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Ancient and Medieval Military History

Wars have always been the norm in most societies. From ancient times, the biggest sources of war amongst humanity and the reigning basis of conflict have always been for cultural reasons.[1] The conflicts arising from ancient civilizations, such as the Japanese culture, were primarily connected to resources. Civilization is, therefore, the uppermost cultural alliance of humans and the widest level of cultural personality people have, which differentiates human beings from other species. The major civilizations in ancient history have been directly recognized with the world's supreme religions[2]. The Japanese, Africans, and the Aztec civilizations' definition and understanding of war, and why these civilizations went into war with one another, is well explicated in this paper. All these three civilizations had a diverse understanding and definition of war and utilized the war differently. Wars among various categories of major world civilizations have occurred for various reasons.

The prehistoric Chinese civilization was involved in warfare activity from the time when the warfare began. The Chinese are among the world's most aged and biggest societies springing about 6000 BC. Chinese as well remain the longest enduring civilization on the planet; villages developed in the Northern China beside the Yellow and Yangtze waterways. In due course, they developed cities and started to fight one another. Nonetheless, the Xia

[1] Philip Adler, and Randall Pouwels, *World Civilizations: Volume II: Since 1500* (New York: Cengage Learning, 2011), 73-78.

[2] Adler, Philip, and Randall Pouwels. *World Civilizations: Volume II: Since 1500*. New York: Cengage Learning, 2011.

Dynasty was the first to record military warfare (2100 BCE-1650 BCE) when writing was formulated based on Sumerian text. According to the *Frontiers of History in China,* the primeval Chinese were held in persistent wars of connection, growth, and safety of their regions.[3] They engaged in war on an advanced level to fulfill these demands. China formed enormous infantry based troops and navies who fought for charge of the huge rivers of China. Afterward, great Chinese navies would patrol the high seas, searching and expanding Chinese power. Chinese troops gained from military novelty and cautiously planned logistics plus an affluent tradition in military hypothesis, originating with Sun Tzu's "The Art of war" recorded in the sixth century BC.

The Chinese defined the war as a conflict that was necessitated by the need to acquire more resources. The Chinese had dominion over the East Asian nations' development in the southeast deserts and steppes. The border was unmatched with no other country across the West. This caused the cultural and political diversity attribute within the West due to the decline of the Roman Empire in the sixth century.[4] In this respect, Vietnam and Korea are currently founded on agricultural societies and have a heavy influence on the Chinese civilization.[5] The geographic location of Japan affected its civilization trend. Most of Japan's dry land is composed of islands, which include Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku that served to hinder its culture from the influence, by other civilizations. China had an immense craving for an influential military. Not only were troops required to manage the huge territories of China and to conquer interior enemies, but potential foes as well encircled prehistoric China. Diverse Ethnic tribes in ancient China; for instance, the Qiang and Di,

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[3] Guogang Zhang, "The transformations of the Tang military system and social changes in medieval China," *Frontiers of History in China* 2, no. 3 (2007): 298.

[4] Jackson Spielvogel, *Western Civilization: Alternate Volume: Since 1300* (New York: Cengage Learning, 2011), 89-90.

[5] Ibid., 7-78.

competed for influence. The established cultures around China disliked the subordination, or absolute invasion, that the Chinese undertook to push on them while inducing wars with cultures such as the Vietnamese and the Koreans. Conversely, the nomadic groups in the West and North of China caused the most trouble.

The history of the Japanese civilization, however, is dissimilar. Being an island-nation, Japan experienced negligible direct political, as well as cultural influence from China than from both Korea and Vietnam. Japanese civilizations entered into war to protect their religion and cultural achievements away from corruption by other foreign civilizations. Previous Buddhist traditions, the salvation ranging from contributions all the way to monasteries, focus on Buddhist texts, development opportunities available to the wealthy aristocrats. The new aspect was the Zen Buddhism arriving at around 1200 from the Chinese civilization. It enhanced the teaching that salvation was attained through the enlightenment of the people above their faith. On the other hand, the Ashikaga Shoguns had the active support of the Zen Buddhism spread through building more monasteries and supporting Zen.[6] Within the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries, various forms of art with inspirations from Zen teachings stormed Japan. These include landscape architecture coupled with the designing garden art. The art involved meticulous arrangement of trees, water, and rocks for representing the essence of nature's beauty.

The subsequent Japanese cultures had more success employing a blend of inducements and diplomacy. A study by Ahmed, Ahsani, and Siddiqui affirmed that the Japanese focused on maintaining its foes disjointed; the Japanese could induce a crowd to battle another and even back a group in its conflict against a rival clan or faction.[7]

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[6] Basheer Ahmed, Syed Ahsani, and Dilnawaz Siddiqui, *Muslim Contributions to World Civilization* (New York: IIIT, 2005), 92-100.

[7] Thomas Keirstead, "Inventing medieval Japan: the history and politics of national identity," *The Medieval History Journal* 1, no. 1 (2008): 68.

Nevertheless, later, Japanese rulers took a more hostile approach. They applied huge cavalry troops, a new development in Japanese conflict to defeat the tribes on their territory. The cavalry troops proved to be formidable, subduing big areas of Mongolia, Korea, and Middle Asia. This meant that Japanese rulers adopted strict isolation policies. They closed Japan, as they perceived that the external contacts were a challenge to the governing authority. Prior to the 1500s, the Japanese had inadequate operation contacts mostly with Korea and China. A number of Daimyos did business with the Portuguese and gradually introduced both Christianity and the musket to Japan.

With time, Christian missionaries were in a position of converting close to half million Japanese.[8] However, the fact that Christianity spread obedience to being stronger that shogun elicited oppositions from Tokugawa due to its rapid influence. Christianity started to be perceived as a superior religion than shogun and this notion presents a source of conflict from Tokugawa and those who supported Shogunism with the Christian converts. Christianity was later outlawed as it was a major cause of conflicts and later wars. The protection of religion was an important aspect in the Japanese civilization that could lead to war. Religion, therefore, was a source of war in this civilization.

Ancient African civilizations perceived war as an important instrument to prevent the invasion of their territories by other communities. Their war was used to conquer other tribes and occupy their land. Most of what is popular for African developments in the Sahara Desert, as well as the Mediterranean coastline, is less popular in the southern regions of the Sahara. The reason for this is mainly the absence of well-documented sources while the form of records, which historians were accustomed to, used a form of writing within specialized books and studies like modern-day text. Different scholars studying early African history use alternative sources, such as the study of diffusion of languages like Bantu, archeological

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[8] Ibid., 100-109.

excavations, and oral traditions, such as the ones in Zimbabwe.[9] They also focus on various artifacts, including the Axum Stele as well as the accounts given by external observers. The illustrations of civil knowledge provided by various archaeologists' works are wholly based on sub-Sahara Africa's tropical climate while it destroys even more artifacts. Equally, problematical accounts of civilization are from the foreign visitors and observers. Most of these developments were perceived to be from the European or Islamic origin with an ultimate bias of creating drastic stereotypes for the sub-Saharan Africa.

Harris states that most African cultures fought to gain both economic and political influence over each other. Since there is an impossibility of making simple generalizations about the civilization as diverse from that of Africa before 1500, the geographical positioning influenced the form of approach.[10] Some of the characteristics of the African civilization included the fact that economies based their trade processes on political control. Each culture contested to dominate the trade of important items, such as the import of salt across the north and the importation of gold from the south. Further, governments received their various forms of revenues within taxes introduced in the trade of gold, salt, among other goods. For instance, an important aspect of the Songhai and Mali kingdoms was their fight for Islamic influence in furthering trade activities.[11] They affirmed that administrators should stimulate their overall intellectual life. Irrespective of the relevance, Islam as a religion became a comprehensive urban faith not penetrating the countryside. This was where many people

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[9] Alfred Andrea, and James Overfield, *The Human Record: Source of Global History, Volume I: To 1500* (New York: Cengage Learning, 2011), 67-78.

[10] William Harris, "The Mediterranean and ancient history," *Rethinking the Mediterranean* 2, no. 3 (2005): 15.

[11] Jiu-Hwa Upshur, Terry Janice, Jim Holoka, and George Cassar, *World History: Before 1600: The Development of Early Civilization* (New York: Cengage Learning, 2011), 89-95.

sought to retain their initial beliefs and gods. For this reason, the heavy reliance on the ruling kings on Islam related to the short-term strengths, as well as the long-term weaknesses.

Berbers frequently fought to oppose the civilization of the Asian cultures, such as the Japanese while seeking sources of the African treasure and imposing a tamed version of Islam. More foreign invaders introduced destruction of both the Songhai and Ghanaian kingdoms. From this moment, all perspectives of African development changed. Here, danger evidenced the place through insecurity and poverty of wealth. On the other hand, peace turned into violence, disasters, and distress. At around 1500, the African continent engaged in a series of battles to protect the corruption of their cultures, languages, and economic and political arrangements.[12] Asian civilizations such as the Indians had penetrated Africa from the north and spread aspects of the Islamic religion all through until it reached Sudan at the eastern coast. At the center of all this, the native traditions led in dominance. The significant new developments within the fifteenth century included the availability of ships in the Indian and Atlantic coasts through carrying European missionaries and traders from England, Holland, Portugal, and Spain.[13] On this note, the Europeans proceeded to establish supply and trading centers on the coast, while making minimal or no effort of moving inland. The onset of the Europeans such as Portugues additionally resulted in a series of wars against African tribes and against the foreign enemy. This happened even when the ill-famed slave trade in the Atlantic exemplified the diversities apparently.

The Aztec society settled on a huge section of the place that is now Southern America, between about 1428 and 1521.[14] The Mexicans established going in kingdoms, and designed their investment of Tenochtitlan, where the existing Southern America Town is situated. Even the Mexicans were not culturally homogeneous; some scientists believe that as

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[12] Ibid., 25-42.

[13] Ibid., 95-102.

[14] Ibid., 78-87.

many as 17 cultural categories were among the unique communities that came south to the website of Tenochtitlan. They initially established a partnership with two other places in the area, known as Texcoco and Tlacopan, known as the multiple Alliance.[15]

The Aztecs was occupied in numerous battles as they constantly fought other powerful tribes such as Tepanecs, Cholcos, Xochimilcos, and Tlaxcalans who attempted to occupy their land. The areas occupied by the Aztec society were not entirely connected. The Aztec dynasty was well established and this made them to successfully fight and win numerous battles. The big population of the Aztec culture, as well, helped them in their battles with neighboring communities. At its size, the Aztec society conquered large areas of land, from the Hawaiian Sea to the Beach of Southern America. Northern south, the kingdom expanded from Main Southern America to the current El Salvador and Honduras.

The Aztecs defined war as any external aggression that would result from other people outside their culture. The group used the strong leadership structure and power mainly to fight external aggression. Groups of family members' associates were the primary method of government in the kingdom. These categories, known as *calpulli*, had persisted prior to the Aztec society, and were established to own place. The management of the *calpulli* set up educational institutions for typical people, gathered taxation, and took proper care of primary team needs. Later *calpullis* were less family members relevant and local, but managed in much the same way. Leaders of the *calpullis* established significant city authorities; probably the product with the most power in the historical Aztec government. Each city authority had other authorities within it, and professional authorities made of four associates. One of them would be the innovator of the town, or tlatcani, Innovator of this team was the Huey Tlatcani, or the emperor. He was worshiped as a god and had the assistance of the town authorities, significant government authorities, and the priesthood. The most popular of the Aztec

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[15] Jacques Goff. *Medieval Civilization 400-1500* (New York: Wiley, 1990), 56-72.

emperors was Montezuma II, leader when Cortes achieved the Aztecs. [16] The popular individual forfeit of the Aztecs were initially irregular, repulsive to contemporary sight. It seems that, during the middle of the fifteenth century, a sequence of mishaps assured the Mexicans that a huge compromise was required to satisfy their gods. These methods were among the justifications that the Spanish terminology used to make an effort to eliminate the kingdom.

In summary, it is evident that each civilization discussed in this report perceived and used war to achieve distinct objectives from each other. The prehistoric Chinese were engaged in recurrent wars of association, expansion, and security of their territories[17]. The Chinese defined the war as a conflict that was necessitated by the need to acquire more resources. The Chinese had dominion over the East Asian nations' development in the southeast deserts and steppes. Japanese civilizations entered into war to protect their religion and other traditional cultural features from corruption by other alien civilizations. Ancient African civilizations perceived war as a vital instrument to prevent the invasion of their territories by other communities. They used war to conquer other tribes and occupy their land. The onset of the Europeans such as Portugues additionally resulted in a series of wars against African tribes and against the foreign enemy. The Aztecs was involved in numerous battles as they constantly fought other powerful tribes who attempted to occupy their land. The Aztecs defined war as any external aggression that would result from other people outside their culture. The group used the strong leadership structure and power mainly to fight external aggression.

[16] John Bodley, *Cultural Anthhropology: Tribes, States, and the Global Systems* (New York: Rowman Atamira, 2011), 78-80.

[17] Adler, Philip, and Randall Pouwels. *World Civilizations: Volume II: Since 1500*. New York: Cengage Learning, 2011.

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