

(Provisional translation by FPCJ)

Japanese Politics and the 150th Anniversary of Meiji Restoration

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A Quiet Celebration—One Day before the 150th Anniversary of the Start of the Meiji Period

† Different Perspectives of the Meiji Ishin— 150th Anniversary of the Meiji Period, 150th Anniversary of the Boshin War

The 100th anniversary of the Meiji period (1968) was a national celebration, and the 50th anniversary (1918) was a time to mourn and make a fresh start

Cultural initiatives (≠ political use): Opening of Meiji Memorial Oiso Park, the biggest project

Publication of various research. From “praising great deeds” to “examination as a model to understand modern times”

1. Restoration, Revolution, or Innovation

† Was the Meiji Ishin a Restoration of Imperial Rule?

Government push to modernize, society unable to change rapidly, people upset by change

Power divided up in an organization formed under the emperor’s authority—a blend of tradition and reform

† Response to the Shock of the West

Education moving towards independence (*shushigaku* [Confucian studies], *kokugaku* [national studies], *yogaku* [Western studies]), a nationwide intellectual network

Freedom from Pax Tokugawa, birth of a nation and lack of citizens

Recent past—continuity of modernity, the “innovation” aspect of the Meiji Ishin

† The Meiji Ishin as a Revolution in Selecting Suitable People for Important Positions

From a focus on lineage to a meritocracy—ideal of a society of self-actualization as seen in the Gokajo-no Goseimon (the Charter Oath of Emperor Meiji Consisting of Five Articles)

Evaluation of the patriots of the Meiji Ishin: Saigo, Okubo, Kido, Sakamoto, Okuma, Ito

2. 150 Years of Japanese Politics—77 Modern Years and 73 Post-War Years

† Formation of an Administrative Government and a Dysfunctional Cabinet

From universities to government agencies—formation of a society in which social position can be improved, the bureaucrats which exemplified this

Bottom-up creation of policy in government offices, lack of governance in cabinet, short-lived governments

→Moving away from reliance on individuals, post-war cabinet system, central government

reform (2001), increased powers of the Kantei (Prime Minister's Official Residence)

† Existence of Sovereign, Lack of Sovereign

Discrepancy between the imperial rule stated in the constitution and reality—the facade of direct rule by the emperor and the tradition of emperor not actually ruling

Creation of citizens—the political and historical significance of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars

Restricted elections, carrying on the culture of “rule by the virtuous (the emperor),” avoidance of party factions, the pros and cons of a closed society

→Creation of Japanese-style party politics (1918) and their collapse (1932), post-war politics

† On the Fringe of Globalization

Latecomer imperialist nation—path to party politics and territorial expansion

The turning point of World War I—Asia’s leader? Weakening of internationalism

Disconnect between political and economic reality and improved international position

→Return to internationalism, adoption of economic focus, increased emphasis of pacifism

3. Reference Chronology

Mar. 1854: U.S.-Japan Treaty of Peace and Amity signed. June 1858, the Treaty of Amity and Commerce Between the United States and the Empire of Japan signed.

Jan. 1868: Proclamation of restoration of imperial rule. May 1869, Boshin War ended. July 1869, confiscation of land by Meiji government.

Aug. 1871: Abolition of the feudal *han* system. December, Iwakura Mission dispatched.

Jan. 1874: Petition for the Establishment of a Popularly Elected Assembly submitted. October 1877, Satsuma Rebellion (Seinan War) ends.

Feb. 1889: Constitution of the Empire of Japan proclaimed. November 1900, Imperial Diet convened.

Aug. 1894: Sino-Japanese War (ended April 1895). September 1900, Rikken Seiyukai (political party) established.

Jan. 1902: Anglo-Japanese Alliance treaty signed. February 1904, Sino-Russo War (ended September 1905).

Aug. 1910: Annexation of Korea. February 1913, Taisho political crisis.

Aug. 1914: Japan entered World War I. September 1918, Hara Cabinet established.

Jan. 1924: Second Movement to Protect the Constitution. May 1925, universal male suffrage.

Jan. 1930: London Naval Conference held. September 1931, Manchurian Incident. March 1933, Japan left League of Nations.

Oct. 1940: Imperial Rule Assistance Association established. December 1941, Pacific War (ended August 1945).