

Japan. The shrine's major festival, Mitama Matsuri, is celebrated around mid-July. The shrine was initially established to commemorate and venerate the dead of the Boshin Civil War, in which the new Imperial Army defeated rebellious feudal *han* (clans) during the Meiji Restoration (1868–1912). It is controversial largely because of its association with the militaristic period of the Japanese imperial past. The shrine is not supported by public funds because of constitutional prohibitions. Many conservative Japanese feel in consequence that their war dead are not properly honored. Moreover, the clause separating state from church in the constitution can be interpreted, and has been interpreted, to mean that national political figures, such as the prime minister, are forbidden from attending rituals at Yasukuni Shrine in their official capacity. As a result, ministers have attended Yasukuni memorial rituals only in their capacity as private citizens.

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#### Further Reading

Safer, Joshua. (1996) "Yasukuni Shrine and the Constraints on the Discourses of Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Japan." M.A. thesis. University of Kansas.

#### YASUKUNI SHRINE CONTROVERSY

The Yasukuni Shrine has been a source of antiwar sentiment in East Asia because of its association with the Shinto *bushido* warrior code. Yasukuni has been visited routinely by members of the royal family, but civil politicians have been criticized for visiting the shrine because the remains of Japanese soldiers convicted of war crimes are placed there. Controversy began in 1978 when the remains of General Tojo Hideki were brought to Yasukuni thirty years after he was executed. The placement of his remains there deified him. Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo was the first prime minister to visit Yasukuni since 1945. In 1985, Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro made an official visit to the shrine.

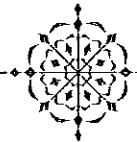
Japan's Supreme Court ruled in 1997 that using public funds for ritual offerings violated the constitution. Nevertheless, annual visits by politicians on the anniversary of the end of the war (August 15) continue to be a point of contention with Japan's neighbors. In 1997, the Japanese prime minister chose not to attend Yasukuni prior to visiting China. Three years later, however, China cancelled a scheduled visit of Japan's Transportation Minister, who was to have presented his bid for Japanese construction of a high-speed rail line in China, two days after he had visited Yasukuni.

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**YAYOI PERIOD** The Yayoi period (c. 300 BCE to 300 CE) saw the introduction of a full-scale agricultural economy into the islands of Japan. This economy was initially associated with immigration from the Korean Peninsula. Population growth among early Yayoi farmers then led to the rapid expansion of Yayoi culture as far as northern Honshu. By the end of the Yayoi period, chiefdom-type societies had developed in Japan, laying the foundation for Japan's first early states.

The Jomon period (c. 14,500 BCE–300 BCE) that preceded the Yayoi had seen some small-scale plant cultivation but such practices seem to have had little influence on the organization of Jomon society. In contrast, the full-scale farming of the Yayoi period marked a very different intensive and expansionary economic system. A variety of studies within biological anthropology have shown that the people of the Yayoi period were physically quite different from the Jomon peoples but very similar to the inhabitants of mainland Japan in historical times. Currently the most widely accepted interpretation of this evidence is that continental rice farmers spread to Japan from the Korean Peninsula at the beginning of the Yayoi period. It has been argued that the Japanese language also spread to the archipelago at this time.

As well as rice farming, a variety of other items and technologies were introduced from Korea in the Yayoi.



#### JAPAN—HISTORICAL PERIODS

Jomon period (14,500–300 BCE)  
 Yayoi period (300 BCE–300 CE)  
 Yamato state (300–552 CE)  
 Kofun period (300–710 CE)  
 Nara period (710–794 CE)  
 Heian period (794–1185)  
 Kamakura period (Kamakura Shogunate)  
 (1185–1333)  
 Muromachi period (1333–1573)  
 Momoyama period (1573–1600)  
 Tokugawa or Edo period (Tokugawa Shogunate)  
 (1600/1603–1868)  
 Meiji period (1868–1912)  
 Taisho period (1912–1926)  
 Showa period (1926–1989)  
 Allied Occupation (1945–1952)  
 Heisei period (1989–present)