

**CULTURAL STUDIES  
2022**



# **THE CULTURE OF ANCIENT JAPAN**

# CULTURE OVERVIEW

**6 distinct  
periods:**

**Jomon**

**Yayoi**

**Kofun**

**Asuka**

**Nara**

**Heian**



# JOMON CULTURE (14000 BC – 300

## BC)

- ❑ Use of chipped and polished tools
- ❑ Pottery making
- ❑ Hunting, fishing, gathering edible roots
- ❑ The initiation of agriculture and cattle rearing - the first signs of agriculture appear c. 5000 BCE
- ❑ Weaving
- ❑ Earliest known settlement - c. 3500 BCE
- ❑ Extracting and filling a tooth – a sign of adulthood



# JOMON CULTURE (CONTD)

- ❑ Population concentrated in coastal areas
- ❑ 100,000 and 150,000 ppl across the islands
- ❑ First evidence of growing rice in wet fields - c. 600 BCE
- ❑ The most common burial type – in pits sometimes lined with stone slabs
- ❑ Clay and stone human-shaped figurines, clay masks, stone rods, and clay, stone, and jade jewelry



- ❑ Ritual structures of stone circles, lines of stones forming arrow shapes, and single tall standing stones surrounded by a cluster of smaller stones

# YAYOI CULTURE (300 BC – 250 CE)

- ❑ From around 400 BCE - arrival of migrants from continental Asia, esp. the Korean peninsula;
- ❑ Metal objects;
- ❑ Iron and bronze implements;
- ❑ New pottery, bronze, iron and improved metalworking techniques
- ❑ Specialized trades and professions;
- ❑ Cultivation of rice;
- ❑ Establishment of ruling class and alliances of clan groups
- ❑ Remains of fortified villages;
- ❑ Population - 4.5 million ppl.



# YAYOI CULTURE (CONTD.)

- ❑ First attempts at international relations
- ❑ Envoys and tribute were sent to the Chinese commanders
- ❑ Embassies to Chinese territory (238, 243, and c. 248 CE)
- ❑ Queen Himiko (r. c.189-248 CE).
- ❑ Ruled over 100 kingdoms
- ❑ Dual role of ruler and high priestess



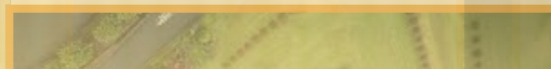
# KOFUN CULTURE (250 AD – 538 AD)

- ❑ Named after the large burial mounds
- ❑ Sometimes referred to as the Yamato Period (c. 250-710 CE) by the name of the dominant state or region
- ❑ From the 4th century CE - an influx of people from the Korean peninsula
- ❑ Influx of Korean manufactured goods, raw materials (iron), and cultural ideas.
- ❑ Elements of Chinese culture such as writing, classic Confucian texts, Buddhism, weaving, and



# KOFUN CULTURE (CONTRD.)

- ❑ 20,000 mounds across Japan
- ❑ A keyhole shape when seen from above
- ❑ Several hundred meters across and are surrounded by a moat
- ❑ Horse trappings
- ❑ Large terracotta figurines of humans, animals, and even buildings
- ❑ Centralized state with a full functioning bureaucratic apparatus





# ASUKA CULTURE (538 - 710 CE)

- ❑ Derives from the capital at that time
- ❑ The first firmly established historical emperor - Emperor Kimmei
- ❑ The most significant ruler - **Prince Shotoku**
- ❑ Seventeen Article Constitution, rooting out corruption and encouraging greater ties with China



# ASUKA CULTURE (538 - 710 CE)

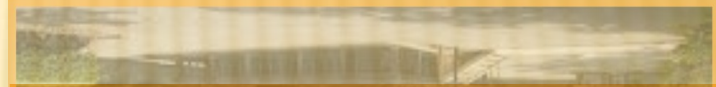
## Taika Reforms:

- ❑ Land was nationalized;
- ❑ Taxes were to be paid,
- ❑ Social ranks were recategorized;
- ❑ Civil service entrance examinations were introduced;
- ❑ Law codes were written;
- ❑ The absolute authority of the emperor was established.
- ❑ Only direct descendants could claim any right to the imperial throne



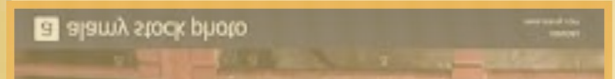
# ASUKA CULTURE (CONTD.)

- ❑ Introduction of Buddhism to Japan around the 6th century CE
- ❑ Adopted by Emperor Yomei and further encouraged by Prince Shotoku
- ❑ Literature and music were actively promoted by the court and artists were given tax reliefs



# NARA CULTURE (710 - 794 CE)

- ❑ The capital built on a Chinese model
- ❑ Regular and well-defined grid layout
- ❑ State bureaucracy -7,000 civil servants
- ❑ Population of Nara -200,000 ppl.
- ❑ Temples in every region
- ❑ The largest bronze **sculpture** of the Buddha in the world
- ❑ Brutal level taxation



# NARA CULTURE (CONTD.)

- ❑ 13 diplomatic embassies
- ❑ Flourishing trade (exported textiles and Balhae furs, silk, and hemp cloth)
- ❑ Two most famous and important works of Japanese literature
- ❑ Agriculture still depended on primitive tools, poor irrigation techniques
- ❑ Outbreaks of famine
- ❑ Smallpox epidemics



# HEIAN CULTURE (794 - 1185 CE)

- ❑ The new capital (Kyoto)
- ❑ Palaces for the aristocracy, and a large pleasure park
- ❑ No Heian buildings survive today except the Shishin-den (Audience Hall) and the Daigoku-den (Hall of State)
- ❑ Government - the emperor, his high ministers, a council of state, and eight ministries, which ruled

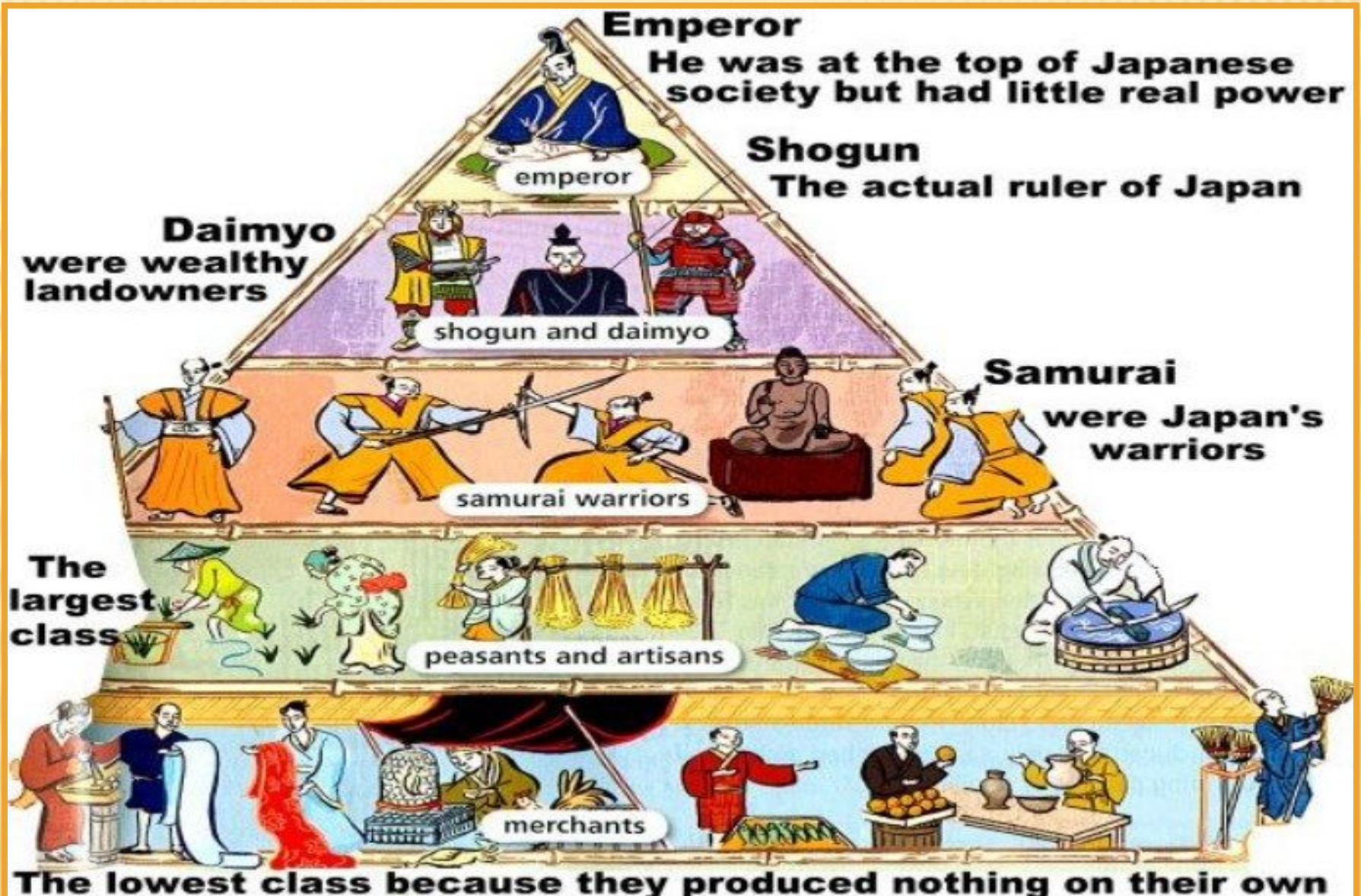


# HEIAN CULTURE (CONTRD.)

- ❑ **Weakening of the royal position**  
- many emperors took the throne as children
- ❑ **Governed by a regent**
- ❑ **Continued domination of Buddhism with presence of Confucian and Taoist principles**
- ❑ **Imported from China - medicines, silk fabrics, books, ceramics, weapons, musical instruments while export from Japan - pearls, gold dust, amber, raw silk, and gilt lacquerware**
- ❑ **Private armies of samurai**



# ANCIENT JAPAN SOCIAL STRUCTURE





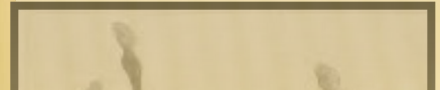
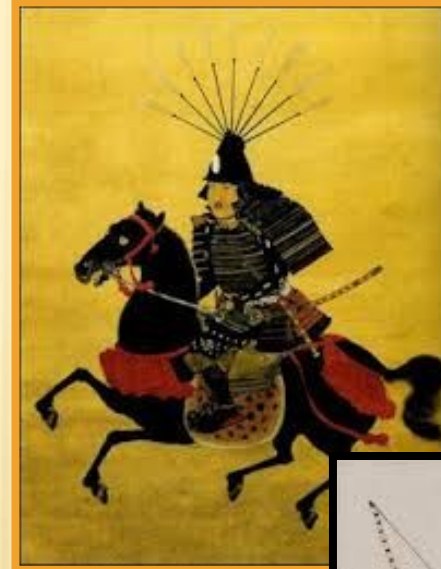
# THE UPPER CLASS

## The King or the Emperor

- ▣ The top most rank in the hierarchy.
- ▣ The supreme power (!)
- ▣ The order of an Emperor - the final decision
- ▣ Ruled the kingdom and handled the administration.
- ▣ The equivalent to the God for the countrymen

## The Daimyo - the warlords

- ▣ Shogun - military and economic power of the kingdom.
- ▣ The Samurai - brave soldiers that constituted the armies led by



# THE LOWER CLASS

## The Farmers

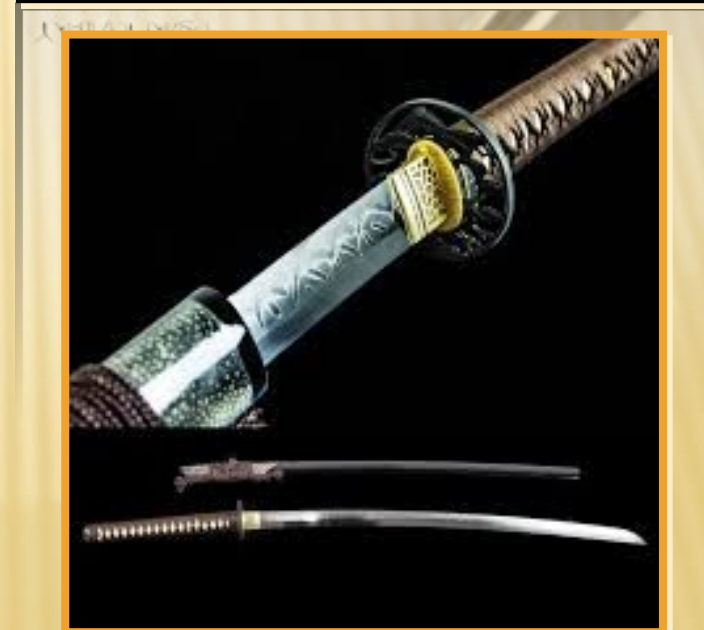
- ▣ topmost Class in the common man class
- ▣ two sub categories: the Farmers having their own land and the Farmers not having their own land.

## Artisans / Craftsmen:

- ▣ metal and wood work
- ▣ ardent Samurai's Sword makers

## Merchants

- ▣ the lowest class in the common man class in the hierarchy because it was thought that their earning is totally dependent on other people's work



# TRADITIONAL JAPANESE ART FORMS

- ❑ **Bonsai**
- ❑ **Ikebana**
- ❑ **Origami**
- ❑ **Tea ceremony**
- ❑ **Poetry**
- ❑ **Calligraphy**
- ❑ **Martial Arts**
- ❑ **Ukiyo-e**

