14-1 Notes

* Japan is a chain of more than 3000 islands.
* The four major islands are: Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku, and Kysushu
* The vast ocean surrounding Japan isolated its people causing them to develop an independent society.
* Only 20% of Japan’s land can be farmed; thus they turned to fishing for survival.
* Some of the earliest people in Japan were Jomons – nomads who made clay pottery using knotted cords to make designs on the clay. They settled in fishing villages along the coast.
* Yayoi – ancestors of the Japanese people who introduced farming, made pottery and were skilled in metal working. Bells were used in religious rituals.
* The Yayoi lived in clans – a group of families related by blood or marriage and were headed by a small group of warriors.
* Yayoi buried their chiefs in large mounds called kofun
* Yamato – a clan that became strong enough to bring most of Japan under its rule.
* The Yamato leader Jimmu took the title “emperor of heaven”.
* Japan’s emperor today is of the Yamato clan.
* A Yamato prince named Shotoku wanted to create a strong gov’t and used China as an example.
* Shotoku created a constitution – a plan of gov’t. His constitution gave all power to the emperor who had to be obeyed.
* Shotoku had a temple, the Horyuji, built – it is the oldest temple in Japan and the world’s oldest surviving wooden building.
* The Yamato continued Shotoku’s reforms --- they began the Taika, the Great Change, a plan which divided Japan into provinces run by officials who reported to the emperor. This plan created Japan’s first strong central gov’t.
* The Japanese religion, called Shinto – this word means “way of the spirits”, was based on nature spirits.
* Animism is the belief that all things have their own spirits.
* When people need help, they call on the kami – the nature spirits.
* To honor the kami, the Japanese worship at shrines – holy places.