Documents

Considering the Evidence: The Making of Japanese Civilization

Japan's historical development during the postclassical era places it among the third-wave civilizations—Russian, Swahili, Srivijaya, west European, Islamic—that took shape between 500 and 1500. Each of them was distinctive in particular ways, but all of them followed the general patterns of earlier civilizations in the creation of cities, states, stratified societies, patriarchies, written languages, and more. Furthermore, many of them borrowed extensively from nearby and older civilizations. In the case of Japan, that borrowing was primarily from China, its towering neighbor to the west. The documents that follow provide glimpses of a distinctive Japanese civilization in the making, even as that civilization selectively incorporated elements of Chinese thinking and practice (see pp. 394–97).

Document 9.1

Japanese Political Ideals

As an early Japanese state gradually took shape in the sixth and seventh centuries, it was confronted by serious internal divisions of clan, faction, and religion. Externally, Japanese forces had been expelled from their footholds in Korea, while Japan also faced the immense power and attractiveness of a reunified China under the Sui and Tang dynasties (see pp. 380–85). In these circumstances, Japanese authorities sought to strengthen their own emerging state by adopting a range of Chinese political values and practices. This Chinese influence in Japanese political thinking was particularly apparent in the so-called Seventeen Article Constitution issued by Shotoku, which was a set of general guidelines for court officials.

- What elements of Buddhist, Confucian, or Legalist thinking are reflected in this document? (Review pp. 192–95 and 199–201 and Documents 4.3, pp. 174–75, and 5.1, pp. 217–19.)
- What can you infer about the internal problems that Japanese rulers faced?

- How might Shotoku define an ideal Japanese state?
- Why do you think Shotoku omitted any mention of traditional Japanese gods or spirits or the Japanese claim that their emperor was descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu?

Despite this apparent embrace of all things Chinese, Shotoku's attitude toward China itself is less clear. In various letters that he sent to the Chinese Sui dynasty ruler, Shotoku inscribed them as follows: "The Son of Heaven of the Land of the Rising Sun to the Son of Heaven of the Land of the Setting Sun." Another read: "The Eastern Emperor Greets the Western Emperor."[35] Considering their country as the Middle Kingdom, greatly superior to all its neighbors, Chinese court officials were incensed at these apparent assertions of equality. It is not clear whether Shotoku was deliberately claiming equivalence with China or if he was simply unaware of how such language might be viewed in China.

SHOTOKU

The Seventeen Article Constitution

604

1. Harmony is to be valued, and an avoidance of wanton opposition to be honored. All men are influenced by class feelings, and there are few who are intelligent. Hence there are some who disobey their lords and fathers, or who maintain feuds with the neighboring villages. But when those above are harmonious and those below are friendly, and there is concord in the discussion of business, right views of things spontaneously gain acceptance....

2. Sincerely reverence the three treasures... the Buddha, the Law [teachings], and the Priesthood [community of monks]....

3. When you receive the Imperial commands, fail not scrupulously to obey them. The lord is Heaven, the vassal is Earth. Heaven overspreads, and Earth upbears.... [W]hen the superior acts, the inferior yields compliance.

4. The Ministers and functionaries should make decorous behavior their leading principle.... If the superiors do not behave with decorum, the inferiors are disorderly....

5. Ceasing from gluttony and abandoning covetous desires, deal impartially with the [legal] suits which are submitted to you....

6. Chastise that which is evil and encourage that which is good. This was the excellent rule of antiquity....

7. Let every man have his own charge, and let not the spheres of duty be confused. When wise men are entrusted with office, the sound of praise arises. If unprincipled men hold office, disasters and tumults are multiplied. In this world, few are born with knowledge: wisdom is the product of earnest meditation. In all things, whether great or small, find the right man, and they will surely be well managed....

Source: W. G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697* (London: Paul, Trench, Truebner, 1896), 2:129–33.

Zen Buddhism, often known as Chan in China, was introduced to Japan about the same time that Pure Land was taking root. Both were concerned with making Buddhism available to the widest possible audience, for all persons possessed a Buddha nature and could potentially achieve awakening. But the Zen tradition decisively rejected the idea of relying on an external divine source, such as the Amida Buddha. Rather, serious practitioners should look within themselves through a highly disciplined form of meditation known as *zazen*. This meant much less emphasis on religious texts and philosophical discussion than in some other expressions of Buddhism. Furthermore, Zen valued very highly the transmission of teachings from master to disciple in an unbroken line of succession from the historical Buddha himself. Document 9.2 presents extracts from the writings of Dogen (1200–1253), among the first and most well-known of those Japanese monks who introduced Zen to their homeland, after extensive study in China.

- What was distinctive about Zen practice?
- Why do you think Zen was particularly attractive for Japan's warlords and its *samurai* warrior class?
- What distinguished Zen from Pure Land Buddhism in Japan?
- What understandings lie behind the strict discipline of Zen? How might Buddhist critics of this approach take issue with Dogen?

DOGEN

Writings on Zen Buddhism

Thirteenth Century

We teach: For all the Buddha dharma–preserving Zen ancestors and Buddhas, sitting upright in the practice of self-actualizing *samādhi* [concentration] is the true path of awakening. Both in India and in China, all who have attained awakening did so in this way. Because in every generation each teacher and each disciple intimately and correctly transmitted this marvelous art, I learned the genuine initiation.

In the correctly transmitted Zen lineage we teach: This directly transmitted, authoritative Buddha dharma is the best of the best. Once you start studying under a good teacher, there is no need for lighting incense, worshipful prostrations, recalling the Buddha (*nembutsu*), repentance, or chanting scripture. Just sit and slough off body-mind....

* * *

When I stayed at T'ien-t'ung monastery [in China], the venerable Ching used to stay up sitting until the small hours of the morning and then after only a little rest would rise early to start sitting again. In the meditation hall he went on sitting with the other elders, without letting up for even a single night. Meanwhile many of the monks went off to sleep. The elder would go around among them and hit the sleepers with his fist or a slipper, yelling at them to wake up. If their sleepiness persisted, he would go out to the hallway and ring the bell to summon the

Source: William Theodore de Bary et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, 1:321; William Theodore de Bary, *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969), 372–73.

10. Let us cease from wrath, and refrain from angry looks. Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings.... [All] of us are simply ordinary men....

11. Give clear appreciation to merit and demerit, and deal out to each its sure reward or punishment. In these days, reward does not attend upon merit, nor punishment upon crime. You high functionaries, who have charge of public affairs, let it be your task to make clear rewards and punishments....

12. Let not the provincial authorities or the [local nobles] levy exactions on the people. In a country, there are not two lords.... The sovereign is the master of the people of the whole country....

15. To turn away from that which is private, and to set our faces toward that which is public—this is the path of a Minister....

16. Let the people be employed [in forced labor] at seasonable times. This is an ancient and excellent rule. Let them be employed, therefore, in the winter months, when they are at leisure. But from spring to autumn, when they are engaged in agriculture or with the mulberry trees, the people should not be so employed. For if they do not attend to agriculture, what will they have to eat? If they do not attend the mulberry trees, what will they do for clothing?

17. Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone. They should be discussed with many.

Document 9.2

Buddhism in Japan: The Zen Tradition

Buddhism was perhaps Japan's most significant cultural borrowing. Although the religion had begun in India and entered Japan from Korea in the mid-sixth century, it was widely viewed as a Chinese import, conveying, according to one historian, a "Chinese-style dignity and civilization" for an emerging Japanese state. To the rulers of that new state, Buddhism was politically useful, for it provided a potentially unifying religious tradition for a divided society and support for the imperial regime.[36] Yet Buddhism in Japan was never a single tradition, for a great variety of Buddhist sects, practices, and schools of thought, most of them of Chinese origin, took root in Japan. Frequently they were at odds with one another and with the Japanese state as well.

The Pure Land school of Buddhist practice achieved widespread popularity in Japan beginning in the twelfth century and represented a democratization of a religion that had earlier given special prominence to monks and to elites in aristocratic circles. Its goal was no longer *nirvana*, the enlightenment gained in this life by the strenuous personal effort of a few individuals, but rather rebirth in the Pure Land of the Western Paradise, a heavenly place of beauty and delight where full awakening was virtually guaranteed (see Visual Source 5.5, p. 234). That possibility was now open to many simply by calling repeatedly on the name of Amida, a compassionate Buddha figure from ages past and an earlier incarnation of the historical Buddha. *Nama Amida Butsu* (Praise be to Amida Buddha)—that was the invocation, known as *nembutsu*, that offered divine assistance to all struggling seekers, ordinary people as well as monks, women as well as men, and even outcasts and the impure.

monks to a room apart, where he would lecture to them by the light of a candle.

"What use is there in your assembling together in the hall only to go to sleep? Is this all that you left the world and joined holy orders for?... Great is the problem of birth and death; fleeting indeed is our transitory existence. Upon these truths both the scriptural and meditation schools agree. What sort of illness awaits us tonight, what sort of death tomorrow? While we have life, not to practice Buddha's Law but to spend the time in sleep is the height of foolishness. Because of such foolishness Buddhism today is in a state of decline....

Upon another occasion his attendants said to him, "The monks are getting overtired or falling ill, and some are thinking of leaving the monastery, all because they are required to sit too long in meditation. Shouldn't the length of the sitting period be shortened?" The master became highly indignant. "That would be quite wrong. A monk who is not really devoted to the religious life may very well fall asleep in a half hour or an hour. But one truly devoted to it who has resolved to persevere in his religious discipline will eventually come to enjoy the practice of sitting, no matter how long it lasts. When I was young I used to visit the heads of various monasteries, and one of them explained to me, 'Formerly I used to hit sleeping monks so hard that my fist just about broke. Now I am old and weak, so I can't hit them hard enough. Therefore it is difficult to produce good monks. In many monasteries today the superiors do not emphasize sitting strongly enough, and so Buddhism is declining. The more you hit them the better,' he advised me."

Document 9.3

The Uniqueness of Japan

Despite Japan's extensive cultural borrowing from abroad, or perhaps because of that borrowing, Japanese writers often stressed the unique and superior features of their own country. Nowhere is this theme echoed more clearly than in *The Chronicle of the Direct Descent of Gods and Sovereigns*, written by Kitabatake Chikafusa (1293–1354). A longtime court official and member of one branch of Japan's imperial family, Kitabatake wrote at a time of declining imperial authority in Japan, when two court centers competed in an extended "war of the courts." As an advocate for the southern court, Kitabatake sought to prove that the emperor he served was legitimate because he had descended in unbroken line from the Age of the Gods. In making this argument, he was also a spokesman for the revival of Japan's earlier religious tradition of numerous gods and spirits, known later as Shintoism.

- In Kitabatake's view, what was distinctive about Japan in comparison to China and India?
- How might the use of Japan's indigenous religious tradition, especially the Sun Goddess, serve to legitimize the imperial rule of Kitabatake's family?
- How did Kitabatake understand the place of Confucianism and Buddhism in Japan and their relationship to Shinto beliefs?

KITABATAKE CHIKAFUSA

The Chronicle of the Direct Descent of Gods and Sovereigns

1339

Japan is the divine country. The heavenly ancestor it was who first laid its foundations, and the Sun Goddess left her descendants to reign over it forever and ever. This is true only of our country, and nothing similar may be found in foreign lands. That is why it is called the divine country.

In the age of the gods, Japan was known as the "ever-fruitful land of reed-covered plains and luxuriant ricefields." This name has existed since the creation of heaven and earth.... [I]t may thus be considered the prime name of Japan. It is also called the country of the great eight islands. This name was given because eight islands were produced when the Male Deity and the Female Deity begot Japan.... Japan is the land of the Sun Goddess [Amaterasu]. Or it may have thus been called because it is near the place where the sun rises.... Thus, since Japan is a separate continent, distinct from both India and China and lying in a great ocean, it is the country where the divine illustrious imperial line has been transmitted.

The creation of heaven and earth must everywhere have been the same, for it occurred within the same universe, but the Indian, Chinese, and Japanese traditions are each different....

In China, nothing positive is stated concerning the creation of the world, even though China is a country which accords special importance to the keeping of records....

The beginnings of Japan in some ways resemble the Indian descriptions, telling as it does of the world's creation from the seed of the heavenly gods. However, whereas in our country the succession to the throne has followed a single undeviating line since the first divine ancestor, nothing of the kind has existed in India. After their first ruler, King People's Lord, had been chosen and raised to power by the populace, his dynasty succeeded, but in later times most of his descendants perished, and men of inferior genealogy who had powerful forces became the rulers, some of them even controlling the whole of India. China is also a country of notorious disorders. Even in ancient times, when life was simple and conduct was proper, the throne was offered to wise men, and no single lineage was established. Later, in times of disorder, men fought for control of the country. Thus some of the rulers rose from the ranks of the plebians, and there were even some of barbarian origin who usurped power. Or some families after generations of service as ministers surpassed their princes and eventually supplanted them. There have already been thirty-six changes of dynasty since Fuxi, and unspeakable disorders have occurred.

Only in our country has the succession remained inviolate from the beginning of heaven and earth to the present. It has been maintained within a single lineage, and even when, as inevitably has happened, the succession has been transmitted collaterally, it has returned to the true line. This is due to the ever-renewed Divine Oath and makes Japan unlike all other countries....

Then the Great Sun Goddess... sent her grandchild to the world below. Eighty million deities obeyed the divine decree to accompany and serve him. Among them were thirty-two principal deities.... Two of these deities... received a divine decree specially instructing them to aid and protect the divine grandchild. [The Sun Goddess] uttered these words of command: "Thou, my illustrious grandchild, proceed thither and govern the land. Go, and may prosperity attend thy dynasty, and may it, like Heaven and Earth, endure forever."...

Because our Great Goddess is the spirit of the sun, she illuminates with a bright virtue which is incomprehensible in all its aspects but dependable alike in the realm of the visible and invisible. All

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Source: William Theodore de Bary et al., *Sources of Japanese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 1:358–63.

sovereigns and ministers have inherited the bright seeds of the divine light, or they are descendants of the deities who received personal instruction from the Great Goddess. Who would not stand in reverence before this fact? The highest object of all teachings, Buddhist and Confucian included, consists in realizing this fact and obeying in perfect consonance its principles. It has been the power of the dissemination of the Buddhist and Confucian texts which has spread these principles.... Since the reign of the Emperor Ōjin, the Confucian writings have been disseminated, and since Prince Shōtoku's time Buddhism has flourished in Japan. Both these men were sages incarnate, and it must have been their intention to spread a knowledge of the way of our country, in accordance with the wishes of the Great Sun Goddess.

Document 9.4

Social Life at Court

For many centuries, high culture in Japan—art, music, poetry, and literature—found a home in the imperial court, where men and women of the royal family and nobility, together with various attendants, mixed and mingled. That aristocratic culture reached its high point between the ninth and twelfth centuries, but, according to one prominent scholar, it "has shaped the aesthetic and emotional life of the entire Japanese people for a millennium."[37] Women played a prominent role in that culture, both creating it and describing it. Among them was Sei Shonagon (966–1017), a lady-in-waiting to the Empress Sadako. In her *Pillow Book*, a series of brief and often witty observations, Sei Shonagon described court life as well as her own likes and dislikes.

- What impression does Sei Shonagon convey about the relationship of men and women at court?
- How would you describe her posture toward men, toward women, and toward ordinary people? What insight can you gain about class differences from her writing?
- In what ways does court life, as Sei Shonagon describes it, reflect Buddhist and Confucian influences, and in what ways does it depart from, and even challenge, those traditions?

SEI SHONAGON

Pillow Book

ca. 1000

That parents should bring up some beloved son of theirs to be a priest is really distressing. No doubt it is an auspicious thing to do; but unfortunately most people are convinced that a priest is as unimportant as a piece of wood, and they treat him accordingly. A priest lives poorly on meager food, and cannot even sleep without being criticized. While he is young, it is only natural that he should be

Source: Ivan Morris, trans. and ed., *The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 25–26, 39, 44–45, 47, 49–50, 53, 254–55.

curious about all sorts of things, and, if there are women about, he will probably peep in their direction (though, to be sure, with a look of aversion on his face). What is wrong about that? Yet people immediately find fault with him for even so small a lapse....

A preacher ought to be good-looking. For, if we are properly to understand his worthy sentiments, we must keep our eyes on him while he speaks; should we look away, we may forget to listen. Accordingly an ugly preacher may well be the source of sin....

When I make myself imagine what it is like to be one of those women who live at home, faithfully serving their husbands—women who have not a single exciting prospect in life yet who believe that they are perfectly happy—I am filled with scorn....

I cannot bear men who believe that women serving in the Palace are bound to be frivolous and wicked. Yet I suppose their prejudice is understandable. After all, women at Court do not spend their time hiding modestly behind fans and screens, but walk about, looking openly at people they chance to meet. Yes, they see everyone face to face, not only ladies-in-waiting like themselves, but even Their Imperial Majesties (whose august names I hardly dare mention), High Court Nobles, senior courtiers, and other gentlemen of high rank. In the presence of such exalted personages the women in the Palace are all equally brazen, whether they be the maids of ladies-in-waiting, or the relations of Court ladies who have come to visit them, or housekeepers, or latrine-cleaners, or women who are of no more value than a roof-tile or a pebble. Small wonder that the young men regard them as immodest! Yet are the gentlemen themselves any less so? They are not exactly bashful when it comes to looking at the great people in the Palace. No, everyone at Court is much the same in this respect....

Hateful Things

...A man who has nothing in particular to recommend him discusses all sorts of subjects at random as though he knew everything....

An admirer has come on a clandestine visit, but a dog catches sight of him and starts barking. One feels like killing the beast.

One has been foolish enough to invite a man to spend the night in an unsuitable place—and then he starts snoring.

A gentleman has visited one secretly. Though he is wearing a tall, lacquered hat, he nevertheless wants no one to see him. He is so flurried, in fact, that upon leaving he bangs into something with his hat. Most hateful!...

A man with whom one is having an affair keeps singing the praises of some woman he used to know. Even if it is a thing of the past, this can be very annoying. How much more so if he is still seeing the woman!...

A good lover will behave as elegantly at dawn as at any other time. He drags himself out of bed with a look of dismay on his face. The lady urges him on: "Come, my friend, it's getting light. You don't want anyone to find you here." He gives a deep sigh, as if to say that the night has not been nearly long enough and that it is agony to leave. Once up, he does not instantly pull on his trousers. Instead he comes close to the lady and whispers whatever was left unsaid during the night. Even when he is dressed, he still lingers, vaguely pretending to be fastening his sash....

Indeed, one's attachment to a man depends largely on the elegance of his leave-taking. When he jumps out of bed, scurries about the room, tightly fastens his trouser-sash, rolls up the sleeves of his Court cloak, over-robe, or hunting costume, stuffs his belongings into the breast of his robe and then briskly secures the outer sash—one really begins to hate him....

It is very annoying, when one has visited Hase Temple and has retired into one's enclosure, to be disturbed by a herd of common people who come and sit outside in a row, crowded so close together that the tails of their robes fall over each other in utter disarray. I remember that once I was overcome by a great desire to go on a pilgrimage. Having made my way up the log steps, deafened by the fearful roar of the river, I hurried into my enclosure, longing to gaze upon the sacred countenance of Buddha. To my dismay I found that a

throng of commoners had settled themselves directly in front of me, where they were incessantly standing up, prostrating themselves, and squatting down again. They looked like so many basket-worms as they crowded together in their hideous clothes, leaving hardly an inch of space between themselves and me. I really felt like pushing them all over sideways.

Document 9.5

The Way of the Warrior

As the Japanese imperial court gradually lost power to military authorities in the countryside, a further distinctive feature of Japanese civilization emerged in the celebration of martial virtues and the warrior class—the *samurai*—that embodied those values. From the twelfth through the mid-nineteenth century, public life and government in Japan was dominated by the samurai, while their culture and values, known as *bushido*, expressed the highest ideals of political leadership and of personal conduct. At least in the West, the samurai are perhaps best known for preferring death over dishonor, a posture expressed in *seppuku* (ritual suicide). But there was much more to bushido than this, for the samurai served not only as warriors but also as bureaucrats—magistrates, land managers, and provincial governors—acting on behalf of their lords (*daimyo*) or in service to military rulers known as *shoguns*. Furthermore, although bushido remained a distinctively Japanese cultural expression, it absorbed both Confucian and Buddhist values as well as those of the indigenous Shinto tradition.

The two selections that follow reflect major themes of an emerging bushido culture, the way of the warrior. The first excerpt comes from the writings of Shiba Yoshimasa (1349–1410), a feudal lord, general, and administrator as well as a noted poet, who wrote a manual of advice for the young warriors of his own lineage. Probably the man who most closely approximated in his own life the emerging ideal of a cultivated warrior was Imagawa Ryoshun (1325–1420), famous as a poet, a military commander, and a devout Buddhist. The second excerpt contains passages from a famous and highly critical letter Imagawa wrote to his adopted son (who was also his younger brother). The letter was published and republished hundreds of times and used for centuries as a primer or school text for the instruction of young samurai.

- Based on these accounts, how would you define the ideal samurai?
- What elements of Confucian, Buddhist, or Shinto thinking can you find in these selections? How do these writers reconcile the peaceful emphasis of Confucian and Buddhist teachings with the military dimension of bushido?
- What does the Imagawa letter suggest about the problems facing the military rulers of Japan in the fourteenth century?

SHIBA YOSIMASA

Advice to Young Samurai

ca. 1400

Wielders of bow and arrow should behave in a manner considerate not only of their own honor, of course, but also of the honor of their descendants. They should not bring on eternal disgrace by solicitude for their limited lives.

That being said, nevertheless to regard your one and only life as like dust or ashes and die when you shouldn't is to acquire a worthless reputation. A genuine motive would be, for example, to give up your life for the sake of the sole sovereign, or serving under the commander of the military in a time of need; these would convey an exalted name to children and descendants. Something like a strategy of the moment, whether good or bad, cannot raise the family reputation much.

Warriors should never be thoughtless or absentminded but handle all things with forethought....

It is said that good warriors and good Buddhists are similarly circumspect. Whatever the matter, it is vexing for the mind not to be calm. Putting others' minds at ease too is something found only in the considerate....

When you begin to think of yourself, you'll get irritated at your parents' concern and defy their instructions. Even if your parents may be stupid, if you obey their instructions, at least you won't be violating the principle of nature. What is more, eighty to ninety percent of the time what parents say makes sense for their children. It builds up in oneself to become obvious. The words of our parents we defied in irritation long ago are all essential. You should emulate even a bad parent rather than a good stranger; that's how a family culture is transmitted and comes to be known as a person's legacy....

Even if one doesn't perform any religious exercises and never makes a visit to a shrine, neither deities nor buddhas will disregard a person whose mind is honest and compassionate. In particular, the Great Goddess of Ise,° the great bodhisattva Hachiman,° and the deity of Kitano° will dwell in the heads of people whose minds are honest, clean, and good.

Source: Thomas Cleary, trans. and ed., *Training the Samurai Mind* (Boston: Shambhala, 2008), 18–20.

°**Great Goddess of Ise:** Amaterasu, the sun goddess.

°**Hachiman:** a Japanese deity who came to be seen as a Buddhist bodhisattva.

°**Kitano:** patron god of learning.

IMAGAWA RYOSHUN

The Imagawa Letter

1412

As you do not understand the Arts of Peace° your skill in the Arts of War° will not, in the end, achieve victory.

You like to roam about, hawking and cormorant fishing, relishing the purposelessness of taking life.

You live in luxury by fleecing the people and plundering the shrines.

°**Arts of Peace:** literary skills including poetry, history, philosophy, and ritual.

°**Arts of War:** horsemanship, archery, swordsmanship.

Source: From Carl Steenstrup, trans., "The Imagawa Letter," *Monumenta Nipponica* 28, no. 3 (Autumn 1973), 295–316.

To build your own dwelling you razed the pagoda and other buildings of the memorial temple of our ancestors.

You do not distinguish between good and bad behavior of your retainers, but reward or punish them without justice.

You permit yourself to forget the kindness that our lord and father showed us; thus you destroy the principles of loyalty and filial piety.

You do not understand the difference in status between yourself and others; sometimes you make too much of other people, sometimes too little.

You disregard other people's viewpoints; you bully them and rely on force.

You excel at drinking bouts, amusements, and gambling, but you forget the business of our clan.

You provide yourself lavishly with clothes and weapons, but your retainers are poorly equipped.

You ought to show utmost respect to Buddhist monks and priests and carry out ceremonies properly.

You impede the flow of travelers by erecting barriers everywhere in your territory.

Whether you are in charge of anything—such as a province or a district—or not, it will be difficult to put your abilities to any use if you have not won the sympathy and respect of ordinary people.

Just as the Buddhist scriptures tell us that the Buddha incessantly strives to save mankind, in the same way you should exert your mind to the utmost in all your activities, be they civil or military, and never fall into negligence.

It should be regarded as dangerous if the ruler of the people in a province is deficient even in a single [one] of the cardinal virtues of human-heartedness, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and good faith.

You were born to be a warrior, but you mismanage your territory, do not maintain the army, and are not ashamed although people laugh at you. It is, indeed, a mortifying situation for you and our whole clan.

Using the Evidence: The Making of Japanese Civilization

1. **Considering cultural borrowing and assimilation:** What evidence of cultural borrowing can you identify in these documents? To what extent did those borrowed elements come to be regarded as Japanese?
2. **Looking for continuities:** What older patterns of Japanese thought and practice persisted despite much cultural borrowing from China?
3. **Noticing inconsistencies and change:** No national culture develops as a single set of ideas and practices. What inconsistencies, tensions, or differences in emphasis can you identify in these documents? What changes over time can you identify in these selections?
4. **Considering Japanese Buddhism:** In what different ways did Buddhism play a role in Japan during the postclassical era? How did Buddhism change Japan, and how did Japan change Buddhism?

Visual Sources

Considering the Evidence: The Leisure Life of China's Elites

From the earliest centuries of Chinese civilization, that country's artists have painted—on pottery, paper, wood, and silk; in tombs, on coffins, and on walls; in albums and on scrolls. Relying largely on ink rather than oils, their brushes depicted human figures, landscapes, religious themes, and images of ordinary life. While Chinese painting evolved over many centuries, both in terms of subject matter and technique, by most accounts it reached a high point of artistic brilliance during the Tang and Song dynasties.

Here, however, we are less interested in the aesthetic achievements of Chinese painting than in what those works can show us about the life of China's elite class—those men who had passed the highest-level examinations and held high office in the state bureaucracy and those women who lived within the circles of the imperial court. While they represented only a tiny fraction of China's huge population, such elite groups established the tone and set the standards of behavior for Chinese civilization. For such people, leisure was a positive value, a time for nurturing relationships and cultivating one's character in good Confucian or Daoist fashion. According to the Tang dynasty writer and scholar Duan Chengshi,

> Leisure is good.
> Dusty affairs don't entangle the mind.
> I sit facing the tree outside the window
> And watch its shadow change direction three times.[38]

Action and work, in the Chinese view of things, need to be balanced by self-reflection and leisure. In the visual sources that follow, we can catch a glimpse of how the Chinese elite lived and interacted with one another, particularly in their leisure time.

Leading court officials and scholar-bureaucrats must have been greatly honored to be invited to an elegant banquet, hosted by the emperor himself, such as that shown in Visual Source 9.1. Usually attributed to the emperor Huizong (1082–1135)—who was himself a noted painter, poet, calligrapher, and collector—the painting shows a refined dinner gathering of high officials drinking tea and wine with the emperor presiding at the left.[39] This emperor's great attention to the arts rather than to affairs of state gained him a reputation

as a negligent and dissolute ruler. His reign ended in disgrace as China suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of northern nomadic Jin people, who took the emperor captive.

- What features of this painting contribute to the impression of imperial elegance?
- What mood does this painting evoke?
- What social distinction among the figures in the painting can you discern?
- How is the emperor depicted in this painting in comparison to that on page 388? How would you explain the difference?
- How might you imagine the conversation around this table?

Visual Source 9.1 A Banquet with the Emperor (National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan)

Visual Source 9.2 At Table with the Empress (National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan)

Elite women of the court likewise gathered to eat, drink, and talk, as illustrated in Visual Source 9.2, an anonymous Tang dynasty painting on silk. Hosting the event is the empress, shown seated upright in the middle of the left side of the table, holding a fan and wearing a distinctive headdress. Her guests and paid professional musicians sit around the table.

- How does this gathering of elite women differ from that of the men in Visual Source 9.1? How might their conversation differ from that of the men?
- To what extent are the emperor and empress in Visual Sources 9.1 and 9.2 distinguished from their guests? How do you think the emperor and empress viewed their roles at these functions? Were they acting as private persons among friends or in an official capacity?
- What differences in status among these women can you identify?
- What view of these women does the artist seek to convey?
- What does the posture of the women suggest about the event?

Visual Source 9.3 A Literary Gathering (Palace Museum, Beijing)

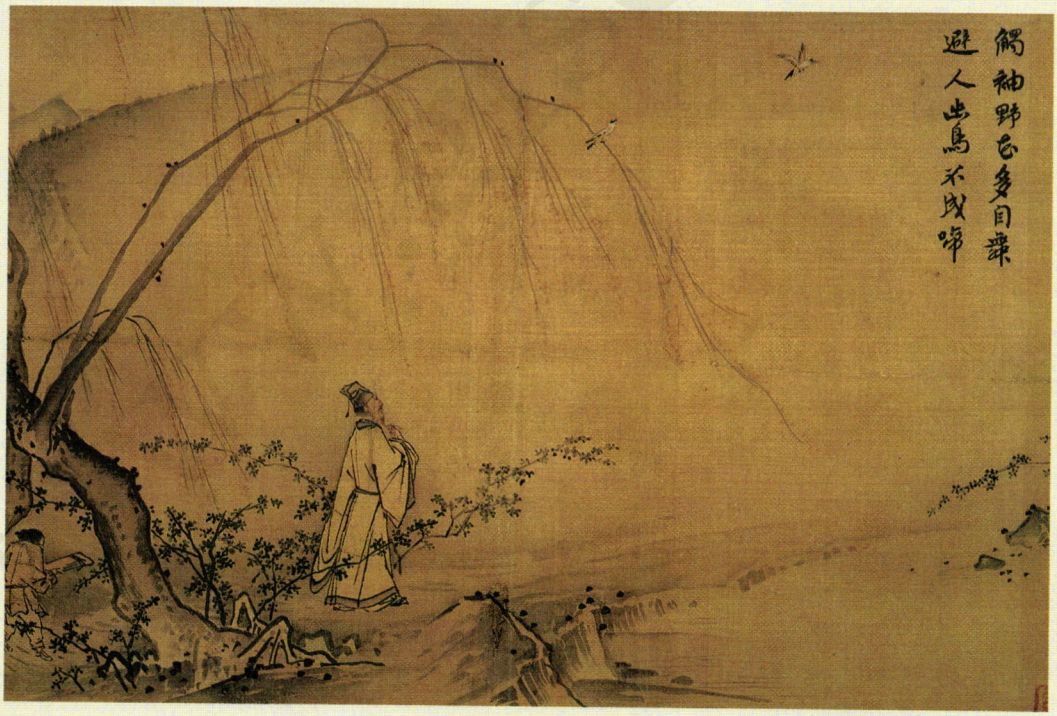
Confucian cultural ideals gave great prominence to literature, poetry, and scholarly pursuits as leisure activities appropriate for "gentlemen" (see pp. 193–95). Confucius himself had declared that "gentlemen make friends through literature, and through friendship increase their benevolence." Thus literary gatherings of scholars and officials, often in garden settings, were common themes in Tang and Song dynasty paintings. Visual Source 9.3, by the tenth-century painter Zhou Wenju, provides an illustration of such a gathering.

- What marks these figures as cultivated men of literary or scholarly inclination?
- What meaning might you attribute to the outdoor garden setting of this image and that of Visual Source 9.1?
- Notice the various gazes of the four figures. What do they suggest about the character of this gathering and the interpersonal relationships among its participants?
- Do you think the artist was seeking to convey an idealized image of what a gathering of officials ought to be or a realistic portrayal of an actual event? What elements of the painting support your answer?

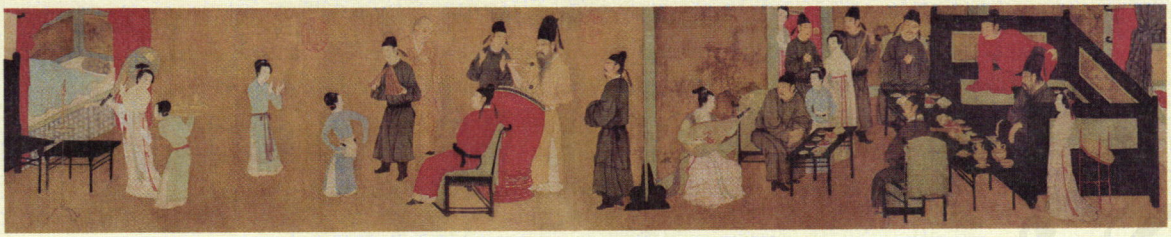
Chinese scholars and bureaucrats are often shown, in their leisure hours, as solitary contemplatives, immersing themselves in nature. The famous Song dynasty painter Ma Yuan (1160–1225) depicted such an image in his masterpiece entitled *On a Mountain Path in Spring*. In Visual Source 9.4, a scholar walks in the countryside watching several birds, while his servant trails behind carrying his master's *qin* (lute). A short poem in the upper right reads:

> Brushed by his sleeves, wild flowers dance in the wind;
> Fleeing from him, the hidden birds cut short their songs.[40]

- How would you define the mood of this painting? What techniques did Ma Yuan use to evoke this mood?
- How might this painting reflect the perspectives of Daoism (see pp. 195–97)? How does it differ from the more Confucian tone of Visual Source 9.3?
- What relationship with nature does this painting convey?
- During Ma Yuan's lifetime, the northern part of China was coming under the control of the feared Mongols. How might an awareness of this situation affect our understanding of this painting?



Visual Source 9.4 Solitary Reflection (National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan)



Visual Source 9.5 An Elite Night Party (Palace Museum, Beijing)

Not all was poetry and contemplation of nature in the leisure-time activities of China's elite. Nor were men and women always so strictly segregated as the preceding visual sources may suggest. Visual Source 9.5 illustrates another side of Chinese elite life. These images are part of a long tenth-century scroll painting entitled *The Night Revels of Han Xizai*. Apparently, the Tang dynasty emperor Li Yu became suspicious that one of his ministers, Han Xizai, was overindulging in suspicious night-long parties in his own home. He therefore commissioned the artist Gu Hongzhong to attend these parties secretly and to record the events in a painting, which he hoped would shame his wayward but talented official into more appropriate and dignified behavior. The entire scroll shows men and women together, sometimes in flirtatious situations, while open sleeping areas suggest sexual activity.

- What kinds of entertainment were featured at this gathering?
- What aspects of these parties shown in the scroll paintings might have caused the emperor some concern? Refer back to the "singsong girls," shown on page 253. In what respects might these kinds of gatherings run counter to Confucian values?
- How are women portrayed in these images? In what ways are they relating to the men in the paintings?

Using the Evidence: The Leisure Life of China's Elites

1. **Describing elite society:** Based on these visual sources, write a brief description of the social life of Chinese elites during the Tang and Song dynasties.
2. **Defining the self-image of an elite:** What do these visual sources suggest about how members of the elite ideally viewed themselves? In what ways do those self-portraits draw upon Confucian, Daoist, or Buddhist teachings?

3. **Noticing differences in the depiction of women:** In what different ways are women represented in these paintings? Keep in mind that all of the artists were men. How might this affect the way women were depicted? How might female artists have portrayed them differently?
4. **Using images to illustrate change:** Reread the sections on Chinese women (pp. 253–55 and 384–85). How might these images be used to illustrate the changes in women's lives that are described in those pages?
5. **Seeking additional sources:** What other kinds of visual sources might provide further insight into the lives of Chinese elites?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