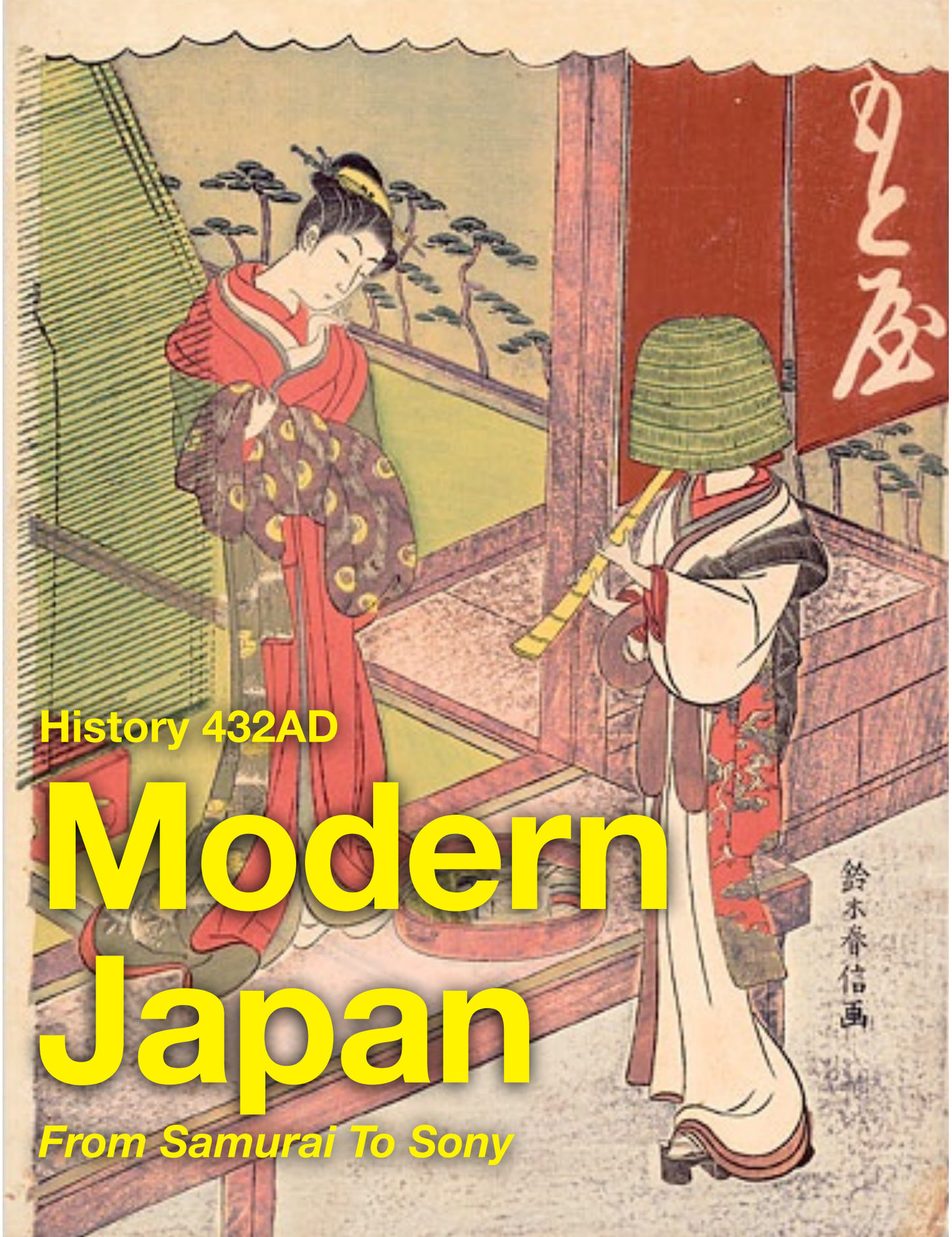

History 432AD
Modern Japan
From Samurai To Sony

Class #3

To Be Japanese

Shinto origins myth. Race and Japanese identity.

Document 1

The Creation Myth of Japan

TRADITIONAL

Shintō creation myth.

Long ago all the elements were mixed together with one germ of life. This germ began to mix things around and around until the heavier part sank and the lighter part rose. A muddy sea that covered the entire earth was created. From this ocean grew a green shoot. It grew and grew until it reached the clouds and there it was transformed into a god. Soon this god grew lonely and began to create other gods. The last two gods it made, Izanagi ("he-who-invites") and Izanami ("she-who-invites") were the most remarkable.

One day as they were walking along they looked down on the ocean from the Floating Bridge of Heaven and wondered what was beneath it. Izanagi thrust a spear embellished with costly gems into the waters and as he pulled it back up some clumps of mud fell back into the sea. They began to harden and grow until they became the islands of Japan.

The two descended to these islands and began to explore, each going in different directions. They created all kinds of plants. When they met again they decided to marry and have children to inhabit the land. The first child Izanami bore was a girl of radiant beauty. The gods decided she was too beautiful to live in Japan, so they put her up in the sky and she became the sun. Their second daughter, Tsuki-yami, became the moon and their third and unruly son, Sosano-wo, was sentenced to the sea, where he creates storms.

Later, their first child, Amaterasu, the sun goddess, bore a son, Jimmu, who became the emperor of Japan and all the emperors since then have claimed descent from him.

After a journey to the underworld, Izanagi promised to create fifteen hundred people a day and this is the origin of those who have ever since populated the islands.

Document 2

A Modern Take On Japanese Identity

BY JAMES FALLOWS

"The Japanese Are Different From You and Me," *The Atlantic*, Sept. 1986, v. 258.

JAPAN IS TURNING ME INTO MRS. TROLLOPE. She was the huffy Englishwoman who viewed the woolly American society of the 1820s and found it insufficiently refined. ("The total and universal want of good, or even pleasing, manners, both in males and females, is so remarkable, that I was constantly endeavoring to account for it," and so forth.) Her mistake, as seems obvious in retrospect, was her failure to distinguish between things about America that were merely different from the ways of her beloved England and things that were truly wrong. The vulgar American diction that so offended her belongs in the first category, slavery in the second.

I will confess that this distinction--between different and wrong--sometimes eludes me in Japan. Much of the time I do keep it in mind. I observe aspects of Japanese life, note their difference from standard practice in the West, and serenely say to myself, who cares? Orthodontia has never caught on in Japan, despite seemingly enormous potential demand, because by the local canon of beauty overlapping and angled-out teeth look fetching, especially in young girls. It was barely a century ago that Japanese women deliberately blackened their teeth in the name of beauty. The delicate odor of decaying teeth was in those days a standard and alluring reference in romantic poetry. This is not how it's done in Scarsdale, but so what? For their part, the Japanese can hardly conceal their distaste for the "butter

smell" that they say wafts out of Westerners or for our brutish practice of wearing the same shoes in the dining room and the toilet.

Similarly, child psychologists and family therapists have told me that the Japanese parent's way of persuading his children to stop doing something is not to say "It's wrong" or "It's unfair" but rather to tell the child, "People will laugh at you." This is not my idea of a wholesome child-rearing philosophy, but I'm not preparing my children for membership in a society that places such stress on harmonious social relations. Several American psychologists have recently claimed that the Japanese approach may in fact equip children for more happiness in life than American practices do. Americans are taught to try to control their destiny; when they can't, they feel they've failed. Japanese children, so these psychologists contend, are taught to adjust themselves to an externally imposed social order, which gives them "secondary control"-- that is, a happy resignation to fate.

Now that Japan has become so notoriously successful, American visitors often cannot help feeling, This is different--and better. Practically anything that has to do with manufacturing and economic organization falls into this category. Recently I toured a Nissan factory an hour outside Tokyo, escorted by a manager who seemed almost embarrassed by the comparisons I asked him to make between his company's standards and GM's or Ford's. Yes, Nissan did insist on a higher grade of steel for its cars. No, the foreign companies had not matched its level of automation. Yes, the gap between managers' earnings and those of assembly workers was tiny compared with that in Detroit. No, the company did not expect trouble surmounting the challenge of the higher yen.

From what I have seen, a tight-knit, almost tribal society like Japan is better set up for straightforward productive competition than is the West. It places less emphasis on profit than on ensuring that every company and every worker will retain a place in the economic order. (Apart from raw materials and American movies, most Japanese would be content, I think, if the country imported nothing at all. Who cares about high prices, as long as everyone is at work?) Its politics is ridden with factions--because of certain peculiarities of the electoral system, politicians can win seats in the Diet with only 10 or 12 percent of their district's vote. (Each district elects several representatives to the Diet, but each voter has only one vote. In a four-member district, for example, the leading candidate might get 35 percent of the total vote, and the next three might get 15, 12, and 8 percent. All four of them would be winners.) But there are few seriously divisive political issues, and the country has a shared sense of national purpose, as the United States last did between 1941 and 1945.

Even beyond the measurable signs of its productive success, Japan seems different and better in those details of daily life that reflect consideration and duty. During my first week here another

American journalist told me that only when I had left would I realize how thoroughly Japan had had me. At the time, I was still reeling from exchange-rate shock and thought she was crazy. But I am beginning to understand what she meant. A thousand times a day in modern society your life is made easier or harder, depending on the care with which someone else has done his job. Are the newspapers delivered on time? Are vending machines fixed when they break? Are the technocrats competent? Do the captains of industry really care about their companies, not just about feathering their own nests? In general, can you count on others to do their best? In Japan you can. Mussolini gave trains that ran on time a bad name. After seeing Japan, I think that on this one point Mussolini had the right idea.

From bureaucrats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (who, I am told, average six hours of overtime a day) to department-store package-wrappers, the Japanese seem immune against the idea that discharging their duty to others might be considered “just a job.” Tipping is virtually unknown in Japan; from the Japanese perspective it seems vulgar, because it implies that the recipient will not do his best unless he is bribed. The no-tipping custom is something you get used to very quickly, because it seems so much more dignified and honorable, not--at least in Japan--because it’s a way of gypping the working class. Japan is famous for the flatness of its income distribution. Year in and year out more than 90 percent of the Japanese tell pollsters that they think of themselves as “middle class”--and here the perception seems accurate, not a delusion as it might be in the United States. Indeed, from the Japanese perspective America seems fantastically wrapped up in and bound by class. American commercials are basically targeted along class lines: one kind of person drinks Miller beer, another buys Steuben glass. Japanese commercials are not--or so I am told by people who produce them. They may aim at different age groups--new mothers, teenage boys, and so forth--but otherwise they address the Japanese as one.

I can’t say exactly, but I would bet that 100,000 people live within half a mile of the apartment where I live with my family. Yet in the evening, when I walk home through the alleyways from the public baths, the neighborhoods are dead quiet--unless my own children are kicking a can along the pavement or noisily playing tag. The containedness and reserve of Japanese life can seem suffocating if you’re used to something different, but they are also admirable, and necessary, if so many people are to coexist so harmoniously in such close quarters. Because the Japanese have agreed not to get on one another’s nerves (and because so much of Tokyo is built only two or three stories high), the city, though intensely crowded, produces nothing like the chronic high-anxiety level of New York. The very low crime rate obviously has something to do with this too. “Is this not, truly, Japan’s golden age?” one American businessman exclaimed, spreading his arms in non-Japanese expansiveness and nearly knocking over the passersby, as we walked near the Imperial Palace on a brilliant sunny day

recently. Everyone was working, Japan was taking a proud place in the world, there were no serious domestic divisions, and the drugs, dissoluteness, and similar disorders that blight the rest of the world barely existed here. Wasn't it obvious that Japan had figured out what still puzzled everybody else?

On the whole, I had to agree. What most Americans fear about Japan is precisely that it works so well. Foreigners who have lived for years in Japan tell me that the legendary Japanese hospitality toward visitors suddenly disappears when you stop being an "honored guest" and slide into the "resident alien" category. In effect, the country is like an expensive, very well run hotel, making the guest comfortable without ever tempting him to think he's found a home. But while it lasts, the hospitality is a delight. Those I interview at least feign more attention and courtesy than their counterparts in the United States have done. A few people have moved beyond the tit-for-tat ritualistic exchange of favors to displays of real generosity. Still, after making all appropriate allowances for the debts I owe them, and all disclaimers about the perils of generalizing after a few months on the scene, I find that two aspects of Japanese life bring out the Mrs. Trollope in me.

ONE IS THE PROMINENCE OF PORNOGRAPHY IN DAILY life. I realize that no one from the land that created Hustler and Deep Throat can sound pious about obscene material. The difference is the degree of choice. In the United States pornography did not enter my life unless I invited it in, and I had no trouble keeping it from my grade-school children. Here it enters unbidden all the time.

Like most other residents of Tokyo, I spend a lot of time on the trains--about three hours a day. There I am surrounded not just by people but also by printed matter-- advertising placards all over the trains, and books, magazines, and newspapers in everyone's hands. The dedicated literacy of Japan is yet another cause for admiration, but the content of the reading matter--especially on the trains, where no one knows his neighbor and in principle everyone is unobserved--is not. Some of the men are reading books, but more are reading either "sports papers" or thick volumes of comics, the size of telephone books, known as manga. What these two media have in common is the porno theme. Sports papers carry detailed coverage of baseball games or sumo tournaments on the outside pages and a few spreads of nearly nude women inside. (The only apparent restriction is that the papers must not display pubic hair.) The comic books, printed on multicolored paper and popular with every segment of the population, are issued weekly and sell in the millions. They run from innocent kids' fare to hard-core pornography.

To some degree the sports papers and the more prurient manga exist to display female bodies, no more and no less, and they differ from their counterparts in other cultures only in the carefree spirit with which men read them in public. I don't know whether

Japanese men consume any more pornography than American ones, but in the United States men look guilty as they slink out of dirty movies, and they rarely read skin magazines in front of women. Japanese men are far less inhibited--perhaps because of the anonymity of the crowded train car, or perhaps because their society is, as often claimed, more matter-of-fact about sex. In any case, the trains and subways are awash in pornography, as are television shows starting as early as 8 P.M. My sons, ages nine and six, very quickly figured out this new aspect of Japanese culture. On train rides they stare goggle-eyed at the lurid fare now available to them.

In addition to its pervasiveness, Japanese subway pornography differs from the Playboys and Penthouses of the West in the graphic nastiness of its themes. Voyeurism plays a big part in the manga, and in a lot of advertisements too. One new publication recently launched a huge advertising campaign billing itself as "the magazine for watchers." Its posters showed people peeping out from under manhole covers or through venetian blinds. In the comics women--more often, teenage girls--are typically peeped up at, from ground level. A major weekly magazine recently published two pages of telephoto-lens shots of couples in advanced stages of love-making in a public park. Most of the teenage girls in Japan spend their days in severe, dark, sailor-style school uniforms, with long skirts. As in Victorian-era fantasies, in the comics the skirts are sure to go. But before the garments are ripped off, the girls are typically spied upon by ecstatic men.

The comics are also quite violent. Women are being accosted, surprised, tied up, beaten, knifed, tortured, and in general given a hard time. Many who are so treated are meant to be very young--the overall impression is as if the Brooke Shields of five years ago had been America's exclusive female sexual icon, with no interference from Bo Derek or other full-grown specimens. One advertising man, who has been here for ten years and makes his living by understanding the Japanese psyche, says that everything suddenly fell into place for him when he thought of a half-conscious, low-grade pedophilia as the underlying social motif. It affects business, he said, where each year's crop of fresh young things, straight out of high school, are assigned seats where the senior managers can look at them--until the next year, when a newer and younger crop are brought in. It affects TV shows and commercials, which feature girls with a teenage look. The most sought-after description in Japan is kawaii, or "cute" (as opposed to "beautiful" or "sexy"), often pronounced in a way equivalent to "Cuu-uuuute!" The kawaii look is dominant on television and in advertising, giving the impression that Japanese masculinity consists primarily of yearning for a cute little thing about fifteen years old. "A director can shoot an act of sodomy or rape for a TV drama ?? for the dinner hour with impunity so long as he allows no public hair to be shown," a recent article by Sarah Brickman in the Far Eastern Economic Review said. "He is, of

course, particularly assured of immunity from legal repercussions if the female star of the scene is prepubescent."

A few years ago Ian Buruma, a Dutch writer who had lived here for years and has a Japanese wife, published Behind the Mask, a wonderful book that closely analyzed the managa, soap operas, low-brow movies, and other aspects of Japanese popular culture. He richly illustrated how the Japanese, in many ways so buttoned up and contained, sought outlandish fantasy releases. Buruma attempted to trace the oddities of manga-style fantasy to the deep bond between Japanese boys and their mothers, who typically raise their children with little help from the father. I don't know enough to judge Buruma's theory, or otherwise to make sense of Japan's standards of pornographic display. My point is that they rest on theories and values at odds with the West's. According to the Far Eastern Review article, the director-general of Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs once endorsed physical exercise this way: "When asked my reasons for jogging, I used to answer 'although it is shameful for a gentleman to rape a woman, it is also shameful for a man not to have the physical strength necessary to rape a woman!'"

In the United States more and more people are claiming that pornography contributes to sex crimes. If you look at Japan--with its high level of violent stimulation but reportedly low incidence of rape and assault--you have your doubts. But even if it leads to few indictable offenses, and even if Japanese women themselves do not complain; the abundance of violent pornography creates an atmosphere that gives most Westerners the creeps.

THE OTHER OFF-PUTTING ASPECT OF JAPAN IS THE ethnic--well, racial--exclusion on which the society is built. I hesitated to say "racial" or "racist," because the terms are so loaded and so irritating to the Japanese. I can understand why they are annoyed. In their dealings with the West the Japanese have traditionally seen themselves as the objects of racial discrimination-- the little yellow men looked down on by the great white fathers. A new book by the historian John W. Dower, called War Without Mercy, provides hair-raising illustrations of the racism with which both Japanese and Japanese-Americans were viewed during the war. For instance, Ernie Pyle explained to the readers of his famous battlefront column that the difference between the Germans and the Japanese was that the Germans "were still people."

Rather than talking about race--as white Americans did when enslaving blacks and excluding "inferior" immigrants--the Japanese talk about "purity." Their society is different from others in being purer; it consists of practically none but Japanese. What makes the subject so complicated is the overlap between two different kinds of purity, that of culture and that of blood.

That the Japanese have a distinct culture seems to me an open-and-shut case. Some economists here have given me little speeches about the primacy of economic forces in determining

people's behavior. Do the Japanese save more, stick with their companies longer, and pay more attention to quality? The explanations are all to be found in tax incentives, the "lifetime-employment" policy at big firms, and other identifiable economic causes. I'm sure there is something to this outlook, but I am also impressed by what it leaves out. We do not find it remarkable that the past 250 years of American history, which include revolution, settling the frontier, subjugating Indians, creating and then abolishing slavery, and absorbing immigrant groups, have given the United States a distinctive set of values. Is it so implausible that 2,500 years of isolation on a few small islands might have given the Japanese some singular traits?

Japan is different from certain "old" Western cultures because it has been left to itself so much. In the same 2,500 years the British Isles were invaded by Romans, Angles, Saxons, and Normans--and after that the British themselves went invading and exploring. Blood was mixed, and culture was opened up. During all that time the Japanese sat at home, uninvaded and disinclined to sail off to see what the rest of the world might hold. The effect of this long isolation was a distinctive culture and the isolation of a "pure" racial group, which tempted people to think that race and culture were the same.

I'm sure that someone could prove that the Japanese are not really mono-racial, or not clearly separate from the Koreans or the Chinese. The significant point is that as far as the Japanese are concerned, they are inherently different from other people, and are all bound together by birth and blood. The standard Japanese explanation for their horror of litigation and their esteem for consensus is that they are a homogenous people, who understand one another's needs. When I've asked police officials and sociologists why there is so little crime, their explanations have all begun, "We are a homogenous race . . ." Most people I have interviewed have used the phrase "We Japanese . . ." I have rarely heard an American say "We Americans . . ."

The Japanese sense of separateness rises to the level of race because the Japanese system is closed. The United States is built on the principle of voluntary association; in theory anyone can become an American. A place in Japanese society is open only to those who are born Japanese.

When I say "born," I mean with the right racial background, not merely on rocky Japanese soil. One of Japan's touchiest problems is the second- or even third-generation Koreans, descended from people who were brought to Japan for forced labor in the fascist days. They are still known as Koreans even though they were born here, speak the language like natives, and in many cases are physically indistinguishable from everyone else. They have long-term "alien residence" permits but are not citizens--and in principle they and their descendants never will be. (Obtaining naturalized Japanese citizenship is not impossible but close to it.) They must register as aliens and be fingerprinted

by the police. The same prospect awaits the handful of Vietnamese refugees whom the Japanese, under intense pressure from the United States, have now agreed to accept for resettlement.

The Japanese public has a voracious appetite for Nihonjinron--the study of traits that distinguish them from everyone else. Hundreds of works of self-examination are published each year. This discipline involves perfectly reasonable questions about what makes Japan unique as a social system, but it easily slips into inquiries about what makes the Japanese people special as a race. Perhaps the most lunatic work in this field is The Japanese Brain, by a Dr. Tadanobu Tsunoda, which was published to wide acclaim and vast sales in the late 1970s. The book contends that the Japanese have brains that are organized differently from those of the rest of humanity, their internal writing optimized for the requirements of the Japanese language. (Tsunoda claims that all non-Japanese--including “Chinese, Koreans, and almost all Southeast Asian peoples”-- hear vowels in the right hemispheres of their brains, while the Japanese hear them in the left. Since the Japanese also handle consonants in the left hemisphere, they are able to attain a higher unity and coherence than other races.)

I haven’t heard anyone restate the theory in precisely this form. And in fairness, during the war British scientists advanced a parallel unique-Japanese-brain theory (as John Dower points out), asserting that Japanese thought was permanently impaired by the torture of memorizing Chinese characters at an early age. But British scientists don’t say this any longer, while Tsunoda is still a prominent, non-ridiculed figure in Japan. Whatever the Japanese may think of his unique-brain theory, large numbers of them seem comfortable with the belief that not just their language but also their thoughts and emotions are different from those of anyone else in the world.

The Japanese language is the main evidence for this claim. It is said to foster the understatement for which the Japanese are so famous, and to make them more carefully attuned to nuance, nature, unexpressed thoughts, and so forth, than other people could possibly be. Most of all, it is a convenient instrument of exclusion. Mastering it requires considerable memory work. Japanese businessmen posted to New York or London often fret about taking their children with them, for fear that three or four years out of the Japanese school system will leave their children hopelessly behind. It’s not that the overall intellectual standards are so different but that in Japan children spend much of their time memorizing the Chinese characters, kanji, necessary for full literacy--and for success on the all-important university-entrance tests.

Until a few years ago only a handful of foreigners had bothered to become fully fluent in Japanese, and they could be written off as exceptions proving the general rule: that Japanese was too complicated and subtle for non-Japanese to learn. Now the

situation is changing--many of the Americans I meet here are well into their Japanese-language training--but the idea of uniqueness remains. Four years ago an American linguist named Roy Andrew Miller published a splenetic book titled Japan's Modern Myth, designed to explode the idea that Japanese was unique, any more than Urdu or German or other languages are. Edward Seidensticker, a renowned translator of Japanese literature, makes the point concisely: "'But how do you manage the nuances of Japanese?' the Japanese are fond of asking, as if other languages did not have nuances, and as if there were no significance in the fact that the word 'nuance' had to be borrowed from French."

As Roy Miller pointed out, the concept of an unlearnable language offers a polite outlet for a more deeply held but somewhat embarrassing belief in racial uniqueness. In a passage that illustrated his book's exasperated tone but also his instinct for the home truth, Miller wrote:

Japanese race consists in using the Japanese language. But how does one become a member of the Japanese race? By being born into it, of course, just as one becomes a member of any other race. . . . But what if someone not a Japanese by right of race . . . does manage to acquire some proficiency in the Japanese language? Well, in that case, the system literally makes no intellectual provision at all for his or her very existence. Such a person is a nonperson within the terms and definitions of Japanese social order. . . . The society's assumption [is] that the Japanese-speaking foreigner is for some unknown reason involved in working out serious logical contradictions in his or her life. . . . He or she had better be watched pretty carefully; obviously something is seriously amiss somewhere, otherwise why would this foreigner be speaking Japanese?

As applied to most other races of the world--especially other Asians, with whom the Japanese have been in most frequent contact--the Japanese racial attitude is unambiguous: Southeast Asians and Koreans are inferior to Japanese. Koreans are more closely related to the Japanese than are any other Asians, but they are held in deep racial contempt by the Japanese. (A hilarious, long-running controversy surrounds excavations in central Honshu that seemed to indicate that the Imperial Family was originally . . . Korean! The digs were soon closed up, for reasons that are continually debated in the English-language but not, I am told, the Japanese-language press.) Recent opinion polls show that the nation the Japanese most fear is not the United States, on which they depend for their export market, nor the Soviet Union, which still occupies four of their northern islands, but Korea--which threatens to beat them at their own hard-work game and which fully reciprocates Japan's ill will. China--the source of Japan's written language and the model for much of its traditional culture--presents a more difficult case. The Australian journalist Murray Sayle offers the model of China as the "wastrel older brother," who forfeited his natural right of

prominence through his dissolute behavior, placing the family burden on the steadfast younger brother, Japan. This is one reason why stories of Chinese opium dens were so important in pre-war Japan: the older brother had gone to hell and needed the discipline of Japanese control.

For Westerners the racial question is more confusing than even for the Chinese. For a few weeks after arrival I seized on the idea that being in Japan might, for a white American, faintly resemble the experience of being black in America. That is, my racial identity was the most important thing about me, and it did not seem to be a plus.

I AM JUST BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND HOW COMPLICATED the racial attitude toward Westerners really is. Whereas Southeast Asians in Japan are objects of unrelieved disdain, Westerners are seen as both better and worse than the Japanese. One timeless argument in Japan is whether the Japanese feel inferior to Westerners, or superior to them, or some combination of the two. Feeling equal to them--different in culture, but equal as human beings--somehow does not emerge as a possibility, at least in the talks I have had so far.

There is evidence for both propositions--that the Japanese feel superior to Westerners, and that they feel inferior to them. On the one hand, Japanese culture is simply awash in Western--mainly American--artifacts. The movies and music are imported straight from America; the fashion and commercial models are disproportionately Caucasian; the culture seems to await its next signal from the other side of the Pacific. A hundred years ago, Japan began its Meiji-era drive to catch up with the West's industrial achievements. Prominent figures urged Japanese to interbreed with Westerners, so as to improve the racial stock, and to dump the character-based Japanese language in favor of English, which was the mark of a more advanced race. To judge by the styles they affect and the movies and music they favor, today's young Japanese seem to take Europe as the standard of refinement and America as the source of pop-cultural energy. Even when nothing earthshaking is happening in America, the TV news has extensive what's-new-in-New-York segments.

Herbert Passin, a professor of sociology at Columbia University, who came to Japan during the Occupation and has been here off and on ever since, contends that the sense of inferiority is so deep-seated that a few years of economic victories cannot really have dislodged it. The longer I have been here, and the better I've gotten to know a few Japanese, the more frequently I've seen flashes of the old, nagging fear of inferiority. Americans often talk, with good reason, about the defects of their "system." Many Japanese take pride in their economic and social system but still act as if something is wrong with them as a race. I talked with a group of teenage entrepreneurs, who had set up a mildly rebellious magazine. We talked about Japan's economic success, and then one of them burst out: "We're just like a bunch of ants. We all teem around a biscuit and carry it off. That's the only way

we succeed." A famous scientist who has directed successful research projects for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry--precisely the kind of man American industrialists most fear--described Japan's impressive scientific work-in-progress. Then he signed and said, "Still, my real feeling is, Everything new comes from the States. We can refine it and improve it, but the firsts always come from outside."

On the other hand, many Japanese can barely conceal their disdain for the West's general loss of economic vigor. Many people I have interviewed have talked about the United States the way many Americans talk about England: it had its day, but now that's done. One influential businessman in his early forties told me that members of his generation were not even daunted by the wartime defeat. Our fathers were beaten, he told me with a fierce look--not us. This is shaping up as the year of "economic-adjustment" plans: every week a new ministry comes out with a scheme for reducing Japan's trade surplus. I have yet to see the word fairness in the English versions of these documents. Instead they are all designed to promote "harmony." The stated premise is that Japan has to give foreigners a break, so that it doesn't make needless enemies overseas. The unstated but obvious corollary is that Japan could crush every indolent Western competitor if it tried. Even the things some Japanese still claim to admire about America suggest racial condescension. Among the American virtues that Japanese have mentioned to me are a big army, a sense of style and rhythm, artistic talent and energy, and raw animal (and supposedly sexual) strength. In their eyes we are big, potent, and hairy.

The Japanese have obviously profited, in purely practical terms, from their racial purity. Many of the things that are most admirable about the society--its shared moral values, its consideration for all its members' interests, the attention people pay to the collective well-being as well as to their own--are easier to create when everyone is ethnically the same. Three years ago, at a commemoration for those killed by the atomic bomb at Hiroshima, Prime Minister Nakasone made this point as crudely as possible. He said, "The Japanese have been doing well for as long as 2,000 years because there are no foreign races."

I have always thought that, simply in practical terms, the United States had a big edge because it tried so hard, albeit inconsistently and with limited success, to digest people from different backgrounds and parts of the world. Didn't the resulting cultural collisions give us extra creativity and resilience? Didn't the ethnic mixture help us at least slightly in our dealings with other countries? The Japanese, in contrast, have suffered grievously from their lack of any built-in understanding of foreign cultures. Sitting off on their own, it is easy for them to view the rest of the world as merely a market--an attitude harder to hold if your population contains a lot of refugees and immigrants. This perspective has as much to do with "trade frictions" as does their admirable management style. I am exaggerating for effect here--

the most cosmopolitan Japanese I have met have a broader view than most people I know in America--but in general a ?? population with no emotional ties to the rest of the world acts even more narcissistically than do others. When the United States threatened to drown the world in its trade surpluses, it started the Marshall Plan. The Japanese, to put it mildly, have been less eager to share their wealth.

Practicalities aside, the United States, like the rest of Western society, has increasingly in the twentieth century considered it morally “right” to rise above differences of race, inconvenient and uncomfortable as that may sometimes be. Few Western societies, and few people, may succeed in so rising--but they feel guilty when they fail. The Japanese do not.

The integrationist dream has few supporters in this half of the globe. The Japanese are unusual in having so large a population with so little racial diversity, but their underlying belief that politics and culture should run on racial lines is held in many other parts of Asia. Directly or indirectly, the politics of most Asian countries revolve around racial or tribal divisions, especially those between the numerous Chinese expatriates and the Malays, Vietnamese, Indonesians, and others among whom the Chinese live. It’s hard to think of a really stable or happy multi-racial Asian state. Asians look at the Hindu-Moslem partition of India and see acquiescence to fate. Japanese look at America and see a mongrel race.

Edward Seidensticker, now a professor at Columbia, lived here for many years after the war--and then, in 1962, announced his intention to depart. “The Japanese are just like other people,” he wrote in a sayonara newspaper column. “But no. They are not like other people. They are infinitely more clannish, insular, parochial, and one owes it to one’s self-respect to preserve a feeling of outrage at the insularity. To have the sense of outrage go dull is to lose the will to communicate; and that, I think, is death. So I am going home.”

I’ve just gotten here, but I think I understand what Seidensticker was talking about. And it is connected with my only real reservation about the Japanese economic miracle. Even as Japan steadily rises in influence, the idea that it should be the new world model is hard for me to swallow. I know it is not logical to draw moral lessons from economics. But everyone does it--why else did Richard Nixon brag to Nikita Khrushchev about our big refrigerators--and the Japanese are naturally now drawing lessons of their own. Their forty-year recovery represents the triumph of a system and a people, but I think many Japanese see it as the victory of a pure people, which by definition no inferior or mixed-blood race can match. The Japanese have their history and we have ours, so it would not be fair to argue that they “should” be a multi-racial, immigrant land. Most of the world, with greater or lesser frankness, subscribes to the Japanese view that people must be ethnically similar to get along. But to me, its ethic of exclusion is the least lovable thing about this society. And I

hope, as the Japanese reflect upon their victories, that they congratulate themselves for diligence, sacrifice, and teamwork, not for remaining “pure.”

Class #4

Religious Traditions I

Shintō. Confucianism. Taoism.

Document 3

Shintō

Brief history of Shintō

Shintō is an ancient Japanese religion. Starting about 500 BCE (or earlier) it was originally “an amorphous mix of nature worship, fertility cults, divination techniques, hero worship, and shamanism.” Its name was derived from the Chinese words “*shin tao*” (“The Way of the Gods”) in the 8th century CE. At that time:

- The Yamato dynasty consolidated its rule over most of Japan.
- Divine origins were ascribed to the imperial family.
- Shinto established itself as an official religion of Japan, along with Buddhism.

The complete separation of Japanese religion from politics did not occur until just after World War II. The Emperor was forced by the American army to renounce his divinity at that time.

Unlike most other religions, Shintō has no real founder, no written scriptures, no body of religious law, and only a very loosely-organized priesthood.

Shintō beliefs

Shintō creation stories tell of the history and lives of the *kami* (deities). Among them was a divine couple, Izanagi-no-mikoto and Izanami-no-mikoto, who gave birth to the Japanese islands. Their children became the deities of the various Japanese clans. Amaterasu Omikami (Sun Goddess) was one of their daughters. She is the ancestress of the Imperial Family and is regarded as the chief deity. Her shrine is at Ise. Her descendants unified the country. Her brother, Susano came down from heaven and roamed throughout the earth. He is famous for killing a great evil serpent.

The *kami* are the Shintō deities. The word "*kami*" is generally translated "god" or "gods." However, the *kami* bear little resemblance to the gods of monotheistic religions. There are no concepts which compare to the Christian beliefs in the wrath of God, his omnipotence and omnipresence, or the separation of God from humanity due to sin. There are numerous other deities who are conceptualized in many forms:

- Those related to natural objects and creatures, from "food to rivers to rocks."
- Guardian *kami* of particular areas and clans
- Exceptional people, including all but the last of the emperors.
- Abstract creative forces

They are seen as generally benign; they sustain and protect the people.

About 84% of the population of Japan follows two religions: both Shintō and Buddhism. (As in much of Asia, Christianity is quite rarely. Fewer than 1% of adults are Christians.) Buddhism first arrived in Japan from Korea and China during the 6th through 8th centuries CE. The two religions share a basic optimism about human nature, and for the world. Within Shintō, the Buddha was viewed as another "*kami*." Meanwhile, Buddhism in Japan regarded the *kami* as being manifestations of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Most weddings are performed by Shintō priests; funerals are performed by Buddhist priests.

Shintō does not have as fully developed a theology as do most other religions. It does not have its own moral code. Shintōists generally follow the code of Confucianism.

Their religious texts discuss the "High Plain of Heaven" and the "Dark Land" which is an unclean land of the dead, but give few details of the afterlife.

Ancestors are deeply revered and worshipped.

All of humanity is regarded as "*kami's* child." Thus all human life and human nature is sacred.

Believers revere *musuhi*, the *kamis*' creative and harmonizing powers. They aspire to have *makoto*, sincerity or true heart. This is regarded as the way or will of *kami*.

Morality is based upon that which is of benefit to the group. "Shinto emphasizes right practice, sensibility, and attitude."

There are "Four Affirmations" in Shintō:

1. Tradition and the family: The family is seen as the main mechanism by which traditions are preserved. Their main celebrations relate to birth and marriage.
2. Love of nature: Nature is sacred; to be in contact with nature is to be close to the Gods. Natural objects are worshipped as sacred spirits.
3. Physical cleanliness: Followers of Shinto take baths, wash their hands, and rinse out their mouth often.
4. Matsuri: The worship and honor given to the kami and ancestral spirits.

The desire for peace, which was suppressed during World War II, has been restored.

Shintō practices

Shintō recognizes many sacred places: mountains, springs, *etc*.

Each shrine is dedicated to a specific *kami* who has a divine personality and responds to sincere prayers of the faithful. When entering a shrine, one passes through a Tori a special gateway for the Gods. It marks the demarcation between the finite world and the infinite world of the Gods.

In the past, believers practiced *misogi*, the washing of their bodies in a river near the shrine. In recent years they only wash their hands and wash out their mouths in a wash basin provided within the shrine grounds.

Believers respect animals as messengers of the Gods. A pair of statues of "*Koma-inu*" (guard dogs) face each other within the temple grounds.

Shrine ceremonies, which include cleansing, offerings, prayers, and dances are directed to the *kami*.

Kagura are ritual dances accompanied by ancient musical instruments. The dances are performed by skilled and trained dancers. They consist of young virgin girls, a group of men, or a single man.

Mamori are charms worn as an aid in healing and protection. They come in many different forms for various purposes.

An altar, the "*Kami-dana*" (Shelf of Gods), is given a central place in many homes.

Seasonal celebrations are held at spring planting, fall harvest, and special anniversaries of the history of a shrine or of a local patron spirit. A secular, country-wide National Founding Day is held on February 11 to commemorate the founding of Japan; this is the traditional date on which the first (mythical) emperor Jimmu ascended the throne in 660 BCE. Some shrines are believed to hold festivities on that day.

Origami ("Paper of the spirits"): This is a Japanese folk art in which paper is folded into beautiful shapes. They are often seen around Shinto shrines. Out of respect for the tree spirit that gave its life to make the paper, origami paper is never cut.

Forms of Shinto

Shinto exists in four main forms or traditions:

• Koshitsu Shintō (The Shintō of the Imperial House): This involves rituals performed by the emperor, who the Japanese Constitution defines to be the "symbol of the state and of the unity of the people." The most important ritual is Niinamesai, which makes an offering to the deities of the first fruits of each year's grain harvest. Male and female clergy (Shoten and Nai-Shoten) assist the emperor in the performance of these rites.

• Jinja (Shrine) Shintō: This is the largest Shintō group. It was the original form of the religion; its roots date back into pre-history. Until the end of World War II, it was closely aligned with State Shintō. The Emperor of Japan was worshipped as a living God.

Almost all shrines in Japan are members of Jinja Honcho, the Association of Shintō Shrines. It currently includes about 80,000 shrines as members. The association urges followers of Shintō:

➡ "To be grateful for the blessings of *kami* and the benefits of the ancestors, and to be diligent in the observance of the Shinto rites, applying oneself to them with sincerity. brightness, and purity of heart."

➡ "To be helpful to others and in the world at large through deeds of service without thought of rewards, and to seek the advancement of the world as one whose life mediates the will of kami."

➡ "To bind oneself with others in harmonious acknowledgment of the will of the emperor, praying that the country may flourish and that other peoples too may live in peace and prosperity."

• Kyoha (Sectarian) Shintō (aka Shuha Shintō): This consists of 13 sects which were founded by individuals since the start of the 19th century. Each sect has its own beliefs and doctrines. Most emphasize worship of their own central deity; some follow a near-monotheistic religion.

• Minzoku (Folk) Shintō This is not a separate Shintō group; it has no formal central organization or creed. It is seen in local rural practices and rituals, e.g. small images by the side of the road, agriculture rituals practiced by individual families, etc. A rural

community will often select a layman annually, who will be responsible for worshiping the local deity.

These three forms are closely linked. An image may be installed by a member of one of the Sectarian Shintō sects who worships at a particular shrine. Shintō is a tolerant religion which accepts the validity of other religions. It is common for a believer to pay respect to other religions, their practices and objects of worship.

Number of adherents

Estimates of the number of adherents are hopelessly unreliable. Some sources give numbers in the range of 2.8 to 3.2 million. One states that 40% of Japanese adults follow Shintō; that would account for about 50 million adherents. Others state that about 86% of Japanese adults follow a combination of Shintō and Buddhism; that would put the number of followers of Shintō at 107 million.

One source estimates 1000 followers of Shintō in North America. The Canadian Census (1991) recorded only 445 in Canada.

Essentially all followers of Shintō are Japanese. It is difficult for a foreigner to embrace Shintōism. Unlike most other religions, there is no book to help a person learn about the religion. It is transmitted from generation to generation by experiencing the rituals together as a group.

Document 4

Confucianism

Confucianism is the complex system of moral, social, political, and religious teaching built up by Confucius on the ancient Chinese traditions. Confucianism aims at making not simply the man of virtue, but the man of learning and of good manners. The perfect man must combine the qualities of saint, scholar, and gentleman. Confucianism is a religion without positive revelation, with a minimum of dogmatic teaching, whose popular worship is centered in offerings to the dead, in which the notion of duty is extended beyond the sphere of morals proper so as to embrace almost every detail of daily life. Confucianism has influenced the Chinese attitude toward life, set the patterns of living and standards of social value, and provided the background for Chinese political theories and institutions. It has spread from China to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam and has aroused interest among Western scholars.

Although Confucianism became the official ideology of the Chinese state, it has never existed as an established religion with a church and priesthood.

Confucianism developed from the teachings of Confucius and his disciples, and concerned with the principles of good conduct, practical wisdom, and proper social relationships. Confucianism has influenced the Chinese attitude toward life, set the patterns of living and standards of social value, and provided the background for Chinese political theories and institutions. It has spread from China to Korea, Japan, and Vietnam and has aroused interest among Western scholars.

The Teacher

The chief exponent of this remarkable religion was K'ung-tze, or K'ung-fu-tze, latinized by the early Jesuit missionaries into Confucius. Confucius was born in 551 B.C., in what was then the feudal state of Lu, now included in the modern province of Shan-tung. His parents, while not wealthy, belonged to the superior class. His father was a warrior, distinguished no less for his deeds of valor than for his noble ancestry. Confucius was a mere boy when his father died. From childhood he showed a great aptitude for study, and though, in order to support himself and his mother, he had to labor in his early years as a hired servant in a noble family, he managed to find time to pursue his favorite studies. He made such progress that at the age of twenty-two years he opened a school to which many were attracted by the fame of his learning. His ability and faithful service merited for him promotion to the office of minister of justice. Under his wise administration the State attained to a degree of prosperity and moral order that it had never seen before. But through the intrigues of rival states the Marquis of Lu was led to prefer ignoble pleasures to the preservation of good government. Confucius tried by sound advice to bring his liege lord back to the path of duty, but in vain. He thereupon resigned his high position at the cost of personal ease and comfort, and left the state. For thirteen years, accompanied by faithful disciples, he went about from one state to another, seeking a ruler who would give heed to his counsels. Many were the privations he suffered. More than once he ran imminent risk of being waylaid and killed by his enemies, but his courage and confidence in the providential character of his mission never deserted him. At last he returned to Lu, where he spent the last five years of his long life encouraging others to the study and practice of virtue, and edifying all by his noble example. He died in the year 478 B.C., in the seventy-fourth year of his age. His lifetime almost exactly coincided with that of Buddha, who died two years earlier at the age of eighty.

That Confucius possessed a noble, commanding personality, there can be little doubt. It is shown by his recorded traits of character, by his lofty moral teachings, by the high-minded men that he trained to continue his life-work. In their enthusiastic love and admiration, they declared him the greatest of men, the sage without flaw, the perfect man. That he himself did not make any pretension to possess virtue and wisdom in their fullness is shown by his own recorded sayings. He was conscious of his shortcomings, and this consciousness he made no attempt to keep concealed. But of his love of virtue and wisdom there can be no question. He is described in "Analects," VII, 18, as one "who in the eager pursuit of knowledge, forgot his food, and in the joy of attaining to it forgot his sorrow." Whatever in the traditional records of the past, whether history, lyric poems, or rites and ceremonies, was edifying and conducive to virtue, he sought out with untiring zeal and made known to his disciples. He was a man of affectionate nature, sympathetic, and most considerate towards others. He loved his worthy disciples dearly,

and won in turn their undying devotion. He was modest and unaffected in his bearing, inclined to gravity, yet possessing a natural cheerfulness that rarely deserted him. Schooled to adversity from childhood, he learned to find contentment and serenity of mind even where ordinary comforts were lacking. He was very fond of vocal and instrumental music, and often sang, accompanying his voice with the lute. His sense of humor is revealed in a criticism he once made of some boisterous singing "Why use an ox-knife," he said, "to kill a fowl?"

Confucius is often held up as the type of the virtuous man without religion. His teachings, it is alleged, were chiefly ethical, in which one looks in vain for retribution in the next life as a sanction of right conduct. Now an acquaintance with the ancient religion of China and with Confucian texts reveals the emptiness of the assertion that Confucius was devoid of religious thought and feeling. He was religious after the manner of religious men of his age and land. In not appealing to rewards and punishments in the life to come, he was simply following the example of his illustrious Chinese predecessors, whose religious belief did not include this element of future retribution. The Chinese classics that were ancient even in the time of Confucius have nothing to say of hell, but have much to say of the rewards and punishments meted out in the present life by the all-seeing Heaven. There are numbers of texts that show plainly that he did not depart from the traditional belief in the supreme Heaven-god and subordinate spirits, in Divine providence and retribution, and in the conscious existence of souls after death. These religious convictions on his part found expression in many recorded acts of piety and worship.

The Teachings

Although Confucianism became the official ideology of the Chinese state, it has never existed as an established religion with a church and priesthood. Chinese scholars honored Confucius as a great teacher and sage but did not worship him as a personal god. Nor did Confucius himself ever claim divinity. Unlike Christian churches, the temples built to Confucius were not places in which organized community groups gathered to worship, but public edifices designed for annual ceremonies, especially on the philosopher's birthday. Several attempts to deify Confucius and to proselyte Confucianism failed because of the essentially secular nature of the philosophy.

The principles of Confucianism are contained in the nine ancient Chinese works handed down by Confucius and his followers, who lived in an age of great philosophic activity. These writings can be divided into two groups: the Five Classics and the Four Books.

The Wu Ching (Five Classics), which originated before the time of Confucius, consist of the I Ching (Book of Changes), Shu Ching (Book of History), Shih Ching (Book of Poetry), Li Chi (Book of Rites), and Ch'un Ch'iu (Spring and Autumn Annals). The I Ching is a manual of divination probably compiled before the 11th century BC; its supplementary philosophical portion, contained in

a series of appendixes, may have been written later by Confucius and his disciples. The Shu Ching is a collection of ancient historical documents, and the Shih Ching, an anthology of ancient poems. The Li Chi deals with the principles of conduct, including those for public and private ceremonies; it was destroyed in the 3rd century BC, but presumably much of its material was preserved in a later compilation, the Record of Rites. The Ch'un Ch'iu, the only work reputedly compiled by Confucius himself, is a chronicle of major historical events in feudal China from the 8th century BC to Confucius's death early in the 5th century BC.

The Shih Shu (Four Books), compilations of the sayings of Confucius and Mencius and of commentaries by followers on their teachings, are the Lun Yü (Analects), a collection of maxims by Confucius that form the basis of his moral and political philosophy; Ta Hsüeh (The Great Learning) and Chung Yung (The Doctrine of the Mean), containing some of Confucius's philosophical utterances arranged systematically with comments and expositions by his disciples; and the Mencius (Book of Mencius), containing the teachings of one of Confucius's great followers.

The keynote of Confucian ethics is jen, variously translated as "love," "goodness," "humanity," and "human-heartedness." Jen is a supreme virtue representing human qualities at their best. In human relations, construed as those between one person and another, jen is manifested in chung, or faithfulness to oneself and others, and shu, or altruism, best expressed in the Confucian golden rule, "Do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself." Other important Confucian virtues include righteousness, propriety, integrity, and filial piety. One who possesses all these virtues becomes a chün-tzu (perfect gentleman). Politically, Confucius advocated a paternalistic government in which the sovereign is benevolent and honorable and the subjects are respectful and obedient. The ruler should cultivate moral perfection in order to set a good example to the people. In education Confucius upheld the theory, remarkable for the feudal period in which he lived, that "in education, there is no class distinction."

Confucian Schools of Thought

After the death of Confucius two major schools of Confucian thought emerged: one was represented by Mencius, the other by Hsün-tzu (Hsün K'uang, 300?-235? BC). Mencius continued the ethical teachings of Confucius by stressing the innate goodness of human nature. He believed, however, that original human goodness can become depraved through one's own destructive effort or through contact with an evil environment. The problem of moral cultivation is therefore to preserve or at least to restore the goodness that is one's birthright. In political thought, Mencius is sometimes considered one of the early advocates of democracy, for he advanced the idea of the people's supremacy in the state.

In opposition to Mencius, Hsün-tzu contended that a person is born with an evil nature but that it can be regenerated through moral education. He believed that desires should be guided and restrained by the rules of propriety and that character should be molded by an orderly observance of rites and by the practice of music. This code serves as a powerful influence on character by properly directing emotions and by providing inner harmony. Hsün-tzu was the main exponent of ritualism in Confucianism.

After a brief period of eclipse in the 3rd century BC, Confucianism was revived during the Han dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). The Confucian works, copies of which had been destroyed in the preceding period, were restored to favor, canonized, and taught by learned scholars in national academies. The works also formed the basis of later civil service examinations; candidates for responsible government positions received their appointments on the strength of their knowledge of classic literature. As a result, Confucianism secured a firm hold on Chinese intellectual and political life.

The success of Han Confucianism was attributable to Tung Chung-shu, who first recommended a system of education built upon the teachings of Confucius. Tung Chung-shu believed in a close correspondence between human beings and nature; thus a person's deeds, especially those of the sovereign, are often responsible for unusual phenomena in nature. Because of the sovereign's authority, he or she is to blame for such phenomena as fire, flood, earthquake, and eclipse. Because these ill omens can descend on earth as a warning to humanity that all is not well in this world, the fear of heavenly punishment proves useful as a curb to the monarch's absolute power.

In the political chaos that followed the fall of the Han dynasty, Confucianism was overshadowed by the rival philosophies of Taoism and Buddhism, and the philosophy suffered a temporary setback. Nevertheless, the Confucian Classics continued to be the chief source of learning for scholars, and with the restoration of peace and prosperity in the Tang dynasty (618-907), the spread of Confucianism was encouraged. The monopoly of learning by Confucian scholars once again ensured them the highest bureaucratic positions. Confucianism returned as an orthodox state teaching.

Put simply, Confucianism is the quest for order. Most of the ideology dictates that the primary focus of Confucian doctrine is to balance the relationships of individual family, and society with the Five Agents of the Universe. More a method of management than an actual religion, it became a mode by which rulers and civic leaders could run the bureaucracy of the state.

Document 5

Taoism

Quotations

“Be still like a mountain and flow like a great river.” - Lao Tse

“We believe in the formless and eternal Tao, and we recognize all personified deities as being mere human constructs. We reject hatred, intolerance, and unnecessary violence, and embrace harmony, love and learning, as we are taught by Nature. We place our trust and our lives in the Tao, that we may live in peace and balance with the Universe, both in this mortal life and beyond.” - Creed of the Western Reform Taoist Congregation

History of Taoism

Tao (pronounced “dow”) can be roughly translated into English as *path*, or *the way*. It is basically indefinable. It has to be experienced. It “refers to a power which envelops, surrounds and flows through all things, living and non-living. The Tao regulates natural processes and nourishes balance in the Universe. It embodies the harmony of opposites (*i.e.*, there would be no love without hate, no light without dark, no male without female.)”

The founder of Taoism is believed by many to be Lao-Tse (604-531 BCE), a contemporary of Confucius. (Alternate spellings: Lao Tze, Lao Tsu, Lao Tzu, Laozi, Laotze, *etc*.). He was searching for a way that would avoid the constant feudal

warfare and other conflicts that disrupted society during his lifetime. The result was his book: Tao-te-Ching (a.k.a. Daodejing). Others believe that he is a mythical character.

Taoism started as a combination of psychology and philosophy but evolved into a religious faith in 440 CE when it was adopted as a state religion. At that time Lao-Tse became popularly venerated as a deity. Taoism, along with Buddhism and Confucianism, became one of the three great religions of China. With the end of the Ch'ing Dynasty in 1911, state support for Taoism ended. Much of the Taoist heritage was destroyed during the next period of warlordism. After the Communist victory in 1949, religious freedom was severely restricted. "The new government put monks to manual labor, confiscated temples, and plundered treasures. Several million monks were reduced to fewer than 50,000" by 1960. During the cultural revolution in China from 1966 to 1976, much of the remaining Taoist heritage was destroyed. Some religious tolerance has been restored under Deng Xiao-ping from 1982 to the present time.

Taoism currently has about 20 million followers, and is primarily centered in Taiwan. About 30,000 Taoists live in North America; 1,720 in Canada (1991 census). Taoism has had a significant impact on North American culture in areas of "acupuncture, herbalism, holistic medicine, meditation and martial arts..."

Taoist Beliefs and Practices

Taoism is a religio-philosophical tradition that has, along with Confucianism, has shaped Chinese life for more than 2,000 years. The Taoist heritage, with its emphasis on individual freedom and spontaneity, laissez-faire government and social primitivism, mystical experience, and techniques of self-transformation, represents in many ways the antithesis to Confucian concern with individual moral duties, community standards, and governmental responsibilities. The two traditions have coexisted in the country, region and generally within the same individual.

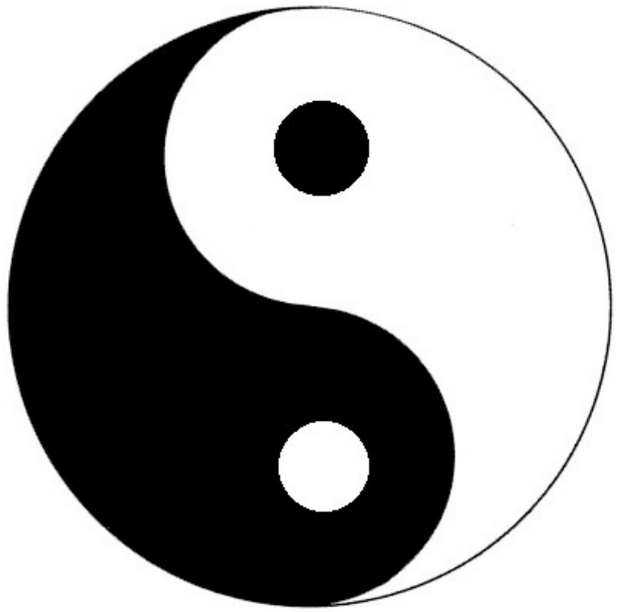
Tao is the first-cause of the universe. It is a force that flows through all life.

Each believer's goal is to become one with the Tao.

The priesthood views the many gods as manifestations of the one Dao,"which could not be represented as an image or a particular thing." The concept of a personified deity is foreign to them, as is the concept of the creation of the universe. Thus, they do not pray as Christians do; there is no God to hear the prayers or to act upon them. They seek answers to life's problems through inner meditation and outer observation.

In contrast with the beliefs and practices of the priesthood, most of the laity have "believed that spirits pervaded nature...The gods in heaven acted like and were treated like the officials in the world of men; worshipping the gods was a kind of rehearsal of attitudes

toward secular authorities. On the other hand, the demons and ghosts of hell acted like and were treated like the bullies, outlaws, and threatening strangers in the real world; they were bribed by the people and were ritually arrested by the martial forces of the spirit officials."



Time is cyclical, not linear as in Western thinking.

Yin (dark side) is the breath that formed the earth. *Yang* (light side) is the breath that formed the heavens. They symbolize pairs of opposites which are seen throughout the universe, such as good and evil, light and dark, male and female. Intervention by human civilization upsets the balances of *Yin* and *Yang*. The symbol of Taoism, seen at the top of this page, represents *Yin* and *Yang* in balance.

"The Tao surrounds everyone and therefore everyone must listen to find enlightenment."

Taoists generally have an interest in promoting health and vitality.

Five main organs and orifices of the body correspond to the five parts of the sky: water, fire, wood, metal and earth.

Each person must nurture the Ch'i (air, breath) that has been given to them.

Development of virtue is one's chief task. The Three Jewels to be sought are compassion, moderation and humility.

Taoists follow the art of "wu wei," which is to let nature take its course. For example, one should allow a river to flow towards the sea unimpeded; do not erect a dam which would interfere with its natural flow.

One should plan in advance and consider carefully each action before making it.

A Taoists is kind to other individuals, largely because such an action tends to be reciprocated.

Taoists believe that "people are compassionate by nature...left to their own devices [they] will show this compassion without expecting a reward."

There is a long history of involvement by Taoists in various exercise and movement techniques. Tai chi in particular works on all parts of the body. It "stimulates the central nervous system, lowers blood pressure, relieves stress and gently tones muscles without strain. It also enhances digestion, elimination of wastes and the circulation of blood. Moreover, tai chi's rhythmic movements massage the internal organs and improve their functionality." Traditional Chinese medicine teaches that illness is

caused by blockages or lack of balance in the body's "chi" (intrinsic energy). Tai Chi is believed to balance this energy flow.

More a mode of living than an actual theology, Taoism asks that each person focuses on the world around them in order to understand the inner harmonies of the universe. It is a kind of religious system heavily focused on meditation and contemplation. The Tao surrounds everyone and one must listen to find enlightenment.

The Tao was written in a time of feudal warfare and constant conflict. Lao Tzu was reflecting on a way which would stop the warfare, a realistic path for humanity to follow which would end the conflict. And so he came up with a few pages of short verses, which became the Tao Te Ching. This is the original book of Tao.

It was shortly followed by a series of commentaries, and commentaries on the commentaries, and then hybridized with Confucianism, Buddhism, and a clutch of other Eastern religions. Books of Tao from around the time of Christ more closely resemble an unexpurgated 10 commandments than the poetic Tao Te Ching, carefully delineating everything from the proper system of greetings to the proper way to clean one's house. Most modern Taoists consider this to be a radical departure from the true Tao, since Lao Tzu abhorred the caste systems of Confucianism that riddle the later Taoist books.

However, Lao Tzu did leave us a problem in translation. Ancient Chinese was extremely succinct, having no verb tense or other complex grammatical construction. The first sentence, for instance, of the Tao Te Ching, is usually translated as, "The Tao that can be named is not the true Tao." Literally, that sentence reads, "The Tao that can be Tao'd is not the true Tao."

Likewise, one of the better known phrases from the Tao Te Ching is, "I am good to the man who is good to me, likewise, I am also good to the bad man." Literally, this sentence would read, "The good man, I good him. The bad man, I good him too."

Does this mean the Sage is good to him, as most translations suggest, or that he makes him good, or both? There's as much room for interpretation in the Tao as in just about any text in existence.

Much of the essence of Tao is in the art of wu wei, action through inaction. This does not mean, "sit on your ass and wait for everything to fall into your lap."

What it really means is a practice of minimal action, particularly violent action. It is the practice of going against the stream not by struggling against it and thrashing about, but by standing still and letting the stream do all the work.

Thus the sage knows that relative to the river, he still moves against the current. To the outside world the sage appears to take no action - but in fact he takes action long before others ever

foresee the need for action. Thinking well about one's actions before making them is another aspect of the Tao.

Likewise, the Taoist is not precisely a pacifist. He will take military action when he has not seen far enough ahead to prevent the need for violence in the first place. When violence is needed, the Taoist leader will fight until he has achieved his goal, and then stop, saddened at the need for bloodshed and with resolve to foresee better into the future.

Taoism can also be called "the other way," for during its entire history, it has coexisted alongside the Confucian tradition, which served as the ethical and religious basis of the institutions and arrangements of the Chinese empire.

Taoism, while not radically subversive, offered a range of alternatives to the Confucian way of life and point of view. These alternatives, however, were not mutually exclusive. For the vast majority of Chinese, there was no question of choosing between Confucianism and Taoism. Except for a few straight-laced Confucians and a few pious Taoists, the Chinese man or woman practiced both—either at different phases of life or as different sides of personality and taste.

Class #5

Religious Traditions II

Buddhism. Zen.

Document 6

The Buddha

Buddha (563?-483? BCE), Indian philosopher and the founder of Buddhism, born in Lumbini, Nepal. He was the son of the head of the Sakya warrior caste, with the private name of Siddhartha; in later life he was known also as Sakyamuni (Sage of the Sakyas). The name Gautama Buddha is a combination of the family name Gautama and the appellation Buddha, meaning "Enlightened One."

All the surviving accounts of Buddha's life were written many years after his death by idealizing followers rather than by objective historians. Consequently, it is difficult to separate facts from the great mass of myth and legend in which they are embedded. From the available evidence, Buddha apparently showed an early inclination to meditation and reflection, displeasing his father, who wanted him to be a warrior and ruler rather than a religious philosopher. Yielding to his father's wishes, he married at an early age and participated in the worldly life of the court. Buddha found his carefree, self-indulgent existence dull, and after a while he left home and began wandering in search of enlightenment. One day in 533, according to tradition, he encountered an aged man, a sick man, and a corpse, and he suddenly and deeply realized that suffering is the common lot of humankind. He then came upon a mendicant monk, calm and serene, whereupon he determined to adopt his way of life and forsake family, wealth, and power in the quest for truth. This decision, known in Buddhism as the Great Renunciation, is celebrated by

Buddhists as a turning point in history. Gautama was then 29 years old, according to tradition.

Wandering as a mendicant over northern India, Buddha first investigated Hinduism. He took instruction from some famous Brahman teachers, but he found the Hindu caste system repellent and Hindu asceticism futile. He continued his search, attracting but later losing five followers. About 528, while sitting under a bo tree near Gaya, in what is now Buddh Gaya in the state of Bihar, he experienced the Great Enlightenment, which revealed the way of salvation from suffering. Shortly afterward he preached his first sermon in the Deer Park near Benares (now Varanasi). This sermon, the text of which is preserved, contains the gist of Buddhism. Many scholars regard it as comparable, in its tone of moral elevation and historical importance, to Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount.

The five disciples rejoined Buddha at Benares. Accompanied by them, he traveled through the valley of the Ganges River, teaching his doctrines, gathering followers, and establishing monastic communities that admitted anyone regardless of caste. He returned briefly to his native town and converted his father, his wife, and other members of his family to his beliefs. After 45 years of missionary activity Buddha died in Kusinagara, Nepal, as a result of eating contaminated pork. He was about 80 years old.

Buddha was one of the greatest human beings, a man of noble character, penetrating vision, warm compassion, and profound thought. Not only did he establish a great new religion, but his revolt against Hindu hedonism, asceticism, extreme spiritualism, and the caste system deeply influenced Hinduism itself. His rejection of metaphysical speculation and his logical thinking introduced an important scientific strain heretofore lacking in Oriental thought. Buddha's teachings have influenced the lives of millions of people for nearly 2500 years.

Document 7

Buddha's Teachings

The Buddha was an oral teacher; he left no written body of thought. His beliefs were codified by later followers.

The Four Noble Truths

At the core of the Buddha's enlightenment was the realization of the Four Noble Truths: (1) Life is suffering. This is more than a mere recognition of the presence of suffering in existence. It is a statement that, in its very nature, human existence is essentially painful from the moment of birth to the moment of death. Even death brings no relief, for the Buddha accepted the Hindu idea of life as cyclical, with death leading to further rebirth. (2) All suffering is caused by ignorance of the nature of reality and the craving, attachment, and grasping that result from such ignorance. (3) Suffering can be ended by overcoming ignorance and attachment. (4) The path to the suppression of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right-mindedness, and right contemplation. These eight are usually divided into three categories that form the cornerstone of Buddhist faith: morality, wisdom, and *samadhi*, or concentration.

Anatman

Buddhism analyzes human existence as made up of five aggregates or "bundles" (*skandhas*): the material body, feelings, perceptions, predispositions or

karmic tendencies, and consciousness. A person is only a temporary combination of these aggregates, which are subject to continual change. No one remains the same for any two consecutive moments. Buddhists deny that the aggregates individually or in combination may be considered a permanent, independently existing self or soul (*atman*). Indeed, they regard it as a mistake to conceive of any lasting unity behind the elements that constitute an individual. The Buddha held that belief in such a self results in egoism, craving, and hence in suffering. Thus he taught the doctrine of *anatman*, or the denial of a permanent soul. He felt that all existence is characterized by the three marks of *anatman* (no soul), *anitya* (impermanence), and *dukkha* (suffering). The doctrine of *anatman* made it necessary for the Buddha to reinterpret the Indian idea of repeated rebirth in the cycle of phenomenal existence known as samsara. To this end he taught the doctrine of *pratityasamutpada*, or dependent origination. This 12-linked chain of causation shows how ignorance in a previous life creates the tendency for a combination of aggregates to develop. These in turn cause the mind and senses to operate. Sensations result, which lead to craving and a clinging to existence. This condition triggers the process of becoming once again, producing a renewed cycle of birth, old age, and death. Through this causal chain a connection is made between one life and the next. What is posited is a stream of renewed existences, rather than a permanent being that moves from life to life—in effect a belief in rebirth without transmigration.

Karma

Closely related to this belief is the doctrine of karma. Karma consists of a person's acts and their ethical consequences. Human actions lead to rebirth, wherein good deeds are inevitably rewarded and evil deeds punished. Thus, neither undeserved pleasure nor unwarranted suffering exists in the world, but rather a universal justice. The karmic process operates through a kind of natural moral law rather than through a system of divine judgment. One's karma determines such matters as one's species, beauty, intelligence, longevity, wealth, and social status. According to the Buddha, karma of varying types can lead to rebirth as a human, an animal, a hungry ghost, a denizen of hell, or even one of the Hindu gods.

Although never actually denying the existence of the gods, Buddhism denies them any special role. Their lives in heaven are long and pleasurable, but they are in the same predicament as other creatures, being subject eventually to death and further rebirth in lower states of existence. They are not creators of the universe or in control of human destiny, and Buddhism denies the value of prayer and sacrifice to them. Of the possible modes of rebirth, human existence is preferable, because the deities are so engrossed in their own pleasures that they lose sight of the need for salvation. Enlightenment is possible only for humans.

Nirvana

The ultimate goal of the Buddhist path is release from the round of phenomenal existence with its inherent suffering. To achieve this goal is to attain nirvana, an enlightened state in which the fires of greed, hatred, and ignorance have been quenched. Not to be confused with total annihilation, nirvana is a state of consciousness beyond definition. After attaining nirvana, the enlightened individual may continue to live, burning off any remaining karma until a state of final nirvana (*parinirvana*) is attained at the moment of death.

In theory, the goal of nirvana is attainable by anyone, although it is a realistic goal only for members of the monastic community. In Theravada Buddhism an individual who has achieved enlightenment by following the Eightfold Path is known as an arhat, or worthy one, a type of solitary saint.

For those unable to pursue the ultimate goal, the proximate goal of better rebirth through improved karma is an option. This lesser goal is generally pursued by lay Buddhists in the hope that it will eventually lead to a life in which they are capable of pursuing final enlightenment as members of the *sangha*.

The ethic that leads to nirvana is detached and inner-oriented. It involves cultivating four virtuous attitudes, known as the Palaces of Brahma: loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity. The ethic that leads to better rebirth, however, is centered on fulfilling one's duties to society. It involves acts of charity, especially support of the *sangha*, as well as observance of the five precepts that constitute the basic moral code of Buddhism. The precepts prohibit killing, stealing, harmful language, sexual misbehavior, and the use of intoxicants. By observing these precepts, the three roots of evil—lust, hatred, and delusion—may be overcome.

Document 8

Zen Buddhism

Zen has been an influential Buddhist sect in Japan for centuries. The name of the sect—Ch'an in Chinese and Zen in Japanese—derives from the Sanskrit *dhyana* [meditation]. In China the school early became known for making its central tenet the practice of meditation, rather than adherence to a particular scripture or doctrine.

The earliest information we possess regarding Zen in Japan refers back to when Dosho, an outstanding Japanese monk, came into contact with the tradition of the Indian philosopher Bodhidharma, who came to China from India in the late 5th century A.D. He taught the practice of "wall-gazing"; legend has it that he once sat staring at a cave wall in China for nine years. His goal in this painful experience was to find enlightenment through meditation. Bodhidharma was regarded as the first great master of Ch'an, a Chinese Buddhist sect. When this form of meditative exercise reached Japan, it became known as Zen.

According to tradition, Hui-neng (638–713) became the sixth patriarch of Ch'an Buddhism by superseding his rival in the intuitive grasp of the truth of enlightenment, even though he was illiterate. The Platform Sutra, attributed to Hui-neng, defines enlightenment as the direct seeing of one's "original Mind" or "original Nature," which is Buddha, and this teaching has remained characteristic of Zen. A number of teaching lineages arose after Hui-neng, all claiming descent from him, and teaching the method of "sudden enlightenment" best known in the

West by the term *satori*. In its formative period Zen was influenced by both Taoism and elements of Prajna-Paramita Buddhism.

The 8th and 9th centuries were the “golden age” of Ch’an Buddhism in China. The unique Zen teaching style developed, stressing oral instruction and using non-rational forms of dialogue, from which the later *koan* was derived. In some cases physical violence was used to jolt the student out of dependence on ordinary forms of thought and into the enlightened consciousness. Scholarly knowledge, ritual, and performing good deeds were considered of comparatively little spiritual value.

After the great persecution of Buddhism in 845, Ch’an emerged as the dominant Chinese sect, due partly to its innate vitality and partly to its isolation in mountain monasteries away from centers of political power. Two main schools of Ch’an—the Lin-chi (Japanese: Rinzai) and the Ts’ao-tung (Japanese: Soto)—flourished and were transmitted to Japan.

Zen was introduced in Japan as early as the seventh century, and was being taught by the eighth and ninth centuries. However, Zen had obstacles to overcome since it was a foreign religion. It did not prosper until the early Kamakura period (1185-1333), when concentration on a single path became important. It was also during this period that Zen found its entree among the Japanese nobility.

The austere discipline and practical approach of Zen made it the Buddhism of the medieval Japanese military class. Zen monks occupied positions of political influence and became active in literary and artistic life. Zen monasteries, especially the main temples of Kyoto and Kamakura, were educational as well as religious centers.

There were two main Zen schools that arose during this time period in Japan. Each contributed different ways of how to reach enlightenment. One was Rinzai, and the other was Soto. The followers of Rinzai believed they would find enlightenment through spontaneous flashes and this placed greater emphasis on the use of the *koan* and effort to attain sudden enlightenment. The Soto school attempted to reach enlightenment through lengthy sessions of sitting meditation (*zazen*) without expectation and with faith in one’s own intrinsic state of enlightenment or Buddha-nature. The founding of these two differing schools are attributed to two monks who played a vital role in the development of Zen in Japan.

The first of these, Eisai (1141-1215), is said to be the actual founder of Japanese Zen. Eisai traveled to China, where he was trained in the Lin-chi (Rinzai) house. He returned to Japan in 1191 and constructed the first Rinzai sect in Japan. He managed to win the favor of the shoguns and forge the alliance with the military class that is still the social foundation of Japanese Zen.

The other founder was Dogan (1200-1253), who established the Ts'ao-tung (Soto) school of Zen in Japan. He taught *zazen*, wrote, and attracted so many followers that he moved several times to more spacious temples. Dogan eventually moved to east Japan and settled in a nearby temple (Eiheiji) that was built in his honor. To this day, he is still considered a great thinker, an admirable man, and a gifted contemplative, both by Buddhists of all sects and by many non-Buddhists. Dogan is undeniably the most significant person in the history of Japanese Zen.

The Zen influence on Japanese aesthetics ranges from poetry, calligraphy, and painting to tea ceremony, flower arrangement, and landscape gardening—particularly the distinctive rock-and-sand temple gardens. Japanese Zen declined in the 16th and 17th century, but its traditional forms were revived by the great Hakuin (1686–1769), from whom all present-day Rinzai masters trace their descent.

The methods used by different schools of Zen on how to reach enlightenment vary some, but the fundamental concept remains consistent. Zen does not stress retreat from life, but rather full immersion in it. It rejects the shadow world of concepts and aims to perceive the world directly. There are three primary reasons why Zen came to Japan at that particular time and was successful. First, Zen cultivated a pure aesthetic dimension, and artistic creativity was important in that era. Second, there was an emphasis on the transcendence of all life. And finally, Zen learned to coexist, and even merge some, with Shintō worship and belief.

Class #6

Religious Traditions III

Linking past and present.

Document 9

Seishin Ryooiku

THOMAS ROHLEN

"Spiritual Education in a Japanese Bank,"
***American Anthropologist*, 1973.**

"Spiritual Education" in a Japanese Bank[1]

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Many Japanese companies train their new employees according to a philosophy of "spiritualism," a set of ideas about human psychology and character development that inspired much of the country's pre-war education. "Spiritualism's" debts to the Zen, Confucian and samurai traditions are quite apparent. It emphasizes social cooperation and responsibility, an acceptance of reality, and perseverance. Its educational methods emphasize specially constructed training experiences. As a case study in the anthropology of education, Japanese company spiritual education points to the value of (1) studying educational processes outside formal school systems; (2) considering native concepts of psychology in analyzing educational processes; (3) finding relationships between educational techniques and techniques found in religious conversion, psychological therapy, and social initiation; and (4) discovering avenues of education that proceed by non-verbal means.

DURING the last few years Japanese media have given considerable attention to the startling increase of company training programs devoted at least in part to *seishin kyooiku*, a manner of training commonly translated as "spiritual education." As many as one-third of all medium and large Japanese companies may now conduct such programs as part of their regular in-company training.[2] The accounts of these in the media have been impressionistic and generally critical with journalists in particular labelling company "spiritual education" practices as unwanted and unwarranted echoes of Japan's pre-war educational philosophy, universally condemned in the early post-war period as militaristic and stultifying to individualism and the democratic impulse. This harsh judgment is entirely predictable and not without some validity, but a closer examination of the phenomenon of company *seishin kyoolku* is in order before any reasonable conclusions as to its nature and political implications may be made.[3] Furthermore, spiritualism (*seishin-shugi*) is much more than a sensitive public issue in Japan; it is a key to much that Japanese now regard as traditional and foreigners regard as Japanese in the nation's ongoing cultural pattern. Spiritualism provides a very definite philosophy of socialization and human development, one that underlies such well known pursuits as flower arranging, judo, and the study of the tea ceremony. At one time it inspired the training of the country's samurai and, more recently, her pre-war youth.[4] Spiritualism offers a perspective by which individual character continues to be widely judged today. Company spiritual education is, in summary, but the most recent manifestation of a very long and still quite vital Japanese orientation to issues of human psychology and education and for this reason the subject is of far greater interest than the matter of resurgent nationalism alone would imply.

In this article I wish to describe a company spiritual training program in which I was a participant for its three-month duration in 1969.[5] The full scope of the program is too varied to permit a complete account and consequently only the major activities that are focal events of the instruction and a few themes of training life will be described in detail. The patterns underlying these activities will be discussed

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