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World in the 1900s

3/2/18

Tokyo

Tokyo in the early 1900s was a place of great change as the old slowly faded and industrialization creeped in. The city located on an island off the cost of China had been secluded for years. Minding itself and mastering its arts and culture in a blissful peace. The island was diverse from blistering blizzards in the northern tips near Russian to the tropics of their most Southern tips where one did not have to worry about the cold and all varying environments in between. The emperor building his palace in Edo. Edo would later be renamed Tokyo once the king had managed to move in. Much like Japan, Tokyo quickly found its self-modernizing extremely rapidly in what used to just be agricultural land. Emmerson talks of a city that is westernizing, but its people were still franticly trying to hold on to tradition. Hobsbawm similarly brushes onto this idea of what it means to be a power in the early 1900s, and how the elite would set the seeds to their own demise in what seemed to be their greatest years.

Japan in the 1900s had just stated industrializing. Roughly 50 years ago Japan was all agricultural and still under a feudal system. By 1904; however, industrialization would match that of agriculture in Japan and Tokyo. In the 1800s, land in Tokyo was 1 yen an acre and mostly agricultural, but by 1904 an acre would cost 31 yen. If you were to look out over Tokyo you would see a sea of low wooden houses.[[1]](#footnote-1) The houses would be made of brick and wood bringing in this weird mix of wester, American, Japanese style into the homes.[[2]](#footnote-2) Still from above you could still see that the traditions of Japan had not completely been washed away. Among those seas of wooden roofs you would occasionally see a foreigner’s house or an Embassy sticking out like a sore thumb in what seemed to be a traditional area. However; on the ground, one could better see the westernization that was coming over Tokyo. The houses could clearly be seen as a mixture of the west and Japanese own style. The roads would still be made of dirt lined with trees giving an agricultural look, but on the roads there would be electric tram lines as well. Making transportation quick and efficient you could travel Tokyo in around 18 minutes by trams[[3]](#footnote-3). People who visited Tokyo would say that Tokyo had this rural atmosphere. Trees were everywhere and you could easily confuse a major road for one you’d see in the country side.[[4]](#footnote-4) Tokyo was holding on to what it used to be even as the state was trying to modernize creating this beautiful mix of tradition and modernity.

Emmerson would take a different view of this resistance to fully give up tradition. While the officials in the center of town modernized and westernized their neighboring areas those who live in the outskirts still followed tradition. Their houses were built in traditional Japanese styles and they still dressed traditionally, refuting the western style. When people visited Tokyo they felt that the soul of Tokyo was among these outskirts. The wooden houses, not as strongly built as the brick buildings, but more traditional, in a sense more Japanese.[[5]](#footnote-5) These people in the outer parts of Tokyo where still holding onto what it meant to be Japanese. They refused to mix their culture with that of the foreigners. To them this was still Japan of old and they would preserve what it meant to be Japanese. Another reason that these people could hold off the modernization was that while industrialization was happening agriculture was growing to match. Land was also no longer taxed as it used to be under a feudal system. To keep up with industrialization farmers where experimenting with their crops. Mixing soil from different parts of the island, trying new seeds, and new techniques for growing crops.[[6]](#footnote-6) The agricultural life of Japan and Tokyo was not about to give in to industrialization. The farmers where not going to just roll over. They found themselves becoming part of the government.[[7]](#footnote-7) This provided them with opportunities to try to slow down the modernization of Tokyo and they even opened their own school for agriculture to promote a new age of farmers.[[8]](#footnote-8) The people were getting active in government to preserve as much as they could of what it meant to be Japanese. The economy also happened to help the farmers trying to maintain a traditional life in that Japan. Tokyo had now become a large exporter of agricultural products.[[9]](#footnote-9) The demand boosted the ability for the farmers to reframe from selling their land in Tokyo and having to adopt a western life style of working in factories or for a wage for some capitalist. The people of Tokyo have always been attached to the land, but they found themselves being forced to accept what the state wanted.[[10]](#footnote-10) The people of Tokyo resisted as much as they could trying to preserve what it meant to be Japanese. The world started to associated Tokyo with modernity, a powerful symbol of commercialization, a place where money be been placed over the value of beauty, and success was prized over honor.[[11]](#footnote-11) Before this the Japanese, had achieved the art of happiness, not that of mere pleasure-seeking but of working, yet they flung this priceless gift away for battleships, armies, and industrialism.[[12]](#footnote-12) Tokyo would hold off as long as she could preserving what it meant to Japanese, but slowly after fires, floods, and earth quakes the empire would have conquered Tokyo and turned the city into a true metropolitan area.

The rulers of Japan the emperor amd his counsel all where proud of Japan on 10 November 1913. Japan had just defeated the Russians and had claimed the title of being the first foreign power to defeat a wester nation. To celebrate the Imperial Japanese Navy put on the most impressive display of naval power in the dark waters of Tokyo’s harbors.[[13]](#footnote-13) This celebration by the elite however, could not have been as far from how the people of Tokyo and Japan felt about the war with Russia. The elite of Japan, who lived in Tokyo, found themselves all upset by the fact that Japan had built such a great naval force but not used it yet.[[14]](#footnote-14)The officials where all ready to go to war, so when the opportunity arrived in 1905 they took the chase to go to war against Russia. That same year Japan defeated the Russian Baltic fleet.[[15]](#footnote-15) This sent a shock wave all around the world boosting Japans power. The west now had an opponent in the east. The elite where all pleased, but the people of Tokyo would find themselves in opposite ends. Hobsbawm view of the elite having more power than ever, but at the sometime planting the seeds for their destruction can be seen in Tokyo. The Russo- Japanese war actually caused riots in Tokyo.[[16]](#footnote-16) A few years before Japan was a country that has stayed to itself and not involved itself in outside conflicts. The people were not willing to support war that the elite had decided to fight to prove their power. These riots would show how un-connected the elite really where to the people. Like with the farmers and the loss of tradition. The people of Tokyo would try to prevent approval of this war against the Russians. On top of this unapproved war the people of Tokyo and other major cities where not pleased with how heavily they were being taxed. The Japanese naval might was built on the people. Tokyo taking the heavy burden of having to paying high taxes. The elite tried to convince the people that the naval fleet was important for further expansion planned in the years ahead.[[17]](#footnote-17) The people however, did not want to expand they did not want war. It was the elite who wanted war. They wanted to prove their might to the world, but as the sun rose on a new imperial power you could not help but see its demise in the mist.[[18]](#footnote-18)The elite had created a strict state where the states decrees was law and for a people who 50 years ago where about peace and cultural expansion this government would have to fall. Eventually the sun would set on The Japanese Empire and their military would be disbanded. The thirst for the elite to prove their power would lead to atrocities across nations. They forced men to join a military they did not want to fight for and train the young to love the state more than themselves.

Tokyo and Edo might as well have been two different cities. Edo preserved the peoples culture fought again westernization and modernization. To preserve the people and what it meant to be Japanese. Tokyo a city renamed and rebuilt by the elite to stand as staple of their power and industrialization. Forcing modernization and westernization on its residence until nothing was left, but the love of one’s city and state.

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