Japan: Isolation to Adaptation

Chapter 12 Student Notes

Kami isolated rituals Ainu kamuy haiku matsuri tsunami stoic arable monsoon gohan homogonous assimilation archipelago

***Big Idea:***

*8.1: How did Japan’s physical geography affect its worldview?*

*It had*

According to Japanese mythology, two divine beings, the male izagani and the female Izanami , stood on the bridge of heaven and churned the ocean with a spear to make a small island of curdled salt. From that mystical beginning grew a string of islands-Japan Izanagi and Izanami looked at their creation and said “Why should we not produce someone who shall be lord of what is below heaven?” So they went on to bear the deities called kami who inhabited the land from that time forward.

For most of their long history, the Japanese have believed that their country is favored and protected by those gods. In 1274,Mongols rulers sent a large fleet from Asia that landed on Kyushu, the southern island of Japan. A typhoon forced the invaders to retreat. In 1281, the Mongols returned with thousands of ships and more than 100 000 men. The Japanese in their smaller, swifter boats defended their island well, but again a ferocious storm destroyed most of the Mongol fleet. Lucky huh? The Japanese called the storm kamikaze, a divine wind sent by the gods to defend their islands.

**PREDICT 🡪 How do you think the geographic location of Japan affected and shaped their worldview?**

They were isolated from other countries in a geographic term. They had a very rough and choppy sea between them and the mainland. They had limited knowledge of the outside world. They were self-sufficient so they had no need for trading and thus communication with other people.

**C:\Documents and Settings\kateweber\Local Settings\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\L1M7KQ2H\MC900018802[1].wmfThe Land of the Rising Sun**

Why do the Japanese describe their country as the “Land of the Rising Sun”?

Because Izanagi had a child called Amaterasu. At one point she decided to go into a cave and block it off with a boulder so the light went away. The gods tricked her to come out and bring light and hope back to the Japanese people.

The rulers or emperors of Japan were considered the descendants of Amaterasu. The emperor was believed to be divine (godlike).

**Maps and Identity: Pg. 263**

* What does the position of Japan say about how the Japanese viewed the importance of their country relative to the rest of the world?

Japanese names are written with the surname (LAST NAME) first. How would your name be written in Japanese? Schroer Alexander

With a land area of nearly 380,000 square kilometers, Japan is about 60% the size of Alberta.

Japan, however, has always had a larger population than Alberta. In 1600, Japan’s population was around 12 million!!! (Alberta only became a province in 1905)

Forested mountains and steep valleys cover about 80% of Japan. About 18% of the country is level enough to permit agriculture or settlement. The largest plat are in Japan is less than 200 kilometers across. The habitable areas of Japan with population density are mainly along the coast.

**A Land Apart**

If you were planning to visit Japan how would you travel there?

How long do you think it would take? Jet. Around 10 hours.

Because Japan is an island country it is geographically isolated from its nearest neighbors Korea, China and Russia.

Fig. 12-9: Map. What connection can you make between the shoreline and location of major Japanese cities? They are on the coast so that they can access the sea easy

The 185 km of ocean between Japan and Asia is very rough, making travel difficult. The western coast of Japan has fewer bays and inlets – logical places for harbors – than the eastern side. Evidence suggests that there was contact between peoples living in present-day Japan and China as early as the mid-200’s! Before 1500’s, Europeans did not have the means to reach Japan by sailing either across the Pacific or around the southern tip of Africa and across the Indian Ocean. It was extremely dangerous travel and took several months to do.

The Japanese chose freely the elements of other cultures that they wanted to include in their own. They borrowed the Chinese system of writing and later adapted it to create their own language and written characters.

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3. Choose the two provinces in Canada that you think are geographically the most similar to Japan. Create a Venn diagram to show your thinking about the geography of these three areas.

**Nature Shaping a Worldview**

The beauties of the natural landscape of Japan have always been a great source of pride to the Japanese people. Most of Japan experiences distinct, predictable seasons. Celebrations and rituals, or special ceremonies, mark the change in seasons, and have traditionally played an important part in all Japanese life.

Describe below why the cherry blossom is important to the Japanese

Represent new beginnings because they represent the shortness of beauty of life.

What is a haiku? Japanese poem with seventeen syllables. Five on the first and last line and seven in the middle.

Write your own haiku poem below!

This is Detention

An appalling injustice

I don’t belong here

Nature has a dominant role in the culture of the Ainu (the indigenous people of Japan). How are First Nations people of Canada and the Ainu similar? How are they different? Use the Venn diagram below to show this

*First Nations Ainu*

Voices: Nature and Culture pg. 269

Q1 Think it through:

A: I think they would welcome them but as they began industrializing the land they would be agitated by them. Canadians are welcoming to other people but the indigenous people here were mistreated by Europeans when they first came.

**Shinto: The way of the Spirits**  
What is Shinto? An ancient religion of Japan. Every element in nature have a god. Appreciating ancestors and the nature gods. Believe life is inherited from ancestors. Q2ws  
  
The love of nature is the most important aspect of Shinto. Shinto is based on the belief that sacred spirits called kami take the form of objects in nature such as mountains, trees and stones. Human beings become *kami* when they die and are honored by their families. To please and celebrate the kami, festivals called matsuriare held throughout the year.   
  
Shinto does not have a founder and there are no religious laws. The Japanese have borrowed aspects from both Buddhism and Confucianism. Borrowing has resulted in a distinctly Japanese form of worship.   
  
***The Dark Side of Nature***  
Japan is located in an area where several continental and oceanic tectonic plates meet. Earthquakes are caused by shifts in these plates. Every few decades, a major earthquake strikes Japan. When earthquakes happen on the ocean floor they may cause devastating waves called tsunami, which means “harbor wave”. In late summer and fall, Japan may be struck by typhoons - a type of tropical storm.   
  
Japan has a calm and violent side to it. How does the constant possibility of a natural disaster affect the people? They must be prepared for anything and must not be afraid of nature around them.  
  
  
  
Define **stoic** below: A person who can control his/her emotions and endures difficult experiences with patience.  
  
  
  
Why are the Japanese people described as being **stoic**? Because they always have to be prepared for any natural disasters.

Draw the timeline of the major disasters in Japanese history. Include the most recent natural disaster to hit Japan as well. Do this below:   
2011 earthquake, tsunami, meltdown  
  
  
  
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Q2: To what extent does nature contribute to your sense of identity? Do you think living in a primarily rural or primarily urban environment might affect your answer? Explain.

I think that I have been incredibly affected by nature and figure that I am a country kid. I think nature affected me in the way that I am closer to nature and animals.   
**A Self - Sufficient Country**  
What does it mean to be self-sufficient? Do you consider yourself to be self-sufficient?  
  
Japan had little trade with other countries prior to 1853. Yet, the country survived and prospered. Japan’s farmers and fishers provided sufficient food to feed the people. Wood came from the abundant forests. Silkworms and cotton plants provided material for clothing. Artisans made use of available metals. As a result, Japan was a self-sufficient country.   
Nature compensated for the limited amount of arable land, by making it very fertile. A temperate climate and dependable rainfall provided a longer growing season than is possible in Canada. Japan’s climate includes brief winter, so people had to grow enough food to last through the colder months.   
  
Rice was the main food of Japan. Although the poorest Japanese could afford rice only occasionally, it was - and remains - the food most associated with Japan and its culture. Growing rice is labor intensive, which means it requires a lot of time and person power to grow. For centuries, rice was also the Japanese money system. For tax purposes, land was valued by the amount of rice it could potentially produce.

What else do the Japanese eat? Draw pictures below showing the Japanese diet.   
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
{In 1853, Commodore Perry and his ships from America made contract with the Japanese.}  
  
Even though the geography of Japan would suggest division from other groups of people (mountains, forests, rivers, etc.), the Japanese have always thought of themselves as a homogeneous society.   
  
Define **homogenous** below:

Looks like one group but has many smaller amounts of different groups.  
The Ainu lived in the northern part of Japan for several thousand years in an area called Ezochi, Land of the Ezo (Ainu). The word *Ainu* means “human“. The Ainu had their own separate society and territory, but eventually the Japanese became to take over the Ainu lands. They Ainu fought several wars of resistance against Japanese control, but each time were defeated. The Japanese began a program of the Ainu people. They were forbidden to speak their own language or practice many of their customs, and were restricted to living in areas the government provided for them.

>>>Does this remind you of anything in Canadian history? Describe below :<<<

It reminds me of the first nations and the way that the Canadian government attempted to assimilate them in aggressive means. They also forbade them to speak their own language and practice their own customs. The Ainu and the first nations also had their own lands and language although the first nations never physically fought the British settlers.