Japan

During the seventh century C.E., Chinese culture reached Japan. Attempts by the Japanese emperor to mimic the form of Chinese bureaucracy resulted in Japan's adoption of both Confucian thought and Chinese written characters. Buddhism mixed with **Shinto**, the traditional Japanese belief system that revered spirits of nature and of ancestors.

Aristocratic rebellion against the complete adoption of Chinese ways led to the restoration of the elite classes and the establishment of large estates in Japan. Local aristocrats began to acquire their own military. As the power of the Japanese emperor steadily gave way to that of aristocrats in the capital at Kyoto, the power of local lords in the countryside increased. Rather than providing land and labor for the imperial court, local lords ran their own tiny kingdoms. The Japanese countryside saw the construction of fortresses protected by earthen walks and ditches similar to the moats used by European fortresses (Chapter 13).

The small states into which Japan was divided by the eleventh century were led by ***bushi***, who not only administered their territories but also maintained their own military. Armed military troops called ***samurai*** served the *bushi*. Periodically, the *samurai* also were expected to serve in the capital to protect the emperor from bandits. Armed with curved swords, they engaged in battles in which they shouted out the details of their family heritage before engaging in conflicts.

The rise of the *samurai* gradually moved Japan toward a style of feudalism with some similarities to that of Western Europe during the same period. A *samurai* code of honor called ***bushido*** developed. This code included the practice of ***seppuku***, or disembowelment, a form of suicide used by defeated or disgraced warriors to maintain family and personal honor. Japanese peasants gradually became **serfs** bound to the land and considered property of the local lord.

By the twelfth century, powerful families such as the Fujiwara allied themselves with local lords. During the late twelfth century, a series of conflicts called the **Gempei Wars** placed peasants against the *samurai*. The Japanese countryside was destroyed. As a result of the Gempei Wars, in 1185 a powerful family, the Minamoto, established the ***bakufu***, or military government. Although the emperor and his court remained, real power now resided in the Minamoto family and their *samurai*. As imperial government broke down, the Japanese increasingly distanced themselves from Chinese Confucian ways.

The Shogunate

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, real Japanese authority lay in the hands of prominent families who, in turn, controlled military leaders called *shoguns*. A period of civil disorder in the fourteenth century lessened the power of both the emperor and the **shogunate**. The resulting power vacuum allowed the *bushi* vassals to acquire lands that they then divided among their *samurai*. The *samurai* were required to pledge loyalty to their lord and provide him with military assistance when needed. Further court rebellions from 1467 to 1477 culminated in the division of Japan into approximately 300 tiny kingdoms, each ruled by a warlord called a ***daimyo***.

Japanese warrior culture changed as the code of *bushido* lost its dominance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Large castles of stone and wood began to dot the Japanese landscape. Poorly trained peasant armies armed with pikes became a major fighting force of *daimyo* armies.

Gradually, some *daimyo* began to impose a degree of centralization upon their vassals and peasants. Taxes were collected to fund public projects such as the improvement of irrigation systems. Trade between villages arose and blossomed into long-distance trade,

including trade with China. Merchant and artisan guilds arose; both men and women participated in these organizations. The strengthening of trade in Japan promoted the use of a common currency that assisted the centralization of the Japanese state.

Although trade revived in Japan, Japanese art also was developing its characteristic traditions. Although much Japanese art was an imitation of Chinese models, Japanese artists created their own style in sketches done in ink. Both Shintoism and Buddhism were reflected in two additional examples of Japanese artistry: the **tea ceremony** and decorative gardens.

Korea

Chinese influences in Korea can be traced back as far as the fourth century B.C.E., when the knowledge of metallurgy and agriculture spread from China to the Korean peninsula. In the latter part of the Han dynasty, Chinese settlers moved into Korea. Through these contacts Chinese culture, especially Buddhism, found a path into Korea. Chinese writing, which was later modified and made more suitable to the Korean language, was introduced. Confucian classics were read by Korean scholars.

Tang rulers defeated Korean peoples who resisted Chinese rule. The Silla kingdom of Korea, however, routed Tang forces. In 668, the Chinese withdrew from Korea in exchange for an arrangement that made the Silla vassals of the Tang and required them to pay tribute. After the Tang withdrew, the Silla united Korea.

The Silla studied Chinese customs and willingly performed the **kowtow** (a ritual bow) to the Chinese emperor. They introduced the Chinese civil service exam to Korea. The Silla made tribute payments that allowed them to participate in the Chinese trade network and in educational systems with Vietnamese, Japanese, and other Eastern peoples. Korean cultural and commercial opportunities, therefore, expanded. Buddhism became popular, especially with the Korean elite classes. Techniques of porcelain manufacture made their way from China to Korea; the Koreans modified Chinese porcelain to produce **celadon** bowls with a characteristic pale green color.

The Mongol invasion of Korea in the thirteenth century interfered with cultural contacts between Korea and China. When the Mongols were cast from Korea in 1392, Korea once again established contacts with the Chinese.

Vietnam

Southeast Asians displayed a somewhat different response to the introduction of Chinese culture than the peoples of East Asia had. While the Viets admired the technological advances and political ideals of the Chinese, at the same time they highly valued their own independence. Before the time of the Qin dynasty, the Viets carried on an active trade with the people of southern China. The Viets gradually brought the lands of the Red River valley under their control and began intermarrying with the peoples of present-day Cambodia and others in Southeast Asia. In contrast to the Chinese, the Viets had a different spoken language, lived in villages rather than establishing large urban areas, and based their society on the nuclear family. Vietnamese women enjoyed more privileges than women in China. Additionally, Buddhism gained greater popularity in Vietnam than in China.

When Han rulers attempted to annex South China into their empire, they encountered opposition from the Viets. Initially requiring the payment of tribute from the Viets, the Han conquered them in 111 B.C.E. Under Han rule the Viets adopted Chinese agricultural and irrigation techniques, the Confucian concept of veneration of ancestors, and the extended family structure. In spite of their admiration of some aspects of Chinese culture, however, the Viets periodically staged rebellions against Chinese rule. After the fall of the Tang in 907, they staged a major protest, which in 939 resulted in Vietnamese independence. After their independence was secured, the Viets continued the Confucian civil service examinations, which had earlier been disbanded. Vietnamese conquests of neighboring peoples succeeded largely because of the military organization and technology they had adopted from the Chinese.