Samurai and Shoguns

TERMS & NAMES

- daimyo
- samurai
- vassal
- shogun
- Tokugawa Shogunate

Build on What You Know As you read in Lesson 1, an emperor ruled Japan. But wealthy noble families often held the real power. Nobles would battle one another to gain the power the emperors no longer had.

Nobles Gain Power

1 ESSENTIAL QUESTION Who lost power in Japan?

Japan remained strong and united after Prince Shotoku's rule ended with his death in 622. It was a time of relative peace. The emperor still headed the central government. But he was only a figurehead—someone who appeared to have power but did not. In the 800s, wealthy nobles of the Fujiwara (FOO•jee•WAH•ruh) clan, or family, became the real rulers of Japan. They remained Japan's most powerful family for 300 years.

The Central Government Grows Weak During the 1100s, the power of the central government and the Fujiwaras declined. The government was running out of money. It began to lose authority over larger landholders. These estate owners, called **daimyo** (DY•mee•OH), paid no taxes to the government. They also had their own private armies of trained warriors called **samurai** (SAM•uh•RY), whom you read about in Starting with a Story.



◀ **A Noble's Household** This fan-shaped illustration shows servants performing daily chores in a noble's household in the 1100s.



◀ Samurai in Combat Samurai loyal to the Minamoto family attacked and burned a palace associated with the Taira clan in 1159.

Feudalism Begins in Japan Daimyo hired samurai warriors both to protect themselves and to attack other daimyo. Powerful families, such as the Taira and the Minamoto, had large armies of samurai. Daimyo often fought among themselves to try to gain more land to increase their wealth and power.

As the power of the daimyo increased, the central government weakened and lawlessness increased. Small landowners wanted protection. To win the aid of a more powerful lord, they pledged their loyalty to that lord. Often, their loyalty included military service. A person who received land and protection from a lord in return for loyalty was called a **vassal**. This lord-vassal system increased the power of large landowners. It also marked the start of feudalism in Japan. This was a system of local rule similar to ancient China and medieval Europe. (You will read about European feudalism in Chapter 9.)

REVIEW Why did power shift from the central government to the nobles?

The Rise of a Military Society

2 ESSENTIAL QUESTION How did Japan become a military society?

While nobles fought among themselves, the emperor remained in office. But the emperor no longer held real power. This continued the pattern begun early in Japan's history.

The Emperor and the Shoguns Now military leaders called **shoguns** had taken control. *Shogun* means "supreme commander of the army." A shogun ruled on the emperor's behalf. But usually his own interest came first. Minamoto Yoritomo (MIH•nah•MOH•toh YOH•ree•TOH•moh) became the first shogun in 1192. As shogun, he led more than just the army—he ruled the country. Japan would be under a shogunate, or military government, for nearly 700 years.

The Samurai and the Warrior Code Samurai were fearsome warriors. They vowed to fight for their lord, even if it meant that they could not protect their own family. Dying an honorable death was more

important to them than a long life. Women in warrior families learned to handle weapons to protect their families from bandits when the men were away fighting. At this time, women had higher status than at earlier times. Some inherited land. A few even became samurai.

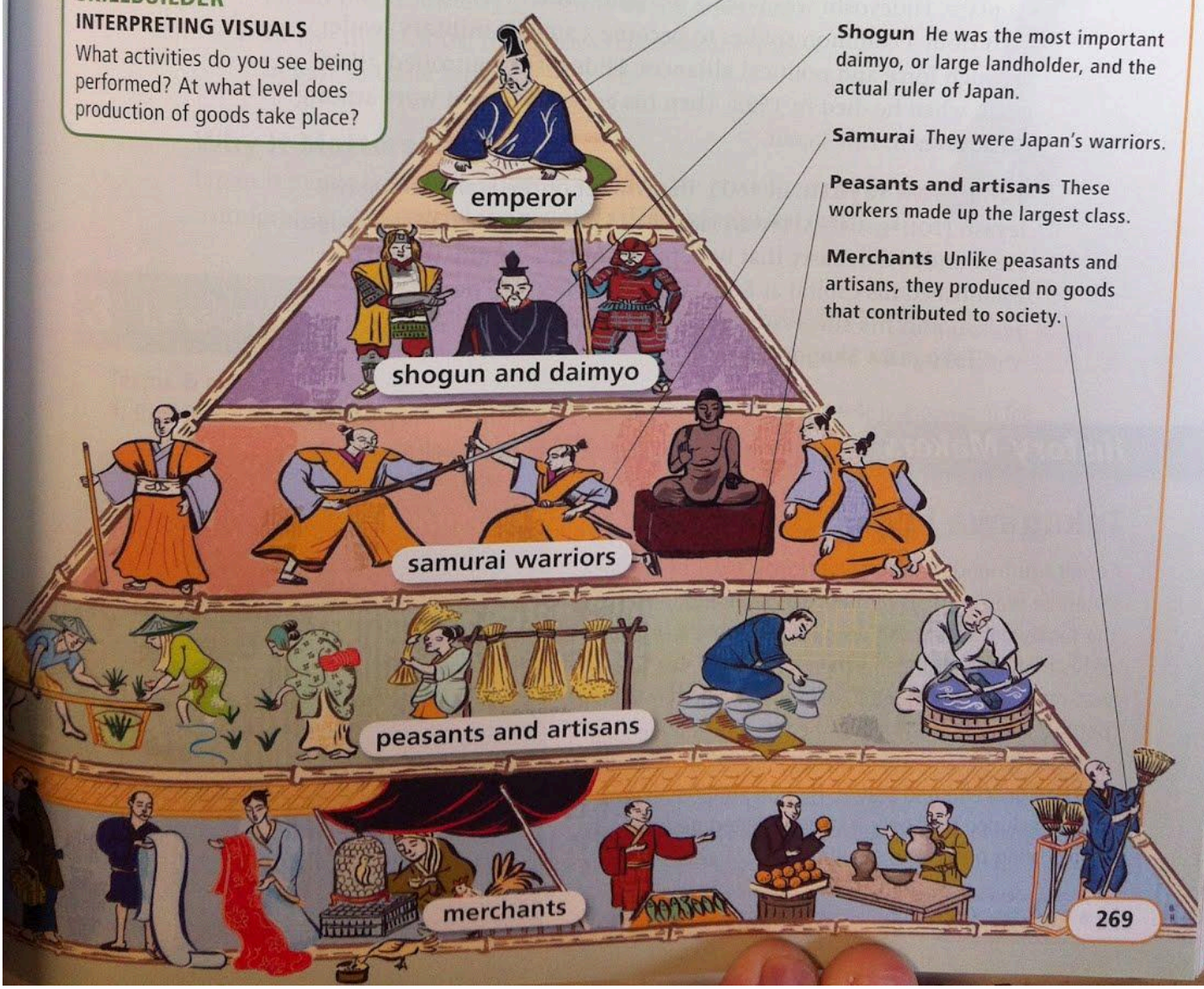
Samurai lived by an unwritten code of honor called *bushido*. This warrior code called for honor, loyalty, and bravery. It was similar to the chivalry code followed by knights in medieval Europe. Samurai pledged to show respect for the gods and generosity toward the poor. Zen Buddhism was an important aspect of their lives. Samurai values and traditions continued to appeal to the Japanese into the 1900s.

REVIEW Who held power in Japan's military society?

Japanese Society

INTERACTIVE

SKILLBUILDER
INTERPRETING VISUALS
What activities do you see being performed? At what level does production of goods take place?



Emperor This ruler was at the top of Japanese society but had little real power.

Shogun He was the most important daimyo, or large landholder, and the actual ruler of Japan.

Samurai They were Japan's warriors.

Peasants and artisans These workers made up the largest class.

Merchants Unlike peasants and artisans, they produced no goods that contributed to society.