

O-MO-TE-NA-SHI English Book 2:

Japanese Culture

『おもてなし英語』 第2編 日本の文化



A Letter to the Student

Dear Student of English,

Welcome to ***Omotenashi English Book 2: Japanese Culture.*** Have you ever had any experience of being asked by people from different cultures about things Japanese such as 'Kabuki', and of being stuck for words? Do you think it was because your English skills need improving? No! It was mainly because of your lack of knowledge about things Japanese.

This course book covers some of the most frequently asked questions about Japanese culture. So, once you have digested and mastered this book, your conversations with foreign visitors to Japan will move smoothly. It can also be useful for Japanese people going abroad. In fact, at the Training Institute for Diplomats of the Japanese Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, acquiring knowledge about Japanese culture is a crucially important part of all training before they are sent abroad.

I would like you to review each lesson at home. The book, written for intermediate-advanced level students, is primarily geared towards improving speaking and listening skills. In doing so, focused treatment of pronunciation features is important. If you pronounce English words wrongly, foreign visitors to Japan will not understand you.

This book contains some Japanese so that you can easily understand what to do.

I wish you success! Always remember "Practice makes perfect."

Yoshito Miyosawa
RSA/ Cambridge/ CELTA

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Unit 1

O-MO-TE-NA-SHI Japanese Culture Introduction

JAPAN



CONVERSATION 1

Key words:

- performing arts 舞台芸術
- intangible 無形 の
- thrive 栄える
- heritage 遺

1. Complete the following conversation with words from the box.

A: I think Japan is known for its _____ culture.

B: Yes. Japanese culture is different from other cultures. And it has been _____ by the Japanese people for a long time. _____ performing arts, such as Kabuki, Noh and Bunraku, continue to _____ in Japan today. These are recognized by UNESCO as _____ cultural _____ of humanity.

thrive/ heritage/ preserved/ intangible/ traditional / unique

2. Listen and check the answers.
3. Now repeat the completed conversation after the teacher until you memorize each sentence.
4. Role play

Your teacher plays the role of A and you play the role of B.



HISTORY OF JAPAN

1. Repeat after the teacher the following key words, which appear in the text you are going to read.

Key words:

habitation: 住むこと//prehistoric: 先史時代の// supersede: に取って代わる//
millennium: 千年間// unify: 統一する// clan: 氏族// seize: 素早くつかみ取る//
topple: 転覆する// claimant: 要求する人// usher: 導き入れる// warlord: 軍閥
指導者// descend: 陥る// preside: 統括する// seclusion: 鎖国・隔離//
autonomy: 自治権// reigning: 君臨している// monarchy: 君主制

2. Now read the following text “History of Japan” from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, and answer the questions. The time limit is 15 minutes.

3.

Human habitation in the Japanese archipelago can be traced back to prehistoric times. The Jōmon period (14,000–300 BC), named after its “cord-marked” pottery, was superseded by the Yayoi in the first millennium BC. Between the third century and the eighth century, Japan’s many kingdoms and tribes gradually unified under a centralized government, nominally controlled by the Emperor. In 794, a new imperial capital was established at Heian-kyō (modern Kyoto), marking the beginning of the Heian period, which lasted until 1185. The Heian period is considered a golden age of classical Japanese culture.



Over the following centuries the power of the emperor gradually declined and passed to the military clans and their armies of samurai warriors. After seizing power, the Minamoto clan set up his capital in Kamakura and took the title of shōgun, which literally means “general”. But in 1333 it was toppled by a rival claimant to the shogunate, ushering in the Muromachi period. During the Muromachi period regional warlords known as daimyō grew in power. Eventually, Japan descended into a long period of civil war. Over the course of the late sixteenth century, Japan was reunified thanks to the leadership of the daimyō Oda Nobunaga and his successor Toyotomi Hideyoshi. After Hideyoshi’s death in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu came to power and was appointed shōgun by the emperor. The Tokugawa shogunate, which governed from Edo (modern Tokyo), presided over a prosperous and peaceful era known as the Edo period (1603–1868). The sakoku policy, literal translation “locked country”, enacted in 1633 by the Tokugawa Shogunate prevented foreigners from entering Japan. The same policy also prevented Japanese from leaving Japan. The arrival of Commodore Matthew Perry and the U. S. Navy in 1853 ended Japan’s seclusion which in turn led to the fall of the shogunate.

The new national leadership of the following Meiji period transformed their isolated island country into an empire that closely followed Western models and became a world power. Although democracy developed during the Taishō period (1912–26), Japan’s powerful military had great autonomy and overruled Japan’s civilian leaders in the 1920s and 1930s. The military invaded Manchuria in 1931, and from 1937 the conflict escalated into a prolonged war with China. Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 led to war with the United States. In August 1945 the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki made it possible for the reigning emperor to force the military to surrender. The US occupied Japan until 1952. Under the supervision of the US occupation forces a new constitution was enacted in 1947 that transformed Japan into a parliamentary monarchy. After 1955, Japan enjoyed very high economic growth rates, and became a world economic powerhouse.

(Excerpted (7 January 2016 12:06 UTC)

from Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Japan)



QUESTIONS

1. How do you call the period which is named after its “cord-marked” pottery?
2. Where was a new imperial capital established in 794?
3. Which period is considered a golden age of classical Japanese culture?
4. Then what happened over the following centuries?
5. What happened to Japan over the course of the late sixteenth century?
6. How did the Edo period end?
7. What did the new national leadership of the following Meiji period do?

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