

Study Guide for trial RPT: Culture, Religious Studies, & Asia

(corresponding to on-line readings linked to the syllabus, including "Dimensions of Religious Culture" & EB listings; IAR, chapter 1 recommended)

Topics, Readings & Terms	Important Details	Related Primary Sources
<p>1. Cultural History & Religious Studies (“<u>Dimensions of Culture</u>” in the on-line syllabus; EB: "Study of Religion" & IAR, ix-x, 2-3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(look for: culture unseen powers/forces practice community god(s) study of religion</p>	<p>(a) culture analyzes as composed of three “dimensions”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflection about/awareness of/trust in unseen powers & forces • engagement and trust in practices • involvement in family and ethnic communities <p>(b) religious studies as both interdisciplinary & a distinct discipline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scholars draw on theory & methods of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, literary & linguistic analysis • history especially central <p>(c) diverse applications of the terms “God” & “gods”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ultimate reality & judge vs. angels, dead saints & ancestors • use of icons and myths • scholars of religion typically use more neutral terminology 	<p style="text-align: center;">Required: “The Creatures, Objects, & Mysteries of Xg57H4y” (on-line PPT)</p>
<p>2. “The Strange Culture of Xg57H4y” [a fictitious counterexample of how NOT to study foreign cultures]</p>	<p>(a) evidence from the remote planet Xg57H4y</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visual data samples & fragmentary documents encoded in printed symbols retrieved from the long dead-civilization on Xg57H4y. • documents reflect ideas and practices important to at least some of the creatures living on Xg57H4y, though connection to images unclear. <p>(b) creatures, objects, & landscapes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hairy creatures outnumbered but of superior intelligence & character; manic smooth-skinned creatures plagued by deformities & disease. • landscapes of extraordinary beauty largely ignored by smooth-skinned creatures, though instruments of often placed in such landscapes. • smooth-skinner creatures primarily isolated in structures of their own making, whose diversity of form suggests differences in social status. <p>[(c) underlying intention: consciously <i>misrepresenting</i> human culture.]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Optional: “Xg57H4y Investigation Packet” (6 MB download from link in syllabus)</p>

<p>3. Geographical & Historical Diversity of Asia (see EB: "Asia," "Human Geography" & IAR, 4-6)</p> <p>(look for:)</p> <p>human geography Asia</p>	<p>(a) diversity of both physical & human geography</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inner Asia: endless forests & plains, with some rivers & mountains; extreme winters & summers make agriculture nearly impossible. • SW Asia: primarily considered in relation to Semitic cultures • South Asia: high mountains & several deserts in the north restrict access, semitropical forests in peninsula made travel difficult; agricultural cycles linked to cyclical monsoon rains. • SE Asia: also mountains in north but otherwise mainly coastline & numerous islands linked by sea, also subject to cycles of monsoon. • East Asia: large expanse with internal mountain ranges, large rivers, seacoasts & islands lead to sharp regional & cultural divisions. <p>(b) diverse cultures & uneven access to historical evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China: inward looking culture with detailed records since 1500 BCE. • SE Asia: evidence primarily from archeology & inscriptions • South Asia: dating of events much less systematic 	<p>Optional:</p> <p>“map of Asia” www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/asia_ref02.jpg</p> <p>(or simply use the link from top of “Course Overview” page in the on-line syllabus)</p>
<p>4. Shamanism & Other Indigenous Asian Traditions (see EB: "Shamanism" & IAR, 7-11)</p> <p>(look for:)</p> <p>shaman</p>	<p>(a) NE Asian term used in broader context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • actual term “shaman” derived from culture of Tungusic herders • used broadly to refer to religious ideas and practices persisting all over Asia, often in conflict with specialists of more formal religions <p>(b) the shamanic worldview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all things are imbued with life to to some extent consciousness; & a multitude of invisible spirits affect the visible world. • shaman’s abilities • shaman’s training • shaman’s public duties 	<p>Required:</p> <p>"Possession by Changun" (@ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRIUy2dyBQA)</p> <p>“Festivals: the Tsam Ceremony” (@ http://www.asiasociety.org/arts/mongolia/tsam.html)</p>