

Document A

East Asia Boundaries

-Information provided by saylordotorg: Chapter 10 East Asia: World Regional Geography: People, Places and Globalization

East Asia is a large expanse of territory with China as its largest country. The countries of **Mongolia**, **North** and **South Korea**, and **Japan** are China's neighbors. The island of **Taiwan**, off the eastern coast of China, has an independent government that has been separated from mainland China since shortly after World War II. On the southern coast of China is **Hong Kong**, a former British possession with one of the best ports in Asia. Under an agreement of autonomy, Hong Kong and its port were turned over to the Chinese government in 1997. Next door, to the west of Hong Kong, is the former Portuguese colony of **Macau**, which has also been returned to Chinese control. In western China is the autonomous region of **Tibet**, referred to by its Chinese name, **Xizang**. Tibet has been controlled by Communist China since 1949, shortly after the People's Republic of China (PRC) was declared a country. Lobbying attempts by the Dalai Lama and others for Tibetan independence have not been successful. The region of Tibet has recently become more integrated with the country of China because of the immigration of a large number of Chinese people to the Tibetan region.

Figure 10.1 East Asia and Its Neighbors



China is the largest country in East Asia in both physical size and population. Other countries of East Asia include Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Japan. Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan are associated with mainland China.

Japan has emerged as the economic dragon of East Asia. Japanese people have a high standard of living, and the country has been an industrial and financial engine for the Pacific Rim. Up and coming economic tigers like Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and South Korea have also experienced strong economic growth and are strong competitors in the global economy. Balancing out the advances of the economic tigers and Japan is the extensive labor base of the Chinese people, which has catapulted the Chinese economy to its position as a major player in the global economy. Left behind in the region is North Korea, which has isolated itself behind an authoritarian dictatorship since World War II. A number of countries that were former enemies in World War II are now trading partners (e.g., China and Japan), as economic trade bridges cultural gaps with common goods and services. However, cultural and political differences between these countries remain.

East Asia is home to one-fifth of the human population. The realm's location on the Pacific Rim provides access for interaction with the global economy. The location of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, just off the coast of mainland China, creates an industrial environment that has awakened the human entrepreneurial spirit of the realm. Manufacturing has fueled the high-tech engines of the Pacific Rim economies, which have recently taken advantage of the massive labor pool of the Chinese heartland. Across the Pacific from East Asia are the superpower of the United States and its North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners, countries that are both competing against and trading with the East Asian Community (EAC). The Russian realm to the north of East Asia—especially its Pacific port of Vladivostok—continues to actively engage the East Asian nations.

Document A Analysis

1. What countries and regions make up East Asia?
2. Hong Kong was once the possession of what European country?
3. What is the Chinese name for Tibet?
4. How much of the human population is home to East Asia?
5. Write down something interesting that you learned about East Asia from reading this document?

Document B

East Asia Population Data

Countries in Eastern Asia

| Country | Population (2020) |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| China | 1,439,323,776 |
| Japan | 126,476,461 |
| South Korea | 51,269,185 |
| North Korea | 25,778,816 |
| Taiwan | 23,816,775 |
| Hong Kong | 7,496,981 |
| Mongolia | 3,278,290 |
| Macao | 649,335 |

-data provided by Worldometer

- The current population of **Eastern Asia** is **1,678,380,395** based on the latest United Nations estimates.
- Eastern Asia population is equivalent to **21.53%** of the [total world population](#).
- Eastern Asia ranks number **2** in [Asia](#) among [subregions ranked by Population](#).
- The population density in Eastern Asia is 145 per Km² (376 people per mi²).
- The total land area is 11,560,456 Km² (4,463,515 sq. miles)
- **64.3 %** of the population is **urban** (1,078,434,915 people in 2019).
- The **median age** in Eastern Asia is **39.4years**.

Population of Eastern Asia (2019 and historical)

| Year | Population | Yearly % Change | Yearly Change | Migrants (net) | Median Age | Fertility Rate | Density (P/Km ²) | Urban Pop % | Urban Population | Eastern Asia's Share of World Pop | World Population | Eastern Asia Rank within Asia |
|------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------------------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2020 | 1,678,089,619 | 0.4 % | 6,581,139 | -207,100 | 39.4 | 1.65 | 145 | 64.3 % | 1,078,434,915 | 22.7 % | 7,794,798,739 | 2 |
| 2020 | 1,678,089,619 | 0.33 % | 5,478,521 | -207,054 | 38.0 | 1.63 | 145 | 64.3 % | 1,078,434,915 | 21.5 % | 7,794,798,739 | 2 |
| 2019 | 1,672,611,098 | 0.37 % | 6,139,768 | -207,054 | 38.0 | 1.63 | 145 | 63.3 % | 1,059,488,755 | 21.7 % | 7,713,468,100 | |
| 2018 | 1,666,471,330 | 0.40 % | 6,703,335 | -207,054 | 38.0 | 1.63 | 144 | 62.4 % | 1,039,790,968 | 21.8 % | 7,631,091,040 | 2 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---------------|--------|------------|----------|------|------|-----|--------|---------------|--------|---------------|---|
| 2017 | 1,659,767,995 | 0.43 % | 7,133,315 | -207,054 | 38.0 | 1.63 | 144 | 61.4 % | 1,019,385,342 | 22.0 % | 7,547,858,925 | 2 |
| 2016 | 1,652,634,680 | 0.45 % | 7,450,754 | -207,054 | 38.0 | 1.63 | 143 | 60.4 % | 998,346,521 | 22.1 % | 7,464,022,049 | 2 |
| 2015 | 1,645,183,926 | 0.5 % | 8,064,898 | -107,400 | 37.7 | 1.63 | 142 | 59.4 % | 977,010,127 | 23.6 % | 7,379,797,139 | 2 |
| 2010 | 1,604,859,437 | 0.51 % | 8,133,426 | -342,200 | 35.8 | 1.59 | 139 | 54.1 % | 868,193,190 | 24.5 % | 6,956,823,603 | 2 |
| 2005 | 1,564,192,305 | 0.58 % | 8,882,199 | -287,300 | 33.3 | 1.57 | 135 | 48 % | 751,471,132 | 25.5 % | 6,541,907,027 | 2 |
| 2000 | 1,519,781,309 | 0.74 % | 11,043,335 | -47,400 | 30.7 | 1.60 | 131 | 41.8 % | 635,753,113 | 26.5 % | 6,143,493,823 | 1 |
| 1995 | 1,464,564,633 | 1 % | 14,245,967 | -144,500 | 28.1 | 1.81 | 127 | 37.8 % | 553,186,093 | 27.5 % | 5,744,212,979 | 1 |
| 1990 | 1,393,334,798 | 1.65 % | 21,876,901 | -44,900 | 25.8 | 2.60 | 121 | 33.8 % | 470,664,827 | 28.6 % | 5,327,231,061 | 1 |
| 1985 | 1,283,950,293 | 1.39 % | 17,164,896 | 13,500 | 24.4 | 2.45 | 111 | 30.6 % | 393,153,604 | 28.8 % | 4,870,921,740 | 1 |
| 1980 | 1,198,125,815 | 1.49 % | 17,084,602 | 32,700 | 22.9 | 2.86 | 104 | 27.4 % | 327,914,222 | 29.4 % | 4,458,003,514 | 1 |
| 1975 | 1,112,702,806 | 2.17 % | 22,653,536 | -112,500 | 21.2 | 4.42 | 96 | 25.4 % | 282,805,349 | 30.1 % | 4,079,480,606 | 1 |
| 1970 | 999,435,124 | 2.54 % | 23,529,469 | 207,500 | 20.2 | 5.57 | 86 | 25 % | 249,424,766 | 29.9 % | 3,700,437,046 | 1 |
| 1965 | 881,787,780 | 1.82 % | 15,181,384 | -220,700 | 20.6 | 5.49 | 76 | 17.1 % | 150,628,617 | 29.1 % | 3,339,583,597 | 1 |
| 1960 | 805,880,858 | 1.57 % | 12,062,459 | 55,200 | 21.6 | 5.05 | 70 | 22.8 % | 183,919,087 | 29.1 % | 3,034,949,748 | 1 |
| 1955 | 745,568,565 | 1.93 % | 13,606,662 | -35,900 | 22.2 | 5.63 | 64 | 20.2 % | 150,628,617 | 29.4 % | 2,773,019,936 | 1 |

Source: Worldometer (www.Worldometers.info)

Elaboration of data by United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Population Prospects: The 2019 Revision*. (Medium-fertility variant).

Document B Analysis

1. Which East Asian country has the largest population?
2. How much of the population is living in urban areas?
3. How much of the population is living outside of urban areas?
4. What is the median age in East Asia?
5. What do you notice about what is happening over time with the urban population number?
6. What do you notice about what is happening over time with the median age number?

Document C

East Asia Physical Geography

-Information provided by Saylor Academy



Physical Geography

East Asia is surrounded by a series of mountain ranges in the west, Mongolia and Russia in the north, and Southeast Asia to the south. The Himalayas border Tibet and Nepal; the **Karakoram Ranges, Pamirs**, and the **Tian Shan Mountains** shadow Central Asia; and the **Altay Mountains** are next to Russia. The **Himalayan Mountains** are among the highest mountain ranges in the world, and Mt. Everest is the planet's tallest peak. These high ranges create a rain shadow effect, generating the dry arid conditions of type B climates that dominate **western China**. The desert conditions of western China give rise to a large uninhabitable region in its center. Melting snow from the high elevations feed many of the streams that transition into the major rivers that flow toward the east.

Created by tectonic plate action, the many mountain ranges are also home to earthquakes and tremors that are devastating to human livelihood. The Indian tectonic plate is still pushing northward into the Eurasian plate, forcing the Himalayan ranges upward. With an average elevation of fifteen thousand feet, the Tibetan Plateau is the largest plateau region of the world. It has high elevations and type H climates. The plateau is sparsely populated and the only places with human habitation are the river valleys. Lhasa is the largest city of the sparsely populated region. Sometimes called "the Roof of the World," the Tibetan

Plateau is a land of superlatives. The small amount of precipitation that occurs often comes in the form of hailstorms mixed with wind. Its landscape is generally rocky and barren.

The vast arid regions of western China extend into the **Gobi Desert** between Mongolia and China. Colder type D climates dominate the Mongolian steppe and northern China. The eastern coast of the Asian continent is home to islands and peninsulas, which include Taiwan and the countries of Japan and North and South Korea. North Korea's type D climates are similar to the northern tier of the United States, comparable to North Dakota. Taiwan is farther south, producing a warmer tropical type A climate. The mountainous islands of Japan have been formed as a result of tectonic plates and are prone to earthquakes. Since water moderates temperature, the coastal areas of East Asia have more moderate temperatures than the interior areas do. A type C climate is dominant in Japan, but the north has a colder type D climate. The densely populated fertile river valleys of central and southeastern China are matched by contrasting economic conditions. Rich alluvial soils and moderate temperatures create excellent farmland that provides enormous food production to fuel an ever-growing population.

Most of China's population lives in its eastern region, called **China Proper**, with type C climates, fresh water, and good soils. China Proper has dense population clusters that correspond to the areas of type C climate that extend south from Shanghai to Hong Kong. Around the world, most humans have gravitated toward type C climates. These climates have produced fertile agricultural lands that provide an abundance of food for the enormous Chinese population. To the south the temperatures are warmer, with hot and humid summers and dry, warm winters. The climates of China Proper are conducive for human habitation, which has transformed the region into a highly populated human community. The **North China Plain** at the mouth of the **Yellow River** (*Huang He River*) has rich farmland and is the most densely populated region in China.

Northwest of Beijing is **Inner Mongolia** and the Gobi Desert, a desert that extends into the independent country of Mongolia. Arid type B climates dominate the region all the way to the southern half of Mongolia. The northern half of Mongolia is colder with continental type D climates. In the higher elevations of the highlands in western Mongolia, there is a section of type H highland climates. Its climate and location identify Mongolia as a landlocked country in the northern latitudes with a low level of precipitation. The areas of type D climate that extend north from Beijing through Northeast China at times receive more precipitation than northern Mongolia. Northeast China features China's great forests and excellent agricultural land. Many of China's abundant natural mineral resources are found in this area. Balancing mineral extraction with the preservation of agricultural land and timber resources is a perennial issue.

Lying north of the Great Wall and encompassing the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia is the vast Mongolian steppe, which includes broad flat grasslands that extend north into the highlands. North China includes the Yellow River basin as well as the municipalities of Beijing and Tianjin. Areas around parts of the Yellow River are superb agricultural lands, including vast areas of loess that have been terraced for cultivation. Loess is an extremely fine silt or windblown soil that is yellow in color in this region. Deciduous forests continue to exist in this region, despite aggressive clearcutting for agricultural purposes. The Great Wall of China rests atop hills in this region.

China and Its Main Climate Regions



Source: Updated from map courtesy of University of Texas Libraries, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_clothing.jpg.

Most of western China is arid, with a type B climate. Western China has large regions like the **Takla Makan Desert** that are uninhabited and inhospitable because of hot summers and long cold winters exacerbated by the cold winds sweeping down from the north. In a local Uyghur language, the name *Takla Makan* means “You will go in but you will not go out.” To the far west are the high mountains bordering Central Asia that restrict travel and trade with the rest of the continent. Northwestern China is a mountainous region featuring glaciers, deserts, and basins.

The central portion of China Proper is subtropical. This large region includes the southern portion of the **Yangtze River** (Chang Jiang River) and the cities of **Shanghai** and **Chongqing**. Alluvial processes give this area excellent agricultural land. Its climate is warm and humid in the summers with mild winters; monsoons create well-defined summer rainy seasons. Tropical China lies in the extreme south and includes **Hainan Island** and the small islands that neighbor it. Annual temperatures are higher here than in the subtropical region and rainfall amounts brought by the summer monsoons are at times very substantial. This area is characterized by low mountains and hills.

Document C Analysis

1. Which East Asian area(s) have warm weather during the winter?
2. Do any areas of East Asia have warm weather year-round? If so, what area(s)?
3. What recommended clothing should you pack when traveling to Beijing during the winter?
4. What place is called the “Roof of the World?”
5. What type of plain is at the mouth of the Yellow River? And why is it the most densely populated region in China?

Document D

River Basins of China

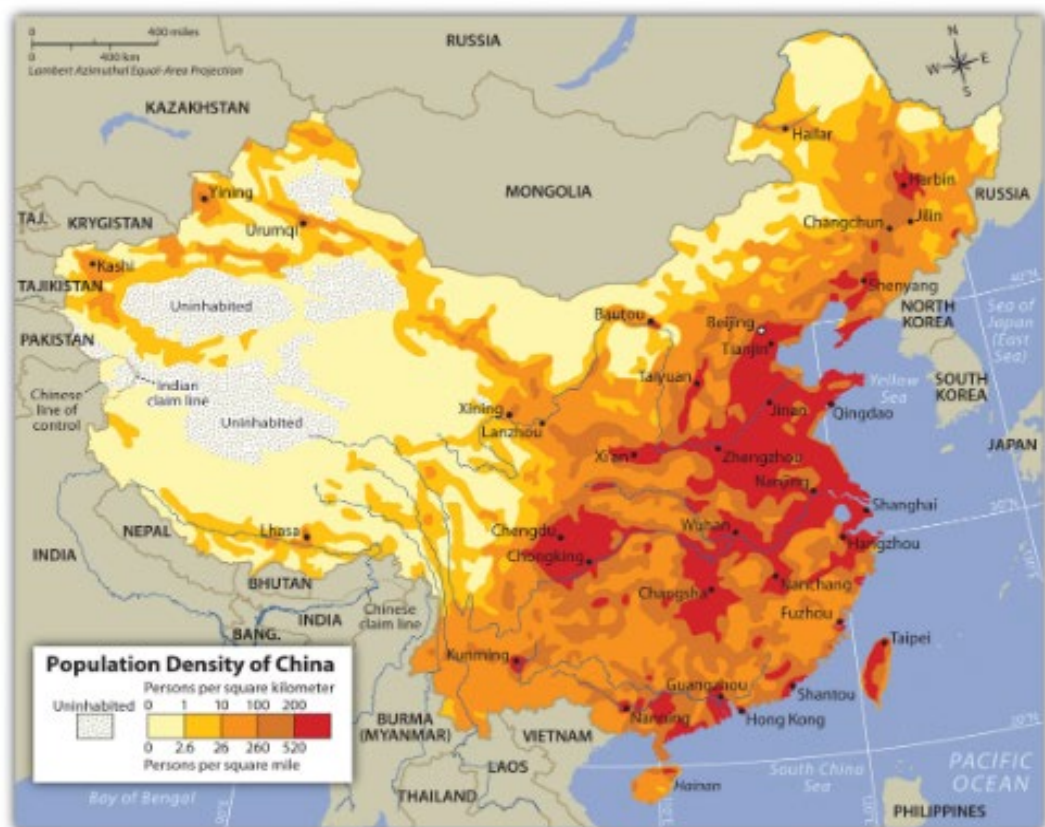
There are two major river systems that provide fresh water to the vast agricultural regions of the central part of China Proper. The Yellow River (Huang He River) is named after the light-colored silt that washes into the river. It flows from the Tibetan highlands through the North China Plain into the Yellow Sea. Dams, canals, and irrigation projects along the river provide water for extensive agricultural operations. Crops of wheat, sorghum, corn, and soybeans are common with vegetables, fruit, and tobacco grown in smaller plots. The North China Plain has to grow enough food to feed its one thousand people per square mile average density. This plain does not usually produce a food surplus because of the high demand from the large population of the region. Beijing borders the North China Plain. Its nearest port, **Tianjin**, continues to expand and grow, creating an economic center of industrial activity that relies on the peripheral regions for food and raw materials. Cotton is an example of a key industrial crop grown here.

The Yangtze River (Chang Jiang River) flows out of the Tibetan Plateau through the Sichuan Province, through the Three Gorges region and its lower basin into the East China Sea. Agricultural production along the river includes extensive rice and wheat farming. Large cities are located on this river, including Wuhan and **Chongqing**. **Nanjing** and Shanghai are situated near the delta on the coast. Shanghai is the largest city in China and is a growing metropolis. The **Three Gorges Dam** of the Yangtze River is the world's largest dam. It produces a large percentage of the electricity for central China. Oceangoing ships can travel up the Yangtze to **Wuhan** and, utilizing locks in the Three Gorges Dam, these cargo vessels can travel all the way upriver to Chongqing. The Yangtze River is a valuable and vital transportation corridor for the transport of goods between periphery and core and between the different urban centers of activity. Sichuan is among the top five provinces in China in terms of population and is dependent on the Yangtze River system to provide for its needs and connect it with the rest of China.

Northeast China was formerly known as Manchuria, named after the Manchu ethnic group that had dominated the region in Chinese history. Two river basins create a favorable industrial climate for economic activity. The lower **Liao River Basin** and the **Songhua River Basin** cut through Northeast China. The cities of **Harbin** and **Shenyang** are industrial centers located on these rivers. This region is known as the **Northeast China Plain**. It has extensive farming activities located next to an industrial landscape of smokestacks, factories, and warehouses. Considerable mineral wealth and iron ore deposits in the region have augmented the industrial activities and have created serious environmental concerns because of excessive air and water pollution. In its zenith in the 1970s, this was China's main steel production area, but the region is

being reduced to a rustbelt since many of China's manufacturing centers are now being developed in the southern regions of China Proper.

Figure 10.4 China and Its Main Population Regions



The region of eastern China that is favorable to large populations is called China Proper. River basins historically produce abundant food, which in turn leads to concentrated populations.

The southernmost region of China Proper is home to the **Pearl River Basin**, an important agricultural and commercial district. Though smaller in size than the Yangtze River Basin, major global urban centers are located on its estuary, where the mouth of the river flows into the South China Sea. The system includes the Xi River, Pearl River, and their tributaries. As the third-longest river system in China, these rivers process an enormous amount of water, and have the second-highest volume of water flow after the Yangtze. **Guangzhou**, Macau, and Hong Kong are the largest cities located here, alongside the rapidly expanding industrial center of **Shenzhen**.

As mentioned earlier, Macau was a former Portuguese colony and Hong Kong was a former British colony. These urban areas are now hubs for international trade and global commerce. Guangzhou is one of the largest cities in China, along with Shanghai, Beijing, Wuhan, and Tianjin. Cantonese heritage and traditions form a foundation for the cultural background of the people who live here.

Figure 10.5 Xi-Pearl River System



An estuary is a wide area at the mouth of a river where it meets the sea. Hong Kong is located on the eastern side of the Pearl River Estuary, and the former Portuguese colony of Macau is located on the western side of the waterway.

Source: Updated from map courtesy of Croquant, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pearl_River_Delta_Area.png.

Document D Analysis

1. What are the two major river systems that provide fresh water to the central part of China?
2. What is the name of the world's largest dam?
3. Name some agricultural operations that the Yellow River provides.
4. Name the two river basins that cut through Northeast China.
5. What do you notice about the population density in China? And why are most people living in those areas?

Document E

Explore the diversity of East Asian religions



OMF International Data

East Asia's religions are foundational to the political, social and educational development to its countries and peoples. Today, religious beliefs continue shaping the decisions and practices of people: Buddhism in Thailand, Islam in Malaysia and many others, including a growing number of Christians throughout the region. For many in these collectivist societies, one's religion is determined by the culture and reinforced through family legacy. New beliefs lend themselves to syncretism as people search for a sense of fulfillment while staying loyal to cultural expectations.

Animism

The word “animism” derives from the Latin word *anima*, meaning soul or breath. It is usually applied to any religious beliefs that recognize spirits or a spirit world inherent in the physical world. Animism can be found in many tribal or primal religions. Primal religions are those which are ancient, in existence before the advent of world religions such as Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. There are many such religions in East Asia, particularly in rural or undeveloped areas, island communities and among tribal groups or minority nationalities. Animism is also found in most of the world religions in East Asia as folk religion.

Buddhism

Buddhism encompasses a series of beliefs based on the teachings of Buddha, who was born in the sixth century B.C. Buddha taught that humans are in a state of suffering produced by their attachment to temporal things. Only by releasing our desires can we avoid suffering, and in doing so, reach a more enlightened state. Reaching nirvana—the ultimate state of enlightenment—is the highest goal. Buddhism originated in India but spread to Southeast Asia and China, eventually permeating most of East Asia. In many parts of East Asia, local animistic beliefs mix with Buddhism to create Folk Buddhism.

Confucianism

Confucianism is a collection of ideologies developed from teachings of the Chinese philosopher, Confucius (ca. 551-479 B.C.). Confucius’ philosophies address every facet of life, from political to educational systems, as well as community and family life. He taught the importance of love and concern for others, to be achieved through self-discipline and being mindful of others. Confucianism began as a Chinese belief system and even today is most prevalent in China, but has since spread to other nations, particularly Korea, Japan and Vietnam.

Cults

A cult is an unorthodox, deviant religious group, which is devoted to a person, thing or set of ideas. People who join cults are often dissatisfied with the world or unsure of their place in it. Cults offer answers, asserting that the world is corrupt and unreliable. It can be difficult to leave a cult. The world outside can seem frightening and evil. Cults usually teach how to behave, live, think and sometimes how to use their money, what to wear and where to live. Most cults require worship of or dependence upon the leader and encourage dependence upon other members or the whole group. Some demand a promise of commitment, an initiation ceremony, financial input, active evangelism, participation in ritual.

Daoism

Daoism is considered both a philosophical and religious system that advocates unity with the natural flow of the universe. Its adherents try to align themselves with Dao, or “the way.” Daoism, like Confucianism, traces its beginnings back to China and to this day influences much of Chinese thought. Daoism has since spread to other regions of the world, though in East Asia it is most prevalent in China, Singapore and Taiwan.

Folk Christianity

The Philippines is known as the only Christian country in East Asia. About 66 percent of the population is nominal or committed Roman Catholic and about seven percent of the population is Protestant. However, much of the Christianity is mixed with animism, creating Folk Christianity.

Hinduism

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest and most influential religions. It is extremely diverse. Different practices and beliefs occur in different countries, regions and villages. At one time Hinduism was widespread in Southeast Asia. From around 600 b.c. it extended from India into Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines. In most of East Asia it was later obscured by Buddhism and Islam. It still prevails in Bali and parts of East Java and since the late 1800s has been reintroduced to Peninsular Malaysia.

Islam

Islam is a monotheistic religion based on the worship of Allah (the Arabic name for God). Islam derives its teachings from the Qur'an, the Muslim Holy Book containing the inspired words of Allah, as dictated to the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century A.D. The Five Pillars are the five essential acts of obedience required by Muslim believers. Islam is the second-largest religion in the world. Its origins stem from the Middle East but it has since become a widely followed religion in East Asia. The pervasive influence of local animistic beliefs, particularly in Southeast Asia, create a type of Folk Islam in some areas.

Shinto

Shinto is a mix of ancient religions and religious rites which have been followed in Japan since prehistoric times. The literal translation of Shinto means "the way of kami," or "the way of god," though Shinto followers worship no Supreme Being. The kami are various objects of the natural world, as well as ancestral beings, that are believed to possess supernatural forces. Shintoism is less about a belief system and more about the rituals performed to revere kamis and the divine presence within them. Japanese culture is deeply influenced by Shintoism, such that even Japanese who claim no personal religion can be found engaging in Shinto rituals.

Document E Analysis

1. What is Animism?
2. Which religion literally translates into "the way of kami?"
3. Which country is known as the only Christian country in East Asia?
4. Which religion developed from the teachings of Confucius?
5. How does someone reach the "enlightened state" in Buddhism?
6. Which religion did you find most interesting and why?