

9.5

The Island Kingdom of Japan

Japan's Geography

While Japan was impacted by China culture, the island nation developed their own culture

Most of Japan is too mountainous to farm, but the mild climate allows what little farming to be successful

Fishing was/is VERY important to Japanese culture

However, Japan is in the region known as **The Ring of Fire & subject to earthquakes & massive waves called **tsunamis****

Early Japan

Early Japanese society was split into uji, or clans.

Each one had a chief & a special god or goddess

Yamato clan would take control & set up the Yamato dynasty.

They had Amaterasu as their goddess & chose the rising sun as their symbol

Emperors would become revered as gods

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Religion & Korea

Shinto- Religion that worships the forces of nature “way of the kami”

Shinto Shrines still are found around Japan today

Korea & Japan used to trade & keep in contact with each other, eventually knowledge from China entered the country

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Chinese Influence

Eventually Prince Shotoku would send nobles to China to gain knowledge.

Japan would eventually take many different ideas from China to adapt them into their own culture

Soon Buddhism would change the landscape & introduce pagodas to Japan

Confucian ideas would gain popularity as did the emphasis on filial piety & respect for learning

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Selective Borrowing

The process of adopting aspects of one culture,
but modifying or discarding others

Eventually Japan would take what they gained
from China & morph it into their own
culture

Japan would adopt **kana**- phonetic symbols
representing syllables for writing

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Hein Period

During this time Kyoto would become the capital & Emperors & court families gained power

Fine art, pavilions, & lotus pools became popular as did fine silk outfits

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Sei Shonagon wrote a series of anecdotes called *The Pillow Book*

Muraski Shikibu- wrote the worlds first full-length novel, *The Tale of Genji*.

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Japan's Feudal Age

Soon rival clans would battle for control of the countryside, Emperor became a figure head

Shogun- Supreme Military commander of a region in Japan

Daimyo- Great war lords who swore allegiance to the Shogun

Samurai- Warriors who served under the Daimyo
“those who serve”

Way of the Warrior

Bushido- “Way of the Warrior” code for samurai that emphasized honor, bravery, & loyalty

Samurai would go through extreme hardships for the code

Those who broke the code were expected to commit **seppuku**- ritual suicide

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Feudal Society

Women had to accept hardships for her husband & give him loyalty

Peasants would work Samurai lands & serve as foot soldiers during wars.

Merchants were viewed lower on the social scale as they were “obsessed with wealth”

The Mongols would try & invade Japan multiple times, only to succumb to typhoons

Japan would credit the kamikaze, divine winds, as evidence they were under protection by the gods

United Japan

Toyotomi Hideyoshi- commoner who becomes general that unites most of Japan under his control

Japan would eventually join under a centralized feudalism with a ordered government

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New laws to keep tabs on daimyos were created, such as required living quarters for family

Soon the rise of the economy led to the rise of a very wealthy merchant class

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Feudal Culture

Zen- Emphasis on self-reliance, meditation, & devotion to duty

Soon new forms of entertainment & drama would be created for the masses

Noh Theater- Zen inspired drama with slow movement & carved masks

Bunraku- Puppet theaters to tell grand epic tales

Kabuki Theater- A grand, colorful show with music dance & special effects

Literature & Art

Haiku- a 17 syllable form of poetry to express feelings, thoughts, or ideas

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Wood-block prints gave Japan a unique sense of culture

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