

Cultures of East Asia

Section 3



MAIN IDEA

Geography and cultural borrowing from China shaped the early civilizations of Japan and Korea.

Key Terms and People

archipelago large island chain

Shinto “the way of the gods,” a religion based on belief in supernatural beings called kami

Prince Shokotu ruler of Japan between 593 to 622, member of the powerful Soga family

Lady Murasaki Shikibu wrote *The Tale of Genji*, considered the world’s first full-length novel

Koryo dynasty Korean dynasty that who ruled from 918 to 1392

Taking Notes

As you read the summary, use a graphic organizer like the one below to take notes about early Japan and Korea.

Japan	Korea

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Section Summary

RISE OF JAPANESE CIVILIZATION

The nation of Japan consists of some 3,000 islands. The islands form an **archipelago** (ahr-kuh-PE-luh-goh), or large island chain, along East Asia's mainland. Steep mountains covered with forests leave only a small amount of farmland but this land is fertile and receives much rain. The sea provides food and serves as a barrier against invasion. However, huge waves called tsunamis, storms known as typhoons, and frequent earthquakes pose threats to Japan's safety.

Early Japanese people were hunters and gatherers who arrived from the Asian mainland during prehistoric times. Over time, they developed a religion called **Shinto**, which is based on belief in nature spirits called kami (KAH-mee), whom they believed were their ancestors. Shinto does not have a sacred text or formal structure like many religions. Instead, followers build shrines to kami in natural settings and perform ceremonies to ask for their blessings.

Japanese society was organized into clans based on extended family ties. By the 500s, the Yamato clan became the most powerful. They claimed the sun goddess as their ancestor. All of Japan's emperors are descended from the Yamato. Eventually, other clans gained power and controlled the emperor. Often, the emperor became a figurehead with no real power.

FOREIGN INFLUENCES ON JAPAN

Japan's culture was influenced by nearby Korea and China. Korean traders and travelers introduced Japan to Chinese writing. Buddhism also came to Japan through Korea. One of the people who most helped spread Buddhism in Japan was **Prince Shotoku** (sho-toh-koo). He served as regent for his aunt from 593 until 622. A regent is a person who rules for someone who is unable to rule alone. Shotoku's devout practices helped Buddhism spread. He also sent young scholars to China. Over the next 200 years, many of these missions brought home Chinese fashions, food, tea, artwork, music, dance, gardening and ideas about law.

Name three ways the sea affects Japan.

How was Japanese society organized?

How did Prince Shotoku influence religion in Japan?

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THE HEIAN PERIOD

In 794 Japan's emperor moved the capital to Heian (HAY-ahn), now called Kyoto (kee-OH-toh). This period, called the Heian period, lasted until 1185.

The nobles at Heian lived in beautiful palaces and enjoyed easy, privileged lives. Lovely gardens, art and poetry were popular. Rules of etiquette governed all aspects of court behavior and dress.

Monogatari, or fictional prose, was especially popular. Noblewomen were discouraged from learning Chinese, so many of them wrote and read in Japanese. By this time, the Japanese had developed a way to write their spoken language by combining Chinese characters with phonetic characters.

Heian women produced some of the best works of early Japanese literature. The greatest writer was perhaps **Lady Murasaki Shikibu** (moohr-ah-sahkee shee-kee-boo). Around 1000, she wrote *The Tale of Genji*, considered the world's first full-length novel.

During most of the Heian period, the Fujiwara family controlled Japan until rich landowners with private armies began to challenge them.

How did the Japanese develop a written language?

KOREA

Korea's location has made it able to share its culture with Japan and China's but it has also made Korea vulnerable to invasion. Korea is a mountainous peninsula with limited land available for farming. The first Koreans came from northeast Asia. Chinese influences in Korea included Confucianism, agricultural methods, writing, political institutions, and, later, Buddhism.

After China's Han dynasty declined, a kingdom called Silla allied with China to conquer Korea. The Silla then turned on the Chinese and drove them from Korea. They decided, however, to pay tribute to China to ensure harmony and goodwill. When the Silla kingdom weakened, rebels founded the **Koryo dynasty**, which lasted from 935 until 1392. During this time, Korean artisans created a pottery style called celadon and metal movable type.

In the 1200s, the Mongols invaded. They stayed until 1392 when a Korean general founded a new dynasty, which ruled until 1910.

Name two ways Korea's geography has affected the lives of its people.
