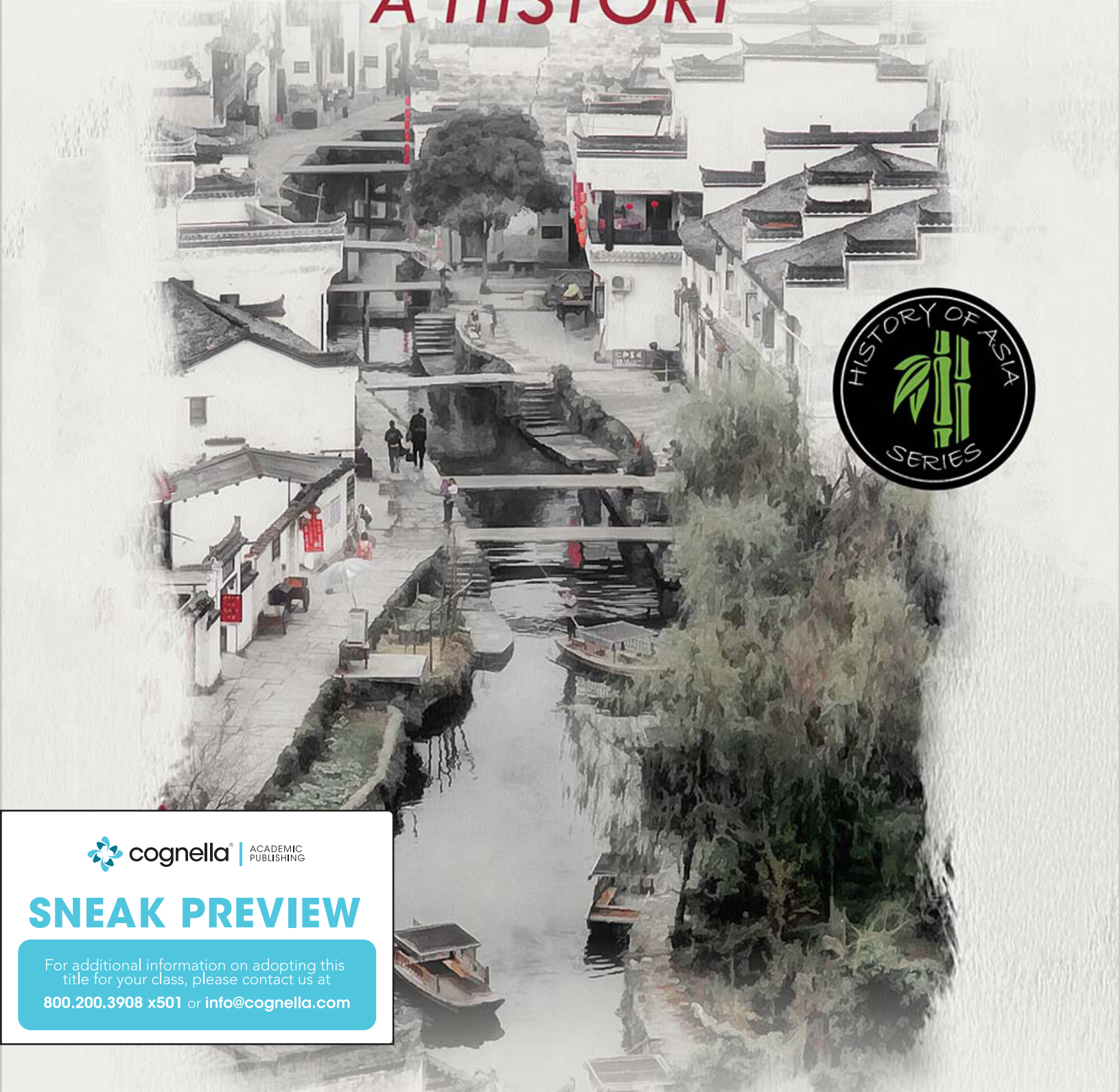
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Modern East Asia

A History

Mary L. Hanneman, Yi Li, Wayne Patterson, and James A. Anderson

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Introduction

The part of the world known as "East Asia" is defined not only by geography but also by a shared history and culture. This book covers China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. The inclusion of Vietnam, often omitted from consideration as East Asia, reflects Vietnam's position in the Chinese cultural sphere, its uncanny historical parallels with Korea, and its importance to the US due to their shared history and the presence of a significant Vietnamese population in the US. Geographically of course, East Asia sits on the western edge of the Pacific Ocean. Both geographically and culturally, East Asia has always been, and continues to be, dominated by China, the vast continental empire first unified under centralized bureaucratic control two hundred years before the Common Era. Sharing borders with China were both Korea and Vietnam. As relatively small countries on China's periphery, parts of what are now Korea and Vietnam came under Chinese control for periods of time, and thus both had to devise ways to retain their independence in the face of their giant continental neighbor. Both discovered this could most easily be achieved by maintaining a cordial relationship with China and acknowledging its superiority through China's traditional system of international relations, known as the tributary system. China's tributary states, which included most of the states around its periphery, accepted and acknowledged Chinese superiority and sent periodic tribute missions to China. The Chinese emperor, in good Confucian fashion, reciprocated with gifts of his own, usually more lavish and exotic, befitting China's superior position in the relationship. The tributary relationship also included a bilateral military agreement: If either China or the tributary nation asked the other for military assistance, they would oblige. It seems ironic, but by accepting the inferior status in the tributary relationship, both Korea and Vietnam were able to protect their independence as small nations on the periphery of the mighty continental power. Japan, as an island nation off China's coast, was more insulated and isolated from Chinese power and thus was able to more easily pick and choose how to conduct its relations with China.

Culturally too, China dominated East Asia. When China unified under the Qin Dynasty in 221 BCE, the founding emperor helped to promote the unification of the empire by standardizing the Chinese writing system and enabling written communication (even if the spoken languages were different) both to and from the capital, thus making it possible to govern a vast territory

from one center. While the Japanese and Korean languages do share grammatical features with each other, neither of those languages, nor Vietnamese, share any grammar with Chinese. Nevertheless, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam all borrowed the Chinese writing system, using—and adapting—it for their own needs. While the grammar is not shared, because of the borrowing of the Chinese characters, many Chinese loan words made it into Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese. For example, the Chinese word for Chinese characters, *hanzi* became *kanji* in Japanese, *hanja* in Korean, and *hantu* in Vietnamese. Each developed their own phonetic syllabary to supplement the Chinese characters: *hiragana* and *katakana* in Japan, *han'gŭl* in Korea, and *chu nom* in Vietnam; in the early twentieth century, Vietnam adopted a script, *quoc ngu*, based on the Latin alphabet. In the traditional period, any literate person throughout East Asia would have been able to understand (if not pronounce the same way) texts written in Chinese characters, somewhat analogous to the way people across a wide variety of linguistic groups can understand the numerals 1, 2, 3, etc., although they pronounce the corresponding words very differently.

Cultural Foundations

With the shared writing system came cultural transmission among the four nations, reinforced by diplomatic contact that centered on China. Over the long centuries, many intellectual and philosophical currents emerged and emanated out from China. The most influential of these were Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, the "three ways." These three modes of thought provided a philosophical and religious foundation for much of East Asian culture.

Unlike the monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—that came to dominate in much of the rest of the world, the religions of East Asia did not demand exclusive adherence, but rather co-existed and intermingled. Confucianism was by far the most dominant. First espoused in the sixth century BCE, Confucianism originated in China with Kong Zi—Master Kong—or in the even more honorific version, Kong Fuzi, Latinized to "Confucius" by Jesuit priests in China in the sixteenth century. Master Kong considered himself not the founder of a school of thought, but a compiler of modes of thinking that had been around in China for centuries. The central goal of Confucian doctrine, which occupied a fundamental position in traditional China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, is the achievement and maintenance of social stability and harmony. A stable and harmonious society was a hierarchical society in which everyone knew their role in a network of superiors and subordinates and acted accordingly, as mapped out in the model of the five cardinal relationships of ruler to ruled, father to son, elder brother to younger brother, husband to wife, and friend to friend. As an example of the mutual, reciprocal relationships described by Confucian



FIGURE I.1 Map of East Asia.

doctrine, a father was expected to guide and nurture his son, while the son's duty toward his father was to be obedient and show reverence. Filial piety, the child's respect for and obedience to his or her parents, was a paramount teaching in Confucianism. Women occupied a subordinate position in this scheme and in general had a very low status throughout East Asia in the traditional period. The Confucian principles permeated society and defined not only interpersonal relationships and interactions but the role of government as well.

According to Confucian teachings, government plays the most important role in creating a harmonious society because it is only through good and wise government, overseen by good and wise officials, that social stability and harmony can be achieved. Thus, traditional East Asian society placed great emphasis on government and its role in guiding society. The impact, influence, and role of Confucianism on East Asian society might be likened to Christianity's place in Western civilization.

Offering a complementary contrast to straight-laced Confucianism was Taoism, the teaching of the "Way." Originating in Chinese antiquity that pre-dated Confucianism, Taoism emphasized the complementarity of opposites (yin/yang) and embraced naturalism and the concept of *wu-wei*, non-struggle, or "going with the flow." The best path or way is the natural way. The tale of the Taoist butcher exemplifies the Taoist ideal: Rather than hacking away at meat, bone, and sinew, by following the natural path and cutting between the bones the butcher kept his knife sharp and honed for seventeen years.

Buddhism, a third major strand of thought and belief, originated in northern India in the sixth century BCE. Founded by the historic Buddha, Siddartha Gautama, Buddhism spread to China during the Han dynasty, around 100 CE. The basic teachings of Buddhism center on the Four Noble Truths, which hold that life is suffering, suffering is caused by desire, suffering can be eliminated by eliminating desire, and desire can be eliminated by following the eight-fold path. Life is a cycle of birth and re-birth, or *samsara*, and this cycle can be ended by achieving *nirvana*, when the individual ego merges with the ultimate whole. For the elite, Buddhism offered an avenue of esoteric intellectual engagement, while for the average peasant, it offered the promise of release from suffering and reward in the afterlife. These belief systems spread throughout East Asia, used by and adapted as needed in each of the East Asian nations. Confucianism and Taoism originated in China, and Buddhism originated in India; Japan, Korea, and Vietnam also had their own indigenous belief systems that pre-dated the arrival of these outside influences. Japan's indigenous belief system was Shinto, the "way of the gods." Shinto is an animistic religion, viewing the natural world as being inhabited by deities that reside in natural objects. In Shinto, the emperor is believed to be the descendent of the most important of these deities, the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu. Korean indigenous belief centers around shamanism, and

like Japanese Shinto, it is animistic. In modern-day Korea, shamans, known as *mudang*, can serve as intermediaries between the living and the spirit world. Ancient Vietnamese too observed animistic beliefs. Also common across East Asia is the practice of "ancestor worship," the veneration of the spirits of deceased ancestors and a reminder that filial piety does not stop at death—one is expected to revere the departed generations.

Interconnection and Independence

In their efforts to establish lasting and stable governments, all four nations emphasized the maintenance of an unchanging agrarian status quo, with a solid and solvent base of peasant tax-payers whose yearly toil would provide them with enough resources to feed their families, pay their taxes, and once again plant their fields come planting time. Thus, the Confucian ideal was also strongly reflected in the social systems that characterized traditional East Asia. But, each of the four nations had their own strengths and faced their own set of challenges. China's great strength, of course, was its sheer size, which allowed it to dominate East Asia. But China's size was also a huge challenge—how to govern such a vast and diverse territory from one central point? As we will see, the first emperor of a unified China, Qin Shihuang, "solved" this problem with the creation of the bureaucracy, but China's periodic and widespread rebellions, along with the cycle of the rise and fall of dynasties, demonstrates the difficulty of maintaining control over a large territory. China's size also meant that its territory bordered the territories of many other peoples, making China vulnerable to outside invasion. Japan, just a fraction of the size of China, faced less of a challenge in governance and unification. And, as an island nation, Japan was less vulnerable to outside invasion. Also unlike China, whose emperor was believed to be the "son of heaven" who ruled by heavenly mandate (and thus could be overthrown), Japan's emperor, as the descendent of the Sun Goddess was himself divine, and by definition possessed the mandate of heaven and therefore could not be overthrown. As a result, while the "unbroken" imperial line continued to reign over Japan, military governments rose and fell to rule over the country.

Korea's geographical location was both a benefit and a disadvantage. If all was well in China and with China, the positives outweighed the negatives and Korea could enjoy the benefits of cultural and economic exchange and the expectation of military protection. If China was in chaos, however, or if it was in an expansionist mode, Korea felt the impact. Although it too shared a border with China, Vietnam's geographic location put it much farther from the Chinese power center. Vietnam's geographic location, straddling the East Asian and South Asian cultural worlds, had a strong influence on its early historical development. Closer to China, the northern regions of Vietnam felt the impact of

Chinese cultural, political, and military influence much earlier, which gradually spread south. Between 111 BCE and 939 CE, Vietnam was under Chinese control, gaining its independence during a period of disunity in China after the fall of the Tang dynasty. China would again briefly control Vietnam during the early Ming dynasty. Vietnam's relationship with China had a strong impact on the development of Vietnam—on the one hand, Vietnam adopted and adapted many aspects of Chinese culture; on the other hand, it developed a strong and deeply rooted desire for national independence. Thus, the East Asian nations were inter-connected and yet independent. This is the book's most important theme. China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam share a cultural heritage, yet each possesses a national identity all its own. Interconnected yet independent, each country retained its own unique national identity as it traversed the often treacherous path to modernity.

Image Credit

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Chapter 1

Foundations

In the early seventeenth century, both China and Japan were in the process of establishing new governments to rule society. In China, the Ming dynasty was overthrown by the semi-nomadic Manchus, whose new Qing dynasty (1644–1911) created a stable foundation by emulating Chinese patterns of rule. In Japan, the Tokugawa regime consolidated control over the country in 1603, ending over a century of civil warfare by creating Japan's third military government, or *shogunate*, which would rule as a delegate of imperial power. The Chosŏn dynasty in Korea was the oldest of the East Asian regimes, having been established in 1392; by the early 1600s, it still retained many of the elements of a dynamic, responsive government. Vietnam in the mid-sixteenth century had just thrown off a brief period of Chinese Ming dynasty domination and entered into a period of military competition that would end with the establishment of the Nguyen dynasty in 1802.

China

The Manchu takeover of China in 1644 displaced the Chinese Ming dynasty with non-native rulers. The Manchus, however, recognizing the value of the Chinese traditions in creating a stable government and society, largely adopted the Chinese Confucian patterns of rule. In doing so, they built the foundation for one of China's great dynasties, whose territorial expanse and cultural and political strength allowed China to remain the dominant power in East Asia throughout most of its rule.

End of the Ming

The Ming dynasty (1368–1644) was China's last *Chinese* dynasty. During the subsequent Qing dynasty, China was ruled by the Manchu people who, having taken over China, largely adopted the Chinese approach to government and built a lasting government on the foundations of Ming rule. By the mid-1500s the Ming dynasty began to experience many of the internal and external problems traditionally associated with a dynasty in decline. The Wanli emperor, for example, who reigned from 1572 to 1620, is said to have given himself over so completely to pleasure seeking that many of his ministers didn't even know what he looked like. In a system that placed so much power in the hands of the emperor, Wanli's excesses rendered the entire state apparatus dysfunctional. Into this power vacuum, in another typical symptom of a dynasty in decline, stepped the eunuchs, most notoriously Wei Zhongxian, who essentially usurped the power of the emperor, passing decrees in the emperor's name and



FIGURE 1.1 Map of China.

arresting and persecuting any ministers who might try to stand in his way.

Internally, the country was wracked by drought in the north and floods in the south. While natural disaster was a perennial threat—the traditional truism was that the peasants stood neck deep in water, and any little ripple would drown them—a strong and solvent dynasty could respond with appropriate relief measures. A righteous emperor, it was believed, ruled by virtue of the mandate of heaven: When things began to go wrong in the empire, the obvious conclusion was that the emperor had lost the mandate to rule. Natural disaster wreaked such havoc that hundreds of thousands of peasants died from starvation, and the dead began to clog the roadside ditches. Those who survived were driven off their barren land, becoming drifting people who, at the peak of famine in the early 1500s, numbered in the millions. In desperation, many took up banditry, and the country became infested with bandit gangs.

In addition to these internal problems, the Ming empire faced external problems, including, for example, the stress of the Japanese invasions of Korea under Toyotomi Hideyoshi. Because of their tributary relationship with Korea, which included a mutual agreement for military support should either side ask, China sent troops to defend Korea against these invasions, first in 1592 and again in 1597. While they succeeded in turning the Japanese back, the invasions proved a serious drain on the imperial treasury.

The most difficult threat to the Ming dynasty, however, was not Japan, but a new force emerging on the northeastern frontier: the semi-nomadic Manchu tribes, newly united in 1616 by the dynamic and charismatic leader Nurhaci Aishingioro. The Ming, aware of this rising threat, expended enormous financial, military, and diplomatic resources in the first decades of the 1600s trying to eliminate this Manchu challenge. But, having lost control over conditions within the country, the Ming found themselves beset not only by the Manchus, but by internal peasant rebellion. Preoccupied with the immediate threat of rebels at the gates of the Forbidden City, the Ming allowed its forces to be

drawn into the decisive Battle of Shanhaiguan in March 1644, and deploying the age-old tactic of "using one barbarian against another," Ming forces, under the command of Ming general Wu Sangui, allied with Manchus against the rebels, forcing the rebels into a hasty and disorganized retreat. But now, rather than turn on the Manchus, Wu joined them, charging on toward Beijing. The desperate Chongzhen emperor, holed up and defenseless in the Forbidden City, killed his family and, exiting the back gates of the palace, hanged himself from a tree at the top of Coal Hill Mountain, leaving behind an apocryphal suicide note:

> I die unable to face my ancestors in the underworld, dejected and ashamed. May the rebels dismember my corpse and slaughter my officials, but let them not despoil the imperial tombs nor harm a single one of our people.[1]

The 276-year-old Ming dynasty had come to an abrupt end.

Building the Great Qing

By sealing the fate of the ailing Ming dynasty, the Battle of Shanhaiguan recharted the course of Chinese history for the next three centuries. In the areas under Qing control, the political infrastructure was rebuilt and social order was restored. Refugees gradually returned home to till the land they had abandoned, and their taxes helped to build the coffers of the new regime. While Wu Sangui led the Qing army to extend control over the empire, the Qing emperor Shunzhi (r. 1643–1662) moved to the imperial palace in Beijing. The Qing had earned the mandate as the new ruling dynasty, and they adopted the dynastic name "Qing," meaning "clear," associating the new dynasty with the water element in the five elements, and thus symbolically elevating itself over the Ming, whose name, "Bright," was associated with the fire element.

Building the new empire took up the entire century that followed. Military action to consolidate Manchu control over China first focused on eliminating potential enemies within China proper. The Qing did not shy away from imposing extreme measures to eradicate resistance, going so far as to annihilate entire populations in towns that refused to surrender. In the conquered territory, the Qing rulers demanded that all male subjects shave their foreheads in the Manchu style, retaining a single braid, or queue, down their backs in an overt gesture of submission to the authority of the Qing. For many Han literati who regarded their bodies as having been bequeathed to them by their parents and therefore sacred, this was a bitter pill. Resistance was especially strenuous in the lower Yangzi River area, where the concept of Han superiority over the "barbarian" nomads was most deeply rooted.

Because no great empire can rule through force alone, however, over time the Qing rulers also endeavored to disable resistance to their rule by softening their policies toward the conquered Chinese. Having never thought of themselves as just warriors like the Mongols, the Manchus followed the Ming model of the civil service examination long before they took over Beijing. As they consolidated control over the country, they expanded the practice of recruiting Han literati into government service. The Qing civil service examination, like its Ming predecessor, centered on Confucian teachings and thus appealed greatly to the Han literati. As their ranks in the bureaucracy expanded, the division between the Han and the Manchus, though always complicated and never entirely erased, became blurred.

After pacifying China proper, the Qing turned its efforts toward territorial expansion. Utilizing a judicious mixture of military campaigns and diplomacy,

1 Quoted in Frederic Wakeman, Jr., *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 226.

the Qing came to terms with the Russians in the northeast, permanently ended the belligerence of the Mongol tribes in the north and northwest, and incorporated the areas of the extensive Tibetan plateau into its governing system. By 1750, the great Qing empire had expanded to include all of China proper, Manchuria, Mongolia, Tibet, and the western regions reaching into Central Asia.

The Manchus adapted their methods from deeply rooted Chinese patterns dating back to antiquity, creating complex systems that set the basic tone for the working of China's politics, its economy, and its cultural orientation. These patterns became the cultural DNA that left a unique imprint on the making of modern China.

The Imperial System

The first of such systems was the imperial system. The imperial system assumed its basic framework when the first emperor of Qin, Qin Shihuang, unified the country as an empire in 221 BCE. For centuries prior to the Qin unification, hereditary lords had monopolized government offices and frequently used their status as members of the royal



FIGURE 1.2 Map of Qing empire.

family to challenge royal power. Having subdued the hereditary lords, Qin Shihuang built a bureaucracy to take their place in the governance of the empire, greatly strengthening the power of the emperor, who now had the power to appoint—and fire—his officials who were no longer family members governing by hereditary right. To carry out his rule, Qin divided the land into thirty-six prefectures, each run by prefects directly appointed by the emperor, and further subdivided into counties, each run by county magistrates, also directly appointed by the emperor. The prefects and magistrates were responsible for maintaining order and collecting taxes, but they did so *for* the emperor and they answered *to* the emperor. Under the imperial system that thus emerged, the emperor claimed essentially all powers: executive, legislative, and judicial, and he ruled at all levels: empire wide, regional, and local.

As a system, imperial rule was by no means unique to China. In the centuries that followed the Qin dynasty, the system was continuously put to test and challenged by the rise of regional powers, the religious order, and outsiders, similar to its counterparts elsewhere. What was unique to China was that this system became perennial: Each time it survived a challenge, such as the overthrow of a dynasty, a new dynasty emerged, and the imperial system revived and was further fine-tuned. The command of the military, for example, had been removed from the hands of the generals and was taken in the firm grip of the emperor. In this way, a policy initiated in the tenth century was subsequently confirmed and institutionalized. According to the "rule of avoidance," each government official was forbidden to serve in his home province. This measure was designed to prevent any official from building up personalized local support based on family or other ties. When the Ming dynasty was founded in 1368, the office of chancellor was removed altogether, simply because whoever occupied that position had been proven most likely to usurp the throne. Despite challenges that continued to emerge, such as peasant rebellions and repeated invasions by the northern nomads, the challengers tended to aim at stealing the throne rather than replacing the system. In fact, to one degree or another, almost all these challengers, nomads and rebels alike, took up the system for themselves. Unlike in Europe where imperial rule was often compromised by the feudal lords, in China, political unity under the emperor was the norm.

The Landowning System

Even if the imperial system retained its essential form, the land system in China went through several changes over the long course of history. Through most of the Zhou dynasty (1046 BCE–256 BCE) land was claimed by the Zhou king in name, owned by the hereditary regional and local lords, in fact, and tilled by the peasants. The tillers' rights to the land were not explicit. This whole system, known as Zhou feudalism, changed starting in the fourth century BCE when Shang Yang (390–338 BCE) introduced a reform to the Qin State (under which unification of the empire would occur) that recognized the rights of the tillers and ruled that they would pay taxes directly to the Qin king, not to the lords as they had formally done. The reform allowed the Qin king to develop enormous power and ultimately paved the way for Qin Shihuang to unify the country.

The institution of private landowning, however, resulted in the rise of powerful families based on large landowning—over a long period of time, these land-owning families grew powerful enough to pose a challenge to imperial power. When such a challenge was in its full swing at the end of the Han dynasty in the third century CE, it shattered political unity into pieces. At that time, an initiative gathered momentum to allow the state to set a limit on landowning as a way to control the excessive power of the big landlords and to restore order. Ironically, this initiative was consolidated by a nomadic invading group: the horse-riding Tuoba (also referred to as Tabgach) who conquered northern China during the

long period of disunion that followed the fall of the Han dynasty in 220 CE. In 485, having established the Northern Wei dynasty, they introduced the equal-field system in which the emperor claimed the ultimate ownership of all lands, which he then distributed to individual tilling families, who then owed the emperor taxes, labor, and military duty in return. The system did help restore order in a short run, and in a long run it left behind a legacy that would mutate to become a form of primitive socialism.

The equal-field land system did not last long, however, for although sound in theory, in practice it required a complex and costly system of administration—land was supposed to return to the state for redistribution on the death of the initial designee, for example. Administering this was too great a burden for any premodern regime. Consequently, by the eighth century private landownership had once again been established. While large-scale landowning expanded, as it had in earlier times, it stopped short of becoming a threat to the central power of the state because the practice of partible inheritance, that is, dividing family estates evenly among all the heirs (in traditional China this meant all male heirs), became well established. Under this practice, land-holdings were parceled out into smaller pieces with every generation. "Rarely does family wealth last for three generations," claims a Chinese saying. As land ownership was subjected to continuous divisions, by the modern era, small-holding, self-cultivating, and tax-paying peasants came to constitute the bulk of the Chinese population.

The Commercial Sector

It is a mistake to assume that China was only a society of peasants, however. As in other parts of the world, commerce was an element of China's life and began to develop rapidly, especially in the tenth century when a cycle of global warming helped to initiate a period of sustained economic growth. This economic growth coincided with the shift of political gravity to the south and a series of technological innovations, which jointly led to the onset of the maritime trade. The resulting expansion of cross-cultural exchanges not only opened more opportunities for the Chinese, but also altered their social structure. The subsequent Mongol conquest in the thirteenth century, despite all the accompanying interruptions in Chinese life, further propelled the trend of commercialization by opening communication between different regions in the vast empire and beyond and facilitating a revival of the ancient trade network, the so-called silk road system, which linked China to the greater Eurasian world.

As a result of this upsurge in commerce, by the dawn of the modern era, a thriving commercial sector was firmly in place in Chinese society. Most scholars today agree that more than 80 percent of the population in premodern China lived primarily off the land but supplemented their incomes by engaging in trade. While the number was not too different from that in Europe during the same period, the economic structure in Qing China was quite different. In China, the villages were connected to periodic markets, usually within a day's walk, which allowed the villagers to trade their produce. A number of these periodic markets, in turn, were further connected to a more metropolitan center, where a greater volume and variety of commodities were gathered and then redistributed to other parts of the country. Cotton, grown in the north, was shipped to Central China where it was woven into cloth. Products from South and Central China, such as rice, silk, and tea, were in turn farmed, processed, packaged, and redistributed to the north.

In predominantly agricultural China, farming was viewed as the foundation of society, and the rulers were advised to restrain from competing with the general populace for commercial profits. The government policy toward commerce bore the mark of this tradition. On the one hand, the government

drew tax revenues primarily from land so that it would not grow dependent on commerce. On the other hand, it felt justified to extract money from the merchants on an *ad hoc* basis, euphemistically calling such exactions "contributions." For an individual merchant, the better he cultivated good terms with the government—albeit by tacit understanding rather than by law—the greater his chances of success. As a result, it was common that one acquired wealth by doing business but safeguarded that wealth by investing in land.

Neo-Confucianism

Buddhism, with its more esoteric and abstract ideas, entered China in the first century CE and gained a solid foothold, offering a philosophical and religious richness that both complemented and contrasted with Confucianism. By the time of the Song dynasty, partially influenced by the cosmic and transcendent message of Buddhism, Confucianism began to develop into a vast confluence of thoughts known as Neo-Confucianism, which offered a comprehensive explanation of the working of human relations and associated the human realm with the metaphysical concept of *li*, or "principle," which, because it runs through all phenomena in the universe, governs not only human society but also the natural order. With such association, imperial rule became better justified. From the Song period onward, Neo-Confucianism was identified as the official ideology of the state (and also became the standard Confucianism of Korea, Japan, and Vietnam).

The Civil Service Examination System

The civil service examination was first adopted informally during the Han (206 BCE–220 CE) period as a way for the emperor to recruit, select, and appoint talented people to staff the imperial bureaucracy. The Chinese bureaucratic system embraced what has been called the principle of "rule by merit." In theory, the exam was opened to all males, regardless of their birth or social status, and the most talented men would thus be appointed to official positions in the bureaucracy. After the Han fell, the use of the examination was eclipsed by competition for power among wealthy families, but when the Tang dynasty was founded in the seventh century, the civil service exam was not only restored, but further streamlined and standardized, providing a viable venue for a much larger pool of candidates to join the government service. The civil service examination system subsequently became a defining feature of Chinese society.

The examination system was highly regularized and was offered once every three years and at three levels. The first was the county level. Those who passed would earn the degree *xiucai*, "flowery talent," which qualified them to move on to take the exam in the provincial level. Upon passing the provincial exam, one would be conferred a more advanced degree, *juren*, "elevated man," a degree that came with many privileges, including exemption from drafted labor. A *juren* also became eligible for taking the exam at the third and highest level: the national level, held in the capital; those who passed this exam earned the esteemed degree of *jinshi*, "advanced man." These degree-holders, a miniscule portion of the population, constituted a pool of candidates from which the emperor drew to staff the bureaucracy. As social elite, they also served as a link between the mandarins above and the commoners below, and because the exam was centered entirely on the examinee's knowledge of the Confucian classics and the accepted commentaries, this elite class of scholar-officials was thoroughly educated and indoctrinated in and imbued with Confucianism. Indeed, it might be said that China's contemporary education system, with its emphasis on rote learning, and the contemporary college entrance exam system, have been deeply shaped by the tradition of the civil service exam, although the system was officially abolished in 1905 near the end of the Qing dynasty.

Social Class System

The traditional social class system in China was shaped by Confucian ideas on the role and value of the various functions or occupations in society. Because it was believed that social order and harmony was achieved via good government, at the top of the system was the class of the scholar-officials, those men who had passed the civil service exam and had been appointed to official positions in the imperial bureaucracy. Because the examination system was legally open to men from all classes, the traditional Chinese elite was not a closed class—the possibility of upward mobility, even if supremely elusive to the average peasant out in the field, always existed. The mere fact that access to this elite class was even remotely possible gave Chinese society a certain flavor, reinforced Confucianism, and helped to expand literacy in traditional China. By some scholarly estimates, late in the traditional period as much as 40 percent of the male population in China were literate. There were indeed cases of intelligent peasant boys whose families, villages, and clans pooled resources to provide the proper education to enable boys to study and sit for the exam. Such was the prestige and status of the scholar-official class that wealthy merchant families, rather than reinvesting their profits in their businesses, might use their capital to educate their sons to prepare them for the exams.

The second class in Confucian Chinese society, and to which the majority of the population belonged, were the peasants. Obviously, from the standpoint of utility, the peasants were indispensable: Not only did they grow the food to feed the people, their taxes provided the government with revenue. Below the peasants, the third Confucian class were the artisans, such as carpenters, weavers, brewers, and so forth, who crafted necessary items for everyday life. Merchants occupied the lowest of the four Confucian classes, deemed a pariah class because they produced nothing but merely took from here, sold to there, and reaped the profit in between. Their status was suspect, in part because they were generally an itinerant group, and in a system that valued stability and idealized an unchanging norm, merchants were often considered a threat to social order because as they traveled to peddle their wares, they also spread news—and possibly dissent. Although a merchant might be fabulously wealthy, sumptuary laws that spelled out what types of dwellings, clothing, and transportation each rank could use, restricted them from completely indulging in their wealth. Their wealth did not bring them respect or status.

Japan

Establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate

In 1582, while at the height of his power, warlord Oda Nobunaga (1532–1582) prepared for battle against the rival Mori clan. Having secured control over the Kanto Plain of central Japan, he now set out to solidify control over the Chugoku region, at the southern tip of the main island of Honshu. En route to battle, Oda stopped for a night, resting at the Honno temple in Kyoto, lulled into a sense of security deep within his own territory. Since the break-up of the Ashikaga Shogunate over a century earlier, the country had been roiled by war and chaos as rival warlords and their samurai warriors competed to conquer and rule. That night, for reasons still disputed by historians, Nobunaga's trusted general Akechi Mitsuhide, turned on his master and ambushed the temple. Bereft of options, Nobunaga deprived his turn-coat opponent of the chance to strike the final blow and instead committed ritual suicide, *seppuku*, as the centuries-old temple burned around him. Just eleven days later, Mitsuhide met his fate in the Battle of Yamazaki, defeated by one of Nobunaga's top generals, Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

The Tokugawa Shogunate (military government) emerged from the chaos of Japan's Warring



FIGURE 1.3 Map of Japan.

States period (1467–1568) to consolidate control over the nation, becoming the last in a succession of three military governments to control Japan. In the process of consolidating control over the country, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the second of the three great unifiers, put in place policies that not only shaped the Tokugawa system of military government itself, but would profoundly influence Japan's development over the course of the Tokugawa period and beyond.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the Foundations of Tokugawa Rule

With his victory in the Battle of Yamazaki, Hideyoshi (1537–1598), a peasant of such humble birth that he started out as Nobunaga's sandal bearer (his father served as a foot soldier to Nobunaga) took over the provinces that Nobunaga controlled—nearly half the country—and over the next half decade continued to consolidate his control by inducing the feudal lords, known as *daimyo*, to acknowledge his military superiority. Unable to militarily subdue Tokugawa Ieyasu, the strongest daimyo, Hideyoshi forged a family link by giving his sister to Ieyasu in marriage, having first forced her to divorce her husband, who then killed himself (it was a brutal era). By 1586, Hideyoshi was named grand master by the emperor (his peasant origins prevented him from ever gaining the title shogun), and began to implement a series of policies that would define and shape the Japanese political, economic, social, and international situation over the course of the succeeding Tokugawa period (1603–1868) and beyond.

To establish order and solidify his dominant position after the turmoil of the Warring States, or Sengoku, period (1467–1568) Hideyoshi needed to assert clear control over the people and the land. During the Warring States era, the daimyo had built up their forces by recruiting and training men from any walk of life to serve as their samurai warriors. But the opportunity to rise in power and status through military prowess, a dynamic that had begun to emerge in the late twelfth century with the establishment of Japan's first military government, the Kamakura Shogunate, blurred class distinctions and undercut the principle of heredity that was at the base of Japanese society. At the same time, it was not unusual for samurai to abandon their masters and take up farming or for men to serve part time as warriors and part time as farmers. From Hideyoshi's perspective, this social fluidity posed a threat not only to his military control but to the economic basis of the nation as well.

"Freezing" Society

To counter these tendencies and stabilize society, while at the same time reinforcing his own power, in 1588 Hideyoshi implemented the Sword Collection Edict and three years later issued the Edict on Changing Status and Residence, both policies intent on "freezing" society—and most importantly, the samurai and peasant classes—in place. In the sword hunt (we might call it one of history's early cases of "gun" control) Hideyoshi directed that all weapons—"any swords, short swords, bows, spears, firearms, or other types of arms"—be confiscated from those among the population not at that time serving as samurai. Farmers were instead directed not to pursue the arts of war and instead "give their undivided attention to agriculture and sericulture [silk production]." The policy allowed peasants to retain agricultural implements, but all other weapons and potential weapons were smelted and used as nails in building the Great Buddha at the Asuka temple in Nara, an act which would, the Edict declared, "benefit the people not only in this life but also in the life hereafter." After the completion of the sword hunt, only samurai were allowed to carry swords; thus, a clear line was drawn between the samurai and the peasantry, and daimyo could no longer recruit new samurai from among the lower classes.[2]

The Edict on Changing Status and Residence, issued in 1591, was a de jure reinforcement of the de facto changes created by the sword hunt. This edict stipulated that samurai must remain samurai and could not "take up the life of a peasant." Likewise, a peasant must remain a peasant, he could

2 "The Sword Collection Edict," in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, eds. Wm. Theodore de Bary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur Tiedemann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 329.

not "abandon his fields." Finally, the third article of the edict stated that no samurai could abandon or change masters. If any did so without permission, "the heads of three men shall be offered in compensation to the original master."[3] No longer free to work the land or engage in other occupations, the samurai were thus bound to their masters and became economically dependent on them; the peasants were tied to the land. Hideyoshi's edicts stabilized the military and agricultural bases of the country.

Controlling the Daimyo

During this same period, from 1583 to 1598, Hideyoshi further established control over the land by conducting the Taiko Survey, a massive undertaking of cadastral surveys—land surveys that established what land was under cultivation, how productive it was, and thus what the tax rate was and who was responsible for paying taxes on that land. The land survey was done nationally, using standardized measures by teams under Hideyoshi's direction rather than by local authorities. Productivity of the land was assessed in *koku* of rice, a volumetric measurement equivalent to approximately five bushels (about 330 pounds of rice), an estimate of the amount of rice needed to keep a man alive for a year. The *koku* became the standard used to measure income, taxation, and land value and would remain so until the Meiji Restoration of 1868. The land survey also determined who was and who was not a daimyo: To qualify as a daimyo, one had to control land that produced *at least* 10,000 *koku* of rice. Although all land *in theory* was owned by the emperor, in practice, land was treated as private property, so by establishing clear title to land, Hideyoshi's land surveys provided greater incentive to the peasantry to remain on their land, improve it, and increase productivity. Taxes were collected from the village as a whole (the village headman determining each household's portion), and peasants were forbidden to move from their village. With tax liability clearly established, the daimyo now had a set income and, more importantly, clear control over their land, a benefit of subordination to Hideyoshi.

Technically, Hideyoshi's edicts could only be enforced in the territories that Hideyoshi directly controlled. But, seeing the advantages Hideyoshi's policies created, other daimyo followed his lead and implemented the policies in their own areas. In contrast to Nobunaga's ruthlessness toward his defeated rivals, Hideyoshi was willing to delegate authority over territories to the vanquished—as long as they in turn subordinated themselves to his authority. The daimyo benefited from their subordination and from enacting his policies because it meant, in turn, that they now each had a standing army, as well as a steady source of income, since taxes were collected—and remained—at the domain level. Hideyoshi legitimized all these changes and solidified daimyo loyalty to himself by invoking his own loyalty to the emperor. Because they were subordinate to him, this meant daimyo had pledged loyalty to the emperor as well. In 1591, Hideyoshi took the title *kampaku*, or regent.

Urbanization of the Samurai

As these policies were being implemented, another foundation of Hideyoshi's system of control was also emerging—the castle town. Over the course of the last twenty years of the 1500s, daimyo throughout Japan were building fortified military headquarters. The Japanese castle, at the heart of the city, was a massive wood and stone construction, militarily fortified with a commanding and defensive view over the surrounding territory. The castle served as the residence of the daimyo, but also as the military headquarters and administrative center of their domain (or *han*). With the Edict on Change of Status and Residence, which mandated that the samurai

3 "Restrictions on Change of Status and Residence," in *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 330.



FIGURE 1.4 Tokugawa Era Samurai.

must remain with their masters and could not return to the land, the castle towns became the headquarters for the samurai, whose residences surrounded the castle in a defensive perimeter. The samurai ties to the land were cut. No longer rewarded for their service with fiefs of land, they were instead compensated with stipends in the form of *koku* of rice. No longer a landed elite whose property gave them an inherent power, the samurai were transformed into a bureaucratic elite entirely dependent on their daimyo. Thus, the castle towns reinforced the removal of the samurai from the land—the urbanization of the samurai—which would profoundly shape society and the economy for the next three hundred years, leading to the emergence of a strong merchant class and the development of a market economy. Even today, most of Japan's largest cities began their urban incarnations as castle towns, including Edo (now Tokyo).

The urbanization of the samurai profoundly affected the peasant, artisan, and merchant classes as well. The concentration of relatively well-to-do samurai in the castle towns, who earned a set income from their daimyo, attracted merchants and artisans, and castle towns soon became not only the military and political centers, but economic and cultural hubs as well. Paid in stipends of rice, the samurai had to sell their rice to obtain other necessary goods, and a new class of rice merchants emerged. Peasants too, who once had to be largely self-sufficient, could now specialize and, assured of a market, began to produce tobacco and silk, earning income that enabled them to purchase goods they had previously had to make themselves.

The return of peace and stability after one hundred years of chaos allowed for cultural growth. The ancient but vital teachings of Buddhism, which originated in India and arrived in Japan via China and Korea in the sixth century, continued to have a profound impact in Japan, as evidenced by a rich artistic and architectural tradition. Buddhism teaches that life is suffering caused by our desire and greed, and we can only eliminate suffering by eliminating desire, thus achieving nirvana or enlightenment and ending the cycle of birth and rebirth. Buddhism, particularly Zen Buddhism, which taught sudden enlightenment and emphasized meditation and self-denial, formed a core of the samurai ethos. The samurai ethos of loyalty and death also found expression in the meditative qualities of the ritualized tea ceremony and flower arrangement.

Christianity too made its way to Japan during this period, with Jesuit missionaries arriving on Japanese shores in 1549. Christianity's impact in Japan was closely associated with politics and economics, and early daimyo converts were perhaps more attracted to the possibilities of Western trade—most notably the Portuguese arquebus—than to the Christian message itself. Hideyoshi himself had a mixed reaction to Christianity, and although personally cordial to the missionaries (he is said to have professed that he might have considered converting if not for the Roman Catholic insistence on monogamy), in the 1580s, with some two hundred thousand Japanese converts in Japan's southern-most island of Kyushu, he issued edicts to expel missionaries from Japan and to prevent the further spread of Christianity in Japan. Presumably, these edicts were politically rather than theologically motivated, intended to prevent loyalty to the Pope and/or the Christian God from superseding loyalty to Hideyoshi or the

emperor. The prohibition of Christianity also prevented those daimyo who conveniently converted to Christianity as a way to cement their trade relations with Portuguese traders from getting access to Western traders (and firearms).

Having consolidated control over Japanese territory, Hideyoshi turned his attention to the continent, and in 1592 and 1597 launched two disastrous efforts to invade China—both of which made it as far as Korea (with important impact on both China and Korea) before being turned back. The tragedy of Hideyoshi's life, however, was his failure to produce a stable full of sons and potential successors. Hideyoshi's first son had died at age two in 1591, after which he had adopted a nephew. When his second son, Hideyori, was born in 1593, he forced his nephew, then 27, to commit suicide to eliminate any possible rival to his own biological son. From his deathbed in 1598, Hideyoshi induced his top five daimyo to swear their allegiance to his son, empowering Tokugawa Ieyasu to serve as regent until the five-year-old Hideyori came of age. That the following era would be the Tokugawa era should be sufficient explanation of the viability of *that* arrangement: The vaunted samurai loyalty was best reinforced by the blade.

Korea

Founding of the Chosŏn Dynasty

Throughout the traditional period, and to a large degree even today, events in Korea are closely tied to conditions in China. Such was the case with the founding of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910). The Ming dynasty's successful overthrow of the Mongol Yuan dynasty from China in 1368 had a reverberating effect on Korea that ultimately resulted in the founding of Korea's long-lasting and final dynasty, the Chosŏn dynasty, which resumed a close relationship with China, maintaining, for example, its tributary relationship with its large continental neighbor. Replacing Koryŏ Buddhism with Confucianism as the dominant religious and philosophical influence, the Chosŏn dynasty built a society and political structure that closely emulated the Chinese pattern.

The Ming dynasty's ousting of the Mongol Yuan dynasty threw Korea's Koryŏ dynasty into controversy, divided over the question of whether they should maintain loyalty to the Yuan Dynasty, or acknowledge China's new Ming dynasty as the new rulers of China. Korea would not have the luxury of making that decision on their own, however: In 1388, the Ming emperor sent an expeditionary force against Koryŏ to compel them to shift their loyalty to the Ming. Korean General Yi Sŏng-gye, ordered by his king to lead the Koryŏ military against the Ming, had a different idea; he instead staged a coup against his own Koryŏ government. Yi Sŏng-gye thus took power and founded the Chosŏn dynasty in 1392.

Korea has had a unified government since 668 when the kingdom of Silla was established. Koryŏ, from which the modern name of Korea derives, succeeded Silla in 918. Yi Sŏng-gye's Chosŏn dynasty with its capital in Seoul, lasted until 1910, when Japan took colonial control over Korea. Because Korea is a peninsula appended to the East Asian land mass dominated by China, much of Chosŏn's history and development has been deeply affected by its much larger (forty times) neighbor.

Relations with China

One of the first steps Yi Sŏng-gye (who reigned as King Taejo) took was to accept tributary status with China, explicitly transferring Korean loyalty to China's new Ming dynasty.

Another of King Taejo's new policies upon founding the dynasty was to undercut the Buddhist establishment in Korea; during the Koryŏ dynasty, Buddhism had been the dominant state religion. The new Chosŏn dynasty confiscated land and holdings from the powerful Buddhist monasteries, thus limiting their power and influence.



FIGURE 1.5 Korean Peninsula.

In place of Buddhism, Chosŏn consciously adopted Confucianism from its larger neighbor to shore up Chinese support. As we have seen, Confucian philosophy orders society hierarchically, beginning with relationships within the family, where the wife is subordinate to the husband, the son to the father, and the younger brother to the elder brother. This extends to the king in that the subject is subordinate to the ruler. Socially, the landed and intellectual elite, known as yangban (similar to the gentry in China) were superior to commoners. Additionally, Confucianism taught that everyone should know their place in the hierarchy and accept it. If that occurred, then there would be harmony, beginning in the family and emanating out to society as a whole. Thus, one should not question the ruler or their superiors in society. Since the Chosŏn dynasty lasted for over five centuries, one might argue that this was a successful strategy.

Government and Administration

Chosŏn Korea also emulated China in terms of its political structure. The king was, of course, at the top of the government, and directly beneath him were the state council and the six ministries. The entire government was overseen by the Censorate, which monitored the functioning of government and could act as a brake on monarchic power. This bureau was also modelled after the Chinese pattern, but in Korea it had much greater power—the Korean king never enjoyed the kind of absolute power as the Chinese emperor did.

Under the rule of the new dynasty, the country was divided into eight provinces for administration. Each province was further broken down into a number of counties. The officials at both the provincial level and the county level were appointed by the government from those yangban men who had passed the civil service exam. Due to a policy called the "law of avoidance," no official could serve in his home district. This was intended to prevent any individual or family from gaining too much power. The county magistrate, the lowest level government appointee, was responsible for tax collection, crime prevention, judging criminal and civil law suits, promoting agriculture, and maintaining good communication with the center.

As typically happened during the latter part of a dynasty, by the end of the previous Koryŏ dynasty, more and more land had fallen into the hands of large private landlords, limiting the ability of the state to collect revenue. Seeking a remedy, Yi Sŏnggye ordered that a land survey be conducted. He nationalized all land (that is, brought it under state ownership) and redistributed it. This enabled him to reward his supporters and made more land subject to taxation, thus increasing government revenues. Of central importance to the government was assuring an adequate and steady revenue—this, of course, was the function of taxation. The heaviest tax burden fell on the peasantry, who were required to pay a land tax, levied in grain (typically rice), as a percentage of their harvest. Peasants were also required to pay a tribute tax, that is, locally produced products such as timber, metal ores, or even ginseng. This could be a problem for peasants because even though those products might be from their area, they did not necessarily produce them themselves, but nevertheless had to come up with them. To deal with this situation, a group of men called "tribute men" sprang up, who would procure the items, then take payment from the peasants in rice or cloth for the items. Finally, peasants were also subject to a labor tax, which included both corvée service by providing labor to build roads and bridges, engage in mining, and so on for the government, and by providing military service. Male peasants between the ages sixteen and sixty were obligated to give six days of labor service to the government annually (and they had to feed and clothe themselves while in service), although this could often extend to more than six days per year. It could be a very onerous burden indeed for a peasant family to have to send their fathers or sons off to government service.

As Korea looked to China and Confucianism for models, it also copied the way that China interpreted historical development, based on cycles that resembled a sine curve. The dynastic cycle suggested that the first half of a dynasty was dynamic and ascending. In the case of Chosŏn, this was exemplified by the rule of the fourth king, Sejong, whose face currently graces Korea's 10,000 *wŏn* note. During his reign (1418–1450), developments such as the invention of a water gauge allowed the government to estimate the size of that season's crop and thus levy the appropriate amount of taxes. Perhaps even more significant was the development during his reign of the Korean alphabet, or *han'gŭl*, a phonetic script to supplement the Chinese characters. While celebrated now, during the Chosŏn period *han'gŭl* was seen largely as a language for use by women or those with lesser educations. The yangban elite eschewed *han'gŭl* in favor of Chinese characters. Even today, South Koreans who want to call attention to their status will use Chinese characters on their business cards. By contrast, North Korea uses *han'gŭl* exclusively, rejecting the use of a non-Korean language.

Vietnam

Relations with China

Like Korea, Vietnam had a complicated relationship with China. More distant from the Chinese capital than Korea, Vietnam traditionally was not as closely integrated into the Chinese system as Korea was. While Korea had, for the most part, remained independent of direct Chinese control (one notable exception was the Han dynasty control over parts of northern Korea), Vietnam had at various times come under direct Chinese control, most prominently the period stretching from about 111 BCE to 938 CE and again for a short time during the early Ming dynasty from 1407–1427. During this time, particularly the nearly one-thousand-year period of Chinese control, Vietnamese rulers had absorbed a variety of elements of Chinese culture, including the use of the Chinese writing system, Buddhist and Taoist teachings, and, certainly most significantly in terms of government, the teachings of Confucianism. The periods of direct Chinese control thus left a strong Chinese cultural imprint in Vietnam but also contributed to the development in Vietnam of a fierce drive for national independence, tempered by a recognition that one of the best ways to handle its gigantic northern neighbor was through friendship and appeasement rather than direct confrontation and conflict. So, while various Vietnamese rulers discovered that the best way to propitiate their much larger neighbor to the north was, like the Koreans, to accept tributary status, the Vietnamese relationship with China was more distant and cooler than was Korea's.

North-South Competition for Control

By the time of China's Ming–Qing transition in the mid-seventeenth century, Vietnam's Le dynasty, after a brilliant start under the early emperors who closely emulated Chinese models in establishing what they hoped would be lasting rule, fell into disarray. The trouble began when the early Le dynasty rulers, having built up military power in the north, used that power to extend Le rule further and further south, even conquering the Cham kingdom in Central Vietnam in the 1470s and pushing as far south as the Mekong Delta region. The conquest of new territory in the south, however, gave an opening for northern Vietnamese families who sought to exploit these territories for their own aggrandizement. By the early 1500s, feuding between two of these powerful families, the Trinh and the Nguyen, erupted into civil unrest that would stretch all the way into the mid-eighteenth century. While nominally still governed by the Le dynasty, the country was divided into two sections ruled by designees of the Le dynasty. Under this arrangement, the north was controlled by the pro-Chinese Trinh family and the south controlled by the anti-Chinese Nguyen,

an early precedent for the north-south division of the country in the middle of the twentieth century. Conflict between the Nguyen and Trinh families caused great problems in the countryside, disrupting peasant life as the competing powers fought one another for land and impeded agriculture. It was against this backdrop that Vietnam would experience its first contacts with the West.

Early Western Contact

Southeast Asia was among the first areas in Asia to experience on-going contact with the West. In general, Western powers came into Southeast Asia through trade and not conquest, a scenario that would change after the maritime powers of the Portuguese, Dutch, and Spanish captured their "market shares." Organized Western mission efforts in Vietnam were first launched from Portuguese-controlled Macao in the early sixteenth century, although these early efforts to enter Vietnam were mostly unsuccessful and it was not until 1615 the Jesuits Francesco Buzomi (Italian, 1576–1639) and Diego Carvallo (Portuguese, 1578–1624) arrived from Macau at Tourane (Da Nang), and founded the Cochinchinese Mission at Faifo (Hoi An). They were soon joined by Jesuit priest (and mathematician) Christoforo Borri (1583–1632), who would distinguish himself as the first writer to describe Vietnam and Vietnamese society to a European audience. The most famous resident of this mission, however, was Alexander de Rhodes (1591–1660), a Frenchman from the papal seat of Avignon. In 1627, de Rhodes travelled from Macau and had an audience at the Trinh court in Hanoi. It is recorded that six months after his arrival in Vietnam, he began preaching to the public in Vietnamese and within two years of his arrival had baptized 6,700 people. De Rhodes has been credited with the development of *quoc ngu*, the phonetic alphabet used in the writing of modern Vietnamese. The writing system was actually the collective effort of Portuguese and Italian Jesuits, but de Rhodes was



FIGURE 1.6 Map of Vietnam.

its most famous promoter. De Rhodes also wrote the first catechism in Vietnamese and published a Vietnamese-Latin-Portuguese dictionary.

In 1630 de Rhodes was expelled from the north by Trinh/Le authorities. Rather than face a suspicious Nguyen court in the south, de Rhodes

retreated to Macau, attempting without success to return to Vietnam in 1640 and 1645. In 1649 he returned to Europe and travelled to Rome to plead for greater support for the Catholic missions in Asia. In 1653, he published a book on Vietnam, colorfully describing the land as rich and boasting an extremely wealthy population, thus firing the imaginations of European adventurers, as well as the French Church, which would serve as patron to the missionary movement in Vietnam. De Rhodes's proposals became Church policy and French missionaries continued to proselytize in Vietnam.

Missionaries and their Vietnamese converts faced court persecution in both the north and the south, even while the Trinh and Nguyen courts freely admitted Buddhist monks from China to preach in Vietnam. This was largely due to the pressure Confucian-trained officials of the Trinh and Nguyen courts placed on the throne. Christian beliefs appeared to be completely incompatible with Confucian state doctrine. The rites controversy (ca. 1640–1742) of Qing China had an influence on the Vietnamese rulers' thinking. Christian missionaries' attack on polygamy was seen as harmful to the integrity of the Confucian family structure; following one's own moral conscience, rather than the publicly stated civic code, was seen as subversively individualistic. In rumors similar to those that would later fuel China's 1870 Tianjin massacre, Christian missionaries were purported to kidnap children for use in religious rituals and remove the eyes and organs of the dead, practices that disgusted and horrified local rulers throughout the region. European missionaries had to wait for their own governments to develop greater interest in Vietnam before their efforts began to have much influence, and, as is often the case, that interest developed when economic incentives appeared.

Beginning in the 1660s, merchant activities in northern Vietnam also became a front for missionaries. In 1535, Portuguese explorers had arrived at the Bay of Tourane (Da Nang). This site was named Faifo (Hoi An), and it was intended as a center for Portuguese trade and shipping. By 1540, the port had become the major international entry into "Cochinchina" and soon competition developed between the Catholic and Protestant European powers. The Dutch found relative success in East Asia by divorcing trade from religion and not seeking to convert their Asian trading partners to the "true faith." In 1636, with the support of the Nguyen leaders, the Dutch set up their own trading port in southern Vietnam and soon expanded their ambitions, seeking to extend control over trade in the north. They succeeded at setting up a base at Pho Hien and allied themselves with the Trinh as well.

The English faced troubles entering the "market" of Vietnam. In 1613, they failed to gain a foothold at Faifo when their representative Walter Carwarden, dispatched from Japan, was murdered in a rebellion of local inhabitants (perhaps under Portuguese direction). Other British attempts to establish a presence elsewhere in Vietnam were thwarted by the Dutch. However, by 1672, the English had finally opened a trading post in Pho Hien. Their business operations were continually challenged by Le and Trinh leaders, who supported certain Portuguese and Dutch merchants, as well as Vietnamese Catholics. The French arrived even later than the British, after attending to more pressing military matters in Europe. Eight years after the English entered Pho Hien, the French opened their own office (1680). However, the first priority of the early French representatives was missionary work. Domestic critics regarded the earlier failures of other European powers as a bad omen for French efforts, and the entire enterprise came under strong domestic attack in France.

Conclusion

The East Asian nations, with China at the center, each carried features of the Chinese political, social, and economic models, reinforced by Confucian

modes of thought. Each adapted these to their own needs, however, according to their own unique concerns. Over the course of the 1600s, both China and Japan were engaged in building new governmental and social frameworks under the Qing dynasty and the Tokugawa *bakufu*, respectively. Meanwhile, Korea's Chosŏn dynasty, having been founded in 1392, continued to "refine" its society. Vietnam, in the 1700s, countered political disunity with efforts at forging political unity while at the same time experiencing the early influx of Western influence, with both a Western missionary and trade presence. By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, all four of the East Asian nations began to face signs of political and social disruption and decline.

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