

# ASIA

## IN THE CORE CURRICULUM

By  
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**T**oday no one doubts the importance of Asia in world affairs, or questions the need to give it a larger place in American education. Indeed, the great expansion of Asian studies since World War II testifies to the increased awareness of this need. For the most part, however, this expansion has taken the form of elective programs in Asian studies for students majoring in one or another area or disciplinary field. Little headway has been made in reaching the great majority of American students through general education programs. If Asia figures at all in the required curriculum, it is usually in the form of options offered under one or another distribution or language requirement, which leaves many students free to choose otherwise. ♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

\*\*\*\*\*The question then becomes how we can do more, how can most students—not just a few majors and specialists, but the majority who are going on into business, government or professional work—be appropriately introduced to the values of Asian cultures in a way that serves their basic humanistic education rather than just expanding the range of their intellectual skills or competencies?

These days much that passes for general education is essentially skill oriented, not value oriented. Such programs promote diversity and versatility through distribution requirements but give students little help in focusing attention and considered reflection on the central concerns of human life and society. In this respect, then, one feels a need to distinguish between general education, which in practice has allowed a choice among distribution requirements, and a genuine core curriculum, which dares to minimize student options and instead compels undergraduates to grapple together with key issues and shared concerns.

Historically speaking, the term “general education” gained currency in mid-twentieth century America as applied to efforts at reform of university education, increasingly dominated as it had become by departmental specialization in graduate schools, and by an elective system in undergraduate colleges that lent itself to the same trend toward specialization. “General education” today, whether as a term or as a practice, has become, on account of its very generality and vagueness, an anachronism which might better be replaced by a better defined core curriculum. Further, the more recent movement for what is called “multicultural education,” only underscores the need for an education that has both a better defined core and multicultural, especially Asian, dimensions.

The genesis of these educational reform movements came with the abandonment of the classical “liberal” education that had prevailed in British and American colleges, wherein the required languages had been Greek, Latin, and sometimes Hebrew, and the classic texts studied by “liberally educated” young men were read in those

languages. When these language requirements were abandoned in the early twentieth century, a serious question arose as to how the humanistic values of a classical education would survive if students no longer read these classics in the original. The answer was to read them in translation and discuss them in courses required of all students as part of their common education.

The justification for requiring all students to engage together in reading and discussion of such classics was a civic one: that, along with the inescapable trend toward academic specialization, colleges should educate their students to deal in an informed way with the shared problems of contemporary society. Preparation for leadership and citizenship were undoubtedly among the educational aims, but the method of personal engagement with urgent contemporary problems, through active class discussion (rather than just listening to lectures), was almost an end in itself. In other words, the discussion method promoted active civil discourse on the nature of civility.

These, then, were the shared moral and social concerns, along with a sense of corporate responsibility in addressing them in a collegial fashion, that justified limiting the students’ full freedom of election—while also, it is important to add, limiting the faculty’s freedom to teach whatever its individual members chose in the way of their own specialties. In the interests of education, the faculty had to subordinate their personal research interests to the needs of a common curriculum, taught in a collegial fashion.

Subsequently, the idea of having a “required core” spread widely, but one hardly need mention today that the original sense of corporate responsibility and esprit de corps on the part of the faculty has since proved difficult to sustain, and as this true “esprit de corps” has become dissipated, “core” at many places now only means “what is required,” while few remember why. Usually it amounts only to a distribution requirement—at best a methodological smorgasbord.

In the light of this experience, one can say that the very generality and flexibility of so-called “general education” lent itself too readily to centrifugal tendencies in

academia. And it is likewise from this experience that one may draw an important lesson concerning the need to refocus attention on common human concerns. Though "a common humanity" may itself be a difficult philosophical question, if it ceases even to be a question, a key issue for shared discussion, we are in deep trouble, exposed to all the divisiveness of special ethnic and political claims on multiculturalism. For this, the important thing is to have a common reading list conducive to shared discourse and collegial discussion—an on-going, open-ended dialogue between past and present, sometimes referred to as "The Great Conversation,"<sup>1</sup> because the great minds have spoken to each other, commented on their forbears, and argued with them over the centuries.

True core courses in the Western humanities have continued to make use of major works, not just to learn from the past, but to put before students models that challenge them personally, stretching the intellect and exercising the moral imagination. Thus, the true greatness of "great books," from this educational point of view, has lain, not in their perfection as final statements, but in their pivotal quality, their ability to focus on key issues and expose the mind to crucial alternatives. Far from settling things, they have been seen as unsettling, always open to reinterpretation. They have encouraged reflective thinking, critical analysis, and the formulation of the student's own grounds for positive commitment. The canon (if such it be) and the questioning of it have gone together.

Core, in this sense, has referred not just to content or canon but to process and method—to a well-tested body of challenging material, cultivated habits of reflective critical discourse, and procedures for reexamination and redefinition. A viable core can neither be slave to the past nor captive to the preoccupations, pressures, or fashions of the moment. It should serve rather to advance the student's intellectual growth and self-awareness, cultivate his powers of thought and expression, and prepare him to take a responsible part in society.

Almost from the beginning however, the proponents of this type of Humanities

course at Columbia were conscious of its initial Western focus and anxious to extend its horizons. In the syllabus of the original honors course "Classics of the Western World," on which the required Humanities course was modeled, "West" signified an acknowledgment of inadequacy and limitation, not an affirmation of Eurocentrism. And no sooner had the required Humanities course been added to the core in 1937-38 than leaders of the movement (though none of them Orientalists or Asianists themselves) began to agitate and plan staff development for counterpart courses in Asian civilizations and humanities, which were added as soon as practicable after World War II.

The way in which this was done is highly significant for the present debate on multiculturalism: its focus was on core concerns, humanity and civility, and the method of instruction continued to put a premium on collegial discussion—that is, practice in civil discourse. No assumption was made of the superiority of Western ways or values or the primacy of a European canon, but only of the presence in other major civilizations, and in other major traditions, of great depth, complexity, and longevity, of comparable discourses on perennial human concerns and issues, which we should try to make our own to the extent that translation allowed.

This assumption of a parallel discourse had no difficulty gaining confirmation from Asian works themselves, but there being no such thing as an "Asian tradition" (in the sense of "pan-Asian"), some judgment had to be exercised in identifying the major traditions or civilizations to be focused on in a one-year course; in our case, Islamic, Indian (including both Buddhist and Hindu traditions), Chinese and Japanese.<sup>2</sup> Here, however, our fundamental assumption concerning the nature

of any tradition or canon was that it be self-defining and self-confirming. Thus, it was not for us to find counterparts to Western classic models but only to recognize what Asians themselves had long since ratified as works commanding special respect, either through enduring appeal or irrepressible challenge.

Within each major tradition, this dialogue has taken place through a process of constant, repeated cross referencing and back referencing, internal to the tradition and largely independent of external involvement except to the extent that, from at least the seventeenth century onwards, writers in the West, great and not so great, have confirmed for themselves what Indians, Chinese, and Japanese have long held in esteem. Thus, in the Islamic tradition, Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Khaldūn have based themselves on the Quran and commented on the great Sufis, while European writers, no less than middle-Eastern, from medieval times onwards, have recognized the greatness of Al-Ghazālī and more recently Ibn Khaldūn. Something similar is true of India, with the Upanishads taking up the discourse from the earlier Vedas, the Gita from the Upanishads, and Shankara from both and from the Buddhists. It is also true of China, with Mencius drawing on Confucius, Xun Zi commenting on both Confucius and Mencius, the Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi taking issue with the Confucians, and so on. Almost all of the great classics of the Asian traditions have established each other as major players in their own league, members (even if competitors) in their own discursive company.

It is of crucial importance, however, that enough of the original discourse be reproduced so that this internal dialogue can be recognized and meaningfully evaluated by the reader. For the reader (or discussant)

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to recognize and judge the adequacy of one author's representation of another requires some familiarity with the original work. Further, though the particular examples given above are drawn more from the religious and philosophical domain, the same is no less true of the literary. Indeed, in any domain the matter of genre, voice, and medium of expression enters strongly into the judgment of what is considered either classic form or canonical wisdom.

[At this point I should add parenthetically that the Columbia program includes parallel courses in Asian civilizations, with a more historical, developmental, and social emphasis, as well as courses in Asian music and art humanities. Thus, the overall program is less bibliocentric than my discussion thus far might lead one to believe. But it is in the discussion of the classic works that one can most easily observe the kind of civil discourse that should be incorporated in the larger discourse aimed at here.]

So fundamental are the foregoing considerations to any kind of multicultural education that, just to include one or two such works in a world civilization, world history, or world literature course is almost worse than nothing at all. It is tokenism, and even if such a course is equally and uniformly sparing in its representation of all cultural artifacts, it is only tokenism on a grander and more dangerous scale. If one's initial framework is a civilization or humanities course already established to deal with Western models, the addition of just one or two Indian or Chinese works will almost always be prejudicial, no matter how innocently intended, for in such a case the individual Asian work, bereft of its own context, will inevitably be read in a Western frame of reference by Western readers.

No one can prescribe a fixed number or minimum of classic works to be included in any such multicultural program. As a rule of thumb, however, I suggest that five

or six such works are the minimum necessary to establish the context of any particular discourse into which one might hope to gain entry, assuming that the works are well chosen to complement and take issue with one another, and suggest not only the range of possibilities within a given tradition, but also how it has grown and developed. For unless the cumulative nature of the discourse, its continuities, discontinuities, and mature syntheses are to some extent represented, the tendency of the reader is to see individual works as in themselves embodying some static essence of the culture, rather than landmarks along the way.

Today in a multicultural education that serves human commonality as well as cultural diversity, both content and method may vary in different educational situations, but a core program should make the repossession (both sympathetic and critical) of a given society's main cultural traditions the first priority in general education, then move on, in a second stage, to a similar treatment of other major world cultures.

It is best, if at all possible, for the process to extend to more than one "other" culture than one's own, so that there is always some point of triangulation and a multicultural perspective predominates over simplistic we/they, self/other, East-West comparisons. This allows for significant cross-cultural comparisons quite apart from those that the student naturally makes between his or her own and any one other culture.

Above I have suggested "civility" and "humanity" (to which "the common good" or "commonality" could well be added) as basic categories or core concepts, but a main reason for starting the process with source readings or original texts has been to proceed inductively—to ask, in the reading of these works, what are the primary questions being addressed in each, what are the defining concepts and values of the

discourse, in what key terms have they expressed both their proximate and ultimate concerns? As a matter of educational coherence, it is best to work out from some center, however tentatively constructed or even contested, to the outer reaches of human possibility. And for purposes of establishing the grounds for carrying on civil discourse, some working consensus, initially tradition based but increasingly multicultural, is needed.

The priorities and sequence just proposed would, it seems to me, be applicable to almost any cultural situation. One would naturally expect each educational program to "ingest" its own culture first, and then move on to ingest others. Indeed, one would concede this possibility to others as a right—that in Japanese schools, for instance, Japanese Civilization would have priority over European; in India, Indian Civilizations, and so forth. Starting from the premise that every person and people needs its own self-respect, as well as a minimum of respect from others, it is essential for each to have a proper self-understanding—to come to terms with its own past. When properly understood, most traditions will be revealed as multicultural themselves.

Nevertheless, in view of the great displacement of peoples and cultures that has occurred in the past century, it is evident that not a few peoples, as minorities submerged in other dominant cultures, have been unable to choose for themselves, to maintain their own traditions. Others, responding to the challenge of the modern West, have gone so far as to relinquish or even repudiate their own traditions, and thus, for the moment at least, have lost consciousness of their own past or roots as anything worthy of respect. Yet, we must regard this as an abnormal and unnatural condition that in the long run will tend to right itself if allowed to do so.

The key to success in such an endeavor is how well one defines core human issues and how one selects the classics that can illuminate these issues from among the larger body of works recognized as perennial classics in the respective traditions. This requires constant reflection, reexamination, and dialogue among world traditions. But as each civilizational tradition participates in this multicultural

discourse, we can hope gradually to expand the horizons of civil discourse and the scope of shared civilizational values. In my view, the basic format and method of such an Asian humanities course would serve the purposes of a multicultural core curriculum anywhere, East or West, and provide common reference points for the discussion of outstanding global issues.

Important as it is, however, to develop this multicultural dialogue on a global scale, it is still more important that serious learning start with the student. When the great Neo-Confucian teacher Zhu Xi (1130-1200) explained the text of the classic Great Learning, he said it was meant to serve as a means of learning to become a great human being (*ta-jen*) or great person. "Great learning" also had connotations of "higher" learning, and "great person" had the meaning, too, of "adult" or "mature." Zhu Xi believed that the learning process set forth in this text was to start at the age of fifteen. Confucius had been quoted in the Analects as saying that "at fifteen he set his heart on learning" and by thirty had established himself in its pursuit, could "stand on his own feet." In other words, although Confucius had undoubtedly learned something before that age, it was at fifteen that he became consciously committed to and took responsibility for his own education. According to the Analects' version of it, the process was lifelong, but it had to begin with Confucius' own self-involvement and conscious commitment.

School curricula for Zhu Xi focused in a selective and sequential way on a range of classic texts, not limited to the Confucian tradition. His method called for the student—now removed from home and a family-controlled environment—to read and confront the original text himself, and to form, at least tentatively, his own ideas about it. Then he should discuss it with others who had read it, and consult the traditional commentaries. That process, once started, would go on throughout life as an interactive one between self and others, self and cultural tradition, self and active life experience in society, etc. But it had to start with taking responsibility for oneself, for one's own life, and for the learning process. Subsequently, Mencius confirmed this concept by expressing it in

terms of taking charge of one's own destiny and vocation in life (*li-ming*).

Similarly, as the method has evolved in the Asian Humanities course at Columbia, it has emphasized personal engagement with the text, and each meeting of the class has started with one or more students presenting their own personal "take" on the text which all in the class have read, followed by general discussion. This give-and-take goes on throughout the course, in dialogue among students and instructors, in papers, and in a final oral examination for each student.

The importance of personal engagement in "learning for one's self" (as Confucius, Zhu Xi and Wang Yang-ming referred to it) stands in contrast to the near-universal emphasis in American (and now in East Asian) education on learning for success. Even what is called "general education" is prevailingly instrumentalist and pragmatic, or, if somehow experiential in character, it is only of the immediate, short-term, "feel good" variety. In the contemporary commercialization and "commodification" of education (colleges that advertise "we teach success") the wisdom of the ages and value of personal reflection are most often sacrificed to the gaining of mental skills, the so-called "tools of success," or immediate sensual and emotional gratifications.

The opening lines of Confucius' Analects express his joy in learning and in sharing his learning with "friends from afar." But immediately following these lines came his characterization of the true human person as someone who could remain unsoured and unembittered even if he were not recognized and appreciated. In other words, true learning prepared one to withstand frustration and disappointment, to stand on one's own inner resources. One could almost say that it was not "learning for success" but learning to

endure failure. "Learning for one's self," for true personhood, was something that comprehended failure, suffering, and tragedy. This, of course, is no less true of other great thinkers and texts from West and East—Socrates, the Iliad, the Greek tragedies, Job, the Christian Gospels, Shakespeare's King Lear, Dostoyevsky, and so on.

The educational philosophy expressed in the foregoing will not sound strange to those already acquainted with the *philosophia perennis* ("perennial philosophy") or traditional wisdom much advocated in the early days of the general education movement, and indeed it will seem only a realistic approach to life for those who appreciate the great wisdom traditions of East or West—taking into account life's darker side and not just its fleeting attractions or successes. But to many readers it will sound out of tune with much of contemporary culture, and out of step with the kind of opportunistic realism so dominant in the commercialized education promoted and practiced even in supposedly reputable institutions today.

What may seem most to stand in the way of any such program today are the systemic forces, vested academic interests, and shallow administrative policies that militate against any humanistic education at all. Undeniably, too, it is a struggle anywhere and everywhere against the current tide of academic specialization and departmentalization. Moreover, the struggle could worsen if the economics of education—the pressure to economize by using modern technology and mass instruction—further undercuts the efforts of those who still try to carry on some kind of reflective, personalized teaching in colleges today.

All these, I concede, are daunting difficulties, and I have little more than a kind of moral solidarity to offer those teachers

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# ASIAN CLASSICS . . .

of the humanities who may wonder whether my recommendations, based though they are on considerable personal experience, are not too idealistic, ambitious and impractical. Even those who have fought the good fight for humanistic education over the years may think me too optimistic. The only encouragement and consolation I can offer are the words attributed to Zeng Zi in the Confucian Analects. He refers to the vocation of the scholar-teacher-educator-leader known in ancient China as the *shi*, for whom Confucius set forth the ideal of the noble person:

*The shi cannot but be  
large-minded and stout-hearted,  
for his burden of responsibility  
is great and the way is long.*

In the long span of human history, we are not alone. ■

## NOTES

1. See my *Approaches to the Asian Classics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).
2. For a suggested list, see W. T. de Bary and I. Bloom, *Eastern Canons* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 52-57.

Appended to this essay is a list of the classics from which we at Columbia have generally made up our reading lists for a year course in Asian Humanities. Obviously one cannot include them all in any given course, and the selection will depend on the interests of the instructors who join in the team of teachers who conduct the program. In our experience these need not necessarily be specialists in Asian matters. Since 1947 when the Asian Humanities was first offered (by a Greek classicist, Moses Hadas, and a Western political scientist Herbert Deane), a large array of translations, reading guides, and teachers' manuals have been made available, and with the help of these, the teacher need be no more expert in the languages and cultures of Asia than are those who teach Greek and Latin classics in the Western humanities expert in those subjects. How many read the Bible in Hebrew, Greek or Latin?

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## THE ISLAMIC TRADITION

*The Qur'ān*: A book of revelation that, because of the unique claims made for it, almost defies reading as a "great book," but is nonetheless indispensable to all reading in the later tradition.

*The Assemblies of Al-Hurīrī* (1054-1122): A major work of classical Arabic literature which illustrates in an engaging way some of the tensions between piety and civilization, the desert and the city in Islamic culture.

*The Deliverance from Error of Al-Ghazālī* (1058-1111): A very personal statement, by perhaps the greatest of the Islamic theologians, concerning the relation of mystical experience to theology and the rational sciences.

The poems of Rūmī (1207-1273): Chosen as the most representative of the Sufi poets.

*The Conference of the Birds* by Aṭfār (1141-1220): A symposium on the stages of religious experience in the contemplative ascent to union with God.

*The Prolegomena [to World History]* of Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406): Often called the world's first "social scientist" (a subject of useful discussion in itself). Ibn Khaldūn's encyclopedic discourse on the historical factors in the rise and fall of civilizations is already a classic among modern world historians.

(Options not selected above but obvious candidates for inclusion in a more ample listing: The seven Odes of pre-Islamic poetry; the *Thousand and One Nights*; other Arab philosophers like Averroes and Ibn Arabi; other Sufi poets like Ḥāfiz, etc.)

## THE INDIAN TRADITION

Hymns from the *Rig Veda*: Bedrock of the Hindu tradition.

The *Upanishads*: Classic discourses which laid the foundation for Hindu religious and philosophical speculation.

The *Bhagavad Gītā*: Major work of religious and philosophical synthesis and basic scripture of Hindu devotionalism.

The *Rāmāyana* of Vālmiki (c. 200 B.C.): The earlier of the two great Indian epics and the best known in Indian art and legendry. Exemplifies the fundamental values and tensions in the classical Indian tradition.

Basic texts of Theravāda Buddhism: No one text represents a complete statement of Buddhism, but the Dhammapada, Mahāsatipāṭhāna Sutta, Milindapañha, and Mahāparinibbana Suttānta come closest perhaps to "basic discourses."

Scriptures of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism: Again, no one work suffices, but the Prajñāpāramitā texts (especially the Heart Sutra), the works of Nāgārjuna and Śāntideva, and the Vimalakīrti Sutra all represent basic statements.

The *Śakuntalā*: Major work of Kālidāsa (c. A.D. 400), the greatest of Indian dramatists and arguably the greatest in Asia.

The Vedānta Sūtra with Commentary of Śaṅkarācārya (c. 780-820): Generally regarded as the leading Indian philosopher, representing the dominant nondualistic school of the Vedānta.

The *Gītāgovinda* of Jayadeva (c. A.D. 12th c.): Great religious poem in Sanskrit and major work of medieval devotionalism.

Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas Gandhi: Two contrasting views of the Indian tradition in its encounter with the West. (These are the only modern writers on our list, but Tagore's poems and plays and Gandhi's so-called *Autobiography*, though admittedly not "classics," have been perennial favorites for the way they juxtapose aspects of Indian tradition in response to the challenges of the West.)

(Major options not availed of above: The epic Mahābhārata; the Yoga sutras of Patañjali; Kautilya's *Artha Śāstra*, a guide to politics; the *Little Clay Cart* of King Śudraka (c. A.D. 400), a most entertaining domestic drama; the famous collection of fables in the *Pañcatantra*; Bhartṛhari's verses on worldly life, passion, and renunciation; Rāmānuja, a rival to Śaṅkara in religious philosophy.)

# Great Books of the East

## THE CHINESE TRADITION

*The Analects of Confucius* (551-479 B.C.): The best single source for the ideas of Confucius (Kong Fuzi).

Mo Tzu (Mozi) or Mo Ti (Mo Di): A sharp critic of Confucianism in the 5th c. B.C. and a major alternative voice in politics and religion.

*Lao Tzu (Laozi)*: A basic text of Daoism which has become a world classic because of its radical challenge to the underlying assumptions of both traditional and modern civilizations.

*Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi)*: Delightful speculative ramblings and philosophical parodies by a Daoist writer of the late 4th, early 3rd c. B.C.

*Mencius* (Mengzi, 372-289 B.C.): A thinker second in importance only to Confucius in that school, who addressed a broad range of practical and philosophical problems.

*Hsün Tzu (Xunzi, 3rd c. B.C.)*: The third great statement of the Confucian teaching, with special attention to the basis of learning and rites.

*Han Fei Tzu (Han Feizi, 3rd c. B.C.)*: The fullest theoretical statement and synthesis of the ancient Legalist school, a major influence on the Chinese political tradition.

*Records of the Historian* by Ssu-ma Ch'ien (Sima Qian, c. 145-90 B.C.): A monumental history of early China, notable for its combination of chronicles, topical treatises, and biographical accounts.

*The Lotus Sutra*: By far the most important text of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism, influential throughout East Asia.

*The Platform Sutra*: An original Chinese work and early statement of Chan (Zen) thought, which assumed the status of both classic and scripture because of its unique claim to religious enlightenment.

Tang poetry: Selections from the great poets of the Tang dynasty, generally viewed as the classic age of Chinese verse.

Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi, 1130-1200): Leading exponent and synthesizer of Neo-Confucianism, which became the dominant teaching in later centuries and spread throughout East Asia.

Wang Yang-ming (Wang Yangming, 1472-1529): Principal Neo-Confucian thinker of the Ming period, who modified Zhu Xi's philosophy most particularly in respect to the nature and importance of learning (especially the role of moral intuition vs. cognitive learning).

*The Journey to the West attributed to Wu Ch'eng-en* (Wu Chengen, c. 1506-1581): A fantastic fictional account of the historic pilgrimage to India of the Buddhist monk Hsüan-tsang (Xuanzang).

*The Dream of the Red Chamber* (or *The Dream of Red Mansions*) by Ts'ao Hsüeh-ch'ien (Cao Xueqin, d. 1763): An 18th c. realistic allegorical novel of the decline of a great family and its young heir's involvement in the world of passion and depravity.

(Other options within the Chinese tradition are such Buddhist texts as *The Awakening of Faith*, the *Śūraṅgama Sutra*, and if it has not been read as a work of the Indian tradition, the *Vimilakīrti Sutra*; and other major novels like the *Water Margin* (*All Men are Brothers*); *Golden Lotus*, and the *Scholars* (*Ju-lin wai-shih*, *Rulin waishi*).

## THE JAPANESE TRADITION

Here it is worthy of special note that women are prominent as authors of the earlier classic works and as dominant figures in many of the later works of drama and fiction.

*Manyōshū*: The earliest anthology of Japanese poetry (8th c. and before).

*The Tale of Genji* by Murasaki Shikibu (978-1015?): The world's first great novel, about court life in Heian period Japan and the loves of Prince Genji.

*The Pillow Book* of Sei Shōnagon (A.D. late 10th-early 11th c.): Observations on life, religion, aesthetic sensibility and taste in Heian Japan.

"An Account of My Hut" by Kamo no Chōmei (1153-1236): A kind of Japanese Thoreau, meditating on the vicissitudes of the world, the beauties of nature, and the satisfactions of the simple life—but at the farthest remove from Thoreau's civil disobedience.

*Essays in Idleness* by Yoshida no Kenkō (1283-1350): Observations on life, society, nature, and art by a worldly monk and classic literary stylist, in journal form.

Nō plays: The classic drama, distinctive to Japan, but now much admired in the West as well. Preferably to be seen and heard as well as read.

The novels of Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693): Fictional writings in a poetic style, expressive of the new culture of the townspeople in 17th c. Japan.

The poetry of Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694): Poetry and prose by the master of the haiku and one of the greatest of all Japanese poets.

The plays of Chikamatsu (1653-1725): Works written for the puppet theater by Japan's leading dramatist, focusing on conflicts between love and duty.

(Alternate selections: Religious writings of the eminent Japanese monks Kūkai, Dōgen and Hakuin, while important in the history of Japanese religion, were difficult even for the Japanese to understand and, though respected, did not have a wide readership. The more widely read literary and dramatic works were probably also more expressive of the actual religious sentiments of the Japanese, as well as of their literary preferences. These might include, in addition to the above, the major poetry anthologies *Kokinshū* and *Shinkokinshū*, the war tale *The Tale of the Heike*, and the eighteenth century drama *Chūshingura*.)

## Editor's Note:

*With Chinese names in most cases we have included both traditional and current spelling for bibliographical reference.*