

PART V THE ASIAN CULTURAL ROOT

Chapter 15 An Introduction to the Civilizations of China and Japan

1. China had the oldest of the world's earliest riverine civilizations.
2. It became the major center of culture for the whole region and beyond to Korea, Japan, and Indochina.
3. Either directly or indirectly through Korea, China played a formative role in the creation of Japanese society for six hundred years starting in A.D. 300.

A. China from 2000 to 221 B.C.

1. The first ascertainable political organization in China was the Xia dynasty.
2. It emerged in 2000 B.C. in the valley formed by the Huang He (Yellow) River.
3. The Shang dynasty, which followed around 1500 B.C., governed a large area of land spreading out from both sides of the river.
4. The Shang dynasty's superior military with horse-drawn chariots exacted tribute from rulers of subjected tribes.
5. The Shang was replaced by the Zhou (Chou) dynasty and after a period of turmoil, the Qin (Ch'in) dynasty in 221 B.C., from which the nation of China derives its name.

A. Social Structure

1. There was a sharp divide between nobles and peasants.
2. Only nobles bore arms, owned land, and possessed wealth.
3. The peasant's total subjugation to the landlord continued until modern times.
4. The peasants worshipped local deities; the nobles worshipped ancestors.
5. There were hundreds of noble clans, each claiming descent from a hero or god.
6. The ruler's lordship over the nobility derived from his central religious role.

B. Economics

1. During the Zhou period (1000–770 B.C.), several factors helped develop the economy.
2. There were improvements in agricultural technology.
3. There is evidence of silk production.
4. Iron replaced bronze.
5. Population rose and a merchant class developed.

C. Writing

1. In Chinese writing, every symbol represents a complete word.
2. By the time of the Shang Dynasty (1766–1121 B.C.), Chinese writing included more than two thousand symbols.
3. The system did not prove to be an impediment to education.
4. An advantage of the system was that it could be read and understood by people speaking many different languages.
5. The writing system helped unite the vast region of China.

II. Religion and Philosophical Thought

1. Ancestor worship and veneration of local gods were only two manifestations of Chinese religious tendencies in the early historic period.

2. A sense that a moral order pervaded the universe had become a fundamental philosophical and religious concept.
3. At its most basic, this moral order involved a balance between two primary forces known as *yin* and *yang*.
4. Despite similarities with Western thought, the West tended to think of *clashes* of opposites, while the East saw opposites as part of an integrated whole.
5. Chinese religion had no priestly class, and the Chinese showed little interest in abstract theological thought.

#### A. Confucianism

1. Confucius (551–479 B.C.) lived about 100 years before the Greek philosopher Socrates.
2. The Portuguese invented the term Confucianism, used to signify his ideas, in the sixteenth century.
3. Confucianism is sometimes viewed as a religion, yet it had no doctrine, no priests, no missionaries, nor belief in salvation or an afterlife.
4. Confucianism took centuries to permeate Chinese societies.
5. Confucius redefined the contemporary term for noblemen giving it ethical rather than social significance.

#### B. Daoism (Taoism)

1. Dao (tao) means the way or “the way of the universe.”
2. Daoism teaches abandonment of the self to the natural rhythms of nature through meditation.
3. Daoist teachings focus on health, balance, beauty, and enjoyment of life.
4. Daoism does contain some mysticism, but neither Daoism nor Confucianism are religions in the usual sense.

### III. China from 221 B.C. to A.D. 221

#### A. Science and Technology

1. Science and technology advanced rapidly during the Han Dynasty. (c. 206 B.C.–24 A.D.)
2. Inventions and innovations during this period included paper, the water mill, and the wheelbarrow.

### IV. Buddhism and the Age of Dispersal (220–586)

1. The collapse of the Han dynasty led to the longest period of anarchy in China’s history.
2. During this “Age of Dispersal,” a constant succession of dynasties in both the north and south competed for dominance.
3. It was during this time that Buddhism spread throughout the country.
4. Buddhism seems contrary to many Chinese cultural values, but its promise of salvation may have contributed to its appeal.

### V. China from 581 to 1300

1. Concentrated in the south, the Sui dynasty briefly established a unified China.
2. Frequent wars and numerous invasions had led to a power and population shift to the south.
3. The south of China also had a longer growing season.
4. The Sui emperors drafted a million workers to construct the Grand Canal between the Yangtze and their capital in Changan.
5. The Sui were defeated by a military aristocracy from a border region called the Tang.

6. The Tang expanded the empire's borders well beyond China; they welcomed foreigners and foreign influences.
7. Competitive examinations for appointment to the imperial government introduced a meritocracy whose membership shared a common education and set of moral standards.

## VI. Science and Technology

1. The conservatism of Chinese society after the Tang did not hinder creativity in the areas of science and technology.
2. The Chinese used movable type to print books four hundred years before Germany's Johann Gutenberg.
3. Seafaring junks carrying up to a thousand men set sail in the eleventh century.
4. The printing press and another Chinese invention, gunpowder, had revolutionary impacts on European societies, but not so in the nation of their origin.

### I. Foreign Trade

1. By 1000 A.D., China's cities were the largest in the world.
2. Trade was vital, but China was remarkably self-sufficient.
3. China exported mostly silk and pottery and imported luxury items and narcotics (opium).

### II. Why Not China? Why Europe?

1. China and Europe were roughly equal technologically in the fourteenth century.
2. By the sixteenth century, Europe had forged ahead.
3. European exploration, driven by a desire to find a trade route to China, had enormous consequences for Europe and the world.
4. The world gained access to American miracle crops such as potatoes, corn, cassava, and sweet potatoes.
5. Europeans gained first access to the New World's raw materials—silver, furs, and timber—and were the main carriers of the growing trade with Asia.
6. China possessed the technology for such voyages and had even carried some out to Africa but these voyages were abruptly halted.
7. The Chinese were more concerned about internal stability, while the competition of numerous states in Europe made the Europeans more competitive and aggressive.

### III. Chinese Poetry

1. The highest form of literary expression in China has traditionally been poetry.
2. It is also the form that has garnered the most attention from the West.
3. The first written collection, the *Shi Jing* or "classic of songs," dates from around 600 B.C.
4. Reading, as well as writing, poetry was essential to the education of a gentleman in the Confucian tradition.
5. China produced no epic poem to celebrate its heroic feats in combat.
6. Chinese poetry tends to be *occasional* (*written for important events*).
7. The best known Chinese form of poetry is the *shi*, a short poem with an even number of lines with end rhymes in each line.

### IV. Art and Architecture

1. China's neolithic cultures are called "painted pottery" and "black pottery" for the type of pottery archaeological finds unearthed from these societies.
2. These ceramic finds seem to presage the western view of China as distinct in its formal and technical mastery of materials.
3. Chinese artists and artisans also excelled with creations in jade, bronze, and silk.
4. Chinese bronzes from the Shang period (1766–1050 B.C.) are some of the best examples of metallurgical craftsmanship in the world.

5. The importance of writing and calligraphy in Chinese culture seems to have been a primary influence on the development of Chinese art as well.
6. The impact of Buddhism on Chinese art was significant, but native Chinese forms and ideas persisted.

#### A. Tang Painting and Ceramics

1. Tang China (618–907) was probably the most advanced civilization of its time.
2. There was greater openness which allowed the arts to flourish.
3. Horses were a prime subject of Tang art.
4. Figures were created from earthenware, stoneware, and porcelain.
5. True porcelains such as Xing ware were developed during this time.

#### B. Song Landscape Painting

1. The Song dynasty (960–1279) was culturally the most brilliant era in later imperial Chinese history.
2. A true school of landscape painting developed.
3. Painting a landscape or observing one was an act of spiritual regeneration.
4. The diversity of the work is such that it is classified into five categories—courtly, monumental, literal, lyrical, and spontaneous.

#### C. The Imperial City and the Garden

1. In densely populated China the duality of community and privacy is vividly created in the house, the royal court, and the garden.
2. Great attention is given, not only to the design of the dwelling but to the arrangements of courtyards, gardens, and other buildings in relationship to each other.
3. The Chinese gardens of the Ming dynasty were composed like a painting.
4. Chinese gardens made a strong impression and had many imitators in the country houses of Europeans.

### XI. Music

#### A. Peking Opera

1. Chinese opera is a classical art form and in many ways comparable to European opera.
2. Like European opera the music is invested with strong emotional content.
3. Many conventions have become stylized and are known to both actors and the audience.
4. The *Emperor's Farewell to his Favorite* and *Beating the Dragon Robe* are two of the best-known works.

### XII. Japan: Early Civilization

1. Evidence suggests that the Japanese islands, which combined are about the size of California, have been inhabited by humans for as long as eighteen thousand years.
2. Humans arrived in as many as four different waves of migration from Korea and other parts of eastern Asian.
3. Until about 300 B.C. Japan consisted of hunter-gatherer societies.

### XIII. Late Bronze Age

1. The Yayoi culture (300 B.C. to 300 A.D.) saw a wide variety of technological innovations from China and Korea—irrigated rice paddies, high-temperature kilns, metallurgy, and clay pot burial practices, to name a few.

2. By 200 A.D. the Japanese were riding horses, using looms to weave cloth, and manufacturing specialized metal implements.
3. Evidence further suggests the existence of small clan states; extravagant burial practices are suggestive of an aristocratic society and the use of slave labor.

XIV. The Yamato Court (Fourth through Seventh Centuries A.D.)

1. Though Japan was strongly influenced by China, its unique geography fostered the development of a more decentralized political structure.
2. Abundant rainfall and short rivers exempted the population from the massive irrigation and damming projects of China that favored a centralized state.
3. Starting in the fourth century, major clans joined together to form the *Yamato court*, unifying Kyushu and a large part of the island of Honshu under a single imperial family.
4. The Yamato court began an unbroken imperial succession in the same family down into modern times.
5. In the fifth century, families gained independence from the clan structure, and there was a change from matrilineal families.
6. Unlike China, the Japanese government was unable to develop a merit-based bureaucracy, which kept power in the hands of the aristocracy and local clans.
7. The abject status in which most of the rural population lived was the basis for thousands of agrarian revolts over the centuries.

A. Shinto

1. Shinto (Way of the Gods) was the religion of Japan prior to the influx of Buddhism.
2. Shinto is similar to shamanism of Korea in which shamans communicate with spirits in the world beyond and departed souls.
3. Shinto is still practiced in Japan, frequently in purification rituals and rites to honor departed loved ones.

B. Literacy and the Importation of High Culture from the Mainland

1. The Chinese system of writing, political organization, and religious practices were introduced to Japan at this time.
2. Though Chinese in origin, these cultural imports were brought to Japan by way of Korea.
3. Vigorous direct contact with China was not pursued until the seventh century.
4. The Japanese developed a complex writing system that was based on the Chinese but was adapted to the differences between the structure of the Chinese and Japanese languages.

XV. The High Culture of the Nara Period (710–794)

1. In 710 Japan had a capital city, Nara.
2. In this century, Chinese influence on the Japanese upper classes was at its height.
3. Korean Buddhist missionaries and Buddhist-influenced architecture appeared during this time, especially in Nara.
4. The Hôryûji and Yakushiji compounds symbolized the power and grandeur of the imperial court.
5. Themes of death and exile pervade the *Manyôshû*, an anthology of over four thousand poems gathered to demonstrate the high attainments of the Japanese Court.

6. The poems frankly express themes of love, sexuality, and longing as well as the wide gulf in social status between the aristocracy and the common people.
7. At times the poems seem to function as prayers.

#### XVI. The Heian Court (794–1192)

1. The transfer of the capital from Nara to Heian (present day Kyoto) marked the beginning of an expansion of central authority.
2. By the ninth century, Japan controlled four major islands.
3. Much of the Heian period was dominated by the Fujiwara family, while the imperial family served a marginalized ceremonial function.
4. The elegant and cultured society of Heian is reflected in the *Kokinshū* (Collection of Poetry Ancient and New) as well as *The Tale of the Genji*.
5. The e-maki (scroll painting) of the tale was enormously popular in Japan and represented a major step toward the creation of a very specifically Japanese art.

##### A. Gender Roles and Literature in the Heian Court

1. The elite women of the court had no decision-making authority.
2. The extreme hierarchization of this society fostered intense competition for status and imperial favor.
3. Aesthetic pursuits were a primary path for achieving social advancement for both men and women.
4. Ceremony and ritualism pervaded court life.
5. Conversation was laden with restatements of social status.

##### B. *Tanka* Poetry and Buddhism

1. Poetry from the Heian period is the *tanka* (short poem) format.
2. The images of *tanka* poems are drawn from nature.
3. Experience of everyday court life is avoided.
4. The syntax is complex and intentionally ambiguous, making it open to many interpretations.

#### XVII. The Rise of Medieval Society

1. In the twelfth century two powerful clans challenged the power of the imperial court and the powerful clans that surrounded the throne.
2. The Taira and Minamoto families were increasingly drawn into military conflict with each other.
3. The military lifestyle demanded by the clan feud was difficult to reconcile with the effete life at court.
4. The victorious Minamoto established a shogunate (military government in Kamakura).
5. The shogunate maintained firm ties with the imperial court but the real political power rested with the shogunate in Kamakura.

##### A. Literature and Art

1. During the Kamakura period (1192—1333) literary activities spread beyond the imperial court.
2. Buddhist sentiment and outlook is common during this time.
3. The *Tale of the Heike* is a massive work of oral literature that was set to music.

## B. The Military Government

1. The emperor remained in Kyoto as a figurehead.
2. The real government was in nearby Murmachi headed by a military general or *shogun*.
3. The shogun depended on massive numbers of local warriors bound by oath to serve him.
4. Successive generations of the Ashikaga family held the position of shogun from 1333 to 1578.
5. The Ashikagas were strong patrons of the arts.
6. Mastery of an art form was regarded as a path to enlightenment.

## C. The Noh Theater

1. Noh (meaning skill or talent) theater was an example of the ideology of enlightenment through mastery.
2. Noh theater incorporated elements of poetry, music, and dance including not only Japanese but also Korean and Chinese forms.
3. Performance of Noh Theater requires highly trained actors, musicians, dancers, and artists for costume design and mask making.

## XVIII. Japan and the West

1. Japan began relations with western European countries in the sixteenth century.
2. Catholic Spain's efforts to spread Christianity were viewed as a threat and missionaries and converts were massacred in 1597.
3. The Christian movement was seen as a threat to reunification efforts.
4. Christianity was tolerated for a few decades in the early seventeenth century.
5. Christianity's link to a peasant rebellion in 1637–1638 led to the execution of the rebels, the abolition of the religion, and the cessation of foreign trade for two centuries.