

# The Asian Dynasties

*The Emergence of the First  
Global Age (1450–1750)*



The Ming Dynasty

The Qing Dynasty

**Tokugawa Japan**

## Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Religion and thought



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

**Icons:** For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will have learned about Tokugawa Japan, and be able to answer the following key questions:

- How and when did the Tokugawa Shogunate develop?
- What was life like for different people in Tokugawa Japan?
- How did Europeans change Japan?
- How did the Tokugawa rulers react to foreign intervention?



In the early 1400s, Japan was fraught with political and economic upheaval. The year 1467 saw the beginning of a civil war that would last for 100 years. This period was known as the **Sengoku** (“Warring States”) period.

During this time, powerful samurai captured feudal estates and offered local peasants protection. These new warrior landowners were called **daimyo**.



The daimyo ushered in a new era of **feudalism**. Under this system, the emperor at Kyoto was only a figurehead. The real power rested with feudal warlords.





# The Tokugawa Shogunate



Like their European counterparts, the feudal lords in Japan solidified their power by building strong castles and large armies. The daimyo continued to struggle for control. Press the dates in the timeline to learn about the rise of a new shogunate in Japan.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





Like China, Japan's culture was centered on Confucian ideals, which supported an agricultural society and celebrated farmers as ideal citizens.

In reality, most Japanese peasants were taxed to the point of poverty. Women were expected to be obedient homemakers for their husbands.

Wealthy Japanese continued to enjoy traditional art and culture. They read familiar stories about ancient warriors and went to traditional *noh* dramas.





Tokugawa Japan had a strict social hierarchy that was based on tradition and military power. Drag each group into the correct order, from the highest ranking to the lowest.  
Press **start** to begin.

**start**



Why did merchants have the lowest status?



Despite the low social status of merchants, they were able to grow rich while farmers starved in their fields. As a result, many peasants moved to cities.

The rise of new commercial centers allowed some women to find job opportunities outside the home, including entertainment and textile production.

Growing cities also gave rise to new forms of entertainment. Writers began to tell new stories about common people. A new form of poetry called **haiku** celebrated imagery instead of traditional stories and themes.

**Kabuki** theater was a new type of drama that used elaborate costumes, dance and mime to tell stories about modern life.

Would you rather be a farmer or a merchant?





Japan's first interaction with Europeans came in 1543, when Portuguese ships were wrecked off the Japanese coast.

Trade between the regions followed quickly. Europeans brought goods such as tobacco, clocks and eyeglasses to Japan for the first time.



The introduction of firearms changed Japanese warfare forever by rendering the sword-wielding samurai obsolete. Cannons also forced daimyo to build fortified castles. Villages sprang up around these strongholds, eventually growing into cities.

Considering these changes to Japanese society, were the Chinese wise to limit trade during this era?





Along with Western goods and innovation, European merchant vessels also brought Western ideas and beliefs. Christian missionaries began arriving in Japan as early as 1549, and by 1600, around 300,000 Japanese had converted. Watch this animation to learn about the impact of Christianity on Tokugawa Japan and the evolution of the **closed country policy**.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**



Do you agree with Ieyasu's decision to close Japan?



Can your team construct a Japanese castle before your opponents do?  
Use your knowledge of Asian dynasties to answer questions and build a castle as quickly as you can.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





Test your understanding of Asian dynasties  
by recapping key terms and important  
people using this glossary.

Press on the tabs and then each term to  
see a definition.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**

