names. Indonesian Muslims from Aceh wrote to the Meiji emperor asking for help in their struggle against the Dutch, and Muslim poets wrote odes in his honor. The Egyptian nationalist Mustafa Kamil spoke for many when he declared:

### ■ Connection

How did Japan's relationship to the larger world change during its modernization process?



**Map 19.3** The Rise of Japan

As Japan modernized after the Meiji restoration, it launched an empire-building program that provided a foundation for further expansion in the 1930s and during World War II.

“We are amazed by Japan because it is the first Eastern government to utilize Western civilization to resist the shield of European imperialism in Asia.”<sup>19</sup>

Those who directly experienced Japanese imperialism in Taiwan or Korea no doubt had a less positive view, for its colonial policies matched or exceeded the brutality of European practices. In the twentieth century, China and much of Southeast Asia suffered bitterly under Japanese imperial aggression. Nonetheless, both the idea of Japan as a liberator of Asia from the European yoke and the reality of Japan as an oppressive imperial power in its own right derived from the country’s remarkable modern transformation and its unique response to the provocation of Western intrusion.





## Reflections: Success and Failure in History

Beyond describing what happened in the past and explaining why, historians often find themselves evaluating the events they study. When they make judgments about the past, notions of success and failure frequently come into play. Should Europe's Industrial Revolution and its rise to global power be regarded as a success? If so, does that imply that others were failures? Should we consider Japan more successful than China or the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century? Three considerations suggest that we should be very careful in applying these ideas to the complexities of the historical record.

First, and most obviously, is the question of criteria. If the measure of success is national wealth and power, then the Industrial Revolution surely counts as a great accomplishment. But if preservation of the environment, spiritual growth, and the face-to-face relationships of village life are more highly valued, then industrialization, according to some, might be more reasonably considered as a disaster.

Second, there is the issue of “success for whom?” British artisans who lost their livelihood to industrial machines as well as those Japanese women textile workers who suffered through the early stages of industrialization might be forgiven for not appreciating the “success” of their countries' transformation, even if their middle-class counterparts and subsequent generations benefited. In cases such as this, issues of both social and generational justice complicate any easy assessment of the past.

Finally, success is frequently associated with good judgment and wise choices, yet actors in the historical drama are never completely free in making their decisions, and none, of course, have the benefit of hindsight, which historians enjoy. Did the leaders of China and the Ottoman Empire fail to push industrial development more strongly, or were they not in a position to do so? Were Japanese leaders wiser and more astute than their counterparts elsewhere, or did their knowledge of China's earlier experience and their unique national history simply provide them with circumstances more conducive to modern development? Such questions regarding the possibilities and limitations of human action have no clear-cut answers, but they might caution us about any easy use of notions of success and failure.

---

## Second Thoughts

### What's the Significance?

social Darwinism	China, 1911	informal empires
Taiping Uprising	“the sick man of Europe”	Tokugawa Japan
Opium Wars	Tanzimat	Meiji restoration
unequal treaties	Young Ottomans	Russo-Japanese War,
self-strengthening movement	Sultan Abd al-Hamid II	1904–1905
Boxer uprising	Young Turks	

To assess your mastery of the material in this chapter, visit the Student Center at [bedfordstmartins.com/strayer](http://bedfordstmartins.com/strayer).

### Big Picture Questions

1. How did European expansion in the nineteenth century differ from that of the early modern era (see Chapters 14–16)?
2. What differences can you identify in how China, the Ottoman Empire, and Japan experienced Western imperialism and confronted it? How might you account for those differences?
3. “The response of each society to European imperialism grew out of its larger historical development and its internal problems.” What evidence might support this statement?
4. What kinds of debates, controversies, and conflicts were generated by European intrusion within each of the societies examined in this chapter?

### Next Steps: For Further Study

For Web sites and additional documents related to this chapter, see **Make History** at [bedfordstmartins.com/strayer](http://bedfordstmartins.com/strayer).

William Bowman et al., *Imperialism in the Modern World* (2007). A collection of short readings illustrating the various forms and faces of European expansion over the past several centuries.

Carter V. Finley, *The Turks in World History* (2004). A study placing the role of Turkish-speaking peoples in general and the Ottoman Empire in particular in a global context.

Maurice Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan* (2000). A well-regarded account of Japan since 1600 by a leading scholar.

Jonathan Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (1999). Probably the best single-volume account of Chinese history from about 1600 through the twentieth century.

E. Patricia Tsurumi, *Factory Girls: Women in the Thread Mills of Meiji Japan* (1990). An examination of the lives of women in Japan’s nineteenth-century textile factories.

Arthur Waley, *The Opium War through Chinese Eyes* (1968). An older classic that views the Opium War from various Chinese points of view.

Justin Jesty, “Japanese History from 1868 to the Present,” <http://ceas.uchicago.edu/outreach/1868%20to%20Present.pdf>. A guide to modern Japanese history, with many links to pictures, documents, and further information.

---

---

# Documents

## Considering the Evidence: Voices from the Opium War



The Opium War of 1839–1842 marked a dramatic turn in China’s long history and in its relationship with the wider world. It was also indicative of the new kinds of cross-cultural encounters that were increasingly taking place as Europe’s global power mounted. The five documents in this section of the chapter allow us to follow the unfolding of that encounter, largely from a Chinese point of view.

By the early nineteenth century, China had long enjoyed a position of unrivaled dominance in East Asia. Furthermore, its wealth and technological innovations had given it a major role in the world economy of the early modern era, reflected in the flow of much of the world’s silver into China. At the same time, the island nation of Great Britain was emerging as a major global economic and military power, thanks to its position as the first site of the Industrial Revolution and its increasingly dominant role in India.

At the heart of the emerging conflict between these two countries was trade rather than territory. From the British point of view, the problem lay in the sharp restrictions that the Chinese had long imposed on commerce between the two nations. The British were permitted to trade only in a single city, Canton, and even there had to deal with an officially approved group of Chinese merchants. This so-called Canton system meant that Europeans had no direct access to the Chinese market. Thus in the early 1790s, the British government sent a major diplomatic mission to China, headed by Lord George Macartney, to seek greater access to the Chinese market.

### Document 19.1

## A Chinese Response to Lord Macartney

Despite a polite reception at the Chinese court, Macartney’s mission was an almost total failure from the British point of view. At its conclusion the Chinese emperor Qianlong sent a message to the British monarch George III replying to Macartney’s requests.

- What reasons does Emperor Qianlong give for rejecting British requests?

- What does this document reveal about the Chinese view of trade in general?
- What does it show about China's relations with foreign "barbarians," and about China's understanding of its place in the world?
- In what historical context does the Chinese emperor understand Macartney's mission?

## EMPEROR QIANLONG

### *Message to King George III*

1793

**Y**ou, O King, from afar have yearned after the blessings of our civilization, and in your eagerness to come into touch with our converting influence have sent an Embassy across the sea bearing a memorial. I have already taken note of your respectful spirit of submission, have treated your mission with extreme favor and loaded it with gifts, besides issuing a mandate to you, O King, and honoring you with the bestowal of valuable presents. Thus has my indulgence been manifested.

Yesterday your Ambassador petitioned my Ministers to memorialize me regarding your trade with China, but his proposal is not consistent with our dynastic usage and cannot be entertained. Hitherto, all European nations, including your own country's barbarian merchants, have carried on their trade with our Celestial Empire at Canton. Such has been the procedure for many years, although our Celestial Empire possesses all things in prolific abundance and lacks no product within its own borders. There was therefore no need to import the manufactures of outside barbarians in exchange for our own produce. But as the tea, silk, and porcelain which the Celestial Empire produces are absolute necessities to European nations and to yourselves, we have permitted, as a signal mark of favor, that foreign *hongs*<sup>o</sup>

should be established at Canton, so that your wants might be supplied and your country thus participate in our beneficence. But your Ambassador has now put forward new requests which completely fail to recognize the Throne's principle to "treat strangers from afar with indulgence," and to exercise a pacifying control over barbarian tribes, the world over. Moreover, our dynasty, swaying the myriad races of the globe, extends the same benevolence toward all. Your England is not the only nation trading at Canton. If other nations, following your bad example, wrongfully importune my ear with further impossible requests, how will it be possible for me to treat them with easy indulgence? Nevertheless, I do not forget the lonely remoteness of your island, cut off from the world by intervening wastes of sea, nor do I overlook your excusable ignorance of the usages of our Celestial Empire. I have consequently commanded my Ministers to enlighten your Ambassador on the subject, and have ordered the departure of the mission. . . .

Your request for a small island near Chusan, where your merchants may reside and goods be warehoused, arises from your desire to develop trade. As there are neither foreign *hongs* nor interpreters in or near Chusan, where none of your ships have ever called, such an island would be utterly useless for your purposes. Every inch of the territory of our Empire is marked on the map and the strictest vigilance is exercised over it all: even tiny islets and far-lying sand-banks are clearly defined as part of the provinces to which they belong. Consider, more-

<sup>o</sup>*hongs*: approved Chinese trading firms.

Source: "Edict on Trade with Great Britain," in J. O. P. Brand, *Annals and Memoirs of the Court of Peking* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 325–31.



over, that England is not the only barbarian land which wishes to establish relations with our civilization and trade with our Empire: supposing that other nations were all to imitate your evil example and beseech me to present them each and all with a site for trading purposes, how could I possibly comply? This also is a flagrant infringement of the usage of my Empire and cannot possibly be entertained. . . .

Regarding your nation's worship of the Lord of Heaven, it is the same religion as that of other European nations. Ever since the beginning of history, sage Emperors and wise rulers have bestowed on China a moral system and inculcated a code, which from time immemorial has been religiously observed by the myriads of my subjects [Confucianism]. There has been no hankering after heterodox doctrines. Even the European officials [missionaries] in my capital are forbidden to hold intercourse with Chinese subjects; they are restricted within the limits of their appointed residences, and may not go about propagating their religion. The distinction between Chinese

and barbarian is most strict, and your Ambassador's request that barbarians shall be given full liberty to disseminate their religion is utterly unreasonable. . . .

[Perhaps] you yourself are ignorant of our dynastic regulations and had no intention of transgressing them when you expressed these wild ideas and hopes. . . . If, after the receipt of this explicit decree, you lightly give ear to the representations of your subordinates and allow your barbarian merchants to proceed to Zhejiang and Tianjin, with the object of landing and trading there, the ordinances of my Celestial Empire are strict in the extreme, and the local officials, both civil and military, are bound reverently to obey the law of the land. Should your vessels touch the shore, your merchants will assuredly never be permitted to land or to reside there, but will be subject to instant expulsion. In that event your barbarian merchants will have had a long journey for nothing. Do not say that you were not warned in due time! Tremblingly obey and show no negligence! A special mandate!

### Documents 19.2 and 19.3

## Debating the Opium Problem

With Europe engulfed in the Napoleonic wars, Great Britain made no immediate response to China's 1793 rebuff. But in the several decades following Napoleon's 1815 defeat, the issue reemerged. This time the question was not just trade in general but opium in particular. By the early nineteenth century, that addictive drug was providing a solution to another of Great Britain's problems in its trade relations with China—the difficulty of finding Western goods that the Chinese were willing to buy. This had long meant that the British had to pay for much-desired Chinese products with major exports of silver. Now, however, opium grown in British India proved increasingly attractive in China, and imports soared.

But this solution to a British problem had by the mid-1830s provoked a growing and many-sided crisis for China. The country's legal prohibition on the importing of opium was widely ignored, silver was flowing out of the country to pay for the drug, and addiction was increasing, even among the elite. This dire situation prompted the Chinese emperor Daoguang to seek advice from his senior officials. The two documents that follow illustrate the sharp division within Chinese official circles, one side advocating legalization and the other counseling suppression.

- What arguments are made for each position? On what issues did they disagree?
- How might each respond to the arguments of the other?
- What similarities and differences do you see between this debate within the Chinese court of the 1830s and contemporary discussion about the legalization of marijuana in the United States?

XU NAIJI

### *An Argument for Legalization*

1836

Xu Naiji, Vice-President of the Sacrificial Court, presents the following memorial in regard to opium, to show that the more severe the interdicts against it are made, the more widely do the evils arising therefrom spread. . . .

In Keenlung's reign, as well as previously, opium was inserted in the tariff of Canton as a medicine, subject to a duty. . . . After this, it was prohibited. . . . Yet the smokers of the drug have increased in number, and the practice has spread almost throughout the whole empire. . . .

Formerly, the barbarian merchants brought foreign money to China; which being paid in exchange for goods, was a source of pecuniary advantage to the people of all the sea-board provinces. But latterly, the barbarian merchants have clandestinely sold opium for money, which has rendered it unnecessary for them to import foreign silver. Thus foreign money has been going out of the country, while none comes into it.

It is proposed entirely to cut off the foreign trade, thus to remove the root, to dam up the source of the evil. The Celestial Dynasty would not, indeed, hesitate to relinquish the few millions of duties arising therefrom. But all the nations of the West have had a general market open to their ships for upward of a thousand years, while the dealers in opium are the English alone; it would be wrong, for the sake of cut-

ting off the English trade, to cut off that of all the other nations. Besides, the hundreds of thousands of people living on the sea-coast depend wholly on trade for their livelihood, and how are they to be disposed of? Moreover, the barbarian ships, being on the high seas, can repair to any island that may be selected as an entrepôt, and the native sea-going vessels can meet them there; it is then impossible to cut off the trade. . . . Thus it appears that, though the commerce of Canton should be cut off, yet it will not be possible to prevent the clandestine introduction of merchandise.

It will be found, on examination, that the smokers of opium are idle, lazy vagrants, having no useful purpose before them, and are unworthy of regard or even of contempt. And though there are smokers to be found who have overstepped the threshold of age, yet they do not attain to the long life of other men. But new births are daily increasing the population of the empire; and there is no cause to apprehend a diminution therein; while, on the other hand, we cannot adopt too great, or too early, precautions against the annual waste which is taking place in the resources, the very substance of China.

Since then, it will not answer to close our ports against [all trades], and since the laws issued against opium are quite inoperative, the only method left is to revert to the former system, to permit the barbarian merchants to import opium paying duty thereon as a medicine, and to require that, after having passed the Custom-House, it shall be delivered to the Hong merchants only in exchange for merchandise, and

---

Source: "Memorial from Heu-Naetse," in *Blue Book—Correspondence Relating to China* (London, 1840), 56–59.

that no money be paid for it. The barbarians finding that the amount of dues to be paid on it, is less than what is now spent in bribes, will also gladly comply therein. Foreign money should be placed on the same footing with sycee silver, and the exportation of it should be equally prohibited. Offenders, when caught, should be punished by the entire destruction of the opium they may have, and the confiscation of the money that may be found with them. . . .

It becomes my duty, then, to request that it be enacted, that any officer, scholar, or soldier, found guilty of secretly smoking opium, shall be immedi-

ately dismissed from public employ, without being made liable to any other penalty. . . .

Lastly, that no regard be paid to the purchase and use of opium on the part of the people generally. . . .

Besides, the removal of the prohibitions refers only to the vulgar and common people, those who have no official duties to perform. So long as the officers of the Government, the scholars, and the military are not included, I see no detriment to the dignity of the Government. And by allowing the proposed importation and exchange of the drug for other commodities, more than ten millions of money will annually be prevented from flowing out of the Central land.

YUAN YULIN

### *An Argument for Suppression*

1836

I, your minister, believe that the success or failure in government and the prosperity or decay of administration depend largely upon our capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, between what is safe and what is dangerous. . . . The prevailing evil of to-day is the excuse that things are hard to get done, and the foremost example of such hypocrisy is the proposal to legalize opium. . . .

In my humble opinion, the proposal for legalization has overlooked the distinction between right and wrong. . . . Further, it fails to appreciate what is safe and what is dangerous. . . .

The prohibition of opium is most solemnly recorded on the statute books. . . . The proposal to change the established law is thus a violation of an inherited institution and of the imperial edicts.

Uniformity is the most important element in the decrees of the Court. Now it has been proposed that the prohibition of opium-smoking would reach the officers of the Government, the scholars, and the military, but not the common people. But it is forgotten that the common people of to-day will be

the officers, scholars, and the military of the future. Should they be allowed to smoke at first and then be prohibited from it in the future? Moreover, the officers, scholars, and the military of to-day may be degraded to the rank of the common people. In that case, are they to be freed from the prohibition once imposed on them? Prohibition was proclaimed because opium is pernicious. It follows then that the ban should not be abolished until it ceases to be an evil. A partial prohibition or partial legalization is a confusion of rules by the government itself; consequently good faith in its observance can hardly be expected. When the law was all for prohibition, decrees had not been followed. How can the people respect the restrictions or punishments should the law be in confusion? The logical consequence will be the ruin of government and demoralization of our culture. . . .

Even if the duties be raised to twofold, it would be only a little over 200,000 taels. Further doubled, the figure will stand at only 500,000 taels. . . . Hence, if our Government should seek its revenue from the duties on opium, it is to make an enormous sacrifice for a scanty profit. . . .

The drain of silver, to be sure, arouses apprehension. But the point is whether inspection is faithfully

---

Source: "Memorial from Yuan Yu-lin," in P. C. Kuo, *A Critical Study of the First Anglo-Chinese War* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1935), 211-13.

enforced or not. Should the inspection be faithful, opium prohibition will be effective; so also will be the ban on the silver export. If it be not faithful, opium prohibition will come to naught, and so will the ban on silver export. It must not be supposed that inspection will be facilitated by relaxing opium prohibition or that it will be difficult if the prohibition is severe. . . .

It has been argued that since the imported opium costs an enormous sum of money, the cultivation of the poppy should be allowed in the interior of the country. . . . [But], the farm lands of our country are fixed in number. . . . The valuable acres yielding crops may easily be turned into a vast field of opium. This means to destroy agriculture and ruin the very foundation of the lives of the people.

If the habit of smoking secretly spreads over the country under the present prohibition, its legalization will mean greater disasters: fathers would no longer be able to teach their sons; husbands would no longer be able to admonish their wives; masters would no longer be able to restrain their servants; and teachers would no longer be able to train their pupils. The habitual smokers would continue it as a regular practice, while others would strive for imitation. The per-

petration of evils will be fathomless. It would mean the end of the life of the people and the destruction of the soul of the nation.

As a result of the smoking of opium, the soldiers of Kwangtung were enfeebled. Your Majesty admonished them on that account during the late rebellion of the mountaineers in the said province. Now should the proposal be adhered to that soldiers, but not the people, be prohibited from smoking opium, then at the future recruitment of the army it would be found that old soldiers had already been spoiled by secret smoking, while fresh recruits would be habitual smokers! . . . The very trick of the cunning barbarians is to weaken our nation with poison. If they now actually succeed in fooling our people, it means the disintegration of our national defense and the opening up of the same to their penetration. . . .

[W]hat arouses our gravest apprehension is the perpetration of an evil which might completely go out of control. Once opium is legalized, the people will flock to it. When the evil becomes alarming and when we come to repent the wrong of legalization. . . we will readily find that the country is so heavily saddled with its bad results that recovery is well-nigh impossible. . . .

## Document 19.4

### A Moral Appeal to Queen Victoria

The Chinese emperor soon decided this debate in favor of suppression and sent a prominent official, Commissioner Lin Zexu, to enforce it. Lin did so vigorously, seizing and destroying millions of pounds of the drug, flushing it out to the sea with a prayer to the local spirit: “[You] who wash away all stains and cleanse all impurities.”<sup>20</sup> At the same time (1839), Lin wrote a letter to the British monarch, Queen Victoria, appealing for her assistance in ending this noxious trade.

- On what basis does Commissioner Lin appeal to Queen Victoria?
- How might you compare this letter with that of Document 19.1? What similarities and differences can you notice?
- What assumptions about the West does this letter reveal? Which were accurate and which represented misunderstandings?
- Although there is no evidence of a response to the letter, how might you imagine British reaction to it?



COMMISSIONER LIN ZEXU  
*Letter to Queen Victoria*  
 1839

**A** communication: magnificently our great Emperor soothes and pacifies China and the foreign countries, regarding all with the same kindness. If there is profit, then he shares it with the people of the world; if there is harm, then he removes it on behalf of the world. . . .

We find that your country is sixty or seventy thousand *li*<sup>o</sup> from China. Yet there are barbarian ships that strive to come here for trade for the purpose of making a great profit. The wealth of China is used to profit the barbarians. . . . By what right do they. . . use this poisonous drug to injure the Chinese people? . . .

Let us ask, where is your conscience? I have heard that the smoking of opium is very strictly forbidden by your country; that is because the harm caused by opium is clearly understood. Since it is not permitted to do harm to your country, then even less should you let it be passed on to the harm of other countries—how much less to China! Of all that China exports to foreign countries, there is not a single thing which is not beneficial to people: they are of benefit when eaten, or of benefit when used, or of benefit when resold: all are beneficial. Is there a single article from China which has done any harm to foreign countries? Take tea and rhubarb,<sup>o</sup> for example; the foreign countries cannot get along for a single day without them. If China cuts off these

benefits with no sympathy for those who are to suffer, then what can the barbarians rely upon to keep themselves alive? . . . On the other hand, articles coming from the outside to China can only be used as toys. We can take them or get along without them. . . . Nevertheless our Celestial Court lets tea, silk, and other goods be shipped without limit and circulated everywhere without begrudging it in the slightest. This is for no other reason but to share the benefit with the people of the whole world. . . .

We have heard heretofore that your honorable ruler is kind and benevolent. Naturally you would not wish to give unto others what you yourself do not want. . . .

Suppose a man of another country comes to England to trade, he still has to obey the English laws; how much more should he obey in China the laws of the Celestial Dynasty? . . .

Therefore in the new regulations, in regard to those barbarians who bring opium to China, the penalty is fixed at decapitation or strangulation. This is what is called getting rid of a harmful thing on behalf of mankind. . . .

After receiving this dispatch will you immediately give us a prompt reply regarding the details and circumstances of your cutting off the opium traffic? Be sure not to put this off.

<sup>o</sup>*li*: approximately one-third of a mile.

<sup>o</sup>*rhubarb*: used as a medicine.

Source: Dun J. Li, ed., *China in Transition, 1517–1911* (London: Wadsworth, 1969), 64–67.

Document 19.5  
 War and Defeat

While Queen Victoria and British authorities apparently never received Commissioner Lin's letter and certainly did not respond to it, they did react to the commissioner's actions. Citing the importance of free trade and the violation of British property rights, they launched a major military expedition in which

their steamships and heavy guns reflected the impact of the Industrial Revolution on the exercise of British power. This was the first Opium War, and the Chinese lost it badly. One prominent scholar has described it as “the most decisive reversal the Manchus [Qing dynasty] had ever received.”<sup>21</sup> The Treaty of Nanjing, which ended that conflict in 1842, was largely imposed by the British. It was the first of many “unequal treaties” that China was required to sign with various European powers and the United States in the decades that followed. While Chinese authorities tried to think about the treaty as a means of “subduing and conciliating” the British, as they had done with other barbarian intruders, it represented in fact a new, much diminished, and dependent position for China on the world stage.

- What were the major provisions of the treaty? Why do you think that opium, ostensibly the cause of the conflict, was rarely mentioned in the treaty?
- In what respects did the treaty signal an unequal relationship between China and Great Britain? What aspects of Chinese independence were lost or compromised by the treaty?
- What provisions of the treaty most clearly challenged traditional Chinese understandings of their place in the world?

## *The Treaty of Nanjing*

1842

### I.

There shall henceforward be peace and friendship between Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and His Majesty the Emperor of China, and between their respective subjects, who shall enjoy full security and protection for their persons and property within the dominions of the other.

### II.

His Majesty the Emperor of China agrees, that British subjects, with their families and establishments,

shall be allowed to reside, for the purposes of carrying on their mercantile pursuits, without molestation or restraint, at the cities and towns of Canton, Amoy, Foochowfoo, Ningpo, and Shanghai. . . .

### III.

It being obviously necessary and desirable that British subjects should have some port wherewith they may [maintain] and refit their ships when required, and keep stores for that purpose, His Majesty the Emperor of China cedes to Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain, &c., the Island of Hong-Kong. . . .

### IV.

The Emperor of China agrees to pay the sum of 6,000,000 of dollars, as the value of the opium which was delivered up at Canton in the month of March,

---

Source: Treaty of Nanjing, in *Treaties, Conventions, etc., between China and Foreign States* (London: Statistical Department of the Inspectorate General of Customs, 1917), 1:351–56.

1839, as a ransom for the lives of Her Britannic Majesty's Superintendent and subjects, who had been imprisoned and threatened with death by the Chinese High Officers....

#### V.

The Government of China having compelled the British merchants trading at Canton to deal exclusively with certain Chinese merchants, called Hong merchants (or Co-Hong)... the Emperor of China agrees to abolish that practice in future at all ports where British merchants may reside, and to permit them to carry on their mercantile transactions with whatever persons they please; and His Imperial Majesty further agrees to pay to the British Government the sum of 3,000,000 of dollars, on account of debts due to British subjects by some of the said Hong merchants, who have become insolvent, and who owe very large sums of money to subjects of Her Britannic Majesty.

#### VI.

The Government of Her Britannic Majesty having been obliged to send out an expedition to demand and obtain redress for the violent and unjust proceedings of the Chinese High Authorities towards Her Britannic Majesty's officer and subjects, the Emperor of China agrees to pay the sum of 12,000,000 of dollars, on account of the expenses incurred....

#### VIII.

The Emperor of China agrees to release, unconditionally, all subjects of Her Britannic Majesty

(whether natives of Europe or India), who may be in confinement at this moment in any part of the Chinese empire.

#### X.

... [T]he Emperor further engages, that when British merchandise shall have once paid at any of the said ports the regulated customs and dues, ... such merchandise may be conveyed by Chinese merchants to any province or city in the interior of the Empire of China....

#### XI.

It is agreed that Her Britannic Majesty's Chief High Officer in China shall correspond with the Chinese High Officers, both at the capital and in the provinces, ... on a footing of perfect equality....

#### XII.

On the assent of the Emperor of China to this Treaty being received, and the discharge of the first instalment of money, Her Britannic Majesty's forces will retire from Nanking and the Grand Canal, and will no longer molest or stop the trade of China. The military post at Chinhai will also be withdrawn, but the Islands of Koolangsoo, and that of Chusan, will continue to be held by Her Majesty's forces until the money payments, and the arrangements for opening the ports to British merchants, be completed.

---

## Using the Evidence: Voices from the Opium War

1. **Defining the issues in the Opium War:** The Opium War was about more than opium. How would you support or challenge this statement?

2. **Characterizing the Opium War:** In what ways might the Opium War be regarded as a clash of cultures? In what respects might it be seen as a clash of interests? Was it an inevitable conflict or were there missed opportunities for avoiding it? (Note: You may want to consider the data in the Snapshot on p. 885 as well as Documents 19.1–19.5, pp. 905–13.)
3. **Interpreting the Treaty of Nanjing:** In the context of British and Chinese views of the world, how do you understand the Treaty of Nanjing? Which country's view of the world is more clearly reflected in that treaty?
4. **Exploring Chinese views of the British:** Based on these documents, how well or how poorly did the Chinese understand the British? How might you account for their misunderstandings?



---

# Visual Sources

## Considering the Evidence: Japanese Perceptions of the West



The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a profound transformation of Japanese life. (See pp. 894–902) The Tokugawa shogunate, which had governed the country for over two centuries, came to an inglorious end in the Meiji restoration of 1868, and the country then embarked on a massive process of modernization and industrialization. Accompanying these upheavals, Japan’s political and military relationship to the West changed dramatically, as its government and its people found themselves required to confront both Western power and Western culture, a common feature of nineteenth-century world history in many places. Accordingly, Japanese understanding of the West, and what they had to fear or gain from it, also changed. Those evolving perceptions of the West found artistic expression, especially in Japanese woodblock printing, an art form that reached its high point in the late nineteenth century. Those images provide for historians a window into Japanese thinking about their own society and the larger world impinging upon them during this critical half-century.

The initial occasion for serious Japanese reflection on the West occurred in 1853–1854, in the context of American commodore Matthew Perry’s efforts to “open” Japan to regular commercial relationships with the United States. His nine coal-fired steamships, belching black smoke and carrying a crew of some 1,800 men and more than 100 mounted cannons, became known in Japan as the “black ships.” Visual Source 19.1, created around 1854, represents perhaps the best known of many such Japanese depictions of the American warships.

- What general impression of the American intrusion did the artist seek to convey?
- What specific features of the image help the artist make his case?
- Why might the artist have chosen to depict the gunfire coming from the American ship as streams of light?

Beyond portraying the American warships, Japanese artists sought to depict their inhabitants, especially Commodore Perry and his top aides. Some Japanese men rowed their small boats out to the black ships, hoping to catch a glimpse of Perry himself. But the commodore remained largely inaccessible, and the



Visual Source 19.1 The Black Ships (Courtesy, Ryosenji Treasure Museum)

Japanese called his secluded on-board cabin “The Abode of His High and Mighty Mysteriousness.” Visual Source 19.2 represents one of many portrayals of Perry (on the right), together with his second-in-command, Commander Henry A. Adams.

- What overall impression of the Americans was the artist seeking to communicate?
- What features of this image seem intended to show the Americans as “other” or different from the Japanese?
- The Japanese had long portrayed a particular kind of goblin, known as *tengu*, with long noses and viewed them as dangerous, demonic, and warlike. What aspects of this depiction of the Americans suggest that the artist sought to associate them with *tengu*?
- But not all portrayals of the Americans displayed such gross and negative features. Compare this image with the woodblock print on page 897. How would you describe the difference between the two portrayals of the Americans? How might you account for the difference?





Visual Source 19.2 Depicting the Americans ( Courtesy, Ryosenji Treasure Museum)

By the 1880s, Japan was in the midst of an amazing transformation, in part the outcome of Perry's forced "opening" of the country. By then Japan had a new government committed to the country's rapid modernization. Dozens of official missions and thousands of students had been sent abroad to learn from the West. Particularly among the young, there was an acute awareness of the need to create a new culture that could support a revived Japan. "We have no history," declared one of these students; "our history begins today."<sup>22</sup> In this context, much that was Western was enthusiastically embraced. The technological side of this borrowing was illustrated in woodblock print on page 900. But it extended as well to more purely cultural matters. Eating beef became popular, despite Buddhist objections. Many men adopted Western hairstyles and grew beards, even though the facial hair of Westerners had earlier been portrayed as ugly. In 1872, Western dress was ordered for all official ceremonies. Women in elite circles likewise adopted Western ways, as illustrated in Visual Source 19.3, an 1887 woodblock print titled *Illustration of Singing by the Plum Garden*. At the same time, the dress of the woman in the middle seems to reflect



**Visual Source 19.3** Women and Westernization (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of L. Aaron Lebowich. RES.53.82-4. Photograph © 2010 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston)

earlier Japanese court traditions that encouraged women to wear many layers of kimonos.

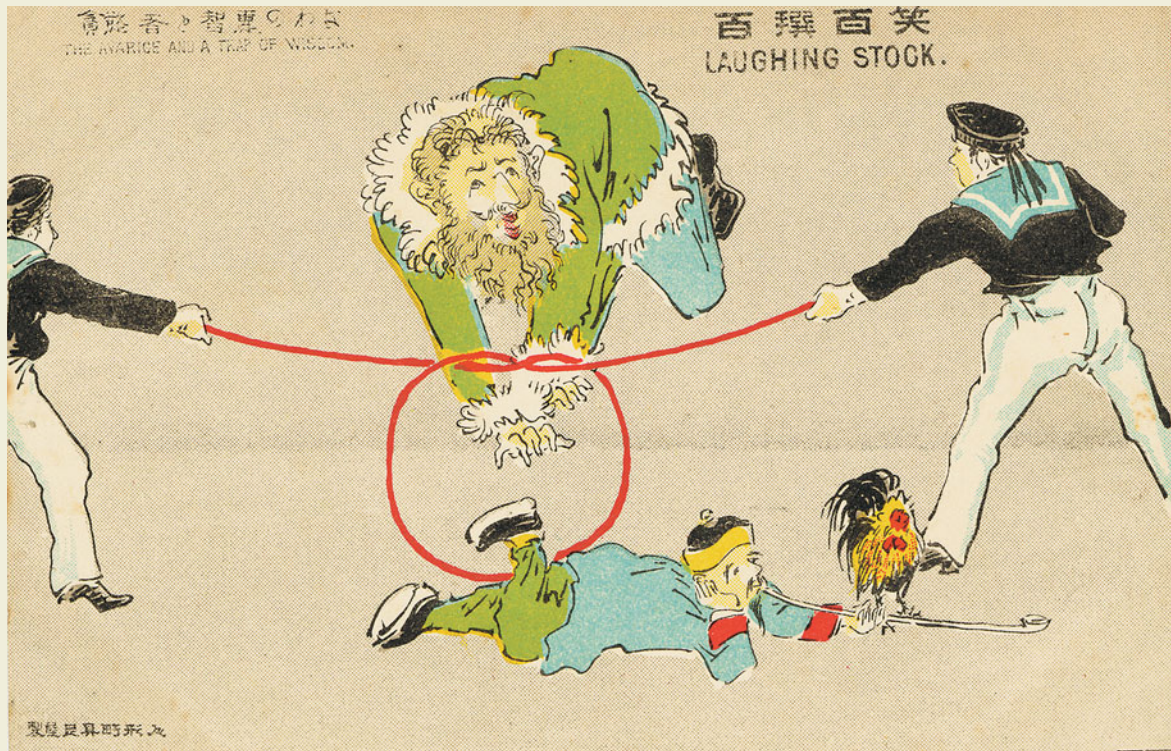
- What elements of Western culture can you identify in this visual source?
- In what ways does this print reflect the continuing appeal of Japanese culture? Pay attention to the scenery, the tree, and the flowers.
- Why were so many Japanese so enamored of Western culture during this time? And why did the Japanese government so actively encourage their interest?

Not everyone in Japan was so enthusiastic about the adoption of Western culture, and by the late 1870s and into the next decade numerous essays and images satirized the apparently indiscriminate fascination with all things European. Visual Source 19.4, drawn by Japanese cartoonist Kobayashi Kiyochika in 1879, represents one of those images. Its full English-language caption read as follows: “Mr. Morse [an American zoologist who introduced Darwin’s theory of evolution to Japan in 1877] explains that all human beings were monkeys in the beginning. In the beginning—but even now aren’t we still monkeys? When it comes to Western things we think the red beards are the most skillful at everything.”<sup>23</sup>

- What specific aspects of Japan’s efforts at Westernization is the artist mocking?
- Why might the artist have used a Western scientific theory (Darwinian evolution) to criticize excessive Westernization in Japan?







**Visual Source 19.5** Japan, China, and Europe: A Reversal of Roles (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Leonard A. Lauder Collection of Japanese Postcards. 2002.3504. Photograph © 2010 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston )

Historically the Japanese had borrowed a great deal from China—Buddhism, Confucianism, court rituals, city-planning ideas, administrative traditions, and elements of the Chinese script. But Japan’s victory in a war with China in 1894–1895 showed clearly that it had thrown off the country in whose cultural shadow it had lived for centuries. Furthermore, Japan had begun to acquire an East Asian empire in Korea and Taiwan. And its triumph over Russia in another war ten years later illustrated its ability to stand up to a major European power. The significance of these twin victories is expressed in Visual Source 19.5, a Japanese image created during the Russo-Japanese War and titled *The Japanese Navy Uses China as Bait to Trap the Greedy Russian*.

- What overall message did the artist seek to convey in this print?
- What is the significance of the Chinese figure with a chicken in hand, lying as “bait” at the bottom of the image?
- How is the Russia character portrayed?
- What had changed in Japanese thinking about China and Europe during the nineteenth century?

---

## Using the Evidence: Changing Japanese Perceptions of the West

1. **Explaining change:** How and why had Japanese perceptions of themselves and their relationship to the West changed in the half century since the Meiji restoration? What elements of continuity in Japanese traditions are evident in these visual sources?
2. **Making comparisons:** Based on these visual sources and the documents about the Opium War, how might you compare Japanese and Chinese perceptions of the West during the nineteenth century? What accounts for both the similarities and differences?
3. **Distinguishing modernization and westernization:** Based on a careful reading of Chapter 19, including the documents and images, do you think that technological borrowing (modernization) requires cultural borrowing (westernization) as well? Is it possible to modernize while avoiding the incorporation of western culture at the same time? What do the examples of China, the Ottoman Empire, and Japan in the nineteenth century suggest about this issue?