Brief History of Japanese Religions

Jomon (11,000?-300 B.C.E.)
   Animism, belief in all sorts of spirits

Yayoi (c. 300 B.C.E.-c. 200 C.E.)
   Belief in kami spirits established
   Ancestor worship spreads

Yamato (c. 200-c. 500)
   Queen Himiko
   Confucianism and Taoism introduced by Korean and Chinese immigrants

Asuka (c. 500-710)
   538 Introduction of Buddhism from Paekche
   Prince Shotoku patronizes Buddhism

Nara (710-784)
   Nara Buddhist schools flourish
   752 Dedication of the Great Buddha at Todaiji temple

Heian (794-1192)
   Founding of Tendai sect at Mt. Hiei and Shingon sect at Mt. Koya
   Faith in Amida’s Paradise and the practice of nenbutsu spreads

Kamakura (1192-1333)
   Period of great religious leaders: Honen (Jodo), Shinran (Jodo-shinshu), Eisai, Dogen (Zen), Nichiren

Muromachi (1336-1573)
   Development of “Kamakura Buddhism”
   Zen Buddhism pervades the arts

[Sengoku] Warring States Period (c. 1460-1573)
   1549 Francis Xavier introduces Christianity
   1571 Oda Nobunaga attacks Mt. Hiei

Azuchi-Momoyama (1573-1603)
   1589 Toyotomi Hideyoshi prohibits Christianity and burns a Catholic church in Kyoto

Edo (1603-1867)
   Persecution of Christians
   Blooming of Confucian and other ethical schools
Meiji (1868-1912)

1868 Separation of Shinto and Buddhism
Shinto chosen as national faith
1873 Ban on Christianity lifted
1875 Doshisa founded in Kyoto

Taisho (1912-1926)

Marxist ideology becomes popular; suppressed by government

Showa (1926-1989)

State Shinto elevated to national faith
Soka Gakkai, Rissho Koseikai and popular sects emerge
1945 Postwar dismantling of State Shinto

Heisei (1989-present)

1995 Sarin gas attack on Tokyo subway by Aum Shinrikyo members