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Question 4

The rulers of the Japanese archipelago shifted over several different periods in history. During the Yayoi and Tomb period, the ability to have a ruler who could both protect their people militaristically, as well as be a spiritual leader, was essential, and the balancing act was what allowed for them to rule undisrupted. During the Heian period, a system was adopted from China that allowed the emperor to justify his right of rule because he was a descendant of the gods, but he also needed strong military support to keep his position. The Warring States period introduced a turn away from spiritual connections being necessary to rule and instead military might was all that mattered. These shifts in who rules and how they justify that rule shows changing ideas and values in the archipelago.

Queen Himiko ruled during the transition between the Yayoi and Tomb periods. She was believed to have had mystic powers and ruled alongside her brother. Though she ruled alongside her brother, she was mostly in charge of the kingdom. Her right to rule was based in her ability to use these powers and she maintained control over her part of the Japanese archipelago because of this belief in her divinity and her military strength. Her people respected her as a mystic and believed that her powers allowed for her to protect their land. When she died, her people wanted another female to take over her spot because they trusted that women would better be able to handle the spiritual aspects of ruling. Queen Himiko was able to maintain her military prowess and expanded her territory also through relations with the Chinese court. A Chinese official recorded, “ We confer upon you, therefore, the title “Queen of Wa friendly Wei,” (Bary, 8). The recognition by the Chinese court allowed for her to become the recognized ruler of the area she

ruled. The recognition also allowed for her to have military backing when other kingdoms challenged her or if she needed support for her own military campaigns. She maintained her tributary relationship with China during her lifetime and this allowed her to maintain her rule. Her own people would not challenge her right to rule because she had been recognized by China as the proper ruler, as well as having military backing from China. Queen Himiko was able to maintain her right to govern by balancing her mystic prowess, as well as her militaristic and strategic power.

During the Heian period the emperor had the divine right to rule because of the myth building that happened surrounding the position of emperor. During this period there was also an alignment between the emperor and other aristocrats and Buddhist sects. Often retired emperors, as well as other high ranking officials, would go into monkhood after their retirement. Being a practitioner of Buddhism was seen as an elite characteristic. Therefore conflict between the ruling class and Buddhist leaders were minimal. The Ritsuryo system created a different kind of validation for why the emperor had the right to rule. The system based itself off of the Chinese government system. It also focused on some aspects of Confucianism and, in doing so, prohibited females from ruling like had been possible for Queen Himiko and rulers of the past. The Chinese system and their idea of a Heavenly Mandate was also adopted, but instead the Japanese emperor had the right to rule because of Heavenly Descent. Amino discusses, “ But while the Chinese theory of the Heavenly Mandate was comparatively rational, the theory of Heavenly Descent was magico-religious in its characterization of imperial succession based on a lineage originating with the Sun Goddess” (Amino, 248). The emperor's right to rule is based in a religious idea that as a descendant of the Sun Goddess he has a specific skill set that allows him

to rule. His right to rule is similar to that of Queen Himiko, whose right was founded on their ability to connect to another plane of existence and rule as a divine middle man. The emperor's justification for ruling was based in his heritage even though the line of succession was not always continuous and heritage was often questionable. In these situations having a strong military backing was essential for not only maintaining control by suppressing those who would argue against a successor, but also was needed for some people to force their way into the imperial position. Though unlike Queen Himiko, these military backings came from *uji* support and not the Chinese government. China also did not play a role in determining who was a recognized ruler or not in this period or the ones following it. The emperor of Japan needed to have both the support of a military family, as well as using the idea of Heavenly Descent, to justify his right to rule. Though the emperor would perform some ritualistic duties as emperor, his role was not focused on his ability to perform these Shinto or Buddhist rites like Queen Himiko's role had been. The emperor's rule was slowly shifting to being able to maintain power by connection to military groups and less to being a spiritual leader.

The Kamakura saw a division between the Buddhist sects and the Japanese officials. Though the emperor had power as a descendant of a Shinto deity, the view of Buddhist sects was not entirely positive. The shift happened when Buddhist sects stopped trying to only attract the elite and began reaching out to the ordinary members of society. The Buddhist monks were also able to work outside of the system set up by the Ritsuryo codes because they were not under the same taxing system as the rest of the country. The emperor and the Kamakura shogunate did not accept this and began labeling monks as evil in order to try and prevent the control that they had taken from continuing to spread. Amino states, " However, as the cash economy continued to

grow from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries, commercial and financial organizations and shipping networks also expanded and grew more complex. At the same time, the organization for imperial and shrine purveyors continued to expand...” (Amino, 81). During this time the Buddhist monks were able to control commerce and gained control over trade which was rapidly becoming essential to the country. They also were reaching out to ordinary citizens and gaining support from sources outside of the government structures in place. They were able to create their own system and took care of the people in their areas without the interaction of the Imperial or Shogunate leaders. Through their actions they began working against what the rulers in place wanted and often made strides in creating a Japan that was in opposition to what the leaders had in mind. The monks had even been used to fight battles between the Imperial leaders and the Shogunate.

During the Warring States period what defined a ruler changed and it no longer needed any justification from a spiritual or mystic field in order to be valid. The daimyo who ruled over certain areas in the Japanese archipelago depended solely on their military might in order to maintain control. The people who lived in their areas only cared that they were able to defend the land and prevent disorder in their daily lives, which was possible simply by having a strong military and a leader who was strategic. A story of such a daimyo states, “ In the tenth month Shingen, taking advantage of Kenshin’s immobility because of snow, again went to Totomi and brought down Futamata Castle” (Sato, 223). The daimyo were able to rule because they had the military might and ability to expand their territory. The ability to expand their territory meant that they had more resources and could better take care of those who lived within their boundaries. The switch away from divine right to rule, or the need to have a spiritual aspect

involved in their position as a ruler, indicates that there was too much turn over for that to work. The Warring States period allowed for many people who had previously been at the bottom of the class structure to rise to high positions. This would have completely eliminated the ability for any daimyo to claim that they had a divine right to rule. Buddhism during this period had returned to being a sign of class and daimyo would take part in Buddhist practices to show off their wealth. There was less contention between Buddhists and the daimyo though, those who opposed daimyo were still facing retaliation. The increase in different religions being available to the people could also play a part in the shift away from needing any kind of religious aspect to a ruler's justification. Buddhism, as well as Shinto, were now a part of the lives of the common person and this would have made it more difficult to claim a single religion was what justified a person's ability to rule. The Warring States period and the daimyo showed a shift that started in the Heian period where rulers were allowed to rule only based on their military might alone.

The Japanese archipelago had changed over many different periods in what was truly needed in order to be a valid ruler. As time went forward, leaders needed to justify themselves in different ways. The desire to have some kind of military backing was continuous throughout the archipelago's history and was a feature that became increasingly important as time went on. However, the need for their to be a connection to a spiritual element was slowly phased out of the requirements as an increasingly diverse set of rulers came into play. While Queen Himiko was able to maintain her people's trust as a spiritual leader, the shifting nature of the Warring States period made this element impossible. The ability to work with the military, as well as having a kind of spiritual backing, was a balancing act that allowed for the rulers to maintain their power on multiple fronts.