

# Interwar Japan (1) “Taisho Democracy”

Modern Japanese History: Japan and the  
World since 1868



# Presentations

- Choose a topic - send email before next Wednesday class
- Check with instructor

Sandra Wilson on the Russo-Japanese War

- “Taisho Period” or “Taisho Democracy”
- (1912-1926)
- (1905-1932)

# Taisho Emperor



**“TAISHO DEMOCRACY”**

## Hara Takashi



- Elected politicians gain more power
- Hara Takashi: first elected politician as prime minister (1918)
- More openness in the colonies: e.g. expanding education opportunities
- 1925: universal male suffrage (excluding Korea and Taiwan)

# Grass-roots Political Movements

## Buraku Liberation Movement (1922)

- Feminist movement
- Workers- and farmers unions
- Japanese Communist Party (1922)
- Right-wing & Pan-Asian organizations
- → A shift from politics by the elite only to participation in politics by the masses



# How Democratic was Taisho Japan?

## “Taisho Democracy”

- Political parties more power
- Universal Male Suffrage 1925
- Hara Takashi
- Culturally cosmopolitan
- More relaxation & openness in colonial policies

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## Limits to Democracy

- Politicians have to compromise with (unelected) military, elites, bureaucrats
- 1925 Peace Preservation Law
  - Forbids criticizing the Emperor
  - Forbids criticism of “the system of private property”
  -

# INDUSTRIALIZATION & URBANIZATION

# Urbanization, 1920-1930

Tokyo 3,358,000 -> 4,959,300

Osaka 1,250,300 -> 2,450,000

Nagoya 430,000 -> 900,000

- WWI Boom & Bust
- New Industries: steel, chemicals,...
- New professions: more white collar workers

# Ginza







駅のへら (道鐵下地京東)



# Osaka



# "Taisho Modern"



# Jazz in Japan



# New Mass Culture

- Radio
- Movies (Hollywood)
- Newspapers
- Mass-circulation  
magazines
- “yen-books”



(STOPPED HERE)

# Korean Workers in Japan

("blood and bone," 2004)

- 1910 2,500
- 1920 30,000
- 1930 419,000
- 1940 1,200,00
- 1945 2,000,000
- > Mostly laborers, but also students at Japanese universities



# 1923 Earthquake



# WOMEN IN MODERN JAPAN

## Feminist movement

- Meiji policy: “good wife, wise mother”
- “In the beginning, woman was the sun” (1911)





帝國  
帝國瓦斯八電球

帝國衣特許油八開閉器

# “Modern Girl” (“Moga”)





# Factory Girls



# Business as usual...



# Kita Ikki (1883-1937)



- 1906 Socialist
- 1911 Chinese revolution
- Relations to Pan-Asianist organizations
- 1919: “Plan for the Reorganization of Japan”
- “Japan’s most dangerous thinker”