

**A Brief Survey of the History of Kumamoto Prefecture  
and it's Place within Japanese History and World History**  
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Year	Period	Events in Kumamoto	Events in Japan	Events in the World
300 BC	Jōmon	Kumamoto is estimated to contain Japan's earliest settlements.	Hunters, fishers, and gatherers are prevalent in Japan during this period.	Construction of the Great Pyramid of Cholula begins
300B-300	Yayoi	1/3 of Japan's archeological sites are in Kumamoto Prefecture	Introduction of rice and, with it, social hierarchy Hundreds of small countries begin to group together	Height of the Roman Empire Jesus is born
300-538	Kofun		<b>300:</b> Loose unification of Japan This period is characterized by Kofun, large tombs built for the deceased leaders	Fall of the Western Roman Empire and the beginning of the Early Middle Ages
538-710	Asuka	During this period, Kumamoto is known as Higo Province and is the only major province on Kyushu.	<b>538-552:</b> Buddhism is introduced to Japan <b>604:</b> The Seventeen Article Constitution (十七条憲法 <i>jūshichijō kenpō</i> ) is authored by Prince Shōtoku <sup>i</sup> <b>645:</b> Introduction of the Taika Reform <sup>ii</sup>	Muhammad is born Augustine arrives in Kent The Tang Dynasty is established in China
710-794	Nara		<b>710:</b> Nara is chosen as the first Capital <b>784:</b> Capital is moved to Nagaoka	Rise of the Abbasid Caliphate
794-1185	Heian	At the beginning of the Heian period, Higo Province contains 14 counties and 99 villages.  The Aso clan and the Kikuchi clan hold the majority of power in Higo and, from the 11 <sup>th</sup> century, these clans possess armies of their own. Both clans ally themselves with the Taira clan.	<b>794:</b> The capital is moved to Heian (Kyōto) <b>1159:</b> Fujiwara Michinaga is named regent <b>1159:</b> Taira Kiyomori leads the Taira clan to power at the close of the Heiji War <b>1175:</b> Introduction of the Jodo sect of Buddhism <b>1180-85:</b> The Gempei War: the Minamoto clan rises to power with the defeat of the Taira clan <sup>iii</sup> <b>1191:</b> Introduction of the Zen sect of Buddhism	Charlemagne becomes Holy Roman Emperor Vikings enter England Mayan Empire falls Song Dynasty begins in China William the Conqueror invades England First and Second Crusade

1192-1333	Kamakura	<p>After the Taira fall, the Kikuchi clan allies with the Kamakura Bakufu (government).</p> <p>The Kikuchi clan plays a major role in defending Fukuoka against the Mongol invasions. Due to this, the 12<sup>th</sup> head of the clan, Kikuchi Taketoki becomes one of the Emperor's most trusted generals.</p> <p>Takezake Suenaga, a prominent retainer of Higo Province, leaves behind extensive records of the Mongol invasion.<sup>iv</sup></p>	<p><b>1192:</b> Minamoto Yoritomo is appointed Shōgun and the Kamakura government is created</p> <p><b>1221:</b> The Jōkyū Disturbance ends a struggle between Kamakura and Kyoto resulting in the supremacy of the Hojo regents in Kamakura</p> <p><b>1232:</b> The Jōei Shikimoku (legal-code) is created<sup>v</sup></p> <p><b>1274/1281:</b> Two invasion attempts by the Mongol army fail due mainly to weather</p> <p><b>1333:</b> The Kamakura Bakufu falls<sup>vi</sup></p>	<p>Third and Fourth Crusade</p> <p>Rise of Mongol Empire</p> <p>Reconquista in Spain</p> <p>Magna Carta is created</p> <p>First War of Scottish Independence</p> <p>Rise of Ottoman Empire</p> <p>Knights Templar fall</p> <p>Dante publishes his <i>Divine Comedy</i></p>
1333-1573	Muromachi	<p>The Kikuchi and Aso clans support the Southern Court during the split.</p> <p>Kikuchi Takeshige, 13<sup>th</sup> head of the Kikuchi clan, creates a blood oath to unify his clan. This is the country's oldest constitution signed in blood. The constitution can still be seen today at the Kikuchi Shrine.</p> <p>The Kikuchi clan falls from power during the Sengoku Period<sup>vii</sup>.</p>	<p><b>1334:</b> Kemmu Restoration: the emperor restores power over Japan</p> <p><b>1336:</b> Ashikaga Takauji captures Kyoto</p> <p><b>1337:</b> The emperor flees and establishes the Southern court in Yoshino<sup>viii</sup></p> <p><b>1338:</b> Takauji establishes the Muromachi government and a second emperor in Kyoto (Northern court)</p> <p><b>1392:</b> Unification of the Southern and Northern courts</p> <p><b>1467-1477:</b> Onin war<sup>ix</sup></p> <p><b>1542:</b> Portuguese introduce firearms and Christianity to Japan</p> <p><b>1568:</b> Nobunaga enters Kyoto<sup>x</sup></p> <p><b>1573:</b> The Muromachi Bakufu falls</p>	<p>England and France enter the Hundred Years War</p> <p>The Black Death kills up to half of Europe's population</p> <p>The Bible is translated into English</p> <p>Johannes Gutenberg invents the printing press</p> <p>Constantinople falls to the Ottoman Empire</p> <p>Christopher Columbus sails to the "New World"</p> <p>Martin Luther writes his 95 Theses</p>

1573-1603	Azuchi Momoyama	<p>Toyotomi Hideyoshi invades Kyushu and grants Higo Province to Sassa Narimasa. Sassa is unable to maintain order and is ordered to commit seppuku. Higo Province is then split between Katō Kiyomasa and Yukinaga Konishi. In 1600, Yukinaga Konishi falls at Sekigahara and Katō Kiyomasa takes control of Higo Province. Katō is later responsible for developing Kumamoto City and Kumamoto Castle.</p> <p>Christianity begins to flourish in Amakusa.</p>	<p><b>1575:</b> The Takeda clan is defeated in the battle of Nagashino  <b>1582:</b> Nobunaga is murdered by his general, succeeded by Toyotomi Hideyoshi<sup>xi</sup>  <b>1588:</b> Hideyoshi confiscates the weapons of farmers and religious institutions in the "Sword Hunt"  <b>1592-98:</b> Korea Campaign  <b>1598:</b> Death of Hideyoshi  <b>1600:</b> Tokugawa Ieyasu defeats his rivals in the battle of Sekigahara<sup>xii</sup></p>	<p>Copernicus publishes his theory that the universe revolves around the Sun</p> <p>Pope Gregory XIII issues the Gregorian Calendar</p> <p>Colony at Roanoke established in North America</p> <p>England defeats the Spanish Armada</p>
1603-1867	Edo	<p>Suizenji Park is created in 1634.</p> <p>In 1637, 15 year old Amakusa Shiro leads 30,000 Christian peasants in a rebellion against high taxes in the Shimabara region. The rebellion is crushed and subsequently plays a factor in the coming persecution of Christians.</p> <p>Mt. Unzen's eruption in 1792 causes 2 major earthquakes and a tsunami, claiming 15,000 lives.</p> <p>The early 19<sup>th</sup> century sees hot springs constructed around Aso and also the construction of Japan's largest aqueduct, the Tsujun Bridge.</p>	<p><b>1603:</b> Ieyasu is appointed shogun and establishes the Tokugawa Shogunate in Edo (Tokyo)  <b>1614:</b> Ieyasu intensifies persecution of Christianity  <b>1615:</b> The Toyotomi clan is destroyed after Ieyasu captures Osaka Castle  <b>1639:</b> Almost complete isolation of Japan from the rest of the world<sup>xiii</sup>  <b>1854:</b> Commodore Matthew C. Perry forces the Japanese government to open a limited number of ports for trade<sup>xiv</sup></p>	<p>Colony established at Jamestown, Virginia</p> <p>Mayflower arrives in North America</p> <p>Charles I executed in England</p> <p>Manchu conquer China</p> <p>Taj Mahal is completed</p> <p>War of American Independence</p> <p>Scottish Engineer James Watt builds an improved steam engine</p> <p>Qajar Dynasty founded in Iran</p> <p>Napoleon seizes power</p> <p>Karl Marx publishes <i>Das Kapital</i></p>

1868-1912	Meiji	<p>With the Meiji Restoration, all lands are returned to the Emperor in 1869. At this time, Higo Province becomes Kumamoto Prefecture.</p> <p>Kumamoto Medical School and the Kumamoto School of Western Studies open.</p> <p>Angry Samurai, stripped of their positions, lead a number of rebellions against the Meiji government. The last of these is the Satsuma Rebellion (1877). The first major battle of the Satsuma Rebellion is an attack and siege on Kumamoto Castle. The siege is eventually defeated by the Imperial Army. Kumamoto Castle becomes a major headquarters for the Imperial Army.</p>	<p><b>1868:</b> Meiji restoration<sup>xv</sup></p> <p><b>1872:</b> First railway line between Tokyo and Yokohama</p> <p><b>1889:</b> The Meiji Constitution is created</p> <p><b>1894-95:</b> Sino-Japanese War</p> <p><b>1904-05:</b> Russo-Japanese War</p> <p><b>1910:</b> Annexation of Korea</p> <p><b>1912:</b> Death of emperor Meiji</p>	<p>The Suez Canal opens</p> <p>Franco-Prussian War ends with unification of both Germany and Italy</p> <p>Thomas Edison tests his first light bulb</p> <p>Louis Pasteur creates a vaccine for anthrax</p> <p>Tsar Alexander II is assassinated</p> <p>Olympics revived in Athens</p> <p>Spanish-American War</p> <p>Boxer Rebellion</p>
1912-1926	Taisho	<p>There is widespread prosperity and development within Kumamoto until World War II.</p>	<p><b>1914-18:</b> Japan enters WWI</p> <p><b>1923:</b> The Great Kanto Earthquake devastates Tokyo and Yokohama</p>	<p>Archduke Francis Ferdinand is assassinated, triggering World War I</p>
1926-1989	Showa	<p>In 1931, Emperor Hirohito himself oversees a massive military exercise at Kumamoto Castle.</p> <p>During WWII, Kumamoto City is the target of two major airstrikes. Approximately one-third of the city is destroyed.</p> <p>Mt. Aso erupts in 1953. Also, northern Kyushu is ravaged by flooding.</p> <p>Kumamoto Castle undergoes extensive repairs in 1960.</p>	<p><b>1931:</b> Manchurian Incident</p> <p><b>1937:</b> Second Sino-Japanese War begins</p> <p><b>1941:</b> Japan enters World War II</p> <p><b>1945:</b> Japan surrenders after two atomic bombs are dropped over Hiroshima and Nagasaki</p> <p><b>1946:</b> The new constitution is created</p> <p><b>1952:</b> The Allied Occupation of Japan ends</p> <p><b>1956:</b> Japan becomes member of the UN</p> <p><b>1972:</b> Normalization of relations to China</p>	<p>Germany invades Poland, triggering World War II</p> <p>The United Nations creates Israel</p> <p>Jack St. Clair Kilby invents the microchip</p> <p>Neil Armstrong lands on the moon</p> <p>Chernobyl disaster</p>
1989-Present	Heisei	<p>Kumamoto Prefecture has a population of 1.8 million people (ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> in Japan)</p>	<p><b>1995:</b> Sarin Gas attack in the Tokyo subway by AUM sect</p> <p><b>2011:</b> Great Eastern Japan Earthquake</p>	

- i The Seventeen Article Constitution outlined Buddhist and Confucian morals and guidelines that government officials and subjects of the Emperor needed to follow in order to ensure a stable state.
- ii The Taika Reforms were extensive reforms that restructured land, government, and social structures so that they resembled the structures existent in China at the time.
- iii The Gempei War was the culmination of tensions between the Minamoto and Taira clans over influence in the Imperial Court. Tensions turned to conflict with a disagreement over a successor to the throne.
- iv Takezaki Suenaga was a prominent retainer of Higo Province. He played an important role in the defense of Fukuoka. After the battles, Takezaki sold his horses and saddles to finance a trip to Kamakura in order to report his deeds and receive his rewards. Takezaki later commissioned the *Moko Shurai Ekotoba*, a painting that depicts these reported deeds.
- v Before the Jōkyū Disturbance, the bakufu ruled on court cases without written law or precedent. After the disturbance, the courts were flooded with land disputes and the Jōei Shikimoku was created as a standard to decide these disputes.
- vi Largely due to Ashikaga Takauji switching sides in the middle of battle, Emperor Go-Daigo was able to return from exile and reclaim the Imperial throne. Ashikaga Takauji was named Shōgun as a reward.
- vii The Sengoku Period was a span of nearly one hundred and fifty years of social upheaval and nearly constant military conflict. This period is famous for gekokujō, or the conquering of the higher class by the lower class.
- viii After assuming power, Ashikaga Takauji disagreed with Emperor Go-Daigo on the methods to rule. To solve this dispute, Ashikaga replaced the Emperor with one of the Emperor's heirs. Fearing for his life, Go-Daigo then fled to Yoshino and set-up his court there. This split between the Northern and Southern Courts continued until the Southern Court eventually surrendered.
- ix The Ōnin War began as a dispute between Hosokawa Katsumoto and Yamana Sōzen. The dispute eventually escalated into a nationwide war that resulted in the majority destruction of the city of Kyoto and the beginning of the Sengoku Period.
- x Oda Nobunaga was the first of the Three Unifiers of Japan (followed by Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu). Nobunaga was able to unify only a third of the country before he was murdered by one of his generals. His loyal follower, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, continued his conquest.
- xi Toyotomi Hideyoshi was the second of the Three Unifiers of Japan. He was also the first man to completely unify the country. He was responsible for bringing the Sengoku Period to an end and rebuilding much of the country. Hideyoshi is famous for his decree that only the samurai class could carry swords and for his crucifixion of twenty-six Christians in Nagasaki. Upon his death, his young son would be displaced by Tokugawa Ieyasu.
- xii With the defeat of his rival contenders at the Battle of Sekigahara, Tokugawa Ieyasu rose to power and founded the Tokugawa Shogunate. The Tokugawa Shogunate would rule from 1603 until the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The country during this period was relatively peaceful, with culture and commerce flourishing.
- xiii The Closed Country Edict of 1635 prohibited any Japanese to leave Japan and, if they did leave, banned them from returning on penalty of death. The edict also restricted foreigners to land only on an artificial island in Nagasaki Harbor and, later, a small quarter within Nagasaki. As Christianity was seen as a destabilizing force, especially after the Shimabara Rebellion, Christian daimyo (warlords) were forced to convert from Christianity. At this point, many Christians were forced to go “underground”, some of them hiding in Amakusa.
- xiv In 1854, Commodore Matthew C. Perry sailed a fleet of black ships into Edo Bay. After a show of force, the Japanese agreed to meet with Perry, and U.S. President Fillmore's trade agreement was eventually accepted.
- xv The Meiji Restoration was the return of Imperial rule to Japan under Emperor Meiji. The Restoration was a response to the sudden realization that Japan had been left behind in the world due to isolation, and could not compete with the advanced technologies of the Western world. The Meiji government brought about the modernization and industrialization of Japan at an astonishing speed.