**Nara and Heian Period Notes**

**Nara Period**

* Capital of Nara modeled on Chang’an, capital of T’ang China
* 1st two books published in this time
* Many natural disasters – widlfires, droughts, famines, disease
* Emperor concerned that his lack of devotion to Buddhism caused all this troubles so increased government’s support of Buddhism (construction of more temples, spreads among nobility)

**Heian Period**

* Capital moves to Heian (modern Kyoto) which lasts until 1868
* Political power shifts to Fujiwara clan –emperors had become so focused on Buddhism and the arts and less interested in ruling – clan creates a position that allows a regent to rule for adult emperor; marries daughters to Japanese emperors to have influence over emperor’s power
* As emperors continue to neglect managing Japan outside of the capital city, noble families and religious orders become more powerful – and claim tax-exempt status – so emperor doesn’t have money to pay for its army; land owners create their own armies
* 2 powerful families rise – Taira and Minamoto clans – own many manors and have large armies; eventually the Genpei (Gempei) war between these two clans is won by Minamoto who essentially become Japan’s rulers; Minamoto Yoritomo sets up his government (shogunate) in Kamakura and emperor remains in Kyoto
* Culture flourishes – art and literature; Murasaki Shikibu’s Tale of Genji
* Development of kana (written symbols for syllables instead of words)