

## Obj. 2.05 Japan: Early History & Life in the Age of Feudalism

### Geography

- Archipelago off the coast of China & Korean peninsula
- Region known as Ring of Fire
  - Islands formed via volcanic eruptions
- 4/5 land is too mountainous to farm
- Most people live in valleys & coastal plains
  - Temperate climate
  - Arable land (fit for farming)

### Geography Influences Culture

- Seas
  - Isolate & protect
  - Close enough to Korea & China for cultural diffusion
  - But distant enough to prevent invasion
- Violent earthquakes
- Tsunamis & Volcanoes
- Therefore, Japanese have great respect for the power of nature

### Culture

- Uji -**clan system**
  - Yamato clan      500 – 1500AD
    - 1<sup>st</sup> and only ruling Dynasty
- Emperor -living god

- Amaterasu -sun god
  - Land of the “Rising Sun”
- Religion: ***Shinto*** “*the way of the gods*”
  - *Kami* -clan gods (nature spirits)
  - Never grew beyond Japan

### Language

- Related to Korean
- 800 AD Chinese system of writing is change by adding Korean phonetic symbols
  - Korea & Japan had close ties
  - 500 AD Buddhist missionaries bring language and culture

### Chinese Influence

- Mostly at court, starting about 600AD
- Heian Period
  - Nobles sent directly to China
  - Gov’t & bureaucracy, Technology, Law code, and works of literature
- Capital modeled after Tang Dynasty
  - Spoke Chinese
  - Food, arts, tea ceremony
  - No civil service, jobs only for nobles

### Culture outside of Court

- Beyond court Japanese culture remained

- Buddhism & Confucian Ideals respected

— Pagodas

— Filial Piety

## Feudal System      1194 – 1867 AD

- Strict social classes
- Nobles control land
- Warrior aristocracy
- Loosely organized government
- Nobles owe military service & other support to greater lords or emperor
- Position of women declines, but owe loyalty to overlord

## The Samurai

- **Bushido** -warrior code of values
  - Like chivalry in Christian cultures
  - Honor, bravery, absolute loyalty
  - Seppuku -ritual suicide
  - Encouraged Zen Buddhist beliefs

Emperor                      (figure head)

Shogun  
(actual ruler)

Daimyo  
(large landowners)

Samurai (warriors)

Peasants & Artisans (work with their hands)

Merchants (profit off other's labor)

## Religion

- Zen Buddhism
  - Meditation & devotion to duty
  - Stressed time of “non-knowing”
  - Scholarly
  - Accepted by samurai
    - Compassion vs. fight to kill
  - Influenced landscape architecture & painting
  - Tea ceremony

## Early Art & Literature

- Theater
  - similar to Greek plays with chorus
  - Wore masks

## Late Feudal Art & Literature

- *Kabuki* theater
- Comedy & drama
- Colorful costumes
- Okuni (female playwright created it)
  - Women later banned from participating as actors