

East Asia in the World

An Introduction



FOUNDATIONS IN GLOBAL STUDIES SERIES

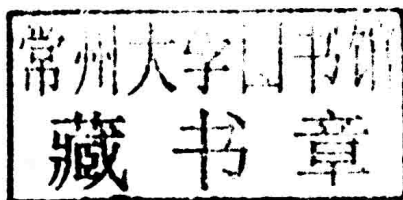
Edited by Anne Prescott

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East Asia in the World

From the *Foundations in Global Studies* series, this text offers students a fresh, comprehensive, multidisciplinary entry point to East Asia, with an emphasis on the globalizing processes the region is undergoing. After a brief introduction to the study of East Asia, the early chapters of the book survey the essentials of East Asian history and offer an overview of the region's languages, economic development, and global connections. Students are guided through the material with relevant maps, resource boxes, and text boxes that support further independent exploration of the topics at hand.

The second half of the book presents an interdisciplinary portrait of the region through a set of case studies that explore key aspects of the cultural, economic, and political life in specific countries, sometimes holding up a mirror to the region as a whole. Readers will come away from this book with an understanding of current issues that have particular relevance in East Asia as we know it today and of the larger globalizing forces shaping the region and beyond.

Anne Prescott is the director of the Five College Center for East Asian Studies in Massachusetts and a national director for the National Consortium for Teaching about Asia, a leading provider of professional development training on East Asia. Trained as an ethnomusicologist specializing in traditional Japanese music, she spent eight years in Japan. She has been an administrator at area studies centers since 2002.

Foundations in Global Studies

Series Editor: Valerie Tomaselli, MTM Publishing

The Regional Landscape

East Asia in the World: An Introduction

*Editor: Anne Prescott, Five College Center for East Asian Studies
at Smith College*

The Middle East in the World: An Introduction

Editor: Lucia Volk, San Francisco State University

South Asia in the World: An Introduction

Editor: Susan Snow Wadley, Syracuse University

About This Book

East Asia in the World: An Introduction—the third book in M.E. Sharpe’s *Foundations in Global Studies: The Regional Landscape* series—provides a fresh, systematic, and comprehensive overview of East Asia. Including coverage of China (including Taiwan), North Korea, South Korea, and Japan, the East Asia considered here is cogent and diverse at the same time; the vast areas under this formulation share patterns of history and culture, but also diverge in dramatic ways across the broad reach of its geography. For instance, these East Asian countries are not only tied together by their physical proximity, but also by two prominent cultural bonds that originated in China: the first being Confucianism and the second being the use of Chinese characters in their writing systems. These regions, often considered under a separate rubric in the traditional area studies approach, are considered critical here in understanding how “East Asia” developed across the centuries and how it is defined today. And while the focus is on the more typical “core” East Asian countries rather than those in Southeast Asia, the globalized complexion of East Asia is made clear in our broader reach.

The exploration of globalizing processes is indeed the focus of *East Asia in the World*, and the series as a whole. As we examine a host of global patterns that are reflected in and that shape the region—money flows, diasporic movements, hybridity in language, political movements affected by worldwide media and movement of ideas—the “in the World” part of the title gets a full hearing. Indeed, the variations in this wide region’s social, cultural, economic, and political life are explored within the context of the globalizing forces affecting *all* regions of the world.

In a simple strategy that all books in the series employ, this volume begins with an overview and foundational material (including chapters on history, language, and economic development), moves to a discussion of globalization, and then focuses the investigation more specifically through the use of case studies. The set of case studies exposes readers to various disciplinary lenses that bring the region to life through subjects of high interest and importance to today’s readers. Among others, these topics include the new car culture in China; the use of the radio as new media and technology in colonial Korea; the effect that Japan’s March 2011 Triple Disaster had on minorities; Confucianism in modern East Asia; and the growing effect of China’s one-child policy on the country’s urban daughters.

A deliberate attempt has been made to illustrate the connections between peoples and countries that make up East Asia, and to counter the contemporary media focus on turmoil in the region. The chapters in Part Two, on history and language, illustrate clearly, for instance, that the region is much more than the sum of its civil and regional conflicts.

In addition to her own contributions as author of the overview and fundamentals chapters, the editor, Anne Prescott, director of the Five College Center for East Asian Studies at Smith College, has assembled a team of specialists, primarily from the Five Colleges (Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst) to contribute case studies to the volume. The team represents the full range of disciplines brought to bear in the study of East Asia, including, among others, anthropology, communications and media, geography and the environment, geopolitics and international affairs, history, linguistics, and political economy.

Resource boxes, an important feature of the books in this series, are included to preserve currency and add utility. They offer links that point readers to excellent sources—mostly online—on the topics discussed. The links, which include connections to timely data, reports on recent events, official sites, local and country-based media, and visual material, establish a rich archive of additional material for readers to draw on. The URLs included are known to be current as of July 1, 2014, and in the case of expired URLs, enough information has been provided for the reader to locate the same, or similarly useful, resources.

As with all books about regions with writing systems different than the Roman alphabet, we needed to determine the best way to transliterate “foreign” words. Our decision was to follow specific systems, but not to be dogmatic in their application. Specifically, the spellings of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese words were standardized with the use of, respectively, the *hanyu pinyin* (usually referred to simply as Pinyin), Revised Romanization of Korean (RR), and revised Hepburn transliteration systems. However, when the spellings prescribed by these systems went against legitimate, more commonly accepted alternatives, we usually decided to use the more prevalent spelling. In particular, the RR system was developed relatively recently. We chose to use it, however, because it is the one officially endorsed by the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and it lends itself well to computer input as it does not rely on diacritical marks. However, because the RR system was developed in 1995 and adopted in 2000, most resources do not yet use this system. We have assisted the reader, where necessary, by providing what are perhaps more familiar spellings of words, particularly Korean place and personal names. For example, the city of Pyongyang is Pyeongyang and former President Roh Tae-woo’s name is No Tae-u in Revised Romanization.

Contents

<i>About This Book</i>	vii
Part One: Overview	1
1. Introducing East Asia <i>Anne Prescott</i>	3
2. East Asian Studies: History, Careers, and Resources <i>Anne Prescott</i>	25
Part Two: Fundamentals	35
3. Modern East Asia: A History <i>Jerry P. Dennerline</i>	37
4. East Asian Languages <i>Anne Prescott</i>	70
Part Three: The Global Context	83
5. East Asian Economies in a Globalizing World <i>Thomas Gottschang</i>	85
6. Globalization in East Asia <i>Anne Prescott</i>	102
7. Debunking the Myths <i>Anne Prescott</i>	112

Part Four: Case Studies	117
8. Introduction to the Case Studies <i>Anne Prescott</i>	119
9. From Flying Pigeons to Fords: China's New Car Culture <i>Beth E. Notar</i>	122
10. New Media and New Technology in Colonial Korea: Radio <i>Jina E. Kim</i>	140
11. Interpreting Minority Experiences of Japan's March 2011 Triple Disaster <i>Joshua Hotaka Roth and Mariko Sikama</i>	154
12. Society and Culture: Confucianism in East Asia Today <i>Jeffrey L. Richey</i>	174
13. The Korean Peninsula: Global Dimensions <i>Jacques Fuqua</i>	185
14. Reading "Kimigayo": The Japanese National Anthem in a Time of Postnational Transition <i>Junko Oba</i>	201
15. Globalization and Deindustrialization in China's (Former) Porcelain Capital <i>Maris Gillette</i>	219
16. Butō: The Birth and Maturation of a New Global Art Form <i>Bruce Baird</i>	243
17. China's One-Child Policy and the Empowerment of Urban Daughters <i>Vanessa L. Fong</i>	261
<i>About the Editor and Contributors</i>	279
<i>Index</i>	282

PART ONE

Overview

Introducing East Asia

ANNE PRESCOTT

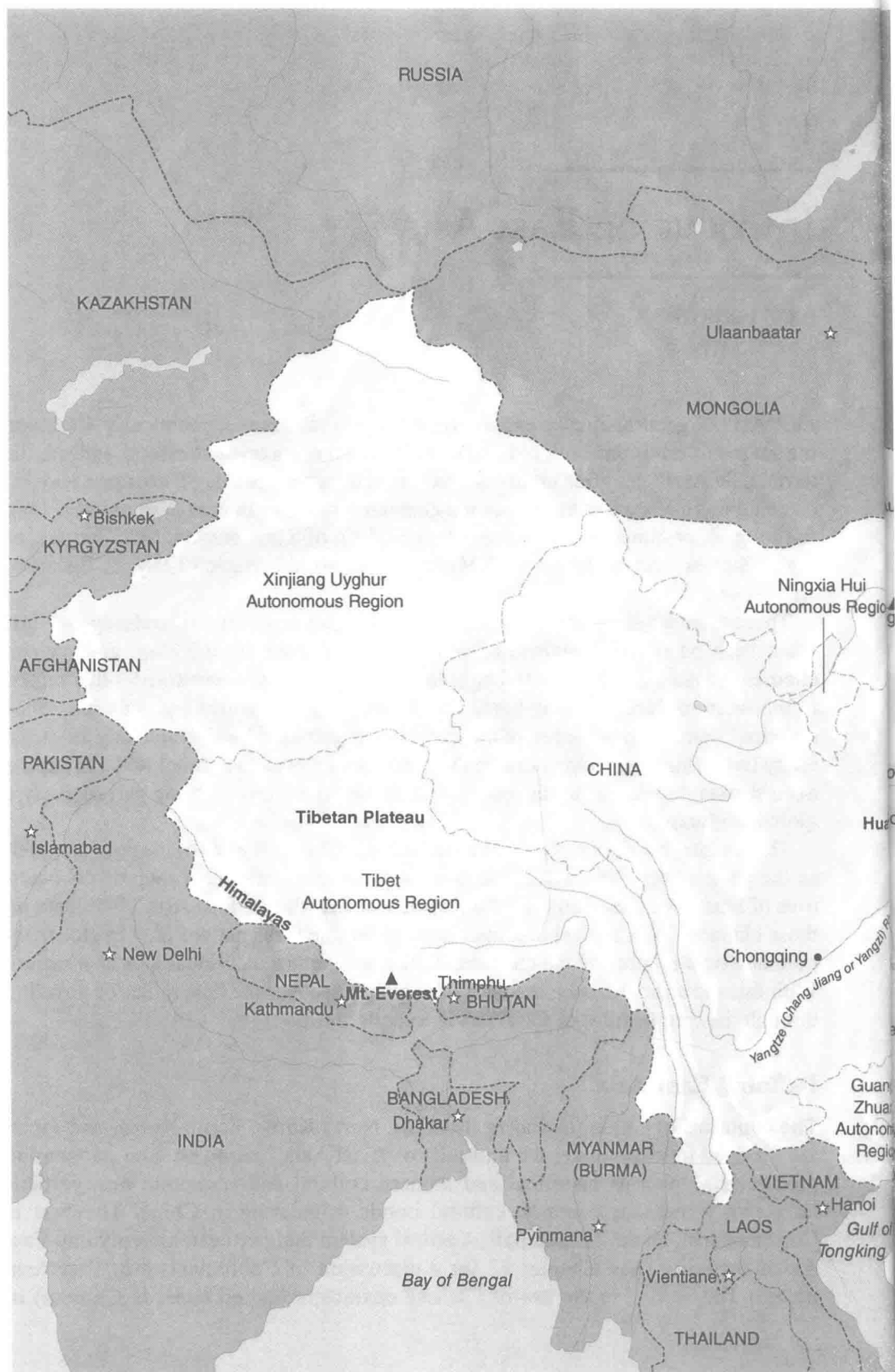
East Asia is geographically expansive, culturally diverse, economically vital, and the source of traditions both old and new. It is also often misunderstood. Indeed, the term “East Asia” conjures up many images: of Japanese cosplay (“costume play”—dressing up in costumes to represent a character, often from manga or anime), kung fu (*gongfu*), or kimchi (spicy Korean vegetables); of Kim Jong-un, Mao Zedong, or Ichiro Suzuki; and of the films of Miyazaki Hayao, the music of Psy, or the art of Ai Weiwei.

There is no single highway through the historical and cultural landscape of East Asia; each person approaches it from a different place on the map, and we can choose any number of roads to begin to learn about—and understand—this region in the western Pacific that is home to 20 percent of the world’s population. Once distanced from much of the rest of the world by geographical barriers and long journeys, today technology has helped bridge the gap and allows us to interact with the people of East Asia, leading us to discoveries about how they have become part of today’s global landscape.

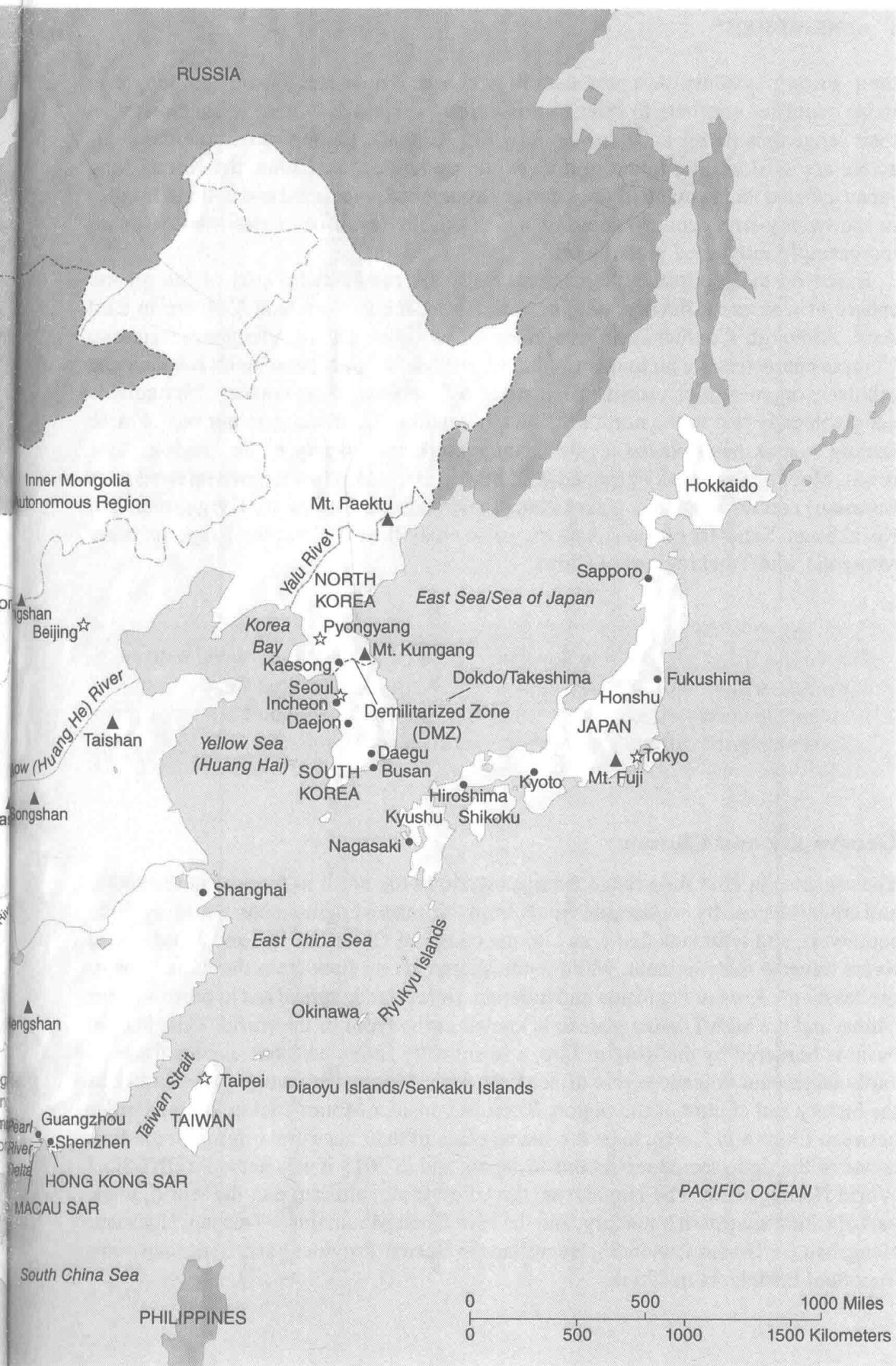
This chapter briefly considers some of defining characteristics of the region as well as the geographical, historical, and cultural traits that distinguish each of the countries of East Asia. (See Table 1.1 for a statistical snapshot of East Asia.) It focuses on those characteristics critical to understanding the role these nations play in globalization, and on a number of the challenges they face, either individually or as a region. With this introduction, each reader will begin to discover the best route for traveling through the complexities of East Asia in today’s world.

Defining East Asia

The countries of China (including Taiwan), North Korea, South Korea, and Japan are grouped together under the umbrella of “East Asia,” based on their geographic proximity as well as historical and modern cultural and economic ties, particularly two prominent common cultural bonds originating in China. The first is Confucianism, an ethical and philosophical system that permeates deeply into East Asian societies. (See Chapter 12 for a discussion of Confucianism in East Asia today.) The second is the use of Chinese characters (called *hanzi* in Chinese) in



East Asia: China (including Taiwan), Japan, North Korea and South Korea, its neighbors, and the major geographical features and cities cited in this introduction.



their writing systems. Adopted centuries ago in Korea and Japan, the people in those countries continue to refer to this writing system as “Chinese characters” in their languages (*kanji* in Japanese, *hanja* in Korean). Examples of how the characters are used will be found in the chapter on languages. China, the Koreas, and Japan are also facing many of the same environmental, economic and cultural hurdles in the twenty-first century, some of which are the result of or exacerbated by an increasingly integrated global world.

Based on these criteria, Vietnam may also be considered a part of the greater sphere of Chinese influence, and, as such, some scholars include Vietnam in East Asia. Although Confucianism continues to be important in Vietnamese culture, Chinese characters are no longer used in its written language, and many scholars and scholarly organizations classify Vietnam as a Southeast Asian country. Mongolia is geographically just to the north of China, but neither Confucianism nor the Chinese writing system have played a role in the culture and society of that region. As a result, Mongolia is usually grouped with other Inner Asian (sometimes referred to as Eurasian) countries such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Scholars of Inner Asia may also study the people in the Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Tibet regions of China.

The Sinor Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies (<http://www.indiana.edu/~srias/>) and the Inner Asian & Uralic National Resource Center (<http://www.indiana.edu/~iaunrc/>), both at Indiana University, are good resources for understanding the differences between East Asia and Inner Asia.

Geography and Climate

The climates in East Asia range from subarctic in the north to tropical in the south, and are influenced by continental winds from the northwest, monsoon winds from the southwest, and typhoons that crawl up the coasts of China, Korea, and Japan. Long rivers traverse the continent, while much shorter rivers flow from the mountains to the sea on the Korean Peninsula and in Japan. Desert lands spread out in northwestern China, and the high Tibetan plateau is known as the “roof of the world.” The Pacific basin is bordered by the Ring of Fire, a seismically active belt that spawns frequent earthquakes and volcanoes that affect East Asia. Mountains feature prominently in the history and culture of the region. Koreans consider Mount Paektu, on the border between China and Korea, to be the sacred place of their ancestral origin. Mount Fuji is one of the three sacred mountains in Japan, and in 2013 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Himalayas, the tallest mountain range in the world, mark part of China’s western boundary, and the Five Great Mountains—Taishan, Huashan, Hengshan (in Hunan Province), Hengshan (in Shanxi Province) and Songshan—are important landmarks in China.

Table 1.1

A Statistical Snapshot of East Asian Countries

	Area (km ²)	Arable land	Urbanization, 2011	Population, July 2014 est.	Cell phones	Life expectancy, 2014 est. (male and female)	Literacy
China (PRC)	9,596,961	11.62%	50.6%	1.36 billion	1.1 billion (2012)	m: 73.09 f: 77.43	95.1% (2010 est.)
Taiwan (ROC)	35,980	24.00%	NA	23.36 million	29.5 million (2012)	m: 76.72 f: 83.20	96.1% (2003)
Hong Kong	1,104	5.05%	100.0%	7.11 million	16.4 million (2012)	m: 80.18 f: 85.71	93.5% (2002)
Macau	28.2	0.00%	100.0%	607,500	1.6 million (2012)	m: 81.52 f: 87.59	95.6% (2011 est.)
Japan	377,915	11.26%	91.3%	127.10 million	138.4 million (2011)	m: 81.13 f: 87.99	99.0% (2002)
South Korea (ROK)	99,720	14.93%	83.2%	49.04 million	53.6 million (2012)	m: 76.67 f: 83.13	97.9% (2002)
North Korea (DPRK)	120,538	19.08%	60.3%	24.85 million	1.7 million (2012)	m: 65.96 f: 73.86	100% (2008 est.)

Source: Compiled from the CIA *World Factbook*, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_eas.html, accessed May 16, 2014.

China

Historically, “China” referred to a collection of kingdoms and empires, commonly called dynasties. The area under dynastic rule changed over time as lands were conquered or lost in wars. Through much of history, the Chinese believed in the Mandate of Heaven, the idea that heaven gives the emperor (usually a male) the right to rule based on his ability to govern rather than his social status. Using this reasoning, even a commoner or a foreigner could be accepted as the ruler. Poverty and disaster were seen as signs from heaven that the ruling emperor was unjust and should be replaced.

Chinese Dynasties and Key Events

- Xia, ca. 2100–1600 BCE.
- Shang, ca. 1600–1050 BCE. Oldest written history dates from this dynasty.
- Zhou, ca. 1046–256 BCE. Longest-lasting dynasty in Chinese history.
- Qin, 221–206 BCE. Capital at Chang’an (Xi’an); created a unified state by imposing a centralized government; Qin emperor died in 210 and was buried with Terracotta Warriors.
- Han, 206 BCE–220 CE. Confucianism officially established as the basis for the Chinese state; the name of the dominant ethnic group in China, the Han, comes from the name of this dynasty, as does the name of the Chinese writing system, *hanzi* (literally “Chinese writing”). Silk Road began.
- Six Dynasties Period, 220–589 CE. Period of instability following the fall of the Han; Buddhism introduced to China.
- Sui, 581–618 CE. Reunification of China.
- Tang, 618–906 CE. Golden age of Chinese civilization. Chang’an (presently Xi’an) was the capital; at the eastern end of the Silk Road, it was the most populous city in the world at that time. The Tang Dynasty had great cultural influence on Korea, Japan, and Vietnam.
- Five Dynasties Period, 907–960 CE.
- Song, 960–1279 CE. Great economic and social changes occurred during this period.
- Yuan, 1279–1368 CE. Established by the Mongols under Kublai Khan; the Mongols reigned from Beijing over most of what we know as China today.
- Ming, 1368–1644 CE. Han reestablished rule.
- Qing, 1644–1912 CE. Manchus reigned from Beijing.

Source: Asia for Educators website, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/china_timeline.htm.