

Intro to Japanese Studies

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Chapter 1

Concepts of Japan, Japanese Culture, and the Japanese, by Harumi Befu

Japanese culture is not an objective thing, instead Japanese culture is based off of a bajillion different variables.

People believed that every country had a specific neat culture bounded perfectly within their country.

Globalisation in the 60's changed that.
Land \neq people \neq culture \neq society \neq polity

Japan

Japan is a big chain of islands vaguely related to each other
Honshū, Kyūshū, Shikoku, Hokkaidō and Ryūkyū islands (Okinawa).

Stratified Japan

Interpretations of Japan are geographical (for example, the "four seasons" come from mainly central Japan).

However, elites tried to paint Japan as a homogeneous nation. Despite proclaiming homogeneity, they still considered non-mainland Japanese people as "others". This is seen through the use of *naichi* (proper Japan) and *gaichi* (Japanese colonies). Colonies were expected to emulate real Japan.

Otherness of Japan

Other countries' depictions of Japan come from their historical relations with the country.

Frail, Feminine, Exotic as seen in French art.

Treacherous, Sneaky, Without Mercy, Backwards during WW2.

"Japanese Culture

essentialism

nihonjiron uniqueness of Japan, exceptionality.

flawed, failed to recognize heterogeneity of the islands.

Also no mention of Chinese influence or Westernization.

de/re-territorialisation

Japanese emigrants have been found around the world since the 1800's bringing their cultures.

these communities of emigrants are extensions of Japan.

The Japanese

"typical" Japanese must have 2 Japanese parents, be a native speaker, and embody the culture. Not having any of those is "suspect".

Koreans and Chinese in Japan

Japanese legal status, but foreign social status. *passing*

Don't live in Japan, but are some variety of actually Japanese.

Naturalized

abandon their Japanese citizenship and completely identify with another country.

orphans

Can become Japanese via legal shenanigans if they have 1 Japanese adoptee parent. Still socially very much foreigners though.

Conclusion

Big group of varying peoples.

People try to fit Japan in a box. It does not fit in a box.

”Japan” as an idea is actually from only central Japan. Non-central Japanese places/people are considered ”other”.

Despite the Japanese elites trying to push the idea of homogeneity to the outside, there still exists mass discrimination in Japan against people not considered ”typically” Japanese.

The Japanese state forces upon the rest of the population ”proper” japaneseness (Tokyo dialect).

Ainu (from Hokkaidō) and Okinawans (from Okinawa) get discriminated against.

Chapter 2

Turning Japanese by Andrew Curry

Basically Japan learned agriculture in the 900's BC instead of the 200's BC and that was a big thing.

Chapter 3

Early Japan by Nancy K. Stalker

Japan is very mountainous and 75% uninhabitable.

Timeline

Most of our knowledge of ancient Japan comes from only two places: the Kojiki and the Nihon Shogi.

- Paleolithic - 35,000 BC to 15,000 BC

- Jomōn - 15,000 BC to 900 BC (had poetry, but hunter gatherers)

- Yayoi - 900 BC to 250 CE (agriculture)

- Kofun - 250 CE to 600 CE (large burial mounds)

- Modern Japanese have a mix of Jomō and Yayoi genes

3.1 Jomon

Had preservation and very elaborate pottery

- Dogū = small lil clay figurines

3.2 Yayoi

RICE

- decent metallurgy
- more boring pottery
- social distinctions in burials
- Dōtaku = funky bells

3.3 Kofun

MASSIVE key-shaped burial mounds

3.4 Yamato

Japan was a federation of a bunch of different states
ruled by mystical sorceress Himiko

3.5 Shinto

Recorded in both the Kojiki and the Nohin Shogi.

Theorized to have been created to legitimize the Yamato
Clan's "divine right" to the throne.

Tales of Amaterasu

3.5.1 Creation Myth

Izanagi and Izanami make Japan and have kid

already eaten the food of the underworld??????????

3.6 Buddhism

idk

Chapter 4

The Kami Tradition by Kojiki

- Shinto is not necessarily completely related to the Japanese Kami, and it is debated among scholars how much Shinto actually is a part of Japanese culture compared to Buddhism.
- Buddhism is very well defined religion, while Shinto is just a bunch of gods that people might or might not worship.
- Buddhists shrines and Shinto temples also became so intertwined that they basically became the same thing: "shrine-temple multiplexes".

Shinto

Shinto is a big bowl of unorganized practices. Japanese people rarely call themselves Shinto, yet the majority of them still interact in some way or another with shrines related to the kami

and Shinto. Kami and buddhist divine people (bodhisattvas) also have become venerated in the same manner.

4.1 Tradition as Illusion

Religion is not always institutionalized.

Sacred Spaces

Yayoi

- ritual sites were separate from settlements, often at sources of water. The kami would come down from the mountains and attend.
- The kami were often related to natural landmarks. Kami are also identified by their power (Mt. Fuji being a literal volcano).
- Initially worshipped in open-air, then buildings were built.
- Very related to growing rice. Religious power and political power were very interconnected.

4.2 The Rule of Taste

- The Fujiwara gained control of the emperor through external influence

- Michinaga Fujiwara is said to be the guy referenced for Genji in the tale of Genji
- Japan has a culture of accepting a culture and then staunchly rejecting it for a bit.
- Heian's considered a good color palette to be noble
- very gender binaried, but also male beauty was much more feminine than in Europe
- kana = "women's hand"
- patriarchy
- formal love affairs?

4.2.1 The Tale of Genji

- first novel?
- 1000AD
- PLOT

He's a bastard kid who gets kicked out and fucks his stepmom and grooms his stepmom's niece.

4.3 Buddhism

- Brought to Japan by Koreans in the 700's AD