The Socio-cultural Modernization of East Asia

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Cultural and Linguistic Modernization of East Asia
China (中国) Japan (日本) Korea (韩国)

- China: Zhongguo (中国) and Zhonghua (中华), Han (漢/汉) and Tang (唐) / Sino

- Japan: Nihon, Nippon, Yamato (大和) / Jipangu

- Korea: Hanguk, Joseon (朝鲜) / Goryeo (高丽)
Geography of East Asia
China

• Land: 3.705 million square miles (9.5 million square km) < US (3.797m m²)
• From Shanghai to Kashgar: 2,600 miles (4184km)
• Russian border to Hainan: 2,500 miles (4023km)
• China encompasses the Historical Boundary of kingdoms and empires
• Modern China: Northeast, North, Upper Yangzi, Middle Yangzi, Lower Yangzi, Southeast Coast, Lingnan, Yun Gui
• Provinces (省) are the highest-level administrative divisions. There are 34 such divisions, classified as 23 provinces, 4 municipalities, 5 autonomous regions (Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet and Xinjiang) and 2 Special Administrative Regions (HK and Macao).
Chinese Geography

• Physiographic Macro regions – Nine regions centred on river valleys and hills or mountains; each has regional core and peripheries (Skinner 2007)

• Geographical and Cultural Division: North and South

• With the exception of the northeast (Dongbei 东北), the macro-regions lie in three tiers; the Yellow River (Huanghe 黄河) Valley, the Yangzi River (Changjiang 长江) Valley in the centre, and the West River (Xijiang 西江) system

• All of these river follow the continent’s downward tilt from Tibet to the sea
Korea: Geography
Korean Geography

• The Korean Peninsula; dense and mountainous; Mt. Baekdu (Changbai 长白) in the north and 120 miles from Japan

• The size of Utah, 84,565 square miles. The DMZ division allocated more territory to the North (47,541 square miles) than to the South (38,024 square miles); 3,500 islands; only 15% arable land

• Mineral resources are concentrated in the north

• Goryo kingdom (917-1392) was succeeded by Joseon dynasty.

• Topography delineates regional identities: mountainous division and relatively immobile population correspond to food cultures and local religious customs
Korean Geography

• Hamgyong: relatively isolated northeast; strong dialect
• Pyungan: close to the main routes to China; the local population is more cosmopolitan and commercial
• Gyeonggi: Seoul and standard language; Joseon dynasty elites and sources of wealth
• Jeolla: Rice production, high rates of tenancy
• Gyeongsang: human and economic resources
• Respect for land and farming, thus maritime transportation and trade relatively not developed (Confucian influence)
Japanese Geography
Japan: Geography

• Mountainous, short and fast rivers flowing down from central volcanic mountains

• Made up of four main islands; 150,000 square miles (388,500 square km) the size of Montana; less than 13% of total land is lowland; two thirds of total land is mountains

• The four main islands of Kyushu, Honshu, Shikoku and Hokkaido; Hokkaido (ex Ezo) joined in the late nineteenth century;
Japan: Geography

• The Kansai Region: home to ancient and medieval cities in the vicinity of current Osaka and Kyoto, and was the cradle of Japanese civilization; known as Yamato, supported the development of culture, religious belief and wealth

• The Kanto Region: current Tokyo area of east central Japan; the Tokugawa rulers developed Edo out of a small fishing village; after 1868, Edo was named Tokyo

• The population grew to 30 million by the early 1800s. In the early modern period, new agricultural techniques overcame the limits of geography
East Asian Culture

• In the seventeenth century, East Asia was at least as safe and comfortable as in Europe; technology advanced

• Often **Chinese inventions** transformed Europe: the gunpowder, the printing technology, the compass; ceramics and silks

• **Chinese, Korean and Japanese are mutually incomprehensible**; but share the written Chinese letters

• Korean and Japanese belong to the same language group
East Asia: Culture

- Written language: Chinese – pictographs, ideographs (山，好)
- Japanese written language: during the Heian period (794-1185), the hybrid system of retaining Chinese characters (Kanji) for nouns, the stems of verbs, and adjectives with Japanese kana (美しい、食べる)
- Korean written language Hangul was created in 1443, and is now the official script of both South Korea and North Korea. In South Korea, Hangul (한글) is occasionally augmented by Chinese characters called Hanja (한자): Members of elites, who prided themselves on their command of Chinese language and literature and writing poetry in Chinese (cf. vernacular)
East Asia: Culture

- **Confucianism**: the texts and ideas promoted by Confucius (孔子 circa 549-449 BC); peace and harmony prevail by following the words of sages – the Way (道)

- **By 1600**, the teachings of Confucius had been evolved to what is known as Neo-Confucianism (**Wang Yangming** 王陽明)

- The Analects (论语 논어) was accepted as the authentic words and conversations of Confucius; it formed one of the four books selected by Zhu Xi (1130-1200)
East Asia: Culture

- Confucianism: Mencius (孟子 孟子 387-303BC) advocated benevolence, without which the ruler would risk of losing “the Mandate of Heaven”

- In the common view, such loss of divine sanction would be preceded by earthquakes, floods and droughts, which may lead to revolts

- If these warnings are ignored, then the mandate will be lost

- In Japan and Korea, The Four Books and Five Classics were equally revered and taught at private schools (四書五經: 論語 大學 中庸 孟子 / 易經 書經 詩經 礼記 春秋)
East Asia: Culture

- **Confucian Patriarchy;** the norm and applied to inheritance practice
- In Japan: a single heir inherited by far the largest portion of an estate (one of the cause for emigration; **Japanese Nikkei people, diaspora**)
- In China: after providing for dowries for unwed daughters, it was divided equally among all surviving sons
- In Korea: used to practice based on a **primogenital** principle
- These Confucianism-based inheritance practices not only affected the quality of life of those concerned but had a major impact on the size and economic viability of land holdings and on the degree of social mobility; later, **Confucian values and Western systems** were in conflict during the modernisation of Asia
About Confucianism

• [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUhGRh4vdb8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUhGRh4vdb8)
• 5:30 (quick version)
Central Themes of Confucian Society

• Family and State: The Importance of Hierarchy and Paternalism for Social Order

• Government and society in China were traditionally grounded in the Confucian philosophy

• Confucianism held that the correct ordering of relationships within the family was key to the ordering of society in general

• Emphasis was on hierarchical relationships and the paternal line, with the eldest male holding supreme authority and responsibility for the family unit.

• The state claimed to be modeled on the family, with the emperor serving as the father of subjects (Individual vs. Collective)
Class Hierarchy in China

- The Shi/Scholars/Officials
- The Nong/Farmers/Peasants
- The Gong/Artisans
- The Shang/Merchants

Diagram:
- Emperor
  - First class: palace court, nobles, government officials
  - Second class: peasants
  - Third class: artisans
  - Fourth class: merchants
  - Slaves
Central Themes of China

• **Moral Role of the Government**

• The dominant strain of Confucian thought stressed *self-cultivation, education, and the practice of ritual.*

• One of the government's main functions in the Confucian state is to *educate and transform the people*, by moral example of the emperor and his officials (division between guan and min – officers and subjects)

• The belief that the state is the moral guardian of the people and that *men are perfectible* is reflected in a number of institutions, historically in the merit bureaucracy, or civil service, in which all officials are supposed-to be selected for their *moral qualities* (i.e., Mao Zedong’s style of Communist party leadership, the treatment of deviance, and the revolutionary role assigned to the peasantry in China)
Central Themes of Japan

• Japan

• Cultural Borrowing: Japanization of Foreign Ways (和)
  • All societies borrow from others, but the Japanese are distinguished by the degree to which they have engaged in deliberate and selective borrowing
  • By adaptation, or Japanization, of foreign ways.
  • Japanese Language, Culture, Modernization, etc.
Cultural Borrowing: Japanization

Kanji  智志
Hiragana  さとし
Katakana  サトシ
Comparative Analysis of Collectivism

**Characteristic Behaviors**

-Collectivism (Group Harmony)-

China
- “We” (group-orientated)
- Consensus
- Individualism (selfish)

Japan
- “We” (group-orientated)
- Return of favor is almost subconscious

Korea
- A group-centered society, “we”
- Consensus is very important to promoting and maintaining harmony
- Individualism often viewed as selfishness
Comparative Analysis of Collectivism

• Ching (Küng and Ching 1989) emphasizes that Confucius’ central doctrine is always concerned with human relationships, asserting that it is associated with loyalty (zhong) to oneself and reciprocity (shu), or respect and concern for others; the latter referring more to social behavior, and the former to the person’s inner orientation.

• Ching (ibid.) emphasizes that benevolence (jen) is also translated variously as goodness, benevolence, humanity and human-heartedness. The person with jen loves all and everyone.

• With regard to the collective and the individual, the central ideology of inclusion was for the collective purpose and unity of the nation, thus individual rights were to be sacrificed for the nation (Son 2017)
Central Themes of Korea

• **Korea**

• Korea's **position as a peninsula** on the eastern edge of Northeast Asia has determined much of its social, political, and cultural history.

• Civilization on the Korean peninsula has developed in **close interaction with neighboring China** and other cultures on the Northeast Asian mainland, and with **Japan**.

• Topography and climate have also been important influences on Korea's historical development. The Korean peninsula is very mountainous, especially in the north. **Less than 20 percent of the land is suitable for cultivation.**
Confucian influence in Korea (禮)
Central Themes of Korea

• Until the fourteenth century Korea also had a powerful hereditary aristocracy

• Unlike the warrior class in Japan, the military in Korea lost its elevated social status after the fourteenth century (Mun vs. Mu 文武, Scholar vs. Soldier)

• There are few ethnic minorities in Korea (Race discourse on Consanguinity)

• The Korean language is part of the Uralic family of languages, along with Japanese and Mongolian

• It is quite different from the Chinese language, which is a member of the Sinitic family of languages (but borrowed Chinese characters)

• The political, linguistic, and ethnic unity of the Korean peninsula over a long period of time has created a strong sense of national identity and distinctiveness among the Korean people.
The Western Influence on East Asia

• By the Age of Discovery, Europe had developed enough geographical knowledge and technology in shipbuilding
• By the 15th century, Europeans explored the African coast
• In 1492, Christopher Columbus reached the Americas
• Before 1500 European economies were largely self-sufficient
• Asia gave rise to a growing trade in lucrative commodities (a key development in world capitalist economy)
• Rivalry between reigning European powers saw the entry of the Dutch, British and French among others
Historical Events

• 1650s to the 1780s Age of Enlightenment
• 1760 The Industrial Revolution
• 1776 the American Revolution
• 1789 the French Revolution

External Forces to China’s Modernisation

• 1792 British Macartney Mission to China
• 1839 the First Opium War with Britain
Commodore Matthew Perry and Japan

• Perry’s appearance in Edo bay in July 1853, and his return the following year, followed by another excursion in 1854; the Japanese demonstrated Sumo wrestlers to intimidate the American envoy

• Americans brought some latest technology: a locomotive engine and a circle of track, and the bakufu commissioners were sitting on the train as it went around at the speed of 18 miles an hour

• Perry left a harsh message in 1853 demanding the signed letter until he comes back the following year, which caused panic in Edo

• To avoid war and to produce consensus, the bakufu requested that daimyo submit their advice on how to deal with the Americans
Commodore Matthew Perry (1794-1858)

From the Western perspective

From the Japanese perspective
Considerations of China’s Modernization

• Convergence of Chinese and Western history / Change and Reform / Revolution / Nationalistic Racial Consciousness

• 1839-42 The First Opium War as the point of departure / China’s seclusion / Western Imperialism and Colonialism

• The intrusion of the West as a catalyst of Modern China vs. the dominant ideology of Confucianism

• The Qing autocracy – no legal or loyal opposition was allowed / strong censorship imposed / Secret society and nationalistic-racial revolt and revolution

• Burdened by tradition and heritage yet ignorant of the nature of the Western world
Frameworks of China’s Modernization

1. The role of Western powers and cross-cultural contacts in influencing the shape and trajectory of modern China

2. Necessary to move beyond the impact-response model to expand to an interactive and autonomous Chinese efforts to achieve modernisation
Life of Scholars and Civil Servants

• Since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), civil examination was implemented to select public officials

• Examinations were based on the Confucian classics, and passing it successfully assures wealth, power and influence

• Boys began preparing for the exam from about the age of five

• Memorizing Chinese letters about two hundred a day until they reach 431,286 words of the Seven Classics

• By the age of twenty, a prodigious student would sit for the prefectural level, then provincial level, if successful, moves onto national level.

• For those who failed to complete all three levels, unofficial gentry class (tension between the mandarins and the literati's)
Language and China’s Modernization

• Socio-political role of language
• Structure and grammar of Western language
• Necessity of inclusive pedagogy and the clearly stipulated Chinese grammar
• Relation to Print media to form public opinion
• Unity of written and spoken Chinese language
• Linguistic barriers in uniting the people politically
• Uniting the Chinese by overcoming geographical distance (Overseas Chinese)
• Modern rationality and political power
Language and China’s Modernization

• Daruvala (2000) holds that, since the late Qing dynasty, while the people had been the most important component of the nation, language, and more specifically, the use of the vernacular, was the instrument by which the people’s commitment to the nation was to be mobilized.

• Fei (1992) argues language is society’s sifter as it has dual functions in either helping or blocking communications, thus, those feelings and meanings that differ in size and shape cannot pass through the sifter.

• Duara (1995) highlights the openness or vulnerability of language as susceptible to strategic appropriations as he emphasizes that language can be mediated by social reality and political forces, but not infinitely manipulable.
Language and China’s Modernization

• In the West, language has been regarded as a core cultural element that shapes national identity.

• Saussure once said that language was a collective treasure shared by all members of a community (Bourdieu 1991).

• Bourdieu (1991) maintains that language can neither be analyzed nor understood in isolation from its cultural context and the social conditions of its production and reception.

• Habermas (1984) stresses that the ultimate purpose of language is to understand common meaning among the communicators in society.
Analysis of Sun Yat-sen’s Discourse

• Sun initially remarked on the structure of Western language: “The European (written) languages are phonology-based, and its phonology is closely linked to spoken language; thus when the spoken language changes, these changes can be also reflected in the written language.”

• Sun also discovered the existence of the system of grammar in Western language and the difference in the structure of Western pedagogy from that of Chinese.

• He commented, “European countries all pursue the learning of grammar, which takes their own language as its research subject, and it is a compulsory subject that every student must take in their education”
Analysis of Sun Yat-sen’s Discourse

• Sun’s comparative analysis of the structural differences between Chinese language and Western language seems to have made him convinced that the grammar served as the key to writing correctly.

• He commented on the grammatical absence in Chinese language: In Chinese, there is no [structured stipulation of] grammar, and that is why those who learn how to write [in Chinese], are not able to compose even a single word unless they recite articles by their predecessors and mimic their writing style;

• Thus either they know all about writing, or they know nothing even after 10 years of struggling with it. It has nothing to do with [one’s] effort.”
Analysis of Sun Yat-sen’s Discourse

• Sun further analyzed the style of Chinese writings, suggesting the lack of instructing grammatical logic in Chinese pedagogy

• “Besides, most scholars treat logic in the same way as Tao Yuanming (a great poet of the Jin dynasty), as they do not seek a thorough understanding during reading”

• “The sense of logic is an innate capability of humankind; thus for scholars who can write articles that enjoy a long-lasting reputation, with eloquence and sophistication, logic is easily achieved; however, when they are asked how to get to logic, they cannot answer”
Analysis of Sun Yat-sen’s Discourse

• Yet, Sun was aware of the limitations of translation as he advised to avoid too narrow an interpretation. He exclaims: “Of course, these are by no means the most exact translations!”

• Having recognized that a translated word could produce various meanings, Sun emphasized the differences in perspective within the expression

• Sun implied that understanding language was most needed when interpreting new concepts when they were derived from different cultures.

• Sun tried to connect the Western concept of logic to an existing Chinese word by expanding the boundaries of the word’s connotations.
Analysis of Sun Yat-sen’s Discourse

• Sun argued that Chinese language maintained its cultural connections to the surrounding Asian nations, serving as a medium of communication across Asia.

• “Beyond the boundaries of our country, [Chinese language] influence extends over Japan, Korea and Indo-China, which consider themselves akin to the Chinese for their language.”

• On the other hand, Sun regarded Chinese language as a cultural fortress that preserved Chinese history.

• While Sun considered land and the people as the two essential constituents of a nation, he argued that language was a common socio-cultural constituent that bridged the people and the nation.
Analysis of Sun Yat-sen’s Discourse

• Sun’s criticism was extended to the underlying causes of the absence of China’s unity and modernization.

• Sun was arguing for the necessity of more inclusive education from the linguistic perspective in order to include the illiterate and the undereducated. Sun recognized that grammar would serve as a guideline for them to overcome exclusionary hindrances to gain logic:

  “Because of the lack of grammar, beginners cannot find an efficient way to proper writing. This is just like when there is no bridge leading to the other side of a river; you have to travel ten times or hundreds of times more distance as you detour in order to cross the river.”
Implications

• Exclusionary aspects of Chinese language resulted from the absence of a clearly stipulated grammar and the Chinese scholars’ perfunctory pedagogy

• Linguistic unity would bridge the Chinese people to political unity

• National unity required equal access to education, which would serve as catalyst for modern rationality and political awareness

• Sun urged Chinese scholars to fulfil their responsibility in educating students so that they gain logic through learning language properly

• Linguistic inclusion corresponded to the collective power of the Chinese people as linguistic logic could provide a most powerful tool in attaining equal rights