

Japan's Feudal Age

Geography:

Japan is a country that consists of a chain of islands, (**archipelago**). It is located in the Pacific Ocean close to Korea, China and Eastern Russia.

Japan is an area that is part of **The Ring of Fire** which is a horseshoe shaped area that had underground and above ground volcanoes, earthquakes and often tidal waves (**tsunamis**)

The islands of Japan are very mountainous so the majority of the populations live along the coast and in the narrow river valley. In the earliest times of Japan the mountains prevented cultural diffusion and trade between the islands and inland areas of the country.



History:

Around 500 A.D., the **Yamato clan** gained control of Japan and set up its first and only dynasty. The current emperor can still trace his roots to this Yamato clan. Japan learnt and developed through **cultural diffusion from Korea and China**. In the early 600s, a Yamato ruler sent Japanese nobles to China so they could study the Chinese ways of life. They brought back many Chinese ideas and technology. Additionally, the Japanese adopted many Chinese laws, customs, and traditions but over time they developed their own unique civilization. They even developed their own religion, **Shintoism** or the "Way of the Gods"

Japan Adapts Chinese Ideas		
AD 600-799	AD 800 to 899	AD 900-1200s.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Japanese study Chinese civilization * Japanese emperor builds capital city modeled after the Chinese capital of Peking * Japanese nobles adopt Chinese language, food, and style of dress * Japanese nobles adopt Chinese tea ceremony, music, dance and ornamental gardens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Japanese stop traveling to China as nation becomes isolated under orders from the emperor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Japanese keep some Chinese ways but begin to build their own civilization by keeping what parts of Chinese culture they want and creating new religions, architecture, traditions and beliefs. * Japanese artists develop their own styles * Japanese change the Chinese system of writing to their own

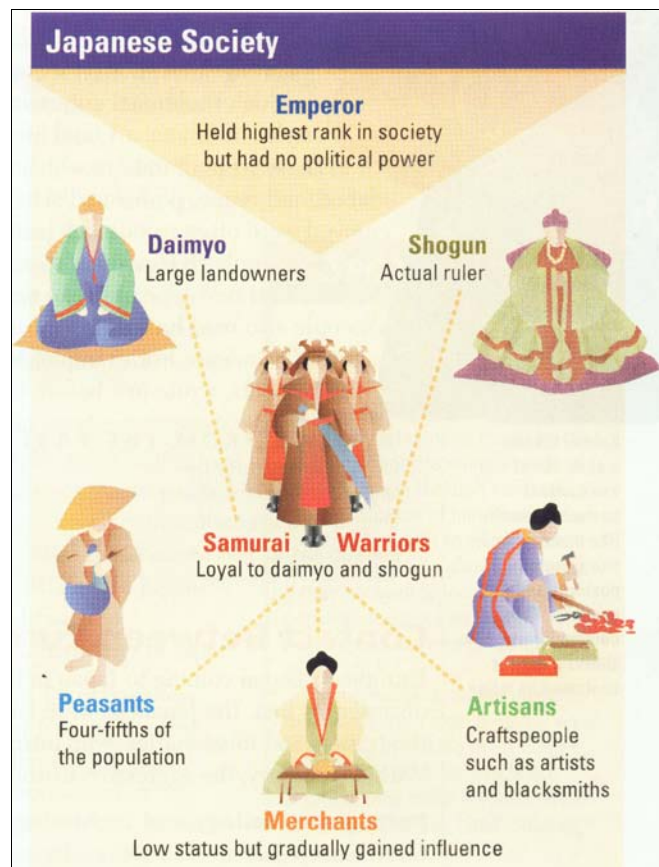
The blending of Japanese and Chinese cultures first began to take place in 794 A.D. and reached its prime by 1185 A.D. This time is called the **Heian Period**. During the Heian Period, the emperor lost power to one clan, the **Fujiwara**, who ran the country. They became known for their rich and lavish lifestyles, beautiful homes with gardens and pools. They developed elegant manners and new ways to dress. Nobles wrote important works of Japanese literature. One Heian woman wrote the world's first novel!

During the 1100s, local warlords began to fight each other in civil wars. While the armies battled for power, a new social system society emerged. It was called **feudalism**.

The **emperor** had no real power. He was merely a figurehead for the Japanese population to look up to and respect, sometimes like a god. The real power was held by the military ruler or team of rulers called the **shoguns**. They created their own dynasties called **shogunates**.

The shoguns gave land to local vassal lords in return for following and support. These land owing lords were called the **daimyo**.

Supporting each daimyo was the **samurai**. In return for his fighting and loyalty to his daimyo he was given his own area of land which was farmed by his peasants. The samurai also received extra income in the form of stipends (allowances) and grants of more land if they had to fight for a particular shogun or even the emperor if the nation was under foreign attack.



In 1603, the **Tokugawa shogunate** came to power. They ended the wars between the feudal lords. Once they had taken control over all of Japan they continued the **feudal system**. They began to impose restrictions on society by taking control of the daimyo and forcing the peasants to remain on the land. They were allowed no mobility. The new law was that only the Samurai class could serve in the imperial army or hold government jobs.

Agriculture did improve under the Tokugawa shogunate. Farmers used new seeds and tools to grow more food. The population of Japan grew. Roads and canals were built to link the towns that could now trade with each other.

During this time a form of Buddhism took hold in Japan. It was **Zen Buddhism** where the people valued peace, simple living, nature, and beauty. The tea ceremony and the ornamental gardens were very popular. Japan developed its own theatre called **kabuki**. The actors wore colorful costumes and acted out stories about families or events in Japanese history. Literature was allowed to expand and the new method of writing was the form of poetry called **haiku**.