

Concise History of Japan Before the Edo Era

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古代史 Ancient Periods

- 神話 Mythology
- 縄文 Jomon (10000BC-300BC)
- 弥生 Yayoi (300BC-300AD)
- 古墳 Kofun (300-592)
- 飛鳥 Asuka (592-710)
- 奈良 Nara (710-794)
- 平安 Heian (794-1185)

武士の時代 Samurai Periods

- 中世 Medieval Periods
 - 鎌倉 Kamakura (1185-1333)
 - 室町 Muromachi (1333-1568)
 - 安土桃山 Azuchi-Momoyama (1568-1600)
- Early Modern Period
 - 江戸 Edo (1600-1868)

現代 Modern Periods

- 明治 Meiji (1868-1912)
- 大正 Taisho (1912-1926)
- 昭和 Showa (1926-1989)
- 平成 Heisei (1989-2019)
- 令和 Reiwa (2019-present)

記紀神話 Japanese Mythology

- According to the Japanese Myth, *Ninigi*, god of Rice and Plenty, was sent by *Amaterasu*, ruler of the Plain of Heaven, to the earth to govern Japan.
- Japanese imperial family is believed to be the descendants of Ninigi.
- Takachiho-no-mine at Miyazaki prefecture is the place where Ninigi marked his first step.



Jomon Period (10000BC-300BC)

- People of Japan followed a hunting and gathering way of life.
- The period is distinguished from the Paleolithic Period by the presence of the *Jomon Pottery*.
- The introduction of rice farming to Kyushu and its rapid spread brought an end to the Jomon life style.



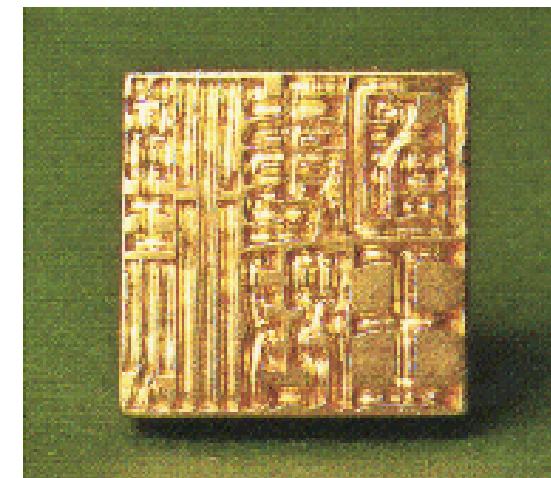
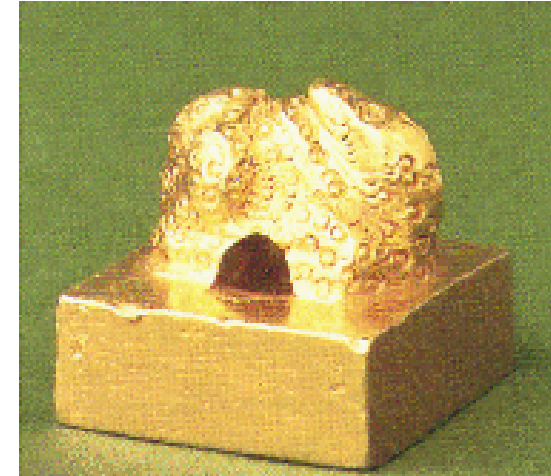
Yayoi Period (300BC-300AD)

- Yayoi period was considered to be peaceful agricultural society.
- But the period is increasingly seen as one of warfare, social stratification, and political conflicts.
- People used *Yayoi pottery* with smooth shapes, and bronze mirrors, bells, and weapons.



International Relations

- A gold seal of the “King of the state of Na of Wa of Han” was discovered in 1784 on Shikanoshima in Fukuoka Prefecture.
- The gold seal is believed to be presented in AD57, from the emperor of Later Han, a Chinese dynasty, to a “King of a small northern Kyushu country”.



Yamatai-koku

- It is known from Chinese chronicles that Japan housed many small political units called *kuni*.
- Among kuni, *Yamatai-koku*, was described in detail by the Chinese chronicles.
- Yamatai was ruled by Queen *Himiko*.
- There is a dispute on where Yamatai-koku was located: Kyushu or Kansai?



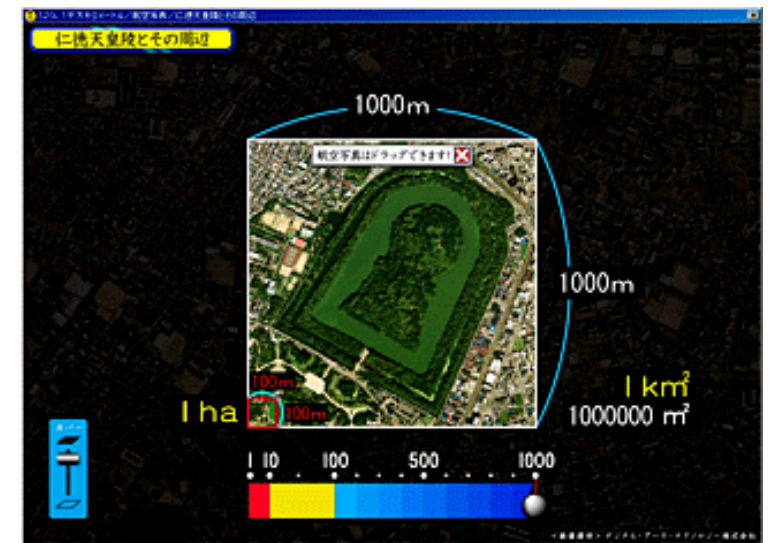
doutaku



haniwa

Kofun Period (300-600)

- The first state in Japan, *Yamato*, emerged in Kansai, and established diplomatic relations with Korea and China.
- Kyushu lost its political leadership.
- During this period, various tomb mounds (*kofun* in Japanese) were raised in the Western area of Japan.
- Among the kofun, the tomb of Emperor Nintoku is the largest.



高松塚 (Takamatsuzuka) 古墳

- Takamatsuzuka Tomb was accidentally founded in 1960s.
- Inside the tomb mound, the wall is decorated with colorful paintings drawn in the 7th century.
- The tomb was built for the imperial family members.



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遣唐使 Embassies to China

- The government started to send official envoys to Tang Dynasty in 702.
- Between 702 and 777, seven missions were dispatched, each consisting of as many as 500 or 600 men.
- Knowledge and culture were brought to Japan by the missions and the foreign visitors.



大宰府 Dazaifu

- The imperial court settled down a local government, which ruled the Kyushu island and managed its international affairs.
- Many aristocrat-bureaucrats were sent from Kyoto and spent a few years at Dazaifu as local officials.
- Some of the bureaucrats were outstanding poets, and their poems are collected in the 万葉集 *Manyo-shu* collection.

令和 Reiwa

- Japan's government chose 令和 *Reiwa* as the new era title, which started on May 1, 2019.
- *Reiwa* was taken from the foreword to the section of poems on Spring of the 万葉集 collection.
- One day, 大伴旅人 Otomo-no Tabito held a banquet to admire the beautiful blossom of plum trees here at Dazaifu

Admiring plum blossom

- 初春の令月にして、気淑（よ）く風和（やわら）ぐ。梅は鏡前の粉（ふん）を披（ひら）き、蘭は珮後（ばいご）の香（かう）を薰（かを）らす。
- The foreword to the section is based on the words of some ancient Chinese classical poems.
- January of the lunar calendar is February of the solar calendar.
- The new era name celebrates the coronation of the new emperor 徳仁 Naruhito who was born on February 23, 1960.

聖徳太子 Prince Shotoku Taishi

- From 594 to 622, Japan was led by a Buddhist, Prince Shotoku, who was appointed to the regent to support Emperor Suiko, his elder sister.
- He sent an embassy to China to open an “equal diplomacy” with an impolite letter, starting “The ruler of the land of the rising sun addresses the ruler of the land of the setting sun”.



Shotoku Taishi was printed on the 10,000 yen bill in the Showa era.

大化の改新 The Taika Reforms

- The imperial politics was strongly under the influence of the Soga clan, which was destroyed in a coup launched by Prince Naka no Oe and Fujiwara no Kamatari.
- The imperial court was reformed to introduce the Chinese institutions into bureaucracy and land ownership.

大宝律令 Taiho Code

- After the passing of Prince Naka no Oe (then Emperor Tenji), there was a bloody conflict between his son Prince Otomo and his brother Oama, of which the latter won the battle, and was enthroned as Emperor Tenmu.
- Emperor Tenmu completed the institutional reform to promulgate the Taiho Code.
- Under the reign by Emperor Tenmu, the historical chronicles, Kojiki and Nishon-Shoki were compiled.

Construction of the Giant Buddha 奈良の大仏

- In 710, the government constructed a new capital at Nara, following China's capital Chang'an.
- During Nara period, Japan suffered many natural disasters, including a smallpox (天然痘) epidemic.
- In 752, Emperor Shomu built the Giant Buddha statue at the Todaiji temple, in order to put down natural disasters with the help of Buddhism.



平安時代 Heian Period 1- *Sekkan* politics

- In 794, the capital moved to Kyoto, which remained the capital until 1868.
- The Fujiwara clan, ancestors of Fujiwara no Kamatari, dominated the Heian politics.
- They maintained their power by allowing their daughter to marry into the emperor's family and their grandson to ascend the throne as emperor for generations.
- The Fujiwara leaders supported the emperor as a regent, either as 摂政 *sessho* (an assistant to the emperor in his infancy) or as 関白 *kampaku* (a guarantor to the emperor in his adulthood).

莊園 *shoen* (manor)

- In the 律令 Rite System, land was owned by the government.
- In order to increase agricultural productivity, the imperial court encouraged cultivation and allowed conditional private ownership of new settlements.
- Manors were nominally the private property of powerful members of the imperial court, and by the 11th century, more than half of the country's land was manors.
- The owners of manors hired armed samurai to protect their private properties. This is the origin of samurai.

平安時代 Heian Period 2 – Cloistered rule

- In 1086, Emperor Shirakawa ceded the throne to his son but continued to exercise political power.
- Since then the real authority was held by a retired emperor behind the scenes.
- Newly cleared landowners maintained their position as administrators of the manors by donating them to the Fujiwara clan and the imperial family.

源氏と平氏 the Minamoto and Taira clans

- Among the emerging warriors, the Minamoto and Taira clans, whose ancestors were the imperial family, rose to prominence.
- They gradually grew in power by being hired by the imperial family and nobility as armed devices to resolve the political struggles of the imperial court.
- In 1160, 平清盛 Taira no Kiyomori defeated his political rival 源義朝 Minamoto no Yoshitomo and became the first samurai to take control of the imperial court.

鎌倉幕府 Kamakura bakufu

- The Taira clan was challenged by Monamoto no Yoritomo, a son of Minamoto no Yoshitomo.
- As a result of fierce battles, the Minamoto clan destroyed the Taira clan.
- In 1192, Yoritomo received the title of 征夷大將軍 *Sei tai shogun* from the Imperial Court and established a government in Kamakura independent of the Imperial Court for the purpose of controlling the warriors.
- This was the establishment of the Kamakura Shogunate.



The Hojo clan

- The Minamoto clan died out in three generations, and the real power of the Kamakura shogunate passed to the Hojo clan, which inherited the regency.
- The rule by the Hojo clan confronted the two full-scale invasions by Kublai Khan of the Mongol Empire in 1274 and 1281.
- After the Mongolian invasion, the weakened rule of the Hojo clan was challenged by the descendants of the Minamoto clan
- In 1333, the Kamakura shogunate fell, and the rule by the imperial court was temporarily restored.

南北朝対立 The North-South Dynasty Conflict

- The newly restored rule by the imperial court soon lost the trust of the warriors.
- Ashikaga Takauji, a descendant of the Minamoto clan, revolted, drove Emperor Go-Daigo out of Kyoto and set up a new shogunate with a replacement emperor.
- The chased Emperor Go-Daigo opened another imperial court in Yoshino in Nara and called for support from samurai all over the country.

室町幕府 Muromachi Bakufu

- The North-South conflict was won by the Northern Dynasty, and the three symbols of imperial succession returned to Kyoto.
- The Muromachi Shogunate was at its peak during the reign of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, the third shogun, who was economically successful in trading with the Ming Dynasty in China.
- In 1397, Yoshimitsu built the sumptuous Kinkakuji Temple on Kitayama in Kyoto.



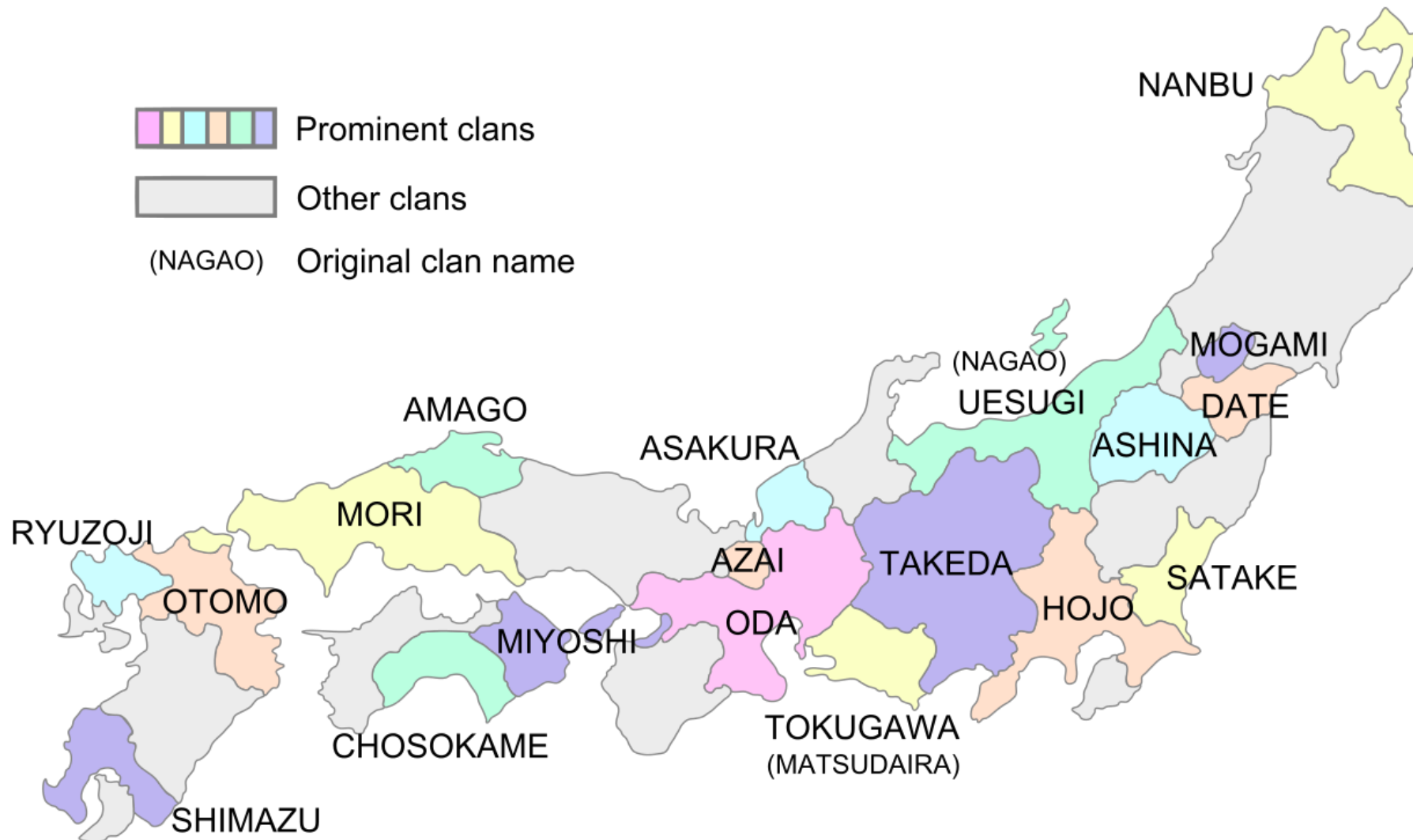
応仁の乱 The Onin War

- The Muromachi Shogunate was characterized as a coalition of guardian daimyos, each with large territories, and the power of the shogun gradually weakened.
- Finally, in 1467, a major civil war (Onin War) broke out.
- At the same time, the feudal lords in each area were exhausted.
- The control of their domains was deprived by powerful warriors in their domains.
- The dymayos were particularly distressed by the revolts of the Jodo Shinshu sect of Buddhism (一向一揆).

戦国大名 The Sengoku War Lords

- After the Onin War, the guardian daimyo, who were related to the Muromachi shogun, fell and were replaced by powerful local samurai. They were called 戦国大名 sengoku war lords.
- Among them, the Hojo clan in Sagami, the Uesugi clan in Echigo, the Takeda clan in Kai, the Imagawa clan in Suruga, the Saito clan in Mino, the Asakura clan in Echizen, and the Mori clan in Aki are the most famous.
- In 1570s, Oda Nobunaga emerged as a next ruler of Japan.

Sengoku Daimyos in 1570



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daimyo>

Supplement: Sugawara Michizane

- The Dazaifu Tenman-gu Shrine is dedicated to Michizane Sugawara (845-903), who has been enrolled among the gods in the name of *Tenjin* (heavenly-god).



The Scholar

- Sugawara was famous as the family of Chinese scholars.
- In his childhood, he was trained in Chinese classics and poetry under a private tutor, and soon became famous as a genius and a born poet. Later he was praised by a Chinese ambassador as Po-Chu-i (白居易) of Japan.

His Official Career

- Michizane easily obtained the position of *Monjohakase* (Doctor of Literature), who taught Chinese classics to the Nobles in the court.
- The *Fujiwara* family (clan) was the most powerful in the court at that time. Michizane was always subject to its pressure.

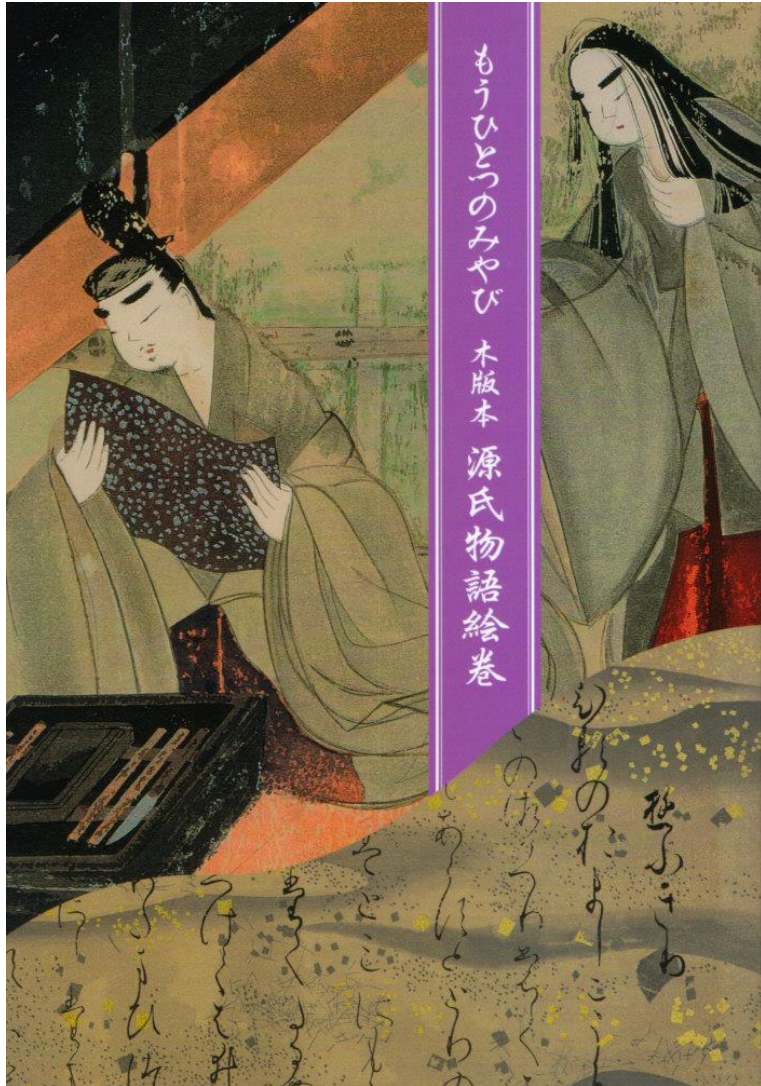
Udaijin

- However, Michizane enjoyed the confidence of The Emperor Uda.
- In 899 when he was 54, he was promoted to the rank of *Udaijin*, the second highest rank of the court officials.
- This was an exceptional promotion for a Chinese classic scholar.

Stop the Embassy to China

- In 899, he made a proposal to stop sending the embassy to China (the Tang dynasty at that time), which was accepted by the court.
- This is considered to be a great contribution to the history of Japan
- The florescence of the great Heian Literature such as the *Pillow Book* and the *Tale of Genji*, is an outcome of the temporary isolation of Japanese culture from the Chinese influence.

源氏物語 Tale of Genji



Exile to Dazaifu

- The head of the Fujiwara family, Tokihira, claimed that Michizane conspired to dethrone Emperor Daigo.
- The Emperor believed the false charge to be true, and sentenced Michizane to a lifelong exile to Dazaifu, as vice-governor in name, in 901.

The East Wind

- On the day he left Kyoto for Kyushu, he composed a well-known poem impromptu.

*When the east wind blows,
Forget not to emit thy perfume,
Because thy master is far way,
Oh, my beloved plum tree!*

- He died at Dazaifu at age 58 in 903. The funeral took place at *Anrakuji*.

東風吹かば 匂いおこせよ

梅の花

あるじなしとて

春な忘れそ



The Tenjin

- After Michizane's death, the nobles in the imperial court were scared by the Michizane's grudge, because many Fujiwara members suddenly died shortly.
- The Emperor ordered to build a shrine for Michizane in Dazaifu and Kyoto.
- Even today, people worship Michizane as the god of liberal arts and sciences.