

# STUDY PACK 14

## CHINA AND JAPAN

“In Confucianism, the worlds of the living and of the deities and spirits are closely linked.”

~ Coogan, *Eastern Religions*, p.336 ~

### I. THE LAND

Chinese civilization arose and developed in a vast area, one-third larger than the United States.

For centuries China was almost completely isolated from the other centers of civilization \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. This isolation helps explain the great originality  
of China’s culture.

China proper is a vast watershed drained by three river systems that rise close together on the high Tibetan plateau and flow eastward to the Pacific.

Three mountain systems also rise in the west, diminishing in altitude as they slope eastward between the river systems. The Yellow River (Huang Ho), traditionally known as “China’s Sorrow” because of the misery caused by its periodic flooding, traverses the North China plain.

In this area, the original homeland of Chinese culture, the climate is like that of western Europe.

The Yangtze River and its valley form the second river system. South of this valley lie the subtropical lands of South China, the home of ancient cultures that were destroyed or transformed by Chinese expansion from the north.

Here the shorter rivers and valleys converging on present-day Canton formed the third major river system.

This pattern of mountain ranges and river systems has, throughout China’s history, created problems of political unity.

At the same time, the great river valleys facilitated the spread of a homogeneous culture \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### II. THE SHANG DYNASTY

Shang originally was the name of a nomadic tribe whose vigorous leaders succeeded in establishing themselves as the overlords of other tribal leaders in North China.

The Shang capital, a walled city to which the tribal leaders came to pay tribute, changed frequently; the last capital was at modern Anyang.

The Shang people developed \_\_\_\_\_ and carried it to heights hardly surpassed in world history.

Bronze was used to cast elaborate ceremonial and drinking vessels (the Shang leaders were notorious for their drinking bouts) and weapons, all intricately decorated with both incised and high-relief designs.

The Shang people also developed a distinctive writing system employing nearly 5000 characters, some of which are still in use today.

These characters represent individual words rather than sounds and consist of pictographs, recognizable as pictures of observable objects, and ideographs representing ideas.

Most Shang writing is found on thousands of “oracle bones,” fragments of animal bones and tortoise shells on which were inscribed questions put to the gods and ancestral spirits, which were thought to continue a close relationship with their living descendants as members of the family group.

The diviner would ask such questions as “Will the king’s child be a son?” and “If we raise an army of 3000 men to drive X away from Y, will we succeed?”

The shell or bone would then be heated and the resulting cracks would be interpreted as an answer to the question.

Shang China was ruled by hereditary kings who were \_\_\_\_\_.

Their power was not absolute, being constantly limited by an aristocratic “Council of the Great and Small.”

The oracle bones reveal that the kings often appealed to the ancestral spirits in order to overcome the opposition of the council.

Shang kings and nobles lived in imposing buildings, went to battle in horse-drawn chariots resembling those of Homer’s \_\_\_\_\_, and were buried in sumptuous tombs together with their chariots, still-living servants and war captives.

Warfare was frequent, and the chariot, a new military weapon, facilitated the spread of Shang power through North China.

The power of the kings and nobles rested on their ownership of the land, their monopoly of bronze metallurgy, their possession of expensive war chariots, and the kings’ religious functions.

Unlike the common people, the kings and nobles had recorded ancestors and belonged to a clan.

They were the descendants in the male line from a common ancestor to whom they rendered worship and \_\_\_\_\_. The chief deity, \_\_\_\_\_, was the ancestor of the king’s own clan. There were regular animal sacrifices and libations of a beer-like liquor were poured on the ground. The object was to win the aid or avoid the displeasure of the spirits.

Magic was employed to maintain the balance of nature, which was thought to function through the interaction of two opposed but complementary forces called yang and yin.

The common people were peasants who belonged to no clans and apparently worshiped no ancestors.

Their gods were \_\_\_\_\_ of nature, such as rivers, mountains, earth, wind, rain, and heavenly bodies.

Peasants were virtual serfs, owning no land but working plots periodically assigned to them by royal and noble landowners. They collectively cultivated the fields retained by their lords.

Farming methods were primitive.

Bronze was used for weapons, not tools or implements, and the peasants continued to reap wheat and millet with stone sickles and till their allotted fields with wooden plows.

### **III. THE CHOU DYNASTY**

Around 1122 B.C., the leader of the Chou tribe overthrew the Shang ruler, who, it was claimed, had failed to rule fairly and benevolently.

The Chou leader announced that Heaven (Tien) had given him a mandate to replace the Shang. This was more than a rationalization of the seizure of power.

It introduced a new aspect of Chinese thought: the cosmos is ruled \_\_\_\_\_, which sits in judgment over the human ruler, who is the intermediary between Heaven's commands and human fate.

The Chou was a western frontier tribe that had maintained its martial spirit and fighting ability.

Its conquest of the Shang can be compared with Macedonia's unification of Greece.

The other Chinese tribes switched their loyalty to the Chou leader, who went on to establish a dynasty that lasted for more than \_\_\_\_\_ (1122-256 B.C.), the longest in Chinese history.

Comprising most of North China, the large Chou domain made the establishment of a unified state impossible.

Consequently, the Chou kings set up a feudal system of government by delegating local authority to relatives and noble magnates.

These vassal lords, whose power was hereditary, recognized the over-lordship of the Chou kings and supplied them with military aid.

The early Chou kings were vigorous leaders who were able to retain the allegiance of their vassals (when necessary, by their superior military power) and fend off attacks from barbarians on the frontiers.

In time, however, weak kings succeeded to the throne, and the power and independence of their vassals increased.

By the eighth century B.C., the vassals no longer went to the Chou capital for investiture by \_\_\_\_\_.

The remnants of Chou royal power disappeared completely in 771 B.C., when an alliance of dissident vassals and barbarians destroyed the capital and killed the king.

Part of the royal family managed to escape eastward to Lo-yang, however, where the dynasty survived for another five centuries doing little more than performing state religious rituals as the Son of Heaven.

Seven of the stronger feudal princes gradually conquered their weaker neighbors. In the process they assumed the title Wang (“king”), formerly used only by the Chou ruler, and began to extinguish the feudal rights of their own vassals and establish centralized administrations.

Warfare among these emerging centralized states was incessant, particularly during the two centuries known as the Period of Warring States (c. 450-221 B.C.).

#### IV. UNIFIED CHINA

By 221 B.C., the ruler of the Ch’in, the most advanced of the seven warring states, had conquered all his rivals and established a \_\_\_\_\_ with himself \_\_\_\_\_.

China gets its name from the Ch’in Dynasty.

#### V. CONFUCIUS

Confucius (born around 551 B.C.) taught a philosophical system that later became a religion. He emphasized \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and equal treatment for the lower caste. His emphasis on respect for ancestors soon led to \_\_\_\_\_ among his followers. Some of his more radical followers actually tried to contact their ancestors and turned a segment of Confucianism \_\_\_\_\_.

One of Confucius’ followers, Mencius, developed a philosophy of “natural political rights” based on Confucius’ teachings. He taught a concept of limited government and the idea that people possessed rights which no government had the right to take away. Confucianism helped to encourage Chinese people. It also encouraged desire for freedom.

#### VI. TAOISM

Another prominent Chinese philosophical and religious leader was Lao-Tzu. His system of ethics, which later became a religion, was called Taoism. Lao-Tzu emphasized the study \_\_\_\_\_. He believed in studying different cultures to see what religious principles they hold in common. These common principles formed the basis for a common system of ethics. He also taught that history should be studied to determine which principles of behavior lead to human happiness and which do not. The end result of Taoism was \_\_\_\_\_. Undoubtedly following the ethical principles of Taoism made men better than if they followed the principles of paganism. But the principles of Taoism were imperfect, limited to human wisdom. They also provided man with no atonement, no redemption, no saviour.

The Bible teaches that there is such a thing as natural law. “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another,” Romans 2:14-15.

However, no human being follows even the natural law he acknowledges. Also, natural law cannot redeem anyone.

## VII. JAPAN

The Japanese people developed as several tribes merged together on what are now known as the Japanese Islands. They were first united under a king \_\_\_\_\_. The same royal family has maintained its position ever since — for over 2,600 years. This is \_\_\_\_\_.

The primary religion was the pagan religion of Shintoism. Shintoism taught the worship of nature and contact with gods and ancestral spirits. In Japan’s early history it practiced \_\_\_\_\_. The lower caste were \_\_\_\_\_. The middle caste consisted \_\_\_\_\_. The highest caste consisted \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. Warriors were considered spiritual leaders as well as military and they were called the Samurai.

As the decades passed, Japan came to be influenced more and more by China. Buddhism was introduced by missionaries from Korea and China. Japanese culture developed independently from most of the world. Eventually even China and Korea were rejected. Japan \_\_\_\_\_. Because Japan was an isolationist power it exerted little influence on the rest of the world.

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