

Lecture 02

Japan's Prehistorical Past

0. Introduction

Theme: Forming a picture of Japan before written Japanese documents

- b. The introduction of Buddhism and Chinese characters in Japan, 6th c.
- c. Pre-historical artifacts from Jōmon, Yayoi, and Kofun periods.

1. Jōmon period (c. 11,000BC to 250BC): Neolithic/earth/female figurine

- a. Ancient “Japanese” as amalgamation of peoples who immigrated in waves.
- b. Some areas may have developed more quickly than others.
- c. Pit dwellings lead to an “earth orientation”.

2. Yayoi period (c. 250BC–250AD): Bronze/Sea/Bell (dōtaku)

- a. Marks introduction of a new wave of immigrants.
- b. Jōmon and Yayoi cultures existed side-by-side for a time.
- c. Iron/bronze and wet-paddy rice cultivation ---> new social organization.
- d. Artifacts include “Three Imperial Regalia”: mirror, jewel, and sword.
 - “TLV Mirror” Chinese mirrors with written characters on them (2nd cent.)
 - Swords: Some symbolic and used for ritual and ceremonial purposes.
 - Jewels: The so-called *magatama* (curved-shaped jewel).
 - *dōtaku* “bells”
 - Gold seal found in Kyūshū in 1784: “King of Na of the Land of Wa”
- e. Kyushu & Yamato as the site of “Yamatai.”

3. Kofun period (250–550): Sky/Haniwa

- a. Large earthen tombs built for clan chieftains
- b. “Emperor” Nintoku’s tomb is the largest at about 80 acres.
- c. Haniwa (“clay circles”), figurines of animals, dwellings, and humans.

4. Myths, religion, & *kami* (“deities”)

- a. Primary myths in *Kojiki* (712) & *Nihongi* (*Nihon shoki*, 720).
- b. Creation of universe, Japanese archipelago, and the imperial line:
Izanagi–Izanami → Amaterasu–Susano–o → (Okuninushi)–Ninigi.