

## Japanese History: A Chronological Outline

ca. 4000 BCE **Jomon Culture**

Prehistoric culture characterized by handmade pottery with rope pattern design

ca. 300 BCE **Yayoi Culture**

More advanced agricultural society, using metals and wheel-turned pottery

BCE/CE

ca. 300 CE **Tomb Period:**  
Kofun (250-538) | Asuka (538-710)

Great earthen grave mounds and their funerary objects, such as clay haniwa — terra cotta figurines of people and animals, models of buildings and boats — attest to emergence of powerful clan rulers. Among these was the Yamato clan, whose rulers began the imperial dynasty that has continued to the present.

552 CE **Introduction of Buddhism**

645 CE **Taika Reform**

Reorganization and reform based largely on learning imported from China: Buddhism, writing system, bureaucratic organization, legal theories

710-814 **Nara Period**

Establishment of first permanent capital at Nara; emergence of Japanese patterns of administration and institutions. Beginning of classical period.

794-1185 **Heian Period; Late Heian (Fujiwara)**

Great flowering of classical Japanese culture in new capital of Heian-kyo (Kyoto). Court aristocracy, especially women, produced great body of literature — poetry, diaries, the novel *The Tale of Genji* — and made refined aesthetic sensibility their society's hallmark.

1185-1333 **Kamakura Period**

Beginning of military rule, as samurai (warriors) replaced nobles as real rulers of Japan. Imperial court remained in Kyoto but shoguns governing organization based in Kamakura, south of modern Tokyo.

**1333-1336 Kemmu Restoration****1336-1573 Ashikaga (Muromachi) Period**

New warrior government in Kyoto retained weak control of the country, but from its base in Kyoto's Muromachi district became patron of newly flourishing artistic tradition, influenced by Zen Buddhist culture as well as samurai and court society.

**Country at War**

Warring factions engaged in lengthy, destructive civil wars

**1568-1598 Unification****1600-1867 Tokugawa (Edo) Period**

Country unified under military government which maintained 250 years of secluded peace, leading to development of vibrant urban, "middle-class" culture with innovations in economic organization, literature, and the arts.

**1868-1912 Meiji Restoration**  
Meiji Period

Emergence, with Western stimulus, into modern international world, marked by dramatic alterations in institutions, traditional social organization, and culture.

**1912-1926 Taisho Period****1926-1989 Showa Period**

Japan as a world power in the 20th century

**1945-present Contemporary Japan:**  
Heisei Period (1989-present)

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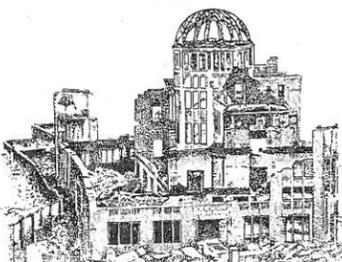
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# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

PERIOD	50 000 BC	11 000 BC	300 BC	300 AD	552	710	794
PERIOD	PALEOLITHIC	JŌMON	YAYOI	KOFUN	LATE YAMATO	NARA	HEIAN
<b>POLITICAL MOVEMENTS</b>	clan heads the only rulers	little political differentiation; clan or village heads as rulers	57 AD King Nu of Wa receives gold seal from Chinese emperor 239 AD Queen Himiko sends embassy to China	<i>uji</i> chieftains as local rulers late 5th century five kings of Wa mentioned in Chinese chronicles Yamato chieftains ( <i>ōkimi</i> )	593–628 Empress Suiko reigns; Prince Shōtoku regent 593–622 beginnings of political centralization along Chinese lines; transition from clan to imperial system 645 Taika reform 672–86 Emperor Temmu reigns 694 Empress Jitō establishes new capital at Fujiwara	710 Empress Gemmyō designates Heijō (Nara) the new capital 724–49 Emperor Shōmu reigns 752 Emperor Shōmu consecrates Great Buddha at Tōdaiji 784 Emperor Kammu (reigns 781–806) moves capital to Nagaoka and later (794) to Heian	early Heian phase of strong imperial authority 858 Fujiwara Yorifusa becomes regent for nine-year-old Emperor Seiwa; marks beginning of Fujiwara domination of court government 995–1027 Fujiwara no Michinaga dominant 1086–1156 <i>insei</i> , cloistered rule by cloistered emperors to offset power of the Fujiwara 1156 Hōgen insurrection 1159 Heiji insurrection 1180–85 Gempei War
							
<b>CULTURE AND RELIGION</b>	stone tools and microliths	Jōmon pottery, shell mounds, figurines	Yayoi pottery	great and lesser tombs	552 introduction of Buddhism 607 foundation of the original Hōryūji monastery	712 <i>Kojiki</i> 720 <i>Nihon shoki</i> 777 <i>Manyōshū</i> six schools of Nara Buddhism Buddhism as court religion reconciliation of Shinto and Buddhism 905 <i>Kokinshū</i> anthology of verse 985 Genshin teaches Pure Land Buddhism 1010 <i>Tale of Genji</i> by Lady Murasaki Shikibu 1175 Hōnen founds Pure Land school	805 Saichō establishes the Tendai school of Buddhism 806 Kūkai founds Shingon school of Buddhism Although direct contact with China is broken off (894), Japanese art, architecture and literature continue to be influenced by China, while showing Japanese innovations 905 <i>Kokinshū</i> anthology of verse 985 Genshin teaches Pure Land Buddhism 1010 <i>Tale of Genji</i> by Lady Murasaki Shikibu 1175 Hōnen founds Pure Land school
<b>SOCIETY AND ECONOMICS</b>	preceramic Stone Age hunting-and-gathering economy	Stone Age hunting-and-gathering ceramic culture	wet rice cultivation, agricultural implements, bronze bells, mirrors and weapons, weaving	builders of the great tombs; heads of a powerful confederation of <i>uji</i> ; evidence of military and horseriding culture	645 all land brought under imperial control 702 Taihō codes promulgated 708 copper and silver coins officially minted	935 Taira Masakado's insurrection in the eastern provinces 1010 private estates ( <i>shōen</i> ) developing within the public land system; warrior bands ( <i>bushidan</i> ) proliferating in the provinces	
<b>INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS</b>			petty rulers of Wa in contact with China	607 embassy of monks and scholars sent to Sui China 630–894 15 official embassies journey to Tang China 663 Japanese fleet destroyed off Korean coast by Silla	754 Ganjin arrives from China	805 Saichō returns from China 806 Kūkai returns from China 894 suspension of official embassies to China	

Colcutt, Martin, Marius Jansen, and Isao Kumakura, eds. *Cultural Atlas of Japan*. New York: Facts on File, 1988, 68-69.

1185	1333	1392	1568	1600	1868	1912	1926–
KAMAKURA	NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN COURTS	MUROMACHI	MOMOYAMA	EDO	MEIJI	TAISHŌ	SHŌWA
1185 destruction of Taira by Minamoto; Yoritomo establishes Bakufu at Kamakura 1192 beginning of warrior government and shogunal rule 1219 Minamoto Sanetomo assassinated; Hōjō regents dominate Kamakura Bakufu 1221 Jōkyū War 1333 overthrow of Kamakura Bakufu	1336 Go-Daigo flees Kyoto and establishes southern court in Yoshino; Takauji establishes Muromachi Bakufu in Kyoto 1338 Takauji takes title of Seiitashogun; followed by 14 generations of Ashikaga shoguns	1368–94 Ashikaga Yoshimitsu rules, a strong shogun 1392 Yoshimitsu unifies the two courts 1467–77 Ōnin War 1449–73 Yoshimasa rules, 8th shogun, a weak ruler; imperial court impoverished	1568 Oda Nobunaga marches into Kyoto, ends Ashikaga shogunate (1573) and conquers much of central Japan 1582 Nobunaga assassinated; Toyotomi Hideyoshi succeeds, unifies Japan and rules as Kampaku	1600 Tokugawa Ieyasu establishes his supremacy at Sekigahara 1603 Ieyasu takes title of Seiitashogun; establishes Bakufu in Edo; succeeded by 14 generations of Tokugawa shoguns who rule Japan through the <i>Baku-han</i> system 1615 siege of Osaka castle	1868 Bakufu overthrown by samurai alliance; imperial restoration; Emperor Mutsuhito moves court to Edo (renamed Tokyo) 1890 Meiji constitution; political parties formed; first general election for House of Representatives	1912 death of Meiji emperor; Taishō emperor succeeds; two-party civilian government until 1932	1926 accession of Shōwa emperor, Hirohito 1945 atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki lead to Japanese surrender 1945–52 allied occupation under General Douglas MacArthur 1946 emperor renounces claims to divinity promulgation of postwar constitution of Japan 1952 Japan regains full independence 1972 Okinawa reverted to Japan
							
development of fine swords, armor and military equipment 1207 Shinran exiled to Echigo: origin of True Pure Land school 1225 <i>Tales of the Heike</i> and other war tales 1253 Nichiren asserts exclusive efficacy of <i>Lotus Sūtra</i> : origin of Nichiren school 1289 death of Ippen, founder of "Timely" school of Pure Land Buddhism	spread of Zen culture revival of Kyoto as a commercial and cultural center 1394 Yoshimitsu builds Golden Pavilion in Kyoto 1420–1506 Sesshū the painter 1421–1508 Sōgi the poet Tea Ceremony developing outside Zen monastic circles 1549–1639 the Christian century	1576 Nobunaga completes Azuchi castle on Lake Biwa 1587 proscription of Catholic missionary activity	1609 prohibition of Catholicism 1637 promotion of Neo-Confucianism 1688–1703 Genroku era: flowering of Kabuki and puppet theater, prints of the floating world, poetry and narrative fiction 1730–1801 Shinto revival; National Learning Movement 1760–1849 Katsushika Hokusai 1767–1858 Andō Hiroshige	1896 movies imported; start of domestic film production	1916 death of Natsume Sōseki, novelist 1922 death of Mori Ōgai, surgeon-general and novelist 1925 start of radio broadcasting	1953 start of televised broadcasting	
1232 compilation of <i>Jōei shikimoku</i> , first legal code for warrior society	1467–77 the age of wars: Japan breaks up into many semi-independent feudal domains ruled by <i>daimyō</i> 1500 Japanese pirates roam seas of east and southeast Asia 1543 introduction of firearms	1582–98 land surveys 1588 sword hunt edict; separation of samurai from peasants	1637 suppression of Shimabara uprising 1688–1703 rapid growth of Edo, Osaka and castle towns 1701–02 affair of the 47 <i>Rōnin</i> 1781–88 Temmei famine; great hardship in many villages, large-scale peasant uprisings and urban riots	1871 return of <i>daimyō</i> domains to emperor 1872 Tokyo – Osaka telegraph opened; Yokohama – Tokyo railroad opened; development of light industry 1894 strike at a cotton mill in Osaka 1904 development of heavy industry	1923 great Kantō earthquake	1945–52 democratization of economic activity and free labor movement proposed by SCAP 1946 land reform policy 1947 SCAP bans planned general strike 1960 Prime Minister Ikeda announces Income Doubling plan: economic miracle under way 1964 first Bullet Train from Tokyo to Osaka 1973 oil crisis 1988 Seikan Tunnel links Hokkaido and Honshu; Seto Bridge links Honshu and Shikoku	
1200 Eisai and Dōgen introduce Rinzaï and Sōtō traditions of Zen from China 1274–81 Mongol invasions	1543 Portuguese arrive at Tanegashima 1549 Francis Xavier comes to Japan	1592 Hideyoshi launches unsuccessful invasions of Korea and (1597) China	1604 Red Seal licenses issued to Japanese vessels trading with Luzon, Siam etc 1609 Dutch trading post established at Hirado 1635 ban on Japanese travel abroad 1853 arrival of Captain Matthew Perry at Uruga precipitates crisis	1894 Sino-Japanese War 1904 Russo-Japanese War 1910 annexation of Korea	1912 first participation in Olympic Games 1914 Japan declares war on Germany 1920 Japan admitted to League of Nations	1933 withdrawal from League of Nations 1937 Japan declares war on China 1941 Japan attacks Pearl Harbor 1950 outbreak of Korean War 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty and US-Japan Security Pact signed 1956 admitted to UN 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games 1970 World Expo in Osaka 1979 5th Summit Conference held in Tokyo 1986 12th Summit Conference held in Tokyo	