

Asian Cultures

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Abstract

The culture of Asia encompasses collective and diverse customs and traditions of art, architecture, music, literature, lifestyle, philosophy, politics, and religion that have been practiced and maintained by the numerous ethnic groups of the continent of Asia since prehistory.

Most of the Asian cultures are predominantly collectivistic. In collectivistic cultures, individuals are seen as embedded within their group identity, and the notion of a separate, autonomous self is deemphasized.

There is a preference for social harmony concerned with socioeconomic prosperity and the collective well-being of the community; loyalty and respect towards figures of authority; a preference for collectivism.

Keywords

Civilization, culture, religion, Asian

Asian Cultures

Asia is home to the world's earliest civilizations. Its indigenous cultures pioneered many practices that have been integral to societies for centuries such as agriculture, city planning, and religion. The Social and political geography of the continent continues to inform and influence the rest of the world. Generally, its culture is valued by Confucianism, in particular filial piety or loyalty towards the family, corporation, and nation, the forgoing of personal

freedom for the sake of society's stability and prosperity; the pursuit of academic and technological excellence and a strong work ethic together.

Asia is the birthplace of 11 major religions whose written records include Judaism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, and the Bahai faith.

The most peculiar cultural customs you will find in Asia are:

- **Kick off your shoes:** One of the most common Asian traditions is taking off your shoes! You will find yourself removing your shoes before you enter the homes and temples of Asia.
- **Mind your head and feet:** In many Asian cultures, the head is considered to be the most sacred part of the body. You should never touch anyone on the head- even children or Buddha Statues. On the other hand, feet are considered the dirtiest part of the body as they touch the ground and are furthest from the head. You should never point the soles of your feet at anyone or anything sacred.
- **Slurping is good:** Many Asian countries are famed for their extreme politeness and courtesy especially when it comes to dining etiquette. Slurping is usually considered to be polite. For instance, In Japan, you show your appreciation for your noodles by slurping on them.
- **Share your food:** Another common Asian tradition is sharing food. Most Asian households like to prepare a bunch of dishes and share them all around a big table.
- **Pouring drinks:** In many Asian Cultures, if you are served a communal drink at a meal, you should never pour your drink from that bottle. It's a sign of greed.
- **Public displays of affection:** In practically every Asian Culture it's rude for members of the opposite sex to kiss, hug or hold hands in public. These are considered to be intimate

acts that are only done in private. But in a country like India hand holding between people of the same gender is ok. It's simply seen as a sign of companionship.

- **Gift giving:** If you want to give a gift to someone in Asia, check the etiquette and traditions. In China, people will refuse your gift a few times before accepting and you should never give someone a clock. In Singapore, never wrap your gift in blue, black, or white colors as this is similar to funeral customs. When in Thailand, try to wrap your gift in yellow or gold.
- **Asian New Year traditions:** In most Asian cultures, New Year is a big deal, but some countries don't celebrate it on the 1st of January. China and Vietnam celebrate the date according to the Lunar Calendar. While Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos celebrate their Buddhist New Year in April.

The top seven cultural values of Asia are:

- Personal control over the environment. People can/ should control nature, their environment, and their destiny.
- Change, / Mobility Change is seen as positive and good
- Time and its importance.
- Equality, / Egalitarianism
- Individualism, Independence, and Privacy
- Self-help
- Competition and free enterprise

Conclusion

Culture provides important, social and economic benefits. With improved learning and health, increased tolerance, and opportunities to come together with others, culture enhances our quality of life and increases our overall well-being for both individuals and communities.

About the Author

Ms. Rafika Rangwala is M.A. Eng. Literature. Schooled in the tough discipline of convent philosophy, she developed interests in creative fields early. She is actively pursuing Kathak. Writing is not only a hobby for her, but a medium to express herself in a way that defines her.

