



# Medieval Japan

History Standards 7.5: Students analyze the geographic, political, economic, religious and social structures of Medieval Japan

# I. Geography & Early Japan

- ▶ Japan's early societies were both isolated from and influenced by China and Korea

Physically, Japan is isolated from Korea and China by seas and the **Korea Strait**.





## A. Geography shapes life in Japan

1. Most islands are the top of undersea mountain and volcanoes.
  1. **Hokkaido**
  2. **Honshu**
  3. **Shikoku**
  4. **Kyushu**
2. People could only farm and settle in the non-mountainous areas (coastal plains).
3. The surroundings seas and ocean also provided food.
4. The physical isolation allowed for Japan to develop its own culture, religion, social structure.





## B. Early Japanese Society

### 1. 1<sup>st</sup> Japanese

1. Farmers that live in small farming villages
2. Villages are ruled by **clans**, or extended families
3. Clan chiefs were political and religious leaders
4. Clan chiefs performed rituals that honored their **kami** (spirits) ancestors
5. These rituals became a central part of the **Shinto** religion

### 2. Emperors – came from the conquering Yamato clan.

1. Western Japan
2. Claimed descendants of the Sun Goddess

日本	東京	大阪	北海道			
Japan	Tokyo	Osaka	Hokkaido			
山	川	日	雨	水	火	田
mountain	river	sun	rain	water	fire	rice field
米	魚	寿司	肉	酒	茶	
rice	fish	sushi	meat	alcohol	tea	
車	電気	自転車	飛行機			
car	electricity	bicycle	airplane			
一	二	三	四	五	六	七
one	two	three	four	five	six	seven
男	女	松井秀喜	黒沢明			
man	woman	Matsui Hideki	Kurozawa Akira			
食べる	行く	小	大	多	少	
to eat	to go	small	big	many	few	



## C. Japan Learns from China & Korea

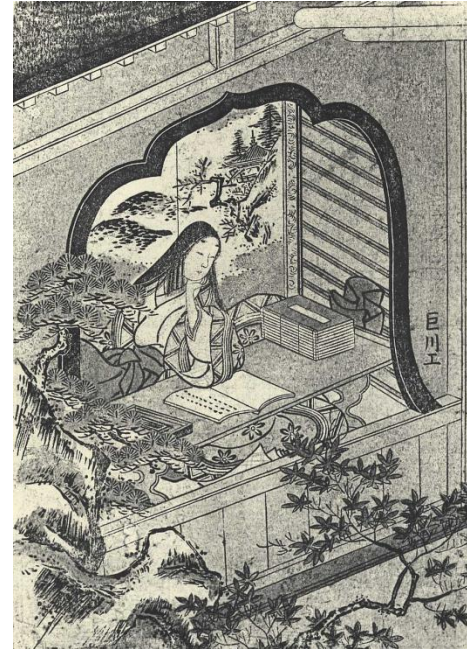
- I. During mid-500s, Japanese were sent to China & Korea to gather information about their neighboring cultures.
  1. Earliest Japanese writings used Chinese characters
  2. **Prince Shotoku**, Japan's **regent**, greatly admired Chinese philosophy and Korean's religion.
  3. Ideas of the Chinese philosopher Confucius helped Japanese culture and family life.
  4. After learning about Buddhism from Korea, Shotoku converted to Buddhism and worked hard to change people's mind about Buddhism.



# Quick summary & preview

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- ▶ You just heard how early Japan grew and developed. Next you'll hear how Japan's emperors encouraged nobles to create great works of art and literature.

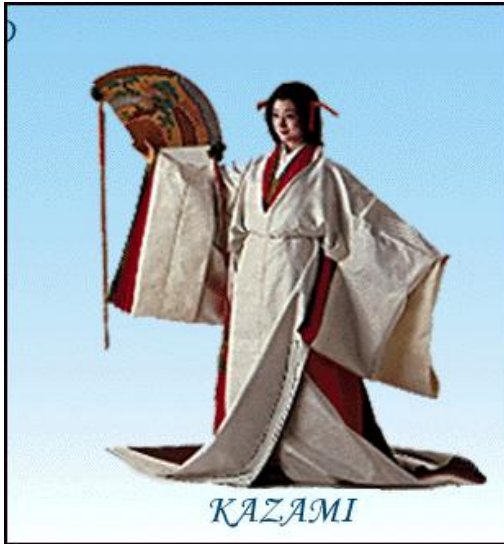


## II. Art & Culture in Heian

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- ▶ Japanese culture experienced a golden age during the Heian period of the 800s to the 1100s





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## A. Nobles Create Great Art

1. Japanese **court**, (a group of nobles who live near and serve or advise a ruler) created great art at Heian.

1. Fashion – layers of colored silks, gold, jewelry, and decorative fans to demonstrate their status
2. Literature – nobles were also careful of how they spoke and wrote. **Lady Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji*** is considered to be the first novel.
3. Visual Art –
  1. Calligraphy – to be beautiful of what was spoken
  2. Painting – bold colors; of court life, nature, and literature
4. Architecture
  1. Influenced by Chinese
  2. Preferred natural look
  3. Airy simple look, and surrounded it elegant gardens, and ponds.
5. Performing Arts – begins to develop during this time and will later influence the art form called Noh (music, speaking, dance), usually historical plays.







## B. Buddhism Changes

- I. Buddhism changes in Heian period.
  1. Nobles' religion reflected their love of elaborate rituals
  2. This was not practical or feasible for the common man who did not have time or money
  3. One alternative for the common people was **Zen**, form of Buddhism from China that emphasized self-discipline, and meditation (quite thinking).
  4. Zen was well received by the warriors. As the warriors become powerful, Zen grew even more popular.

# Quick summary & preview

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- ▶ At Heian, Japan's emperors presided over an elegant court. In the next section, you'll hear what happened when emperors and the court lost power and prestige.

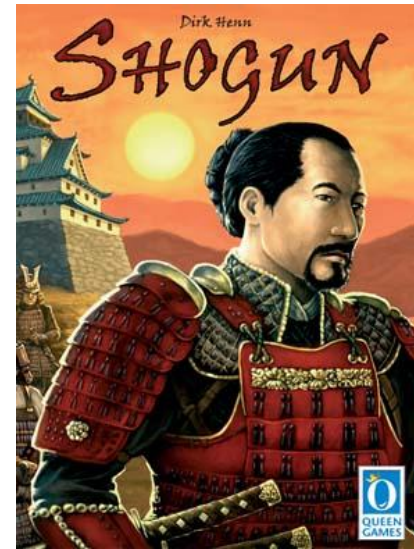


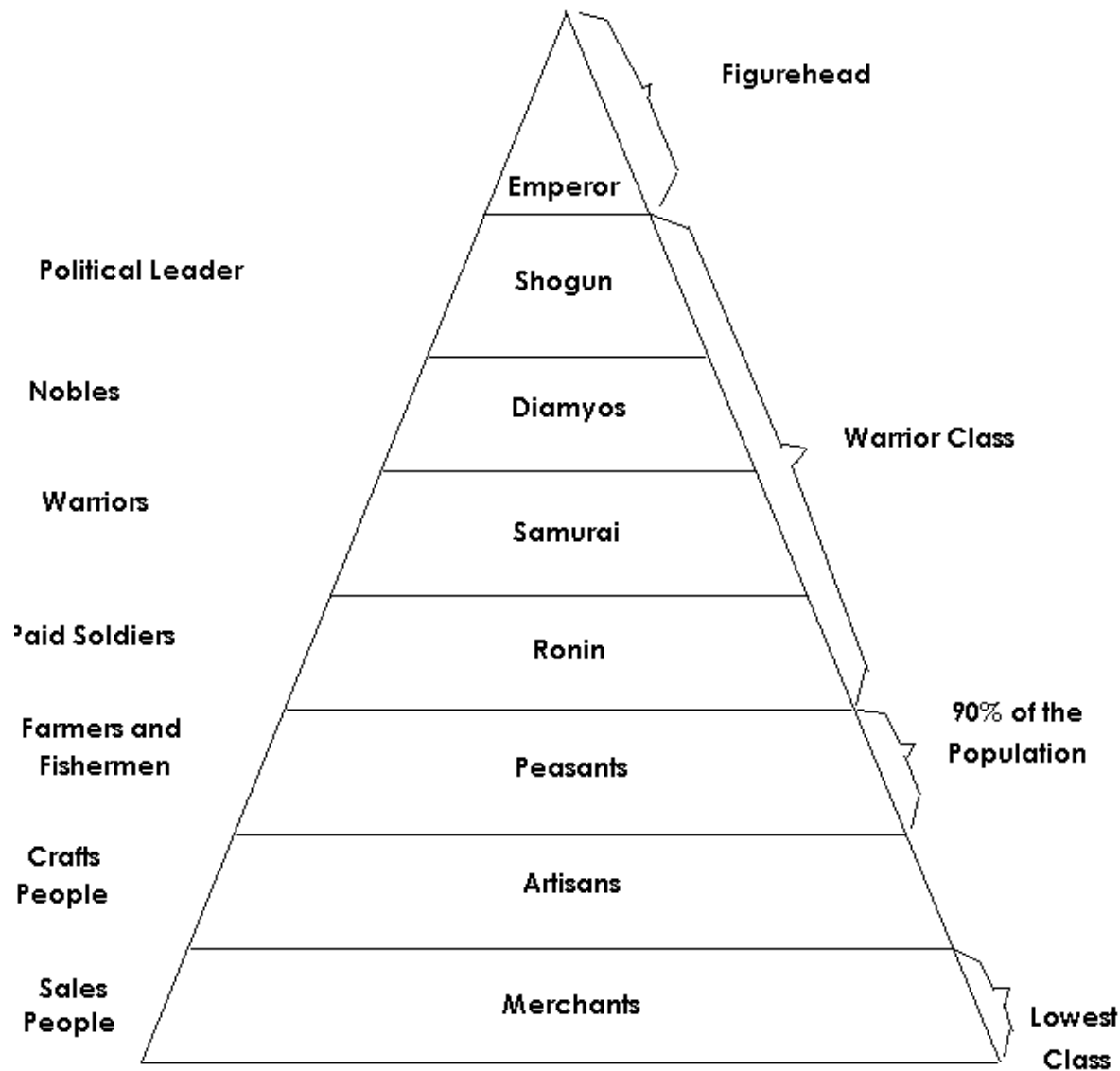


### III. Growth of Military Society

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- ▶ Japan developed a military society led by generals called shoguns.





## A. Warriors take over Japan

1. Samurai and shoguns took over Japan as emperors lost influence
  1. Internal conflicts and a detached emperor
  2. Rise of the Samurai
    1. **Daimyo**
    2. **Samurai** (to serve) – trained professional warriors
  3. Shoguns rule Japan
    1. Nobles outside of Heian were not happy about the way the government was run.
    2. The Minamoto clan ends up taking control of the country through warfare
    3. The Minamoto leader did not get rid of emperor, instead the emperor was made a **figurehead**, and Minamoto leader declared himself the shogun



## B. Samurai Live Honorably

1. Samurai warriors lived honorably
  1. The samurai were bold, highly trained warriors. They followed a strict code of behavior called **bushido**, or “the way of the warrior.”
  2. Samurai were expected to live simple, disciplined lives (turned to gardening, Zen, tea ceremonies)
  3. Must be loyal to one’s lord; important for a samurai’s sense of honor
  4. Lost of honor may result in a samurai committing suicide (i.e. disobeying order, losing a fight, or failing to protect his lord.)
  5. Sense of honor, highly respected /valued still.





## C. Orders Break Down

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- I. Orders break down when the power of the shogun were challenged by foreign invasion and internal rebellion.
  1. In the late 1200's, Mongols attempted to invade Japan, fortunately with united nobles and favorable weather Japan was not invaded. However, many nobles felt that they were not given credit for the success either.
  2. The emperor and daimyos were tired of being under the shogun. Small war broke out and eventually power shifted to the daimyos.
  3. No central power by 1400s





## D. Strong Leaders Take Over

- I. Strong leaders took over and unified Japan.
  - I. Unification
    1. Oda Nobunaga – used guns from Portuguese to help unify Japan
    2. Tokugawa Ieyasu continued to unify all of Japan and was given the title of Shogun by the emperor
    3. Tokugawa ruled in Edo (Tokyo), and when he died his descendants continued on as shogun (this is shogunate) for over 200 years.
  2. Isolation – not everyone was like Nobunaga. In fact, the shoguns turned to isolationism and tried to keep outside forces and ideas from Japan.
  3. It was like this until the late 1800's



## Quick summary

By the 1100s, the growing power of shoguns, daimyo, and samurai had turned Japan into a military society



# Conclusion

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- ▶ Japan's early culture was influenced by China and Korea
- ▶ A Golden age of Japanese art and culture occurred during Japan's Heian period
- ▶ After the Heian period, the Japanese created a military society

