



YAMATO

UNKNOWN ORIGIN

www.city.sakurai.lg.jp/yamato-travel/

English

A full-page background image showing a sunset with a large, dark silhouette of a tree on the left and a string of tassels hanging across the middle. The sun is a bright yellow circle on the horizon, and the sky is a warm orange color.

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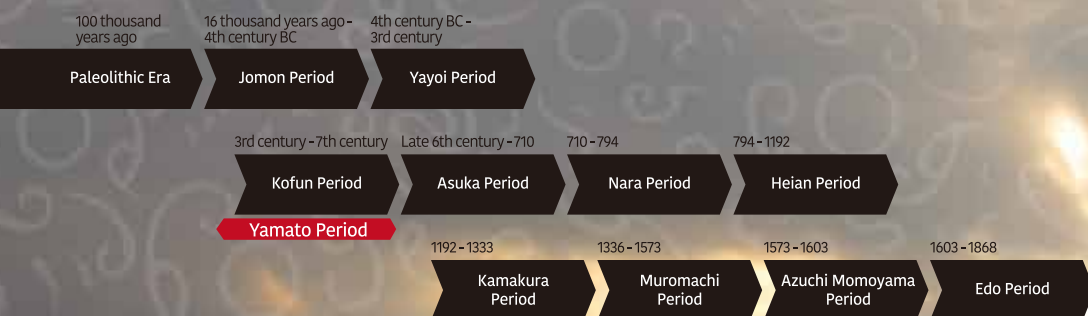
More than ten centuries ago, a capital of Japan existed here. Several generations of kings of the "Yamato Dynasty" ruled here and expanded their influence outward. Eventually, Yamato became a word meaning "the whole of Japan". The foundation of Japan was built here. This ancient capital - older than Kyoto or Nara - did not develop as other ancient capitals did, and thus was left largely untouched. Feel the unknown mystery of the history of Japan in this quiet, untraveled location.

Origin of Japan

— History of Yamato —

How Japan Started

It is said that mankind first set foot on the Japanese archipelago about 30,000 years ago. Theories hold that mankind started to live in the Nara Basin starting from the late Paleolithic age about 20,000 years ago. Subsequently, after the primitive Jomon period of hunting and gathering, rice cultivation was transmitted from China. Japan then transitioned to an agricultural society during the Yayoi period. The power of the rice led to the creation of huge settlements and chieftains with power and authority. Settlements began to create ringed moats as a defense against enemies. The history of Japan shifts from the primitive hunting and gathering of the Jomon period to the Yayoi period by the 3rd century BC. Rice farming knowledge came from China. Japan grew to form a farming society, large settlements were created, and groups welding power appeared in many regions. These settlements were distinguished by their moats, used to defend against external attacks.



Karako-Kagi Site 唐古・鍵遺跡

During the Yayoi period, the Karako Kagi region in the Yamato area was a large moated settlement. Its ruins have produced many important finds, including remains indicating that it may have been a large sanctuary for a leader of the Kinki area, a workshop where copper equipment for rituals (dotaku, bronze bell for ceremonial use) were cast, and the largest and highest grade jade gems and relics from the Yayoi period. A tower drawn on earthenware excavated from the ruins has been reconstructed, and can still be seen today.



Yamataikoku and Makimuku Ruins 邪馬台国と纏向遺跡

Although Japan was stably held by feuding regional groups for some time, a major conflict erupted in the latter half of the second century. Japan fell into a national civil war, and some factions formed the "Yamataikoku Alliance" under a queen named Himiko. Theories once held that Yamataikoku was located in Kyushu, but the theory that it was located at the site of the Makimuku ruins in Sakurai City has gained influence in recent years. The vast ruins - stretching about 1.5km north and south and 2km east and west - are considered the first capital of the Yamato Dynasty for the following four reasons.



- 1 Coverage of a large area.
- 2 Discovery of numerous pottery items made in Kyushu, Kanto, and other regions. These are believed to have been given to the king from regions that interacted with the area.
- 3 The presence of many huge, ancient tombs first constructed in this area.
- 4 Few agricultural tools have been excavated, while numerous tools for civil engineering works have been found.

Less than 2% of the area has been investigated, leaving many parts still unknown.



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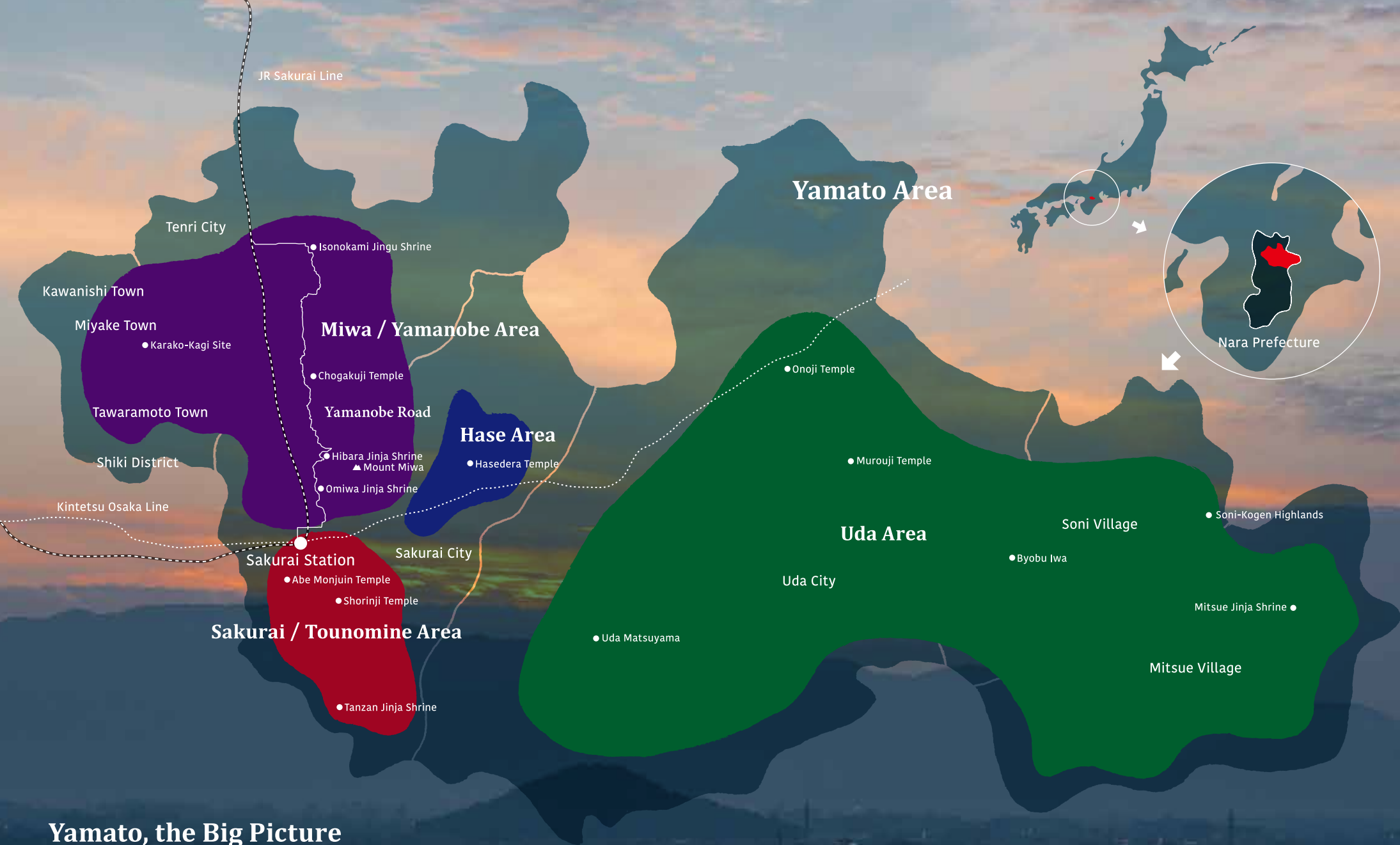
Kofun Period / Yamato Period 3rd - 7th century

Yamato Dynasty was the heir to the power of Yamataikoku. It allied with powerful groups across the area that makes up Japan, ruling almost the entire nation and becoming its center. The word "Yamato" came to mean "Japan" itself. The Japanese spirit is called the "Yamato Soul" even now, and people in Okinawa still call the people of Japan's mainland (Hokkaido - Kyushu) "Yamatonchu". This era saw the creation of a prototypical Japan. Furthermore, the Yamato Period is also known as the "Kofun Period" because many enormous, keyhole-shaped burial mounds (Kofun) were created for kings and powerful individuals at the time.



From the Asuka period onwards 6th century -

Buddhist teachings came to Japan from continental China in this era. This led to a war between the Soga Clan, who sought to convert the Emperor to Buddhism, and the Mononobe Clan, who sought to preserve the Shinto tradition. The Soga Clan won and moved the capital from Yamato to Asuka, about 10km to the southwest. The Asuka Period flourished for about 100 years, and the capital then moved to Nara. From there, in the year of 794, the capital moved to Kyoto. It flourished there for over 1000 years, and moved to Tokyo in the modern era. While it was home to the royal dynasty for some time, Yamato eventually vanished from the main stage of history.



Yamato, the Big Picture

The heart of the Yamato area is Sakurai Station, found at the intersection of the Kintetsu Osaka line - running east to west - and the JR Sakurai line - running north to south. As the station is easy to get to from Osaka and Kyoto, you should plan out your travels with Sakurai Station as your starting point. Administratively, the area straddles Sakurai City; Tenri City; the towns of Kawanishi, Miyake, and Tawaramoto in Shiki District; Uda City; and the villages of Mitsue and Soni in Uda District. However, we'll be introducing Yamato as divided into four areas based on sightseeing and tourism facilities.

*Details are current as of 2017 and may be subject to change.