

# TIMELINE OF JAPANESE HISTORY

## EARLY PERIOD

**ca. 4000 BCE**

### **Jomon**

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

**ca. 300 CE**

### **Tomb Period**

**KOFUN (250-538) | ASUKA (538-710)**

Great earthen grave mounds (often in the shape of a keyhole) 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.

## CLASSICAL PERIOD

**552 CE**

Introduction of Buddhism by Prince Shotoku

- *Sensō-ji Temple* (Asakusa, Tokyo) originally built in 600s CE



**645 CE**

### **Taika Reform**

Reorganization and reform based largely on learning imported from China: Buddhism, writing system, bureaucratic organization, legal theories, and hashi (chopsticks).

**710-814 CE**

### **Nara Period**

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

- *Fushimi Inari-taisha* (Shinto Shrine with Torii Gates) originally established 711 CE, Torii Gates added through 1868)
- Tōdai-ji Temple (Nara - Originally built in 700s, it was reconstructed in the 1700s.)



**794-1185 CE**

### **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.

- *Heian* = Kyoto
- *Hachimangū Shrine* moved here 1191
- Itsukushima Shrine (near Hiroshima) 1168 - earlier version dates to 593

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## MEDIEVAL PERIOD

**1185-1333 CE**

### **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.

- *Hachimangū Shrine*: Shogun Minamoto no Santeomo assassinated here in 1280 bringing about the end of Minamoto rule in Kamakura
- *Kōtoku-in (Giant Buddha - Diabatsu in Kamakura)*: 1252

**1333-1336 CE**

### **Kemmu Restoration**

- *Himeji Castle* (originally built in 1333 but expanded through the 1600s)



**1336-1573 CE**

### **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

- *Kinkaku-ji* (Temple of Golden Pavilion) originally built 1397)
- *Ryōan-ji (Rock Garden)* 1400s
- *Odawara Castle* (originally built in 1447)

**1568-1598 CE**

### **Unification**

- *Osaka Castle* (1583)

**1600-1867 CE**

### **Tokugawa (Edo) Period**

Country unified under Tokugawa Shogunate 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.

- *Edo = Tokyo*
- *Nijō Castle* (Kyoto) 1679

## MODERN PERIOD

**1868-1912 CE**

### **Meiji Restoration**

#### **Meiji Era**

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

**1912-1926 CE**

#### **Taisho Era**

- *Meiji Shrine* (Tokyo)

**1926-1989 CE**

#### **Showa Era: Emperor Hirohito**

**1945-present\***

- *Peace Memorial Park and Museum*

## CONTEMPORARY JAPAN:

#### **Heisei Era**

**1989-PRESENT: Emperor Akihito**

#### **Reiwa Era**

**2019-PRESENT: Emperor Naruhito**