Section 1: Defining Asia

1.1 Asia – A Historian’s Perspective

How useful is Asia as a category?

- Historians, by using Asia as a category, have frequently asked why Asia was different to Europe
- For example, why did Asia not progress to Capitalism? Was Asia more traditional/static?
- Is Asia even useful as a category for analysing anything? – very diverse
- Even Asian regions are diverse; compare China to Japan, Myanmar to Indonesia
- China has 92 ethnic groups
- We need to be cautious in using Asia as a scholarly category of analysis. Asia encompasses tremendous diversity. The lenses through which we examine Asia can also shape our findings.

Where did the term ‘Asia’ come from?

- Asia was originally a name by which Phoenicians distinguished the lands to their east (Acu- the land of the rising sun) from those to their west (Ereb- the land of the setting sun)
- ‘Orient’ derives from oriri ‘to rise’, especially of the sun
- In the 5th century BC, the Greeks defined Asia as those territories outside of Europe – representing the unknown
- Hecataeus divided the world into 3 major regions: Europe and Asia and Libya (which were divided by the Nile river).
- By Roman times ‘the Orient’ meant countries east of the Mediterranean sea: Asia, or the ‘east’, was implicitly defined as East of Europe
- By the 16th century the idea of Asia as a continent became widely accepted in Europe
- “The idea of Asia or the Orient is an artifact of the European imagination.” (Evans, 1993), and it originated not in Asia, but in Europe. It was originally defined in opposition to Europe.

How did western views of Asia change?

- Before the colonial era, Asia was often viewed with a mixture of fear and admiration in Europe – e.g. Marco Polo, Crusades, threat of the Ottoman Empire
- During the colonial period, Europe came to view Asia through general stereotypes concerning the supposed typical ways of thinking of "Orientals", such as, the "Inscrutable", "Oriental Mind", often linked with an idea of the "Mystical East" or a supposed preoccupation with spiritual values
- "Oriental Despotism" was reckoned to be Asia’s natural form of political rule, along with social and economic stagnation
- The term ‘Oriental’ came to have negative connotations of underdevelopment – ‘oriental diseases’
- European superiority led to the adoption of the idea of European racial supremacy over Asian races, adopting ideas from evolution theory to form Social Darwinism, which was used to justify colonialism
- Images of Exoticism and the recurring image of the harem became common in European art, though often western artists depicting the harem had not actually visited them
- Similar fixation on women occurred in regard to foot binding in China and the perceived submissiveness of Japanese women to their husbands
The West became a benchmark for everything else, while Asia was defined as everything the West was not or the “Other”, and “Asian values” were an inversion of the west’s claimed central values of democracy, scientific rationality, economic and social dynamism, progress, etc. Asia was defined as sexually immoral, backward, feminine, etc.

What is Orientalism?
- Said: Arising in the late 18th century, Orientalism [was] the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient by authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short Orientalism is a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.
- Said argued that Orientalism formed a basis for stereotypical and biased cultural definitions of Asian culture and values.
- Orientalism originally meant a system of techniques for understanding the Orient, and an Orientalist was an 18th or 19th century scholar who studied Asian languages, culture, etc.
- Scholarship on Asia played a role in dominating Asia; for example, the Dutch studied Indonesian culture and language in attempt to better placate and control the local population.
- Criticisms of Said included that he generalised based on French and European attitudes towards the Middle East.
- It is also said that Said himself stereotyped the west in his analysis, and ignored the extent to which the west actually admired Asia, and was open to Asian influences.
- Edward Said made an important contribution to analyses of Asia by unpacking how a system of ideas or knowledge contributed to the domination of Asia. His ideas are not, however, unproblematic and to a certain extent reinforce the unhelpful binary of East versus West.

1.2 In the Space of Asia

Where is Asia?
- Asia is more of an idea than anything else.
- For example, one cannot say much about the forests of Siberia that is also true of India.
- The question ‘where is Asia?’ demands decisions of inclusion and exclusion and perceptions of sameness and difference, of proximity and distance, of advantage and disadvantage.
- ‘Where is Asia’ is NOT a neutral question: it should prompt us to think about who is doing the asking or answering, why are they asking, what are the social, economic and political ramifications.
- Conclusion: A territory is both a physical as well as a conceptual space.

What are imaginative geographies?
- The concept of an ‘imaginative geography’ comes from Edward Said.
- Imaginative geographies are “Representations of place, space and landscape that structure people’s understandings of the world and in turn help to shape their actions.”
- People may never have seen or been to a place, but thanks to ‘imaginative geographies’ they have a very firm idea about what these places are like.
- Imaginative geographies are not just ‘made up’ or fleeting, but are long lasting and embodied in material goods like maps, paintings, etc.
- The imaginative geographical ideas and the objects in which they are embodied help to consolidate and disseminate ideas about the world which effect economic, political and social actions.

What are the tropics and why do they matter?
- The Tropics refers to a European imaginative geography which can be traced back to the mid-19C.
- Defined as the area between the Tropics (latitudes 23.5 degrees north and south).
The idea of ‘the tropics’ parallels the idea of ‘the Orient’, as a European ‘other’, with the differences between different parts of ‘the tropics’ were largely ignored.

The tropics were an Edenic place of ‘environment luxuriance’ that hugely excited European botanists, explorers, naturalists.

Examples of this can be found in A. R. Wallace’s 1869 book The Malay Archipelago, and in the 1947 French work ‘The Tropical World’.

How did environmental determinism affect European views of the tropics?

In the 19th century, it became fashionable to view the differences between Europe and Asia as being the result of biologically determined racial variations, which gave rise to different cultural habits and practices.

The idea of environmental determinism was that geographic and environmental factors predetermined the cultural ethnic identities of the animals and humans of the region.

Environmental characteristics were transposed onto humans: ‘tropical’ nature and people were inferior, primitive, uncivilized, too passionate, effeminate, and inconstant.

Scholars like Ellsworth Huntington argued that temperate climatic and environmental conditions allowed people to prosper while ‘torrid’ or tropical environments retarded development.

This further led to the idea that changing undesirable geographies (e.g. draining swamps) could elicit desirable cultural changes in tropical peoples, and hence bring about development.

1.3 Territory, Power and Resources

How does resource development relate to imaginative geographies?

Resource development was seen as aiding economic development and hence independence of new decolonized nations in Asia.

While national leaders called for economic development, the USA and USSR legitimized their role in these areas of the world in the guise of economic aid and development.

New imaginative geography of ‘the developing world’.

Governments and academic disciplines now held the view that progress as ‘development’ possible, desirable and necessary.

How have imaginative geographies shaped the approach to forests?

During the colonial and post-colonial periods, forests were seen primarily as resources for, or barriers to, economic development.

During the decolonisation period, many isolated tribes and peoples were incorporated into new states dominated by other ethnic groups; like the Hmong and the Karen.

There was thus a new imaginative geography of the highlands as resource-rich spaces peopled by ‘backward’ minorities has many of the characteristics of earlier colonial views.

The ideas of ‘the highlands’ as environmentally luxuriant as well as dangerous or licentious places also echo earlier European views of the tropics.

There are also similar ideas that logging forests will help to develop or ‘evolve’ the local peoples.

The opposite imaginative geography to that of logging and development was often the idea of the ‘wilderness’ which must be preserved untouched by humans – local peoples were again excluded.

1.4 Australian Views of Asia

How did Australians view Asia in the early Colonial period?

Long tension in Australian society between history and our British heritage, and our geography, namely our proximity to Asia.
In the early years of Australian history, racist views of Asia predominated, backed up by the European control of so much of the world. Looking north in the colonial period Australians saw European powers occupying most of modern day Southeast Asia; hence Australia was seen as an outpost of Britain in a hostile part of the world. The gold rushes of the 1850s led to a large influx of Asians, who made up one-quarter of the miners. This led to a period of growing anti-Chinese sentiment in Australia, as Asians were seen as the source of social problems like immorality, drugs, bribery, etc. At the same time, the Asians were seen as a threat because of other stereotypes of being hardworking, frugal, disciplined, etc.

**How did fears of invasion effect views of Asia in the late 19th century?**
- Beginning in the 1880s, an increasing media narrative about an ‘invasion’ developed
- Related to growing anxiety about the decline of the British empire
- There was also a fear of interbreeding and racial contamination
- The dawn of Australia as a nation coincided with the ‘rise’ of ‘the East’; that is the growth in nationalism and independence movements in colonial South-East Asia
- This led to an increasing feeling of insecurity in Australia, and hence the white Australia policy
- Australia’s vast size, its relatively small population and declining birth rate led to a ‘populate or perish mentality’
- Asia and in particular China were seen as a tide of humanity waiting to ‘burst’ on Australia
- The bushman was upheld as a sought of ideal hero who had the skills to defend Australia that the city dwellers lacked – note Ned Kelly and the Man from Snowy River
- Australian identity was defined against who was not Australian, notably aboriginals and Asians
- The Japanese, on the other hand, were seen as the ideal foreigners, because they were more developed and avoided western colonialism; enthusiasm for Japanese crafts
- Photos of white women and Asian men sparked outrage

**How did WWII and the Cold War effect Australian views of Asia?**
- In 1941, the Department of Information began a strong hate campaign against the Japanese
- The Japanese were described as barbarians, animal like
- Anti-Japanese sentiment reached a peak in 1942 after the bombing of Pearl Harbour
- Perceptions of Asia changed over time; the Chinese were feared during the Gold rush, became more favoured in WWII, and then were feared again after they became Communist
- During the Cold War the ‘Red Peril’ of Asia replaced the ‘Yellow Peril’ of Asia

**What was the White Australia Policy and how did it end?**
- The Immigration Restriction Act was passed in 1901 to institute an English language test for potential migrants – designed to keep out Asians
- Post WW2, increased immigration in response to fears populate or perish; southern Europeans were allowed in for the first time
- However, there was a strong emphasis on immigrants assimilating into the Australian society
- The Vietnam War encouraged Australians to emphasise more with the suffering of Vietnamese
- Under Whitlam in 1973, the white Australian policy was officially rescinded

**How have Australian views of Asia developed since the 1970s?**
- Multiculturalism - a policy which recognised and celebrated cultural diversity
- A backlash against multiculturalism began in the late 1970s, in response to the arrivals of Vietnamese boat people
Geoffrey Blainey argued that Australia has gone too far in reversing the white Australia policy, and that Australian values and the way of life were under threat, and that Asians from anti-democratic countries would bring these values with them.

Fears arose about Asians taking Australian jobs and so on.

Beginning around the 1980s, there were great fears about the Japanese investments in Australia, and buying up of Australian assets.

Prime Minister Paul Keating in the early 1990s argued for closer relations to Asia, that that was where our destiny lay.

Pauline Hanson proposed halting immigration, especially from Asia, and the abolition of multiculturalism.

‘I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians. Between 1984 and 1995, 40% of all migrants coming into this country were of Asian origin. They have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate’. (Pauline Hanson, maiden speech to Parliament, 1996)

In 1995-2002 there was a push in Australian schools to learn Asian language schools.

The Tanpa incident of 2001 sparked greater fears about Muslim migrants.

This fear of Islam increased after the attacks of September 11 and the Bali bombings.

Rudd government’s Asia literacy goal: ‘to make Australia the most Asia literate country in the collective West’ - driven by economic needs, and future realities.

1.5 Cultures of Movement

Who are Filipino migrant workers?

- A Philippines Government program of overseas contract work began in 1972, to take advantage of the Middle Eastern oil boom of the 1970s
- The success of this program led to the establishment of the Philippine Overseas Employment
- These workers took advantage of the 1980s boom in Asia, work in Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong
- Hong Kong became an important destination for female OCWs, owing to a shortage of domestic workers
- Between 1975 and 1991, the number of Philippines working as ‘domestics’ in HK jumped from 1,000 to 66,000, and rose to 140,000 by 1998, forming the largest non-Chinese community in HK

How did this affect the Philippines?

- Remittances from Pilipino foreign workers totalled about $12 billion in 2003-2004; this is larger than total foreign investment in Philippines
- In 1982, the Philippines government attempted to force 50% of foreign remittances to pass through Philippines banks – the government wanted to tap this revenue source
- The measure was opposed by OCW groups (especially in Hong Kong) and eventually overturned
- OCW money is being spent on material goods, cars, housing, but also being invested in new crops and land, e.g. green bean crops replacing wet-rice cultivation
- Bean crops are ‘expressions of migrant work’ – both the result of remittances, and perhaps the source of the capital needed to send another worker overseas

How did this affect Hong Kong?

- ‘Little Manila’ has developed in Hong Kong, where 100,000 Filipino women gather in Central HK on Sundays to talk, eat, shop, and contact family and friends back home
- This is an example of how flows of people can create new places or types of spaces
Some Hong Kong citizens argued that the Filipino’s should be prevented from meeting in this manner, and have complained of the ‘stench’ of Filipino women cooking native dishes.

Dozens of NGOs and workers unions have taken up issues like: illegal recruitment, exploitation by placement agencies, minimum wage issues, physical and psychological abuse.

It is inadequate to only think about migration vis-à-vis bounded entities such as nation-states, instead see multiple effects and experiences, economic and non-economic.

Section 2: Asian Belief Systems

2.1 Hinduism

How did Hinduism originate?

- The earliest Hindu writings are the *Vedas*. The earlier parts of these (2000-1000 BC) are largely of a clearly religious nature: hymns, specification of rites, etc.
- The most recent parts of these, the *Upanishads* (around 800-400 BC), provided the more systematic (though still poetic) foundations of the Hindu worldview.
- After the *Vedas* (around 400 BC), there came a number of epic poems, such as the *Mahabrata*, which provided explanations and discussions of the view.
- These writings laid the foundations for Hinduism, out of which developed six orthodox Hindu schools of thought by around 200 BC.
- There were a number of reactions against orthodox Hinduism, including Jainism and Buddhism.

What is Brahman?

- According to Hinduism, there is something which creates (originally) and sustains (from moment to moment) the cosmos; in Sanskrit it is referred to as *Brahman*.
- Brahman is outside of space and time, and often described as ineffable. It inheres in all matter.
- Brahman is in some sense ‘God’, but not in the Christian sense. It does not have mental states (goals, desires, etc), nor does it intentionally act in the world. Brahman is not a person in this sense.
- By contrast, Hinduism has a pantheon of personal (but not necessarily human) gods, many of whom are inherited from the early Vedic times. These most definitely are animate.
- Each of these three gods has a distinctive role. It was thought that the cosmos goes through cycles. Brahma is the creator of the cosmos at each epoch, Vishnu is its sustainer, and Shiva is its destroyer.
- However, these gods are really just ways of anthropomorphising Brahman—that is, treating it as a person for poetic, pedagogical, ritualistic, etc, reasons.
- Strictly speaking, then, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are not three separate gods at all, but simply personify three distinct phases/aspects of Brahman.

What is Atman?

- Every person has (an?) Atman. It is their self, individual essence, their true being.
- In some ways, Atman is like an individual soul in orthodox Christianity.
- However, it is importantly different, as in Christianity the soul is often identified with consciousness, while Atman works below the level of normal consciousness.
- Perhaps the most important doctrine of Hinduism is ‘Atman is Brahman’: the two are one.
- How, exactly, to understand this identity is a sensitive question. Sometimes, it is said that Atman and Brahman have the same nature, as all lots of water have the same nature; sometimes it is said that they are literally identical.
• However one understands the identity, it follows that Atman, like Brahman, is eternal, impersonal, and perhaps ungraspable
• For unenlightened people (most of us), the unity of Atman and Brahman is not realised—or at least, not fully understood. The full realisation requires enlightenment, or moksha
• Upon achieving moksha, a person (or their Atman) becomes fully one with Brahman

What is Samsara?
• According to Hinduism, life is cyclic just like the cosmos: people are born, live, die, and are then reincarnated, either as a person (of the same or different class) or even as an animal
• This process is called samsara, the cycle of rebirth. It continues until one achieves moksha
• Samsara is held to be an undesirable state to be in. There is much suffering and pain, and although there are some pleasures, they are short-lived, and in turn give rise to more suffering upon ending
• The bliss of moksha is therefore highly desirable

What is Karma?
• The Hindu and Buddhist philosophy according to which the quality of people’s current and future lives is determined by their behaviour in this and in previous lives
• Actions which one performs may be good or bad, and as such they have, good or bad consequences for the actor, which must transpire eventually
• This is tendency for a consequence to be determined by past actions is known as karma, and it is this that drives the wheel of samsara.
• Karma does not arise because of the action of some god whose job it is to make sure that justice is eventually done. Rather, Karma is conceived as a ‘law of nature’ – the cosmos just works that way
• The result of good karma is generally good for the person. Thus, someone carrying good karma may be reborn into a better class of life, while someone with bad karma may be reborn as an animal

What is Dharma?
• What counts as a good act? Roughly, adherence to the appropriate ethical code, or dharma.
• There are, in traditional Hindu society, four classes or castes of people: the Brahmins (priestly caste), Kshatriyas (warrior or noble cast), Vaisyas (artisan or craftsman caste), and Sudras (roughly everyone else) – these are listed in order of descending order of status
• Traditionally, the caste system was maintained rigidly. Caste was hereditary, and members of different castes were not allowed to eat with each other – let alone marry each other.
• There are certain ethical virtues that are class-independent: fortitude, patience, self-control, not stealing, purity, control of the senses, insight, wisdom, truth, and avoidance of anger
• However, each caste also has its own caste-specific dharma, e.g. Brahmin have to perform religious rites, Kshatriyas have to fight or rule
• These dharmas can even conflict with the general ethical virtues – for example, soldiers must kill (in the appropriate circumstances) since they are soldiers

What is Moksha?
• To break out of the wheel of samsara, and so realise the full union of Atman and Brahman, one must come to know (understand) how the cosmos works, know about Atman, Brahman, etc.
• The knowing is not merely book-learning. To obtain full knowledge one must know the situation “at first hand”, through experiencing things. This is achieved by various meditative and yogic practices.
• Note that moksha can be achieved when one is alive. Once a person has achieved moksha, however, they will not be reborn; their Atman simply remains in union with Brahman.
• Note, also, that one does not achieve moksha by being good. Good karma locks you into samsara just as much as bad karma. What good karma can do is to give you the kind of life (e.g., as a Brahmin), which makes it easier to do all the kinds of things necessary to attain moksha.
• Thus, the relationship between being good and achieving moksha is quite different from the relationship between being good, dieing, and going to heaven, in Christianity

2.2 Buddhism
• Buddhism rejects the existence of both Atman and Brahman (it is therefore an atheist view). It retains, however, its own versions of the doctrines of samsara, rebirth, karma and moksha.
• For the first few hundred years, Buddhism developed in early forms, of which only Theravada (sometimes called Hinayana) still exists
• Around the turn of the CE, however, much more sophisticated forms developed called Mahayana, the Greater Vehicle. In India, Mahayana had two distinctive versions: Madhyamaka and Yogacara
• The Vajrayana or ‘Diamond Vehicle’ school of Buddhism (also referred to as Mantrayana, Tantrayana, or Tantric Buddhism), is widely practiced in Tibet, Mongolia, the Himalayas and China

What are the Four Noble Truths?
• 1. All life in cyclic existence is suffering (duhkha)
• 2. There is a cause of this suffering, namely, craving (trishna), caused by ignorance
• 3. There is a release from suffering (nirvana)
• 4. The path of release is the Noble Eightfold Path
• The first noble truth tells us that samsara is suffering. By suffering, Buddha certainly meant pain, both physical and mental, but suffering is wider than this.
• In fact, it might be more appropriate to translate duhkha as ‘unsatisfactoriness’ or ‘unhappiness’.
• Thus, the view is to the effect that everything that happens in life is unhappy in some ways. Even those things that cause happiness come to an end, and so bring unhappiness.
• The cause of the duhkha is craving. Again, trishna is perhaps better translated as ‘clinging’ or ‘attachment’. We suffer because we desire things, and so cling on to them.
• The root of desire is ignorance, and specifically ignorance about the nature of things
• Everything, and so everything one desires, is transient, impermanent. Whatever one desires or is attached to, that thing will therefore pass, causing suffering.
• Another important aspect of the ignorance is a false belief about the self. Perhaps the greatest attachment each of us has is to themselves. But there is no self (no Atman).
• If the cause of duhkha is clinging, then removing the attachment will remove the duhkha. The third Noble truth assures us that this is possible, as after all, the Buddha himself had achieved it.
• One can be released from samsara by attaining Nirvana, or a state in which there is no suffering
• Nirvana has been described as freedom from ignorance, selfishness, and suffering, and as the attainment of wisdom and compassion

What is the Noble Eightfold Path?
• The final Noble Truth tells us that the way to achieve non-attachment is the Eightfold Path
• The Eightfold Path comprises the following steps (which should be pursued simultaneously, not sequentially):
The first two points concern wisdom. One should get rid of ignorance, and especially the view that there is anything permanent in the world – most importantly, the self. One should also form the intention to free oneself of attachments.

The next three points concern action. One should avoid lying and hurtful speech, hurting, harming and deceiving others, and not earn one’s living in a way that requires one to do these things.

Not only are these incompatible with non-attachment, these are sources of particularly bad karma, as for Hinduism.

The last three points concern the correct mental attitude. One needs not just the intention to carry out all the appropriate things, but the effort to do so as well.

Right mindfulness and concentration require is an awareness of the states and actions of one’s body and mind; one has no hope of controlling these things if one is not fully aware of them.

These factors are engaged in the meditative practices of Buddhism, an important function of which is quieting the mind. This is itself a way of getting rid of emotions and attachment, but is also a way of allowing oneself to see the nature of reality from “immediate experience”.

What is the Buddhist conception of the ‘self’?

According to the Buddhist view, a person is just a collection of mental and physical parts (skandas): bodily parts, emotions, sensations, thoughts, and consciousness. These arise at certain times (when the conditions are appropriate), change, interact with each other and the rest of the world, and then finally come apart and cease to exist.

There is no self, nothing which remains constant during this time.

Of course, we can give this changing set of parts a name, say ‘Graham Priest’. But this is a matter of convention, answering to no reality. Graham Priest has, then, a merely conventional existence.

In the Buddhist view, most objects are mere collections of parts in this way.

What does Mahayana Buddhism say about emptiness?

Mahayana marked a major change in the ethical side of Buddhism.

In the earlier forms of Buddhism, the ideal for which to strive was the Arhat, the person who, by following the Noble Eightfold Path, aimed to achieve nirvana.

In Mahayana, this is replaced by the notion of the Bodhisattva, which is one who follows the Noble Path, but has also sworn to help all others achieve enlightenment.

Even if the Bodhisattva attains enlightenment, and so becomes a Buddha, they will voluntarily not enter ultimate nirvana, until all have achieved enlightenment.

Mahayana also developed the notion of emptiness (sunyata), which refers to the fact that everything has only a conventional existence, and that fundamentally everything is ‘empty’.

What does Yogacara Buddhism say about consciousness?

According to Yogacara, there are three levels of consciousness.

The first level is discursive consciousness, which is the consciousness of everyday thought. It involves a relationship between a subject (the thinker), and an object (what the thinker is conscious of). It is intentional, or a consciousness of particular objects.

The third kind of consciousness, and the “deepest”, is store consciousness, which is below ordinary consciousness, not unlike the unconscious in contemporary Western thought.

It is called the store consciousness because it stores the seeds of experience, which may then manifest themselves in future conscious thought.

Store consciousness is not intentional; it is not consciousness of any particular object. Indeed, it is beyond all dualities – a simple “suchness”.

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Store consciousness is not intentional; it is not consciousness of any particular object. Indeed, it is beyond all dualities – a simple “suchness”.
What does Yogacara Buddhism say about reality?

• Suppose that we are aware of an object, say we see a tree or a person, which occurs at the first level of consciousness. In this way, we perceive things how things are conventionally.
• But this is not how things are ultimately. Conventional reality is a “conceptual construction”, not the way that things are in themselves.
• The objects of intentional consciousness (conventional reality) are therefore unreal, like the objects of a dream. They appear real enough, but actually correspond to nothing in ultimate reality.
• This is what it means to say that things are empty in Yogacara: they are mind-dependent.
• It is impossible to say what ultimate reality is like, or to conceptualise it. Ultimate reality transcends all distinctions and all dualities.
• One of the most important dualities is the duality between subject and object, as it appears in intentional forms of consciousness. This distinction is ultimately just as unreal as all others.

What is Madhyamaka Buddhism?

• The understanding of emptiness is somewhat different in Madhyamaka (Middle Way).
• A person has conventional existence, which means they exist only in as much as they relate to other things, in particular to their parts. The person, has no self-existence (svabhava).
• This is what it means to be empty in Madhyamaka: empty of self-existence. And all things are empty in this way: they exist only in relation to other things.
• For the Madhyamaka, the Yogacara analysis was not thoroughgoing enough. Objects of the first level of consciousness exist only in relation to our concepts, and so are empty.
• But, the Madhyaka argued, the Yogacara take the most fundamental level of consciousness, the storehouse consciousness, to have self-existence: its existence does not depend on anything else.
• The Madhyaka argue that if everything is empty is also must have no self-being. Even “suchness” itself is empty (this is the doctrine of the emptiness of emptiness.)
• Ultimate reality, then, exists only in relation to other things – and in particular to conventional reality. But this means that ultimate reality is itself only conventionally real. There is no ultimate difference between the ultimate and the conventional.
• This is a view that comes close to paradox, and it has startling consequences: from an ultimate perspective, samsara and nirvana are the same!

2.3 Confucianism

What were the important schools and texts of Chinese philosophy?

• Early Chinese philosophy centres around the “Five Classics”, which are works of poetry, history, and other things written between around 1000BC and 700BC.
• Metaphysically, the most important of these is the I Ching (the Book of Changes), which is a book of divination. It also contains much of the Chinese metaphysics, such as the notions of yin and yang.
• The most important Chinese philosopher is Confucius (c. 6c BCE), whose thought exerted an influence for some two and a half thousand years. A major concern of his was how to live and how the state should be governed.
• The tradition was further developed by later Confucians, such as Mencius and Hsun Tzu who, famously, disagreed over whether people were fundamentally good or bad.
• Taoism arose about the same time as Confucianism. Its basic ideas are expressed in the Tao Te Ching, attributed to a sage called Lao Tzu, who may well be entirely mythological.
• The Taoists were much more anarchic politically than the Confucians, and there were many debates between them.
Another important school is the Legalism of Han Fei Tzu, who argued that people are inherently bad, and need to be controlled by a strong government and legal system.

Buddhist writings entered China from India, probably via central Asia around the first century AD, while distinctively Chinese schools of Buddhism emerged in the 6th and 7th centuries.

The most distinctive of these schools is Ch’an (which became Zen, when it was taken up in Japan).

Starting in about 800, and lasting for several hundred years, there was a sequence of thinkers who, whilst Confucians, absorbed elements of Buddhist and Taoist thought. This movement is often called ‘Neo-Confucianism’.

What does Yin-Yang refer to?

- All of Chinese philosophy utilises the idea that there are two fundamental aspects of reality, yin (originally meaning the dark side of a mountain) and yang (the light side of a mountain).
- Yin and yang are often identified with opposing pairs such as female/male, dark/light, soft/hard, and passivity/activity.
- Every situation or state has both yin and yang aspects, though not necessarily in equal amounts. Each cannot exist without the other (recall the sides of the mountain).
- However, no situation is static: everything is in a state of flux. This change occurs cyclically, so yin waxes and yang wanes till yin is dominant, and then yin wanes and yang waxes till yang is dominant, and so on.
- The interplay of the two aspects means that everything is related to everything else in a harmonious whole, the Great (or Supreme) Ultimate (Tai Ch’i).

What is the I Ching?

- The fundamentals of yin-yang cosmology are implicit in the I Ching. The book comprises 64 hexagrams, together with commentaries on each.
- The hexagrams are made up of two basic symbols, one for yin and one for yang, making eight possible trigrams.
- A hexagram is made up of two trigrams, one on top of the other making 64 possibilities in all.
- When the book was used in divination, a hexagram was generated by some random process, such as the casting of yarrow sticks. The commentary on the hexagram was then consulted.
- The process may appear superstitious, but given the yin-yang cosmology it makes sense. Since all things are related in the Tai Ch’i, the hexagram is not random, but produced by natural forces.
- The hexagram shows what aspects of yin and yang are operative in the present context.
- If one understands this, and the natural flow of the two principles, one can make sensible judgments about what actions are likely to be successful or unsuccessful.

What are the major Confucian texts?

- Confucius was a minor public servant who lived in the troubled times of the Warring States.
- He looked back on earlier times, such as the early Chou dynasty, as golden times, and a central concern for Confucius was how to recreate the supposed political stability of the Golden Age.
- No writings by Confucius himself have survived. The four great Confucian texts are the Analects (a compilation of his saying made by his students), the Central Harmony and the Great Learning (attributed to Confucian scholars of the next couple of generations), and the Book of Mencius.

What are the Confucian virtues?

- Ren (jen) is the central Confucian virtue (i.e., what one should aim at both exercising and developing). It is variously translated as kindness, benevolence, goodness, human-heartedness.
Ren concerns the way a person should behave towards others, and exercising ren is also an expression of one’s own true humanity – what it is to be a person, in the fullest sense.

An important part of this behaviour towards others is spelled out in the Confucian doctrine of the Golden Mean, which says that one’s actions and emotions should be appropriate to the occasion – not too much, not too little.

Another Confucian virtue is yi, which means rightness or righteousness. Yi is the virtue of doing something simply because it is the right thing to do, not out of a sense of personal gain.

The exercise of ren also requires li, which refers to rites or rules for proper conduct. The notion is not a million miles away from our own notion of etiquette.

Also important is xiao (hsiao), meaning filial piety or filial conduct. It is displayed by having an appropriate respect for one’s parents and ancestors.

Family relations are centrally important for Confucius. The family is a very hierarchical place, and so children need to have respect for parents, younger brothers for older brothers, and so on.

At the same time, each relationship is reciprocal, so a parent has a responsibility for the well being of their children, etc.

More generally, one’s behaviour should be governed by the rectification of names (cheng-ming), meaning ‘using names correctly’. Thus, everything should behave in the way appropriate to the name that it bears.

Thus, a younger brother should behave like a younger brother; older brothers like an older brother. A teacher should behave like a teacher; students like a student. A ruler should behave like a ruler; subjects like a subject. Each side of the hierarchical pair should realise their reciprocal duties.

What was the ideal Confucian political system?

Confucius did not talk about spiritual beings or life after death. Instead, he concentrated on man, his main concern being a good society based on good government and harmonious human relations.

To this end he advocated a good government that rules by virtue and moral example rather than by punishment or force.

The ideal Confucian state is a highly ordered one. There is a natural order in society, and things work best when everyone does what they ought to in the social order.

Everyone strives to become a junzi (‘superior man’ or ‘gentlemen’) who knows his social role, is good mannered, behaves properly, is cultured, well educated, loves art and music, and is loyal.

Note the male pronouns here: Women and girls rate hardly a mention in the writings of Confucians.

Women ought to adopt the appropriate social roles of service towards their father or husband or ruler, but otherwise little is said about them.

The ideal political state functions properly when all behave correctly individually, or when everyone strives to develop and exercise his ren.

When he does this, he will function well, and therefore the family will function well. If this happens, the state will function well.

Thus if everyone looks after their own virtue, then everything else will take care of itself.

2.4 Chinese Buddhism

What is the Tao Te Ching?

The Tao Te Ching is the foundational book of Taoism. Though attributed to Lao Tzu, a contemporary of Confucius, it was probably compiled over some hundred years from the thoughts of old masters.

Tao is highly ambiguous. The standard translation is ‘way’, meaning a path or route. It can also mean talking, discourse, or teaching, and thus it can refer to a view about the way to live.
• It can also mean something like ‘fundamental principle’ of reality
• In the Tao Te Ching, Tao carries all these meanings at different points, sometimes at the same time
• Te is also somewhat ambiguous. It can mean ‘virtue’, but it can also refer to the powers that something has (e.g., opium has a “dormitive virtue”)
• The te of something is how it acts, and the virtues of behaving like that
• Thus, the Tao Te Ching is something like: the classic book of the fundamental principle of the cosmos, how it acts, and the virtues of acting in accord with it

What does Taoism say about metaphysics?
• Taoism subscribes to the general picture of yin-yang metaphysics, and the thought that the physical cosmos is in a generally harmonious state of flow
• The flow of the cosmos is, however, held to be the manifestation of the action of Tao, which is somewhat like Brahman, but even less like a personal god than Brahman is
• The Tao thus brings into existence and sustains the flow of all that happens
• But in another sense, Tao does not act – it does not do anything, it just “happens”
• Compare the way that you normally breathe, and how you breathe in a controlled way
• Because the Tao is behind all things, it is not itself a thing, not a ‘this’ or a ‘that’; it is ineffable

What does Taoism say about how to act?
• The sage (wise person) is one who is in harmony with the Tao: who “goes with the flow”.
• Water is a constantly recurring metaphor in Taoism. A stream flows naturally, finding its own course without being forced in any way
• It is therefore soft, but at the same time it is also very powerful: over aeons, it can wear away stone
• Like the Tao, the sage does nothing (wu wei): this is the way to be. Wu wei does not mean sitting motionless; it means not doing anything forced or unnatural.
• The sage is a person who manifests spontaneity. They do not monitor their actions, they just act
• Acting naturally is not necessarily easy, though. Paradoxically, one may have to work very hard in order to learn how to do something naturally
• For example, a good musician or sportsperson performs naturally, but they have to discipline themselves for hours in training until their actions come naturally

What does Chinese Buddhism say about reality?
• Chinese Buddhism has a distinctive take on the nature of reality, derived from thinking of the relationship between ultimate and conventional reality in terms of the relationship between the Tao and its manifestations
• Madyamaka had already stressed that the two realities are, in some sense, the same, and, in some sense, different. Chinese Buddhism develops this idea.
• Thus, ultimate reality is like a lump of gold, and conventional reality is like the statue as which it manifests itself. In some sense, the gold and the statue are different, but one clearly cannot have the one without the other. In that sense, they are identical.
• Often added to this is the thought that all the phenomena of conventional reality are themselves (in a similar sense) identical
• The objects of phenomenal reality are like the jewels. Each “interpenetrates” with all the others. Each one is, in some sense, all the others. Indeed, each is, in some sense, the whole.
• You can think as this as a way of interpreting the Madyamaka notion of emptiness. Each thing does not exist in and of itself; its being is constituted by the being of other things.
What do Chinese Buddhists say about Buddha nature?
- In Chinese Buddhism, the notion of ‘store consciousness’ undergoes important developments. It is no longer just the deepest form of consciousness, but a “bit” of ultimate reality which is in a person.
- It is often called, in this context, a person’s Buddha nature, the idea being that everyone already has Buddhahood inside them.
- The Buddha nature, however, is not intentional in any way; there is no subject/object duality. It is pure “thusness”.

What is the Chinese Buddhist conception of Enlightenment?
- These developments make possible a quite distinctive notion of enlightenment. In particular, enlightenment is not gaining anything. It is losing something.
- Specifically, the store consciousness is in an impure form, as it is “perfumed” by karmic seeds. On enlightenment, these fall away, leaving pure Buddha nature, pure ‘thusness’.
- This makes possible a notion of sudden enlightenment. One is, in a sense, already enlightened, and all one has to do to realise this is to see things right. This can happen suddenly.
- In Indian Buddhism, the main emphasis is on the elimination of suffering, the major cause of which is ignorance.
- In Chinese Buddhism, however, the point of enlightenment is to eliminate ignorance and hence see the world aright, unsullied by defilements: elimination of suffering will go along for the ride.
- Finally, a very distinctive notion of what it is like to be enlightened emerges. Enlightenment is realising one’s true Buddha nature, which is the same as the phenomenal world seen aright.
- Enlightenment therefore exists in living a perfectly ordinary life, but in a less than ordinary way.

What is Ch’an Buddhism?
- Perhaps the best known form of Chinese Buddhism in the west is Ch’an. The name ‘Ch’an’ (of which ‘Zen’ is the Japanisation) is a shortened form of Channa, which is simply a transliteration of the Sanskrit dhyana, meaning ‘meditation’.
- Ch’an shares the major features of Chinese Buddhism described in the previous sections.
- However, Ch’an is a very practical form of Buddhism, and what is distinctive about it, as the name suggests, is the emphasis it puts on direct experience.
- As in Yogacara, the things of the world, beings, are just conceptual/linguistic constructions, not ultimately real. There is an ultimate reality, but this cannot be.
- Although one cannot say what it is like, one can have a direct perception of it. This is what meditative practice is supposed to engender.

What does Ch’an Buddhism say about Enlightenment?
- Enlightenment is to be achieved by appropriate training, including reading the relevant sutras.
- But, in the last instance, Buddhist sutras are ultimately a hindrance, since they mire one in the conceptual. In the end, they must be thrown away. Enlightenment can be obtained only by seeing things aright through meditation.
- Another device used to aid achieving Enlightenment is the koan, which is a puzzle which a student is required to solve.
- It is, however, insoluble, and the student must come to see that the puzzle, rather than being solved, should be dissolved by seeing the inapplicability of the conceptual scheme that gives rise to it (often the inadequacy of language).
- What of the life of someone who has attained enlightenment? First, the actions of an awakened person are entirely natural, in the same way that the actions of the Taoist sage are natural.
They are not forced; they just flow. In a sense, the person does nothing, *wu-wei*. Their mind, too, just flows; it is no-mind, *wu-hsin*.

Second, the actions are nothing special. The Ch’an sage just goes about their daily living: after all, as Nagarjuna claimed, samsara and nirvana are no different.

Indeed, in a sense enlightenment is nothing special. Buddha nature is not something that is attained: everyone has Buddha nature all the time. It is just a matter of realising this.

### 2.5 Islamic Societies

**What are the origins of Islam?**

- Before Islam, Arabia was divided between rival tribes engaged in internecine raiding and warfare
- Mohammed was unhappy with the cultural, religious and social practices of the Arabs, and he wanted to change it
- At the age of 14 he claimed to have had a vision, and to be a prophet
- At the beginning, for the first ten or so years he preached mostly to his family and friends, but converted only very few people
- Mecca was a very wealthy merchant city at the time, and the wealthy businessmen didn’t like Mohammed’s ideas of equality, and monotheism, which would undermine the existing idol-worship religion of the city
- In 622, Mohammed migrated with his family and followers to Medina, where he established the first Muslim community and many people of the city converted
- At this point, Mohammed first came up with the idea of uniting the Arabs under a new religion, breaking through the old tribal barriers
- This original Medina community is seen by many subsequent Islamic scholars as a golden age, something to be emulated

**What is the role of the Koran and doctrine in Islam?**

- Muslims believe that Mohammed was a prophet who received revelation from a divine being; the Koran was a compilation of these revelations, which is read and accepted by all Muslims
- With the death of Mohammed, the revelations stopped, and the Koran was finished
- However, the Koran does not contain all necessary information for governance and faith and so many scholars compiled sayings and practices of the prophet Mohammed into a collection known as the Hadith, which is read along with the Koran as a core text of Islam

**What do Muslims believe about God and creation?**

- Shahadah: The unity of God. Islam is a monotheistic religion, believing in the existence of only one, eternal God (just like Christians and Jews)
- Muslims also believe in a personal God, namely a God that is conscious of himself and his action
- However, there are some Muslims who believe that God is impersonal, or a sort of cosmic spirit
- Muslims believe that God created the universe out of nothing – creation ex nihilo
- God created humans in the perfect and correct form; evolution is totally rejected
- Muslims also believe in divine justice – namely that everyone will be judged by God after death for their actions; this life is life a test
- God is believed to be totally just, and will only punish sinners

**What do Muslims think about Christianity and Judaism?**

- Unity of the Prophethood – all prophets mentioned in the Bible and the Koran have been sent by God, and must be recognised as presenting valid and consistent information
• Islam treats the other Peoples of the Book (namely Jews and Christians) differently to non-peoples of the book – that is, religions who do not have revealed texts
• Many biblical stories are mentioned in the Koran, but not discussed in detail, as Arabs were already familiar with the stories of the Bible
• For example, Muslims believe in the creation story, and the story of Adam and Eve, as in the Bible

What are the four major rituals of Islam?
• Salat: Muslims pray five times per day; around dawn, midday, afternoon, evening and at night
• Muslims also gather together to pray in a Mosque every Friday
• Zakat: Muslims also pay sakat, or a tax for the poor; in modern Muslim countries this is payable to the government, who decides how to distribute it
• Sawm: Muslims must also fast for one month per year (Ramadan), in which they do not eat, drink smoke, engage in sexual activity between sunrise and sunset
• The purpose of this is to demonstrate control over the biological needs of the body
• Hajj: This is the Islamic pilgrimage, conducted once per year by those Muslims who can afford it, to the cubic shrine in Mecca which Muslims believe was built by Abraham

What is Sharia Law?
• Shari`ah basically means ‘the way’
• It does not mean ‘law’ in the modern context; but is rather a way of living in private and public life
• The Koran sets out a variety of commandments and punishments for different offences; for example, it clearly sets out capital punishment for murder, and thus there is no scope for interpretation of different scholars
• However not everything in the Koran is clearly stated, and so there are disagreements about interpretation of such things – notably, the Koran says that women should ‘cover themselves’, but does not define what this means
• When a Muslim scholar or judge is faced with a problem, he first looks to the Koran, if there is nothing there, he looks to the Hadith
• If he cannot find anything there, he may use one of three secondary sources
• The first is analogy, whereby an analogy is made between the current problem or question and a similar or related past problem or question, about which a decision has already been made
• Another method is to develop a consensus between Muslim scholars and leaders about an appropriate answer in that case
• A third method is to ask what is in the public interest
• Some Islamic groups want to implement Sharia law, which means the government of the country would operate the legal system according to Islamic law – this is what occurs in Iran, but not in Turkey, where the legal system is based on Swiss civil law

2.6 Muslim Philosophy

Where did the Sunnis and Shiite sects come from?
• The death of the prophet came as a real shock to Muslims, and many claimed that a prophet of God could not possibly die
• Muslims were immediately divided over the issue of who should succeed him as leader
• The majority of Muslims in Medina believed that Mohammed had not nominated any successor, and that we should have an election to determine a successor
• A minority believed that someone from the house of the prophet would be the only legitimate successor – Mohammed didn’t have any sons, but he did have a first cousin and son-in-law, Ali, whom this minority advocated as the only legitimate successor
• However, the majority group nominated Mohammed’s closest friend and father in law as the prophet’s successor
• The majority group later became known as Sunni, and the minority group became Shi’ites

How did the Khariji sect arise?
• After the assassination of the third successor to Mohammed (Uthman), Ali finally became Caliph
• Ali was challenged, however, by the governor of Syria, and after fighting an indecisive battle against him Ali was forced to concede the issue to arbitration
• A group of Ali’s former supporters then rebelled against him, declaring that only God could decide who should be Caliph, and that Ali had committed a grave sin in submitting to arbitration
• These rebels became known as the Kharijis; they believed that any Muslim could become leader, the only criterion being piety and righteousness
• They also believed that all other Muslims were infidels, and could legitimately be killed

What were the three groups in the predestination debate?
• One important question debated by early Muslims was predestination vs. freewill
• Many political rulers justified their brutal murders and so forth by the fact that if God did not want it to happen, he would not let it happen – thus it was God’s will, and everything was made by God and hence predestined to do what God wanted
• The Rationalist School (Mu’tazilites) rejected the idea of predestination, as it was in contradiction with Islamic beliefs about divine justice – God would not create sinners and then punish them for it
• Rather, they argued that all people had free will, and hence would bear the consequence for their own actions
• This rationalist school also denied that man could say anything about God except that he was ‘one’; to say that God was ‘just’, for instance, would be to say that ‘justice’ was an eternal characteristic that existed alongside God
• To admit the existence of anything eternal other than God would be to undermine the concept of monotheism, and hence we cannot say anything about God
• The Moderate School (Ash’arites) argued for a middle course between the rationalists and the traditionalists – they argued that both reason and revelation were needed to answer questions
• They accepted a mixture of pre-destination and free-will
• The traditionalists rejected the use of reason and relied on revelation only; they also rejected free-will and adopted the doctrine of predestination

How did Greek philosophy affect Islamic thought?
• The ninth century saw a widespread translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic, and the consequent influence of Greek ideas into Islamic philosophy
• One important contribution of Greek philosophy was that the universe could not be created out of nothing – a rejection of creation ex nihilo
• According to the Greek view, matter existed and was eternal, and God was merely an organiser, and not created
• A compromise view was that the universe was sort of created ‘out of’ God – he did not just create it out of nothing, but out of himself
• Another interesting idea was that ‘God does not know particulars’ – i.e. God does not know a particular cat, or a particular mountain
The argument is that one can only know a particular object by perception, which only occurs because of sensory organs, which God does not possess.

Many other issues were debated as well, including happiness and the nature of God.

**Why did Islamic philosophy mostly end?**
- However, when the Turks invaded the Middle East, they converted to Sunni Islam.
- They were also not interested in philosophical debate. Because many of the prominent philosophers were Shi’ites, they bundled unwanted philosophy, rebelliousness and all other unwanted aspects into the basket of ‘shi-ism’.
- Under the threat of immense persecution, philosophical thinking in the Muslim world has pretty much been stamped out, except in Shi’ite Iran.

**Section 3: Ancient and Modern Religious Practise**

**3.1 The Emperor in Imperial China**

**Why did Qin succeed in unifying China?**
- Qin was a small state, far away from the old prestige states of the Yellow River.
- The rulers were known for violence and cruelty, and long mixed with barbarian tribes.
- The Qin emperors built up the state’s economy and agricultural facilities, including by building irrigation facilities along the yellow river.
- The state was ruled virtually like a military machine, with strict rewards and penalties to encourage desired behaviour.
- Merchants and intellectuals were treated as inferior to warriors; state offices and rewards were given to the most successful soldiers.
- The Qin leaders were not at all interested in Confucian ideas of compassion and right rule.
- Between about 320 and 220 BC, the Qin state conquered all the other Chinese kingdoms.

**Why was the Emperor’s tomb so elaborate?**
- Tombs sought to replicate the goods the dead enjoyed in life and thus reflect rank and status.
- In general, it was believed that status, rituals, duties and practices performed on Earth would continue in the afterlife, and this was reflected in the structure, furnishing and artwork in tombs.
- There was a widespread fear that dead spirits could return to haunt the living if they were not happy about something.
- Thus, tombs were buried deep, well sealed, and well stocked up with things to keep the dead happy; all the proper funery rights also had to be performed.
- According to historical reports, the tomb complex of the first Emperor was designed to represent the entire Chinese empire and the cosmos.
- The First Emperor planned to devote himself to governing forever the empire he had created.

**What did Legalist scholars say about Confucian ideas?**
- Confucius argued that the best model of government, (which had operated successfully in the ancient kingdoms along the Yellow River), was when the state was set up along the lines of a family.
- Government should not be based on coercion, but on the same types of obligation and sentiment that kept families together – a ruler should rule with compassion (ren).
- For instance, children must follow their parents because parents have their bets interests at heart – the state ruler should act like a parent.
• Legalist thinkers thought Confucian ideas were a recipe for failure, arguing that it was not enough for a ruler to be compassionate, and that “the ancient kings allowed laws to be supreme”
• Legalist thinkers, such as Han Feizi, believed that the family model of governance should be replaced by one of objective laws, and clearly set out rewards and punishments
• “The people bow naturally to authority, but few can be moved by righteousness”, and as such it was not enough to choose ‘virtuous men’ to lead; the ruler has to establish laws and penalties

3.2 Contemporary Chinese Autocracy

Why did the Qin State Fall?
• Turns out that the militaristic, legalist strategy needed to conquer the other states was not an effective policy in ruling them
• This was compounded by the ethnic differences of the many subject peoples
• Harsh taxes and conscription (to build the Great Wall)
• Cruel rulership of the Qin emperor
• Ultimately the Qin dynasty was overthrown by a peasant uprising

What was the lasting impact of the First Emperor?
• He more or less invented the image of the Emperor as the supreme ruler, and established the Chinese Imperial system that was to last until 1911
• He displayed his great power in costumes, architecture, and his burial mound
• He claimed to have a special role in mediation between man and Heaven

What happened to Confucianism after the Qin?
• Following the overthrow of the first Emperor, scholars condemned the excessively legalistic policies of the Qin dynasty
• Confucian ideas and books resurfaced, and were codified as the official state ideology of the Han
• It was to remain state ideology for the next 2,000 years
• In practise, however, some legalist ideals were incorporated into Confucianism

How does modern China compare to the Qin Dynasty?
• The revolutionaries who overthrew the last Chinese Emperor in 1911 believed that China had fallen behind the west partly because it persisted to use an absolute monarchy, while all western states were republics or constitutional monarchies
• Mao admired the First Emperor, and was similarly dictatorial and built up his own cult of personality; however he thought he was better than the Emperor, and would be able to unify the country while keeping the people with him
• To some extent he was accurate – the communist party is still in power, though on the other hand they have abandoned most of his policies
• The current domination of China by the communist party (and in particular Mao’s rule) has been compared by some critics to the autocratic rule of the first emperor
• In particular, the way dissident intellectuals are persecuted today mirrors the persecution of Confucian scholars under the Qin

3.3 Buddhism and the East Asian Imagination

How did Buddhism change as it moved out of India?
• As Buddhism spread to China and South-East Asia, it became more concerned with worldly things and considerations – Buddhists sought to enjoy a good life in this world and Heaven in the afterlife
- Rulers used Buddhism to bolster political power
- Merchants and other wealthy persons sponsored the construction of monasteries and monuments
- Some monks also became important and influential

**What are the three major branches of Buddhism?**
- Hinayana: focuses on leaving the secular world and entering a monastery; common in India
- Mahayana: focuses on lay believers and spiritual beings called bodhisattvas; very common in China and East Asia generally
- Bodhisattvas are individuals who decide to delay nirvana and their departure from the world in order to help mortals achieve nirvana
- Tantric Buddhism (also known as Diamond Buddhism and Vajrayana Buddhism): focuses mainly on attaining immediate enlightenment through close relations with deity
- Also emphasises magic and sexuality to achieve salvation: popular in Tibet, Nepal and Mongolia

**How did Buddhism rise to prominence in China?**
- Buddhism was originally brought to China by Indian merchants travelling along the silk road
- It was consolidated when adopted by non-Chinese rulers of the Northern Wei dynasty in the 4th-6th centuries AD, in order to avoid adopting Confucianism or Taoism and hence boost their power
- These rulers built giant Buddhist temple caves
- Buddhism was also adopted by the succeeding Tang dynasty
- The Empress Wu (the only ever Chinese Empress) also used Buddhism to bolster her power, and identified herself with the Cosmic (Vairochana) Buddha

**How did Buddhism rise to prominence in Korea and Japan?**
- Buddhism entered Korea from China in the 4th century AD, though at this time Korea was not a unified nation
- When it was first united in AD 668, the state of Silla decided to follow the lead of its large and influential neighbour – Buddhist Tang China
- Buddhism came from Korea across the ocean to the islands of Japan
- Although it was not very popular at first, it was adopted by one of the rival clans (the Soga), who subsequently won the civil war, and thus promoted Buddhism
- Emperor Shomu (8th century) decided to transform Japan into a Buddhist state with himself as ruler at the centre; thus once again we see Buddhism adopted as a unifying technique by a ruler
- He build the Todai-ji, a huge timber temple built at the capital, housing a huge bronze Cosmic (Vairochana) Buddha – this Buddha was supposed to protect the nation from epidemics and war

**What was the role of ritual and statues in Tibetan Buddhism?**
- The big focus of Tantric Buddhism is mystical union with deities, which can be achieved through mantras, meditation, and other such rituals
- Art, sculpture and rituals were the most important means by which commoners came to understand and experience their faith, as most people could not read
- The Buddhists believed that their many statues and monuments expressed and allowed one to better understand ultimate reality
- Buddhas are represented with big ear lobes, to represent wisdom, and sitting on thrones to represent purity
- Buddha figures were often surrounded by Bodhisatvas, which were represented as more human-like, and more worldly
3.4 Buddhist Ritual Practice in East Asia

What is the treatment of gender in Buddhism?
- Sex was seen as one of the biggest possible worldly attachments in Buddhism, and hence was something to be avoided for achieving enlightenment
- According to Buddhism, gender was determined at the moment of conception according to karma
- Only men can achieve enlightenment; women must build up karma to be reborn as men in a later life, and hence achieve Buddahood
- Buddas were theoretically asexual, as they had given up all worldly attachments, and hence had no outer sexual characteristics
- However, it is possible for Buddas to change their outer appearance from one gender to the other, as this does not change their real inner identity
- Similarly, a righteous woman changes her inner self to become more ‘man-like’, by building up good karma, even though their outward appearance remains female

Who was Avalokitesvara/Guanyin?
- Avalokitesvara was an Indian bodhisattva; name was translated to Guanyin when taken to China
- Appears in the form of an Indian prince – definitely originally male (statues, paintings, etc)
- He was held to be able to save all beings from suffering; a universal saviour
- He was first popularised after an Indian ruler prayed to him in the 5th century AD and was subsequently cured
- Guanyin led souls to paradise after death, and was appealed to via prayers to protect from evil spirits, hunger, sickness, robbers and many other dangers
- This practical assistance with the problems of life accounts partly for the popularity of Buddhism

How did Guanyin become Sinified?
- In Chinese statues and art representations, Guanyin gradually metamorphosed from male to female
- This was part of a more general process of altering originally Indian ideas and beings to reflect Chinese values, culture, and gender representations, etc
- For example, pictures of Guanyin include characteristically Chinese (Daoist) art motifs of rocks, bamboo, stream, moon, etc
- In many ways Chinese Guanyin was the model of a virtuous Chinese woman (i.e. Confucian virtues), including showing devotion to parents (filial piety) and female chastity (faithfulness to one man)

Why did Guanyin become female?
- Women an increasingly part of the congregation of believers, and hence needed a goddess figure for women to worship; seen as inappropriate to pray about some things to male God
- In world religions, compassion often takes a female form; same with Guanyin
- Competition to attract converts from Daoism, which had female deities
- The female version as then spread through the telling and printing of ‘miracle tales’, which were popular stories which told about how individuals had been saved from sickness or some other danger by Guanyin, or by those who had had visions of her in their dreams
- Often these individuals also founded temples or shrines and place (female) representations of Guanyin as they appeared in their dreams
- These would become pilgrimage sites, hence spreading the female views of Guanyin
3.5 Contemporary Islam in Indonesia

What is happening to Islam in Indonesia today?
- About 80% of Indonesians are Muslims
- For the past few decades there has been a growing trend towards increased Islamisation of Indonesian life, and influence of religion generally
- For example, Indonesian phrases (greetings, etc) are being replaced by Islamic ones
- There are several divisions in Indonesian Islam:
  - Santri: devout/pious practicing Muslims – subdivided into Traditionalists and Modernists
  - Abangan: Muslims who mix other systems of local religious belief with Islam

How did Islamic reformism arise?
- When Indonesia was colonised beginning in the 17th century, improvements in communications and transportation increased pilgrimages to Mecca, and made the transfer of ideas throughout the Islamic World easier
- There was also an increased interest in the need to ‘reform’ Islam, because it had clearly fallen behind the rest of the world and was under colonial rule
- Reform movements emphasised the spirit of Muslim unity, solidarity, and autonomy, and pride in Islam’s intellectual and scientific heritage
- A change-oriented mind-set developed that rejected the blind following of tradition and accepted the necessity of modern reinterpretation and reform

Who are the Traditionalists?
- Seek to preserve the authority of medieval Islamic scholarship and kiai (religious scholars)
- Tend to be more tolerant of local customs, like veneration of wali (saints)
- Practise prayers and celebration of anniversaries for dead ancestors
- Represented by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU, Revival of Religious Scholars) 1926

Who are the Modernists?
- The modernists believe ‘un-islamic’ innovations in the medieval and early modern periods have corrupted Islam – they do not believe in prayers for the dead
- They believe blind adherence to classical Islam led the Islamic world to fall behind the west
- They believe in the need for modernization in Islam
- Represented by Muhammadiyah 1912

Who are the Islamists?
- The late 1990s saw the rise of Islamist groups, who claimed to be purifying the religion by emphasizing ritual and reorganization of public space and outer appearance
- They often have depreciating attitudes towards popular tradition
- They have a tendency to embrace the punitive aspects of religion and adopt the idea of self control over the body – for example, supporting public canings
- They claim the right to reinterpret the sacred texts and reject the wisdom of religious clergy
- Religious symbolism very significant, for example gender segregation at public gatherings
- Some of these Islamist groups are violent, some are peaceful

How did Islam influence Indonesian politics after independence?
- The first principle of the Indonesian Constitution is belief in One God
The charter was also originally to include a clause stating ‘the obligation for Muslims to follow Islamic law’, however this was dropped for fear of ostracising non-Muslims.

There were a number of revolts in the 1950s and 1960s from groups believing the government did not place enough emphasis on Islam – the debate over the clause continues to today.

Following the supposed Communist coup in 1966, Suharto came to power.

To fulfil his debt to the Islamic political groups, which had helped crush the Communists, he granted a certain amount of influence and concessions to the Islamic groups.

All Islamic parties were forcibly merged into the United Development Party (PPP), which had some influence in political and particularly moral issues.

However, only Suharto’s party ever won elections, and the UDP was divided over many issues between traditionalists and modernists.

This period saw the beginning of an Islamic revival, meaning increased observance of and concern with Islamic practices.

Nevertheless, this did not necessarily mean a return to more fundamentalist versions of Islam – there was much debate, and many different Islamic groups.

How did Islamic revivalism develop during the 1980s?

- The oil boom of the 1970s, the wars with Israel and the Iranian revolution led to an increasing sense of World community of Moslems.
- The Ayatollah Khomeini promoted world-wide revolution, and opposition to the west.
- The neo-modernist movement of the 1980s emphasised modern concerns like human rights, democracy, gender equality, liberation theology, a commitment to the poor, and environmental concerns; all approached from an Islamic perspective.
- The NU withdrew from politics, and there was increasing criticism of the idea of an Islamic state, as alienating non-Muslims and less observant Muslims.
- Overall, the movement represented a rethinking of Islamic knowledge to fit with contemporary life.
- It opposed Arabic influences over Islam and in Indonesia – need Indonesian version of Islam.

How did Islamic revivalism develop during the post-Suharto era?

- Suharto was overthrown in 1998, owing to the financial crisis and also the student movement.
- Nevertheless, since the fall of Suharto, Islamic political groups have failed to get more than about 20% of the vote – most Indonesians seem happy with the status quo of many religions and no major political role of Islam.
- Following the first Indonesian edition of Playboy in 2006, certain Islamic movements introduced into Parliament bills proposing harsh measures against pornography, women’s dress, public displays of affection, etc.
- This bill was widely opposed by a variety of groups, and was not passed.
- Recently, the government has caved in to Islamic groups and placed restrictions on certain dissident groups – there is a widespread fear of being branded as ‘un-Islamic’.

3.6 Buddhism and Capitalism in Thailand

What happened during the pre-classical period?

- During the pre-classical period, of about 200-1000 AD, there was a great deal of religious syncretism in Thailand, with Indian influences predominating.
- There was a mixture of Hindu beliefs, Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, Tantric practices and animism (indigenous belief in the spirit world).
- Also popular were beliefs in miraculous relics like Buddha’s footprints and charismatic monks.
During this period, it is difficult to characterise any particular kingdom as Buddhist or otherwise.

**What was the relationship between the king and Buddhism?**

- During the classical period (c. 1000-1500 AD), there were a variety of kingdoms, with a special mutually-beneficial relationship between the king and the Buddhist religion.
- The king’s authority derived from his place in the cosmic order (dhamma), and his duty was to provide ‘royal protection of the sacred religion’.
- The king was expected to be a moral exemplar and embrace the ten *raja dhamma* qualities to be: liberal, of good conduct, practice non-attachment, be straightforward, mild, austere, embody patience and forbearance, suppress anger and not injure anyone.
- The monks (the sanga) supported the King because they relied on his contributions and influence for alms, and because the popularity of Buddhism relied on monarchical support.
- During this period, Theravada Buddhism also became a religion of the masses via the worship of relics and sacred images and by means of popular syncretic cults.

**How and why did 19th century kings reshape Buddhism?**

- Though Thailand was not formally colonised, from the late 18th century it experienced an influx of westerners into its capital city, and an increase in western ideas and economic influence.
- The Chakri dynasty ruled Thailand as an absolute monarchy from 1782 until 1932.
- Traditional education and monks were marginalised through the influence of western education, and the perceived need to modernise to meet the western threat.
- During the mid nineteenth century, Thailand experienced increased pressure from the British and Americans to open up trade.
- King Mongkut (r. 1852-1868) was widely read in science and had knowledge of many languages.
- He sought to introduce western concepts into Buddhism to modernise it, making it more a system of social ethics rather than a cosmological world view – for example he suggested that karma genetic rather than causal.
- King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910) embraced major reforms in many fields, including a new curriculum on Buddhist history, doctrine, liturgy and Pali language, two new higher academies for the study of Buddhism, and the formation of a single national organization for Buddhism.
- Buddhism was also welded to Thai nationalism in opposition to colonialism.

**What happened in Thai politics in the twentieth century?**

- The system of absolute monarchy ended in 1932, and the new constitution pledged the king must be Buddhist but he now was the protector of all religions of his subjects.
- Since then there have been many coups and changes of government.
- The military took power in the 1950s, and co-opted the king as a national symbol to help provide legitimacy for the new regime.
- The monks were also co-opted by the regime, to preach to the people in the hope that they would be less amenable to communism.
- Later, the king was credited with helping the gradual rise of democracy in the 1980s and 1990s.

**What are magic monks?**

- In the 1980s and 1990s, Thailand enjoyed a 10% rate of GDP growth per year, leading to an explosion in wealth and consumption.
- There was a decrease in the state control of Buddhism.
There has been a recent rise in the prominence of ‘magic monks’, who often have birth dates of cosmic significance, have gained skills in supernatural tasks, and are revered by followers due to events that define his potency e.g. his amulets saved someone.

These monks seem to deal with worldly matters and endorse capitalism – people come to them to be healed from sickness and be successful in business.

More people follow magic monks and many temples have been built around the country.

Thus aspects of religion became commodified and increasingly popularized by the media.

We see here a decline in the idea of ‘non-attachment’, and also of the idea of ‘non-self’.

‘Magic monk’ Luang Phor Khoon produced a series of amulets believed by the public to produce good luck, save one’s life in disasters, or produce business successes.

How has Thai Buddhism responded to modernization?

• There have been critiques of ‘magic monks’, and calls for a return to traditional, purer Buddhist philosophies, and overcoming greed rather than encouraging it.

• Thus the process of modernization and globalization has produced a change in Buddhism rather than a secularization.

• Another trend is the rise of ‘green monks’, who focus on sustainable development, environmental preservation, social ethics, and resistance to capitalism and globalization.

• All these trends represent the continuation of a long tradition of reform and adaptation of Buddhism to changing social and economic conditions.

Section 4: Contemporary Asia

4.1 Asian Economic Transition

What is the Asian economic miracle?

• At the end of WWII, Asia was comprised of poor, backward nations that were distant from the centre of the world economy in Europe; millions had died in war and famine, Japan’s industries were destroyed, and the economy and society were in ruins.

• In 1960 per capita income in Japan was one eighth of that of the USA, while South Korea’s was lower than Sudan, Taiwan had the same level as Zaire, and China and India had only one third of Taiwan.

• Not only did Asia manage to overcome these problems, but the entire region has turned into an economic powerhouse in the world economy.

• East Asia is the only region to produce a non-European state in rich nation club: Japan not only escaped from colonisation, but also became economic superpower.

• The Asian economic takeoff began with Japan in the 1950s, followed by the NIEs (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) in the 1960s, ASEAN 4 (Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia) in the 1970s, China in the 1980s, and finally India and Vietnam in the 1990s.

• While after 1780 it took the United Kingdom sixty years to double its per capita income, after 1978 it took China only ten years.

• In 2007, average Asian economic growth was 7.1%, compared to 4.7% for the whole world.

What is the ‘flying geese model’ of development?

• The ‘flying geese model’ of economic growth was developed by Japanese economist Kaname Akamatsu in the 1930s, and regained popularity in the 1960s.

• The idea was that industrial development spreads from developed to developing countries sequentially, with less advanced and labour intensive industries moving away from developed
nations towards less developed economies, as the developed nations moved on to more technologically advanced and capital intensive industries

- This was described as "Giving away industries to other countries, much as a big brother gives his out-grown cloth to his younger brother"
- This model has been criticized as justifying perpetual economic inequalities, and domination by the developed nations (e.g. Japan), who get to decide what industries to ‘shed’

What is the Statist explanation for growth?

- Government incentives (rather than controls) to produce goods for export is often cited as a key factor in promoting East Asian growth
- This enables an expansion of production to achieve greater economies of scale, and forces industries to compete in the international market and use the newest technologies
- Finally, it generates foreign exchange earnings and enables a developing country to import capital and technology for growth
- Thus, statists argue that government interventions were key to develop infant industries, upgrade the industrial structure and obtain technology, and to maintain relative internal political stability
- States have a strategic role to play in taming domestic and international market forces

What is the Technology explanation for growth?

- Importation of western technology and knowledge was particularly important
- They transferred new technology by purchasing patents, careful study of scientific papers, and importation of capital goods with new technology embodied
- With this capital, they used ‘reverse engineering’ – dismantling and reproduction of technology
- They then took this technology and know-how, adapted it to local circumstances, and used it to take advantage of their abundant competitive labour

What is the Neoclassical explanation for growth?

- Neoclassical economics: mainstream economic theory emphasizing the importance of markets
- Assumptions of this school include that the government should avoid excessive intervention in the market, and allow prices to reach their equilibrium levels; they also believe that growth is an inherent property of the market in all countries
- According to the neoclassical school, Asian governments actively created a positive environment for economic growth, and did not interfere with the free workings of markets
- The governments have instituted fewer policy-imposed distortions over labour and capital markets than other nations, and hence the private sector has become the key economic player
- These have all contributed to rapid economic growth

What is the Cultural explanation for growth?

- Culturalists argue that Confucian traditions impact on economic behaviours and social organisation in a manner beneficial for economic growth
- For instance, the emphasis on group value and obedience over individual values, and hence there has been relative harmony between employers and employees and the government – little social disruption for such a rapidly growing country
- Confucianism also supposedly promotes a high saving rate and education investment
- Of course, this school cannot easily explain why Confucianism took so long to have a positive impact on growth; also note that the same Confucian ethic was widely used to explain Korea’s backwardness 30 years ago
- In addition, Chinese influence on patterns of governance in South East Asia was very limited
What are some other important ideas about Asian growth?

- Dependency theorists argue that poor nations are kept poor by foreign domination and Imperialism, while nations like South Korea, Thailand and Japan were able to grow because of large amounts of US Cold War aid.
- It has also been argued that the geographic concentration of these countries indicates that they have learned from each other in some way.
- Proximity facilitated direct investment through cultural/ethnic ties, and imitation of neighbour’s winning policies; low transport costs over short distances also promoted trade.
- Another perspective is that it was mostly luck (factors outside political or economic control), including absence of military conflicts with neighbours, low/externally subsidised defence outlays, availability of generous foreign aid, and access to outside open markets.
- Many of these ideas narrowly focus on the ideas of only their discipline, and adopt a very short historical time span of analysis.

How does the rise of Chindia affect the rest of the world?

- China has received much foreign investment from the west, used to develop factories, but now, China is making its own foreign investment in African countries.
- Unlike China, India’s manufacturing is more selective and largely concentrated on high-end aerospace, military, space and consumer durables including automobiles and appliances.
- Both nations will require enormous natural resources not only because they are manufacturing and service centres of the world, but because of their own rapidly expanding domestic markets.
- This extra demand may create an economic boom for resource-rich nations in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, Central Asia and Russia.
- The advanced world seems less willing to sell their assets to China (especially technology assets) due to fears about the peacefulness of the rise of China (in contrast to rise of India).
- We will see a growing involvement of bureaucrats and professionals from China and India in World forums (from Davos to climate change) and world agencies (World Bank, IMF and various UN agencies such as WHO, ILO, UNIDO and UNESCO).

4.2 Gender and Citizenship in Japan

How is nationality treated in the Japanese constitution?

- Japan’s constitution explicitly guarantees equality before the law for all people regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, gender and so on.
- In this sense, it was long one of the most liberal constitutions in the world.
- There are two separate systems for determining who is allowed to become a citizen of a specific country: Jus Soli (nationality determined by place of birth) – this is (mostly) used in Australia.
- Jus Sanguinis (nationality determined by bloodline, in other worse if your parents are not citizens then you will not be a citizen even if you are born there) – this is used in Japan.

What is Gender?

- Sex refers to biological difference (male, female).
- Gender refers to socially and culturally constructed difference (masculine, masculinity; feminine, femininity).
- Gender identity: do you identity with masculinity or femininity?
- Culture: how gender relates to desirable models of dress, deportment, language, behaviour, occupations.
- Structure: gender relations, gender order, comparative occupations, life chances, etc.
• Metaphor: we sometimes use gender as a metaphor for describing something else, like personifications of countries (the motherland, Britannia, Uncle Sam), or person attributes

What is Citizenship?
• Citizenship refers to the rights and duties of holding citizenship of a specific country, e.g. paying taxes, military service, receiving government benefits, etc
• It also refers to the sense of an individual belonging to a particular country
• It also involves participation in public affairs, for example voting in elections, contributing to political discourse, etc
• Apparently neutral categories like ‘citizenship’, however, may have gendered implications
• For example: Who can hold property? Who pays taxes? Who engages in military service? Who is recognized as adult? How does marriage interact with nationality and citizenship?
• State policies and laws may even be gendered, for example: Constitution, family law, labour regulation, taxation, welfare, education, reproductive control
• There is also a gendering of state personnel: bureaucracy, judiciary, parliament, leaders, etc

What is the Japanese stereotype of the family and how is it under threat?
• In Japan, the stereotypical family has a male, middle-class, heterosexual white collar husband, a full-time housewife and one-two children
• In fact this has always been somewhat inaccurate, as today most women are in the workforce, while only about one third of working males are in the white collar lifetime employment jobs
• Most people in Japan are now marrying later (late 20s), the birth rate is declining, and the population is aging
• This population will put great pressure on the Japanese welfare system, as well as family caring for previous generations
• Because of the difficulty in people taking care of their elderly parents and maybe even grandparents (life expectancy in Japan is very high), the state is playing an increasingly large role in this area

How have migrant workers challenged traditional notions of belonging?
• Many workers from former colonies like Korea, Taiwan and other islands moved to Japan to work in the early 20th century
• As such, there are a fair number of people descended from these workers (some even third generation), who (because they do not have Japanese heritage) do not have citizenship
• It is possible to get citizenship, but this is a difficult and drawn out process, involving linguistic tests and a requirement to have a ‘Japanese sounding’ name
• There is also continual migration to Japan, mostly of workers from poor Asian countries like India, as well as a special category for those descendents of Japanese emigrants who return
• Split between elite, skilled ‘international’ workers and ‘unskilled’ immigrant workers, who tend to do jobs seen as undesirable to the Japanese middle-class
• The aging population crisis in Japan has recently led to a trend to hire care workers from Asian nations in an informal manner – often the workers would come via tourist visas and work for a few months before going home
• Recently, this has been formalised by the Japanese government to bring in care workers from other countries (Economic Partnership Agreements [EPAs] with Indonesia and the Philippines)
• This come lead to the situation where care work jobs are not only gendered as feminine, but also cultured as being the sort of things that Indonesians do, etc
• Intermarriage raises further issues of cultural diversity and belonging
Children of mixed marriages raise further issues of cultural diversity and belonging
Children of mixed marriages raise issues of appropriate education for linguistic and cultural diversity

4.3 Vietnamese Diaspora

What caused the Vietnamese Diaspora?
- The Vietnamese Diaspora of about 2 million Vietnamese after 1975 was unprecedented in Vietnamese history – despite the many crisis in Vietnamese history, few Vietnamese had chosen to emigrate in these times
- Majority resettled in the United States, Australia, Canada, and France
- The post-war communist regime in the South was extremely repressive, including political executions, re-education camps, forced migration, discrimination against ethnic groups and those collaborating with the old regime, intellectuals arrested, free speech and religion curtailed
- Private commerce was cracked down upon, private property confiscated and nationalised, and rural property collectivised
- Also wars with Cambodia in 1978 and China in 1979

What were the major waves of Vietnamese migration?
- The first major wave of migration occurred in 1975, mostly of former government employees
- The second wave occurred following increasing political and economic repression, especially of ethnic Chinese, in 1978-1979
- The huge migration and numbers of boat people caught international attention, and led to Two international conference in Geneva in 1979
- Here, developed countries agreed to provide more help and migrant places for Vietnamese
- A new wave of migration occurred in the late 1980s, many of whom were ethnic Vietnamese coming from North Vietnam
- Developed countries to whom they fled were more sceptical about these migrants, and they were widely felt to be mostly economic migrants rather than true refugees
- The new international conference in 1989 organised to help stem the flow of illegal migrants, encourage legal migration, and eventually repatriate migrants denied refugee status

What were the major waves of Vietnamese migration to Australia?
- The first wave to come to Australia in 1975-1976 (only 500 or so) were mostly elites escaping from the North Vietnamese regime – doctors, lawyers, diplomats, etc
- The second wave in 1978-1980 were mostly ethnic Chinese, while the third wave of ‘economic migrants’ from 1989-1991, were mostly small traders
- About 1000 Vietnamese lived in Australia in 1975, while now there are approx. 200,000, or 1% of Australian population
- The majority now live in NSW and Victoria, and a quarter are ethnic Chinese

How was Vietnamese migration controversial?
- The Vietnamese Diaspora was particularly controversial at the time, coming as it did so soon after the end of the white Australia policy
- The periods of migration were also unfortunately correlated with bad recessions, and hence it was more difficult for migrants to find jobs
- Despite problems with discrimination, crime, drugs and high unemployment, since the 1990s there has been a substantial upward mobility in the Vietnamese community
4.4 Defining “Asian Values”

What is the early history of ‘Asian values’?
- The idea of a universal set of ‘Asian values’ actually traces back to Orientalist thought, comparing the backward, authoritarian Asia to the progressive, democratic west
- In April 1955, the Asian-African Conference assembled the leaders of the newly independent Asia, with many assertions of shared values, experience, and proclamations of solidarity
- In fact the only political values they agree upon are those of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the very document that would be attacked in the name of “Asian Values” in the 1990s
- Most of these nations were new (shaky) democracies, and there was no hint at Bandung of human rights and democracy being incompatible with Asian traditions or communitarianism

- In 1959, Indonesian President Sukarno argued that Indonesia operated by consensus rather than a show of hands
- He justified authoritarian government in the name of “community” and economic development
- The argument was that Indonesia could not ‘afford' western democracy, and it would stunt economic growth
- Authoritarian regimes proliferate across Asia: Park Chung-hee (S. Korea), Ferdinand Marcos (Philippines), Mathathir (Malaysia), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore) – leaders justified rule on basis of Asian values, or something similar
- The two pillars of the “Asian Values” argument were:
  - Cultural values emphasize community, order, stability
  - Individual rights willingly “traded” by Asian people for development
- At first, these arguments were undermined by the limited economic success of these nations

How did economic growth relate to Asian values?
- The 1980s saw rapid economic growth in many parts of Asia, seemingly being delivered by strong leadership and “Confucian” culture (e.g. China, Korea, Singapore)
- Western leaders now began to take notice of claims of ‘Asian values’, since they were less preoccupied with the Cold War
- In the early 1990s, PM Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, began to argue that ‘Asian values’ were responsible for his country’s rapid economic growth in recent decades
- He argued that Confucian societies were focused on the family as essential to the good order of society; filial piety, thrift, loyalty to country, respect for elders and scholarship, were all said to promote economic growth

How did the Asian values debate play out in the 1990s?
- Increasingly, the UN Declaration of Human Rights was attacked as contradictory to Confucian values – though this would have surprised the original Asian leaders at Bandung, and also the official Confucian scholar on the committee who wrote the Declaration
- In 1991, a Chinese Official Government Whitepaper on Human Rights challenged the universality of Human Rights, and asserted Chinese difference due to history and culture
- In June 1993, the UN World Human Rights Conference was divided over “Asian Values”, with authoritarian states like China and Singapore arguing for cultural difference, and western and other states maintaining support for universality
• However, this position was not universally held by Asian societies – though some authoritarian governments seemed to oppose universal human rights, many Asian intellectuals and NGOs argued that Asian values actually supported human rights
• In 1994, Lee Kuan undertook an interview with the leading journal Foreign Affairs, in which he argued his “Asian Values” case
• Mahathir revived the “Asian Values” debate in July 1997, when he asserted that the Universal Declaration was not appropriate for smaller countries, and that it was too individualistic, disrupted social order, while excessive freedom harms economic activity

**Problems with Asian Values**

• The idea of ‘Asian values’ largely lost its lustre after the East Asian financial crises of 1997
• German sociologist Max Weber wrote extensively about how Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism were responsible for the backwardness of India and China
• This demonstrates how culture is not an accurate predictor of economic progress – one starts from the result and works backwards, picking out whatever characteristics suit one’s end
• The assumption that culture is unitary and static, impervious to time and circumstances is wrong
• Cultures are inherently dynamic, divided and contested, adapt to new social and economic realities and needs, and interact with and cross-fertilise each other
• In addition, if cultures were truly universally held and accepted in their native lands, there would be no need for governments to promote the values that their peoples already supposedly uphold
• Paul Keating and John Howard even emphasised the similarities between Asian and Australian values, including the value of education, family, work, and communitarianism as mateship
• Perhaps the biggest challenge to Asian values is the fact that the majority of Asian people now live in democracies, and regularly vote in elections