

# Overview of Key Periods in Japanese History

## Jomon Period (- 300 BC)

The early Japanese were gatherers, hunters and fishers.

- The mythology of the beginning of Japan
- Yamato dynasty became the first Imperial family

## Yayoi Period (300 BC - 250 AD)

- The introduction of rice agriculture began the development of a social hierarchy and small villages started to form into larger communities.

## Kofun Period (250 - 538)

- Japan was unified for the first time.

## Asuka Period (538 - 710)

- **538** Introduction of Buddhism.
- **645** The era of influence of the 'noble' **Fujiwara** clan begins.

## Nara Period (710 - 784)

- **710 Nara** becomes Japan's first Royal capital city.

## Heian Period (794 - 1185)

- **794** The capital moves to Heian (**Kyoto**).
- **1016** Fujiwara family reached the peak of its power over the royal family.
- **1159** The 'noble' **Taira** clan takes power after the Heiji war.
- **1180-85** Minamoto **Yoritomo** ends the Taira reign after the Gempei War.

## Minamoto Period (1192 - 1333) (First Shogunate)

- **1192** Minamoto Yoritomo was appointed **first shogun** and established his 'tent' government (bakufu) in **Kamakura**.
- **In 1274 and 1281** the Mongols made attempts to invade Japan but failed on both occasions because of the intervention of the **kamikaze** (divine winds).
- **1333** The Yoritomo Shogunate government fell.

## Ashikaga Period (1338 - 1573) (Second Shogunate)

- **1336** Ashikaga Takauji captures Kyoto.
- **1467-1600 – The Warring States Era.**
- **1542** The Portuguese introduce Christianity and firearms to Japan.
- **1573** The Muromachi government fell.

## Azuchi-Momoyama Period (1573 - 1603)

- **1582** Nobunaga was murdered and succeeded by Toyotomi Hideyoshi.
- **1588** Hideyoshi confiscated the weapons of farmers and religious institutions in the "**Sword Hunt**", conducted the '**cadastral survey**' and re-united Japan.
- **1592-98** Hideyoshi launched an unsuccessful invasion of Korea.
- **1598** Death of Hideyoshi.
- **1600** Tokugawa Ieyasu defeated his rival Toyotomi in the battle of Sekigahara.

## **Tokugawa Period (1603 - 1868) (Third Shogunate)**

- **1603** Ieyasu is appointed shogun and established the Tokugawa government in Edo (Tokyo).
- **1615** The rival Toyotomi clan was destroyed after Ieyasu captured Osaka Castle.
- **1639** Isolation of Japan from the rest of the world except for strictly limited trade with China, Korea and the Netherlands.
- **1854** Commodore Matthew Perry's first visit - he eventually forced the Japanese government to open ports for trade with the USA.

## **Meiji Era (1868 - 1912)**

- **1868** Restoration of imperial rule by Japan's 122<sup>nd</sup> Emperor Mutsuhito (Meiji).
- **1868** The Imperial capital moved to Tokyo.
- **1872** First railway line between Tokyo and Yokohama.
- **1889** The Meiji Constitution is promulgated.
- **1894-95** Sino-Japanese War.
- **1904-05** Russo-Japanese War.
- **1910** Annexation of Korea.
- **1912** Death of Emperor Meiji.

## **Taisho Era (1912 - 1926)**

- Reign of Japan's 123<sup>rd</sup> Emperor Yoshihito (Taisho).
- **1914-18** Japan joined the Allied forces in WW1, provided naval support for Allied convoys and took possession of Germany's China colony of Tsingtao (Shandong Province).
- **1923** The Great Kanto Earthquake devastated Tokyo and Yokohama.

## **Showa Era (1926 - 1989)**

- Reign of Japan's 124<sup>th</sup> Emperor Hirohito (Showa).
- **1931** Manchurian Incident.
- **1937** Second Sino-Japanese War started.
- **1941** Dec 7<sup>th</sup> – Japan launched the Pacific War.
- **1945** 2<sup>nd</sup> September - Japan surrendered after atomic bombs were dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- **1946** The new constitution was promulgated.
- **1952** The Allied Occupation of Japan ended.
- **1956** Japan became member of the UN.
- **1972** Normalization of relations with China.
- **1973** Oil crisis.

## **Heisei Era (1989 – 30 April 2019)**

- Reign of Japan's 125<sup>th</sup> Emperor Akihito (Heisei).
- **1992** Burst of the Bubble Economy.
- **1995** The Great Hanshin Earthquake hit Kobe.
- **2011** – A tsunami struck the north east coast of Honshu
- **Emperor designate** – Prince Naruhito