

Ebrey / Walthall

# Pre-Modern East Asia to 1800

A Cultural,  
Social, and  
Political  
History



Third Edition







# Pre-Modern East Asia

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# Pre-Modern East Asia: To 1800

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A Cultural, Social, and Political History  
Third Edition

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# PREFACE

There are many reasons to learn about East Asia. A fifth of the world's population lives there. Every day newspapers carry articles on the rapid transformations of the world economy that make China, Japan, and Korea a growing presence in our lives. Globalization means not only that people are crossing the Pacific in ever-increasing numbers but also that U.S. popular culture is drawing from many sources in East Asia, from Korean martial arts to Japanese anime and Chinese films.

But why approach East Asia through its history rather than, say, its economy or contemporary culture? Many reasons suggest themselves. We cannot gain an adequate understanding of modern phenomena without knowing the stages and processes that led up to them. Moreover, the peoples of East Asia are strongly historically minded. To a much greater extent than in the United States, they know and identify with people and events of a thousand or more years ago. In all three countries, readers still enjoy *The Three Kingdoms*, a novel written in fourteenth-century China about the leaders of three contending states in third-century China. Historical consciousness also underlies the strong sense of separate identities among the people of China, Korea, and Japan. The fact that time and again Korea was able to protect its independence despite the attempts of both China and Japan to conquer it is a central part of Korean identity today. Yet another reason to learn about East Asia's past is its comparative value. As a region that developed nearly independently of the West, East Asia sheds light on the variety of ways human beings have found meaning, formed communities, and governed themselves, expanding our understanding of the human condition.

What makes this East Asian history book distinctive? In it we cover all three countries from a broad range of perspectives, from the earliest signs of human civilization to the present, and we balance the big picture with specific cases. While availing ourselves of the framework provided by politics, we also focus on culture, social issues, and economic change.

## WHAT IS NEW IN THE THIRD EDITION

Our first goal in revising this book has been to bring it up to date—to cover the last few years and take account of new scholarship. But we have also put a lot of thought into how we can best serve our audience. Teachers and students who used the first and second editions of this book have told us how much they liked our coverage of social and cultural history, our mini-chapter “Connections,” and our boxed features—the Documents, Biographies, Material Culture, and Making Comparisons features. With their encouragement, we continue to scrutinize our choices and in this edition offer several new ones, including new Material Culture features on Japanese portrait statues and matchlocks and China's recent high-speed trains; new biographies of a Korean interpreter, a Japanese radical samurai, and a Chinese geomancer; and new documents from the *Book of Songs* for the Zhou period and “Wild Lilies,” for the twentieth century. We also have added an additional Making Comparisons feature on languages.

Two more pervasive changes also deserve mention. On the advice of instructors who have used this book in class, we have added two pedagogical aids. The first is pronunciation glosses aimed to give students the courage to pronounce foreign words in their heads while reading, and out loud in class. These glosses do not aim for linguistic precision; their sole purpose is to help U.S. students approximate the sounds of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean words.

The second addition we have made is to add critical thinking questions at the end of all the documents and biographies. It is our hope that these questions will encourage students to pause and think about what they are reading. Teachers might also consider asking students to prepare answers to them.

The overall conception of this book remains the same as it was from the first edition. The following distinctive characteristics are worth underlining.

## COMPARABLE COVERAGE OF KOREA

Part of our original plan for this book was to cover Korea in comparable depth as China and Japan (we ended up giving China about 50 percent of the space, Japan 30 percent, and Korea 20 percent). We know that many teachers have been frustrated in their attempts to cover Korea in their East Asia courses for lack of suitable materials and hope that our efforts prove useful to both them and their students.

## A BROAD FOCUS: CONNECTIONS CHAPTERS

It is often difficult to keep the larger whole in mind as we tell the separate stories of China, Korea, and Japan. Our solution has been to periodically zoom out to look at the wider region from a global or world-historical perspective. Thus, after every few chapters we have inserted a mini-chapter on developments that link the societies of East Asia both to each other and to the larger global context. We have labeled these mini-chapters “Connections” because they emphasize the many ways each society was connected to outside events and people. For instance, the origins and spread of Buddhism are of great importance to all the societies of East Asia, but much of the story can be told as a common narrative that connects East Asia with the rest of Asia. Similarly, many books write about World War II in East Asia in entirely different ways in their China and Japan chapters. By stepping back and writing about the war from a more global perspective, we help students see the larger picture.

## BALANCED CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL HISTORY

This book strives for balanced coverage of the different strands of history. A basic political narrative is essential to give students a firm sense of chronology and to let them think about issues of change. Moreover, there is no denying that the creation of state structures has much to do with how people lived their lives. Even the fact that people think of themselves as “Chinese,” “Korean,” or “Japanese” is largely a by-product of political history.

We also believe students should gain an understanding of the philosophies and religions of East Asia. Confucianism and Buddhism have both been of great importance throughout the region, but in very diverse ways, as the historical context has continually changed. Other elements of high culture also deserve coverage, such as the arts of poetry and calligraphy.

Yet we did not want to neglect topics in social, cultural, and economic history, where much of our own work has been concentrated. Even if the state is important to understanding how people lived, so were families, villages, and religious sects. We also wanted to bring in the results of scholarship on those who had been marginalized in the traditional histories, from laborers and minorities to women at all social levels.

## MAKING COMPARISONS

There are many similarities among the cultures of East Asia, often because of their direct influence on each other and the wide circulation of some core philosophical, religious, and literary texts. Yet differences are at least as significant and interesting. To help students take stock of what they have learned, from time to time we provide a brief, one-page discussion placed between chapters that compares features of the three countries. The topics in the third edition are languages, food cultures, monarchical institutions, women’s situations, neo-Confucianism, slavery, and popular religion.

## A SPECIFIC FOCUS: BIOGRAPHIES, DOCUMENTS, AND MATERIAL CULTURE

The potential danger of trying to cover so much is a high level of generalization. To keep our readers engaged and bring our story down to earth, we devote three or four pages per chapter to closer looks at specific people, documents, and material objects.

### Biographies

Most chapters have a one-page biography, often about someone who would not normally be mentioned

in a history book. We thus highlight a diverse set of individuals, from the most accomplished (such as the eminent Chinese poet Du Fu) to those who are remarkably ordinary people (such as a woman whose job was to mind the neighborhood telephone). Three military men are portrayed; others were physicians, interpreters, entrepreneurs, and founders of religious sects. We also have included some agitators and revolutionaries, and even a winning volleyball coach.

## Documents

In our chapters we frequently cite short passages from primary sources, but we believe students also benefit from texts long enough to give them a sense of the genre, the author's point of view, and the circumstances described. A few of those we have included are by famous writers, such as Fukuzawa Yūkichi and Lu Xun. Some are excerpted from well-known pieces of literature, such as the play *The Peony Pavilion* and ancient Japanese poetry collections. Others will be less familiar to teachers and students alike. We selected legal documents, for what they reveal of ordinary people's lives, and religious texts of several sorts to help students see religion and popular beliefs in action. Many authors are utterly serious, complaining bitterly of war or corruption, for instance; others have well-developed senses of humor. All the documents prompt active involvement and critical interpretation because through them students hear the concerns of people of the past.

## Material Culture

Texts are not our only sources for reconstructing the past; there is much to be discovered from material remains of many sorts. To give focus to this dimension of history, for each chapter we have selected one element of material culture to describe in some detail. These range from the most mundane—food, drink, clothing, houses, and means of transportation—to objects of art including specific paintings, sculptures, and performing arts. Many of the objects discussed have economic significance—for example, fertilizers and the Grand Canal. Most of the features for the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries bring out ways material culture has changed, along with so much

else in modern times—from the food people eat to their ways of amusing themselves to technological advances such as the transistor that continue to have an impact not only in Asia but across the world.

## THINKING LIKE A HISTORIAN

The “Documents” and “Material Culture” features challenge students to draw inferences from primary materials much as historians do. Another way we have tried to help students learn to think like historians is to present history as a set of questions more than a set of answers. What historians are able to say about a period or topic depends not only on the sources available but also on the questions asked. To help students see this, we begin each chapter with a brief discussion of some of the questions that motivate contemporary historians to do research on the time period. Few have easy answers; they are not questions students will be able to resolve simply by reading the chapter. Rather they are real questions, interesting enough to motivate historians to sift through recalcitrant evidence in their efforts to find answers. The earliest chapter on Korea, for instance, poses the question of how the three states on the Korean peninsula were able to survive in the face of Chinese power. The chapter on early nineteenth-century Japan points out that historians have studied the period for clues to the causes of the Meiji Restoration, wanting to know the relative weight to assign to foreign pressure and domestic unrest. For the chapter dealing with China under the Nationalists, we point out that the desire to explain the Communist victory in 1949 has motivated historians to ponder why May Fourth Liberalism lost its appeal and whether the economic politics of the Nationalists could have brought prosperity to China if Japan had not invaded. We hope that posing these questions will help readers see the significance of the topics and issues presented in each chapter.

## USING THIS TEXT IN CLASS

East Asian history is commonly taught either as a one-term or one-year course. To fit both schedules, this text is available as a single volume and as two divided chronologically. Since those who divide

chronologically might prefer to break at either 1600 or 1800, the period 1600–1800 appears in both the chronologically divided volumes.

## INSTRUCTOR SUPPLEMENT

**eInstructor’s Resource Manual** Prepared by Ethan Segal, Michigan State University. This manual has many features, including learning objectives, chapter outlines, discussion/essay questions, key terms, and activities for the classroom. Available on the instructor’s companion website.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the first edition of this book, the three authors divided the work primarily by country of specialization, with Patricia Ebrey writing the parts on China, Anne Walthall those on Japan, and James Palais those on Korea. The Connections chapters we divided among ourselves chronologically, with Patricia Ebrey taking the early ones (on Prehistory, Buddhism, Cultural Contact Across Eurasia, and the Mongols), Anne Walthall taking the early modern and modern ones (on Europe Enters the Scene, Western Imperialism, and World War II), and James Palais doing the final one on East Asia in the Twenty-First Century. Our original co-author, James Palais, passed away shortly after the first edition was printed in summer 2006. For the second and third editions, Patricia Ebrey revised James Palais’s chapters covering up to 1800 and Anne Walthall the remainder.

Many people have contributed to the shaping of this book. The authors have been teaching about the societies of East Asia for three decades, and the ways they approach their subjects owe much to questions from their students, conversations with their colleagues, and the outpouring of scholarship in their fields. As we worked on this text, we received much advice from others, from early suggestions of possible collaborators to critiques of our original proposal and reviews of the drafts of our chapters. The reviewers’ reports prompted us to rethink some

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# CONVENTIONS

Throughout this book names are given in East Asian order, with family name preceding personal name. Thus Mao Zedong was from the Mao family, Ashikaga Takauji from the Ashikaga family, and Yi Sŏnggye from the Yi family.

Both Japanese and Korean have phonetic scripts (Japanese a syllabary, Korean an alphabet), though Japanese additionally makes extensive use of Chinese characters. There are standard ways to transcribe these scripts into our alphabet. Here we have used the Hepburn system for transcribing Japanese. For Korean, we have used the revised romanization system of the Ministry of Culture in South Korea.

Chinese does not have a phonetic script. In this book the pinyin system of romanization has been adopted.

The basic vowels, *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u* in all three languages are pronounced as in Italian, German, and Spanish.

*a* as in *father*

*e* as in *end*

*i* as the first *e* in *eve* (although in Chinese if it comes after an *s*, *ch*, or *z*, it is pronounced as the *e* in *the*)

*o* as in *old* (shorter in length and with less of the *ou* sound of English)

*u* as in *rude* (shorter in length than English)

The macron over the *ō* or *ū* in Japanese indicates that the vowel is “long,” taking twice as long to say, as though it were doubled. Macrons have been omitted from common place names well known without them, such as Tokyo and Kyoto.

*ü* in Chinese (used only after *l* or *n*) is like the German *ü*.

The three languages are not so similar when one vowel follows another. In the case of Japanese, each vowel is pronounced as a separate syllable (*shōen*, is two syllables, *shō-en*). In Chinese, they create a (one-syllable) diphthong (e.g., *mei*, which is pronounced like *may*, and *xia*, which sounds like *shya*). In Korean, two vowels in a row are used to

convey a distinct vowel sound; *ae* is like the *a* in *at*; *eo* is like the *u* in *but*; *eu* is like the *oo* in *foot*.

Consonants for Japanese and Korean romanization are close enough to English to give readers little difficulty. In the Chinese case, divergence between how an English speaker would guess a pronunciation and how the word is actually pronounced is greater. The most confusing consonants are listed below:

*c* *ts* in *tsar*

*z* *dz* in *adze*

*zh* *j* in *jack*

*q* *ch* in *chin*

*x* *sh*

In the case of Chinese, the romanization system does not convey tones, which are also an important element in pronunciation.

We have offered simple pronunciation guides after many words that might give readers trouble. These do not aim at linguistic accuracy; they are at best approximations, based on common American pronunciations, and are provided so that students will feel more comfortable using the words in class. They can be ignored once the reader has gotten the hang of the romanization system.

For both Chinese and Korean, other ways of romanizing the language are also widely used. Through the last edition of this book we used the McCune-Reischauer system for Korean, which uses apostrophes and diacritical marks. Thus, the dynasty that was romanized as Chosŏn in the last edition is now romanized as Joseon. Comparisons of the two systems of romanization can be found at [http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom2\\_ko.pdf](http://www.eki.ee/wgrs/rom2_ko.pdf).

In the case of Chinese, pinyin only became the standard system of romanization in recent decades. Some earlier spellings were based on dialects other than Mandarin (Peking, Canton, Sun Yat-sen). More often the Wade-Giles system of romanization was employed. From context, if nothing else, most readers

have inferred that Mao Zedong is the same person whose name used to be spelled Mao Tse-tung, or that Wang Anshi is the pinyin form of Wang An-shih. Two older spellings have been retained in this book because they are so widely known (Sun Yatsen and

Chiang Kaishek). Charts for converting pinyin to Wade-Giles and vice versa are widely available on the Internet, should anyone want verification of their guesses (see, for instance, <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/pinyin/romcover.html>).





# Pre-Modern East Asia

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## PART ONE

# The Foundations of East Asian Civilization in China

### Connections

The Prehistory of East Asia

### Chapter 1

China in the Bronze Age: The  
Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties  
(ca. 1500–771 B.C.E.)

### Chapter 2

Philosophers and Warring States  
During the Eastern Zhou Period  
(770–256 B.C.E.)

### Chapter 3

The Founding of the Bureaucratic  
Empire: Qin-Han China (256 B.C.E.–  
200 C.E.)

### Connections

Buddhism in India and Its Spread Along the Silk  
Road

### Chapter 4

Political Division in China and the Spread of  
Buddhism (200–580)

### Chapter 5

The Cosmopolitan Empires of Sui and Tang  
China (581–960)

### Connections

Cultural Contact Across Eurasia (600–900)

# The Prehistory of East Asia

THINKING ABOUT THE WHOLE OF EAST Asia before the invention of writing helps to remind us that East Asia has always been a part of Eurasia and did not develop in isolation. During the Pleistocene geological era (the last great Ice Age), plants and animals spread across Eurasia as far as Japan, which was then connected to the mainland. In later times, peoples, crops, and inventions traveled in many directions.

Early human beings (*Homo erectus*) appeared in East Asia more than 1 million years ago, having gradually spread from Africa and West Asia during the Pleistocene. Peking Man, discovered in the 1920s, is one of the best-documented examples of *H. erectus*, with skeletal remains of some forty individuals found in a single cave complex. Peking Man could stand erect, hunt, make fire, and use chipped stones as tools. In recent decades, even earlier examples of *H. erectus* have been found in south China.

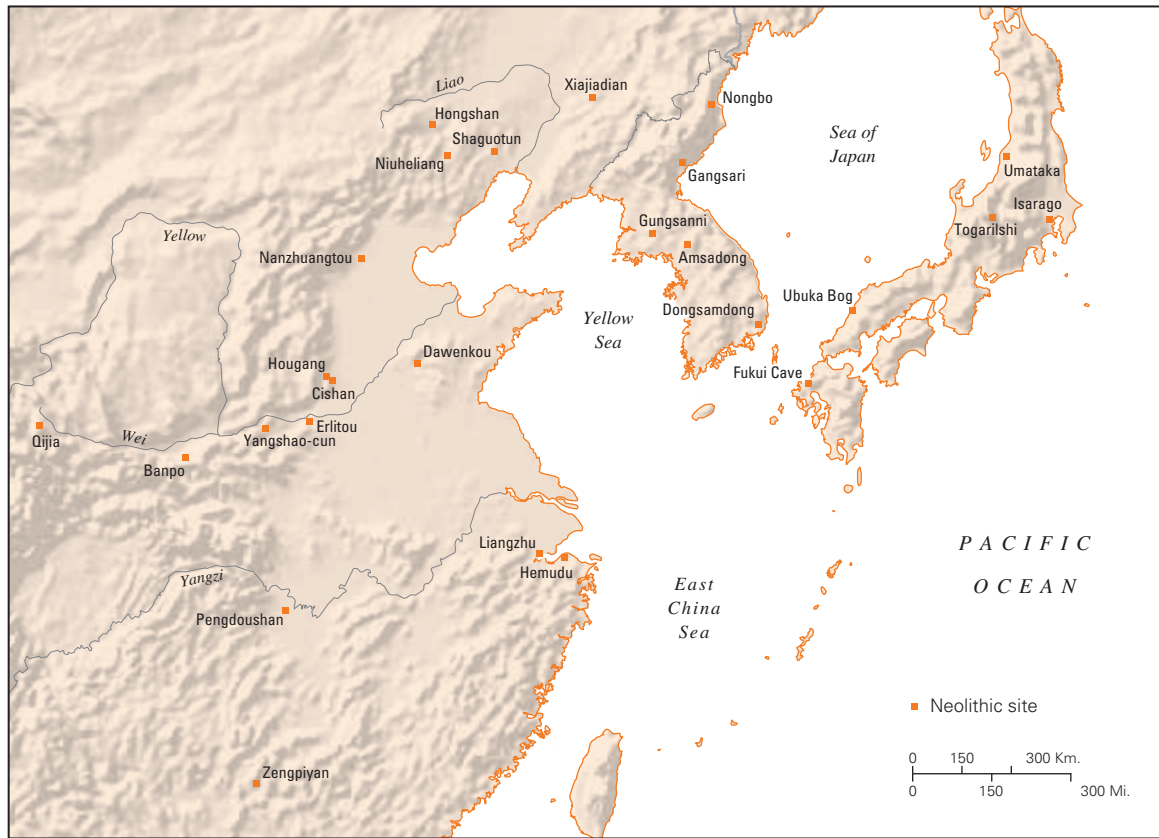
Modern human beings (*Homo sapiens*) appeared in East Asia perhaps fifty thousand years ago. The dominant theory in the West, supported by studies of the mitochondrial DNA of modern people, is that *H. sapiens* also spread out of Africa and displaced *H. erectus* in areas where it was not already extinct. Chinese archaeologists have given more credence to the theory that *H. erectus* evolved into *H. sapiens* independently in many parts of the world, making Peking Man the ancestor of modern Chinese. They can point to similarities between Peking Man and modern Chinese, such as the shape of certain teeth.

During the period from 50,000 to 10,000 B.C.E., East Asia was home to numerous groups of Paleolithic hunters, gatherers, and fishermen. Many of these people were on the move, following the wild animals they hunted or searching for new environments to exploit. This was the period that saw the movement of people from northeast Asia to the Americas and also from south China and Southeast Asia to the Pacific and Australia.

During this long period, humans began to speak, and so the affinities of modern languages offer a rough clue to the spread of peoples in early times. Language affinities suggest at least three migratory routes through East Asia: from North Asia into Mongolia, Manchuria, Korea, and Japan; from China into Tibet and Southeast Asia; and from south China to both Southeast Asia and the islands of the Philippines and Indonesia. Other evidence suggests additional routes—for instance, from Southeast Asia and Micronesia to Japan.

All through Eurasia, much greater advance came after the end of the last Ice Age around 10,000 B.C.E. (See Map C1.1.) Soon after this date, people in Japan began making pottery, some of the earliest in the world. Pottery is of great value for holding water and storing food. In China and Korea, the earliest pottery finds were somewhat later, but pottery was apparently in use by 6000 B.C.E. Throughout East Asia, early pottery was commonly imprinted on its surface to give it texture. In Japan, this period is referred to as Jōmon and dated from about 10,000 to 300 B.C.E. The comparable period in Korea is called Jeulmun and dated from about 8000 to 700 B.C.E. These cultures share many features. From shell mounds found in many places in both Korea and Japan, it is evident that sites were occupied for long periods, that shellfish were collected onshore, and that fish were caught from both rivers and the ocean. Other food sources were animals such as deer and wild boar, which were hunted. Dogs seem to have been domesticated and perhaps used as hunting animals.

China in the millennia after the last Ice Age followed more closely the pattern seen in western Eurasia, which involved crop agriculture, domestication of animals for food and work, pottery, textiles, and villages. Agriculture is a crucial change because cultivating crops allows denser and more permanent settlements. Because tending crops, weaving, and



Map C1.1 Neolithic Sites in East Asia

fashioning pots require different sorts of technical and social skills than do hunting and gathering, it is likely that skilled elders began to vie with hunters and warriors for leadership.

The dozen or more distinct Neolithic cultures that have been identified in China can be roughly divided by latitude into the southern rice zone and the northern millet zone and by longitude into the eastern jade zone and the western painted pottery zone. Dogs and pigs were found in both areas as early as 5000 B.C.E. By 3000 B.C.E. sheep and cattle had become important in the north and water buffalo and cattle important in the south.

Whether rice was independently domesticated in China or spread there from Southeast Asia is not yet certain. The earliest finds in China date to about 8000 B.C.E. At Hemudu, a site south of Shanghai and dating to about 5000 B.C.E., Neolithic villagers grew rice in wet fields and supplemented their diet with fish and water plants such as lotus and water chestnut. Hemudu villagers built wooden houses on

piles; wove baskets; and made hoes, spears, mallets, paddles, and other tools from wood. They decorated their pottery and lacquered bowls with incised geometrical designs or pictures of birds, fish, or trees.

Millet, a crop domesticated in China, became the foundation of agriculture in north China. Nanzhuangtou, the earliest site found so far, is in southern Hebei and dates to about 8000 B.C.E. At Cishan, a site in Hebei dating to about 5500 B.C.E., millet was cut with stone sickles and stored in cord-marked pottery bowls, jars, and tripods (three-legged pots). In addition to growing millet, the local people hunted deer and collected clams, snails, and turtles.

The east–west divide among Chinese Neolithic cultures in terms of expressive culture may well have had connections to less tangible elements of culture such as language and religion. In the west (Shaanxi and Gansu provinces especially), pottery decorated with painted geometrical designs was commonly produced from about 5000 to 3000 B.C.E. In the fully developed Yangshao style, grain jars were

exuberantly painted in red and black with spirals, diamonds, and other geometrical patterns.

In the east, from Liaodong near Korea in the north to near Shanghai in the south, early pottery was rarely painted, but more elaborate forms appeared very early, with the finest wares formed on potters' wheels. Some had exceptionally thin walls polished to an almost metallic appearance. Many forms were constructed by adding parts, such as legs, spouts, handles, or lids. The many ewers and goblets found in eastern sites were probably used for rituals of feasting or sacrifice. Eastern cultures were also marked by progressively more elaborate burials.

At Dawenkou in Shandong (ca. 5000–2500 B.C.E.), not only were wooden coffins used but even wooden burial chambers were occasionally constructed. The richest burials had more than a hundred objects placed in them, including jade, stone, or pottery necklaces and bracelets. Some of the people buried there had their upper lateral incisors extracted, a practice Chinese authors in much later times considered “barbarian” and that is also seen in some Japanese sites.

Even more distinctive of the eastern Neolithic cultures is the use of jade. Because jade does not crack, shaping it requires slow grinding with abrasive sand. The most spectacular discoveries of Neolithic jades have been made in Liaodong near Korea (Hongshan culture, ca. 3500 B.C.E.) and south of Shanghai (Liangzhu culture, ca. 2500 B.C.E.)—areas that literate Chinese in ca. 500 B.C.E. considered barbarian. In the Hongshan culture area, jade was made into small sculptures of turtles, birds, and strange coiled “pig dragons.” In the Liangzhu area, jade was fashioned into objects with no obvious utilitarian purpose and that are therefore considered ritual objects. Most common are disks and notched columns.

In China, the late Neolithic period (ca. 3000–2000 B.C.E.) was a time of increased contact and cultural borrowing between these regional cultures. Cooking tripods, for instance, spread west, while painted pottery spread east. This period must also have been one of increased conflict between communities because people began building defensive walls around settlements out of rammed earth, some as large as 20 feet high and 30 feet thick. Enclosing a settlement with such a wall required chiefs able to command men and resources on a large scale. Another sign of the increasing power of religious or military elites is human sacrifice,



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**Jade Plaque.** This small plaque (6.2 by 8.3 cm, or 2.5 by 3.25 in) is incised to depict a human figure who merges into a monster mask. The lower part could be interpreted as his arms and legs, but at the same time resembles a monster mask with bulging eyes, prominent nostrils, and a large mouth.

probably of captives. The earliest examples, dating to about 2000 B.C.E., involved human remains placed under the foundations of buildings. At about the same time, metal began to be used on a small scale for weapons. These trends in Neolithic sites on the north China plain link it closely to the early stages of the Bronze Age civilization there, discussed in Chapter 1.

For China, prehistory conventionally stops soon after 2000 B.C.E. It is true that in the Chinese subcontinent outside the core of Shang territories, subsistence technology continued in the Neolithic pattern for many more centuries. In Korea and Japan, the period before writing lasted longer, but during the first millennium B.C.E., technologies from China began to have an impact.

To understand the links between early China and its East Asian neighbors, we must briefly consider the wider Eurasian context, especially the northern steppe region. In terms of contemporary countries, the steppe extends from southern Russia past the Caspian and Aral seas, through the Central Asian republics, the northern reaches of China, and into Mongolia and farther east. Horses were domesticated on the southern Russian steppe by about 4000 B.C.E. but spread only slowly to other regions. Chariots spread first, then riding on horseback.

A fourteenth-century B.C.E. Hittite text on horsemanship discusses the training of chariot horses; within a century or so, chariots appeared in Shang China. The Scythians appeared as mounted archers in the tenth or ninth century B.C.E. East of them, the Karasuk, with a similar culture, dominated the region from western Mongolia into south Siberia. The Scythians and the Karasuk lived in felt tents, traveled in covered carts, and had bronze technology, including the bronze bit that made possible horseback riding. By the seventh century B.C.E. in the Altai region of Mongolia, there were two distinct groups of nomadic pastoralists: those who buried the dead under mounds and those who buried the dead in stone boxes. Their bronze implements, however, were much the same.

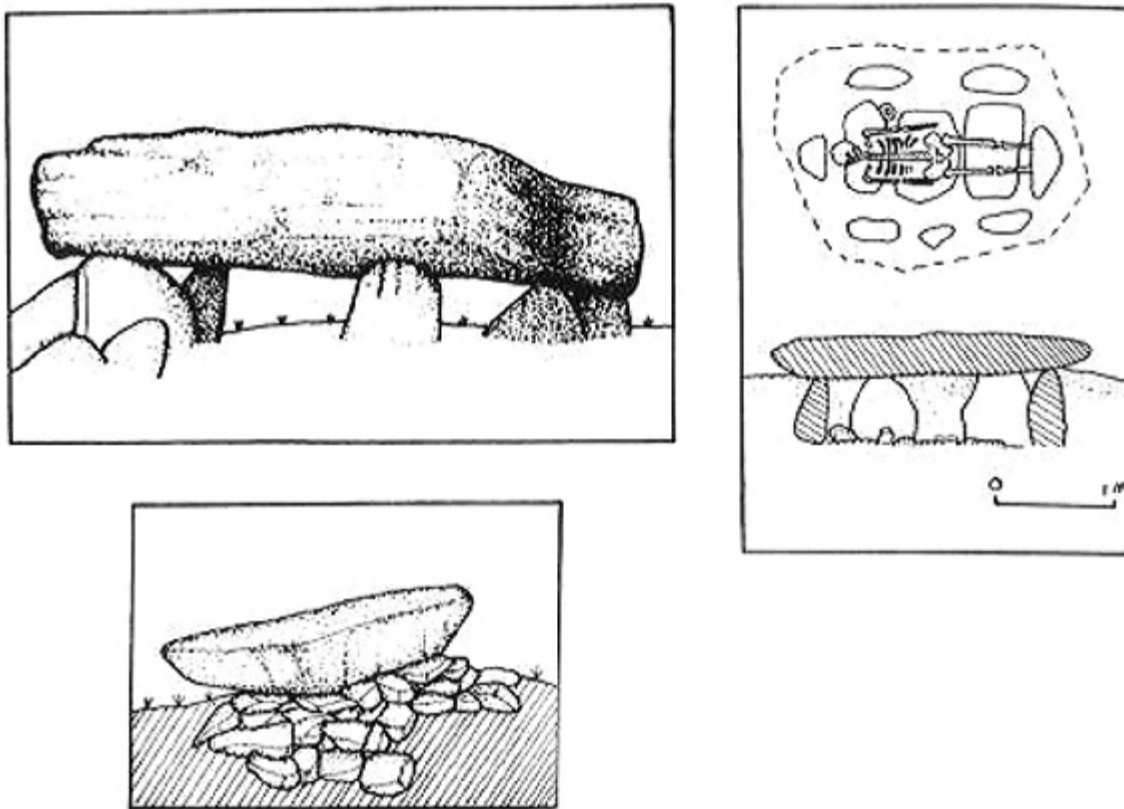
South of these groups on the steppe, but in contact with them, were pastoral-agricultural cultures in China's Northern Zone, stretching in terms of modern provinces from Gansu through northern Shaanxi, northern Shanxi, and northern Hebei, into Liaoning (southern Manchuria). During the late second millennium B.C.E., this zone was settled by a variety of cultures with distinct pottery and burial customs but bronze knives much like those of the steppe to the north. In the early first millennium B.C.E., warrior elites emerged in many of these cultures, and animal raising became more central to their economies, perhaps in response to a climate that was becoming colder and drier. From 600 to 300 B.C.E., evidence of horses becomes more and more common, as does riding astride. Some of these cultures adopted nomadic pastoralism, moving with their herds to new pastures. These cultures also adopted the art styles common on the steppe, such as bronze and gold animal plaques. They made increasing use of iron, which may have spread to them from the Central Asian steppe rather than from China, which was also beginning to use iron in this period. At the same time, these Northern Zone cultures were in contact with the Chinese states; early Chinese coins have been found at some sites.

The eastern end of this Northern Zone was directly north of Korea. Archaeologists have identified a culture there that lasted eight centuries, from the eleventh to the fourth centuries B.C.E., called Upper Xiajiadian culture. Finds include an ancient mine, along with distinctive bronze knives, helmets, mirrors, and horse fittings. The faces of the dead were covered with a cloth decorated with bronze buttons.

During the next phase there was such a radical change in burial practices that archaeologists suspect that a different, and militarily superior, horse-riding group entered the area. This new group used both wooden and stone-cist coffins. A cist burial is one with a burial chamber built of stones to form a box, with a flagstone or similar large, flat stone to cover it. By the third century B.C.E., the cultures of the Northern Zone became increasingly homogeneous in material culture and rituals, with similar warrior elites and ornamental art.

These societies came into contact with people settled farther south in the Korean peninsula. As mentioned previously, after the end of the last Ice Age, the Korean peninsula was home to the fishing and foraging Jeulmun (comb pattern pottery) peoples. By the middle of the first millennium B.C.E., a new culture, called Mumun (plain pottery), became established. Mumun sites, in contrast to the earlier Jeulmun seaside ones, were on hillsides or hilltops. Grain production became more important, and metalworking was adopted. Bronze began to be used in Korea about 700 B.C.E. and iron by about 400 B.C.E. Mumun farmers grew barley, millet, sorghum, and short-grained rice, a mix of crops similar to that grown in north China. They heated their homes with flues under the floor, a practice that continued into modern times. Another distinctive feature of this culture, the use of stone-cist burials, links it to the Northern Zone. A fifth-century B.C.E. site in west-central Korea has a stone-cist burial, twenty-one pit buildings, red burnished pottery, a pottery kiln, a stone mold for casting bronze implements, whetstones for sharpening blades, bronze daggers and swords, and a bronze dagger of the type found farther north in the Northern Zone. Soon, however, Korea was producing its own distinctive metalwork, such as finely decorated mirrors. A new burial form also emerged: large aboveground stone vaults called dolmens.

The shift from Jeulmun to Mumun probably reflects the same movement of people seen in southern Manchuria. Without textual evidence, however, it is impossible to decide whether the local Jeulmun quickly adopted the superior technology of the Mumun people or whether the Mumun moved into the area in large numbers, gradually pushing out those who were already there. Some scholars speculate that the newcomers were the speakers of languages that were the ancestors of the Korean and Japanese languages.



**Figure C1.1 Dolmens.** Burial structures capped with large stones, called dolmens, have been found in both the Korean peninsula and nearby parts of Japan. The two shown on the left were found in northern and southern Korea, respectively. The one on the right, which also shows the arrangement of the bones beneath the capstone, was found in Kyushu, across the Korean Strait. (© Cengage Learning)

Another important technology that made its way to Korea and Japan before writing was rice cultivation. Studies based on stone reaping knives suggest that rice spread north along the China seaboard, reaching Korea and Japan by about 300 B.C.E. In the case of Japan, rice seems to have been grown by the end of the Jōmon period but is more strongly associated with the next stage, called the Yayoi period. The Yayoi period is marked by distinctive pottery, found earliest in Kyushu, then spreading east through Honshu, though farther north more of the Jōmon style is retained in Yayoi pieces. Rice cultivation was more thoroughly adopted in western Japan, with the marine-based way of life retaining more of its hold in northern Japan. Iron tools such as hoes and shovels also spread through Japan during this period, as did silk and associated spinning and weaving technologies.

It is likely that the shift to Yayoi-style pottery and associated technologies was the result of an influx of people from Korea. Archaeologists have identified two distinct skeleton types in Yayoi period sites in western Japan, which they interpret as the indigenous Jōmon people and the new immigrants from Korea. The Jōmon type were shorter and more round-faced. The influx of the immigrants seems to have been greatest in Kyushu and western Honshu. Some scholars speculate that the Ainu, who survived into modern times only on the northern island of Hokkaido, are of relatively pure Jōmon stock.

Another sign that the influx of Yayoi people was not so great in eastern Japan is that bronze implements did not become important in the east, nor did easterners adopt the western Yayoi style of burying the whole body in a jar, coffin, or pit. Rather, in the east, reburial of the bones in a jar predominated.



Because contact between southern Korea and western Japan continued through this period and because new technologies entered through this route, western Japan in this period was relatively more advanced than eastern Japan.

As we can see from this review of prehistory, contact among the societies of East Asia did not lead to identical developmental sequences. In China a millennium passed between the introduction of bronze technology and that of iron, in Korea only three centuries, and in Japan they were acquired together. In China the horse was first used to pull chariots, and it took five hundred or more years before soldiers were riding horses. In Korea and Japan, horses came

with horse riders and there was no chariot stage. Geography has much to do with the fact that Korea's direct neighbors frequently were not Chinese but nomadic pastoralists with distinctive cultures. Geography also dictates that passage from Korea to Japan was shorter and easier than crossing from China, giving Korea more direct influence on Japan than China had.

In Chapters 6 and 7, when we pick up the story of Korea and Japan again, it will be evident that as we move into the historical period, not only is the prehistoric period of continuing significance, but many of the same cultural processes continued to be at work.

# China in the Bronze Age: The Shang and Western Zhou Dynasties (ca. 1500–771 B.C.E.)

The Geography of the Chinese Subcontinent

The Shang Dynasty (ca. 1500–1045 B.C.E.)

**Material Culture:** Rammed Earth

Developments Outside the Shang Core

The Western Zhou Dynasty (1045–771 B.C.E.)

**Documents:** The Book of Songs

China's Bronze Age began soon after 2000 B.C.E., and by 1200 B.C.E. there were bronze-based civilizations in several regions of China. The best known of these was centered on Anyang (ahn-yahng) in north-central China, where the Shang (shahng) Dynasty developed a complex state with writing and large settlements. The inscribed oracle bones found at Anyang confirm traditions about Shang rulers passed down in early texts.

In 1045 B.C.E. the Shang Dynasty was overthrown by an erstwhile ally-vassal, the state of Zhou (joe). The early Zhou Dynasty is known not only from archaeological evidence but also from transmitted texts, which provide the Zhou version of their righteous victory over the decadent Shang. The Zhou rulers sent out vassals to establish settlements in distant regions, creating a feudal-like system.

The issues that engage archaeologists, paleographers, and historians of China's Bronze Age remain the basic ones: Can we reconcile texts that talk of a sequence of dynasties with the archaeological evidence of distinct cultural centers? What were the consequences of the invention of writing? What can be inferred about Shang society and culture from surviving material artifacts such as bronze vessels? Is there any way to tell whether cultures outside the core regions of the Shang and Zhou spoke the same language or considered themselves part of the same culture? How significant in political and cultural terms was the transition from Shang to Zhou? Was anything significant learned from other parts of Eurasia in this period, or were all advances locally generated?



Map 1.1 Western Zhou China

## THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE CHINESE SUBCONTINENT

The term *China* as it is used in this book does not refer to the same geographical entity at all points in history. The historical China, also called China proper, was smaller than present-day China and changed in size over time. It can be thought of as the area settled by Chinese speakers or controlled by a Chinese state, or both. (To radically simplify complex issues of identity, references here to “the Chinese” can be taken to mean speakers of the Chinese language, a group that can also be referred to as the Han Chinese.) The contemporary People’s Republic of China includes territories like Tibet, Inner Mongolia, Turkestan, and Manchuria that were the traditional homes of other peoples and were not incorporated into Chinese states until relatively late in their histories. In this book, to indicate the location of historically significant places

within China, modern province names are used for convenience (see frontispiece map).

The geographical context in which Chinese civilization developed changed slowly over time: rivers and coastlines have shifted, forests have been cleared, and climates have warmed and cooled. The human geography has undergone even more extensive changes as the area occupied by speakers of Chinese has expanded and they have faced different neighbors.

China proper, by the nineteenth century about a thousand miles north to south and east to west, occupies much of the temperate zone of East Asia. The northern part, drained by the Yellow River, is colder, flatter, and more arid than the south. Rainfall in many northern areas is less than 20 inches a year, making it best suited to crops like wheat and millet. The dominant soil is loess—fine wind-driven earth that is fertile and easy to work even with primitive tools. Much of the loess soil ends up as silt in the Yellow River, causing the riverbed to rise