

# The meiji restoration nature and impact



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The Meiji Restoration Nature and Impact Sam Wallis The movie ??? The Last Samurai??™, the newspaper article from The New York Times and the article posted on the George Mason University all give information about Japan??™s changing legal structure, the history of the Samurai in Japan and some of the political and social changes as well as the throes of industrialization in Japan in the 1870??™s. However, both articles written by Jonathan Dresner and Motoko Rich emphasize how source A (??? The Last Samurai??™) is historically inaccurate through a number of different reasons. Kazuho Tsuchiya, a 33 year old Japanese graduate wrote, ??? It wasn??™t realistic???. Many other Japanese people whom viewed the film where disappointed with it??™s poor portrayals of Japanese culture. Source A the film ??? The Last Samurai??™ has a huge number of inaccurate accountings for Japanese events, as well as wrong interpretations of Japanese culture. Although the film does show some true themes of Japans changing social and economic structure in the second half of the nineteenth century. The article posted on the George Mason University hosted website on the 5th of January 2004 lists the reasons that the film ??? The Last Samurai??™ is historically inaccurate.

For example the majority of the samurai in Japan didn??™t protest against the Emperor or the Shogun, they didn??™t rebel, and were even thankful to be freed from the samurai way of life. The film portrays the majority of the samurai as rebels against the Emperor, which is wrong as only a small number of the samurai??™s really did rebel. Another example of historical error in the film is that the Meiji Emperor didn??™t speak English. In addition no one except for the most senior advisors even saw him without an

invitation, he also didn't make an important political decision as seen in the film *The Last Samurai*. One final point that Jonathan Dresner addresses in his article is the fact that samurai lived in large urban areas, while a small amount of lower ranking soldiers were sent to live in the country and farm. If they could the samurai avoided the mountains altogether. The film portrays the samurai living in a more rural area surrounded by mountain ranges. This further illustrates the historical inaccuracy of the film *The Last Samurai*.

The writer of the article is a highly experienced professor of East Asian History, and his main research examines the Meiji-era (1868-1912), meaning that he would have researched the time period in which the movie was set in Japan, therefore being a moderately reliable source. The film *The Last Samurai* does show us some true historical information about Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century. Firstly, the film does demonstrate how Japan has developed as a country and adopted some western styles of living. For example the movie demonstrates how Japan's military was influenced by western's approach to war during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Japan went from swords and arrows on horseback to a more western style of fighting which involved foot soldier regiments armed with bayonets and cannons. In addition the weapons that the westerners used was slowly becoming introduced to the Japanese soldiers. The movie also identifies how some of the samurai went into debt with the merchants, or left the samurai life and started new professions such as police officers. The samurai class then slowly became lower on the hierarchy in Japan; the eventual cutting off

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of the samurai class, further confirms Japan's changing social structure. The newspaper article from the New York Times in January 4th 2004 highlights how Japan over the past decade has become much more familiar to westerners through the export of Japan's popular culture. The trade links between certain countries such as the United States has also helped for the adaptation of more western cultures in Japan. This source's explanation about Japan's development to a more western way of life can be either reliable or not depending on the person who wrote that section of the article.

As the article consists of three different writers one from America and two based in Japan. The film *The Last Samurai* is arguably extremely historically inaccurate, although the movie does show some of the true changing social structure and political policies in Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century. The articles *Hollywood's Land Of the Rising Cliche* and *How True to History is Tom Cruise's The Last Samurai* depict how the film is somewhat historically incorrect by juxtaposing the articles with true information about Japan's culture, social structure and economy during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Reference List: The motion picture: *The last Samurai*, directed by Edward Zwick  
Newspaper article from *The New York Times* January 4, 2004, *Hollywood's Land of the Rising Cliche*, Motoko Rich, Lukas Schwarzscher, Fumie Tomita.  
Article posted on the George Mason University hosted website: *History News Network* on 5 January 2004, *How True to History is Tom Crusie's The Last Samurai*, Jonathan Dresner.