

Unit 2 The Asia–Pacific world – Option

Japan under the shoguns

Japan first became united as a country under an emperor at the end of the 6th century. Ever since then, Japan has been ruled by a long line of emperors. However, for almost 700 years – from 1185 to 1867 – the emperor of Japan had no real power. Instead, Japan was controlled by a series of military leaders, known as shoguns. The title shogun comes from the Japanese words *sho* (meaning ‘commander’) and *gun* (meaning ‘troops’).

In 1868, the last shogun was overthrown and power was returned to the emperor. At this time, the capital was moved to a new location in Edo – now known as Tokyo.



chapter 15

Source 1 Matsumoto Castle was built in 1504 and is typical of most Japanese castles built during the rule of the shoguns in Japan.

15A

What led to the rise of the shoguns?

- 1 Japan is a chain of islands, many of which are so mountainous that only about 15 per cent of the land can be farmed. How do you think these geographical features might have affected the way of life of early Japanese people?

15B

How was Japanese society organised during the rule of the shoguns?

- 1 Shoguns were military leaders and the heads of powerful Japanese clans. How do you think they became more powerful than Japanese emperors, even during times when there were no wars?

15C

How did Japan change during the rule of the shoguns?

- 1 For a long period of time, Japan effectively shut itself off from all contact with other countries, but in 1854 a trade agreement was reached between Japan and the USA. Do you think Japan’s policy of isolation was a strength or a weakness?

15.1 Japan under the shoguns: a timeline

Source 1 A timeline of some key events and developments in Japan under the shoguns



An artist's impression of a samurai, a member of a warrior class that served lords known as *daimyo*.

1185 The Minamoto clan seizes power from the emperor; Minamoto no Yoritomo becomes shogun and establishes his own capital city in Kamakura; with support from *daimyo* (lords) and samurai (warriors) a series of shoguns rules Japan for the next 700 years

1274

The Mongol army launches an attack on Japan, landing on the island of Kyushu; a typhoon destroys many of their ships and the invasion fails.

1337

Ashikaga Takauji seizes power from Emperor Go-Daigo to become the new shogun

1467

A period of civil war, known as the Warring States period, begins in Japan between rival warlords; it lasts for around 100 years.

1598

William Adams, a sailor and navigator, becomes the first Englishman to visit Japan; he befriends Tokugawa Ieyasu (a future shogun) and later becomes a key advisor to him.

1603

Tokugawa Ieyasu becomes shogun and establishes a base in the city of Edo (modern-day Tokyo); the Tokugawa shogunate rules Japan for the next 260 years.

1633

Tokugawa Iemitsu introduces a policy known as *sakoku* (meaning 'locked country'); under the policy, no Japanese people are permitted to leave Japan and no foreigners are allowed to enter; the policy remains in effect until around 1853.

1853

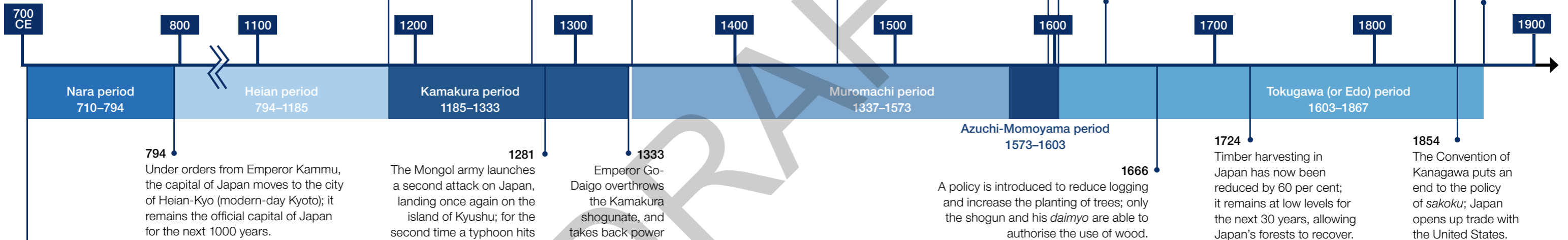
Commodore Matthew Perry, a US naval officer, arrives in the city of Edo (modern-day Tokyo) to persuade the Japanese to open their borders to trade.

1867

The last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, steps down and hands power back to the imperial family under Emperor Meiji



A statue of Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the Tokugawa shogunate



Heijo Palace in the city of Nara was the Imperial Palace, and seat of power, from 710–784



An artist's impression of Japanese fighters facing the Mongol army during the attempted invasion of Japan



Check your learning 15.1

Remember and understand

- 1 In what year was the city of Heian-Kyo built? What name is this city known by today?
- 2 How many times did the Mongol army attempt to invade Japan? Were these attempts successful?

Apply and analyse

- 3 Explain the policy of *sakoku*. Use the dates provided on the timeline to calculate how many years this policy was in place.

Evaluate and create

- 4 The timeline shows that the shoguns ruled Japan from around 794 to 1867. Many historians break

this overall period into five further periods, commonly known as:

- the Heian period
- the Kamakura period
- the Muromachi period
- the Azuchi-Momoyama period
- the Tokugawa period.

- a Conduct some Internet research to discover why each of these periods was given its name.
- b For each period, generate two questions that you would like to find the answers to. As you work your way through this chapter, check back on these questions and provide the answers to them when you can.

15.2 Life before the shoguns

Archaeologists believe that Japan was initially settled by humans around 30 000 years ago. Over time, groups of settlers from the nearby mainland (particularly China and Korea) continued to arrive in Japan. The fact that Japan is made up of many islands, and that each island is very mountainous, meant that many different groups of settlers formed isolated communities. Over time, these communities developed very different customs and traditions.

The influence of geography

Japan is a chain of islands in the Pacific Ocean formed by the peaks of underwater mountain ranges. More than 3000 islands are today part of Japan, but most Japanese people have always lived on the four largest. These are known as Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu and Hokkaido (see Source 2). Japan's rugged landscape means that only 15 per cent of the land can be farmed effectively. As a result, Japanese people tended to settle in the valleys and coastal regions that were flatter, and more suited to agriculture.

Crops commonly grown were soya beans, wheat, barley and millet (a type of cereal grain). These crops formed the basis of the traditional Japanese diet. Rice was also grown, but was eaten primarily by the wealthy.

The lack of suitable farming areas has meant there has always been fierce competition between people for fertile land. In addition to the rugged landscape, Japan is situated in an area of high volcanic and earthquake activity. It is also subject to regular tsunamis as a result of these earthquakes.

The difficulty of living and farming in the mountains encouraged many Japanese people to earn their livelihoods from the ocean. Early Japanese settlers fished from coastal villages and, to this day, seafood remains an important part of the Japanese diet.

The sea surrounding Japan separated its people from the rest of Asia and, as a result, Japan developed its own unique religion, arts and social structures.



Source 1 Japan's mountainous landscape left little flat land for farming. Mount Fuji is the large mountain visible in the background – it holds special significance for the people of Japan.

JAPAN: PHYSICAL



Source 2

Source: Oxford University Press

The earliest settlers

Archaeological evidence suggests that people travelled to the Japanese islands around 30 000 BCE. These people were followed by a second group of settlers in around 14 000 BCE. Historians refer to these early people as Jomon because of the artefacts they discovered. *Jomon* translates roughly as 'cord patterned', which refers to the distinctive pottery with rope-like patterns that has been found. Other artefacts from this time that have been found across Japan include tools, weapons and figurines. These artefacts suggest that there were settled communities in the north of Japan at this time.

The clan system

Over time, small, independent societies and states formed on the islands of Japan. Each of these states was made up of different **clans** – groups of families related by blood or marriage. Each clan honoured a range of different gods. Some were spirits of the wind, trees and mountains, while others were spirits of dead ancestors of clan members. Each clan was led by a group of warrior chiefs. These warrior chiefs protected the people in return for a share of the crops that were harvested each year. Local wars between rival clans broke out regularly as they fought one another over access to resources such as fertile land.

keyconcept: Significance

The Shinto creation myth

Shinto is the oldest religion in Japan and has played a significant role in the way Japanese society has evolved. According to a Shinto creation myth, in the beginning there were two gods – Izanagi and his wife, Izanami – who were asked by the spirits to create a new land. They were given a spear, which they plunged into the ocean. As they pulled the spear from the ocean, drops fell from the tip forming the first Japanese island. Izanagi and Izanami settled on this first island and gave birth to all of the islands that now form Japan. They also gave birth to a range of different gods to inhabit each of these islands, such as gods of the trees, winds, rivers and mountains.

While giving birth to the god of fire, Izanami died. Izanagi followed her to the Land of the Dead, to bring her back, but she refused. He returned alone, but by doing so brought many impurities back to Earth with him. These impurities cause human wrongdoing and suffering.

Izanagi washed himself clean, and the water drops that fell from his body became other gods. These included Susanowo (the storm god) and Amaterasu (the Sun goddess). Japanese legend and mythology states that Amaterasu's grandson, Jimmu, became the first Japanese emperor.

For more information on the key concept of significance, refer to page XX of 'The history toolkit'.



Source 3 The Shinto creation myth tells of gods Izanagi and Izanami plunging a spear into the ocean; drops from the tip of the spear formed the first island of Japan.

Check your learning 15.2

Remember and understand

- 1 What body of water separates Japan from the mainland?
- 2 What do historians call the first people to settle in Japan? Why are they called this?

Apply and analyse

- 3 How did the location of Japan affect the way societies there developed?

- 4 What impact did the geographical features of Japan (such as its mountains) have on the development of society?

Evaluate and create

- 5 Create a facts chart on what you have learned in this section about the early settlement of Japan.
- 6 Draw a simple comic strip (using simple stick figures) to retell the Shinto creation myth.

15.3 The rise of the emperor

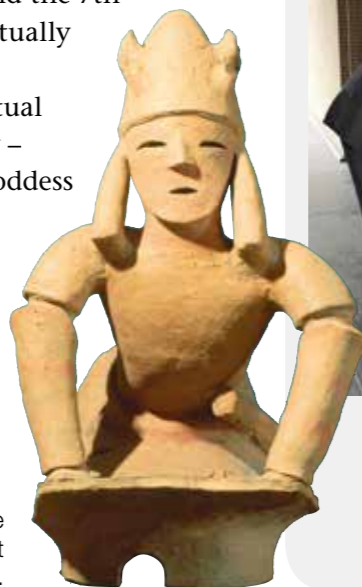
In the 5th century CE, one Japanese clan, known as the Yamato clan, became more powerful than all others. Under the rule of the Yamato clan, the way in which Japanese society was organised began to take shape. A type of centralised government was formed and a system of taxation was introduced, but the most significant change was the appointment of an **emperor** – a supreme ruler who was believed to communicate with the gods and possess magical powers.

The Yamato rulers

Throughout the 5th century, the Yamato clan grew to control much of southern Japan from its territorial base on the central island of Honshu. They developed great military forces in order to protect this territory. While other clans across Japan still technically controlled their own territories, the leaders of these clans promised their loyalty to the Yamato chief, because they knew they could never defeat him in battle. The Yamato chief's territory was divided into a series of provinces that were controlled by junior clan chiefs. Each of these chiefs ensured that the supreme leader was obeyed and that taxes were collected.

The Japanese modelled their system of government on the neighbouring country of China. Even though Japan was ruled by a series of **warlords**, a system developed that recognised one Yamato chief as the supreme leader. From around the 7th century onwards, this leader eventually became known as emperor. The emperor was regarded as the spiritual and symbolic head of the country – descended from the Shinto Sun goddess Amaterasu. Clan chiefs across Japan were required to show their respect to the emperor by acknowledging his superiority and making payments to him to show their loyalty.

Source 1 A fired clay statue from the burial mound of a junior Yamato chief. It was made in the mid-6th century BCE.



keyconcept: Sontestability

The ancestry of the emperor

Yamato chiefs claimed that they were descended from the Sun goddess Amaterasu, and therefore had a right to rule Japan. Japanese legend states that a Yamato leader named Jimmu, the 'grandson' of Amaterasu, was the first 'emperor' of Japan – even though the word was not used in Japanese until a thousand years after he was supposed to have lived. Jimmu is thought to have united a series of clans under his reign from 660 BCE to 585 BCE.

Some historians think that Jimmu is a mix of characters, both real and imagined, while others question whether or not he ever existed. The 13 emperors who came after Jimmu are known as 'legendary emperors', because their existence is also based on legend rather than solid historical evidence. Regardless of whether Emperor Jimmu is fact or fiction, his name is still listed on the official family tree of the current ruling family of Japan. The current Japanese Emperor, Akihito, is the 125th emperor to rule Japan – tracing his ancestors all the way back to Jimmu.

For more information on the key concept of contestability, refer to page XX of 'The history toolkit'.



Source 2 US President Barack Obama bows as he meets Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo in 2009.

A centralised government

Prince Shotoku, a Yamato prince who ruled from 593 to 621, was a key figure in establishing a centralised government and strengthening the control of the Yamato clan. He created a new constitution that gave all power to the emperor, who had to be obeyed by all Japanese people. Shotoku established a large bureaucracy with 12 different ranks and introduced Buddhism and Confucianism to Japan.

After him, in 646, the Emperor Kotoku introduced a series of reforms which further strengthened the centralised government. From then on, all land in Japan was said to belong to the emperor. Peasants were made to pay taxes to the emperor either in goods (such as rice or cloth) or in labour (by working on building sites or by serving as soldiers). To administer this system of taxation, the country was divided into provinces, each overseen by a governor appointed by the emperor.

In 710, the city of Nara was established as the first official capital of Japan and the emperor's palace was built there – from here, the new centralised government ruled Japan.

The Heian period (794–1185 CE)

In 794, Emperor Kammu moved the capital from Nara to a new city he had constructed called Heian-Kyo (modern-day Kyoto). Heian-Kyo remained the official capital of Japan for the next 1000 years (see Source 4 on page XX). This move marked the start of a period in Japanese history known as the Heian period (794–1185 CE). During the Heian period, the Imperial Court in the new capital became known for promoting Japanese arts and culture, but it was also a time in which the emperor began to lose control.

The Imperial Court

Although he was considered the supreme ruler of Japan, the emperor did not involve himself in the day-to-day running of his country. Special advisors and ministers were appointed to carry out these functions. The emperor was removed from his people, living in a beautiful isolated palace known as the Imperial Court. It was a place of luxury and privilege for a select few. The reality of life outside the palace did not come inside.

During the Heian period, the Imperial Court was dedicated to fine arts and learning, both of

15A What led to the rise of the shoguns?

Source 3 A portrait of a typical woman at the Imperial Court during the Heian period

which flourished. Music and writing were encouraged and poetry was a central part of life at court. Both men and women were encouraged to write. Ladies at court dressed in elegant kimonos (traditional robes), made from silk and often composed of up to 16 layers. Although men wore robes with fewer layers, they were still required to dress elegantly and according to tradition.

Men who belonged to the court had little contact with the outside world unless they were appointed as the governor of a province. At court, it was generally considered more important that a man be a good poet than a good administrator. The court was often entertained with poetry or music contests, or through scrolls of picture stories. Physical activities included archery and *kemari* (a traditional game in which players kicked a leather ball to each other without letting it touch the ground).

The emperor's power weakens

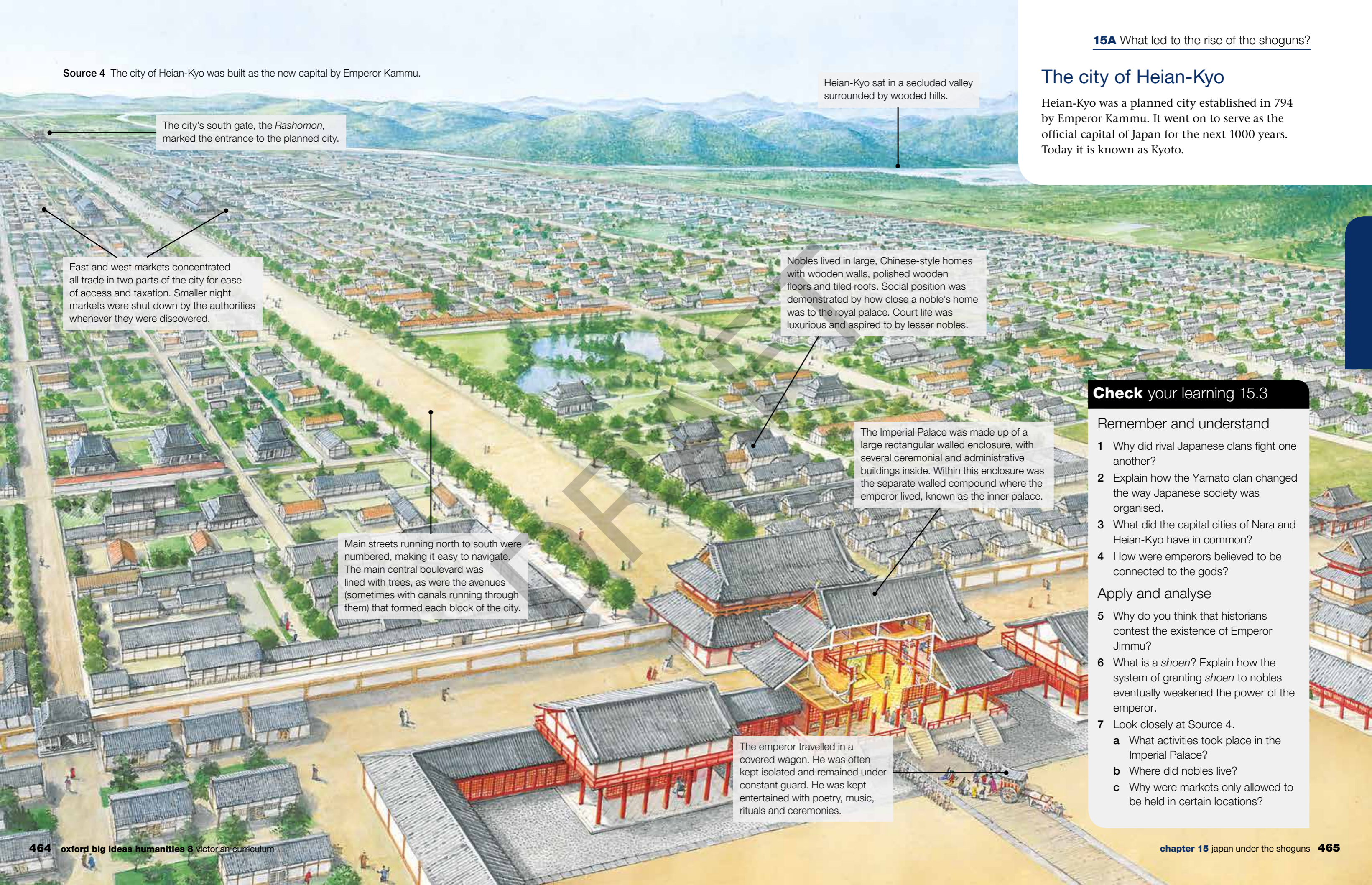
After the death of Emperor Kammu in 806, a series of weaker emperors ruled over Japan. Their reign resulted in the central government becoming increasingly removed from the daily governing of the provinces. Outside the city of Heian-Kyo, the emperor's power and control grew weaker. Lords who had been granted permission by the emperor to own and administer large rural estates – called *shoen* – started to become more and more powerful. To begin with, *shoen* were plots of land given to Buddhist monks to grow rice crops on, without paying tax to the emperor. Later on, emperors began granting *shoen* to nobles and officials as a reward for loyal service. Over time, the noble families who owned the *shoen* became increasingly wealthy and powerful, because they not only controlled the land (tax free) but also collected taxes from the peasants living on it. These noble families built up their own private armies in order to protect and police their *shoen*. These armies were led by generals known as shoguns and made up of warriors known as **samurai**. Eventually, the emperor began to depend on these private armies for support. This process marked the beginning of **shogun** rule in Japan.



Source 4 The city of Heian-Kyo was built as the new capital by Emperor Kammu.

The city of Heian-Kyo

Heian-Kyo was a planned city established in 794 by Emperor Kammu. It went on to serve as the official capital of Japan for the next 1000 years. Today it is known as Kyoto.



The city's south gate, the *Rashomon*, marked the entrance to the planned city.

East and west markets concentrated all trade in two parts of the city for ease of access and taxation. Smaller night markets were shut down by the authorities whenever they were discovered.

Heian-Kyo sat in a secluded valley surrounded by wooded hills.

Nobles lived in large, Chinese-style homes with wooden walls, polished wooden floors and tiled roofs. Social position was demonstrated by how close a noble's home was to the royal palace. Court life was luxurious and aspired to by lesser nobles.

The Imperial Palace was made up of a large rectangular walled enclosure, with several ceremonial and administrative buildings inside. Within this enclosure was the separate walled compound where the emperor lived, known as the inner palace.

Main streets running north to south were numbered, making it easy to navigate. The main central boulevard was lined with trees, as were the avenues (sometimes with canals running through them) that formed each block of the city.

The emperor travelled in a covered wagon. He was often kept isolated and remained under constant guard. He was kept entertained with poetry, music, rituals and ceremonies.

Check your learning 15.3

Remember and understand

- 1 Why did rival Japanese clans fight one another?
- 2 Explain how the Yamato clan changed the way Japanese society was organised.
- 3 What did the capital cities of Nara and Heian-Kyo have in common?
- 4 How were emperors believed to be connected to the gods?

Apply and analyse

- 5 Why do you think that historians contest the existence of Emperor Jimmu?
- 6 What is a *shoen*? Explain how the system of granting *shoen* to nobles eventually weakened the power of the emperor.
- 7 Look closely at Source 4.
 - a What activities took place in the Imperial Palace?
 - b Where did nobles live?
 - c Why were markets only allowed to be held in certain locations?

15.4 Religious beliefs

Religion has long been an important part of life for the Japanese people. Religion was also significant in influencing social and political structures of Japan. As mentioned earlier, Shinto is the oldest religion in Japan and was a part of early clan life. During the rule of the emperors, Buddhism and Confucianism were also introduced from China. Today, Shinto and Buddhism are still the most significant belief systems in Japan.

Shinto

The roots of Japan's traditional Shinto religion (meaning 'the way of the gods') were laid down thousands of years ago. However, many Shinto customs and beliefs are still practised throughout Japan today. Followers of Shinto believe in a number of different gods and sacred ancestor spirits known as *kami*. Like many other ancient peoples, the early Japanese believed that all natural things were alive. *Kami* took the form of things and concepts important to life, such as the Sun, hills, lakes, mountains, rivers, trees and fertility. The Sun goddess, Amaterasu, was considered Shinto's most important *kami*. According to Shinto, people are also believed to become *kami* after they die. They are then worshipped by their families.



Shinto beliefs and rituals

Shinto is a belief system that has a positive, uplifting view of life on Earth. People are considered to be basically good. Evil spirits are seen to be responsible for the bad things that happen. Consequently, many Shinto rituals are aimed at warding off evil spirits through purification, prayers and offerings to *kami*. Shrines for worshipping *kami* are found across Japan, even in homes where small family altars hold offerings of *sake* (rice wine) and food.

Buddhism

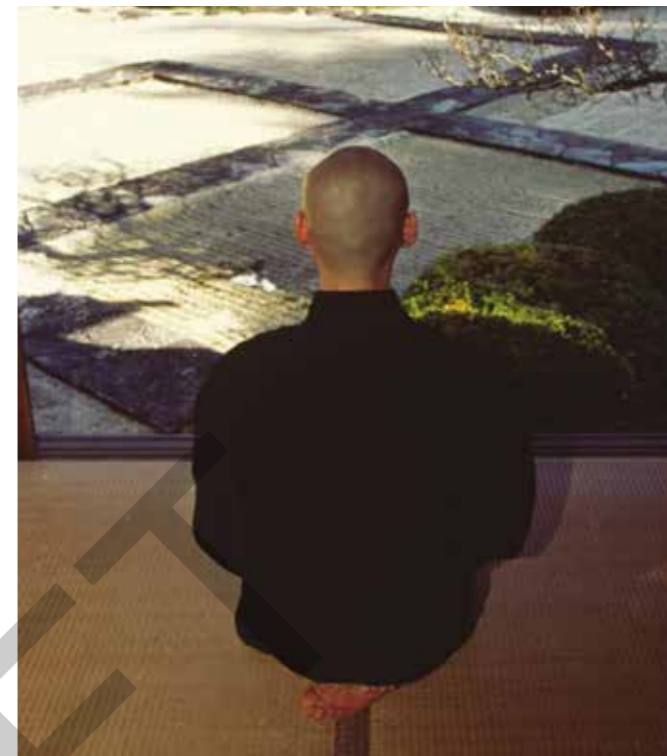
Buddhism was first introduced to Japan in the beginning of the 7th century. Prince Shotoku was a keen follower of Buddhism and had many Buddhist temples built throughout Japan during his rule. Over a short period, Buddhism became the religion of the ruling class.

Buddhism is a religion that sees life as a cycle; you are born, you live, you die, and then you are reborn in a new form. Depending on how you live your life, you can come back as a better or worse thing or person in your next life. Buddhists try, in their lives, to work towards reaching nirvana, or enlightenment, the perfect state from which there is no need to be reborn. They do this by observing certain guidelines and behaviours in the way they live.

In Buddhism there are four Noble Truths:

- 1 Life is full of suffering.
- 2 Suffering comes because people crave things.
- 3 By getting rid of craving one is freed.
- 4 The only way to do this is to have the 'right' understanding, speech, actions, efforts, livelihood, intentions, awareness and concentration.

Source 1 Fortune-telling *omikuji* papers are found at many Shinto shrines, like this one in Kyoto. After making a small donation, a person randomly chooses an *omikuji* paper, hoping the resulting fortune will be good. Paper brings luck to followers of Shinto, because the word for paper in Japanese is also *kami*.



Source 2 A Zen Buddhist monk practises meditation while looking upon a Zen rock garden

Zen Buddhism

From the 12th century onwards, a branch of Buddhism called Zen Buddhism became particularly popular in Japan. Zen Buddhism included an emphasis on meditation. Zen meditation involves sitting still for long periods of time to focus the mind on a single object or on the breath. Over time, this is believed to increase the believer's understanding of the self as a part of a single universe. Zen Buddhism has had a great effect on Japanese culture. The simplicity of Zen gardens has influenced landscape design, and the ritual of the tea ceremony is thought to have originated from a Zen ceremony.

Confucianism

Confucius was a Chinese philosopher and teacher who lived from 551 to 479 BCE. Unlike Shinto and Buddhism, **Confucianism** is not a religion. Instead, it is a set of ethical and philosophical guidelines by which to live. Confucianism appealed to the rulers of Japan as it promoted loyalty and stability.

One of the key principles of Confucianism is loyalty to family and, in particular, that family members should respect and obey their elders. This principle could also be applied to society as a whole, in which case complete obedience should be given to the ruler.

Confucius taught that if family members and rulers upheld values such as obedience, justice, truth, respect, honour and treating others fairly, societies would be stable.



Source 3 A Confucian shrine in Nagasaki, Japan

Check your learning 15.4

Remember and understand

- 1 Describe the concept of *kami* and explain why they are important to followers of Shinto.
- 2 Who was influential in bringing Buddhism to Japan in the 7th century?

Apply and analyse

- 3 Explain the relationship between nature and the Shinto religion.

Evaluate and create

- 4 What similarities and differences can you identify between the three belief systems described? Create a Venn diagram with three circles to conduct a comparison.
- 5 Create a facts chart on what you have learned about each of the three belief systems described here.

15A rich task

The city of Heian-Kyo

Heian-Kyo was a planned city established by Emperor Kammu in 794. It became the capital of Japan for over 1000 years. Today it is known as Kyoto.

During the Heian period, Heian-Kyo was nine blocks long and eight blocks wide. Tree-lined avenues formed each block of the city. Some of the avenues had canals running through them. Heian-Kyo featured a royal palace, Buddhist temples, Shinto shrines, large public squares and many government buildings.



Source 1 The Imperial Palace in Kyoto has been rebuilt eight times – the last time in 1855 using the style of the original Heian architecture.

The royal palace stood at one end of Heian-Kyo, surrounded by the houses of the nobility. Nobles and their families lived in large, Chinese-style homes with wooden walls, polished wooden floors and tiled roofs.

At the other end of the city were two large markets for food and clothing. These sites were set up so that what merchants sold could be regulated and government officials could collect taxes.

The way societies build their cities provides information about what that society valued and how it functioned. By studying Source 4 on page XX you can identify questions about the city that will help you understand more about ancient Japan.



Source 2 The Heian Shrine in Kyoto, built in 1895, is a smaller scale replica of the first Imperial Palace built in 794.

skilldrill: Continuity and change

Generating historical inquiry questions

One of the first and most important steps in conducting a historical inquiry is to generate or pose key questions. The questions that you generate will frame and direct the research you then undertake.

Usually, historians generate one broad, overarching question for their inquiry, such as, ‘How does the design of Heian-Kyo reflect the structure and organisation of Japanese society at the time it was built?’ After that, you

need to generate more specific questions that are related to your overall inquiry question. You will need to generate a combination of three types of questions:

- simple or closed questions (e.g. ‘When or where did event X occur?’)
- open or probing questions (e.g. ‘Why did event X occur?’)
- questions that relate to the process of historical inquiry (e.g. ‘What evidence is there?’, ‘What other sources might be needed?’).

The first step in generating these questions is to work out what you already know about the topic. Use this knowledge as a springboard for questions that will help you understand the topic in more depth. Use a table like the one below to brainstorm all the things you know in dot-point form in one column. In the second column, use each dot point in the first column to generate a related question that will help to deepen or build your understanding. Remember to include a mix of the three question types described above.

Overarching inquiry question:	
What I already know	Questions to help me deepen or build my understanding
Point 1	• Question/s related to point 1
Point 2	• Question/s related to point 2

Apply the skill

- 1 Use the process described above to generate a range of inquiry questions related to the overarching historical inquiry question: ‘How does the design of Heian-Kyo reflect the structure and organisation of Japanese society at the time it was built?’
- 2 Copy the following table into your notebook. First, identify what you already know as a result of reading the information on this page and looking at Source 9.9. List these ideas in dot points in the first column. Then, in the second column, generate related questions that help to deepen or build your understanding. The first few have been done for you.

Overarching inquiry question: ‘How does the design of Heian-Kyo reflect the structure and organisation of Japanese society at the time it was built?’	
What I already know	Questions to help me deepen or build my understanding
The emperor was the most powerful person in Japan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where did the emperor live? (Simple or closed question)• What does the placement of the palace tell us about the role of the emperor? (Open or probing question)
Nobles lived in houses close to the Imperial Palace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What can you tell about Heian society from the style of architecture they used? (Open or probing questions)

Extend your understanding

- 1 Planned cities usually reflect important aspects of the society that has built them. Canberra, for example, is a planned city.
 - a Conduct research using the library or Internet to find out about the architecture and layout of Canberra.
 - b Create a Venn diagram or table to compare what you have found out about Canberra with what you know about Heian-Kyo. For example, Canberra is centred around Parliament House, whereas Heian-Kyo was centred around the Imperial Palace.
 - c Write a paragraph explaining what the designs of Canberra and Heian-Kyo might tell historians in the future about the values of modern Australia and ancient Japan.

15.5 The shogunates

As the power of the emperor and the Imperial Court began to weaken, the heads of Japan’s noble families became increasingly powerful people. Because they were able to tax the peasants working on their *shoen* and sell the crops they grew without paying tax to the **emperor**, they also became extremely wealthy.

By the middle of the 12th century, two powerful clans controlled most of Japan; they were known as the Taira and Minamoto. These two **clans** became particularly powerful by supporting factions (interest groups) at the emperor’s court. In addition to this, they controlled large armies of samurai. Over the next 25 years, the Taira and Monamoto clans fought for control over Heian-Kyo and the emperor. By 1185, the Minamoto clan had captured Kyoto and defeated the Taira. After the defeat, the leader of the Minamoto clan, Minamoto no Yoritomo, allowed the emperor to retain his title, but stripped him of any authority to rule over the people of Japan. This event marked the beginning of about 700 years of **shogun** rule in Japan (see Source 2).

Ruling family	During	Capital city	Period
Kamakura shogunate	1185 (officially recognised 1192)–1333	Kamakura	Kamakura
Imperial family (the emperor briefly regains power)	1333–1336	Kyoto	Kemmu restoration
Ashikaga shogunate	1336–1573	Kyoto	Muromachi
Shogun Nobunaga	1573–1582	Azuchi	Azuchi–Momoyama
Shogun Hideyoshi	1582–1598	Kyoto	Azuchi–Momoyama
Tokugawa shogunate	1603–1868	Edo (Tokyo)	Tokugawa (or Edo)

Source 1 The rulers of Japan during the shogun era



Source 2 Japanese warlord Minamoto no Yoritomo, shown in this artist’s impression, was the first of the Kamakura shogunate, ruling from 1192 until his death in 1199.

Kamakura shogunate

In 1185, Minamoto no Yoritomo formed a military government at his base in the town of Kamakura. It was known as the Kamakura *bakufu*. A *bakufu* is a ‘tent government’ – in other words, it was meant to be temporary. In 1192 the emperor died, leaving Yoritomo with another opportunity to increase his control. He forced the Imperial Court to recognise his position with the title *Seii Tai-shogun* (‘Barbarian-subduing great general’). The deal meant that although the incoming emperor would keep his symbolic position and receive some protection, Yoritomo would rule on his behalf.



Source 3 An artist’s impression of the Japanese repelling Mongol invaders

Since the shogun supposedly spoke for the emperor, all other nobles in Japan now also had to obey him.

Minamoto no Yoritomo then introduced a feudal system across Japan similar to the one in place across much of medieval Europe. He appointed his key supporters as military governors of the provinces. These *daimyo* (lords) were granted land and were responsible for collecting taxes in their region. They, in turn, gave parts of this land to their warriors (**samurai**) in return for their military support. Peasant farmers then were under the control of their local leaders and were granted protection in return for labour and food. For the next 700 years, a series of shoguns from a number of different clans would rule Japan while the emperor and his court remained in isolation with no real power.

Mongol invasions of Japan

One of the most significant events during the Kamakura shogunate was Kublai Khan’s attempted conquest of Japan. From the beginning of the 13th century the size and power of the Mongol Empire in central Asia grew dramatically. Having already conquered China and Korea, the Mongol leader Kublai Khan (grandson of Genghis Khan) planned an

invasion of Japan. Kublai Khan wanted to bring Japan under his control in order to expand his empire and increase his power. He was also eager to collect taxes from the Japanese people and plunder their treasures.

In 1274, a Mongol army totalling 40000 men set sail from Korea in nearly 900 ships bound for Japan. Up until this time battles between rival clans in Japan were common, but this was the first time the clans were forced to unite to fight a common enemy. The Mongol army far outnumbered the Japanese samurai, and used superior fighting techniques and weapons. After only one day of fighting the Japanese forces were no match for the Mongols. They had no choice but to take cover in a nearby fortress. As the Mongol soldiers rested on their ships that night, a storm hit, sinking around 200 ships and drowning about 13000 men. The remaining ships had no other choice but to return home unsuccessful.

Seven years later, in 1281, a second Mongol fleet returned. It was much larger – around 4000 ships carrying approximately 140000 soldiers – and the Mongols were determined to conquer Japan. Once again though, as Mongol soldiers prepared to attack the Japanese, another massive typhoon hit. It wrecked the Mongol ships and once again stopped

the Mongol invasion. Most of the Mongol soldiers drowned and any others that made it to land were hunted down and killed by the samurai.

As a result of the failed invasions, there were many changes in Japan. The Japanese believed that their gods had sent the storms to save Japan from the Mongols, so Zen Buddhism became very popular. The Japanese called the two storms **kamikaze** (meaning divine wind). Kublai Khan seemed to agree that Japan was protected by supernatural forces; he abandoned the idea of conquering the island nation. In addition to this, the samurai adopted different fighting styles and weapons modified from those they had seen the Mongols use.

Kemmu restoration

Prior to the attempted Mongol invasions, successful samurai had been rewarded for their service in battle with treasures or land from their enemies – but the defeated Mongols left nothing behind. In 1333, Emperor Go-Daigo was able to gain the support of discontented samurai warriors who felt their elders had not been rewarded properly for their service in defeating the Mongols. They overthrew the Kamakura shogunate, promising loyalty to the emperor. However, the restoration was short-lived. In 1336, Ashikaga Takauji (a general who had helped Emperor Go-Daigo regain power from the shogun) seized power for himself and started his own shogunate.

Ashikaga shogunate

The new shogun, Ashikaga Takauji, moved the capital back to Kyoto and built a new palace in the Muromachi district. This is why this period of Japanese history (and the rule of this shogunate) is referred to as the Muromachi period.

Under the rule of the Ashikaga shogunate, the authority of local *daimyo* was expanded. In particular, all responsibility for military decisions, policing, the law, and economic and taxation matters was removed from the central government and given to the local *daimyo*. At first, this decision increased the power of the Ashikaga shogunate, mainly because it had a number of strong leaders in charge. However, as weaker shoguns came to power, the Ashikaga shogunate lost control. For the next few decades, from 1467 to 1573, Japan fell into a permanent state of civil

war. This period is referred to by some historians as the Warring States period. The power of the shogun during this time did not extend much beyond Kyoto.

Despite this long period of civil war, the Muromachi period became known for its focus on the arts (with the growth of theatre) and for the growing importance and adoption of Zen Buddhism.

Azuchi–Momoyama period

Shogun Nobunaga

In 1573, after a century of civil war with *daimyo* fighting each other across Japan and weak leadership from the Ashikaga, the warrior Oda Nobunaga took control of Kyoto and became the new shogun. Ruling until 1582, Nobunaga centralised political power in Kyoto again and removed any *daimyo* he suspected of disloyalty.

A military man, Nobunaga reorganised his army into separate divisions of cavalry and foot soldiers and equipped them all with guns. His army proved to be an undefeatable force against more traditional samurai armies and during his rule his battles brought one-third of Japan under his control.

He committed *seppuku* in 1582, on the verge of defeat, after one of his generals rebelled against him.

Shogun Hideyoshi

In 1582 Toyotomi Hideyoshi, one of Nobunaga's key commanders, became the new shogun. He continued the process of reunification in Japan, gaining control of the islands Shikoku and Kyushu. Despite being the son of a peasant, Hideyoshi was a great believer in a strict class system and forbade farmers from carrying swords and samurai from engaging in trade.

Hideyoshi was killed in 1603 during a failed invasion of Korea.

The Azuchi–Momoyama period takes its name from a combination of castle names – Azuchi Castle (Nobunaga's base) and Momoyama Castle (Hideyoshi's base).



Source 4 A statue of Tokugawa Ieyasu of Toshogu shrine, Nikko, Japan

Tokugawa shogunate

The long civil war in Japan ended with the warlord Tokugawa Ieyasu (1542–1616) being declared shogun in 1603 and completing the reunification of Japan. Once again, the country was united under a single military leader and a long period of peace and stability followed. Tokugawa Ieyasu built a new capital in Edo (modern-day Tokyo) and moved the government there. For this reason, the era of the Tokugawa shogunate is also referred to as the Edo period of Japanese history. The Tokugawa family would fill the role of shogun until 1868.

From 1603, the new shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (see Source 4) set about strengthening his position. He claimed absolute right to rule and made it clear to the emperor that the shogun had the right to approve all court appointments. He also ensured that the Tokugawa family directly controlled one-quarter of the countryside in Japan, which strengthened his family's position against any potential challengers.

Check your learning 15.5

Remember and understand

- 1 What demands did Minamoto no Yoritomo make on the emperor?
- 2 In 1274, the Japanese were forced to unite against a common enemy for the first time. Who did they fight?
- 3 Where does the Azuchi–Momoyama period take its name from?

Apply and analyse

- 4 Look at Source 3.
 - a What impressions do you get about the warfare between the Japanese and the Mongols?
 - b Is this a primary or a secondary source?
 - c Was this source created by a Japanese or Mongol artist? Justify your response.
- 5 Why did the shift of power from the Imperial Court to the local *daimyo* weaken the Ashikaga shogunate?

15.6 Significant individual: Minamoto no Yoritomo

Minamoto no Yoritomo was a warrior chief of the Yamato clan who, in 1192 CE, was named the first shogun by the emperor. As the shogun, Yoritomo wielded huge amounts of political and military power. He set up his own capital in Kamakura, far to the east of the emperor's capital in Kyoto. In Kamakura, he would be free to rule without interference from the emperor. He was the first in a line of shoguns who would go on to rule Japan for the next 700 years.

The emergence of a warrior class

Until the end of the 12th century, Japan was still ruled by the emperor and his government from the Imperial Palace in Kyoto. At this time, the decisions made by the emperor were very heavily influenced by members of the Fujiwara clan (who were trusted advisors at court). However, the emperor's government focused almost completely on life and affairs in the capital, and neglected to pay attention to the provinces that surrounded them. Because of this, from about the 10th century onwards, a new warrior class emerged to provide order and control in the provinces that the emperor had neglected.

By the 12th century, this new warrior class was dominated by two great clans – the Minamoto and the Taira. During the late 11th and early 12th centuries, warlords from the Minamoto and Taira clans began to participate more and more in the politics of the Imperial Court. After two armed conflicts in Kyoto, in 1156 and 1159, the Taira succeeded in replacing the Fujiwara as the most powerful clan in Japan.

Yoritomo's rise to power

Yoritomo was only 12 years old at the time of the 1159 conflict, in which the Taira defeated the Minamoto. The Minamoto clan was led by Yoritomo's father, who was killed in the conflict. In defeat, Yoritomo was sent into exile in the eastern provinces of Japan by the Taira leader.

During the next 20 years, the Taira clan became very powerful. However, like the Fujiwara clan before them, they continued to focus on the affairs of the capital and neglect the provinces and the needs of the new warrior

class. Beginning in 1180, Yoritomo and other Minamoto clan leaders decided to rise up against the Taira clan in Kyoto. The war between the Minamoto and the Taira lasted for five years until Minamoto armies drove the Taira from Kyoto to final defeat.

In 1185, Yoritomo established government at Kamakura, a small coastal village south of modern-day Tokyo, where the Minamoto clan had many supporters. A few years later, in 1192, Yoritomo received the title of shogun from the emperor. This made him Japan's first official shogun. The government Yoritomo founded, which lasted from 1185 until 1333, is known as the Kamakura shogunate.



Source 1 Minamoto Yoritomo went into battle for the first time at the age of 13.



Source 2 A 20th-century artist's impression of Minamoto Yoritomo parading through the streets after becoming shogun

Key achievements

Yoritomo had always wanted power and was jealous, suspicious and cold-hearted, even in his own circle. He killed several family members whom he saw as potential threats to his power. But once in power, he proved an excellent ruler.

During the war with the Taira, Yoritomo gained growing authority with the provinces of eastern Japan. He set up a system of feudalism with his followers, providing them with protection and land in exchange for their loyalty and military service.

After 1185, he received permission from the Imperial Court to appoint his followers to govern the provinces. They were given the job of administering and policing their provinces. They were also given the job of managing taxes and supervising individual estates. As a result, these lords held important military power over each province. They became known as *daimyo*.

Through these systems, the Kamakura shogunate undermined the power and authority of the emperor and his centralised government based in Kyoto. Before long, the Kamakura *bafuku* had replaced the Imperial Court at Kyoto as the effective central government of Japan. Yoritomo ruled from 1192 until 1199, dying of a serious illness at the age of 52, but the feudal system of government which he established remained in place for seven centuries.

Check your learning 15.6

Remember and understand

- 1 When did Minamoto Yoritomo become shogun?
- 2 How did a new warrior class emerge as a result of the emperor's approach to governing Japan?
- 3 What happened to Yoritomo after the 1159 conflict between the Minamoto clan and the Taira clan, in which his father was killed?

Apply and analyse

- 4 In your own words, explain what is meant by the term 'feudalism'. Why do you think Minamoto no Yoritomo is remembered today for establishing a feudal system in Japan?

Evaluate and create

- 5 Write a paragraph outlining the key reasons why Yoritomo was able to become so powerful.

15.7 Social groups in shogunate Japan

Although **feudalism** was first introduced under the rule of Minamoto no Yoritomo, it became even stronger during the Tokugawa period. Feudalism in Japan was a system for organising groups of people within society. Like the system in place across much of medieval Europe, feudalism in Japan classified social groups in order of importance. Each of these groups – from most to least important – had certain rights (things they could expect, such as protection) and responsibilities (work they had to perform in return, such as military service or farming). A person’s position in this hierarchy was determined at birth and was strictly defined. People knew what was expected of them and were not able to move between social classes. There were even restrictions on the levels of interaction allowed between certain groups.

Check your learning 15.7

Remember and understand

1

How was the feudal system organised in Japan?

2

What ‘rights’ did each *daimyo* receive from the *shogun*, and what ‘responsibilities’ did he have in return?

Apply and analyse

3

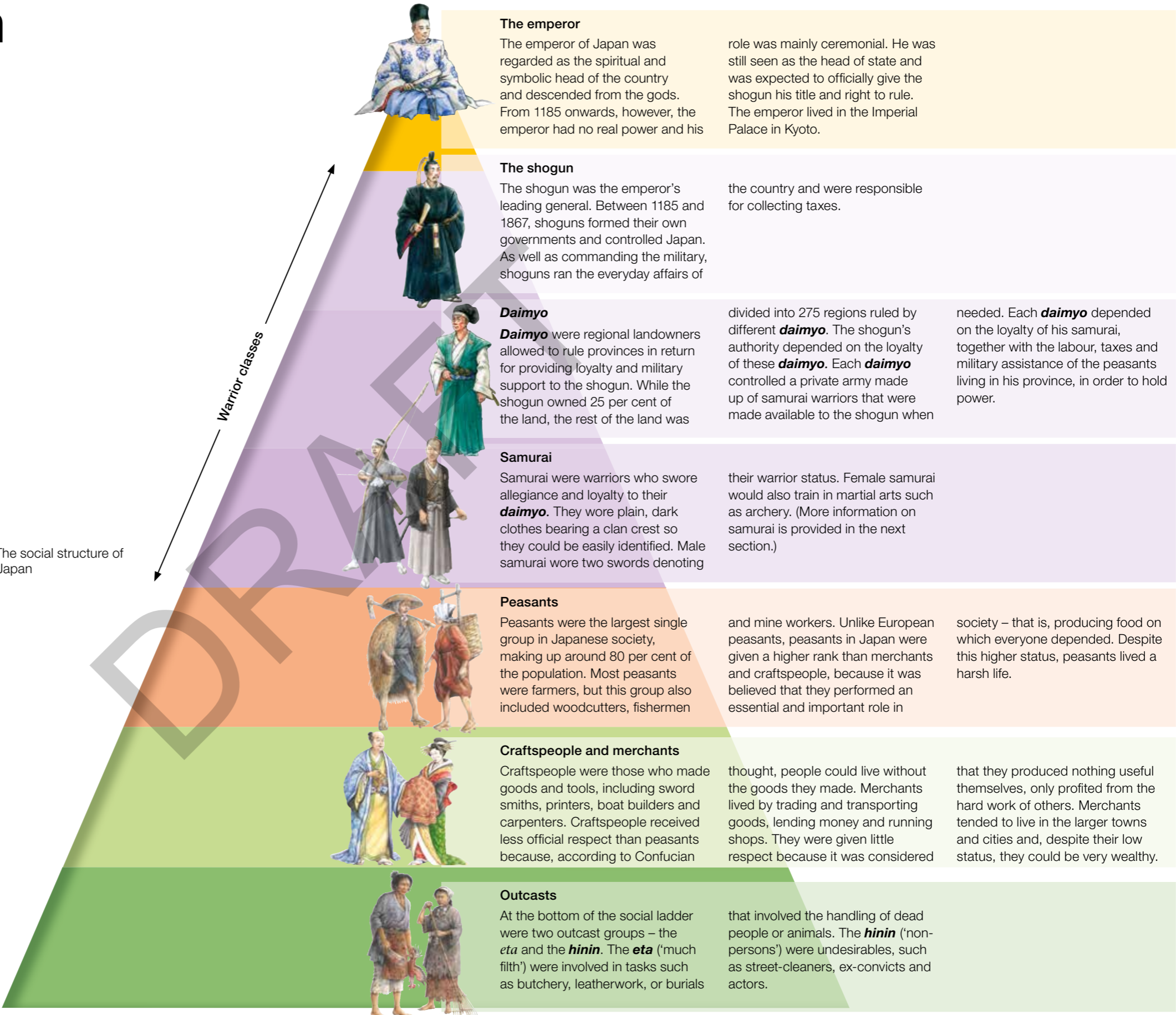
Why were Japanese craftspeople and merchants seen as being lower on the social hierarchy than peasant farmers?

Evaluate and create

4

Imagine you had the opportunity to interview a person from each of the social groups described in this section. Write three questions for a person in each social group that would help you to gather information about their lives and experiences as a member of that group.

Source 1 The social structure of shogunate Japan



15.8 The life of a samurai

All *daimyo* had armies of samurai. The samurai played a key role in Japanese society during the Tokugawa period and were the top-ranking class in society beneath the shogun and *daimyo*.

The title samurai means ‘one who serves’. Each samurai warrior was expected to live and die by a set of rules. During the Tokugawa period, the rituals and training for every samurai began at the age of five. Under the control of special teachers, young samurai learned fighting and military skills as well as reading, writing, calligraphy, etiquette and public service. By the age of 15, the samurai had finished their training. This was recognised at a formal ceremony.



Source 1 The samurai’s sword became the symbol his status and honour.

The bushido code

Samurai lived under a strict code of behaviour known as **bushido** (meaning ‘the way of the warrior’). This code was based on honour, loyalty, respect and discipline (see Source 9.2). During training, samurai were expected to withstand many physical challenges, such as walking barefoot through snow or going long periods without food. According to bushido, every samurai’s first duty was to honour and obey his master. If a samurai was defeated in battle, captured by the enemy, or dishonoured in any way, the code required him to commit ritual suicide – an act known as *seppuku*. A special knife or short sword was used to stab deep into the abdomen and cut across the body from left to right. Only by taking his own life in this way would the samurai and his family be spared public shame and disgrace.

Elements of the *bushido* code

- Benevolence** – showing kindness towards others and those in need
- Readiness** – mental and physical health; being ready for action
- Organisation** – efficiency in all things
- Respect** – to others, to parents, to their ancestors and lords
- Fidelity** – always doing the right thing and following others

Source 2 Characteristics of the *bushido* code followed by all samurai

Weapons and armour

Samurai armour was created by lacing together small pieces of leather and iron using silk thread. Together, these pieces were like fish scales, creating armour that was flexible and easy to fight in – weighing as little as 10 kilograms. This armour was decorated so that people could identify who was wearing it. Helmets often carried horns or frightening images on them to both scare opponents and identify the wearer as a member of a particular clan. A section of the samurai’s head was shaved at the top, with remaining hair tied into a knot and placed on the top of the head.

Each samurai had both a long and a short sword. Swords became a symbol of honour and status during the Tokugawa period, as no other groups in Japanese society (other than the shogun and *daimyo*) were allowed to carry them. If a samurai lost his sword, it was considered a great loss of honour. Most samurai also carried bows and arrows. The long sword was used in fighting, while the shorter sword was used to remove an enemy’s head (or nose). If the samurai was dishonoured, he was also expected to use the short sword to commit *seppuku* (ritual suicide). By the 1500s onwards many samurai also carried guns.

Warfare

In early samurai traditions, warfare took place in the open and there were strict rules governing how battles were fought. The opposing sides would agree where and when each battle was to take place. Once the armies were lined up facing each other, a single samurai would move forward from each side to issue a challenge. They talked of their strength and of the power of their ancestors. They then fired an arrow at each other.

It was only then that the two samurai moved in to fight. This challenging continued until these individual duels became so numerous that it turned into a group battle. Each samurai would cut off the heads of those he killed on the battlefield and carry them back to his camp in victory. The heads were presented to the *daimyo* to celebrate the victory. In later wars, samurai stopped removing enemy heads and simply collected noses, as they were easier to carry.



Source 3 An artist’s impression of a samurai on horseback, wearing armour and a horned helmet and carrying a bow and arrows

During the extended period of civil war in the 1500s the size of samurai armies increased from thousands to tens of thousands. Military tactics also developed during this period, with armies organised into troops. While samurai still rode on horseback, commoners could join the armies as foot soldiers. The use of guns also saw the samurai adopt more European-style group warfare and **siege** warfare.

During the Tokugawa shogunate that followed, a period of extended peace and stability across Japan meant the samurai had nobody to fight. As a result, the shogun began to reduce the number of samurai being trained and many samurai took up administrative positions.

Check your learning 15.8

Remember and understand

- 1 What is meant by the term *bushido*? Give three qualities that were demanded under this code.
- 2 What action was a samurai required to take if he was captured or defeated in battle?

Apply and analyse

- 3 Describe the act of *seppuku* and explain why samurai were bound to carry it out in some instances.

Evaluate and create

- 4 Using the information provided, together with information gathered on the Internet, develop a week-long training program for a young samurai who has recently been recruited at age five.
- 6 Sketch the samurai shown in Source 3. Add labels to show his weapons and armour.

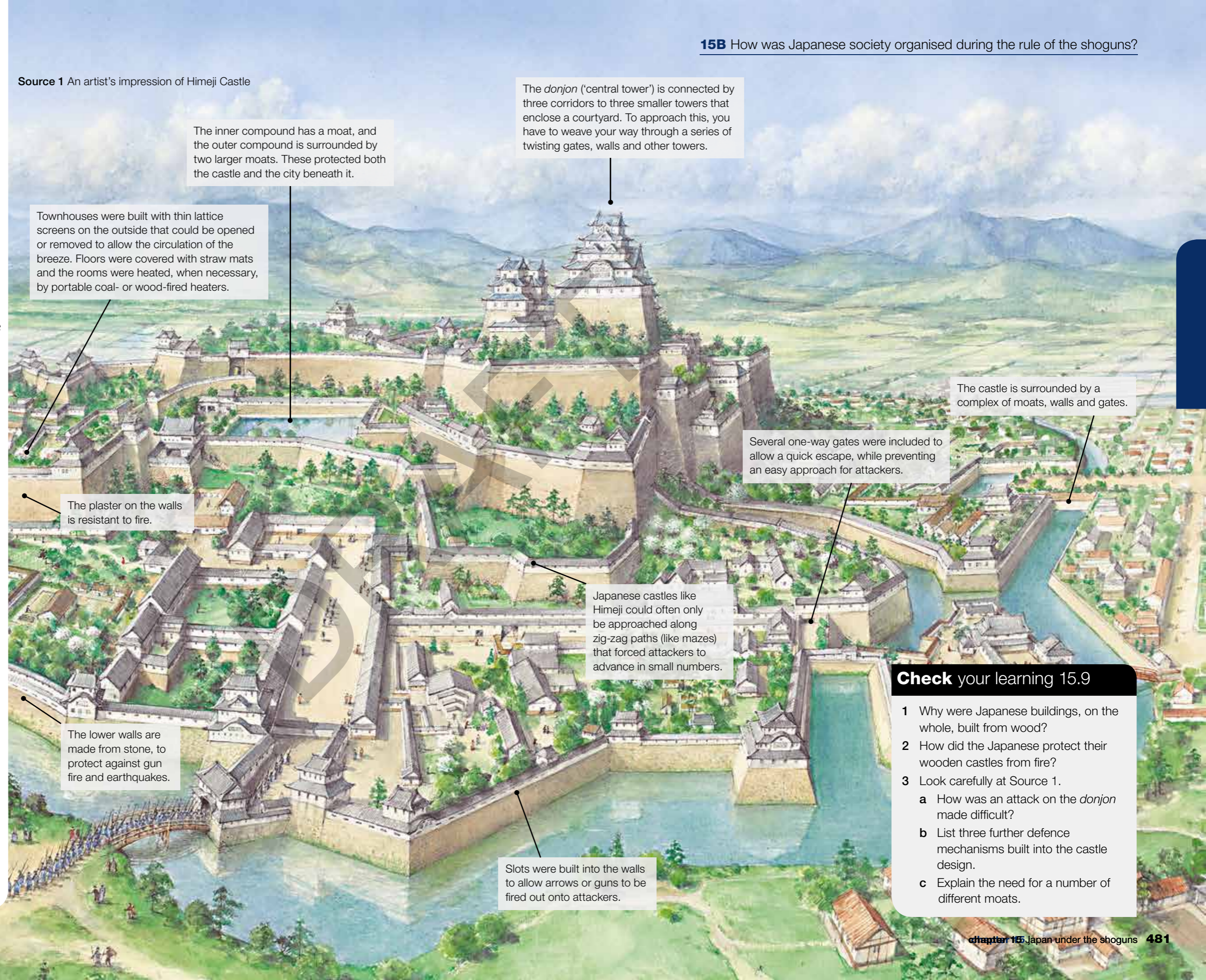
15.9 Towns and castles

Most towns built across Japan during the rule of the shoguns were made from wood, as this was the most freely available material. Internal walls of buildings and houses were typically screens made of paper or light wood, and rooms were divided with sliding doors. Initially, towns and castles were surrounded by simple moats or wooden fences, but more complicated structures began to be built from the 14th century onwards.

By 1615, over 200 castles had been built all over Japan by *daimyo* who were eager to display their wealth and power. These castles were surrounded by homes belonging to the *daimyo*, his family, his samurai and other social groups. The *daimyo* and his samurai would often retreat to the castle tower when they were being attacked. When not under attack, many would live in the areas inside the outer walls in more comfortable homes.

Himeji Castle is located in the city of Himeji, 100 kilometres west of Osaka in Japan. Himeji Castle is often referred to as the 'White Heron Castle' because its bright white plaster walls and black woodwork resemble a bird taking flight. The castle sits at the top of a hill. The central tower stands 46.4 metres above the ground. It has a complicated defence system, similar in many ways to a maze. When it was built, it incorporated the most up-to-date military technology of the period.

Source 1 An artist's impression of Himeji Castle



The inner compound has a moat, and the outer compound is surrounded by two larger moats. These protected both the castle and the city beneath it.

Townhouses were built with thin lattice screens on the outside that could be opened or removed to allow the circulation of the breeze. Floors were covered with straw mats and the rooms were heated, when necessary, by portable coal- or wood-fired heaters.

The *donjon* ('central tower') is connected by three corridors to three smaller towers that enclose a courtyard. To approach this, you have to weave your way through a series of twisting gates, walls and other towers.

The castle is surrounded by a complex of moats, walls and gates.

Several one-way gates were included to allow a quick escape, while preventing an easy approach for attackers.

The plaster on the walls is resistant to fire.

Japanese castles like Himeji could often only be approached along zig-zag paths (like mazes) that forced attackers to advance in small numbers.

The lower walls are made from stone, to protect against gun fire and earthquakes.

Slots were built into the walls to allow arrows or guns to be fired out onto attackers.

Check your learning 15.9

- 1 Why were Japanese buildings, on the whole, built from wood?
- 2 How did the Japanese protect their wooden castles from fire?
- 3 Look carefully at Source 1.
 - a How was an attack on the *donjon* made difficult?
 - b List three further defence mechanisms built into the castle design.
 - c Explain the need for a number of different moats.

15B rich task

Comparing warrior cultures – Japanese samurai versus European knights

The warriors known as the samurai were an important social group in shogunate Japan. Although the word samurai means ‘one who serves’, they held considerable political power of their own. It was the samurai who imposed the will of their masters, the *daimyo*, on the rest of the population. They developed a well-defined relationship with their masters – the *daimyo* promised to reward their warriors with salaries or gifts, including portions of land; in return, the samurai promised to protect and extend the property and power of their *daimyo*, by force if necessary.

many ways, the samurai in Japan were similar to the knights of medieval Europe. During medieval times, **knights** also developed from a group of skilled fighters (employed in times of conflict to defend villages and farms) into an influential social group made up of elite warriors. They operated within the feudal system, pledging their allegiance and service to a lord in exchange for accommodation, payment and gifts. Knights supplied their own weapons, horses and armour – these were the tools that made them formidable opponents in battle. Knights trained from the age of seven or eight as pages, learning to read, write, dance, look after horses and equipment, as well as practising fighting skills. They then became



Source 1 A Japanese samurai on horseback in full armour

squires, training and fighting alongside more experienced knights. At eighteen they could pledge allegiance to a lord or lady and become knights themselves.

European knights lived by the **Code of Chivalry**, which was similar to the *bushido* code in many ways. They vowed to act honourably, and defend the weak and vulnerable. They promised to serve their lord to the best of their ability, only surrendering when the situation was hopeless or they were terribly outnumbered. The Code of Chivalry also emphasised the qualities of courtesy, honesty and chivalry towards women.



Source 2 A European knight on horseback in full armour

skilldrill: Historical sources as evidence

Writing a historical description

Historical descriptions give clear information about people, places or objects at particular moments in time. They focus on the main characteristics or features of particular people or things. They ‘paint a picture’ in words for the reader to increase their understanding. Because of this, writing historical descriptions is an important skill for all historians to master.

Structuring a description

Descriptions must be well planned and always follow a set structure, with events organised in chronological order. Use the outline provided to structure your description.

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Introduces the subject.States the name of the person or event.Outlines why the topic is important.
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides details about the person or event (including dates and important facts).Information must be organised in paragraphs, with a new paragraph for each detail.Quotations and descriptive words should be used where relevant.
Conclusion (optional)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Revisits the most important details and provides a concluding statement.

Apply the skill

- 1 Use your knowledge of the samurai and the *bushido* code along with the information provided about medieval European knights provided to prepare a written historical description that compares the two types of warriors. You can also use Sources 1 and 2 to help you. Before writing your description, conduct a comparison. In your comparison you should look for both similarities and differences between the two types of warriors. Use the table below to organise your thoughts and plan your writing. Each characteristic listed in the table should be covered in your description.

	Japanese samurai		European knights	
	Similarities	Differences	Similarities	Differences
Training				
Weapons and armour				
Code of conduct				
Service to lord				
Reward for service				

Extend your understanding

- 1 If you were given the choice, would you prefer to have lived as a Japanese samurai or European knight? Explain your point of view in two or three paragraphs. Give specific reasons and evidence for your point of view.

15.10 Changes to foreign policy

Under the rule of the **shoguns**, Japanese society, customs, arts and culture, and government policy changed in many ways. One of the most significant changes related to Japan's foreign policy.

Since the mid 1500s, Portuguese, Spanish, English and Dutch traders had been visiting Japan, however under the rule of the Tokugawa shogunate, Japan's relationship with the outside world became strained. Although many *daimyo* wanted contact with the foreigners – mainly in order to buy weapons and other products – the Tokugawa shoguns feared the influence of the West would corrupt Japan. They put in place a policy to first limit, then completely cut off contact between Japan and the West. This policy of isolation would bring about many changes on Japanese society.

Christian missionaries

The early Portuguese and Spanish traders brought missionaries with them who came to convert the Japanese to Christianity. Christianity spread rapidly in Japan, and by 1570 over 30000 Japanese had become converts.

Though Christianity was allowed to grow until about 1620, Tokugawa Ieyasu soon began to see it as a real threat to the stability of the shogunate. It threatened Japanese society on several levels. It called for loyalty and obedience to a foreign power – the Pope – before the shogun. Christian church congregations were also socially mixed and allowed interaction between different social classes. This was frowned upon in Japanese society. Tokugawa Ieyasu eventually banned missionaries from Japan. Around 10 years later, another shogun by the name of Tokugawa Iemitsu took even stronger action. He began persecuting Christians from 1633 onwards and finally outlawed Christianity altogether in 1637.



Source 1 This painting by a Japanese artist shows Portuguese missionary Francis Xavier and his entourage arriving in Japan in 1547.

Foreign trade

Between 1603 and 1635, Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu attempted to monitor and control trade with the outside world by putting a permit system in place. As part of this, he issued 350 red-sealed permits for armed merchant ships destined for South-East Asian ports. He then allocated these permits to his favourite *daimyo* and to key merchants who were interested in foreign trade. Besides Japanese traders, only 12 European and 11 China-based traders are known to have received permits. All others were refused.



Source 2 A drawing from 1634 of a trade ship carrying the shogun's red seal

15C How did Japan change during the rule of the shoguns?

The shogun's seal guaranteed the protection of the ships and allowed them to enter Japanese ports. The shogun vowed to pursue any pirate or nation who violated the seal. At this time, Japanese merchants mainly exported silver, copper, diamonds and swords, while Japan mainly imported silk from China, and sugar and deerskins from South-East Asia.

keyconcept: Significance

William Adams and the shogun

William Adams is a significant figure in the history of Japan. Adams was an Englishman who sailed on a Dutch ship. In 1598, he anchored off the coast of the Japanese island of Kyushu. After a long and difficult voyage, only nine of his crew were fit enough to land. After arriving, Adams' crew were imprisoned because Portuguese missionaries on the island claimed that they were pirates. Adams was questioned by the future shogun Ieyasu and struck up a relationship with him. In 1604, Adams was ordered by Ieyasu, now the shogun, to help build Japan's first ship according to Western designs. The following year, a second ship was constructed.

By 1608, Adams was acting for the shogun, helping to establish relationships with the Philippines. Over time he became a personal advisor to the shogun.

Adams helped to establish a Dutch trading base in Hirado, Japan. He also encouraged the English in Indonesia to trade with Japan, helping establish the British East India Company in 1613. Thanks to Adams, the English gained a red seal that gave them the right to live, buy, sell and trade in Japan.

For more information on the key concept of significance, refer to page XX of 'The history toolkit'.



Source 3 Sailor and navigator William Adams (standing) was the first Englishman to visit Japan in 1598. He was at first put in prison as a pirate, but was freed after building two ships for Tokugawa Ieyasu (seated, second from left).

The policy of isolation

By the time Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu came to power in 1623, he wanted to limit contact between Japan and the outside world even further because he believed that foreign influence was a threat to his rule. In 1633, he outlawed Western traders from stepping foot on mainland Japan and also made it illegal for Japanese people to leave. Any Japanese person who did manage to leave and was then caught trying to return was sentenced to death. This policy was known as **sakoku** ('locked country'). It was an attempt to put a stop to Western influences (such as religion, philosophy and technology) on Japanese people. From 1633 until 1853, there was no trade with the outside world apart from some limited contact with China and the Netherlands through a small man-made island off the coast of mainland Japan called Dejima – which was heavily guarded.

Check your learning 15.10

Remember and understand

- 1 Why were many *daimyo* interested in trading with foreign countries?
- 2 Why did Christianity come to be considered a threat to Japanese society by 1620?
- 3 Who was William Adams and what skills and technology did the Japanese learn from him?

Apply and analyse

- 4 Why was the shogun's red seal so keenly sought by traders?
- 5 Explain the policy of *sakoku* and give two reasons why it was introduced.
- 6 Look at Source 3. What evidence does this source present that Adams was well treated and that the Japanese attitude towards outsiders was changing?

15.11 Changes to cities and the environment

Other changes that took place in Japan under the rule of the shoguns related to the construction of cities, the development of agriculture and the establishment of environmental policies.

When the Tokugawa Shogunate began its rule in 1603, it ended the conflict of the previous four centuries. The Tokugawa (or Edo) period brought 250 years of stability to Japan. The shogun had national authority, and his *daimyo* had regional authority. In response to this stability and peace, a new emphasis on education began, towns sprang up, and merchants and traders became more and more important. More sophisticated ways of managing the economy and its natural resources (such as forests) were also developed.

The development of Edo

After coming to power in 1603, Tokugawa Ieyasu began a period of rapid construction and development in his capital of Edo – particularly the construction of Edo Castle. Canals were built to deliver clean water and to drain marshland. Extensive road networks were built to support the constant travel of *daimyo* and their samurai to and from the new centre of Japanese society – even though Kyoto (where the emperor lived) was still officially the capital. Towns and businesses grew along the roads. By 1721, the feudal town of Edo had become the largest city in the world, with over one million residents (see Source 1). Today, Edo is known as Tokyo and is still one of the largest cities in the world, with a population of more than 35 million.



Source 1 A map of the city of Edo (with Edo Castle shown in the centre), drawn around 1844



Source 2 A satellite image of Edo Castle today

Source 3 Japanese cedar forests were strictly managed in the Tokugawa period



The development of agriculture

In agricultural regions, small farming groups were guaranteed land to cultivate and *daimyo* looked at methods to increase productivity on their land. These methods included the increased use of fertilisers and harvesting crops twice a year. More land became available for farming as water projects delivered more reliable water supplies for irrigation, and provided solutions to control flooding. These improvements enabled rice production to move from subsistence levels (growing only enough to eat) to commercial levels (growing enough to eat and trade).

Environmental management

During the Edo period, Japan developed an advanced forest management policy. Wood had always been a primary building material and a primary fuel in Japan. It had been used extensively in temples, shrines, castles, houses and shipbuilding. The huge growth in the size of cities led to increased demand for timber resources, which caused widespread deforestation. This, in turn, resulted in floods and soil erosion. Around 1666, the Tokugawa Iemitsu introduced a policy to reduce logging and increase the planting of trees. From then on, only the shogun and *daimyo* could authorise the use of wood.

The Tokugawa shogunate also established a policy of planting Japanese cedar trees and controlled who could own land in forest areas. The Tokugawa banned individual ownership of forested land, and limited access to forests by the *daimyo*. Communities were encouraged to plant trees on common land. Local villages managed the forests by planting seedlings, cutting trees selectively and patrolling forest areas to stop the illegal removal of timber.

By 1724, timber harvesting had declined by 60 per cent. It remained at low levels for the next 30 years to allow Japan's forests to recover.

Check your learning 15.11

Remember and understand

- 1 List some ways in which the Tokugawa Shogunate strengthened Japan's economy.
- 2 How did rice production change?
- 3 Why were more roads required around Edo as the city grew?
- 4 Why was timber such an important resource in medieval Japan?

Apply and analyse

- 5 Describe the environmental policies introduced to protect forests and change the way timber was harvested.
- 6 Write a paragraph to explain, in broad terms, the impact that the Tokugawa shogunate had on Japan.

15.12 Changes in arts and culture

During the Tokugawa (or Edo) period (1600–1868) there was also great cultural growth in Japan. The samurai educated themselves in areas such as literature, philosophy and the arts. They were expected to be as skilled in writing poems as they were in fighting. Townspeople also adopted a new focus on the arts, including literature, theatre and crafts. The arts were seen as expressions of learning and education.

Bonsai

During the Kamakura period (1185–1333) when Zen Buddhism was spreading into Japan, members of the Imperial Court and students of Buddhism who travelled to China returned with souvenir plants in Chinese known as *penjing* ('tray scenery'). This practice of cultivating miniature trees in ceramic trays quickly became popular in Japan. In fact, *bonsai* ('tray planting') remains popular to this day. The roots and branches of *bonsai* trees are continually trimmed to make them look as natural as possible. For example, a Japanese maple tree that might grow to 6 metres in the wild can be kept as small as 10 centimetres when grown according to *bonsai*. One of the oldest known living *bonsai* trees is a pine tree pruned by shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu (see Source 1).

Japanese poetry

Another art form that flourished during the rule of the shoguns was poetry. The Japanese created distinctive forms of poetry to capture the beauty of nature, and the joy and sadness of life.

Primary evidence of these art forms remains. One of the oldest forms of Japanese poetry is the unrhymed poem called a *tanka*. Source 2 is an example.



Source 1 This 550-year-old bonsai pine tree was pruned by shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu.

Source 2

*On autumn nights
the dew is
colder than ever—
in every clump of grasses
the insects weep*

Tanka from the Kokinshu (author unknown)

From *tanka* poetry, two other forms of poetry developed. These were known as *renga* and *haiku*. *Renga* poetry was written by many poets working together. There were sometimes hundreds of stanzas (verses). The opening stanza of the *renga* became what we now know as *haiku*. *Haiku* became very popular in the 17th century. *Haiku* poems are made up of 17 syllables (single sound units) divided into three parts – the first part has five syllables, the second has seven syllables and the third has five syllables. The most famous poet of the Tokugawa period in Japan was Matsuo Bashō. His *haiku* poems, such as Source 3, captured the feeling of a scene in a few simple words.

Source 3 The most famous Japanese *haiku* is called *Old Pond* by Matsuo Bashō.

古池や
蛙飛込む
水の音

This is pronounced in Japanese in the following way (the number of syllables is provided in parentheses):

*fu-ru-i-ke ya (5)
ka-wa-zu to-bi-ko-mu (7)
mi-zu no o-to (5)*



Source 4 A folded paper crane, using *origami* techniques

This translates into English as:

*The old pond
A frog leaps in ...
A sound of water splashing.*

Origami

The Japanese word *origami* is made up of two smaller words – *ori* ('to fold') and *kami* ('paper'). Japanese *origami* began in religious ceremonies after Buddhist monks carried paper from China to Japan during the 6th century.

During the Tokugawa period *origami* became a popular form of entertainment for the merchant classes and the common people. It is now also a popular art form with children around the world.

Theatre

Japan is known for a stylised form of theatre called *Noh*. It began in the 14th century as a dramatic way of presenting Shinto and Buddhist beliefs. It came to be used for non-religious themes as well. *Noh* plays were performed on a bare stage. The actors and chorus were all male, performing the parts of both men and women. The actors wore masks along with detailed costumes. They chanted poetry, and danced and gestured to the music of drums and flutes.

Newer types of theatre developed during the Tokugawa era. *Kabuki* theatre involved spectacular scenery and costumes with dramatic actions. It initially included female performers until they were banned in 1629. *Bunraku* is a form of traditional Japanese puppet theatre, created in 1684. In *bunraku*



Source 5 A modern *bunraku* performance

theatre, large puppets perform to a story chanted by a narrator. Unlike human actors, puppets could be beheaded on stage, or undertake actions impossible for humans.

Martial arts

Samurai felt that Zen Buddhism would help them to develop their mind and body, so that these would act as one when required. Weapons would become an extension of their mind so that they could fight without fear or undisciplined thought. Followers of Zen Buddhism learned to control their bodies through martial arts or combat sports.



Source 6 *Kendo* is a modern martial art based on the practice of *kenjutsu* used by samurai.



Source 7 Sumo tournament in Tokyo in 2009

Jujutsu

Jujutsu ('the gentle art') was used to train for close combat. The aim of *jujutsu* is to use the opponent's energy against him, rather than directly opposing it. This is achieved through holds and techniques to throw an opponent off balance.

Kenjutsu

Kenjutsu ('the art of the sword') involved the practice of swordsmanship. During the Tokugawa period, the development of the bamboo practice sword and protective armour allowed full sparring with reduced risk of harm. This came to be known as *kendo* ('the way of the sword').

Sumo wrestling

Sumo wrestling, an ancient temple ritual, became a form of professional sporting entertainment during the Tokugawa period. It is still a national sport today. The original professional wrestlers were probably samurai who needed another form of income. A sumo tournament is lengthy, and can go on for 15 days. During that time, the sumo wrestler will carry out matches against opponents using many of the 70 possible categories of moves. A sumo fighter is usually very big, with a large belly, around which he wears a *mawashi* belt that indicates his rank. As the wrestling bout starts, salt will be thrown into the ring before the referee enters carrying his paddle. Salt purification dates back to the days when sumo was used in the Shinto religion.

Check your learning 15.12

Remember and understand

- 1 How did the Chinese practice called *penjing* change gardening in Japan?
- 2 Zen Buddhism had a strong connection with Japanese art forms. List three artistic forms related to Zen Buddhism.
- 3 Which significant person pruned the *bonsai* tree shown in Source 1?
- 4 What is *haiku*?
- 5 Which martial art developed into a professional sport still popular in Japan today?

Apply and analyse

- 6 Before 1629, Japanese theatre included women.
 - a What role did women play in Japanese theatre?
 - b How did this change for a time when *kabuki* theatre was introduced?

Evaluate and create

- 7 Select one art form from Japanese culture that particularly interests you. Investigate it further by doing one of the following:
 - a making a model
 - b performing a role play
 - c making an oral presentation (with examples)
 - d preparing a facts chart.

15.13 The end of the shogunate

In the mid 1800s, countries around the world began to push for Japan's restrictions on foreign trade to be lifted. One such country was the United States of America.

Japan opens up

On 8 July 1853, four black ships commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy anchored at Edo Bay (now Tokyo Bay). Commodore Perry had arrived in Japan to persuade the Japanese to open up their borders and trade with the United States. He carried with him a letter from the President to the Emperor of Japan.

Because Japan had been cut off from the outside world for so long, the Japanese had never seen steamships before. They thought the ships were 'giant dragons puffing smoke' and were shocked by the size of the ships and the number of guns they carried. In total, the four ships carried around 1000 men and 61 guns.

Commodore Perry was an experienced naval officer who, at the age of 60, had enjoyed a long and distinguished career. He knew that this mission to Japan would be one of his most significant assignments. After dropping anchor in Edo Bay, Perry waited. He refused to receive low-ranking diplomats, instead insisting on seeing only the most senior representatives of the emperor.

Perry refused demands made by the Japanese to leave, and threatened them by fixing his weapons on the capital. The Japanese government realised that their country was in no position to defend itself against a foreign power, and Japan could not retain its isolation policy without risking war.

On 31 March 1854, after weeks of diplomatic talks, Perry received what he had been working towards – a treaty with Japan known as the Convention of Kanagawa. It was signed by Perry and the Tokugawa



Source 1 A Japanese artist's impression of Commodore Matthew Perry drawn in 1856

shogunate. In the years that followed, Japanese ports began opening up to American trade. After more than 200 years of isolation, Japanese society also began opening up to the world.

Many Japanese people resented the increased power and position of the Westerners that followed Perry's arrival. The *daimyo* began to lose faith in the shogun who was, after all, supposed to suppress 'foreign barbarians'. There was talk of forcing his resignation. As a result, the power of the shogun decreased. In 1867, shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu handed back power to Emperor Meiji.

On 3 January 1869, Emperor Meiji formally declared the restoration of his power.

The Meiji restoration

The handing over of power from the shogun to the emperor and the moving of the Imperial Court to Edo from Kyoto represented the return of imperial rule in Japan. Edo was renamed Tokyo ('Eastern Capital'). The new emperor quickly made his mark by establishing



Source 2 A Japanese artist's impression of the 'black ships' entering Edo Bay (now Tokyo Bay)



Source 3 Emperor Meiji shown wearing a Western military uniform

Shinto as the state religion. This reinforced his power, because under Shinto he was viewed as a living god. In 1871, it was declared that all provinces were now to be returned to the emperor. These 300 provinces were combined to form 75 larger areas known as prefectures. Each prefecture came under the control of a state-appointed governor.

Modernising and Westernising Japan

Emperor Meiji moved rapidly to modernise Japan. Western fashions and ideas were quickly adopted, often at the cost of traditional practices and beliefs. The military was strengthened, with the adoption of Western weapons and a modern navy. The government instituted nationwide military conscription (mandatory military service) in 1873, ordering that every man would serve for four years in the armed forces upon turning 21. Samurai were no longer allowed to walk about town bearing swords; instead, many became officers in the newly modernised army and navy.

Japan began to aggressively expand overseas, winning wars with China in 1894–95 and with Russia in 1904–05. Japan gained the island of Taiwan from China in 1895, and annexed Korea in 1910, becoming a powerful new force in the region.

A new constitution was written under the guidance of Prince Ito Hirobumi. It was adopted in 1889. A period of rapid modernisation and industrialisation followed.

The industrialisation of Japan required a huge increase in production capabilities. Shipyards, iron smelters and spinning mills were built. Coal was in heavy demand to power factories, trains and ships (see Source 4). Industrial centres grew quickly with the migration of workers from the countryside. A national railway system was also built to connect industrial regions with ports (see Source 5). Trade also developed rapidly thanks to a series of treaties signed with Western nations.

Source 4 Coal production in Japan, 1875–1913

Year	Coal production (metric tonnes)
1875	600 000
1885	1 200 000
1895	5 000 000
1905	13 000 000
1913	21 300 000

Source 5 Length of train tracks laid in Japan, 1872–1914

Year	Track (kilometres)
1872	29
1883	386
1887	1 030
1894	3 380
1904	7 564
1914	11 426

Check your learning 15.13

Remember and understand

- 1 List two things Emperor Meiji did to quickly demonstrate his authority.
- 2 How did the role and status of the samurai change under Emperor Meiji?
- 3 How did Japan expand through military engagements?

Apply and analyse

- 4 Why do you think the Imperial Court moved from Kyoto to Edo?
- 5 Explain why coal became important in the industrialisation of Japan.

- 6 Look at Source 4 Coal production in Japan increased fourfold between 1885 and 1895. How many years did it take for coal production to quadruple?
- 7 Why do you think the development of the rail system was important for trade?

Create and evaluate

- 8 Think about what you have learned about the shogunate in Japan. Overall, do you think it was a period that produced gains for Japan, or one that slowed down its development? Give reasons for your response.



Source 6 An artist's impression of the Tokyo terminus of the new Tokyo–Yokohama railway, built in 1872 with the aid of foreign engineers

15C rich task

The Emperor's new clothes

Although Japan's emperors were officially the rulers of Japan, emperors held little authority while the shoguns were in power. They were not involved in the everyday running of the country, and were often cut off from any decision making during this time. Emperors lived with members of their court in the Imperial Palace in Kyoto – removed from the rest of society. The Imperial Palace was a place of privilege and beauty, dedicated to fine arts and learning. From the Heian period onwards, both men and women at court dressed in elegant garments of layered silk. Garments worn by women were called júni-hitoe ('twelve layers'). Men wore fewer layers.



In the years after 1867, when shogun Tokugawa Yoshinobu handed power back to Emperor Meiji, clothing styles began to change. In an effort to modernise Japan Emperor Meiji adopted many Western ideas, including fashions. Many of the changes he implemented were unpopular, because they were seen as rejecting traditional beliefs and customs. In 1873, Meiji issued a proclamation that justified why he had decided to cut his hair and no longer dress in traditional Japanese robes (see Source 2). In 1887, Empress Haruko also began wearing Victorian (Western) style dresses on formal occasions (see Source 4).

These primary sources (see Source 4) provide us with a range of evidence from this time, and help us to understand the emperor's push to modernise and Westernise Japanese society by encouraging the shift to Western clothing.

Source 2

We greatly regret that the uniform of our court has been established following the Chinese custom, and it has become exceedingly effeminate [feminine] in style and character ... The Emperor Jimmu, who founded Japan, and the Empress Jingu, who conquered Korea, were not attired in the present style. We should no longer appear before the people in these effeminate styles. We have therefore decided to reform dress regulations entirely.

Proclamation of Emperor Meiji, 1873

Source 3

Now we can no longer restrict ourselves to bowing from a kneeling position, but will have to observe the Naniwa style of bowing while standing. Moreover, if we look at contemporary Western women's wear, we find that it combines a top or jacket and a skirt in the manner of our ancient Japanese system of dress. This is not only suitable for the formal standing bow but also convenient for action and movement and makes it only natural to adopt the Western method of sewing.

Proclamation of Empress Haruko, 1887

Source 1 This woodblock print from 1883 shows Emperor Meiji observing sericulture (silk farming). He is shown wearing a Western-style military uniform. Next to him is Empress Haruko, wearing a traditional júni-hitoe ('twelve layers').



Source 4 A portrait of Emperor Meiji, Empress Haruko and their family from 1880

skilldrill: Continuity and change

Interpreting primary sources

Because primary sources are often first-hand accounts they often convey the writer's or creator's personal point of view, attitudes and values. It is important that you are able to identify and describe these points of view, attitudes and values in any primary sources you are interpreting. Use the following steps to help you do this:

Step 1 Ask yourself what factual information is conveyed in this source. (Be careful: sometimes things that are presented as fact are not always accurate, so you might need to think about whether the facts presented in the source can be verified. Where else might you look to check and make sure those facts are accurate?)

Step 2 Think about how the world described or depicted in the source is different from the world you live in today. What do you already know about what the creator of the source and the people around them believed? How would you feel if you were in the creator's shoes?

Step 3 Ask yourself what opinions are expressed in the source. If the source is written, ask yourself which specific words or phrases show how the writer feels about what they are describing.

Step 4 Ask yourself what is implied in the source. For instance, people do not always spell out what they are thinking when they write something. The reader needs to use clues in the text to 'read between the lines' and infer meanings that are not obvious.

Another important historical skill is the ability to sequence historical events and developments. This means identifying when significant events or changes occurred, and placing them in the order in which they occurred.

Apply the skill

Look at Sources 1, 2, 3 and 4 carefully. Interpret each of these sources by following the steps outlined above. Then complete the following tasks:

- What reasons do the emperor and empress provide for changing to the Western style of dress?
- What do these sources reveal about their attitudes towards Westernisation and traditional Japanese culture.
- How persuasive do you think the Japanese people would have found these arguments? Give reasons for your response.
 - What sort of language has been used to present the arguments? How effective is this language?
 - What do these sources reveal about the values of the Meiji Period?

Extend your understanding

- Why do you think the adoption of Western-style clothing and other changes made during the Meiji Restoration were not popular with the Japanese people? Do you think it's important to maintain traditions and customs? Discuss as a class and explain your point of view.