

Japan

Economy & Social Class



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Farming

- Rice farming became so important in ancient Japan that it changed the way people lived, worked, and were governed.
- Planted rice in waterlogged fields.
- Peasant taxes were charged in rice, and the government paid its high-ranking workers with it. 
- Rice was eaten with every meal.
- It was also used to make sake, flour, and vinegar.
- Stalks of rice plants were used to make floor mats, ropes, and sandals.



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Trade

- Koreans and the Chinese were interested in Japanese silk, which was used to make beautiful clothing, such as kimonos, or robes.
- Volcanic eruptions in Japan left behind lava rich with gold, zinc, and copper. 
- Koreans also traded iron and bronze tools in exchange for gold and rice from Japan.
- Chinese traded bronze mirrors, bells, swords, and spearheads for gold mined in Japanese mountains, as well as rice.
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Money

- Made purchases using quantities of rice rather than money.
- First Japanese coins were made in 708 A.D.
- The coins were round and had square holes in the center so they could be threaded onto string-like beads.
- At first, coins were made from copper and silver but were later made from copper only.
- The coins were not widely used because the government had difficulty getting them to isolated villages.
- The Japanese people went back to using rice instead of coins to pay for things.



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Japanese Samurai

Japan

1 Emperor (Figurehead)

2 Shogun

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EMPEROR

- Emperor and imperial family highest on social ladder
- Religious leader - Direct descendant of Amaterasu Omikami
- Figurehead (leader in name only) - No political Power 
- Under control of Shogun's clan
- ALL classes of society provided for Emperor and his court.
- Emperor still exists today



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Shogun

- Military Leader
- Highest in warrior class
- Clans fought to acquire this status
- Political Leader
- Those of other classes under him provided for his needs
- Shogun gave protection and privileges (Portion of land/Produce on land)



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Daimyo

- Part of warrior class
- Means “Great Names”
- Shogun’s representatives
- Ran estates according to shogun’s rules
- Swords most valuable possessions
- Used often to demonstrate loyalty to Shogun
- Lived in huge castles surrounded by moats



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Samurai

- Professional warriors
- Loyal to shogun and Daimyos
- Lived in Daimyos castles
- Fairly high social status but little political power
- Needs met by lower classes than them



Ronin

- Wandering Samurai
- Had no Daimyo
- Paid soldiers
- Worked as body guards for rich merchants
- Paid soldiers during civil wars
- Low social class
- No political power
- Depended on others for economic well-being



Peasants

- Largest class
- Included farmers and fishermen
- Low social status
- No political power
- VERY poor - Often starved 
- Valued because they produced food for all other classes
- Often made material for clothing
- Paid taxes with rice and work - 2/3 of year's crop to upper classes



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Artisans

- Craftspeople who made variety of products like Art, Cooking pots, Fish hoods, Farm tools Theatre, Ship anchors, swords
- Great sword makers highly respected
- Artisans not as respected as peasants because  they didn't produce food



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Merchants

- Sold goods and produce made by others
- Very low social status since they produced nothing of value and lived off the efforts of others' work
- Often made to live in separate locations 
- Not allowed to mix with other classes except to do business



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