

# Geography and Early Japan



7.5.1  
7.5.2

## The Big Idea

Japan's early societies were both isolated from and influenced by China and Korea.

## Main Ideas

- Geography shaped life in Japan.
- Early Japanese society was organized in clans, which came to be ruled by an emperor.
- Japan learned about language, society, and government from China and Korea.



## Main Idea 1: Geography shaped life in Japan.

- Japan is a large group of islands located off the Asian mainland.
- The islands of Japan are really the tops of mountains.
- The mountains were difficult to live on. Most people lived on flat coastal plains near the sea.



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## The sea influenced Japan by:

### Providing food

- Shark
- Seaweed
- Fish

### Separating it from other countries

- Japan remained isolated until its rulers decided to visit other countries.

### Providing easy access to other countries

- China and Korea were only a short distance by sea from Japan.



## \*Geography of Japan\*

### How did the geography influence the development of Japan?

- Isolation
- Natural Disasters-Volcanoes & Earthquakes
- Limited farm land
- Few natural resources

Mount Fuji →



# Terrace Farming of Rice



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## **Main Idea 2:**

# **Early Japanese society was organized in clans which came to be ruled by emperors.**

- Japan was home to two cultures before it was influenced by China and Korea.
- The Ainu were an early people who were believed to come from Siberia.



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# The Early Japanese

Organized into **clans**, that lived in small farming villages.

The head of the clan, or chief, had religious and political power.

Chiefs were believed to have gained their power through *kami*, which were nature spirits.



# Shinto

- Rituals to honor the *kami* became the central part of Shinto, a traditional Japanese religion.
- **Shinto believes that everything in nature has *kami*.** They built shrines to the *kami* and asked the spirits to bless them.



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## The First Emperors

- Some clans became more powerful than others and built up armies.
- The Yamato clan claimed to have a glorious family history. They began to call themselves the first emperors of Japan.



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**Main Idea 3:  
Japan learned about language, society, and  
government from China and Korea.**

Japan sent representatives to China and Korea.

- Learned to write Chinese
- Learned about Confucianism
- Learn about new religions, especially Buddhism



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## Prince Shotoku

- Served as regent for his aunt, the empress
- **Regent-Person who rules a country for someone that can not rule alone.**
- Influenced the spread of Buddhism by writing commentaries and building a beautiful temple



## Section 1 Review

- What landform dominates the islands of Japan?
- How did Prince Shotoku help spread Buddhism?
- How did the chiefs get their power?
- Why was the sea important to the Japanese culture?



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