

Asia

Asian Dynasties



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Asian Expansion and Empires

Thematic Icons



Economics



Geography



Historical concepts



Government

Icons



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page

For more instructions, see the *User Guide*.





Timeline



What is a dynasty?

Dynasty is the name given to the period when a line of rulers come from the same family. Leadership is **hereditary** and typically passed down from father to son.

Can you name any dynasties? The images below may help you.





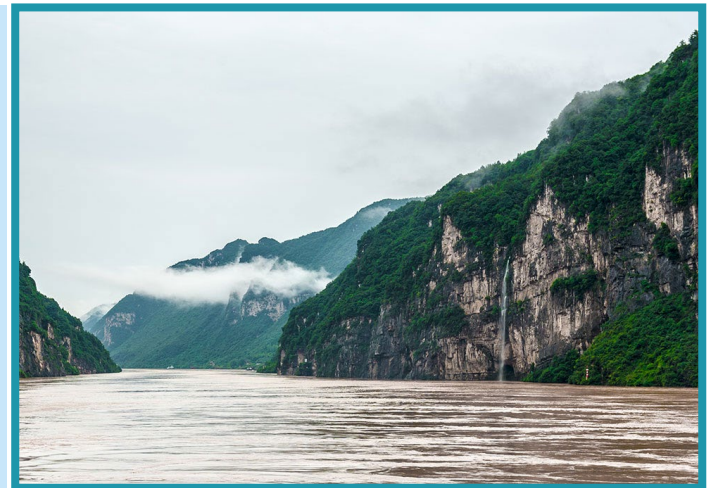
Where is China?



China is roughly the same size as the USA. It has a variety of **climates** and types of **terrain**.

The Himalayan Mountains sit to the west of China, and there are two deserts in the north: the Gobi and the Taklamakan deserts. As these areas are difficult to cross, people have traditionally lived in the east of the country.

There are two major rivers in China. The Yangzi River is the largest river in China and runs from the center of the country to the East China Sea. The Yellow River is in the north of the country.



 What else do you know about China's geography? 



Chinese dynasties



Major achievements





Contact with other people and cultures allowed ideas and technology to spread around the world and introduced new goods to the global marketplace. Forms of contact included:

- trade – the Silk Road stretched from China all the way to the Mediterranean Sea
- conquest – for example, the **Mongol** takeover in 1279 brought China under the control of a foreign government
- exploration – such as the voyages by Zheng He in the 1400s .

However, some emperors sought to restrict this contact. In the 1430s, Ming emperors brought in a policy of **isolationism**.

What might be the consequences of this?



China's economy improved during the Tang and Song dynasties, largely due to:

- developments in agriculture – a surplus of food was produced which could be used to pay taxes and trade with other countries
- the growth of cities – many of which would have been market and trade centers
- trade – grew both internally, due to developments on the **Grand Canal**, and externally, as goods such as tea, rice and silk were exchanged with foreign powers.



What else might they have traded?

Contact with other cultures helped to encourage the spread of major world religions, such as **Buddhism**.

Buddhism first spread to China along the Silk Road and other trade routes during the Han dynasty. From then on, Buddhism continued to spread throughout China.



Buddhism had a large influence on Chinese culture. It was particularly important in China during periods of unrest, such as the **Period of Disunion** (220–589 AD).

Why do you think this was?



Where is Japan?



Japan is an island country, found off the east coast of Asia. It is made up of a number of islands. The four main islands are Hokkaidō, Honshū, Shikoku and Kyūshū, although there are thousands more.

Although cities have developed in the flatter areas, much of Japan is **mountainous**. Many of these mountains are volcanoes and the movement of **tectonic plates** leads to earthquakes.

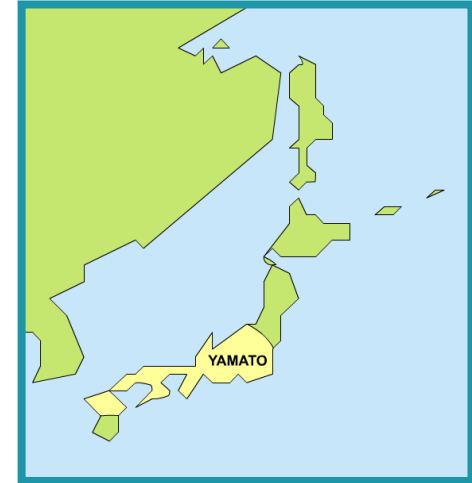


The temperature in Japan can vary from quite cool in the north to more tropical in the south.



The early Japanese lived in **clans**. These were extended family groups who shared a common ancestor. The clan was led by a chief.

The chief was also responsible for following the **Shinto** religious activities, which included leading rituals honoring the **kami** (spiritual beings).



The different clans would compete for territory and power. Over time, the **Yamato** clan from the island of Honshū came to dominate. The exact dates of Yamato rule are unclear, but by the 500s, Yamato rulers were styling themselves as the emperors of Japan.





In 794, the Japanese capital was moved to **Heian** (modern-day Kyoto). Power was largely in the hands of the **Fujiwara** clan, who had married into the imperial family.

Heian became a center of art and culture in medieval Japan. For the previous few centuries, China had been a major influence on Japanese culture. During this period, the arts began to have a more national perspective.

Artistic activities in Heian included:

- painting
- calligraphy
- poetry
- literature – including what is often referred to as the world's first novel, *The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu.

Can you name any Japanese art forms?

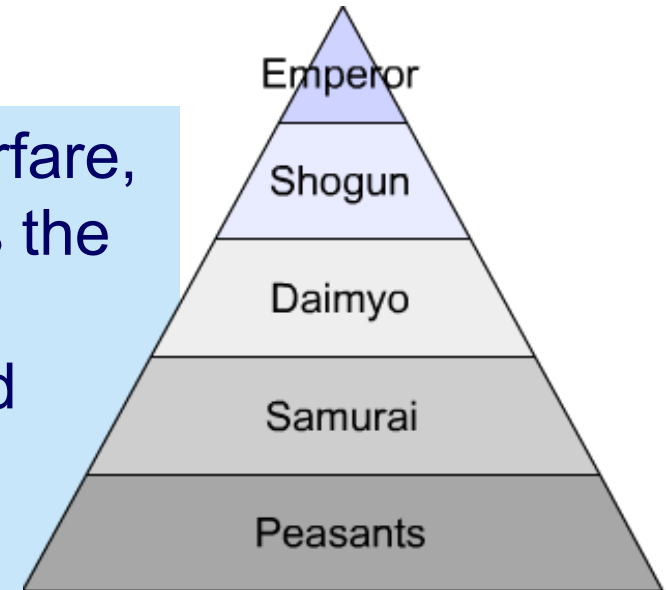


The rise of the shogunate



As the Middle Ages progressed, there was a shift in power away from the emperor who became more of a figurehead than a ruler.

In 1192, following a period of clan warfare, Minamoto Yoritomo was appointed as the first **shogun** ruler (highest military commander in Japan). He established his own capital and authority moved away from the emperor.



A feudal system was established with relationships largely based on military exchanges. For example, the **daimyo** (nobility) offered the **samurai** land and food for protection.

Who is missing from this social pyramid?



The Tokugawa Shogunate



From 1457, Japan was locked in a civil war known as the **Senkoku** (“Warring States”) period.

In 1600, following the Battle of Sekigarhara, Tokugawa Ieyasu successfully united the warring factions and in 1603, became the first shogun of the **Tokugawa Shogunate**.

The Tokugawa Shogunate was mainly a period of peace and prosperity. However, in later years the Shogunate grew weak. In 1868, the **Meiji Emperor** was returned to power as part of an “Imperial Restoration” by the Choshu and Satsuma clans.





Early Japanese contact with other cultures was with China and Korea, two of its closest neighbors, and this is obvious in the written language. While the origins of Japanese are unclear, the written language is drawn from Chinese.

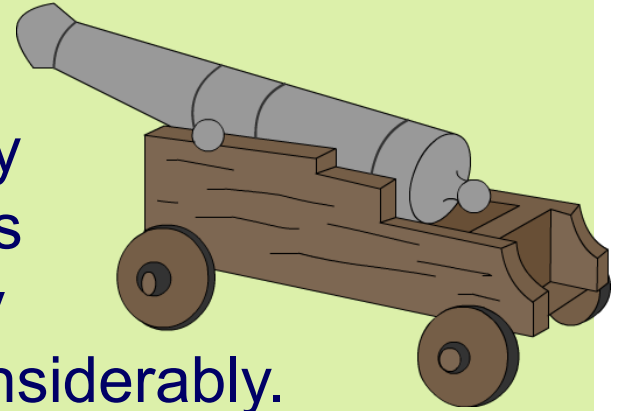
The influence of China on Japanese culture was particularly clear during the **regency** of Prince **Shotoku** who:

- used Chinese government as a model for Japanese government
- encouraged the spread of Buddhism and Confucianism
- encouraged cultural and academic exchanges between the two countries.





Japan's first contact with Europe was in 1543, when they began to trade with Portugal. The Japanese were particularly interested in the weapons the Europeans brought, and the guns and cannons they acquired changed Japanese warfare considerably.



Christian **Missionaries** also attempted to convert the Japanese people. However, later shoguns were concerned at the influence Europeans were having on Japan.

In the 1630s, a **closed-country** policy was introduced, isolating Japan from the rest of the world. This policy was not abandoned until after the Meiji Restoration.

What impact do you think this had?

Closed country policy



