Section 3 - The founding of the Ritsuryo State

Topic 11 - Prince Shotoku's political revolution

Under what circumstances did Prince Shotoku implement his new style of politics?

The unification of China under the Sui dynasty

At the end of the sixth century, a momentous development took place in continental Asia. In 589, the Sui united all of China for the first time in about three hundred years. The emergence of the Sui dynasty, which had a powerful military presence, was a serious threat to the nations of East Asia. The Korean nations of Silla, Koguryo, and Paekche paid tribute to and accepted titles from the Sui. Japan, too, was under pressure over how to respond to the rise of Sui China.

The appearance of Prince Shotoku

The person who led Japan at this crossroads in its history was young Prince Shotoku (Prince Umayado). Prince Shotoku was born into the Imperial Family of Japan. His reputation for intellectual brilliance was such that it inspired a legend that he could listen to and pass judgment on ten legal complaints brought before him simultaneously. When Suiko, Japan’s first empress, assumed the throne in 593, Shotoku was appointed regent1 at the young age of twenty in order to assist her.

*1=A regent, or sessho in Japanese, exercised political power in the place of the Emperor. In later periods of history, regents were only appointed when the Emperor had not yet reached the age of majority.

In 600, Shotoku dispatched envoys to Sui China. This was the first time in 120 years that Japan conducted diplomacy with a Chinese dynasty. Shotoku learned from his envoys just how powerful the Sui dynasty was. He realized that in order to grow as an independent nation, Japan would need to adopt mainland Asia’s advanced technology and political structures.
| Summarized Translation of the Seventeen Article Constitution  
<table>
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<th>(AD 604)</th>
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| "(1.) Harmony should be valued and quarrels should be avoided.  
(2.) The three treasures, which are the Buddha, his teachings, and the Buddhist priesthood, should be given sincere reverence.  
(3.) Do not fail to obey the commands of the Emperor.  
(4.) Government officials should make proper behavior their first principle.  
(5.) Deal impartially with all legal complaints.  
(6.) Punish the evil and reward the good.  
(7.) Let every man attend to his own duties.  
(8.) Government officials should attend to their duties early in the morning and retire late.  
(9.) Good faith is the foundation of right.  
(10.) Let us control ourselves and not be resentful when others disagree with us.  
(11.) Know the difference between merit and demerit, and deal out to each its reward and punishment.  
(12.) Do not let the local nobility levy taxes on the people.  
(13.) All people entrusted with office should fully understand the duties of their position.  
(14.) Do not be envious.  
(15.) The way of the vassal is to subordinate private interests to the public good.  
(16.) Employ the people in forced labor at seasonable times.  
(17.) Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone. They should be discussed with many people." |
The Twelve Level Cap and Rank System and Seventeen Article Constitution

Before pursuing a policy of equality in diplomatic relations with Sui China, Shotoku first set out to reform Japan’s domestic institutions. As a descendent of the Soga clan, Shotoku implemented his policies in cooperation with Soga no Umako, but his actual objective was to restrain the power of Japan’s great clans and construct a system that centered around the Emperor.

In 603, Shotoku changed the custom of filling administrative posts with influential members of Japan’s powerful clans, and instead actively sought out the most capable men to serve the nation, regardless of their ancestry. This was known as the Twelve Level Cap and Rank System.

Then, in 604, Shotoku drew up the Seventeen Article Constitution. The purpose of the Seventeen Article Constitution was to stop conflict between the great clans and promote cooperation within an emperor-centered polity. Contained within the Constitution was a set of guiding ideals for the nation and for the mindset of government officials serving the public interest. The Constitution’s emphasis on harmony among men became a pillar of Japanese society from then on.

**Topic 11 Recap Challenge!** – Explain Shotoku’s new style of politics using the following three terms: Sui dynasty, capable men, constitution.
**Topic 12 - The envoys to Sui China and the title of "emperor"**

What was the relationship between Shotoku’s policy of diplomatic equality with the Sui and the introduction of the title of tenno, Japan’s unique word for "emperor"?

**The envoys to Sui China**

In 607, after successfully implementing internal reforms, Prince Shotoku sent another team of envoys to Sui China. The man selected to lead this delegation was Ono no Imoko. Ono was born into a local clan, but he was a remarkable individual, whose talents were recognized and promoted under Shotoku’s Twelve Level Cap and Rank System.

Japan’s envoys delivered an official message to the Emperor of Sui China: “The Son of Heaven in the land of the rising sun addresses the Son of Heaven in the land of the setting sun. We hope you are in good health.” The "land of the rising sun" referred to Japan, whereas the "land of the setting sun" was China. By emphasizing the equal status of the two rulers in the text of the message, Shotoku left little doubt that Japan did not intend to become a Chinese vassal state.

Chinese Emperor Yang found the message to be disrespectful and it angered him. It was considered inexcusable for a tributary state to describe its own rulers with a title equivalent to Yang’s own status as the world’s only “emperor”. Regardless, Emperor Yang expected war with Koguryo at some point. Out of concern that Japan and Koguryo might join forces, Yang prudently send his own courtesy envoy back to Japan along with Ono no Imoko.1

*1=One of Shotoku’s instructors in Buddhism was a Buddhist priest from Koguryo, so it would appear that Shotoku sent his envoys in full knowledge of the opportune diplomatic timing provided by China’s tense relations with Koguryo.

**The origin of the title of tenno**

The next year, 608, Japan dispatched its third delegation to Sui China. This time, the Japanese government discussed the matter of how they should refer to their own ruler in official correspondence with China. Japan could not use the same title as the one used by China’s emperor without incurring his anger. At the same time, Japan also did not want to revert back to the title of "king", which would have meant that Japan’s rulers would again be the subjects of the Chinese emperor.
The letter that was ultimately composed addressed the Emperor of China with his traditional title of huangdi, meaning "emperor or sovereign ruler", but the Emperor of Japan was described with an entirely new title, tenno, meaning "heavenly sovereign". Thus, the letter paid due respect to the status of the Sui Emperor, by not referring to the Japanese Emperor as "emperor or sovereign ruler", while at the same time asserting the equality of the two rulers by adopting the word "sovereign" into the Japanese Emperor's new title. This is how the word tenno, Japan’s unique title for its emperor, came into being.² The word tenno, which originated as an assertion of Japan's status as an independent nation, continued to be used after this, and has remained in continuous use up to the present day.

²An alternative theory states that the title of tenno was first used later during the reign of Emperor Temmu (673-686).

Prince Shotoku, Buddhism, and the traditional gods
Prince Shotoku was a pious believer in Buddhism who, in 607, constructed Horyu-ji Temple. Even so, he did not forget the importance that the Imperial Court attached to Japan's traditional Shinto deities. In the same year, Shotoku swore to continue to worship the traditional deities during a ceremony he conducted at the Imperial Court. It is thought that Shotoku's stance reflected Japan's tradition of accepting advanced cultures of foreign nations while still honoring its own culture.

In both foreign policy and domestic policy, Shotoku laid down the blueprints for the centralization of the ancient Japanese government to be fully implemented within the eighth century. During the seventh century, when Shotoku was alive, the center of Japanese politics and culture was the Asuka region,³ located in the southern part of the Nara Basin. This historical era is therefore called the Asuka period.

³The Asuka region is home to many of the most important ancient Japanese archeological sites, including Kitora Kofun and Takamatsuzuka Kofun.
The English word "emperor" is the translation of two different foreign words. The traditional Chinese term for their emperor, huangdi, means "sovereign ruler" in English. By contrast, the term used to refer to the Japanese emperor is tenno, meaning "heavenly sovereign" in English. The word "sovereign" in Chinese and Japanese implies a ruler of higher status than a king, and it could be translated as "King of Kings".

The Chinese title "sovereign ruler" dates back to the Qin dynasty, whose founder named himself Shi Huangdi ("First Sovereign Ruler"). Successive Chinese dynasties viewed their nation as the center of the world and as the most advanced civilization. The Emperor of China bestowed the title of "king" upon the leaders of neighboring countries who submitted to his authority. This is known as the “Sino-Barbarian World Order”.

In the past, Chinese suzerainty was even recognized by Japan's leaders such as Himiko, who accepted the title of "Friend of Wei, Queen of Japan" from the Emperor of Wei, and the Five Kings of Japan.

The title tenno, which appears in an official message delivered by the Japanese envoy to Sui China in 608, implies a supreme ruler wielding both temporal and religious authority.

The title tenno continues to be used in Japan to this day as a term that projects an image to the world of a nation with a unique culture under the aegis of a heavenly sovereign.
**Topic 13 – The Taika Reforms**

How did the Soga clan fall from power and give way to the establishment of an emperor-centered nation?

**East Asia in the seventh century**

The cost of Sui China's large-scale war against Koguryo eventually became so great that it caused the dynasty to entirely collapse within about thirty years. In 618, the Tang unified China and started a new dynasty. The Tang dynasty inherited the institutions of Sui China and founded an emperor-centered state system administering such advanced functions as a written legal code, household census, conscription, and imperial examinations. Following its diplomatic missions to Sui China, Japan now sent envoys to Tang China. Accompanying Japan's envoys were students and monks who stayed in China to learn about the advanced institutions and culture of the Tang dynasty.

*1=The results of the imperial examinations determined appointments to government posts.

Imperial examinations started in the sixth century and continued to be administered thereafter for more than 1,300 years. The imperial examinations were extremely difficult, and their objective was to strengthen the power of the emperor by appointing the most talented men to serve in the government regardless of their social status. The imperial examination system was not adopted in Japan at this time.

*2=Japan dispatched its first envoys to Tang China in 630.

By the middle of the seventh century, Tang China had grown strong enough to challenge Koguryo. China's attack on Koguryo sent a wave of panic across the Three Kingdoms of Korea. Japan, too, felt a sense of looming crisis, and a movement was started to bolster its governmental institutions.

**The growing power of the Soga clan**

However, after the death of Prince Shotoku, the Soga clan dominated Japanese politics. Soga no Umako's son, Emishi, acted as an emperor and had his own sons named "princes". Emishi's son, Iruka, even wiped out all of Shotoku's family members, including Shotoku's eldest son Prince Yamashiro no Oe, by driving them to suicide.

Eventually, a movement advocated that Shotoku's ideals be carried out and that an emperor-centered polity be reconstructed to curb the power of the Soga clan. Around this time, the
students Shotoku had sent abroad gradually made their way home. Their reports on the political system of Tang China further invigorated trends in favor of reform.

**The Taika Reforms**

Schemes to bring down the Soga clan were secretly plotted by two men of the Imperial Court, **Prince Naka no Oe** and **Nakatomi no Kamatari**. During a kemari (Japanese hacky sack) match, Kamatari approached the Prince, and the two of them ended up confessing their true intentions to one another. In 645, just a year and a half later, Prince Naka no Oe overthrew both Soga no Emishi and his son Soga no Iruka, and destroyed the Soga clan in collaboration with Nakatomi no Kamatari, who was later known as Fujiwara no Kamatari. Japan’s new leaders launched an ambitious plan to reform Japan’s political institutions.

*3=Emperor Tenji conferred upon Nakatomi no Kamatari the family name of Fujiwara in honor of his achievement in facilitating the Taika Reforms. This was the start of Japan’s famous Fujiwara clan.

The Imperial Court introduced **era names** to Japan in the same year, the year immediately designated as Taika 1. Japan was the only country in East Asia to enact and continuously use a unique system of era names that differed from the ones decreed by the Chinese dynasties.

The following year, the government set out a new policy called “**emperor’s land, emperor’s people**” under which the state would directly rule all the lands and people that had formerly been under the private control of the great clans and members of the Imperial Family.

Because these changes were carried out in the year Taika 1, they are known as the **Taika Reforms**. The objective of the Taika Reforms was to realize the ideals born in Japan in Shotoku’s time by clarifying the division between the emperor and his subjects and establishing a uniquely Japanese national order.

**Topic 13 Recap Challenge! – Using bullet points, list the achievements of the Taika Reforms.**
**Topic 14 – The road to the Ritsuryo State**

In what ways did Japan develop as a nation following its defeat in the Korean Peninsula in the second half of the seventh century?

The Battle of Hakusukinoe and national defense preparations

In the middle of the seventh century, the Korean state of Silla, in alliance with Tang China, destroyed its neighbor, the state of Paekche. The fall of Paekche, which had enjoyed friendly relations with Japan for three hundred years, and Tang China’s domination of the southern half of the Korean Peninsula were both threats to Japan. Accordingly, the Imperial Court accepted a request to help recapture Paekche and sent a great quantity of troops and supplies. The decisive confrontation with the combined forces of Silla and Tang China came in 663 at Hakusukinoe in the southwestern part of the Korean Peninsula. At the end of a desperate fight which lasted two days, Japanese and Paekche forces were defeated. That day, the sky and sea were colored bright red from the flames of four hundred burning Japanese warships. This is known as the Battle of Hakusukinoe. After the battle, Silla also conquered Koguryo and, with that, united the Korean Peninsula.

The residents of Paekche, from the royal family and nobility down to the common people, fled to Japan in exile. Some of them settled in Omi (now in Shiga Prefecture), while others settled in Japan’s eastern provinces. The Imperial Court warmly welcomed them and would eventually benefit from their political administrative knowledge.

Nevertheless, the debacle at Hakusukinoe was a major shock to Japan. In fear of an invasion by Sillan and Tang forces, the Imperial Court mobilized the resources of Japan for national defense, stationing frontier guardsmen called *sakimori* in Kyushu as well as constructing moats and embankments called *mizuki*. Prince Naka no Oe also had the capital city moved from Asuka to Omi where he ascended to the throne as Emperor Tenji. Emperor Tenji moved forward with more internal reforms, including the creation of a nationwide household registry.

*1=The *sakimori* were soldiers who were recruited from across Japan and stationed on Iki Island, Tsushima Island, and the northern coast of Kyushu. Each *sakimori* served a three-year tour of duty guarding his position. Many of them came from Japan’s eastern provinces.
The transfer of the capital further inland to Omi was a precautionary measure against the possibility of a seaborne invasion of Tang soldiers.

The policies of Emperor Temmu and Empress Jito

The death of Emperor Tenji in 672 sparked a civil war of imperial succession between Tenji's son Prince Otomo and his younger brother Prince Oama. This is known as the Jinshin War. Prince Oama allied with the powerful clans of the eastern provinces and, through skillful maneuvering, scored a decisive victory. During the conflict, Japan's great clans split apart, which served to weaken their political clout. This made it possible to build a regime that placed the emperor at the center of all national affairs.

The victorious Prince Oama ascended to the throne as Emperor Temmu. Temmu expanded the power of the Imperial Family and strongly promoted the implementation of the "emperor's land, emperor's people" policy. He also ordered the compilation of national history, which would become the Kojiki and the Nihon Shoki, and further developed a system of laws based partly on the written legal codes of China, which were called ritsuryo in Japanese. To manage the nation, he perfected a system for ranking and promotion of government officials and incorporated members of powerful clans into it.

After the death of Emperor Temmu, Empress Jito ascended to the throne and inherited his reforms. As her capital, she built Fujiwara-kyo in the southern part of the Nara Basin, Japan's first large-scale capital constructed on the Chinese model. Here the establishment of the so-called Ritsuryo State, literally the "State of Laws", which had been envisaged since the regency of Prince Shotoku, finally neared fulfillment. It was also around this time that Japan began to be referred to by its current official name Nihon.

Topic 14 Recap Challenge! — Using bullet points, list the measures Japan put in place in response to its defeat at Hakusukinoe.

- The transfer of the capital further inland to Omi was a precautionary measure against the possibility of a seaborne invasion of Tang soldiers.
- The policies of Emperor Temmu and Empress Jito.
  - The death of Emperor Tenji in 672 sparked a civil war of imperial succession between Tenji's son Prince Otomo and his younger brother Prince Oama. This is known as the Jinshin War.
  - Prince Oama allied with the powerful clans of the eastern provinces and, through skillful maneuvering, scored a decisive victory.
- After the death of Emperor Temmu, Empress Jito ascended to the throne and inherited his reforms.
- As her capital, she built Fujiwara-kyo in the southern part of the Nara Basin, Japan's first large-scale capital constructed on the Chinese model.
- The establishment of the so-called Ritsuryo State, literally the "State of Laws", which had been envisaged since the regency of Prince Shotoku, finally neared fulfillment.
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<th><strong>How the Ritsuryo State Learned from the Lessons of Defeat</strong></th>
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<td>In the middle of the seventh century, East Asia was in a state of upheaval. The nations of the Korean Peninsula struggled to develop centralized states in response to the threat of the powerful Tang Empire. However, the three Korean states of Paekche, Silla, and Koguryo never enjoyed peaceful relations, and their fierce wars with one another provoked Chinese military intervention.</td>
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<td>Paekche was the first to fall to a joint attack from Tang China and Silla. Next, the combined armies of Silla and Tang China opened a two-front war from north and south against Koguryo, which was also destroyed. Japan moved to support Paekche, but its army, which was an amalgamation of soldiers of Japan's powerful clans, could not even agree on strategy and suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of a veteran Tang Army.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Following this defeat, Emperor Tenji sensed that his country had entered a critical situation and worked with determination to turn Japan into a centralized &quot;Ritsuryo State&quot; under a written code of law. Emperor Tenji and Emperor Temmu undertook their nation-building enterprise while drawing lessons from Japan's defeat in war and the fates of other East Asian nations.</td>
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I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT...

The Origin of the Name of Japan

Nihon is the name of Japan in the Japanese language. What does this word mean and how was it created?

A nation blessed by the sun

The Japanese call their nation Nihon, a word that can also be spelt as Nippon. What meaning does this word convey?

The word is composed of two Japanese characters: ni and hon.

"Ni" means "sun". The sun provides heat and light to all things on the Earth and nourishes life. The ancient people of Japan were fully conscious to the blessings of the sun. They perceived the sun as a living force of nature with power and wisdom far surpassing that of humans.

"Hon" means "the source of". Therefore, the word Nihon literally means "the source of the sun", or, if we use the expression from the official message presented by Japan's envoys to Sui China in 607, "the land of the rising sun".

Our ancient ancestors seem to have believed that this was the most fitting name for Japan, whose people had an unshakeable confidence in their country and tremendous pride in their history.

From Wa to Nihon

Before the invention of the name Nihon, neighboring countries referred to Japan as Wa or Wakoku. The Chinese character used to write the word Wa implies "submissive", "short and hunchbacked", or "ugly". It was clearly no name for a great nation.

The reason why Japan acquired such a name was because the people of ancient China had a low opinion of the Japanese and used the name Wa as a pejorative. The Chinese considered themselves to be the most advanced nation standing at the center of the world. For centuries, China looked down on neighboring nations as if they were barbaric. This way of thinking is known as Sinocentrism. Thus, the name Wa was a product of this Sinocentric world view.

For a time, the Japanese accepted the title of Wa without concerning themselves much about the name's implications, but Japan gradually strengthened its political system and grew in power. As the Japanese came to occupy an important position among the East Asian nations, they gradually realized that their nation should have a more fitting name.

"日本"という国名のおこり

私たちの国名「日本」

これはどのような意味をもち、
どのようにしてできたのだろうか？

「太陽の恩恵をいっぱい受け取る国」

私たちの国名前「日本」、日本です。これは、「日本」とはどんな意味をもつ言葉なのでしょうか。

【日本】は、「日」と「本」という2つの言葉（文字）から成り立っています。

「日」は、太陽のこと。太陽は、地球上のあらゆるものに光と熱を与え、命を作り出します。古代の日本人は、太陽の恩恵を直視していました。しかし、人間の知識や技術はまさにかすれた。偉大な自然の「力」を感じ取っていたのです。

【本】は、「…の元」ということ。ですから、【日本】という国名は、607年（607年1月22日）の使節の国書に「日出の国」と書かれていたように、「昇る太陽の出ているところの国」、という意味になります。

これにより、私たちの国名にいられる自信をもち、その歴史を守りももといった古代の祖先たち、わが国にもっともふさわしい国名として選んだものといえます。

「倭」から「日本」へ

「日本」という国名ができた前には、わが国は、周囲の国々から「倭」、「倭国」などと呼ばれています。「倭」は、「人に従う者」、「退がって低い」、「みにくい」などの意味をもった漢字です。どう見ても、立派な国名とはいえません。

なぜ、こんな国名になったのでしょうか。

それは、古代中国の人々が、わが国を軽く見て、あんたたる気持ちで用いた国名だったからです。中国には、自分たちを世界の中心に位置させるもっとも優れた国として、まわりのすべての国々を、劣った国として見下す考え方が長くつづいていました。その考え方を、中華思想といいます。「倭」という国名も、そのような考え方に基づいていました。

日本人はしばらく、この国名をあまり気にとめないで、受け入れていきました。しかし、国際の政治制度が新しいになり、国力も増して、東アジアの国々の中でも重要な地位を占めるようになると、もっとも自国にふさわしい名前があるはずだと考えるようになりました。

1300年後の歴史をもつ国号

7世紀の初め、天智天皇の新政によって、それまで中国の王朝との交流では、日本は周辺国のような立場をとっていたのです。しかし、改めました。そして、「天皇」、という君主の称号を使い始め、中国に対して、自主・対等の姿勢を示すことになりました。
A name with a 1,300-year history

As a result of Prince Shotoku's new policies that were introduced at the beginning of the seventh century, Japan reversed the subservient position that it had previously adopted in its negotiations with China's dynasties. From then on, the Emperor of Japan referred to himself with the title of *tenno* in order to demonstrate Japan's status as equal to and independent of China. This was the first step towards the inauguration of the name *Nihon*.

After this, Japan implemented the Taika Reforms that constituted a great leap forward in the development of Japanese administration. The defeat at Hakusukinoe and Jinshin War were serious national crises for Japan, but they gave rise to a wave of reforms in Japan's political system under the direction of Emperor Tenji and Emperor Temmu.

Finally, it is thought that the national name *Nihon* was formally adopted within the Asuka Kiyomihara Code, which was the culmination of Japan's political reforms up to that point. *The Old Book of Tang*, a Chinese work of history, also acknowledges that Japan's name was thus changed to *Nihon*.

For the next 1,300 years, right up to the present day, Japan never altered its national name. We can see just how special this situation is by way of comparison to China and Korea, which changed their national name with each new dynasty. Japan's name has remained unaltered for so long because, throughout this period of time, the Japanese nation never ceased to exist and was never supplanted by another ethnic group. Japan is the nation with the longest history of any country in the world.

"Japan" and its basis in the word *Nihon*

Finally, concerning the spelling of Japan's national name, is *Nihon* or *Nippon* correct? In fact, both are acceptable. In early times, the characters were read as *Nippon*, but the characters were eventually read as *Nihon* for short, and so the two spellings came to be used synonymously.

In China, the word *Nihon/Nippon* used to also be pronounced as *Jipangu*, which in turn became rendered in the English language as "Japan". As such, the English word "Japan" in fact ultimately derived from *Nihon/Nippon*.
What was the structure of Japan's ancient Ritsuryo State?

**The Taiho Code**

In the year 701, or Taiho 1 under the era name system, the Taiho Code was promulgated. The written legal codes of ancient Japan were called ritsuryo because they combined ritsu, which means criminal penal law, with ryo, which means administrative law on government structure and procedures. A state that was governed on the basis of these legal codes was called a Ritsuryo State. The enactment of the Taiho Code completed ancient Japan's political transformation into a Ritsuryo State.

In the Taiho Code, the penal law mirrored that of Tang China almost perfectly, but by contrast, the administrative law was adjusted to suit Japan's specific needs. For example, in addition to the Great Council of State, which controlled political affairs in general, the Taiho Code also established a separate Department of Worship in charge of divine rituals. Whereas the Korean state of Silla had simply adopted Tang's legal codes wholesale, Japan was able to create its own distinctive legal codes by learning from the Chinese.

**Heijo-kyo**

In 710, or Wado 3 under the era name system, a new city named Heijo-kyo was built in Nara as the new capital of the Ritsuryo State. The following eighty years or so, until the capital was moved to Kyoto, are known as the Nara period.

Heijo-kyo was modeled on Chang'an, the capital of Tang China. Even so, some parts of the design were modified to suit conditions in Japan. An indomitable fortress wall had been erected around Chang'an to protect the city, but Heijo-kyo had no wall, a sign of the peace Japan was enjoying at that time. Heijo-kyo was criss-crossed by roads laid out on a grid pattern. Heijo Palace, the home of the Emperor and the seat of the government, was situated in the center of the city's northern side. In the two markets on the city's east and west sides, a wide variety of goods were bought and sold using a special new coin minted by the Japanese government in the style of Tang China. It was called the wado kaichin, literally "the first coin of the Wado period". The prosperity of Heijo-kyo was reflected in the famous poem that went, "The royal city Nara, beautiful in blue earth, like blossoming trees that shimmer into fragrant bloom, is at the height of splendor now."

The population of Japan during the Nara period was about six million, and the population of
Heijo-kyo was about 100,000. The Imperial Court employed 10,000 bureaucrats, of whom about two hundred were members of powerful central clans who had been appointed to high-ranking positions by the Emperor. These latter men were called the court nobility and undertook political work within the Imperial Court. The work of governing took place through meetings between leading officials.

"Emperor's land, emperor's people" and the Farmland Allotment Law
Under the Ritsuryo State, the principle of "Emperor's land, emperor's people" was formulated, under which the state would directly manage all the people and their land as a means of ensuring fair treatment. In accordance with this principle, the Farmland Allotment Law was promulgated with the aim of redistributing all of Japan's land to the people in an equitable manner. Under the terms of this law, a plot of land would be given to every man and woman six years of age or older based on a household registry revised every six years. This land was to be the basis for each person's livelihood, and it was to be returned to the government upon his or her death. Every citizen who received a plot of land was obligated to pay taxes called the so, cho, and yo.

*1-Men received 2,400 square meters, or twenty-four acres, and women received two-thirds of that.

Although this system emulated the one in use in Tang China, because some of its aspects were incompatible with Japanese society, modifications were occasionally made to suit realities in Japan.

**Topic 15 Recap Challenge!** – Explain the following three aspects of the Ritsuryo system: (1.) penal law, (2.) administrative organization, (3.) the construction of the capital.
The Differences Between Heijo-kyo and Chang'an

The perimeter of the city of Chang'an was surrounded by a fortress wall over ten meters in height. Another massive wall was constructed around the palace where the Chinese Emperor resided. By contrast, Heijo-kyo had no city wall, and its Imperial Palace was protected only by a short fence.

The residential quarters of both Heijo-kyo and Chang'an were divided into rectangular and square-shaped wards that were called bo in Japanese. These wards accommodated about one million people in Chang'an and about 100,000 in Heijo-kyo, including powerful men, government officials, and ordinary citizens. However, in Chang'an each ward was surrounded by walls that were locked shut at night as a means both to defend against outside invaders and to contain and control the people living in the wards themselves. Heijo-kyo was built without any expectation of either an attack by foreign enemies or an exodus of its own inhabitants.

The Main Taxes of the Ritsuryo State

So – A levy of 3% of each rice harvest, which was stored locally to be used as relief aid in case of famine.

Cho – The tribute of local specialty goods, which may have been silk, fabrics, thread, cotton, or marine products.

Yo – Labor service, which in practice was paid as a fixed amount of cloth to the Imperial Court rather than with labor.

The people of Japan were also obligated to do up to sixty days of local corvée labor, called zoyo, and were liable for military service, called heiki, as guardsmen either in the capital or on the northern coast of Kyushu.
With what objective did Japan write its national histories and build the Great Buddha?

Regional administration

Under the Ritsuryo system, the regions of Japan were divided into over sixty provinces, each administered by a provincial governor who was dispatched from the Imperial Court. Each province had its own provincial office, or kokufu, as its seat of government. The Imperial Court also appointed members of influential local clans to be district governors and village chiefs, who were supervised by the provincial governor. Way stations were built along Japan's major highways connecting the national government with the regions, and each of them was outfitted with fresh horses for use by government officials.

Present day Fukuoka Prefecture was made the seat of the Dazaifu, a local government given the authority to administer Kyushu, to serve as a conduit for foreign diplomacy, and to defend the Japanese coastline. Taga Castle (today in Miyagi Prefecture) and Akita Castle were built in northern Japan to aid in political administration and military campaigns.

The compilation of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki

As he developed the structures of the Ritsuryo State in Japan, Emperor Temmu also ordered that the nation's origin and history be recorded. This project was continued by his successors and in 712 produced the Kojiki, a three-volume work that presented the myths and history of the Japanese people as a coherent narrative. The Kojiki was followed in 720 by the thirty-volume Nihon Shoki. The Nihon Shoki was an official national history, styled after those written by successive Chinese dynasties, that recounted in detail the genealogy of the Japanese Emperors and their accomplishments.

The Imperial Court also ordered each of its provincial governors to study the legends, geography, and products of their provinces in order to create gazetteers called fudoki that documented conditions in every part of Japan.
**The Kojiki and Nihon Shoki**

Kojiki literally means "Records of Ancient Matters" in English, whereas Nihon Shoki means "The Chronicles of Japan", the "chronicles" in question being the chronological reigns of Japan's successive monarchs. Because the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki were completed within a decade of each other, it is commonly believed that their contents are the same, but in fact they are very different in the language they use and the structure of their stories. According to the Kojiki, Emperor Temmu ordered the compilation of works of history out of his conviction that history was the bedrock of the nation. The Nihon Shoki describes the origins of the Japanese nation in eloquent classical Chinese and gives the reader a strong sense of Japan's growing spirit of independence and consciousness of its international position.

These two works of history, collectively called the Kiki, explain how the Emperors came to rule Japan and, through the myths and legends they recount, allow us to understand the beliefs and political ideals held by the Japanese people of that era.

**The Law Permitting Permanent Ownership of Newly Cultivated Land**

During the reign of Emperor Shomu, Japan was struck with several epidemics and natural disasters. Some farmers abandoned their allotted fields in order to escape taxation. In 743, the Imperial Court sought to promote cultivation by enacting the **Law Permitting Permanent Ownership of Newly Cultivated Land**, allowing individuals to claim a newly cleared tract of land as private property. By protecting the rights of land cultivators under the Ritsuryo system, the law encouraged individuals to develop new lands and led to the expansion of farmland. Powerful court nobles, Buddhist temples, and influential regional clans also took advantage of the law to enlarge their private estates.

**Emperor Shomu and the Great Buddha**

Emperor Shomu and Empress Komoyo attempted to bring national peace through the construction of provincial temples and provincial nunneries in each province as a means of spreading the Buddhist faith to every corner of Japan. This policy was known as chingo kokka, preserving and pacifying the nation through Buddhist ritual. They had Todai-ji Temple constructed in the capital as the national headquarters for all the provincial temples and instructed that the Great Buddha be erected within it. The Buddhist priest Gyoki, who had earned the respect of many people through his support for public works projects including bridges and irrigation channels, also contributed greatly to the construction of the Great Buddha.
The Great Buddha was unveiled in a grandiose consecration ceremony that was attended by high-ranking priests from as far away as India.

*Empress Komyo, consort to Emperor Shomu, is credited with the construction of shelters for orphans and the poor, called *hidenin*, as well as clinics providing medical care and medicine to the sick, called *seyakuin*. She even personally helped to administer treatments to the ill.

However, these projects required great expenditure and put incredible strain on the nation's finances.

*Topic 16 Recap Challenge! – Give three accomplishments of Emperor Shomu.*

**Gyoki and the Great Buddha**

Gyoki, a Buddhist priest who lived during the Nara period, was one of the first to proselytize among the masses. He engaged in social work such as bridge-building in towns across Japan and amassed many followers. Buddhism had originally been introduced to Japan as a means to encourage national unity and protect the country, but it was not intended as an object of worship for the common people. For this reason, the Imperial Court restricted Gyoki's missionary work.

Nonetheless, when Emperor Shomu sought to construct the Great Buddha, he asked for Gyoki's cooperation, insisting that help be accepted from "anyone who is willing to offer even a blade of grass or a handful of soil." Gyoki's work was instrumental in bringing Buddhism to the common people.
**Topic 17 – The Asuka and Tempyo cultures**

What were the distinguishing features of Japanese culture in the seventh and eighth centuries?

**The Asuka culture**

The Buddhist statues and scriptures brought to Japan from Paekche in the sixth century shook the faith of the Japanese people who had known nothing but nature worship up to that point in time. Some Japanese court nobles began to embrace Buddhism. The appeal of Buddhism was that it was Japan’s first religion to be expressible in a visible and tangible manner and understandable through language.

Near the end of the sixth century, a smallpox epidemic hit the capital, and even Emperor Yomei was afflicted. The bedridden Emperor prayed to the Medicine Buddha to restore his health, and consequently, Buddhism was accepted in the Imperial Court for the first time.

Empress Suiko and the regent Prince Shotoku had Horyu-ji Temple built in Ikaruga in the northwestern part of the Nara Basin to enshrine a statue of the Medicine Buddha. Though it was rebuilt after being destroyed in a fire, it remains the world’s oldest wooden structure. The devoutly Buddhist Prince Shotoku and the pro-Buddhist Soga clan raised numerous other such Buddhist temples around the Asuka region. This is known as the Asuka culture, Japan’s first Buddhist cultural movement. In the field of Buddhist sculpture, the representative works of the period are the Shaka Trinity and the Paekche Kannon.

**The envoys to Tang China**

After the rise of the Tang dynasty in the early seventh century, the Imperial Court dispatched envoys to Tang China on more than ten occasions. Capable and motivated students were selected to study abroad in China and return to Japan with knowledge of the culture and institutions of Tang China. There were even cases of Japanese students passing the Tang imperial examination and being appointed to high offices in China. One such person, Abe no Nakamaro, demonstrated such talent that the Chinese Emperor was reluctant to let him leave, and he ultimately died without ever returning to Japan. On the other hand, the eminent Buddhist priest Ganjin, who lived in Tang China, made five attempts to reach Japan in order to teach the tenets of Buddhism there, but each ended in shipwreck. By the time he finally arrived in Japan, he had gone blind.
As Buddhism continued to spread during the Nara period, numerous Buddhist temples were erected with the sponsorship of the Imperial Court and the court nobles.

**The Tempyo culture**

The arrival in Japan of cultural trends coming from western areas via the Silk Road added a cosmopolitan touch to the culture of the time. This is known as the **Tempyo culture**, a word taken from the era name in use during the reign of Emperor Shomu.

Representative state-sponsored temples constructed at this time include **Todai-ji Temple** and **Yakushi-ji Temple**, while the most famous private temples are **Toshodai-ji Temple**, founded by Ganjin, and **Kofuku-ji Temple**, the official temple of the Fujiwara clan. Toshodai-ji Temple's statues of the Sunlight and Moonlight Bodhisattvas and the Four Devas, as well as Kofuku-ji Temple's statue of Ashura, are regarded as masterpieces of Buddhist art. The Great Buddha of Todai-ji Temple, completed in 752 or Tempyo-Shoho 4 under the era name system, stands at fifteen meters in height, making it the world's largest bronze Buddha statue.

Emperor Shomu and Empress Komyo kept some of their most cherished possessions in the Shosoin Repository of Toshodai-ji Temple. It still contains numerous priceless cultural treasures from China and Iran, including specimens of glassware, musical instruments, and tricolor Tang pottery that have since become rare or entirely lost in their countries of origin. Japan has been referred to as the "eastern terminus" of the Silk Road.

In the field of literature, the **Manyoshu** was compiled as a collection of over 4,500 Japanese poems composed from ancient times up to the Nara period and gathered from people of every walk of life. Its diverse contributors ranged from the Emperor and court nobles to nameless farmers and **sakimori**. Among poetry collections, the **Manyoshu** was unprecedented in world history for including even works by women and commoners. It preserved outstanding works of poetry written by the Asuka period contributors Princess Nukata and Kakinomoto no Hitomaro as well as the Nara period contributors Otomo no Yakamochi, Yamanoue no Okura, Yamabe no Akahito, and Otomo no Tabito.

**Topic 17 Recap Challenge! – Explain why the Asuka and Tempyo cultures blossomed as Buddhist cultural movements.**
Section 4 - The development of the Ritsuryo State

Topic 18 – Heian-kyo and regency government
How did Regency government arise in Japan?

Heian-kyo
Starting in the middle of the eighth century, the court nobles and Buddhist priests came into increasing conflict. Emperor Kammu decided to revitalize the nation’s political system by moving the capital city away from Nara, which was the center of Buddhist power and the Buddhist temple network. The new capital was established in 794 (Enryaku 13) at an easily accessible location, where modern-day Kyoto stands today. This was Heian-kyo, which would serve as the capital city of Japan for over 1,000 years until Emperor Meiji moved the capital to Tokyo. The roughly four hundred years that elapsed between 794 and the institution of the shogunate in Kamakura are called the Heian period.

The revitalization of the Ritsuryo State
In 792, Emperor Kammu abolished the military service requirements that had become highly burdensome to common farmers, and replaced them (except in Kyushu and northeastern Japan) with a new armed force composed of the sons of district governors. In order to regulate the chaotic state of regional politics, he also appointed inspectors called kageyushi with the authority to crack down on misconduct by provincial and district governors. Because Japan’s household registry no longer contained accurate data, Emperor Kammu reformed the Farmland Allotment System and offered relief to farmers by cutting in half the amount of corvée labor they owed to the government.

At this time, the Imperial Court decided to subjugate the emishi, a people inhabiting northeastern Japan, but encountered fierce resistance. In response, Emperor Kammu dispatched an army led by Sakanoue no Tamuramaro who the Imperial Court had appointed as supreme commander under the title of sei tai shogun, literally meaning "barbarian-subduing great general". In 802, he defeated Aterui, the emishi leader.

Regency government
Once the Ritsuryo State had been revitalized, the Emperor’s authority reaffirmed, and the imperial succession stabilized, it became less and less necessary for the Emperor to directly express his will in the political arena. Meanwhile, the Fujiwara clan was skillfully outmaneuvering the other court...
nobles. By having the clan’s daughters marry into the royal family and serve as empress consorts, the Fujiwara clan became the maternal relatives of the reigning Emperors and used this to expand their influence. Member of the Fujiwara clan served as regent (sessho in Japanese) before the Emperor had reached the age of majority, and then, after the Emperor had reached adulthood, as chancellor (kampaku in Japanese). In this manner, the Fujiwara clan came to wield de-facto power over the Japanese government by the end of the ninth century. This is known as regency government.

At the height of regency government, Fujiwara no Michinaga and his son Fujiwara no Yorimichi successfully monopolized all the high-ranking positions in the Imperial Court for members of their own clan.

The growth of the shoen
By the tenth century, the Farmland Allotment System was collapsing for a variety of reasons, including falsified data being placed into the household registry. The Imperial Court responded by reversing course and delegating all regional matters to its provincial governors, intervening only to ensure continued collection of tax revenue from imperial land.

At the same time, wealthy men were taking the initiative to open up new lands and then gifting them to Buddhist temples and court nobles in the capital, including the Fujiwara clan. These lands were recognized by the Imperial Court or a provincial governor as being private property exempt from taxation. Then, wealthy men managed the land and used it to bolster their power. These private estates were called shoen, from the Japanese words sho, which means a storehouse or a management office, and en, which means an enclosed garden.

Topic 18 Recap Challenge! – (1.) Using bullet points, list the policies of Emperor Kammu. (2.) Explain how the Fujiwara clan gained de-facto control of the Japanese political system.

A Poem by Fujiwara no Michinaga

This world, I think,
Is indeed my world.
Like the full moon shines,
Uncovered by any cloud.
The new movements of Heian Buddhism

During the Nara period, Buddhism flourished under state sponsorship, but because it focused on the study of scripture, it soon stagnated. When the Japanese capital was moved to Heian-kyo, the Buddhist temples languished in Nara. It was around this time that two Japanese scholar-priests, Saicho and Kukai, travelled to Tang China, studied the latest trends in Buddhism, and returned on a mission to reinvigorate Japanese Buddhism.

Saicho, known posthumously as Dengyo Daishi, founded Enryaku-ji Temple on Mount Hiei (in modern-day Shiga Prefecture) and preached the Tendai school of Buddhism. Kukai, known posthumously as Kobo Daishi, founded Kongobu-ji Temple on Mount Koya (in modern-day Wakayama Prefecture) and preached the Shingon school of Buddhism. These scholar-priests prayed for peace for their country and people while devoting their lives to spiritual training in the mountains in the hope of learning the secrets of esoteric Buddhism. However, these schools of Buddhism soon attracted followers among the court nobility. Consequently, their emphasis shifted towards incantations and they began to receive financial support in their activities, including the construction of temples.

National culture

In 894 (Kanpyo 13), Japan ceased sending envoys to Tang China on the recommendation of Minister of the Right Sugawara no Michizane. Before long, Japan developed its own unique cultural tradition, emphasizing elegance and subtlety, though still based on Tang styles. This is referred to as national culture, or kokufu bunka in Japanese.

The homes of the court nobles began to be built using "palace style" (shinden zukuri) architecture and they had gardens and ponds that aimed to replicate a natural environment. Clothing styles among the court nobles shifted to ceremonial robes called sokutai for men and layered kimonos called juni hitoe for women. Sliding doors and folding screens were decorated with Yamato-e paintings, which portrayed scenes of nature and daily life. The Yamato-e style also gave rise to picture scrolls depicting narrative stories. The light and easy brush strokes used in the picture scroll Animal Caricatures, commonly attributed to the artist Toba Sojo, can be seen as a precursor to modern-day Japanese comics.

Topic 19 – Heian culture

Why did national culture blossom during the Heian period?
Factors behind the Abolition of the Tang China Envoys

The sea routes that were used by Japan's envoys to Tang China were perilous, and some of Japan's most talented men lost their lives on the journey. When Japan's relations with Korea deteriorated, they were forced to travel on even more treacherous routes.

At the same time, the need to undertake such risky travel became less urgent during the Heian period as increasing numbers of Chinese merchant ships began visiting Japan carrying the treasures of Tang civilization from abroad. Moreover, Tang China entered a period of decline in the midst of prolonged civil strife, and this further contributed to Japan's decision to put an end to its missions to China.

An especially important development was the creation of kana, the phonetic scripts still used to write the Japanese language today. Kana, in particular hiragana, became popular with female court nobles who wrote great works of literature using the script. The Pillow Book by Sei Shonagon was a collection of literary musings on daily life in the Imperial Court and the changes of the seasons written with a sublime eye for detail. Murasaki Shikibu wrote The Tale of Genji, a story of love among court nobles that is recognized as the world's first full-length novel.

In the field of poetry, Emperor Daigo commanded Ki no Tomonori and other poets to compile the Kokin Wakashu, which included the works of such luminaries as Ono no Komachi, Ariwara no Narihira, and others who were collectively dubbed "The Six Immortal Poets". Emperor Go-Shirakawa compiled the Ryojin Hisho from popular songs of the era. It was also around this time that the popular folk story, The Tale of Princess Kaguya, was recorded for the first time.

The spread of Pure Land Buddhism

At the end of the tenth century, the social anxieties of the people gave rise to the belief that the world had entered the Age of the Final Dharma. Arson and theft were rampant in Japan's capital, and the warrior monks of Mount Hiei were the source of numerous disturbances. The regions lying outside the vicinity of the capital were struck by a series of natural disasters, and the samurai’s power rose. Tendai priests from Mount Hiei, including Genshin and Kuya, appeared at this chaotic juncture promising salvation in the form of Pure Land Buddhism. According to Pure Land Buddhism, those who had faith in Amida Buddha and prayed in his name would be resurrected in a paradise known as the "Pure Land".

律令国家が立て直され、天皇の権威が確立し、皇位の継承が安定してくると、天皇が直接、政治の場で意見を示す必要が少なくなった。一方、藤原氏は、たくみにほかの貴族を退け、一族の君を天皇の位にし、その皇子を天皇に立てることで天皇の外戚（母方の親族）となり、勢力をのばした。藤原氏は、天皇が幼いころは枢機として、また成長したちは関白として、9世紀末には国政の実権を握るようになった。これを、摂関政治とよぶ。

摂関政治の最盛期は、藤原道長とその子の朝に至るころで、藤原氏は朝廷の高い地位を一族でとりじめにした。10世紀になると、戸籍の倉りなどにより、班田制はいきなりともになった。朝廷は方針を転換し、国司に公領からの税の確保を求めるかは干渉せず、地方政治をまかせた。有力者らはまずから土地を開墾し、藤原氏を始めとする中央の貴族や寺社に寄与した。この土地は朝廷や国司によって税率を免除される私有地として承認された。有力者らはその土地の管理者となって力をたくわえていった。管理のための事務所や倉庫は「荘」によばれて、これらの私有地を荘園とよんだ。
The Age of the Final Dharma was a time said to begin 2,000 years after Buddha's death when his teachings would decay and the material world would become a lost cause. The pessimistic notion of the Age of the Final Dharma led to the belief that humans had no power to save themselves, but that salvation was possible by appealing to the power of Amida Buddha.

Amida Buddha is the "Buddha of Infinite Life" who was born in India and lives in the Pure Land of the West. It is said that he watches over and extends his salvation to all the people of the world.

Court nobles who also aspired to reach the Pure Land consecrated statues of Amida Buddha and built halls in his honor. Notable examples include Phoenix Hall of Byodo-in Temple, founded by Fujiwara no Yorimichi in modern-day Kyoto, and Golden Hall of Chuson-ji Temple, founded by the Northern Fujiwara clan in modern-day Iwate Prefecture.

**Topic 19 Recap Challenge!** – Describe the uniquely Japanese national culture that arose in each of the following areas: (1.) architecture, (2.) clothing, (3.) literature.
Buddhist statues are divided into four categories in order of their divine rank: (1.) Buddhas, (2.) bodhisattvas, (3.) wisdom kings, (4.) devas. Each of these four types of Buddhas and deities is tasked with protecting the people of Earth in a different area.

Buddhas: Shaka Buddha, Medicine Buddha, Cosmic Buddha, Amida Buddha, Maitreya Buddha, etc…

Buddhas are individuals who have arrived at a great truth or achieved a state of enlightenment. Because they have given up all material desires, they are depicted as humble people wearing only a single article of clothing. (Only statues of the Cosmic Buddha fall into a different category and are exceptions to these rules.)

Originally, Shaka Buddha was the only Buddha, but as Buddhist ideas spread and as new scriptures were written, many new types of Buddha statues also appeared.

Bodhisattvas: Maitreya, Monju, Fugen, Jizo, Kannon, etc…

Bodhisattvas are individuals who are seeking enlightenment through spiritual training. Because they are not yet Buddhas, they wear ornaments and are dressed in the clothing of the ancient Indian nobility. Whereas Buddhas are depicted with austere expressions, the bodhisattvas, who are charged with the task of guiding mankind, are depicted with kind expressions on their faces.

Wisdom Kings: Fudo, Aizen, Kujaku, Bato, etc…

Wisdom Kings are the deities of esoteric Buddhism. Their role is to drive away evil spirits and their statues bear fierce expressions on their faces.

Devas: Brahma, Taishakuten, Bishamonten, the Four Devas, the Twelve Heavenly Generals, the Deva King, Benzaiten, etc…

Devas are the deities who guard the Buddhas. It seems that they were originally deities of Indian and Chinese folk religion that were subsequently assimilated into Buddhism. There are a very great number of devas, including all the Buddhist deities not designated as wisdom kings. Some deva statues are muscular and bear angry expressions on their faces to signify their wrath towards evil, but others are multifaceted like the Ashura of Kofuku-ji Temple, and there are also female devas such as Kisshoten and Benzaiten.
弥勒菩薩・文殊菩薩・普賢菩薩・地蔵菩薩・釈音菩薩など

菩薩は、悟りを求める修行をつづけている者を意味します。まだ如来ではないので、古代インドの貴族の服飾と頭飾りをつけ身につけています。悟りを得た如来はおそかな顔をしていますが、衆生（生きとし生けるもの）を救う菩薩はやさしい顔をしています。

不動明王・愛染明王・孔雀明王・馬頭明王など

明王は密教系の仏像で、悪魔を撃退する役目を負い、怖い表情をしています。

梵天・帝釈天・毘沙門天・四天王・十二神将・金剛力士・弁財天など

天は、仏を守る役目をする神々です。インドや中国の民族宗教の神々が仏教化したものといわれています。天部と、もともと数が多く、明王以外の仏像をすべて指します。天部がさまざまで、怒りの表情をあらわした表情のものもありますが、毘沙門天の阿修羅像のように多感的な姿のものや、弁財天・弁財天の女性の神様もいます。
I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT...

Kana and Women’s Literature

The invention of phonetic kana characters

It is not known when exactly Chinese characters were first introduced to Japan. Scratch marks resembling Chinese characters were found on a piece of pottery dated to around the second century, and there are records indicating that documents were exchanged with continental Asia as early as the third century. It is believed that Chinese characters came to Japan along with immigrants from the Korean Peninsula and China.

The ancient ancestors of the Japanese people were not content to learn Chinese characters only to write in Chinese. Rather, they wanted to use Chinese characters to give the Japanese language its own writing system, though this proved to be a challenging task. Through a process of immense labor and ingenuity, the Japanese people finally succeeded in adapting Chinese characters for the purpose of recording both the sounds and meanings of their own orally transmitted stories and songs.

Chinese characters have phonetic and semantic functions, or in other words they express both a sound and meaning. The Japanese took advantage of both functions when writing native Japanese words, as we can see in the Manyoshu, a poetry collection completed in the eighth century. In the Manyoshu, Japanese poetry is written using Chinese characters, including Chinese characters used to represent native Japanese sounds. This was manyogana, Japan’s first kana script.

The invention and spread of kana

Basic Japanese nouns and verbs can be easily expressed using Chinese characters carrying the same meaning, but the Japanese language also includes unique particles, auxiliary verbs, and conjunctions with no equivalents in the Chinese language. In order to write such words, the Japanese were compelled to remove the semantic function from some Chinese characters and utilize them purely for their phonetic function. Some of these phonetic characters, which were used to conjugate verbs or inflect adjectives, were called okurigana. Eventually, the Japanese developed their own phonetic script through modification of certain Chinese characters. These were called hiragana and katakana.

Near the start of the ninth century, scholars and monks in Heian Japan began to insert small
Manyogana/Katakana/Romanized Phonetic Function

世/セ/se
牟/ム/mu
止/ト/to

Manyogana/Hiragana/Romanized Phonetic Function

波/ハ/ha
武/ム/mu
宇/ウ/u

Japan's world famous women's literature

Chinese characters can be used to express words that are glaringly unambiguous in their meaning, but they fail to capture the gentle subtleties intrinsic to the Japanese language. For example, the Japanese word *sabishii*, meaning "lonely", can be written easily enough in Chinese characters, but the Japanese language has many other similar words such as *urasabishii* and *monosabishii*, each of which represents a perceptible nuance inexpressible in terms of ponderous Chinese characters.

*Kana* characters, which are still being used to write Japanese over 1,000 years after their invention, are the ideal phonetic method for conveying the delicateness of Japanese people's sensibilities. Thanks to their invention, the expressiveness of the Japanese written language was tremendously enriched.

*Hiragana* was referred to as "women's script" because of its graceful curved lines, and it became popular with the noblewomen of the Imperial Court. Because the noblewomen were expected to serve as tutors to the Empress and the princesses of the Imperial Family, they were highly educated, and in intellect they rivaled the greatest literati of their time. The court literature that they begat is the world's oldest literature written by women and includes *The Pillow Book*, a

phonetic characters into the margins of works of religious scripture or Chinese literature as *okurigana* or as reading aids for Chinese characters with difficult pronunciations. However, because the Chinese characters were complex and required many brush strokes to write, abbreviated versions of these characters were devised in place of the *kana* in *Manyoshu*. This simplified phonetic script was called *katakana*.

Later in the ninth century, another similar script was created based on cursive Chinese characters, as opposed to the angular *katakana* script. This was called *hiragana*. Ki no Tsurayuki was a pioneer *kana* writer, using *hiragana* to write both *Tosa Diary* and the preface of the *Kokin Wakashu*.

仮名も発明したらも波をくわして「は」という文字をつくりました。紀貫之は初めて仮名で『土佐日記』『古今和歌集』等の文章を書きました。
collection of light essays by Sei Shonagon, *The Tale of Genji*, a novel by Murasaki Shikibu, and
diary literature such as *Kagero Diary*, *Diary of Izumi Shikibu*, and *Sarashina Diary*.

During the same period of time, *katakana* was also used alongside Chinese writing to indicate
the pronunciation of Chinese characters.

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**Real names of female writers unknown**

The true names of the Heian period's female writers are not known, as it was customary then for
women to not divulge their names without special reason. The author of *The Pillow Book*, for
instance, took a pen name derived from *Sei* ("purity"), an alternative pronunciation of the word
*kiyo* that in turn came from the name of her father Kiyohara no Motosuke, and *Shonagon* (*Lesser
Councilor of State*), which was an administrative position in the Heian government.

The author of *The Tale of Genji* is said to have gotten her pen name from the novel's main
character, Lady Murasaki, and the position that her father held in the Heian government, *Shikibu* (*Minister of Ceremonial Affairs*). Likewise, the author of *Kagero Diary* was only recorded as
being the mother of Fujiwara no Michitsuna, and the author of *Sarashina Diary* is known to us
only as the daughter of Sugawara no Takasue.
**Topic 20 – The rise of the samurai and cloistered rule**

In what way did cloistered rule begin in Japan and how was it related to the rise of the samurai?

The appearance of the samurai

In the ninth and tenth centuries, private shoen that were outside the jurisdiction of provincial governors became widespread. Thievery had grown rampant in both the capital and the outlying regions, and law and order began to break down.

In the capital, the Imperial Family and the court nobles hired professional warriors to guard the court and their mansions. Some of the powerful local clans and clan members that had settled outside the capital after being appointed as provincial governors also began to take up arms en masse in order to defend their lands. This was the origin of the Japan’s famous warrior class, the samurai.

The samurai had blood ties with members of noble families or the Imperial Family. They formed warrior bands and selected the most talented among them as their leader to whom they pledged fealty. The Minamoto clan and the Taira clan, who were descended from the Emperors, led Japan’s most powerful warrior bands.

*1=The word samurai means "one who serves", referring to those in the service of a court noble.

*2=The Japanese word for the leader of a warrior band is toryo, which originally referred to the wooden supports holding up the roof of a house.

*3=For example, the Kammu Taira clan descended from the offspring of Emperor Kammu and the Seiwa Minamoto clan descended from the offspring of Emperor Seiwa.

In the mid-tenth century, two warrior bands, one led by the clan leader Taira no Masakado east of the capital in Kanto and one led by the provincial governor Fujiwara no Sumitomo west of the capital in Setouchi, launched a rebellion against the government. The court nobles of the capital had no option but to rely on their own warrior bands in order to suppress the rebellion.
**Cloistered rule**
In the late-eleventh century, the Imperial Throne passed to Go-Sanjo, the first emperor in 170 years whose mother was not of the Fujiwara clan. Emperor Go-Sanjo intended to rule on his own, depriving the Fujiwara clan of their political power. He passed a decree regulating many of the shoen, including those owned by the Fujiwara clan.

*4=Fujiwara no Yorimichi’s daughters were unable to bear a son for reigning Emperor, Go-Sanjo, whose mother was not of the Fujiwara clan, ascended to the throne. As a result, the influence of the Fujiwara clan declined significantly.

His successor, Emperor Shirakawa, went one step further. After reigning for fourteen years, he passed the Imperial Throne to his infant son, but continued to exercise real control from behind the scenes as a Retired Emperor. This is known as cloistered rule. In regency government, de-facto political power is exercised by the family of the Emperor's mother, but in cloistered rule, political power is exercised free from the shackles of the Imperial Court by the Emperor's father or grandfather. Though it is commonly said that cloistered rule lasted for the next one hundred years until the formation of the Kamakura shogunate, it actually continued even after that.

**The ascent of the samurai**
Near the beginning of cloistered rule, Retired Emperor Shirakawa designated a group of warrior bands dominated by the Taira clan as the "North Front Warriors" charged with the important task of guarding his residence. This act further accelerated the rise of the samurai.

In the second half of the eleventh century, Kanto samurai led by Minamoto no Yoshiie put down two successive uprisings that had broken out in northern Japan, winning him considerable prestige among the samurai of the region.

**Topic 20 Recap Challenge! - (1.) Explain how the warrior bands formed with specific examples. (2.) Write a composition explaining how the transition from regency government to cloistered rule represented a restoration of the authority of the Imperial Family.**
The title of Retired Emperor (*Daijo Tenno* or *Joko*) belonged to an emperor who abdicated during his reign. The first person to hold the title was Empress Jito.

However, an emperor who abdicated and retired to a Buddhist monastery was called a Tonsured Emperor (*Hoo*).

A cloister (*in*) refers to a Retired or Tonsured Emperor and his place of residence, while cloistered rule means governing from a cloister.
I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT...
The Emperors of China and Japan

The Chinese Emperor's view of the Japanese Emperors

In 984, Emperor Taizong of Song China held an audience with a monk from Japan. Emperor Taizong, who was aware that the Japanese Emperors were part of a single continuous dynasty, sighed deeply and told the monk:

"It is said that the monarchy of Japan has been based on hereditary succession for many ages, and that even the monarch's retainers succeed their parents. This is the ideal situation. By contrast, in my country wars never end, dynasties come and go in a short period of time, and members of illustrious families holding ministerial positions are rarely permitted to succeed one another."

In China, it was accepted as normal that the Imperial Throne could be seized through force of arms. For this reason, Emperor Taizong seemed struck with both amazement and admiration by Japan's stable imperial succession.

China's dynasties and Yixing Revolution

In China, it was believed that an emperor was granted authority to rule through a "mandate of heaven". However, if an emperor failed to act virtuously, the mandate would pass to another person. This is known as Yixing ("change of dynasty") Revolution.

The principle of Yixing Revolution was quite convenient for conquerors who had overthrown a ruling dynasty. A conqueror could legitimate his own violent usurpation of the Imperial Throne by claiming that the previous emperor had governed corruptly and lost virtue, causing the mandate of heaven to pass to a new dynasty established by the conqueror. The principle of Yixing Revolution also allowed even a man of low social status or of foreign ethnicity, could seize power and become the next emperor. China's emperors had to be constantly on guard against assassination or mutiny, as reflected in the Chinese proverb, "An emperor who sleeps peacefully will have a short life."

The tenno and Japanese concept of "heaven"

The Japanese concept of "heaven" differs from the Chinese. According to Japanese mythology, the Emperor of Japan is the direct descendant of the Sun Deity Amaterasu, the most important of...
the deities of Takaamahara, the Japanese heaven. Whereas the Chinese word for emperor, *huangdi*, literally means "sovereign ruler", the Japanese word for emperor, *tenno*, literally means "heavenly sovereign", clearly establishing his direct connection to "heaven".

In Japan, the ancient state came to fruition through the introduction of the Ritsuryo system and consolidation of political institutions. Over time, the Emperors lost much of their real political power and became religious figures in charge of holy rites and the source of the authority to govern Japan. Other leaders, such as the regent, chancellor, or shogun, actually ran the country, but it was their appointment by the Emperor that guaranteed their political legitimacy.

The political histories of both China and Japan are periodized in similar ways, such as Yuan, Ming, and Qing in the case of China or Heian, Kamakura, and Muromachi in the case of Japan, but these two periodizations represent completely different realities. In Japan, only the location of the seat of political control changed, whereas in China, the end of each historical period represents the violent overthrow of a dynasty, the ascension to power of a different clan or ethnic group, and the foundation of an entirely new nation.
CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY:
SUMMING UP THE ANCIENT PERIOD

Hiroki, a Japanese middle school student, asked his older brother about the ancient period of Japanese history.

Hiroki's brother: In Chapter 1, we studied Japan's prehistory and ancient times. Basically, the dividing point between the two is marked by the birth of kingship and nations on the Japanese Isles.

Hiroki: You mean the time of Himiko and Yamatai?

Hiroki's brother: Queen Himiko of Yamatai is believed to have died around the middle of the third century. At that time, the Yamato State was just starting to construct its distinctive front-squared, rear-rounded burial mounds called kofun. Before long, such kofun had spread from Tohoku in northern Japan to Kyushu in southern Japan. People say that it was then that the nation known as Japan was truly born.

Hiroki: Oh okay, that's neat!

Hiroki's brother: Then in the seventh century, Prince Shotoku established a model for good government in Japan through his Seventeen Article Constitution. It was during the ancient period that Japan took shape as an emperor-centered polity.

Hiroki: Now I get it!

Hiroki's brother: And one more important thing to remember is that Japan's reigning dynasty never change—even a single time.

Hiroki: Wow! That's amazing!
Comparing historical periods

Compare each set of the following topics and jot down the key differences.

1. The society and lifestyles of the Jomon period versus those of the Yayoi period.
2. The villages of the Yayoi period versus the nations of the Kofun period.
4. The Asuka and Tempyo cultures versus national culture.

Comparing historical figures

Queen Himiko and Prince Shotoku pursued differing policies towards China that were reflective of their respective eras. Compare these two historical figures, consider the differences in their policies, and make a table summarizing your findings.

An essay "in a word"

What did you find most interesting about Japan's ancient history? Give one topic.

In a word, the ancient period was the era of ________.

In the blank, insert the topic that you think best fits and write a short essay of between 100 and 200 words on it.

Examples: the Emperors, nation-building, court nobles, myths, Buddhism, etc…

Group discussion work

1. Compare the ideas that appear in Japanese mythology with Prince Shotoku's Seventeen Article Constitution. Discuss this subject together and see if you can find points that they share in common.
2. *The Book of Wei: An Account of the Wajin* uses derogatory Chinese characters to refer to Himiko and Yamatai. Consider the reason for this and listen to everyone’s opinion.
3. Japan adopted the elements of China's Ritsuryo system in a selective manner. Discuss the reasons for this.
# CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY: MINI HISTORICAL DICTIONARY
(explanation of key terms in less than 100 words)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jomon pottery</td>
<td>c. 15,000 BC – c. 300s BC</td>
<td>Some of the world's oldest pottery, which was made by people living in the Japanese Isles. &quot;Jomon&quot; means &quot;cord-marked&quot;, from the fact that the surface of the pottery was often decorated with a rope-like pattern. Many were deep bowls, and the Jomon people had invented techniques to use them for cooking food. The period when this pottery was being used is called the Jomon period.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yayoi culture</td>
<td>c. 300s BC – c. 200s AD</td>
<td>The period when Yayoi pottery was used is called the Yayoi period, and the agricultural society of the time is called Yayoi culture. The Yayoi period was characterized by the spread of rice cultivation. At the same time, metal tools, including ironware, came to be produced across Japan for use as farming tools and weapons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yamatai</td>
<td>early 200s</td>
<td>Described in <em>The Book of Wei: An Account of the Wajin</em>, which recorded Japanese affairs up to the early 3rd century, as a powerful Japanese nation. This book also stated that Yamatai had subjugated over thirty smaller nations and was ruled by Queen Himiko.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamato State</td>
<td>late 200s – 600s</td>
<td>A political federation dominated by the wealthy clans of Yamato (Nara Prefecture). It arose in the late third century out of efforts to unify numerous small nations. We can ascertain the extent of its power based on the spread of keyhole-shaped burial mounds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prince Shotoku</td>
<td>574 - 622</td>
<td>A young leader who appeared in the late sixth century at a crossroads in his nation's history when Japan was confronting a threat from the Sui dynasty that had united mainland China. He first focused on domestic reforms, including the implementation of the Twelve Level Cap and Rank System and Seventeen Article Constitution, and then he pursued a policy of diplomatic equality with Sui China.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taika Reforms</td>
<td>645 - 652</td>
<td>Reforms that began in Taika 1, the first era name used in Japan. Prince Naka no Oe (later Emperor Tenji) and Nakatomi no Kamatari destroyed the Soga clan and constructed a new political system, including the policy of &quot;emperor's land, emperor's people&quot;.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jinshin War</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>A civil war over the imperial succession that broke out following the death of Emperor Tenji. Tenji's younger brother Prince Oama was victorious and ascended the throne as Emperor Temmu, who set about compiling legislation and works of history with the aim of consolidating the Ritsuryo State.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiho Code</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>A legal code that included criminal penal law (ritsu) and administrative law on government structure and procedures (ryo). A &quot;Ritsuryo State&quot; is a nation with a political system based on such legal codes. Japan created its own unique system by learning from Chinese models. The promulgation of the Taiho Code completed ancient Japan's transformation into a Ritsuryo State.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heijo-kyo</td>
<td>710 - 794</td>
<td>The new capital city of Japan's Ritsuryo State founded in Nara. The eighty years that elapsed between its construction and the transfer of the capital city to Kyoto are called the Nara period. Modeled on the Tang Chinese capital of Chang'an, Heijo-kyo was crisscrossed by roads laid out on a grid pattern and boasted Heijo Palace, the home of the Emperor and the seat of the government, on the city's northern side.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmland Allotment Law</td>
<td>late 600s – 700s</td>
<td>A system established to promote just government. In the Ritsuryo State, the Imperial Court managed all people and land under the principle of &quot;emperor's land, emperor's people&quot;. In accordance with this principle, the Farmland Allotment Law distributed the land to the people on an equal basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Law Permitting</td>
<td>743</td>
<td>A law that recognized newly cultivated land as private</td>
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<td>Property</td>
<td>The law stimulated interest in cultivation and led to an expansion of farmland. Powerful court nobles, Buddhist temples, and influential regional clans also used the law to enlarge their private estates.</td>
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<td>Great Buddha of Todai-ji Temple</td>
<td>A Buddha statue constructed by the order of Emperor Shomu. Emperor Shomu installed provincial temples and provincial nunneries in each province and built Todai-ji Temple in the capital as the national headquarters of this temple network. His order to construct the Great Buddha was motivated by a desire to bring peace to Japan by spreading the Buddhist faith to every corner of the land.</td>
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<td>Heian-kyo</td>
<td>The capital city constructed in Kyoto. Emperor Kammu attempted to revitalize Japanese politics by leaving Nara and transferring the site of the capital to Kyoto. Kyoto would remain the Japanese capital for the next 1,000 years. The roughly four hundred years between the construction of Heian-kyo and the establishment of the Kamakura shogunate are called the Heian period.</td>
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<td>Regency government</td>
<td>A government in which real political power is exercised by others on behalf of the Emperor. The Fujiwara clan enhanced their influence by marrying their daughters to the reigning Emperors, whose offspring would inherit the Imperial Throne. Members of the Fujiwara clan exercised de-facto control of the government as regents before the Emperor had reached the age of majority and as chancellors after he had reached adulthood.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cloistered rule</td>
<td>Government by the Emperor's behind-the-scenes patron. Emperor Shirakawa relinquished the Imperial Throne to his infant son, and then, as Retired Emperor Shirakawa, became his behind-the-scenes patron. In regency government, de-facto political power is exercised by the family of the Emperor's mother, but in cloistered rule, the government is run by the Emperor's father or grandfather.</td>
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