Japanese People and Society
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Japanese People

Image and Reality
Japan’s highest peak, Mt. Fuji, as seen from Lake Kawaguchi in April. It remains snow-covered until June.
Osaka looks forward to the 21st Century

Osaka people have always been ready to try something new, and they did it again by electing Japan’s first female governor. Osaka is moving in new directions to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Osaka Prefecture’s new governor looks back in time, when the region developed its own culture, and talks about the industrial energy that has molded Osaka.

Written by Ota Fusae, Governor of Osaka Prefecture

Osaka Castle was built at the end of the 16th century. The castle building shown here was reconstructed in 1931. The Osaka Business Park (OBP) now looks over the castle, symbolizing the new direction being taken by the city.
Foreigner's Residential District in Kobe

A Traditional European Town Overlooking One of Japan’s Major International Ports

Following the end of Japan’s policy of national seclusion, which continued for over 200 years in the Edo period (1603-1868) and under which trade, traffic and exchange with most foreign countries were prohibited, Kobe became the third port, after Nagasaki and Yokohama, to be opened to foreign trade in 1867. Approximately 30 Western-style buildings constructed in the 19th and early 20th centuries and used as residences for foreign consuls or trading company officials remain standing to this day in the so-called Ijinkan Street in the Kitanomachi district near the center of Kobe. Towards the south these houses overlook the harbor and to the north they offer a view of the Rokko mountains, creating a European-style street scene surrounded by the majesty of nature.

This entire neighborhood is designated as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Historic Buildings, and in fact, several of the buildings themselves are protected as Important Cultural Properties. While many of these foreigners’ residences are open to the public as art museums or sightseeing attractions, a few are still actually occupied by people living there. Although rarely seen in Japan, an Islamic mosque and a Jainist temple co-exist nearby and contribute to the cultural kaleidoscope.

Although most of these foreigners’ residences were severely damaged in the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of January 1995, they have all been restored and reopened to the public.
Since its establishment as the capital of Japan, then called Heian-kyo, in 794, Kyoto remained as the Imperial resident capital for over a thousand years and prospered as the center of Japanese culture. Many Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines were founded in the city and the surrounding area under the patronage of the Emperors and Shoguns (warrior elite leaders), and remain today as they used to be. Each building accurately represents the culture of the historical period when it was built. Thus the whole Kyoto could be regarded as a museum of Japanese history.

Heian-kyo was modeled after Chinese city Chang-an, the capital of Tang China, and the square grid system of roads and streets then created still forms the center of Kyoto City. Because the central Heian-kyo was made primarily to be a place for civic functions, temples were built in the surrounding mountains, and the country villas of the aristocracy were built in places of scenic beauty. During this period, an aristocratic culture centered around the Imperial court flourished. Characterized by finesse, sumptuousness, and harmonization with nature, this court culture became a model of Japanese culture itself.

In the late 12th century, warrior elite families came to gain power. In addition to aristocratic culture and Buddhist culture introduced from China, powerful warrior elite culture became influential and the three cultures coexisted, influencing one another. The highly refined culture which prospered in the 14th and 15th centuries under the established rule of the military Shogunate reflects deep admiration for aristocratic culture and the influence of the Zen Sect of Buddhism. This cultural prosperity can be traced in many of the Zen temples that were built during the period and buildings and gardens used as the shoguns’ villas.
Jingu Shrine in Ise

2000 Years of History, Yet Never Gets Older Than 20

Jingu Shrine in Ise City, Mie Prefecture, consists of two major shrines, Naiku (Inner Shrine) and Geku (Outer Shrine), and other affiliated shrines. The Inner Shrine enshrines Amaterasu Omikami, the sun goddess, from whom the imperial family claimed descent, and the Outer Shrine, about six kilometers (3.7 miles) away from the other, is dedicated to Toyouke, the goddess of agriculture and sericulture. Legend says that the shrine has been standing for 2000 years. As the most ancient and most sacred of the Shinto shrines in Japan, the Jingu Shrine has always been held in high esteem by the Japanese people.
Seto Ohashi Bridge

The Longest Combined Road and Rail Bridge in the World

Data

**Location:** Between Kurashiki City, Okayama Pref. and Sakaide City, Kagawa Pref.

**Construction Period:** October 10, 1978 to April 10, 1988.

**Total length of the bridges over the sea:** 9.4 km (5.8 mi)

**Steel materials used:** 700,000 ton

The route via the Seto Ohashi Bridge was the first of the three routes linking Honshu and Shikoku opened to traffic. In an area studded with many islands, this route hops from one island to another across the Seto Inland Sea. Joining the city of Kurashiki in Okayama Prefecture on the Honshu side with Sakaide City in Kagawa Prefecture on the Shikoku side, the complete route was opened in 1988. Stretching across a total distance of 9.4 kilometers (5.8 miles) there are six bridge sections that span the gaps between islands that lie between the two cities, as well as four viaducts on the islands themselves. The whole route is a double-decker construction, with an expressway running above a railway. In terms of scale, it is the largest combined road and rail bridge system in the world. Among all, the 1100-meter (3,609-foot) central span of the 1,723-meter (5,653-foot) long Minami Bisan Seto Ohashi Bridge at the southernmost end is on its own the world’s longest combined road and rail bridge.
Tsukuba Science City is a research and education center in Tsukuba City in southwest Ibaraki Prefecture. In the early 1960s, it was decided to move research institutes affiliated to government offices and national educational institutes to ease overconcentration of population in the Tokyo Metropolitan area and to promote science and technology as well as advance of education. By 1980, 43 national organizations for research and education had moved to the 27-square kilometer (10.4-square mile) site in Tsukuba. Tsukuba Science City leads scientific and technological research in Japan. In 1985, it hosted the international Tsukuba Science Expo.

Today, more than 200 research facilities, including laboratories of private companies built in the neighboring area, have been set up in Tsukuba Science City, and are conducting advanced experiments and research in various scientific fields in an environment surrounded by natural blessings. The national University of Tsukuba, the core of Tsukuba Science City, has research facilities of many disciplines that are used by researchers from around the country.
**Hybrid Car**

Cars that can be used normally and that minimize the burden on the environment

In December 1997, Toyota began marketing a hybrid car as a general passenger car.

The merit of this car is that it handles the same as existing cars—it does not involve any changes to a car's fundamental performance—while reducing harmful effects on the Earth's environment.

Through the combination of a high-efficiency gasoline engine with an electric motor, the car's fuel efficiency is roughly 100% greater than, existing gasoline-powered cars and emissions are reduced to approximately one-tenth.
Changing Society

- Population structure (see print)
- Family structure
- Traditions
- Religions (see print)
- News media
- Gradually changing values
Comparative Culture

- Other-oriented values
- Individual and peer group
- Taking responsibility
- Concept of time
- Environment and nature
- Status and hierarchy
- Male-female differences
- Importance of age
Social Behavior

- Inside and Outside (uchi & soto)
- Competition and Harmony
- Politeness and conformity
- Obligations (gimu, on, giri)
- Honne and tatemae impression
- Language and body language
- Symbolism of objects and gifts
The Lonely Crowd

- Avoiding confrontation
- Face and F2F rituals
- Fashions and fads
- Accessories & gadgets
- Envy and jealousy
- Indirectness and secrets
- Privacy of home space
- Attachment to land and place
- Too expensive to have children
- Obstacles to meeting strangers
Leisure

- TV
- Music
- Sports (see print)
- Mobile phones
- Computers and Internet
- Shopping
- Traveling
- Reading
- Drinking
My Japanese family

- Lessons in Other-Orientedness
- Pressures to assimilate
- Child-raising
- Husband-wife relationship
- Employment and faithfulness
- Fitting in while sticking out