



Technology Integration Division

July 2011



DEFENSE LANGUAGE INSTITUTE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CENTER

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Profile.....	6
Introduction.....	6
Geography.....	6
Topographic Features.....	7
Climate.....	7
Bodies of Water	8
Major Cities	8
Tokyo	8
Yokohama.....	9
Osaka.....	9
Sapporo	9
Recent History	10
Government.....	11
Media	12
Economy	13
Ethnic Groups and Languages	14
Chapter 1: Assessment.....	15
Chapter 2: Religion.....	16
Overview.....	16
Major Religions	16
Shinto	16

Buddhism	17
Role of Religion in Government.....	17
Religion in Daily Life	18
Religious Holidays.....	19
Buildings of Worship.....	20
Behavior in Places of Worship	21
Chapter 2: Assessment.....	23
Chapter 3: Traditions	24
Introduction (Honor and Values).....	24
Formulaic Codes of Politeness.....	25
Hospitality and Gift-Giving	27
Eating Customs	28
Dress Codes	31
Non-Religious Celebrations.....	32
Tea Ceremony.....	33
Dos and Don'ts	34
Dos	34
Don'ts.....	34
Chapter 3: Assessment.....	35
Chapter 4: Urban Life	36
Urbanization.....	36
Urban Work Issues.....	37

Urban Health Care	38
Education	39
Public Places	41
Restaurants	41
Market Place	44
Urban Traffic and Transportation	47
Street Crime	49
Chapter 4: Assessment	50
Chapter 5: Rural Life	51
Land Ownership and Rural Economy	51
Rural Transportation	52
Health Issues	53
Education	55
Daily Life in the Countryside	56
Who's in Charge	57
Chapter 5: Assessment	59
Chapter 6: Family Life	60
Typical Household and Family Responsibilities	60
Status of Women	61
Married Life and Divorce	62
Family Events, Rites of Passage	63
Naming Conventions	65

Chapter 6: Assessment.....	66
Final Assessment	67
Further Readings.....	69

Chapter 1: Profile

Introduction

Japan is an east Asian island nation with a unique cultural identity. Samurai values, kimono clothing, Noh theater, woodblock art, and sumo wrestling are among the many instantly identifiable aspects of Japan's culture. Much of Japan's culture has developed through centuries of feudal rule and has benefited from the country's geographic isolation.

Japan had a policy of national seclusion for hundreds of years until the 1850s, but it became an imperialist power by the end of the 19th century. Japan's culture was spread internationally through occupation in military campaigns before World War II. Japan reinvented itself after the war and began to flourish economically. In the latter half of the 20th century, Japanese influence spread not by militarist might, but through economic integration with much of the international community.¹



© DJ Anderson
Japanese woman in kimono

Geography

Japan is a country of mountainous volcanic islands and intermittent valleys situated in the western Pacific Ocean east of the Asian mainland. Japan has four main islands, the biggest of which is Honshu. Honshu accounts for 60% of the country's total land area and 80% of the total population.^{2, 3} The other main islands of Japan include Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku. The Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa, lie south of the main islands.^{4, 5} With a total land area of 377,835 sq km (145,902 sq mi), Japan is slightly smaller than the state of California. Japan's closest neighbors, with whom it shares maritime boundaries, are Russia, China, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines.⁶

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

² William E. Deal, *Handbook to Life in Medieval and Early Modern Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 64.

³ World of Information, *Asia & Pacific Review 2003/2004: The Economic and Business Report* (London: Kogan Page, 2004), 90.

⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

⁵ Peter J. Woolley, *Geography and Japan's Strategic Choices: From Seclusion to Internationalization* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 9–11.

⁶ Andrew Heritage, ed., *World Reference Atlas* (New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, 2004), 170–172.

Topographic Features

Mount Fuji, visible from Tokyo and not far from the Pacific shore, is the country's tallest mountain at 3,776 m (12,385 ft). Long revered because of its symmetry, Mount Fuji is a cultural icon in Japan. Shrines and temples surround the mountain, and it has been the subject of poetry and art.⁷ Other topographical features of Japan include several coastal lowlands, primarily on Honshu's eastern and southern shores. These lowlands were once settled because of their agricultural potential, and are today the sites of Japan's major cities.⁸



© Bennett Campbell
Mt. Fuji

Climate

Japan has a monsoonal climate in which winds shift seasonally, originating either in mainland Asia to the west or the Pacific Ocean to the east. From mid-April to early September, warm rain moves west over Japan, toward Asia, falling primarily on the country's eastern shores. But the wind and rain patterns reverse from late September to late March.^{9, 10} Winter monsoons coming in from the Sea of Japan are significantly cooler than their summer counterparts from the Pacific Ocean. As a result, snow and cool rains are more common in the west than the east.¹¹ Japan is 2,400 km (1,500 mi) from north to south and its climate varies accordingly.¹² Heavy snow and average temperatures below freezing are common in the north during winter.¹³ The south has a warmer climate extending into a subtropical zone in the Ryukyu Islands.¹⁴



© Janne Moren
Western Hokkaido

⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Mount Fuji," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/221527/Mount-Fuji>

⁸ Andrew Heritage, ed., *World Reference Atlas* (New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, 2004), 170–172.

⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan: Climate," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

¹⁰ Michael E. Ritter, "Regional Scale Winds—The Monsoon," in *The Physical Environment: An Introduction to Physical Geography*, n.d., http://www.uwsp.edu/geo/faculty/ritter/geog101/textbook/circulation/regional_scale_wind.htm

¹¹ World Wildlife Fund, "Wildfinder: Japan," n.d., <http://gis.wwfus.org/>

¹² Peter J. Woolley, *Geography and Japan's Strategic Choices: From Seclusion to Internationalization* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005), 9–11.

¹³ The Weather Channel, "Monthly Averages for Sapporo, Japan," n.d., <http://www.weather.com/outlook/travel/businesstraveler/wxclimatology/monthly/graph/JAXX0078>

¹⁴ BBC Weather, "Japan: Country Guide," n.d., http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/world/country_guides/results.shtml?tt=TT002500

Bodies of Water

In addition to influencing the country's climate, the waters surrounding Japan provide food and transportation for the resource-scarce country. Japan depends on access to the Pacific Ocean to import natural resources and export its many finished goods.¹⁵ The Sea of Japan, between Japan's main islands and mainland Asia, provides 1 million tons of fish a year for the surrounding countries.¹⁶



© rockriver / flickr.com
Lake Biwa

Lakes in Japan are typically volcanic or former coastal bays that have been naturally damned by sandbars. Lake Biwa is Japan's largest lake at 670 sq km (259 sq mi).¹⁷ Primarily produced by the monsoon rains, Japan's rivers are typically short and fast-flowing, originating in the mountains and running into the Pacific Ocean.¹⁸ The longest river in Japan is the Shinano River at 367 km (229 mi). Unlike many other rivers in the country, the Shinano is navigable and has long served as an important means of transportation for Honshu's central region.¹⁹ The Tone River provides irrigation and hydroelectricity for Honshu's Kanto Plain, which includes Japan's densest urban area.²⁰

Major Cities

Tokyo

Tokyo is the largest city in Japan and the country's cultural, economic, and governing heart. With a population of nearly 9 million people, Tokyo ranks among the most populated cities in the world.²¹ Originally known as Edo, Tokyo has been Japan's capital since its founding in the early 17th century. The city is located on Honshu's central Pacific coast at the head of Tokyo Bay and lies on the Kanto Plain, Japan's largest



© Sebastien Batardy
Skyline, Tokyo

¹⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Pacific Ocean," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/437703/Pacific-Ocean>

¹⁶ The Encyclopedia of Earth, "Sea of Japan: Large Marine Ecosystem," 19 May 2008, http://www.eoearth.org/article/Sea_of_Japan_large_marine_ecosystem

¹⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

¹⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

¹⁹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Shinano River," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/540743/Shinano-River>

²⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Tone River," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/599127/Tone-River>

²¹ Thomas Brinkhoff, "Japan: Major Cities," City Population, 3 April 2010, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Japan-Cities.html>

lowland area.²² Wars and natural disasters have crippled large portions of the city through the years, always inspiring new growth. Today's Tokyo, therefore, is a modern city largely unrecognizable from its pre-World War II history.^{23, 24}

Yokohama

Yokohama, another city on the Tokyo Bay, is a major financial and industrial center for Japan. Although the city today is Japan's second-largest, with a population of 3.6 million, a century-and-a-half ago the city was little more than a small fishing village. Yokohama grew along with Japan's international relations and became a major port for foreign trade.^{25, 26} Yokohama is a popular city for expatriates, including Westerners, and boasts one of the world's largest Chinatowns.²⁷ Yokohama joins with Tokyo to form a massive urban area.

Osaka

Osaka joins with nearby Kobe and Kyoto to form Japan's second-largest urban metropolitan area known as the Keihanshin Industrial Zone. With a population of 2.6 million, Osaka is the heart of southwest Honshu's Osaka Bay. Textiles, which once drove the city's economy, have been replaced by heavy industry.^{28, 29} Osaka is the home to several historical temples and castles because of its proximity to Kyoto, Japan's capital during the Heian period (794–1192).³⁰

Sapporo

Sapporo is the capital of Hokkaido Prefecture and, with a population of 1.9 million, is Japan's fifth-largest city. The city, which in 1972 hosted the first Winter Olympics outside Europe or the United States, is popular for winter sports.^{31, 32} In addition to tourism, major industries in

²² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Kanto Plain," n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/311537/Kanto-Plain>

²³ Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden, eds., *Japan: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1992), 78.

²⁴ Stephen Mansfield, *Tokyo: A Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), viii.

²⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Yokohama," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/653496/Yokohama>

²⁶ Thomas Brinkhoff, "Japan: Major Cities," City Population, 3 April 2010, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Japan-Cities.html>

²⁷ Japan Guide, "Yokohama," 20 September 2009, <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2156.html>

²⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Osaka," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/433718/Osaka>

²⁹ Thomas Brinkhoff, "Japan: Major Cities," City Population, 3 April 2010, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Japan-Cities.html>

³⁰ Osaka Info, "About Osaka, Historical Overview," n.d., <http://www.osaka-info.jp/en/about/historical.html>

³¹ Thomas Brinkhoff, "Japan: Major Cities," City Population, 3 April 2010, <http://www.citypopulation.de/Japan-Cities.html>

³² Olympic.org, "Sapporo 1972," n.d., <http://www.olympic.org/sapporo-1972-winter-olympics>

Sapporo include printing, publishing, sawmilling, and the manufacture of foodstuffs, including beer.³³

Recent History

Japanese society faced significant changes in the late 19th century. In 1868 the military government of Japan was replaced by a new imperial system in what is known as the Meiji Restoration. Japan began to modernize and look beyond its borders for the first time in centuries.

Increasingly militarist policies brought it into conflict with China and then Russia. As Japan entered the 20th century, its imperial pursuits crystallized. It invaded the province of Manchuria in China in 1931 and much of the rest of the country later in the decade. This political aggression spurred tension with the United States, which imposed an embargo when Japan invaded Indochina.



© jpellgen / flickr.com
Ruins, Hiroshima

Japan attacked the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on the morning of 7 December 1941, killing 2,400 Americans.³⁴ The Japanese hoped to cripple the fleet long enough to gain significant territory in the Pacific before the U.S. could rebound. If substantial area were won, the Japanese hoped the United States would determine a counter-campaign to be too costly. The United States rebuilt its fleet faster than Japan had anticipated, however, partly because U.S. aircraft carriers were absent from Pearl Harbor. In June of 1942 the United States decisively won the Battle of Midway and sank four Japanese aircraft carriers. By 1944, an island-hopping campaign brought the United States within striking distance of the Japanese main islands.³⁵ After Japan refused the ultimatum of the Potsdam Declaration in July 1945, President Harry Truman ordered two nuclear bombs dropped on Japan. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August prompted Japan to quickly surrender. By war's end, 2.3 million Japanese soldiers and 800,000 civilians had died.³⁶

Following the war, Japan democratized, demilitarized, and reformed its economy under 7 years of occupation by the United States. By the 1980s the country had developed one of the world's leading economies driven by its automobile and consumer electronics industries. Although the

³³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Sapporo," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/523766/Sapporo>

³⁴ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 209.

³⁵ Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 211–212.

³⁶ PBS.org, "MacArthur: People and Events, Emperor Hirohito (1901–1989)," n.d., <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/macarthur/peopleevents/pandeAMEX97.html>

economy stalled in the 1990s and into the 21st century, Japan retains the third-largest economy in the world.^{37, 38}

Government

The Japanese government is a constitutional monarchy. The prime minister is the head of government appoints and heads a cabinet of ministers.³⁹ Japan's legislative arm, known as the Diet, has two houses.⁴⁰ At the local level, government has significant authority over issues including education, labor, social welfare, health, land development, pollution control, and disaster prevention.⁴¹ Japan is divided into 47 administrative subdivisions called prefectures.⁴²



© Sean Munson
Imperial Palace, Tokyo

By restoring the country's sovereignty to the people, the 1947 constitution significantly reduced the role of the emperor in the government. From the Meiji Restoration in 1868 through the end of World War II, the emperor was the head of the government. Although elements within the military competed at times with the emperor's ultimate authority (primarily during the 1930s), the emperor was the unquestioned head of state. Additionally, citing imperial tradition long preceding the reign of Emperor Meiji (1867–1912), Japan's emperors were believed to be descended from divinity.^{43, 44} When the government was restructured after World War II, the emperor became a symbol of the state only. In 1946 Emperor Hirohito publicly refuted "the false conception that the emperor is divine." The constitution of the following year limited the powers of the emperor to convening the Diet, receiving ambassadors, and giving deserving citizens official awards. Today the emperor remains a figurehead.⁴⁵

³⁷ BBC News, "Japan Country Profile," 12 March 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1258586.stm

³⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jg.html>

³⁹ Japan Guide, "Government," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2136.html>

⁴⁰ Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Japan," 6 October 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4142.htm>

⁴¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan," n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

⁴² Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Background Note: Japan," 6 October 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/4142.htm>

⁴³ BBC, "Religions: Divinity of the Emperor," 9 July 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/history/emperor_1.shtml

⁴⁴ Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden, eds., "The Status of the Emperor," *Japan: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/japan/111.htm>

⁴⁵ Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden, eds., "The Status of the Emperor," *Japan: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/japan/111.htm>

Media

The legal system protects freedom of the press in Japan; however, the media rarely reacts against the government.^{46, 47} National papers and the popular NHK network have close ties to government bureaucrats that drive a reserved editorial process.⁴⁸ These ties are often in the form of press clubs—a small group of reporters with special access to the government—that receive inside access but agree to report only authorized information.⁴⁹ A popular saying in Japan states “The nail that sticks up gets hammered down.” This mentality drives conformity in the media.⁵⁰ Despite such conformity, the Japanese regard media in the country highly, often citing it as the most trusted institution in the country.⁵¹ Five large media conglomerates control the country’s major newspapers, television, radio, and film companies. Although these companies have varied ideologies, their predominance ensures that outside opinions remain largely muted.⁵²



As might be expected from Japan’s market for consumer electronics, television and internet use pervade Japanese society. Satellite and cable television are available in addition to basic TV. The network NHK is a public broadcaster primarily funded through the license fees of viewers.⁵³ Japan was home to 99 million internet users in 2010. Comparable to usage in the United States, more than 78% of the country is online.⁵⁴

⁴⁶ Media Aid, “Japan—Media Environment Open; State Looms Large,” *Open Source Center*, 18 August 2009, 5, <http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/osc/japan-media.pdf>

⁴⁷ Media Aid, “Japan—Media Environment Open; State Looms Large,” *Open Source Center*, 18 August 2009, 6, <http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/osc/japan-media.pdf>

⁴⁸ Media Aid, “Japan—Media Environment Open; State Looms Large,” *Open Source Center*, 18 August 2009, 5, <http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/osc/japan-media.pdf>

⁴⁹ Media Aid, “Japan—Media Environment Open; State Looms Large,” *Open Source Center*, 18 August 2009, 6, <http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/osc/japan-media.pdf>

⁵⁰ Daniel Leussink, “Raging Against Japan’s Media Machine,” *Asia Times Online*, 6 January 2011, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/MA06Dh01.html>

⁵¹ Media Aid, “Japan—Media Environment Open; State Looms Large,” *Open Source Center*, 18 August 2009, 5, <http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/osc/japan-media.pdf>

⁵² Media Aid, “Japan—Media Environment Open; State Looms Large,” *Open Source Center*, 18 August 2009, 9, <http://www.fas.org/irp/dni/osc/japan-media.pdf>

⁵³ BBC News, “Japan Country Profile: Media,” 12 March 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1258586.stm

⁵⁴ Internet World Stats, “Japan,” 24 June 2010, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/asia/jp.htm>

Economy

A defining quality of Japan's economy is that it lacks natural resources. The country has scant coal deposits and small mineral reserves. Copper, once one of Japan's most important resources, is nearly depleted.⁵⁵ Unable to meet energy needs itself, Japan imports more liquefied natural gas (LNG) than any country and is the third-largest importer of crude oil.⁵⁶ Japan also has a small agricultural sector and imports 61% of its food, although the country is self-sufficient in rice production.^{57, 58}



© gwaar / flickr.com
Blanket factory

A population characterized by high levels of education and a strong work ethic contributed to the development of the strong, export-based economy after World War II.⁵⁹ In the early 1990s the Japanese economy entered a significant recession. Despite being stalled for nearly two decades, the Japanese economy remains the third-largest in the world.⁶⁰ Exports include automobiles, consumer electronics, chemical products, metals, plastics, and synthetic rubber.⁶¹ Comparable to the United States, services account for 75.9% of the Japanese economy, with industry at 23% and agriculture at 1.1%.⁶² Tourism has grown over the last 20 years, with 8.6 million foreign visitors in 2010, up from 3.3 million in 1995.^{63, 64} Although unemployment in Japan is relatively low at 5.1% (2010 estimate), the population of Japan is aging and its workforce is declining.^{65, 66} In 2011, 23% of the population were older than 65, and by 2050 that number is expected to climb to

⁵⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

⁵⁶ U.S. Energy Information Administration, "Japan: Background," March 2011, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=JA>

⁵⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁵⁸ Martin Fackler, "Japan's Rice Farmers Fear Their Future Is Shrinking," *New York Times*, 28 March 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/world/asia/29japan.html>

⁵⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁶⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁶¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

⁶² Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁶³ Mure Dickie, "Tourists Flock to Japan Despite China Spat," *Financial Times*, 26 January 2011, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/6a76579a-2945-11e0-ab2f-00144feab49a.html#axzz1HMVooUya>

⁶⁴ World Tourism Organization, "UNWTO World Tourism Barometer," Volume 6, no. 2, June 2008, 10, http://www.tourismroi.com/Content_Attachments/27670/File_633513750035785076.pdf

⁶⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁶⁶ Business Insider, "The Lie Behind Japan's Good Unemployment Numbers," 2 March 2010, <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-illusion-of-japans-unemployment-surprise-2010-3>

40%.^{67, 68} In coming years Japan will have to face the economic challenges of a continually contracting labor sector and the costs associated with an aging population.

Ethnic Groups and Languages

Despite waves of migration from the Asian mainland many centuries ago, ethnic Japanese comprise 98.5% of the population. The remainder are primarily Korean (0.5%) and Chinese (0.4%).⁶⁹ The small Korean population in Japan is not wholly representative of the size of the earlier Korean presence. During Japan's occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, many Koreans moved to Japan and some were taken by force.⁷⁰



© Vintage Lulu / flickr.com
Japanese boy

Generations of intermarriage and assimilation have significantly decreased the population of an indigenous ethnic group known as the Ainu. The Ainu live on Hokkaido and the Kuril Islands, and have faced discrimination since the Meiji period and throughout much of the 20th century. Today only about 25,000 people of Ainu descent live in Japan. Their language, unique from Japanese, has also nearly vanished.^{71, 72}

The Japanese language has many dialects. The geographic isolation of islands and mountainous topography contributed to the growth of regional dialects. Some variants, such as the Kagoshima dialect of Kyushu, are unintelligible to residents from other regions. Similarly, the north has dialects that are difficult for southerners to understand.⁷³ Okinawa and other islands in the Ryukyu chain have dialects that some argue are wholly distinct from Japanese.⁷⁴ Because Tokyo has been Japan's capital for more than four centuries, the Tokyo dialect is the standard language.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

⁶⁸ "The Old and the Older," *Economist*, 19 November 2010, http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2010/11/japans_population

⁶⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

⁷⁰ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Korea: The End of Japanese Rule," n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/693609/Korea/35024/The-end-of-Japanese-rule>

⁷¹ Japan Guide, "Ainu," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2244.html>

⁷² *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Ainu," n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/10567/Ainu>

⁷³ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japanese Language," n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/301146/Japanese-language>

⁷⁴ Everyculture, "Japan," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Japan.html>

⁷⁵ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Japan," n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan>

Chapter 1: Assessment

1. The geographic location of Japan has contributed to its historical isolation and has benefited it economically.

True

Japan is an island nation off the coast of northeast Asia. The country had a policy of seclusion for hundreds of years. Although the oceans surrounding Japan have acted as a geographic hurdle to protect the country from invading armies, the waters have been a source of food and a gateway to international trade.

2. The climate in Japan varies from subtropical in the south to temperate and cool in the north.

True

Japan's northernmost point is 2,400 km (1,500 mi) from its southernmost island, and the climate varies accordingly.

3. Most major cities in Japan are located in the mountainous regions of the country.

False

Several coastal lowlands, primarily on Honshu's eastern and southern shores, are today the sites of Japan's major cities.

4. The Meiji Restoration ended centuries of isolationist policies.

True

Prior to the Meiji Restoration, the Tokugawa Shogunate had a long-standing policy of national seclusion. After the restoration, Japanese policies became increasingly imperialistic.

5. Japan's occupation of Korea during World War II continues to be a source of friction between the two countries.

True

Japan occupied Korea from 1910 to 1945. During this time, many Koreans moved to Japan; some were taken by force.

Chapter 2: Religion

Overview

Although Japanese society is not overtly religious, it is highly spiritual. Two major religions, Shinto and Buddhism, dominate Japanese society. Japan's two major faiths are not mutually exclusive, however, and many in Japan identify with both Shinto and Buddhism. Roughly 84% of the population follows Shinto while 71% is Buddhist. These numbers add to more than 100% because of incorporation rather than competition between these religious practices. Aspects of Shinto and Buddhist spirituality permeate many areas of daily Japanese life and are interwoven into major cultural events, such as marriages and funerals.^{76, 77}



© Dean Jackson
Buddha, Kamakura

Christianity has only a small presence in Japan. The faith first arrived via missionaries in the 16th century, but the Tokugawa Shogunate (1603–1868) later banned the Western religion. After the Meiji Restoration of 1868, Christians were tolerated more in Japanese society, and today between 1 and 2% of the population is Christian.^{78, 79}

Major Religions

Shinto

Shinto literally means “the way of the gods.” Unlike many other major world religions, Shinto does not have a standard, sacred scripture and it does not trace its roots to an original founder. Shinto is a form of homegrown spirituality. The religion holds that humankind, which is essentially good, must perform certain rites to keep away evil spirits. People pay their respects to the gods (*kami*) at sacred shrines where they may gain further fortification from evil spirits. *Kami* are found throughout nature, including mountains, rivers, and the wind. When people



© Alberto Turiel
Shinto prayer tablet

⁷⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, “Japan,” in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jg.html>

⁷⁷ Japan Guide, “Religion in Japan,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e629.html>

⁷⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, “Japan,” in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jg.html>

⁷⁹ Everyculture, “Japan,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Japan.html>

die they join the host of *kami* and are revered by their descendants.^{80, 81} Followers of Shinto find harmony through their observance of religion, which is closely tied to the Japanese value system and underscores many traditional Japanese beliefs and practices.⁸²

Buddhism

Buddhism began in India in the sixth century B.C.E. and holds as its central tenet the possibility of escape from human suffering through meditation and certain moral precepts.⁸³ As the religion developed, several branches emerged that differ concerning the nature of Buddha and who may obtain enlightenment. Theravada Buddhism, especially prominent in South Asia, teaches that only an elect few may achieve enlightenment. By comparison, Mahayana Buddhism, which is popular in East Asia, including Japan, teaches that all may find salvation.^{84, 85}

Several sects of Mahayana Buddhism exist in Japan. The most prominent is Zen Buddhism. Zen originally appealed to the samurai of Japan's past, who felt the discipline of the faith complemented their strict way of life. Concentration and discipline became the hallmarks of Zen Buddhism. Like Shinto, Zen Buddhism underscores many aspects of modern Japanese society.⁸⁶

Role of Religion in Government

Shinto—officially promoted, unlike Buddhism—helped propagate the belief that the emperor is descended from deities. It was the official state religion in Japan prior to the end of World War II.^{87, 88, 89} But the Japanese constitution that was ratified in 1947 changed the relationship between church and state by guaranteeing religious freedom for all faiths. Accordingly, Article 20 states that no religious organization may benefit from government sponsorship.⁹⁰



© Baptiste Michaud
Yasukuni Shrine

⁸⁰ Japan Guide, “Shinto,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2056.html>

⁸¹ Jinja-Honcho: The Association of Shinto Shrines, “Shinto’s Views,” n.d., <http://www.jinjahoncho.or.jp/en/view/>

⁸² *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Shinto,” n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/540856/Shinto>

⁸³ Everyculture, “Japan,” n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Japan.html>

⁸⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, “Religions,” in *The World Factbook*, n.d., <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html>

⁸⁵ Esben Andreasen, *Popular Buddhism in Japan: Shin Buddhist Religion & Culture* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 5.

⁸⁶ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 62.

⁸⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, “Religions,” in *The World Factbook*, n.d., <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2122.html>

⁸⁸ Suzanne Sonnier, *Shinto, Spirits, and Shrines: Religion in Japan* (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2008), 56.

⁸⁹ Suzanne Sonnier, *Shinto, Spirits, and Shrines: Religion in Japan* (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2008), 11.

⁹⁰ Suzanne Sonnier, *Shinto, Spirits, and Shrines: Religion in Japan* (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2008), 60.

A flashpoint for tensions regarding the separation of church and state lies in the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, which Emperor Meiji ordered built in 1869 to commemorate “the souls of all those who have fallen in battle for Japan since that time.”⁹¹ Located in central Tokyo near many government institutions, the Yasukuni Shrine venerates the souls of 2.5 million Japanese war dead, who are worshiped and “surrounded by banners and military regalia.”⁹² Contention arose in the 1970s when 14 convicted World War II war criminals—including the executed Prime Minister Hideki Tojo—were enshrined at Yasukuni.⁹³ Although the emperor and high-ranking government officials have avoided the shrine since 1978, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro visited Yasukuni six times while in office during the early 2000s, spurring contempt in Japan and among its neighbors. The Japanese public remains divided in its view of the Yasukuni Shrine. Whether it is a symbol of imperial misdeeds or of national patriotism will remain hotly contested.⁹⁴

Religion in Daily Life

Although religion has a strong presence in Japanese society, that presence tends to be subdued. Many families follow Buddhist tradition and have an altar (*butsudan*) in their homes dedicated to their ancestors. These altars are usually small enough to be placed on a cupboard and are painted black with gold decorations. Devout Buddhists may pray or burn incense every day at these altars in honor of their ancestors. They may also offer a small bowl of rice at the altar.^{95, 96}



© Evan Blaser
Prayer

Shinto values permeate daily life. The concept of *wa*, which promotes a feeling of benign harmony, may be seen in many aspects of Japanese life, not only in Shinto shrines. Following societal norms helps maintain *wa*. Shinto values drive Japanese principles of personal purity and harmony with nature. Aspects of everyday life, such as the removal of shoes before entering a home or the focus on orderly gardens, are manifestations of these values.⁹⁷

Families may also have a separate Shinto altar, usually no bigger than a shelf fixed in the corner of a room. The shelf is home to an envelope with a sheet of paper imprinted with the name of an ancestor or a Shinto spirit (*kami*). Unadorned cups intended for offering sake (rice wine) or water

⁹¹ BBC, “Yasukuni Shrine,” 16 April 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/places/yasukuni.shtml>

⁹² BBC, “Yasukuni Shrine,” 16 April 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/places/yasukuni.shtml>

⁹³ BBC, “Yasukuni Shrine,” 16 April 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/places/yasukuni.shtml>

⁹⁴ Suzanne Sonnier, *Shinto, Spirits, and Shrines: Religion in Japan* (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2008), 62.

⁹⁵ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 38-39.

⁹⁶ Ian Reader, “Contemporary Zen Buddhist Tracts for the Laity: Grassroots Buddhism in Japan,” in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 490.

⁹⁷ Suzanne Sonnier, *Shinto, Spirits, and Shrines: Religion in Japan* (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2008), 67–69.

may also be on the shelf. Whereas Japanese actively pray at Buddhist altars in their homes, the Shinto altar is much less a part of active devotion.⁹⁸

Religious Holidays

An annual Buddhist festival is held in August. The *Obon* festival is a commemoration of one's ancestors. It is believed that the spirits of those who have died return to visit their living relatives. To guide the spirits to their homes, Japanese hang lanterns outside. At the conclusion of the festival, participants put floating lanterns on waterways to help guide the spirits.^{99, 100}



© PermanentTraveller / flickr.com
Obon festival

Exchange 1: When does Obon start?

Soldier:	When does Obon start?	obon-wa eetsu kara desu ka?
Local:	Tomorrow.	ashita kara desu

The *setsubun* festival takes place in February and marks the coming of spring on the Japanese lunar calendar. During this celebration, people throw roasted beans around their homes as well as at shrines and temples for the purpose of driving away evil spirits.¹⁰¹

Christmas is another popular holiday in Japan, though only a fraction of Japan's population is Christian. Because the holiday is a cultural rather than religious celebration, Christmas symbols that are not explicitly religious, such as Christmas trees and Santas, are common. Many Japanese have a tradition for Christmas of making a sponge cake, whipped cream, and strawberries.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 39.

⁹⁹ Japan Guide, "Obon," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2286.html>

¹⁰⁰ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 14.

¹⁰¹ Japan Guide, "Setsubun," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2285.html>

¹⁰² Japan Guide, "Christmas," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2299.html>

Buildings of Worship

Shinto shrines are dedicated to the gods (*kami*) and function as places of prayer. Shrines are located in many places, from the tops of highrises to secluded forest glades. Many villages have their own small shrine devoted to the ancestral deity of the area. Larger cities or cities of historical prominence may have shrines dedicated to the spirits of important past residents.^{103, 104}



© Jonas Merian
Shinto Shrine Gate

One usually approaches the shrine through a sacred arch known as a *torii*. Statues of paired dogs or lions lie outside shrines, protecting the areas from evil spirits.¹⁰⁵ Most shrines—usually modest and made of unpainted wood—are on a raised platform and have a pitched roof. The buildings may not be as important as the areas around them. Major Shinto shrines are not centuries old but are rebuilt every few decades.^{106, 107}

During festivals, crowds of young men travel through the streets carrying portable shrines known as *mikoshi*. These may be dedicated to a number of themes including agricultural development and fertility.¹⁰⁸

Like Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples are common throughout Japan. Several elements may make up the temple grounds, including a main gate and perhaps several lesser gates for access. Once inside, a visitor will find different buildings. The lecture hall is the site of meetings and formal teaching, while the main hall houses sacred objects. Cemeteries are often located on temple grounds.^{109, 110}

¹⁰³ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 32–33.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 64.

¹⁰⁵ BBC, “Shinto Shrines,” 16 September 2009, http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/places/shrines_1.shtml

¹⁰⁶ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 32.

¹⁰⁷ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 64.

¹⁰⁸ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 64.

¹⁰⁹ Japan Roads, “Visiting a Shrine or Temple,” n.d., http://www.japanroads.com/traveltips/shrines_temples.htm#Visiting_a_Temple

¹¹⁰ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 63.

Behavior in Places of Worship

Visitors should be courteous and respectful at Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines.¹¹¹ When approaching a Shinto shrine one usually encounters a fountain between the welcome gate (*torii*) and the shrine. Guests cleanse their hands and rinse their mouths before entering the shrine. They may then ring a large bell near the shrine and approach the opening that looks in on an altar. Guests usually do not enter the building but stand at the entrance, offer money in a collection box, clap their hands to alert the gods of their presence, then pray with their palms together and eyes closed.¹¹²



© Todd Lappin
Teramachi prayer

Exchange 2: May I come in?

Soldier:	May I come in?	naka nee haayt-temo eee desu ka?
Local:	Yes, please.	hai, doh-zo

Although photography is usually allowed at shrines and temples, it is best to ask permission before taking pictures. Photography inside buildings at temples may be prohibited.¹¹³

Exchange 3: May I take pictures here?

Soldier:	May I take pictures here?	koko de shaa-sheen (w)o toht-temo eee desu ka?
Local:	Yes.	hai

Some Buddhist temples have large incense burners. Visitors may purchase and light incense and put the flame out by waving a hand rather than blowing on it. They then add the incense to the burner. The smoke is said to have healing powers, and patrons will fan smoke toward

¹¹¹ Japan Guide, “Visiting Temples and Shrines,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2057.html>

¹¹² Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 34.

¹¹³ Japan Guide, “Visiting Temples and Shrines,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2057.html>

themselves. When entering a building at a temple, visitors may need to remove their shoes. If so, shoes can be placed on shelves by the entrance or carried in bags.^{114, 115}

Exchange 4: Must I take off my shoes inside the building?

Soldier:	Must I take off my shoes inside the building?	ta-teh mono no naka de wa kootsu (w)o nooganaku-te wa eekeh masen ka?
Local:	Yes.	hai

¹¹⁴ Japan Roads, “Visiting a Shrine or Temple,” n.d., http://www.japanroads.com/traveltips/shrines_temples.htm#Visiting_a_Temple

¹¹⁵ Japan Guide, “Visiting Temples and Shrines,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2057.html>

Chapter 2: Assessment

1. Roughly half the population of Japan follow Shinto and the other half Buddhism.

False

A majority in Japan believe in both Shinto and Buddhism. Roughly 84% follow Shinto and 71% are Buddhist.

2. Shinto began in the eighth century C.E. when a former Buddhist priest codified new religious laws.

False

Shinto does not have an original founder or a set of sacred scriptures. It is a homegrown spirituality that permeates much of Japanese society.

3. Concentration and discipline are hallmarks of Zen Buddhism.

True

Zen Buddhism originally gained traction in Japan because it appealed to the samurai military class, who were governed by a strict personal code.

4. Prior to World War II, Shinto was brutally suppressed by the Japanese government.

False

Shinto was the state religion prior to World War II. Shinto traditions helped promote the idea that the emperor is descended from deities.

5. The Yasukuni Shrine honors 2.5 million Japanese war dead, including 14 convicted war criminals from World War II.

True

Since the war criminals were enshrined in the 1970s, the shrine has become a flashpoint for regional tensions. Any visit from a state official prompts public outcry within Japan and among its neighbors.

Chapter 3: Traditions

Introduction (Honor and Values)

For hundreds of years, a military government (known as a shogunate) ruled Japan. Although the warrior class was dismantled in the late 19th century, many aspects of samurai culture endured, and qualities of the *bushido* (“the way of the warrior”) code permeate Japanese society today, where loyalty, devotion, and sacrifice remain important values. For example, students tend to feel loyalty to their teachers and employees have a sense of devotion to their companies.¹¹⁶

An additional value in Japanese society that often stands out to Western visitors is the high degree of social conformity. Japanese feel socially obligated to behave in a manner that society would expect. This concept, known as *giri* in Japanese, pervades many aspects of society.¹¹⁷ Japanese tend to be aware of their social obligations and to value civil harmony.¹¹⁸ Additionally, values such as politeness and gratitude may be seen throughout Japanese culture.¹¹⁹

Positioning oneself in a hierarchy—in a family, at work, or other social interactions—is important in Japan, where people are aware of age and social status. Children in school address those older than them as *senpai* and younger students as *kohai*.¹²⁰ The vertical nature of these relationships extends into work life as well. The *senpai-kohai* relationship structure permeates companies and social groups.¹²¹

While some of these values continue to evolve in an ever-changing Japanese society, they are so ingrained that they will continue to play an important role in the foreseeable future.¹²²



© Mama Hiro
Polite boy

¹¹⁶ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 47–48.

¹¹⁷ Monika D. Wood, “A Brief Introduction to Japanese Society,” Rutgers University, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, n.d., <http://crab.rutgers.edu/~deppen/Japan.htm>

¹¹⁸ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 95.

¹¹⁹ Edward Hoffman, “Prized Japanese Social Values that Withstand ‘Westernization,’” *Japan Times*, 16 May 2010, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/ea20100516a1.html>

¹²⁰ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹²¹ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 144.

¹²² Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 148.

Formulaic Codes of Politeness

Non-verbal communication is highly important in Japan. Japanese express disagreement by frowning when another is speaking. Silence may also fill a conversation to a much greater degree in Japan than in the West.¹²³



© Vintage Lulu
Man, Takayama

Exchange 5: It's nice out today, isn't it?

Soldier:	It's nice out today, isn't it?	kyoo wa eee otenki desu ne?
Local:	Yes, it is.	hai, soh desu ne

An important aspect of Japanese interaction is bowing. Japanese will bow out of respect, to express apology, or as a sign of affection.¹²⁴

Exchange 6: How are you?

Soldier:	How are you?	ogenkee deskaa?
Local:	Very well.	okagesamadey

¹²³ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 106.

¹²⁴ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 164.

Business cards, known as *meishi*, are a common aspect of initial greetings, even outside of business exchanges.¹²⁵



© वंपायर
Business card exchange

Exchange 7: Hi, Mrs. Kato.

Soldier:	Hi, Mrs. Kato.	kato-san kon-nichiwa
Local:	Hello!	kon-nichiwa
Soldier:	Are you doing well?	o-gen-kee soh des ne?
Local:	Yes.	o-kageh sama de

Exchange 8: How is your family?

Soldier:	How is your family?	gokazoku no kata wa ogenkee des kaa?
Local:	They are doing fine, thank you.	okagesamade, genkee des

The Japanese concept of *aimai*, often translated as “ambiguity,” dictates many social interactions. Although Western visitors may view ambiguity as doubt, Japanese greatly value a friendly atmosphere and so will often be indirect when dealing with a negative issue. For example, rather than definitively saying “No” to a request, one might pause and answer “Yes” with hesitation, expecting the other to understand.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 97.

¹²⁶ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 11.

Hospitality and Gift-Giving

The Japanese highly value hospitality. A phrase from the tea ceremony sums up the importance of hospitality in Japanese services: “Treasure every encounter with another person because it may never happen again.”¹²⁷



© JoshBerglund19 / flickr.com
Hostess

Exchange 9: I really appreciate your hospitality.

Soldier:	I really appreciate your hospitality.	omotenashee nee kansha-eetasheemaas
Local:	It is nothing.	doh eetasheemaashteh

On many occasions in Japan, gift-giving is appropriate, but December’s *seibo* and summer’s *chugen* are chief among them. *Seibo* is traditionally an opportunity to offer a gift as a symbol of congratulations for surviving another year and as a wish for happiness in the new year. *Chugen* grew from a Chinese tradition and likely originated with people making offerings to their ancestors.^{128, 129} Gifts are also common at significant life events or even when visiting a home.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ Torikai Shin-ichi, “The Spirit of Japanese Hospitality: Treasure the Moment,” *Nipponia* no. 39, 15 December 2006, <http://web-japan.org/nipponia/nipponia39/en/feature/index.html>

¹²⁸ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 82.

¹²⁹ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 162.

¹³⁰ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 233.

Gift-giving in Japan may be highly ritualized. Gift wrapping is often valued as highly as the gift.¹³¹ Gifts may also be wrapped in a cloth known as *furoshiki*. The Japanese wrapping cloth may be a simple fabric or an expensive, fine silk. Designs include traditional patterns, family seals, and meaningful words and phrases.¹³² Recipients of gifts often send return gifts.^{133, 134}



© Kojach / flickr.com
Gift wrapping

Exchange 10: This gift is for you.

Soldier:	This gift is for you.	tsumaranai mono desu ga
Local:	I am sorry, but I cannot accept this.	mooshiwake aareemasen ga, itadaku koto ga dekimaasen

Some gifts are social taboos and should be avoided. Lilies, camellias, and lotus blossoms, as well as white flowers in general, should be avoided because they are associated with funerals. Additionally, potted plants are said to encourage sickness. The only exception is bonsai trees, which are highly valued.¹³⁵

Eating Customs

Dinner invitations to a Japanese home are an honor and guests should treat them with great respect. A guest to a Japanese meal should wait to sit until directed to a place at the table. The eldest or a guest of honor will usually sit at the center of the table furthest from the door and is also the first to begin eating.¹³⁶



© Steven Leckart
Chabudai table

Many homes and restaurants have low tables and cushions on the floor. Men typically sit with their legs crossed in front of them and women sit with legs folded

¹³¹ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹³² Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 82.

¹³³ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 163.

¹³⁴ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 239.

¹³⁵ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹³⁶ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

to one side. In quite formal settings men and women will kneel with their feet under them, but foreigners may often avoid this formality.¹³⁷ A Japanese meal will often begin with an exclamation of *itadakimasu* to signify gratitude for the food.¹³⁸

Exchange 11: What is the name of this dish?

Soldier:	What is the name of this dish?	kono ryohree no namae wa nan deskaa?
Local:	This is sukiyaki.	kore wa skeeyaakee-des

Chopsticks are the major utensil in Japan, and visitors should learn how to use them. Eaters place their chopsticks on the chopstick rest, never crossed, while getting a drink or speaking. When the meal is over, chopsticks should be put on the rest and not on a bowl or plate. Diners should not pierce food with their chopsticks or use them for pointing.¹³⁹ It is impolite to pass food using chopsticks.¹⁴⁰



© Ro / wererabbit / flickr.com
Udon

Exchange 12: This food is very good.

Soldier:	This food is very good.	kono tabemono wa totemo oishee des
Local:	It's <i>korokke</i> .	sore wa korok-keh-des

¹³⁷ Japan Guide, "Sitting Techniques and Rules," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2006.html>

¹³⁸ Essential Japan Guide, "Japanese Eating Customs," 2008, <http://www.essential-japan-guide.com/japanese-eating-customs.html>

¹³⁹ Kwintessential, "Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette," n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹⁴⁰ Essential Japan Guide, "Japanese Eating Customs," 2008, <http://www.essential-japan-guide.com/japanese-eating-customs.html>

Exchange 13: What is korokke?

Soldier:	What is in <i>korokke</i> ?	korok-keh-no nakami wa nan deskaa?
Local:	Potatoes, ground beef, carrots, and onions.	jagaaymo, gyoo hiki niku, ninjin to tamanegi des

Table manners in Japan differ in some ways from those in the United States. Japanese serve food with rice but rarely mix the two. It is polite to take a bite of one and then the other.¹⁴¹ When eating rice, Japanese will hold the rice bowl near their mouths and will not pour soy sauce directly on their rice.¹⁴² Slurping is common when eating soup or noodles. Because spoons are usually absent from the meal, Japanese will drink soup broth out of the bowl like a cup.^{143, 144} When eating sushi, Japanese will try to eat the piece in one bite.¹⁴⁵



© jpelligen / flickr.com
A traditional Japanese dinner

It is customary to finish every bite, including every grain of rice in a bowl. An empty bowl is a sign that the eater is satisfied, while rice left over is a signal the eater would like more. Conversely, an empty glass is a signal for more.¹⁴⁶ It is impolite to let companions, either at a table or in a bar, pour their own drinks.^{147, 148}

¹⁴¹ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹⁴² Japan Guide, “Japanese Table Manners,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2005.html>

¹⁴³ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹⁴⁴ Essential Japan Guide, “Japanese Eating Customs,” 2008, <http://www.essential-japan-guide.com/japanese-eating-customs.html>

¹⁴⁵ Japan Guide, “Japanese Table Manners,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2005.html>

¹⁴⁶ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹⁴⁷ Essential Japan Guide, “Japanese Eating Customs,” 2008, <http://www.essential-japan-guide.com/japanese-eating-customs.html>

¹⁴⁸ Japan Guide, “Japanese Table Manners,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2005.html>

Dress Codes

Everyday clothing in Japan is quite similar to that in the West. Conservative dark suits are the standard for businessmen, and comparative conservative clothing is expected for women.¹⁴⁹ Casual clothes are also similar in Japan to much of the Western world.^{150, 151}



© MD111 / flickr.com
Street in Shibuya

Exchange 14: Is this acceptable to wear?

Soldier:	Is this acceptable to wear?	kore wo keete mo daay-jyoh-bu deskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Despite the preponderance of dark business suits in the Japanese workforce, dress standards began to shift in the early 21st century. In an effort to meet new standards for greenhouse gas emissions, the government encouraged businesses in 2005 to raise their thermostats and allow employees to forego the jacket and tie and to don short-sleeved shirts. Unlike similar failed efforts in 1979 and 1994, the “Cool Biz” drive of 2005 caught on and has changed typical business attire in many companies throughout the summer months.^{152, 153}

Traditional clothing remains common for some occasions. The kimono, an ankle-length robe typically with long sleeves and tied with a sash, is popular for weddings and cultural events such as tea ceremonies and art classes.^{154, 155} Many also wear the kimono for New Year’s. The kimono

¹⁴⁹ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹⁵⁰ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 86.

¹⁵¹ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 121.

¹⁵² Associated Press, “Japanese Dressing Down to Battle Warming,” *MSNBC*, 31 May 2005, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8046182/ns/us_news-environment/

¹⁵³ Kwan Weng Kin, “Japanese Men Warm up to ‘Cool Biz’ Drive on Dress Code,” *AsiaOne*, 15 July 2009, <http://www.asiaone.com/Business/Office/Rest%2BAnd%2BRelax/Story/A1Story20090713-154584.html>

¹⁵⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Kimono,” n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/317977/kimono>

¹⁵⁵ Japan Zone, “Kimono,” n.d., <http://www.japan-zone.com/culture/kimono.shtml>

comes in many different styles for men and women and is often highly valued by its owner. A fine kimono may be an heirloom.¹⁵⁶

Non-Religious Celebrations

A number of non-religious celebrations dot the Japanese calendar. The most important national holiday in Japan is New Year (*shogatsu*). Businesses often shut down for the first three days of January. Popular activities include sending cards, visiting temples and shrines, and attending parties known as *bonenkai* (“year forgetting”) parties.^{157, 158}



© Derek A. / flickr.com
Dressed up for Coming of Age

Exchange 15: Will you be celebrating New Year’s Day?

Soldier:	Will you be celebrating New Year’s Day?	oshoogatsu wa oewaay sheemaaskaa?
Local:	Yes, of course!	mochiron

Japan’s next national holiday occurs on the second Monday of January. *Seijin no hi* is a coming of age celebration for those entering adulthood (turning 20) in the following year.¹⁵⁹

February’s sole national holiday is the National Foundation Day (*kenkoku kinenbi*). This day commemorates the crowning of the first emperor in 660 B.C.E.

The spring equinox (*shunbun no hi*) in March and autumn equinox (*shubun no hi*) in September also are national holidays. It is customary to visit gravesites on these days.¹⁶⁰

The busiest holiday in Japan is Golden Week, when four national holidays occur in 7 days. The first is Showa Day (*Showa no hi*), a celebration of the birthday of former Emperor Hirohito (Emperor Showa in Japan) on April 29. Constitution Day (*Kenpo kinenbi*) on May 3 commemorates the day the 1947 constitution went into effect. May 4 is Greenery Day (*Midori no*

¹⁵⁶ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 86–89.

¹⁵⁷ Japan Guide, “New Year,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2064.html>

¹⁵⁸ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 8.

¹⁵⁹ Japan Guide, “Coming of Age (seijin no hi),” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2280.html>

¹⁶⁰ Japan Guide, “Japanese Holidays,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2062.html>

hi), a celebration of the environment and nature (Greenery Day was on April 29 prior to 2007). The last holiday in Golden Week is Children's Day (*Kokomo no hi*) on May 5.^{161, 162, 163}

Other national holidays include Ocean Day (*umi no hi*) on the third Monday in July, Respect for the Aged Day (*keiro no hi*) on the third Monday in September, Health and Sports Day (*taiku no hi*) commemorating the opening of Tokyo's Olympic Games in 1964 on the second Monday in October, Culture Day (*bunka no hi*) on 3 November, Labor Day (*kinro kansha no hi*), and the birthday of the current emperor.¹⁶⁴

Tea Ceremony

Japan's tea ceremony (*chanoyu*) is not only one of Japan's most famous traditions, it also highlights many other traditional art forms including ceramics and architectural aesthetics. Tea drinking in Japan traces its roots more than a thousand years, but the development of a major ritualized art form occurred in the 16th century. Today the ceremony is a tribute to harmony and tranquility.^{165, 166}



© Yamanaka Tamaki
Tea Ceremony

Guests, usually few in number, will gather in a teahouse or tearoom. The guest entrance to the room is usually only large enough for participants to crawl through, emphasizing one's removal from the outside world. The room is bare with the possible exception of flowers or scrolls on the wall. The flowers are a testament to the refined nature of flower arranging (*ikebana*) and the scroll highlights the importance of calligraphy in Japanese society. A round iron kettle rests on a hearth in the middle of the room and guests kneel in silence waiting for their host.^{167, 168}

The host enters with utensils including fresh water, a tea scoop, and a tea whisk. The host then cleans all the instruments and prepares tea to be served in a small bowl shared by all participants. Rules govern nearly every aspect of tea preparation, from the host's movements when entering the room to the exchanges between participants. The ceremony is a time for reflection and

¹⁶¹ Japan Guide, "Golden Week," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2282.html>

¹⁶² *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Golden Week," n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1450902/Golden-Week>

¹⁶³ Shane Sakata, "Golden Week in Japan," *Nihon Sun*, 30 April 2009, <http://www.nihonsun.com/2009/04/30/golden-week-in-japan/>

¹⁶⁴ Japan Guide, "Japanese Holidays," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2062.html>

¹⁶⁵ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 18–19.

¹⁶⁶ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 88–91.

¹⁶⁷ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 18–19.

¹⁶⁸ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 88–91.

introspection. Guests should complement the host not only on the tea but on the bowl and the general environment. Meticulous gardens often surround teahouses.^{169, 170}

Dos and Don'ts

Dos

Do finish your bowl to the last grain of rice.

Do pour drinks for your companions.

Do set your chopsticks on a proper rest rather than a bowl or plate.

Do be prepared to exchange business cards when meeting someone new.

Do be aware of non-verbal cues when speaking to someone.

Don'ts

Don't open a gift upon receipt.

Don't blow your nose at the table.

Don't burp at the table; it is considered rude to do so.

Don't cross your chopsticks when setting them down.

Don't point with chopsticks or pass food with them.



© James Langham
Slippers

¹⁶⁹ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 18–19.

¹⁷⁰ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1999), 88–91.

Chapter 3: Assessment

1. Individualism and assertiveness are hallmarks of Japanese society.

False

Japanese value social conformity and humility. These values dictate many social interactions in Japan.

2. Japanese position themselves in a hierarchy in school and later in work life.

True

Senpai refers to those who are senior and *kohai* to those who are junior to oneself. The vertical nature of the *senpai-kohai* relationship may be seen in many aspects of Japanese society.

3. Gifts in Japan are never wrapped because wrapping is viewed as a form of deception.

False

The wrapping of a gift may be valued just as highly as the gift itself. A gift may be wrapped in paper or a special wrapping cloth known as *furoshiki*.

4. When finished eating, it is appropriate to lay one's chopsticks on an empty bowl or plate.

False

Chopsticks should always be placed on a chopstick rest while speaking or when finished with a meal.

5. It is inappropriate to cross chopsticks when putting them down.

True

Chopsticks should be placed side by side and not crossed when resting. Additionally, one should not stab food or point with chopsticks.

Chapter 4: Urban Life

Urbanization

Modern Japan is in many ways synonymous with urban life. Although the country was highly rural and administered by a feudal government until the late 19th century, the last 150 years have seen significant changes to the country. Today 67% of the population lives in urban areas.¹⁷¹



© Trey Ratcliff
Downtown Tokyo

Japan's urban centers changed quickly following the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Although Tokyo (formerly Edo) had served as the capital of the Tokugawa Shogunate since the early 17th century, the imperial family moved from Kyoto (the imperial capital for centuries) to Tokyo following the imperial restoration and quickly advocated for modernization.¹⁷² Other cities grew through the development of mining and shipbuilding.¹⁷³ Yokohama was only a small fishing village in the mid-1800s, but soon developed into an important foreign trade port. Today, Yokohama is Japan's second-largest city with more than 3 million residents.¹⁷⁴

Japan's cities are relatively recent creations not only because they mostly developed since the late 19th century, but also because many have been destroyed and rebuilt since the Meiji Restoration. The massive Kanto earthquake of 1923 destroyed much of Tokyo and Yokohama.¹⁷⁵ Many cities were destroyed during World War II and rebuilt.¹⁷⁶

This rapid urbanization has affected many aspects of Japanese life. High costs of urban living and raising children have prompted Japanese couples to have fewer children. The Japanese birth rate began to decline after World War II and by the 1980s achieved a negative growth rate. Since that time, more people die annually in Japan than are born.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 25 April 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

¹⁷² Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 102.

¹⁷³ Theodore C. Bestor, "Japan," Everyculture, n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Japan.html>

¹⁷⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, "Yokohama," 2011, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/653496/Yokohama>

¹⁷⁵ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 102.

¹⁷⁶ Theodore C. Bestor, "Japan," Everyculture, n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Japan.html>

¹⁷⁷ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Japan: The Late 20th and Early 21st Centuries, Social Change," n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/300531/Japan/23219/The-late-20th-and-early-21st-centuries>

Urban Work Issues

In conjunction with Japan's economic downturn in the 1990s, homelessness has grown substantially over the last two decades. Though the country's homeless in the 1980s officially numbered slightly more than 1,000, by the early 21st century that number had grown to tens of thousands.¹⁷⁸ Rather than sleeping in the streets, many of Japan's homeless find refuge in parks. Because of Japanese social norms, begging on the street is not common, so the country's homeless largely rely on charitable organizations for food handouts.^{179, 180} As of 2010, Japan had an unemployment rate of 5.1%.¹⁸¹ Despite this relatively low figure, Japan's working population continues to age and the number of workers in the system will fall over time. In 2011, nearly 23% of the population was older than 65 but that number is expected to increase to 40% by 2050.^{182, 183}



© Cory Doctorow
Homeless camp, Shinjuku Park

Loyalty is important in business, for the employer and the employee. Companies often promote from within and workers feel a sense of commitment.¹⁸⁴ Within Japanese businesses, a hierarchy of seniority based on age or company longevity is often present. Those who are senior are known as *senpai* and junior workers are *kohai*. This *senpai*–*kohai* hierarchical structure begins in Japan's schools and is found in many aspects of Japanese society.^{185, 186} Social stratification in Japan's cities is often seen in white collar “new middle class” workers and industrial blue collar workers.¹⁸⁷

¹⁷⁸ Les Donison, “Japanese Introduced to Homeless,” *Post Gazette*, 5 August 2002, <http://www.post-gazette.com/World/20020805japanp2.asp>

¹⁷⁹ Colin Joyce, “Former Bosses Join Japan’s Homeless Army,” *Telegraph*, 26 December 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/japan/1366335/Former-bosses-join-Japans-homeless-army.html>

¹⁸⁰ Robert Case, *Countries of the World: Japan* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 53.

¹⁸¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Japan,” in *The World Factbook*, 25 April 2010, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

¹⁸² *Economist*, “The Old and the Older,” 19 November 2010, http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2010/11/japans_population

¹⁸³ Hugh Pym, “Japan: Debt, Demographics and Deflation,” *BBC News*, 30 November 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-11867257>

¹⁸⁴ *Economist*, “Opening Up,” 21 June 2010, http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2010/07/japanese_corporate_culture

¹⁸⁵ Kwintessential, “Japan—Language, Culture, Customs and Etiquette,” n.d., <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/japan-country-profiles.html>

¹⁸⁶ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, ed., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 144.

¹⁸⁷ Theodore C. Bestor, “Japan,” Everyculture, n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Japan.html>

Urban Health Care

Although some question the sustainability of Japan's healthcare system, quality is high, coverage is wide, and costs to patients are low.¹⁸⁸ Physicians are well-trained and research facilities are highly sophisticated.¹⁸⁹ As a result, and in conjunction with a healthy lifestyle, Japan has the highest life expectancy in the world for a major country (only the small nations of Monaco, Macau, San Marino, and Andorra have higher life expectancies).¹⁹⁰

Life expectancy at birth in Japan is 82 years (79 for men and 86 for women).¹⁹¹ The United States ranks 50th in

the world with a life expectancy of 78.4 years.¹⁹² Japanese visit the doctor regularly, averaging 15 visits per year (three times the norm in the United States).¹⁹³



© WWF Climate
Doctor with patients

Exchange 16: Is Dr. Tanaka in?

Soldier:	Is Dr. Tanaka in?	tanaka-sensey wa iras-shaaymaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

¹⁸⁸ Michael S. Yamashita, "It's Just What the Doctor Ordered," *Newsweek*, 16 August 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/08/16/japan-s-good-cheap-health-care.html>

¹⁸⁹ Theodore C. Bestor, "Japan," Everyculture, n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Japan.html>

¹⁹⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Country Comparison: Life Expectancy at Birth," in *The World Factbook*, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2102rank.html>

¹⁹¹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 16 March 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/jg.html>

¹⁹² Central Intelligence Agency, "United States," in *The World Factbook*, 6 April 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

¹⁹³ Blaine Harden, "Health Care in Japan: Low-Cost, for Now," *Washington Post*, 7 September 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/06/AR2009090601630.html>

The average hospital stay in Japan is 20 nights, four times longer than in the United States.¹⁹⁴ Many hospitals in Japan are privately owned and more than half have fewer than 100 beds. Public hospitals tend to be larger, averaging 283 beds. Although public hospitals account for just 19% of the country's hospitals, they account for 33% of the hospital beds. Japan has proportionally fewer emergency rooms in its hospitals, but also has fewer violent crimes and traffic accidents.¹⁹⁵



© Jean-Marc Rocher
Mother and newborn

Exchange 17: Is there a hospital nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a hospital nearby?	chikaku ni byoh-in ga aareemaaskaa?
Local:	Yes, in the center of town.	haay, machi no man-naka ni aareemaas

Despite vast coverage, healthcare costs remain low in Japan. The country spends USD 3,500 per person on healthcare annually, less than half the United States does. The system offers universal coverage but is largely privatized.¹⁹⁶ Negative aspects of Japan's low costs include lower salaries for doctors (and subsequent shortages of medical professionals) and questions regarding sustainability.¹⁹⁷

Education

Modeled on the American school system during the postwar American occupation, the Japanese school system will be familiar to an American visitor. Education is compulsory and consists of elementary and secondary school.¹⁹⁸ Elementary school is 6 years (grades one to six) and may be preceded by kindergarten or preschool. Secondary school is also 6 years, divided between lower secondary school (junior high) and upper secondary



© jpellgen / flickr.com
Children in school uniforms

¹⁹⁴ Michael S. Yamashita, "It's Just What the Doctor Ordered," *Newsweek*, 16 August 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/08/16/japan-s-good-cheap-health-care.html>

¹⁹⁵ Victor G. Rodwin, *Japan's Universal and Affordable Health Care: Lessons for the United States?* (New York: Japan Society, 1994), <http://www.nyu.edu/projects/rodwin/lessons.html>

¹⁹⁶ Michael S. Yamashita, "It's Just What the Doctor Ordered," *Newsweek*, 16 August 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/08/16/japan-s-good-cheap-health-care.html>

¹⁹⁷ Blaine Harden, "Health Care in Japan: Low-Cost, for Now," *Washington Post*, 7 September 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/06/AR2009090601630.html>

¹⁹⁸ Japan Guide, "Education," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2150.html>

school (high school). Junior high (grades seven through nine) is typically more standardized than high school (grades 10 through 12), which may offer specialization.¹⁹⁹ Prior to high school almost all children attend public schools associated with their geographic residence. But entrance into high school can be competitive. Attending a good high school is often linked with subsequent attendance at a prestigious university.²⁰⁰ Schools known as *juku* schools help students of all grades either to meet standards when falling behind or to excel.²⁰¹

The university system is also structured similarly to that in the United States. Undergraduate education lasts 4 years. Additional graduate education may consist of a 2-year master's degree and an additional 3-year doctorate.²⁰² Intense competition for acceptance to the country's top universities makes attendance at those universities difficult for many. To help prepare for entrance examinations, many students enroll in special cram programs known as *yokiboi* schools.²⁰³ Junior colleges and vocational colleges are also common in Japan.²⁰⁴ As of 2009, Japan has 773 universities, 406 junior colleges, 64 technology colleges, and more than 3,300 specialized training colleges.²⁰⁵

The emphasis on education has only increased because the economy has stalled since the 1990s. Those who are better educated are more competitive in the labor market.²⁰⁶ Because of the societal importance of education, Japan has one of the world's most educated populations.

¹⁹⁹ Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco, "Education," n.d., http://www.sf.us.emb-japan.go.jp/en/e_m08_01_05.htm

²⁰⁰ EducationJapan.org, "Japanese Schools," 2001, http://educationjapan.org/jguide/school_system.html

²⁰¹ EducationJapan.org, "Japanese Schools," 2001, http://educationjapan.org/jguide/school_system.html

²⁰² EducationJapan.org, "Japanese University Education," 2001, <http://educationjapan.org/jguide/university.html>

²⁰³ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 90.

²⁰⁴ Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco, "Education," n.d., http://www.sf.us.emb-japan.go.jp/en/e_m08_01_05.htm

²⁰⁵ Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology—Japan, "Statistics," n.d., <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/statistics/>

²⁰⁶ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 90.

Public Places

Restaurants

Japan's restaurants, especially in Tokyo, have gained wide international attention. Tokyo has restaurants ranked as highly as any in London, New York, or Paris. International cuisine is easily available.^{207, 208}



© Oliver Braubach
Traditional Japanese breakfast

Exchange 18: I would like tea, please.

Soldier:	I would like tea, please.	ocha ga nomee taayn des kedo
Local:	Understood.	wakarimashita

Breakfasts in Japan may be unfamiliar at first to a Western palate. Rice and soup are common breakfast items.²⁰⁹

Exchange 19: Are you still serving breakfast?

Soldier:	Are you still serving breakfast?	mada asagohan ga dekimaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

²⁰⁷ *Economist*, "Tokyo Food: Fishy Business, Gems of the Ocean," 23 May 2008, <http://www.economist.com/node/11394712>

²⁰⁸ Gwen Robinson, "Michelin Sprinkles Stars on Tokyo," *Financial Times*, 19 November 2007, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/9952f580-96c4-11dc-b2da-0000779fd2ac.html#axzz1I678GAds>

²⁰⁹ FoodLinks, "Japanese Meals and Customs," n.d., <http://www.food-links.com/countries/japan/japanese-meals-customs.php>

Miso soup, made from a paste of fermented beans and grain, is quite popular in Japan.²¹⁰



© kagen33 / flickr.com
Miso soup

Exchange 20: I'd like some hot soup.

Soldier:	I'd like some hot soup.	atataakai suupu ga nomitaay des
Local:	Sure.	haay

Restaurants are especially common for lunch as are small snack bars. Most restaurants have only short lunch hours that accommodate the lunch break in a typical worker's schedule.²¹¹ Patrons at *tachigui* shops stand while eating their meal, though it is in poor taste to eat while walking down the street.^{212, 213}

Exchange 21: What type of fish is this?

Soldier:	What type of fish is this?	nan-no sakana deskaa?
Local:	It's tuna.	maguro des

²¹⁰ Martha Rose Shulman, "Miso Soup with Tofu," *New York Times*, 14 April 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/17/health/nutrition/17recipehealth.html>

²¹¹ Noriko Kamachi, *Cultures and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 119.

²¹² Essential Japan Guide, "Japanese Eating Customs," 2008, <http://www.essential-japan-guide.com/japanese-eating-customs.html>

²¹³ FoodLinks, "Japanese Meals and Customs," n.d., <http://www.food-links.com/countries/japan/japanese-meals-customs.php>

Japanese desserts are usually less sweet than those in the West. Pounded rice and bean paste are typical ingredients in Japanese sweets. Green tea often accompanies dessert.²¹⁴



© Kenji Mori
Green tea ice cream

Exchange 22: Do you have dessert?

Soldier:	Do you have a dessert?	dezaato ga aareemaaskaa?
Local:	Yes, we have green tea ice cream.	maat-cha aaysu ga aareemaas

Friends and business associates alike will offer to pour drinks for each other. It is impolite to let someone pour their own drink.²¹⁵

Exchange 23: May I have a glass of water?

Soldier:	May I have a glass of water?	omizu wo kudasaay
Local:	Yes, right away.	haay, tadaayma

Tipping is not customary in Japan at restaurants or for other services. Close friends will often split a bill (*warikan*) at a restaurant, but in more formal situations it is polite to offer to pay. It is common for Japanese to refuse an initial offer, so it is important to offer more than once.²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Tokyo Top Guide, “The Real Secret to Japanese Desserts and Japanese Cake Recipes,” n.d., http://www.tokyo-top-guide.com/Japanese_Desserts.html

²¹⁵ Essential Japan Guide, “Japanese Eating Customs,” 2008, <http://www.essential-japan-guide.com/japanese-eating-customs.html>

²¹⁶ Essential Japan Guide, “Japanese Eating Customs,” 2008, <http://www.essential-japan-guide.com/japanese-eating-customs.html>

Exchange 24: Put this all on one bill please.

Soldier:	Put this all on one bill please.	zenbu is-shoni o-negaayshimaas
Local:	Understood.	waakaarimaashtaa

Restaurants and other public places usually have public restrooms with both Western- and Japanese-style toilets. When using the restroom in a private home, one should leave their slippers outside the bathroom.²¹⁷



© Harrison Jaffe
Sushi bar

Exchange 25: Where is your restroom?

Soldier:	Where is your restroom?	o-te-araay wa dochira deskaa?
Local:	That room to your left, over there.	hidari gawa no sono heya no mukoh des

Market Place

Services account for 75.9% of Japan’s economy, and so consumerism drives much of Japan’s society.^{218, 219} Cash is usually the best way to pay for goods and services. Though some high-end department stores and hotels take credit cards, most prefer cash. The Japanese currency is the yen and can be obtained through Japanese postal service ATMs. Non-postal ATMs may not function for international visitors even if the machines have Visa or MasterCard logos.²²⁰



© Trey Ratcliff
Kyoto alley

²¹⁷ Japan Guide, “Japanese Toilets,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2003.html>

²¹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, “Japan,” in *The World Factbook*, 6 April 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

²¹⁹ Robert Case, *Countries of the World: Japan* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 51.

²²⁰ Lonely Planet, “Japan: Money & Costs,” n.d., <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/practical-information/money-costs#2>

Exchange 26: Do you accept U.S. currency?

Soldier:	Do you accept U.S. currency?	doru wa tsukaemaaskaa?
Local:	No, we only accept yen.	eeyeh, endakedesu

Traditional Japanese clothes including the kimono and happi coat (traditional Japanese jacket) are common souvenirs for tourists.

Exchange 27: Can I buy that kimono with this much money?

Soldier:	Can I buy that kimono with this much money?	korede sono-kimono ga kaemaaskaa?
Local:	No.	eeyeh

Stores and shops in Japan usually open between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. and close in the evening before 9 p.m.²²¹



© Laurent Fintoni
Potato cake vendor

²²¹ Shangri-La Hotel: Tokyo, "Facts for the Traveller," 2011, <http://www.shangri-la.com/en/property/tokyo/shangri-la/facts/businesshours>

Exchange 28: How much longer will you be here?

Soldier:	How much longer will you be here?	ato dono guraay koko ni imaaskaa?
Local:	Three more hours.	san jikan des

Street vendors, local markets, specialty shops, and modern shopping malls all provide goods to Japan's consumers.

Exchange 29: Is the market nearby?

Soldier:	Is the market nearby?	ichiba wa kono chikaku deskaa?
Local:	Yes, over there on the right.	haay, achira no migi desu

Markets are especially popular for locally grown fruits and vegetables.²²²

Exchange 30: Do you have any more of these?

Soldier:	Do you have any more of these?	mot-to kore ga aareemaaskaa?
Local:	No.	eeyeh

²²² Robert Case, *Countries of the World: Japan* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 41.

Urban Traffic and Transportation

There are many good alternatives to driving when traveling in Japan's cities. Fuel is expensive and highly taxed.^{223, 224} Safety inspections, car taxes, mandatory insurance, and high costs for parking add to the high price of maintaining a vehicle. If traveling from one city to another, a driver will pay heavily for expressway tolls.²²⁵ Many city residents do not own a car or even have a driver's license.²²⁶



© southtopia / flickr.com
Tokyo expressway to Shibuya

Exchange 31: Is there a gas station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a gas station nearby?	chikaku ni gasorin sutando ga aareemaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

In Japan, traffic runs on the left side of the road, with drivers sitting on the right side of the car. Traffic in cities is usually heavy and makes regular commuting inconvenient.²²⁷

Exchange 32: Which road leads to the airport?

Soldier:	Which road leads to the airport?	dono michi de kookoh ni ikemaaskaa?
Local:	The road heading east.	kono michi wo higashi ni mas-sugu des

²²³ Embassy of the United States: Tokyo, Japan, U.S. Department of State, "Driving in Japan," n.d., <http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-drive.html>

²²⁴ Hisane Masaki, "Political Tension Rises in Japan Over Gas Tax," *Asia Times Online*, 25 January 2008, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/JA25Dh01.html>

²²⁵ Lonely Planet, "Japan: Getting Around," n.d., <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/transport/getting-around>

²²⁶ Japan Guide, "Driving a Car," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2022.html>

²²⁷ Japan Guide, "Driving a Car," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2022.html>

Trains are common and practical in Japan. Bullet trains known as *shinkansen* connect Tokyo to other major cities. These trains are famous for their comfort, punctuality, speed, and safety.^{228, 229} Subways are a good option for travel within a city. Tokyo’s subway, the largest in Japan, is noted for its punctuality and cleanliness. Because the subway is the preferred means of commuting to work, rush hour can be quite hectic. During these hours trains transport twice as many passengers as they were designed to. Train station attendants, known as “pushers,” assist rush-hour commuters by pushing them into overcrowded trains.^{230, 231}



© Nickolay Khazanov
JR Chuo Line

Exchange 33: Is there a train station nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a train station nearby?	chikaku ni eki ga aareemaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

In addition to subways, Japan’s major cities have extensive bus systems. But these services can be difficult for foreigners to use. Destinations are typically written only in Japanese and buses do not use numbers.²³²

Exchange 34: Will the bus be here soon?

Soldier:	Will the bus be here soon?	baasu wa koko ni sugu kimaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Taxis are more expensive and less convenient within a city than the efficient public transportation system. Trains and buses do not run through the night, however, and taxis may be

²²⁸ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 91.

²²⁹ Japan Guide, “Shinkansen,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2018.html>

²³⁰ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 91.

²³¹ Lonely Planet, “Japan: Getting Around,” n.d., <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/transport/getting-around#55873>

²³² Lonely Planet, “Japan: Getting Around,” n.d., <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/transport/getting-around#55873>

the only option after hours. The driver will open the door to the taxi remotely and does not expect tips because the service fee is inclusive.²³³

Exchange 35: Where can I get a cab?

Soldier:	Where can I get a cab?	doko de takushee ni noremaaskaa?
Local:	Over there.	achira des

Street Crime

Despite a rise in crime since the mid-1990s, Japan continues to have one of the industrial world’s lowest crime rates. Street crime exists but sensible precautions substantially mitigate any risk.²³⁴ The police force in Japan emphasizes close contact with the community. To provide large police coverage in Japan’s cities, mini police stations are abundant. A single mini station, known as a *koban*, will be the primary workplace for several officers. Some will have administrative duties while others will go out on patrol or simply stand outside the *koban* to offer assistance to passersby. Tokyo alone has roughly 1,200 *koban*. These *koban* services include a lost-and-found and providing directions. One of Tokyo’s busiest *koban* receives as many as 2,000 street direction inquiries a day.^{235, 236}



© Douglas Sprott
Koban police station

²³³ Japan Guide, “Taxi,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2021.html>

²³⁴ Lonely Planet, “Japan: Health and Safety,” n.d., <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/practical-information/health>

²³⁵ L. Craig Parker, Jr., *The Japanese Police System Today* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2001), 25.

²³⁶ Edan Corkill, “Masters of All They Survey,” *Japan Times Online*, 28 October 2007, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fl20071028x1.html>

Chapter 4: Assessment

1. Japan is primarily an urban country with 67% of the country living in urban areas.

True

Japan's cities have grown significantly since the Meiji Restoration in 1868. Many have also been destroyed (by natural disasters or war) and rebuilt.

2. Homelessness in Japan has grown significantly since the 1990s.

True

Prior to the economic downturn of the 1990s, Japan had few homeless. Today, tens of thousands are without homes. Many live in parks and rely on charitable organizations for food.

3. High healthcare costs prevent large portions of society from getting proper medical care.

False

Healthcare in Japan is affordable, and coverage is high. Japanese visit the doctor an average of 15 times a year (three times the norm in the United States).

4. Since Japan's economic downturn in the 1990s, life expectancy has fallen below that in the United States.

False

Japan continues to have the highest life expectancy of any large industrialized nation. Average life spans in the U.S. are 4 years shorter than in Japan.

5. The Japanese education model is similar to that in the United States.

True

In Japan, 6 years of elementary school precede junior high and high school, which total another 6 years. Preschool or kindergarten may precede elementary school.

Chapter 5: Rural Life

Land Ownership and Rural Economy

Today 33% of the population lives outside of Japan's urban centers.²³⁷ Northern Honshu, Hokkaido, Shikoku, and Kyushu are all heavily rural. Because only 12% of the land is arable, Japan's agricultural sector is small. Soil quality is poor, but irrigation is relatively easy because of steady rainfall. Most farms are privately owned, quite small, and managed by part-time farmers. Yet the sector is large enough to produce all the nation's rice needs.^{238, 239} This is fortunate because rice—the nation's chief agricultural crop—remains for many a symbol of Japan.^{240, 241, 242} The country imports 61% of its food.



© rumpleteaser / flickr.com
Japanese Countryside

Although the country is presently able to meet its rice demands internally, the ability to sustain its rice production is falling. There is less demand for rice in Japan because of changes in diet and a declining population.²⁴³ Furthermore, Japan's rice farmers are aging, and few young people are taking their place.²⁴⁴ Drawn by the appeal of cities, many Japanese youth continue to flock to urban centers.²⁴⁵

²³⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 28 April 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

²³⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 28 April 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

²³⁹ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 28 April 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

²⁴⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 28 April 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

²⁴¹ Philip Brasar, "The Sticky Subject of Japan's Rice Protection," *Japan Times Online*, 20 February 2011, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fd20110220pb.html>

²⁴² *Economist*, "You are What You Eat: Can a Country as Modern as Japan Cling onto a Culture as Ancient as Rice?" 17 December 2009, http://www.economist.com/node/15108648?story_id=E1_TVTD RGQR

²⁴³ Philip Brasar, "The Sticky Subject of Japan's Rice Protection," *Japan Times Online*, 20 February 2011, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fd20110220pb.html>

²⁴⁴ Martin Fackler, "Japan's Rice Farmers Fear Their Future Is Shrinking," *New York Times*, 28 March 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/world/asia/29japan.html>

²⁴⁵ Tony McNicol, "Rural Life's Slow Death," *Japan Times Online*, 27 January 2004, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fl20040127zg.html>

Exchange 36: Where do you work?

Soldier:	Where do you work?	dokode hataraiteimaaskaa?
Local:	I am a farmer.	uchiwa nookaades

The 1960s and 70s were prosperous years for Japan, and as such, land ownership grew significantly during those decades. However, the burst of Japan's economic bubble in the early 1990s has shifted investments from land ownership into savings and stocks in the last 20 years.²⁴⁶

Exchange 37: Do you own this land?

Soldier:	Do you own this land?	aanaataanotochideskaa?
Local:	No.	eeyeh

Rural Transportation

While cars are not practical in Japan's cities, using a car to travel in the country's rural areas may be the most convenient and economical option. Although trains cover much of the country and are convenient for traveling between cities, Japan's impressive public transportation system often does not extend beyond urban areas.²⁴⁷



© Dickson@flickr / flickr.com
Car rental location

Exchange 38: Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a good auto mechanic nearby?	chikaku ni ee jidoosha shoori kohjyoh ga aareemaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

²⁴⁶ Sumiko Oshima, "Land Ownership Trends Transformed after Economic Bubble," 10 June 2001, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/fl20010610a2.html>

²⁴⁷ Japan Guide, "Driving a Car," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2022.html>

Many large car-rental companies provide service throughout Japan. Though Japanese companies offer the best prices, they may not cater to English speakers. International rental companies are also prevalent in Japan and are popular for foreigners.^{248, 249}

Exchange 39: Where can I rent a car?

Soldier:	Where can I rent a car?	rentakaa no mise wa doko deskaa?
Local:	In the town of Midori.	meedoree-choh ni aareemaas

Driving in Japan is similar to the United Kingdom where cars run on the left side of the road and the driver sits on the car’s right side.²⁵⁰ American visitors to Japan must obtain an international driving permit in order to rent cars and otherwise operate motor vehicles. According to the U.S. Embassy, “Persons found driving in Japan without a legal license are subject to fines, arrest, and possible deportation.”²⁵¹

Health Issues

Healthcare in Japan—which is constitutionally guaranteed for all citizens—is provided through a national health insurance system that “covers everyone regardless of their place of residence.”²⁵² The low cost to patients, availability, and quality of healthcare within the national system contributes to the extended life expectancy in Japan (79 years for men and 86 for women—the highest among industrialized nations).^{253, 254}



© U-M Health System
Reception for medical clinic

Despite the generally good health care system,

²⁴⁸ Japan Guide, “Renting a Car,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2024.html>

²⁴⁹ Lonely Planet, “Japan: Getting Around,” n.d., <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/transport/getting-around#55876>

²⁵⁰ Japan Guide, “Driving a Car,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2022.html>

²⁵¹ Embassy of the United States: Tokyo, Japan, U.S. Department of State, “Driving in Japan,” n.d., <http://japan.usembassy.gov/e/acs/tacs-drive.html>

²⁵² M. Matsumoto et al., “Retention of Physicians in Rural Japan: Concerted Efforts of the Government, Prefectures, Municipalities and Medical Schools,” *Rural and Remote Health*, 7 June 2010, 4, http://www.rrh.org.au/publishedarticles/article_print_1432.pdf

²⁵³ Michael S. Yamashita, “It’s Just What the Doctor Ordered,” *Newsweek*, 16 August 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/08/16/japan-s-good-cheap-health-care.html>

²⁵⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, “Country Comparison: Life Expectancy At Birth,” *The World Factbook*, 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications//the-world-factbook/rankorder/2102rank.html>

differences exist for access to healthcare between urban and rural areas. In comparison to Japan's cities, the availability of physicians is significantly less in towns and villages.²⁵⁵ Concerted efforts of national and local governments have alleviated some of this disparity. One tactic being employed to entice physicians to rural areas has been the equalization of prices for treatment no matter where that treatment occurs.²⁵⁶ By 2006 there were 218 physicians per 100,000 people in rural areas.²⁵⁷

Exchange 40: Is there a medical clinic nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a medical clinic nearby?	chikaku ni o-isha-san ga iras-shaay maaskaa?
Local:	Yes, over there.	haay, achira des

During times of crisis, humanitarian aid to rural areas suffers because of less developed infrastructure. Following the massive 9.0 earthquake of Honshu's northeastern shore in March 2011, many rural hospitals and clinics were destroyed or severely incapacitated. Delivery of essential goods, such as food and water, was slowed by the isolated nature of rural northern Honshu.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ M. Matsumoto et al., "Retention of Physicians in Rural Japan: Concerted Efforts of the Government, Prefectures, Municipalities and Medical Schools," *Rural and Remote Health*, 7 June 2010, 2, http://www.rrh.org.au/publishedarticles/article_print_1432.pdf

²⁵⁶ Michael S. Yamashita, "It's Just What the Doctor Ordered," *Newsweek*, 16 August 2010, <http://www.newsweek.com/2010/08/16/japan-s-good-cheap-health-care.html>

²⁵⁷ M. Matsumoto et al., "Retention of Physicians in Rural Japan: Concerted Efforts of the Government, Prefectures, Municipalities and Medical Schools," *Rural and Remote Health*, 7 June 2010, 4, http://www.rrh.org.au/publishedarticles/article_print_1432.pdf

²⁵⁸ M. Matsumoto and K. Inoue, "Earthquake, Tsunami, Radiation Leak, and Crisis in Rural Health in Japan," *Rural and Remote Health*, 18 March 2011, 2, http://www.rrh.org.au/publishedarticles/article_print_1759.pdf

Education

Declines in the general population, exacerbated by continued migration to cities, have forced schools in rural areas to merge with other schools or close.²⁵⁹



© Derrick Story
Boy at Fukuoka Tower

Exchange 41: Is there a school nearby?

Soldier:	Is there a school nearby?	chikakuni gak-kooga aareemaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Despite the challenges of urbanization, Japan's rural schools continue to run and contribute to the country's educational successes. Education is compulsory for all children, and more than 90% graduate from high school.²⁶⁰

Exchange 42: Do your children go to school?

Soldier:	Do your children go to school?	kodomoha gak-kooni kayot- teimaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Yet students in rural areas may be at a disadvantage when applying to universities. Students in urban areas have better access to extracurricular activities, often designed to prepare them for university entrance examinations. They also have access to prestigious high schools, another advantage when preparing for national collegiate entrance exams—the gateway to the nation's top universities and best jobs. Competition for access to educational opportunities, which begins

²⁵⁹ Oxford Analytica, "Japan: Population Decline Unsettles Rural Education," 27 October 2008, <http://www.alacrastore.com/storecontent/oxford/DB146363>

²⁶⁰ Japan Guide, "Education," n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2150.html>

prior to middle school for most and earlier for some, is fierce and stressful. “To secure entry to most high schools, universities, as well as a few private junior high schools and elementary schools, applicants are required to sit entrance exams and attend interviews.”²⁶¹

Daily Life in the Countryside

Visitors to small towns and villages are likely to find areas with large populations of elderly people, because few members of younger generations remain to take their parents’ places in shops and on farms. In 1970, 82% of farmers were under 65 but by 2005 that had dropped to 42%.^{262, 263} But some people eventually move back to rural areas, usually in their later years, and are known as “U-turners.”^{264, 265}



© Jon Rawlinson
Elderly Japanese man

Exchange 43: Is there lodging nearby?

Soldier:	Is there lodging nearby?	chikakuni tomarerutokoroga aareemaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Work life in rural areas largely revolves around farming. Rice is the dominant crop, but many other crops are important. Fruit is grown throughout the islands of Honshu and Kyushu, and tea is prominent on their fertile plains. Potatoes and sugar beets are grown in Hokkaido, and the raising of cattle is common throughout the country. Many coastal towns and villages survive through fishing.²⁶⁶

²⁶¹ Education in Japan, “Education in Japan,” October 2007, <http://www.education-in-japan.info/sub1.html>

²⁶² *Economist*, “Rural Japan: Where Have All the Young Men Gone?” 24 August 2006, http://www.economist.com/node/7830634?story_id=7830634

²⁶³ Martin Fackler, “Japan’s Rice Farmers Fear Their Future Is Shrinking,” *New York Times*, 28 March 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/29/world/asia/29japan.html>

²⁶⁴ Jeffrey Hays, “Urban and Rural Life in Japan,” Facts and Details, March 2010, <http://factsanddetails.com/japan.php?itemid=646&catid=19&subcatid=122>

²⁶⁵ Norimitsu Onishi, “Aging and Official Abandonment Carries a Japanese Village to Extinction,” *New York Times*, 26 April 2006, http://old.japanfocus.org/_Norimitsu_ONISHI-Aging_and_Official_Abandonment_Carries_a_Japanese_Village_to_Extinction

²⁶⁶ Robert Case, *Countries of the World: Japan* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2003), 26–29.

Who's in Charge

Japan is divided into 47 separate governmental divisions known as prefectures. Although the national government exercises strong control throughout the country, people often feel a close connection with their local community.²⁶⁷



© Bert Kimura
Election day fliers, Kobe City

Exchange 44: Do you know this area very well?

Soldier:	Do you know this area very well?	kono hen-nokoto(w) o yoku sheet-teimaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Prefectures have governors and one-house assemblies elected by popular vote. They deal with issues related to finance, local healthcare, labor, and other local issues. City, town, and village administrations make up prefectures. Towns and villages, like cities, have mayors and assemblies or councils elected to 4-year terms. Villages, “the smallest self-governing entities in rural areas,” often combine several small hamlets into one governing body. The terms *machi* and *cho* “designate self-governing towns outside the cities as well as precincts of urban wards.” The terms *son* and *mara* designate villages.^{268, 269}

²⁶⁷ Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden, eds., “Chapter 6: Government and Politics—Local Government,” in *Japan: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, January 1994, <http://countrystudies.us/japan/116.htm>

²⁶⁸ Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden, eds., “Chapter 6: Government and Politics—Local Government,” in *Japan: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, January 1994, <http://countrystudies.us/japan/116.htm>

²⁶⁹ The Nippon Foundation Library, “Revised Autonomy Law,” n.d., <http://nippon.zaidan.info/seikabutsu/1999/00168/mokuji.htm>

Exchange 45: Does your mayor live here?

Soldier:	Does your mayor live here?	shichoowa konohenni osumaideskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

The duty of a local mayor in Japan is similar to one in the United States. The mayor is the executive officer of the local bureaucracy and runs the town or village government. Local issues, such as opposition to American military bases, may drive local mayoral elections.²⁷⁰

Exchange 46: Mayor, we need your cooperation.

Soldier:	Mayor, we need your cooperation.	shichoono gokyooroku(w)o tamawaritaindesuga
Local:	Yes.	haay

²⁷⁰ Kyung Lah, "New Japanese Mayor Opposes U.S. Base," *CNN*, 25 January 2010, http://articles.cnn.com/2010-01-25/world/japan.okinawa.mayor_1_base-relocation-marine-corp-s-futenma-base-move?_s=PM:WORLD

Chapter 5: Assessment

1. Japan is primarily an urban country with 90% of its residents living in cities.

False

Though Japan is highly urbanized, a full 33% of its population lives in a rural setting. Northern Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku are heavily rural.

2. Rice is Japan's chief agricultural product.

True

Although Japan imports more than 60% of its food, it produces enough rice to be self-sufficient.

3. After Japan's economic bubble burst in the 1990s, many Japanese stopped looking to land ownership as a viable investment option.

True

Many Japanese no longer place the importance on land ownership that they once did. Personal savings and stock investment are viewed as better options than buying land.

4. Cars are equally impractical in Japan's cities and rural areas.

False

Although public transportation is the best option in urban areas, cars may be the easiest and most economical way to travel in Japan's countryside.

5. Cars in Japan are driven on the right side of the road.

False

Driving in Japan is similar to that in the United Kingdom. Cars run on the left side of the road, and drivers sit on the right side of vehicles.

Chapter 6: Family Life

Typical Household and Family Responsibilities

The Japanese household is usually a small nuclear family. This is a dramatic difference from the large multigenerational families common a century-and-a-half ago.²⁷¹ Today Japanese couples have few children. The fertility rate is 1.21 children per woman, which contributes to the country's negative population growth rate.²⁷²



© Rogerio Lira
Family at Horyuji Temple

Exchange 47: How many people live in this house?

Soldier:	How many people live in this house?	konouchiniha nan-nin sundeimaaskaa?
Local:	Four.	yon

Roles in the family are more varied than in the past. In Japan's cities, a husband may work long hours and have little time with his family outside of Sundays. The wife, on the other hand, may run all aspects of the home including raising children and handling the household budget. In rural settings or when families are self-employed, it is much more likely that a husband and wife will work together throughout the day.²⁷³

²⁷¹ Everyculture, "Japan," n.d., <http://www.everyculture.com/Ja-Ma/Japan.html>

²⁷² Central Intelligence Agency, "Japan," in *The World Factbook*, 28 April 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

²⁷³ Ronald E. Dolan and Robert L. Worden, eds., "Chapter 3: The Society—Social Organization," in *Japan: A Country Study*, Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, January 1994, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/jptoc.html>

Exchange 48: Did you grow up here?

Soldier:	Did you grow up here?	kokode sodachimaashtaaka?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Status of Women

Two traditional Japanese concepts provide some insight into the status of women in the country. The first is that of *ryosaikenbo*. Literally meaning “good wife and wise mother,” *ryosaikenbo* was introduced during the Meiji era (1868–1912) but remains a subtext of gender expectations in Japan. Women are expected to support their husbands and to primarily bear the burden of raising children.²⁷⁴



© Everjean / flickr.com
Young girls, Kyoto

Exchange 49: Is this your entire family?

Soldier:	Is this your entire family?	korede aanaataa nokazokuzenin deskaa?
Local:	No.	eeyeh

The second concept is the geisha. Although Western observers often conflate the role of the geisha with a prostitute, the geisha tradition encourages a woman to be a special artist and companion. Though geishas are not pervasive in Japanese society, they do represent an undercurrent in which women are expected to conform to tradition and value customary Japanese beauty.²⁷⁵ Despite the continuance of *ryosaikenbo* in the Japanese psyche, traditional expectations are changing. Women are marrying later than they used to: almost 40% of women in Japan have not married by age 29.²⁷⁶ Many more women are joining the labor market, facilitated by a dwindling workforce.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 179–184.

²⁷⁵ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 40.

²⁷⁶ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 165.

²⁷⁷ Suvendrini Kakuchi, “Dwindling Workforce Forces a Rethink on Role of Women Workers,” *IPS News*, 16 May 2005, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=28692>

Married Life and Divorce

Marriages in Japan are often arranged, though this trend has declined since World War II. Prior to the war, two-thirds of all marriages were arranged. Today that number is between 10% and 30%.^{278, 279} Although arranged marriages (*miai*) still exist, the couple has more say in the arrangement than the term may imply. The process begins with a matchmaker (*nakodo*) who knows one of the families well. The *nokodo* considers social status, wealth, and education in determining a recommendation for one of the partners. After a selection has been made, parents are informed. They may reject the potential suitor or pass the information to their child. At this stage the prospective bride or groom may agree to meet the recommendation or reject it outright.^{280, 281} Among marriages that are not arranged, known as “love marriages,” most meet each other either at work or through a friend or sibling.²⁸²



© Yevgen Pogoryelov
Japanese couple, just married

Exchange 50: Are you married?

Soldier:	Are you married?	kek-konshiteimaaskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Prior to World War II the husband had legal authority over all members of his family. All aspects of family life fell under the husband’s power. After the war the civil code was rewritten so that now husband and wife legally share equal authority in family matters, including over their children.²⁸³



© Vintage Lulu
School children

²⁷⁸ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 133.

²⁷⁹ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 69.

²⁸⁰ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 165–167.

²⁸¹ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 69.

²⁸² Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 133.

²⁸³ Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno, eds., *The Japanese Mind: Understanding Contemporary Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 2002), 123.

Exchange 51: Are these your children?

Soldier:	Are these your children?	aanaataanokodomodeskaa?
Local:	Yes.	haay

Although divorce rates in Japan have been comparatively low for an industrialized nation, rates have risen in recent decades.²⁸⁴ Divorces among those married more than 20 years doubled between 1985 and 2004, reaching 42,000 a year. Among those married more than 30 years, the rates quadrupled between 1985 and 2004. Some analysts view the rise in divorce rates as a result of the “retired husband syndrome” in which a man devotes decades of his life to work only to discover he and his spouse have grown apart when he retires.²⁸⁵ No matter the specific causes, it is clear that societal expectations and norms are changing because divorce is much more accepted in society than it was several decades ago.²⁸⁶

Family Events, Rites of Passage

Weddings in Japan are traditionally conducted according to Shinto beliefs, although many of today’s weddings blend Shinto practices with Buddhist or Western traditions.^{287, 288} In the conventional Shinto wedding the bride wears a white kimono; the groom also wears a kimono. Ritual purification, prayers, and traditional dances are part of the ceremony.²⁸⁹



© Nina Yasmine
Traditional wedding at Meiji Jingu

²⁸⁴ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 132.

²⁸⁵ BBC News, “Japan Retired Divorce Rate Soars,” 22 February 2006, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4741018.stm>

²⁸⁶ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 132–133.

²⁸⁷ Suzanne Sonnier, *Shinto, Spirits, and Shrines: Religion in Japan* (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2008), 70.

²⁸⁸ Cherish Pratt, “The Shinto Wedding Ceremony: A Modern *Norito*,” in *Religions of Japan in Practice*, ed. George J. Tanabe, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 135–138.

²⁸⁹ Suzanne Sonnier, *Shinto, Spirits, and Shrines: Religion in Japan* (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2008), 70.

Exchange 52: Congratulations on your wedding!

Soldier:	Congratulations on your wedding!	gokek-kon omedetoo gozaaymaas
Local:	Thank you very much.	aareegaato gozaaymaas

Japanese funeral rites follow Buddhist religious traditions.²⁹⁰ The deceased is usually dressed in a traveler's kimono (with the right side crossed over the left, opposite the normal convention) symbolically reflecting the journey to the next life. Sometimes a small satchel or a bag of coins accompany the body to assist in the journey. The funeral is held in the family home rather than at a funeral hall or church. Loved ones make speeches, and a Buddhist priest will usually attend.²⁹¹ After the funeral, Japanese usually have their loved ones cremated and place the ashes in an urn. The urn may lie on the family altar for 49 days. After this period of mourning, the urn will be buried in a cemetery.²⁹²



© Brain Miller
Grave offerings

Exchange 53: I would like to give my condolences...

Soldier:	I would like to give my condolences to you and your family.	konotabee wa makoto nee go- shoo-shoh-sama des
Local:	Humbly accepted.	osore eereemaas

Other rites of passage focus on children and their growth into adulthood. After a baby is born, parents will often follow a Shinto practice known as *hatsumiyamairi*. This practice is observed by taking a newborn to a local shrine, 32 days after birth for a boy and 33 days for a girl. The spirit (*kami*) of that particular shrine is then said to protect the child. Children return to their local shrine for a festival known as *Shichigosan*. Boys return at ages 3 and 5 and girls at ages 3 and 7.^{293, 294} Childhood ends at age 20, and this coming of age is celebrated every year on the second

²⁹⁰ Noriko Kamachi, *Culture and Customs of Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 39–42.

²⁹¹ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 70.

²⁹² Japan Guide, “Funerals,” n.d., <http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2060.html>

²⁹³ Suzanne Sonnier, *Shinto, Spirits, and Shrines: Religion in Japan* (New York: Gale Cengage Learning, 2008), 70.

²⁹⁴ *Encyclopædia Britannica*, “Shichi-go-san,” n.d., <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/540261/Shichi-go-san>

Monday of January, an official holiday in Japan. *Seijin Shiki*, literally the “Coming of Age Day,” celebrates all who have recently turned 20 or will soon reach that age.^{295, 296}

Naming Conventions

Naming conventions, like many aspects of Japanese society, changed with the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Prior to the rebirth of the imperial government, a military shogunate (*bakufu*) ruled Japan. During the time of the Tokugawa Shogunate, surnames were typical only with warriors and nobles. After commoners were allowed to choose surnames, many used aspects of nature or agriculture. Popular surnames today relate to fields, rivers, forests, valleys, islands, beaches, villages, or bridges.²⁹⁷ Beyond common themes, all Japanese surnames are part of an official list of about 2,000 written characters approved by the Japanese government for the naming of children. Parents may only choose surnames from this list.²⁹⁸



© Tetsuro Yoshida
Newborn baby girl

Unlike in Western culture, a surname precedes a given name. Given names are important not only for their sound but their meaning. A well-balanced name is important in Japanese society. Fortune-tellers, in a practice called *seimei handan*, will analyze the balance of a name and may suggest the name be changed.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Guillaume Marcotte, “Seijin Shiki,” *Tokyo Times*, 24 January 2010, <http://www.tokyotimes.jp/post/en/13/Seijin+Shiki.html>

²⁹⁶ BBC Religions, “Seijin Shiki (Adults’ Day),” 16 September 2009, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/shinto/holydays/seijinshiki.shtml>

²⁹⁷ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 95.

²⁹⁸ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 95.

²⁹⁹ Daniel Sosnoski, ed., *Introduction to Japanese Culture* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996), 95.

Chapter 6: Assessment

1. The tradition to have a small, nuclear family dates to the founding of the first shogunate centuries ago.

False

Until the Meiji Restoration (1868), households were large and often included three generations under one roof. Japan's small families are a modern phenomenon.

2. Japanese housewives often handle all aspects of running a home, including the family budget.

True

A Japanese wife is responsible for raising the children and running the home, and often takes care of the family's financial responsibilities.

3. The values of being a good wife and wise mother are still important in Japanese society.

True

The concept of *ryosaikenbo*, that a woman should be a "good wife and wise mother," still permeates society. Women are expected to bear the primary burden of raising children.

4. Geishas are not common in modern Japanese society but remain an important cultural symbol.

True

Although Westerners often equate geishas with prostitutes, the reality is that conversational and traditional artistic skills are among the most desired traits in a geisha.

5. Today two-thirds of marriages in Japan are arranged.

False

Prior to World War II, two-thirds of marriages were arranged, but today the number is as low as 10%. "Love marriages," in which spouses choose each other, are much more common.

Final Assessment

1. The Japanese emperor retains significant legislative power in the government.
2. Although freedom of the press is a guaranteed right, the Japanese press tends to follow the government line.
3. Japan is a resource-scarce country and must meet most of its energy and raw material needs through imports.
4. The Japanese people are well educated and respect individuality.
5. Japan's population is ethnically diverse.
6. Shrines exist not only as large buildings but also as small areas inside homes.
7. *Obon* is the celebration of the Japanese New Year.
8. During festivals, small mobile shrines are carried through the streets.
9. The incense burner at a Buddhist temple is reserved for use by a priest or monk.
10. When approaching a Shinto shrine, visitors clap their hands to alert the gods to their presence.
11. Japanese society is highly educated in part because high school graduates are guaranteed college admission.
12. In a Japanese restaurant, asking to split a bill is a social taboo.
13. Although public transportation is readily available in the day, trains and buses largely shut down after midnight.
14. Japanese trains are famous for their comfort, punctuality, speed, and safety.
15. Street crime is common in Japan's cities and is often violent.
16. White flowers should be avoided in typical gift-giving situations.
17. An empty bowl signals that one is finished eating while a bowl with some rice left asks for more.

18. Though men wear Western-style clothes to work, women are expected to wear traditional kimonos to the office.
19. The emperor's birthday is the most important national holiday in Japan.
20. The tea ceremony is a time for introspection rather than social interaction.
21. Isolation is a major issue in rural areas when dealing with natural disasters.
22. As people continue to move into Japan's cities, excess funding is improving the country's rural schools.
23. Japan's rural towns and villages are marked by populations of elderly people.
24. Though farming is common in rural areas, the raising of livestock is virtually nonexistent in Japan.
25. The duties of mayors in Japan are similar to those of mayors in the United States.
26. Legally speaking, a man and woman are completely equal in a marriage.
27. In Japan, weddings typically follow Buddhist traditions, whereas funerals are conducted according to Shinto beliefs.
28. Parents avoid bringing their children to Shinto shrines until they are 3 years old.
29. Childhood in Japan, like the United States, ends at age 18.
30. Parents may only choose from government-approved written characters when naming their children.

Further Readings

Andreasen, Esben. *Popular Buddhism in Japan: Shin Buddhist Religion & Culture*. Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1998.

Carleton College. "Visualizing Japanese Theatre: The Art of Sight, Sound, and Heart." 7 January 2011. <http://apps.carleton.edu/events/japan/exhibition/>

Clavell, James. *Shogun*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1975.

De Mente, Boye Lafayette. *Japan's Cultural Code Words*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2004.

Hayashi, Chikio, and Yasumasa Kuroda. *Japanese Culture in Comparative Perspective*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997.

Kamachi, Noriko. *Culture and Customs of Japan*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999.

Martinez, D.P., ed. *The Worlds of Japanese Popular Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Reader, Ian. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991.

Sorensen, André. *The Making of Urban Japan: Cities and Planning from Edo to the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Sosnoski, Daniel, ed. *Introduction to Japanese Culture*. Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1996.

Tanabe, George J., ed. *Religions of Japan in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

Traphagan, John W. *The Practice of Concern: Ritual, Well-Being, and Aging in Rural Japan*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2004.

Varley, Paul. *Japanese Culture*, 4th ed. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000.